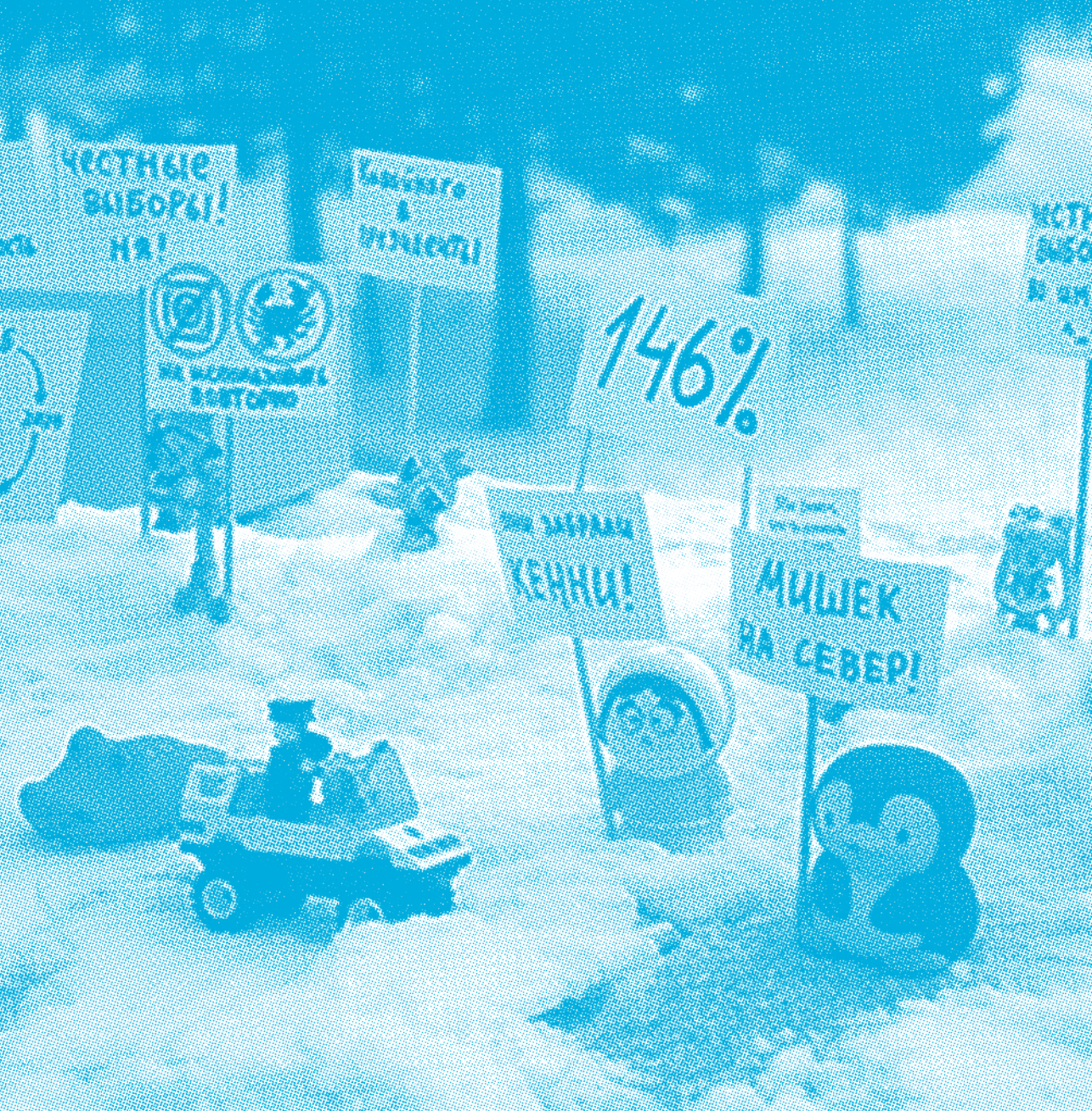


Maaïke de Jong

# THE PARADOX OF PLAYFULNESS

REDEFINING ITS AMBIGUITY





THE PARADOX  
OF PLAYFULNESS  
REDEFINING ITS AMBIGUITY

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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# THE PARADOX OF PLAYFULNESS

## REDEFINING ITS AMBIGUITY

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in het openbaar te verdedigen ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties  
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THE GREAT  
THING  
ABOUT  
MATURITY,  
YOU  
NEVER  
HAVE TO  
GROW UP



*In memory of the ones we lost along the way:  
Efron, Idsart and Kevin*

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# AMUSE

*Redefining its ambiguity*



Figure 1 Antanas Mockus as Super Citizen. © El Tiempo de Bogotá, 2008

# ANTANAS MOCKUS ROCKS SOCIAL ORDER

A man in a Superman-like suit walks across the street, tearing down illegal advertisements and inviting people around him to join in the activity. This man is Antanas Mockus, then mayor of the city of Bogotá. Not many people would connect this kind of behavior to the solemnity we usually associate with a public service position of mayor. Yet, this is exactly the kind of behavior the former candidate for the presidency of Colombia displayed.

His performance as Super Citizen is only one of a dozen playful interventions in the city Mockus considers his social laboratory (see: Singhal, 2006; Singhal & Greiner, 2008; Greiner & Singhal, 2009). Mockus is not afraid to make a bit of a fool of himself: he does not care how he should dress, as long as people understand that they should not put up with illegal advertising (In: Hellot & Lemoine, 2006).

In ordinary language, Mockus can be said to be a playful individual. As the former mayor of Bogota, Colombia, he has a track record of unconventional interventions, which have significantly altered everyday interactions between the city's citizens (Singhal, 2006; Singhal & Greiner, 2008; Greiner, 2010). They have been playful, peaceful, creative and quite effective in sparking dialogue and establishing social change. Mockus' example illustrates the potential of a deeper connection between social engagement and fun. Because, although his actions are fun, they are not "just for fun."

Mockus is not randomly goofing around, but demonstrates considerable skill in putting topics not only on the city's agenda, but also in people's hearts and minds. While his

actions as Super Citizen are highly symbolic, his behavior at the same time models other opportunities for people to act upon. Should he be asked to fill out a test for creativity and playfulness, it is likely that he'd get high scores on items such as "I like to interact with people in a playful way" or "I like to clown around." But can we develop an understanding of what his playfulness entails, if we were to only describe him as a "playful, crazy mayor?"

What he does is more than just goofing around; he goofs around strategically. He breaks expectations, but does it in such a way that others are not ignited by this disruption of social order. In that sense, Mockus demonstrates excellence in rule breaking. His actions – playful, symbolic, fun and yet strategic, effective and serious as they are – disrupt common assumptions of playfulness as a non-serious enterprise. If we largely define playfulness as a character trait or propensity, we miss out on an opportunity of understanding playfulness better. And this would inhibit us from learning how to develop a similar kind of engaged playfulness that is capable of changing a critical situation into a better one. Can we learn to be playful?

# INTRODUCTION: A DESIGN-ORIENTED APPROACH TO PLAYFULNESS AND LEARNING





# 1.1 DEMARCATION OF THE THEME: PLAYFULNESS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Playfulness is the main theme of this thesis, with a focus on the kind of playfulness that appears to be about more than mere fun. Not because “mere fun” does not deserve to be studied, but because of the semantic exclusion of seriousness: playfulness is often considered the antonym of seriousness (Glynn & Webster, 1992, 1993; Schaefer & Greenberg, 1997; Barnett, 1990, 2007). This thesis argues that this false opposition leads to blind spots in the study of human behavior. It is an exploratory case study into the “enabling and constraining conditions” of playfulness (cf. Giddens, 1984). Playfulness is defined differently in different fields of study. One definition is: “a propensity to define (or redefine) an activity in an imaginative, non serious or metaphoric manner so as to enhance intrinsic enjoyment, involvement and satisfaction” (Glynn & Webster, 1992, p. 85).

Academic research indicates playfulness is related to creativity and innovation (Lieberman, 1977; Tegano, 1990), well-being of adolescents (Staempfli, 2007) and coping skills (Hess & Bundy, 2003). These are traits, qualities and skills, which are considered particularly valuable in a highly mediated and complex world (cf. Nootboom & Stam, 2008; Vereniging Hogescholen, 2014). The rise of computer games and game studies as well as the so-called “ludification of culture” – culture becoming ever more playful – has renewed the urgency of playfulness as a research topic (Raessens, 2006; Stenros, Montola & Mäyrä, 2007; Deterding, 2013; Frissen, De Mul & Raessens, 2013). The role of playfulness in the life of adults and adolescents requires additional research (Barnett, 2007;

Staempfli, 2007; Guitard, Ferland & Dutil, 2005).

There is evidence that playfulness is part of “the normal personality” and that playful people are happier (Glynn & Webster, 1992, p.84). As a character trait, playfulness is connected to creativity, innovation, motivation and psychological well-being (Staempfli, 2007; Glynn & Webster, 1992; Reifel, 1999; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). “Playfulness can be productive for both individuals and institutions as it is associated with innovative attitudes and intrinsic motivation; further research examining those personal and organizational characteristics that encourage playfulness is warranted” (Glynn & Webster, 1993, p. 1025). At the same time, playfulness is sometimes interpreted as disruptive or escapist and as such, can also be unproductive (Starbuck & Webster, 1991; Glynn & Webster, 1992; Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006). [Section 1.2](#) discusses the rationale for studying playfulness in more detail.

### 1.1.1 DESIGN BASED RESEARCH (DBR) AS THE METHOD TO STUDY THE THEME

In this thesis, playfulness is studied from a design based research perspective (DBR) (sometimes also called Design Based Scientific Research (DBRS), cf. Van Aken, 2005; Andriessen, 2007; Van Aken & Andriessen, 2012 who differ from Laurel (2003) and Lockwood (2010)). DBR aims to support the professional action of those who work in knowledge intensive fields (Van Aken, 2012). It is the chosen methodology, because the starting point of the research process was a theory-based *design* of a research assignment for students in higher education (BBA Media & Entertainment Management) which sought to provide reflection tools for future reflective practitioners (field problem) as well as better understand the mechanisms of social order in which playfulness can be a useful strategy (theoretical problem). Bachelor students tend to favor pragmatic tools and applicable theory over more theoretical (academic) approaches to their future occupational field (HBO-Raad, 2009).

Design research differs from fundamental research in that it is motivated by the desire to solve “field problems” for which *no generic solution* has yet been found (Van Aken, 2012). Scholars in design research distinguish a “practice stream” and a “knowledge

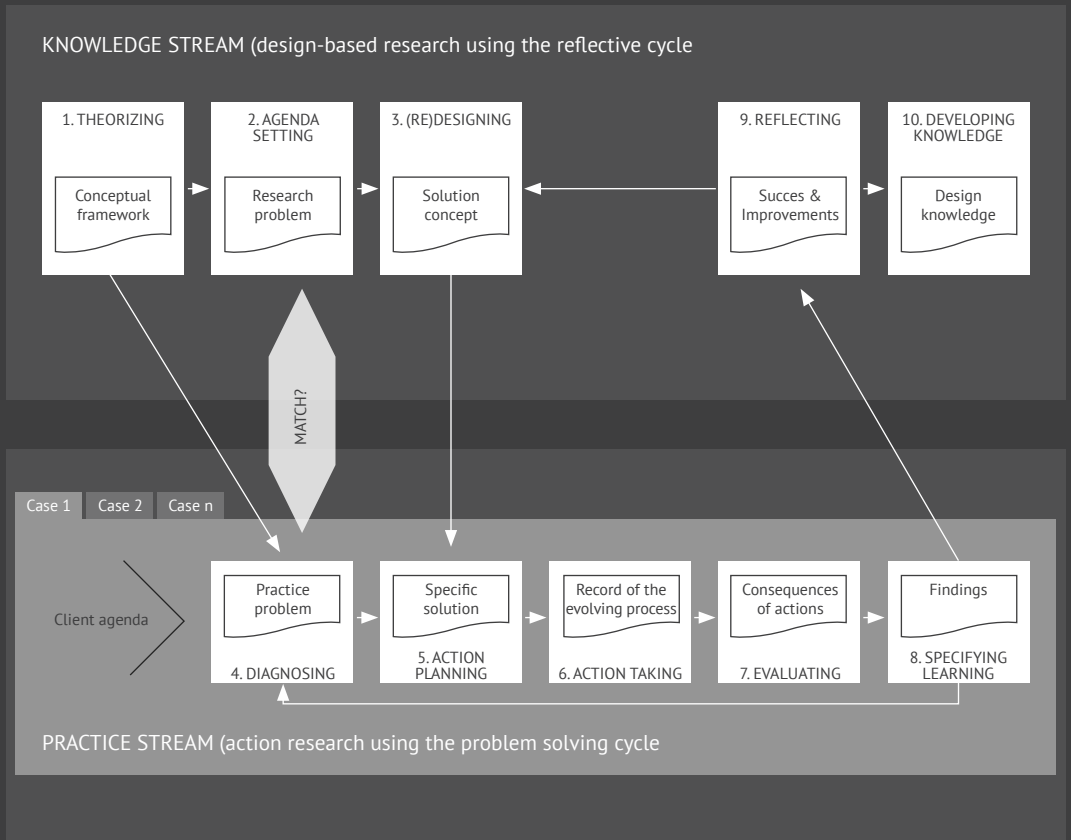


Figure 2. Interaction between the layer of the practice problem and the theoretical problem (adapted from Andriessen, 2007).

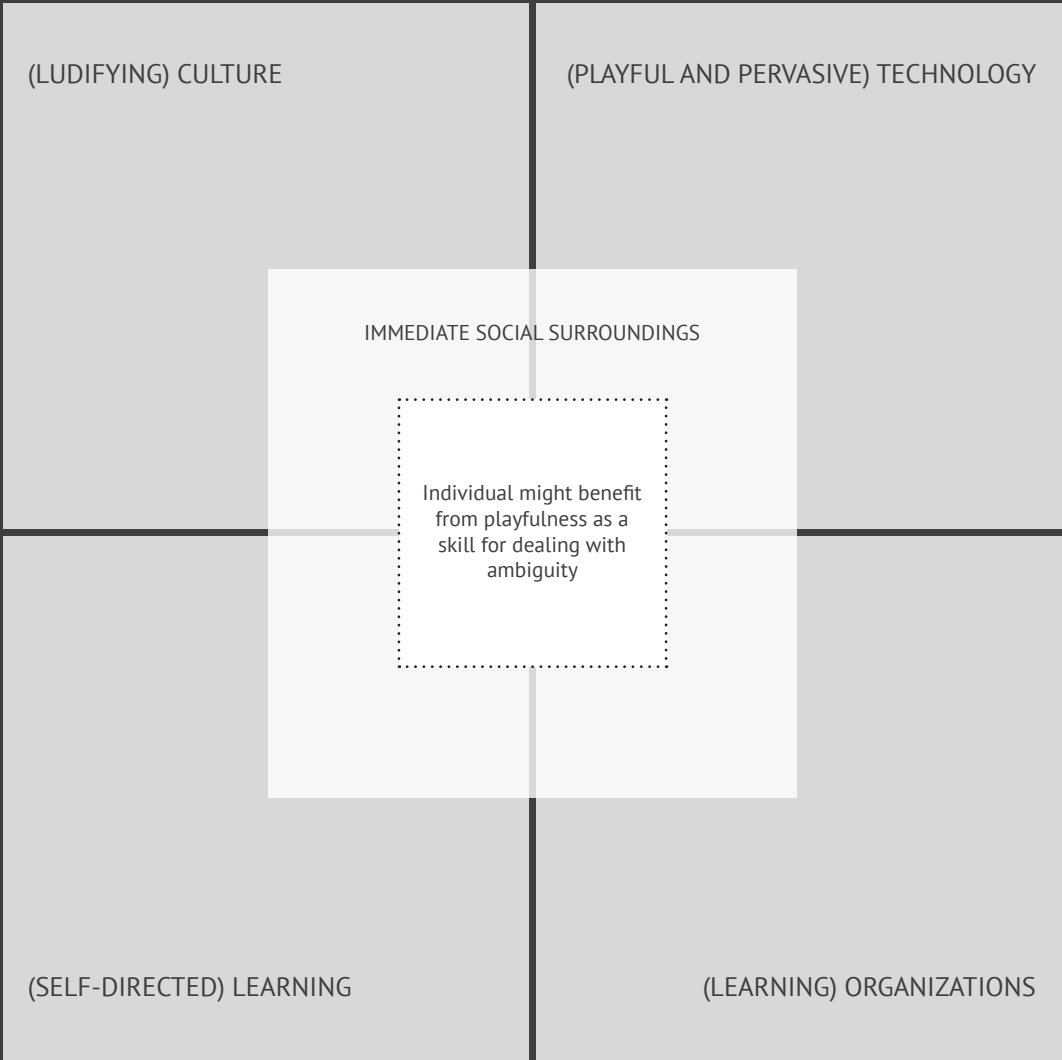


Figure 3. Multiplicity of contexts within which students need to prepare and for which they prepare

stream” in the research process. These streams are connected through the reflections on the outcomes of interventions that have been designed to solve a problem *and* the iterative cycle in which these reflections contribute to theoretical understanding (Andriessen, 2007, 2012).

According to Andriessen (2007), it is exactly the combination of action research and design research creates a good link between theory and application, connecting professional practice to the development of new knowledge. It also generates design principles for problem solving beyond mere application of theory.

## 1.1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE FIELD PROBLEM (1): LEARNING TO REFLECT ON SCRIPTED REALITIES

This section briefly describes the field problem in relation to the overall set-up of the thesis. It is elaborated upon under section 2.3. For a large part, students in higher education prepare to become productive – and creative – employees in organizations. There is also a demand placed on them to become good democratic citizens (HBO-Raad, 2009). There is no generic way to “teach creativity” (Robinson, 2011; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Given how playfulness creativity and innovation are connected, however, students might benefit from new, playful ways of learning to reflect on their surroundings. Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) write about the difficult relationship between creativity and productivity in creative industries, where many students will end up working. It is not at all clear where exactly goal orientation begins: “To work, one must have a purpose; to do creative work, one must move freely and erratically so as to discover and understand what is the purpose. From this point of view, the very purpose of work is often invented in play” (Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006, p.115). This way, inviting playfulness constitutes one solution orientation and as such, one possible generic solution that can be tested: can we learn to be playful?

The original goal of the assignment was to invite reflection on the construction of our social and material world. Later on this was framed as an invitation for students to play with these constructions and put their assumptions to the test. This assignment was co-created with students and its iterations informed the problem definition

and demarcation of the theoretical issue: playfulness in young adults. Over the course of three academic years, the output of this assignment was used for a better theoretical understanding of the building blocks of playfulness, in turn informing the revision of the assignment and informing the development of a philosophical game.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis theoretically *explores* the relations between playfulness, learning and the experience of ordinary life. It follows the general sociological assumption that social order is constituted, reconstituted or altered in everyday interactions (Giddens, 1984; Raffel, 2007).

*theoretical exploration*

The notion of constraining and enabling conditions is derived from the sociological work of Anthony Giddens whose “structuration theory” (1984) serves as a theoretical background for the description of the characteristics of modernity. In this theory, Giddens rejects the idea that there is an opposition between individual and society. He focuses on the relation between agency and structure, conceptualized as a duality. The individual is seen as a reflexive agent, capable of interacting with society’s structure in a meaningful way. His later work, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991), is important as well, because there he connects a sociological perspective on modernity to a psychological perspective on the self. Although according to Giddens some authors, such as Foucault, have been helpful in describing so-called “disciplinary organizations,” he does not share the pessimism in their work: structures are never merely constraining; they also make individual and collective action possible.<sup>2</sup> If social order is constituted in everyday interactions, where the societal structure is both enabling and constraining with respect to human agency, then studying playfulness can help to better understand the relation between human actors and a system. This means playfulness is studied, as one element of social interaction that is not understood enough.

However, as a difference, the disruption and/or alteration are not explored as a form of deviance that rises from *refusal* or *indifference* to this order, as is common in the sociology of ordinary life (Raffel, 2007; Garfinkel, 1967). As Giddens describes the concept of “rules” in relation to structuration, he mentions five key characteristics, of which characteristic one and five are specifically relevant (p.17-18) First of all, he states that although rules are often thought of in a games-context, rules are not “game-like,” they are different in that they are more diverse and less structured and structuring than

game rules.<sup>3</sup> They also “relate on the one hand to the constitution of meaning, and on the other to the sanctioning of modes of social conduct” (1991/2013, Kindle Locations 860-861, p. 18).

Especially in relation to the sanctioning of these modes of conduct, playfulness as a strategy can be interesting, as it creates an “in-between” world, where prior rules (at least temporarily) don’t count and new rules have not been established yet. Anthropologist Victor Turner calls this state “liminoid,” in reference to the liminal stages in rituals, where participants inhabit a temporary, “in-between” world (1982). Sutton-Smith (1997) refers to playful play as the most ambiguous kind.

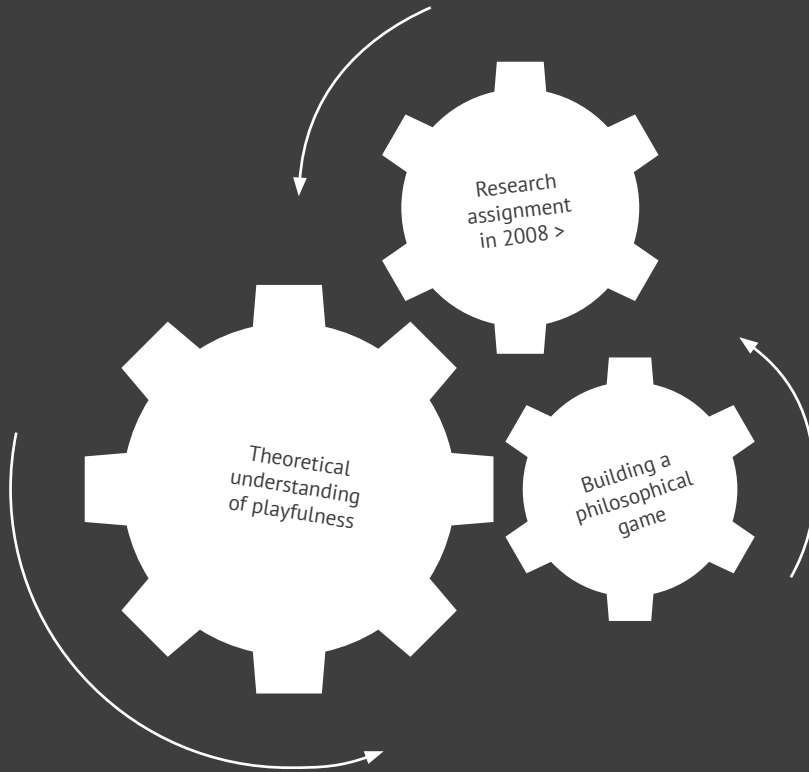
Therefore, the focus is on an examination of playfulness as an intentional, reflexive approach that rises from *excellence in rule breaking* as well as a sense of engagement with the situation at hand. In cases, such as the example of Mockus, mastery over social rules is not expressed in excellent rule following, but in excellent rule breaking. And in this excellence, the usual sanctioning dissipates. While life may not be a game, it does contain several game-like and ritual aspects that require specific skills and artful handling of participants (cf. Huizinga, 1955; Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1974). For the field problem, this means it is useful to develop an understanding of the way in which a playful approach to the structures of ordinary life can be meaningful.

*empirical analysis*

Empirically, therefore, this thesis *analyzes* how (BA Media & Entertainment) students can explore their ordinary life in a playful way, what approaches they use to develop a playful stance, and what changes in perspective this creates.

Since playfulness may be an important trait to foster when dealing with the complexities of modern, mediated life (De Mul, 2005; Raessens, 2006), the practice stream of this research consists of the design and testing of educational material that might invoke playfulness, with a focus on the question: how do we design for it? The theoretical stream consists of the exploration of the conditions under which playfulness can occur - what are the enabling and constraining conditions under which adolescents and young adults engage playfully with their (social and material) surroundings?

The assignments designed for the empirical part were co-created



*Figure 4. Connections between the school assignments, the theoretical problems and design of a playful learning environment*

with students. They invite student's reflections on topics related to agency and freedom in their ordinary life; their role in the continuation or alteration of it and the possibilities for engaging with it in a playful manner. From an educational viewpoint, it aims to establish a sense of awareness in students of the choices they may and may not have in different situations and how to act on them accordingly. Although the assignments and the intended learning environment are aimed at knowledge, awareness, attitude and skills, they are not aimed at behavioral change. It is aimed at the creation of a space of possibilities in which one can contemplate and reflect on whether or not a deviation from "the ordinary" is required or desired. As such, it is about philosophical activity and mental elasticity, and experiencing the fun of a mental space of creation.

Insights from this theoretical exploration are reflected in the (re-) design of the educational material. This way, playfulness is explored as a character trait but also conceptualized as *a skill*. This requires general theoretical perspectives from the field of anthropology, sociology and psychology and several fields that derive some of their key insights about play and playfulness from these fields, such as education, communication studies and game studies. As such, the thesis by necessity takes an interdisciplinary approach.

### 1.1.3 TRIPTYCH: RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PROCESS

The reorganization of the data and insights that this process as a whole generated is documented as a triptych, consisting of the following elements:

1. A reconstruction of the design process as a whole, which incorporates the methods used, their justification and the progression of the process and the insights this yielded (*failing forward*) ([chapter 2](#)).
2. A general theoretical exploration of playfulness, which demonstrates how playfulness is intertwined with the concepts of play, culture, social order, utopia, ordinary life, childhood and maturity ([chapter 3](#)).

3. An analysis of the data generated in two iterations of a school assignment called “the world your playground”, which illustrates the ambiguous relation the participants have with playfulness, games and technology, and ordinary life and which sheds light on the building blocks of playfulness in adolescents ([chapter 4](#)).

[Section 1.2](#) of this introduction outlines arguments for studying playfulness. [Section 1.3](#) provides an overview of the content of the three chapters of this thesis. For purposes of readability, the cycles of the design process are summarized in [section 2.5](#), while the different (educational) documents this approach spawned (assignments, conversations, folders) can be found in the [appendices](#). Readers less interested in this reconstruction of the process as a whole can move from [2.4](#) to [chapter 3](#).

## 1.2 REASONS FOR STUDYING PLAYFULNESS

The main justification for this thesis is that the study of playfulness may hold a key to understanding elements of our relationship with the organization of ordinary life. Play is said to stand apart from ordinary life, but for playfulness this may not be the case. This section discusses five additional arguments for why the study of playfulness is worthwhile. The first four relate to the importance of the study of playfulness in general, the final to the importance of studying playfulness in young adults.

### 1.2.1 PLAYFULNESS IS CONNECTED TO PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING

First of all, as indicated in the previous section, playfulness is considered part of the “normal” personality (Glynn & Webster, 1992). In recent decades, the field of psychology has focused less on the explanation of what is abnormal or psychologically deviant, but instead, has sought to understand “normalcy” (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). The study of play so far reveals that play and playfulness belong to a healthy psychological make-up: “we humans” are in a better state of being when experiencing the freedom to be playful (Glynn & Webster, 1992; Brown & Vaughan, 2009).

In recent years, more attention has been devoted to the playfulness of adults. This has largely been researched in the context of organizational psychology (Starbuck & Webster; 1991; Glynn &

Webster, 1992, 1993; Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006). Moreover, in brain research, biometric data is gathered about our physical responses while in a “state of play” (American Journal of Play, 2009, Brown & Vaughan, 2009; Pellis & Pellis, 2009). Scholars argue that so far, playfulness has not received the attention it deserves and as such, we do not understand important elements of psychological well-being (Sutton-Smith, 1997; Schaefer & Greenberg, 1997; Fix & Schaefer, 2005; Proyer & Buch, 2011; Barnett, 2013). If playfulness is a characteristic of healthy beings, that in itself warrants a better understanding of it.

## 1.2.2 HUMAN BEINGS ARE NEOTENOUS – THEY STILL PLAY WHEN THEY ARE GROWN UP

Biologists have recently begun to study “neoteny” in humans and animals in more detail. Neotenous species are species in which the characteristics of childhood remain in maturity (Norbeck, 1974; Brown & Vaughan, 2009; American Journal of Play, 2009). Human beings are neotenous, as are dolphins, monkeys, dogs, and elephants. Playfulness used to be considered a trait of children, but can be witnessed in adults as well. If a person is playful, it does not mean they have skipped a step in their development (Norbeck, 1974; Turner, 1986; Brown & Vaughan, 2009; American Journal of Play, 2009). As the anthropologist Norbeck stated: “As measured by the incidence of play, the biological trait of playfulness *grows in intensity* in the mammalian class in accord with the position of species in the evolutionary scale leading to man” (1974, p.3, my italics).

In young animals and children, the play function was thought to be an important way to learn new skills (cf. Sutton-Smith, 1997). In this view, play belonged to the realm of children, as a function of their growing up; a preparation for “real” life to come (Pellegriani, 1995 p. viii, Sutton-Smith, 1997, Ch2). Even though Huizinga already contested this notion in 1938, the link between playfulness and childlike behavior is persistent (cf. Sutton-Smith, 1997).

In what Sutton-Smith labels the “rhetoric of progress,” this function served as the main explanation for play behavior. Several theoretical and empirical explorations (Sutton-Smith, 1997; Lieberman, 1977; Fine, 1993; Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006; Myck-Wayne, 2010); Statler, Heracleous & Jacobs (2011) cite the work of Piaget and Vygotski

as foundational for establishing the fundamental role of play in children's learning: for children, there is no fundamental difference between playing and learning (Sutton-Smith, 1997). But what the function of play for mature beings does entail is not yet understood. Turner suggests: "If man is a neotonic [sic] species, play perhaps is his most appropriate mode of performance" (1986, p. 32).

### 1.2.3 THE "LUDIFICATION OF CULTURE" SUGGESTS WE HAVE BECOME MORE PLAYFUL

A third argument can be found in the transformation of today's culture. Some authors call this a "ludification of culture" (Raessens, 2006, 2010) or a "ludic turn" (Stenros, Montola & Mäyrä, 2007). Our day and age are very different from 30 years ago (Raessens & Goldstein, 2005; Raessens, 2006, 2010; Frissen, De Mul & Raessens, 2013). Culture as a whole as well as its agents are become more and more playful, as influenced by mass media, interactive media and new communication devices: "Computer games and other digital technologies such as mobile phones and the Internet seem to stimulate playful goals and to facilitate the construction of playful identities" (Raessens, 2006, p.1). Changes are taking place in our concept of what it means to be a grown-up or adult. The average age of gamers, for instance, is now 30 years old (Carat, 2009). In 2005, the research agency Qrius added the age group 25 - 29 to its studies on youth in The Netherlands (Qrius, 2014).

The ludification of culture has implications for education. There is a quest to better understand the cultural and technological changes that are taking place, in order to better design our educational systems (Petrova, 2013). Scholars express a need for powerful educational environments and the use of "new" media in education, especially web based technology and the use of (computer) games in education (for studies on micro computer playfulness as an enhancer of exploratory behavior, Bozionelos & Bozionelos (1997); Woszczyńska, Roth & Segars, 2002 or Hackbarth, Grover & Mun (2003). Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are said to be changing the face of higher education and its institutions (Mangan, 2012).

These broad changes may have implications for the way students learn or the way they expect to learn (cf. Shirky, 2008). Some

scholars suggest we are dealing with an entirely new generation of learners, called “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001), while skeptics indicate that the unanimous embrace of new media and of games as learning tools is exaggerated (Van den Beemt, 2010).

The term “ludification” is derived from “ludus,” Latin for play and/ or game (cf. Huizinga, 1955; Suits, 1978). Terms in use at the moment are “ludification”, “gamification” and also “gamefulness” - as distinct from “playfulness” (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled & Nacke, 2011, Deterding, 2013). Apart from the psychological definition of playfulness mentioned in the introduction, however, there is little consensus as to what “playfulness” exactly means (Deterding et al., 2011; Korhonen, Montola & Arrasvuori, 2009).

## 1.2.4 LIFE-LONG LEARNING INCREASES THE APPEAL OF PLAYFUL WAYS OF LEARNING

New technologies and an increased complexity of society are changing the role of education; students are being prepared to become life-long learners. Industrialized, late modern societies are characterized by a loss of tradition, a disembedding of time and space (Giddens, 1991). They also have become knowledge economies that rely heavily on individuals capable of self-directed learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Schön, 1983).

For students, this implies they will never be done learning, so they need to focus on not only keeping their knowledge up to date, but also their learning *skills*. It also means they will need to learn to deal with the insecurity that rises from never getting permanent answers to questions. This insecurity can possibly be tempered by enhancing playfulness. In designing for playfulness, a better understanding of playfulness is beneficial (Korhonen et al, 2009; Lucero & Arrasvuori, 2010).

## 1.2.5 UNDERSTANDING PLAYFULNESS MAY HOLD A KEY TO CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

Creativity and innovativeness are traits/qualities that are highly appreciated in Western culture (Nooteboom & Stam, 2008, Eurostat,

2013). These days, the professional development of students requires creative skills as well as innovativeness (HBO-Raad, 2009). These skills are often called 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (Oetelaar, 2012). Literature on creativity suggests that every individual to some extent is creative. Creativity is considered a positive trait, related to the notion of quality of life as well as the possibility of commercial success (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

This suggests creativity and innovation are to some extent malleable or manageable and can perhaps be taught. There is a correlation between playfulness and creativity and innovation (Tegano, 1990). However, the direction of causality is unclear and it is likely that creativity and playfulness are interacting phenomena (Lieberman, 1977, Erikson, 1968, Barnett, 1990, 2007; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1996). Stimulating playfulness in students in higher education or teaching them to be playful could be beneficial to them.

This section provided five arguments for the study of playfulness. Playfulness is a common characteristic of human beings. Human beings are neotenous and our well-being is connected to our capacity for playful behavior. In addition to the playfulness inherent in our species, our culture is transforming into a more playful one. A better understanding of playfulness may be beneficial in designing learning environments for students who have to learn to deal with the complexities of this day and age.

#### MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

Given the dual nature of design based research, the main question of this thesis is two-fold:

1. What are the constraining and enabling conditions of playfulness in young adults in higher education?
2. How do we design educational material that fosters or promotes playful skills in this group?

The following section contains an overview of the chapters in this thesis. [The next chapter](#) discusses the research design of the case study and the methods used for its components.

# 1.3 READING MANUAL: STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS

The upcoming chapter (Chapter 2) outlines the different research methods that were used during the overall game design project. It serves two functions:

- (1) To account for the choices for these methods and to comment on issues of validity and reliability, as well as trustworthiness and usefulness (sections [2.1](#), [2.2](#) and [2.4](#)). Methods used are: participatory game design ([2.2](#)), case study ([2.4.1](#)), structured literature review ([2.4.2](#)) and directed content analysis ([2.4.3](#)).
- (2) To reconstruct the trajectory of the project as a “case story” (Flyvbjerg, 2006), to report not only the research outcomes themselves, but also what we learned from all our attempts at “failing forward”<sup>4</sup> (sections [2.3](#) and [2.5](#)). [Section 2.3](#) contains a reconstruction of the problem analysis that informed the design process. Innovation as the outcome of education is seen as a “wicked” problem (Rittel & Webber, 1973). [Section 2.5](#) details a reconstruction of the design process, including a brief summary of the position of the primary researcher and an evaluation of all three roles a researcher takes during the design process: researcher, designer and change agent (Akkerman, Bronkhorst & Zitter, 2012).

This reconstruction may not be relevant for every reader. Those who are more interested in the outcome of our quest for the enabling

and constraining conditions of playfulness can skip [section 2.4](#) and start on [chapter 3](#). The reconstruction may be relevant for educational design researchers who consider doing a similar project. It allows “case-to-case” transfer on the part of the reader. This transfer “occurs whenever a person in one setting considers adopting a program or idea from another one” (Firestone, 1993, p. 17). As Firestone states: “the researcher has an obligation to provide a rich, detailed, thick description of the case. This is because the researcher’s theories about the conditions that affect the applicability of study conclusions are less important than those of the reader” (Firestone, 1993, p. 18, see also: Geertz, 1973).

In his discussion of the core principles of design thinking, Lockwood (2010) mentions: “Often the goal is to fail quickly and frequently so that learning can occur” (Lockwood, 2010, p. xi). Educational psychologist Dweck (2002) states that a mastery oriented approach to learning is not just about *dealing with* mistakes, but even *embracing* them: they offer you the best possible opportunity to learn something. Or, as one of the children in Dweck’s research stated: “mistakes are our friends!” A research plan is preferably drafted in such a way that unanticipated outcomes are interesting nonetheless. In our case, a project that did not result in its original goal holds some insights that we think are worth reporting.

[Chapter 3](#) deals with theoretical concepts of playfulness and explores what playfulness is and how it can be differentiated from play. Its main purpose is to come to a multifaceted description of playfulness that allows meaningful, interpretative research on it and to establish the conditions that enable or restrain it. The chapter first discusses the possibility and desirability of separating playfulness from play. On the one hand, there seems to be no need to create distinct study of playfulness as separate from play. Playfulness can be seen as the human quality that sparks play behavior. Or the adjective form of “play” is just that: playful. On the other hand, as Sutton-Smith (1997) states, it is also possible to play with the frame of play. In our play interactions, we can instill an added playfulness on top of the fact that we are already playing: playful play ([section 3.1](#)).

The chapter goes on to discuss notions of playfulness based on the work of Huizinga (1955), Caillois (1961) and Bateson (1955). To tease out the similarities and differences in more detail, the chapter

follows three lines of analysis:

- Line 1     the *meaning* of playfulness in relation to *play and culture*, as can be derived from those rhetorics of play (Sutton-Smith, 1997) that allow space for a difference between play and playfulness (Section [3.2](#) and [3.3](#)).
- Line 2     the *situated* aspects of playfulness in interpersonal interactions, as can be derived from Bateson (1955), Goffman (1974), Giddens (1984, 1991) and Suits (1978) (section [3.4](#) and [3.5](#)).
- Line 3     the *empirical* study of playfulness as a characteristic of “self”, with a focus on the research into the playfulness of young adults and adolescents ([section 3.6](#)).

It is possible to distinguish between play and playfulness based on Sutton-Smith’s notion of a referential and a ludic dialectic. In the former, play still refers to reality, while in the latter, playfulness in a sense takes on its own reality. This is consistent with Goffman’s notion of “framing” - in which a primary frame refers to a situation as it is usually understood and in which a transformation is capable of altering the meaning of the frame while still bearing resemblance to the primary frame (1974). Ambiguity occurs when we are not sure how to frame a situation.

The close connection between play and games allows for a continuation of the difference between play and playfulness. Based on Suits’ (1978) definition of a game as “a voluntary way of overcoming unnecessary obstacles”(p.55), it is possible to distinguish between a so-called *lusory* attitude and a *playful* attitude. In an ideal play situation, these two coincide, but can be at odds in a situation where conformity to the game rules is an issue of debate.

An exposition of the results of psychometric approaches to playfulness reveals that the construct of (psychological or intrapersonal) playfulness is connected to the construct of tolerance of ambiguity, as well as creativity and innovativeness. But the ambiguity of play, the so called “in between realities” state of play (“liminal” as Turner (1982) calls it, characterized by Sutton-Smith as one of its main characteristics in terms of ambiguity) is excluded from these measures. As a result, certain kinds of playfulness are easily overlooked.

The chapter ends with a re-evaluation of common dichotomies in conceptions about play and playfulness, such as (a) the difference between play spaces and what we call “ordinary life.” Playfulness belongs to both realms; (b) the difference between playfulness and seriousness – there is no necessary contradiction and (c) the opposition between childhood and adulthood. The suggestion that playfulness does not belong to mature beings is incorrect. Playfulness is also more than a disposition. It can be seen as a potential life skill that helps people to deal with the complexity of everyday events (cf. Staempfli, 2007). The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the touch points in education where more space for playfulness could be created.

The analysis in [chapters 2](#) and [3](#) give rise to an *exploration* of what learning could look like: what would it mean in practice if we were to conceive of playfulness a favorable skill? The construct of playfulness can be said to have both intrapersonal as well as interpersonal qualities. If it is to be “practiced,” it requires a certain mindset as well as certain skills. [Chapter 4](#) contains an analysis of the results of an assignment that was commissioned to second year students in two consecutive years. A research assignment, “The World Your Playground” was developed for students to invite playfulness. An analysis of the way students formulate their thoughts on playfulness reveals the way in which they think about enabling and constraining conditions of playfulness. Students express their concern over the hurriedness of society, but at the same time consider media as enabling playfulness. Fear of sanctions is mostly expressed in a fear of ridicule, of not being taken seriously.

The very different ways in which constraints are formulated are met with very different approaches to lifting these constraints and enabling playfulness. The approaches students take to developing a playful stance – though very similar to and sometimes indiscernible from steps in the creative process in general – illustrate that there are certainly possibilities to create more space for playfulness by designing educational spaces differently, both in a material sense of the physical space as in the space of interactions. The creations the students made, expressly illustrate how playfulness can differ from play: in many examples students start out with the familiar world as a starting point, to move into what Sutton-Smith calls the “ludic dialectic” (1997), in which they create unfamiliar, strange and absurd things.

The conclusion outlines how, on the one hand, there are clear indicators that elements of playfulness can actually be learned. There are no guarantees however, that this is because it was taught. A so-called “paradox of intentionality” (Statler et al., 2011) offers no guarantee that by engaging in play behavior to attain a “serious” outcome, we will actually attain the desired outcome. Otherwise, play retreats from its open-ended, liminal realm into fixed ritual performance. In the reflection, the paradoxes of aiming for playfulness in teaching are addressed, along with the role of trust and self-knowledge.

THE ROAD TO  
BOROBUDUR:  
A CASE OF DESIGN  
BASED RESEARCH



This chapter outlines the different research methods that were used during the overall game design project. In design research the aim is to develop an intervention to improve the practices of professionals in knowledge intensive fields (Van Aken, 2012). Design research uses the label “arrangement” for this collection of interventions that together should lead to the intended outcome (Andriessen, 2012). A design research plan can be drafted and reported in different ways. A common form is a case study report (Swanborn, 1996; Andriessen, 2012). A case study approach allows for a detailed documentation of the iterations a certain design has walked through, without running the risk of fragmentation. The chapter is written in “we” form, to pay tribute to the efforts of all the different students who have participated in this project.

The chapter serves two functions.

1. To account for the choices for these methods and to comment on issues of validity and reliability, as well as trustworthiness and usefulness (sections [2.1](#), [2.2](#) and [2.4](#)). Compared to social sciences, validation in design based research is pragmatic rather than explanatory (Weber, Ropes & Andriessen, 2012). Methodological choices that were made in preparation of the project as well as during the different phases are accounted for. The practical and the theoretical value of the project as a whole are determined as well.
2. To reconstruct the trajectory of the project as a “case story” (Flyvbjerg, 2006) (section [2.3](#) and [2.5](#)). Validation in design based research requires on the one hand that the descriptive and explanatory knowledge is *true* while at the same time the *pragmatic* validity requires that it actually work. The latter can only be achieved by establishing the evidence in front of a forum that may not accept the evidence. This highlights the essentially social character of presenting evidence that the intended intervention *will* work (Weber, Ropes & Andriessen, 2012).

[Section 2.1](#) discusses the overall research design. It addresses the research questions and the main, overall method that has been used for this design: participatory game design (Johansson & Linde, 2005). [Section 2.2](#) discusses the design process and

outlines the demands of the design and the principles we derived from several design theories. This general outline is followed by a reconstruction of the problem analysis: the theme of innovation in higher education, in [section 2.3](#). Establishing more space for playfulness and finding new spaces for reflection in a changing educational environment is one possible solution in the context of the “wicked” problem of innovation. To create these spaces, an understanding of both the enabling and constraining conditions is required. The section consists of an inventory and analysis of the challenges in higher education, in which a policy goal of increasing the innovativeness in higher education<sup>5</sup> is at odds with an output oriented system that does not seem to meet the conditions for encouraging creativity, e.g. by providing a space for play (cf. Robinson, 2009, 2011). The section thus serves as background information that help make sense of the resulting choices for the complementary methods.

These complementary methods are discussed in [section 2.4](#). The discussion of these methods aims to take away unnecessary ambiguities in the design for the study of an already ambiguous concept. Construct validity, for instance, is challenging for a concept that has been referred to as “elusive” by nature and is said to “escape definition.” [Section 2.5](#) reconstructs the steps that were taken in the course of the research process. This section highlights both the constraining and the enabling conditions we encountered not theoretically or empirically, but rather through experience. The different (educational) documents this approach spawned (assignments, meeting notes) can be found in the appendices.

## 2.1 PARTICIPATORY GAME DESIGN AS A “DESIGN BASED RESEARCH” CASE STUDY

The approach to the design of the game is reported as an exploratory case study in the form of a natural experiment (cf. Lee, 1989). A design based approach – though it involves both explanation and evaluation (Andriessen, 2007; Oost, 2008a, 2008b) – involves an *open-ended* approach in which the possible outcome can (still) be informed by the course of the process, and is not necessarily fixed in advance (in e.g. coding categories, tested hypotheses). In addition, playfulness has mostly been a marginal topic in the social sciences and has received little attention separately from the concept of “play.” This too warrants an exploratory approach (cf. Yin, 2009). It is a case study also in part because reports about design processes often take the shape of case reports (Wieringa, 2007), meaning that the design process itself constitutes the case. This limits the number of research designs for case studies to one. Since it was possible to intervene in the process, the case itself takes the shape of a natural experiment. As Swanborn (1996), Firestone (1993) and Lee (1989) argue, the lines between a case study and a natural experiment are not always clear. In some case, too, it is preferable to treat a case like a natural experiment (Lee, 1989).

The “case” in this research report is design oriented: we aimed to create both a theory based and data driven intervention that would solve a real world problem. Design based research seeks generic solutions to field problems; interventions from which these generic solutions are derived often take the form of a case study (Van Aken & Andriessen, 2012). In this case study, this leads to different kinds

of interventions: (a) the intended game, which has not been realized and (b) the creation and testing of different kinds of assignments, which have been realized. The case to be discussed and analyzed is (a) the design process which led to an understanding of playfulness (in spite of the fact that the actual game at this point did not exist) and (b) within this process, the three separate years that are treated as interventions within the broader perspective to establish (a).

The upcoming section discusses what specific question related to playfulness goes where and what method is used to answer it. The sections after this (2.3.2 and on) discuss the use of these methods and their specific issues regarding validity and reliability in more detail.

Although it is customary to discuss the theoretical framework before discussing the methodology, in this study the methods are discussed first, since a concurrent literature review was part of the iterations in the research cycle itself (cf. Weber, 2012). This is due to the exploratory nature of the project and its design approach - the iterations in the process of designing the educational material included an ongoing exploration of literature to help us understand the outcomes of one year and have these theoretical findings inform the changes for the next year.

## 2.1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS: ENABLING AND CONSTRAINING CONDITIONS OF PLAYFULNESS

Given the dual nature of design based research, the main question of this thesis is twofold:

1. What are the constraining and enabling conditions of playfulness in young adults in higher education?
2. How do we design educational material that fosters or promotes playful skills in this group?

Figure 5 shows the “arrangement” of the research design.<sup>6</sup> It serves as a map containing the different layers of which the project as a whole consists. The main question, concerning the enabling and constraining conditions, cover the case study as a whole. It will be

based both on the answers derived from the literature review and from the research data generated for this project. The case study goes hand in hand with the participatory game design, in the sense that the case study as a whole is a reconstruction of the design process – taken as a case including the theoretical, empirical and design questions. The questions belonging to each section are listed below the chart.

*Systematic literature review*

- What is playfulness?
- In what way is playfulness different from play?
- What factors are known to influence playfulness, specifically in adults and adolescents?

*Empirical study: directed content analysis:*

*Problem driven:*

- What do students perceive as constraining or enabling conditions for playfulness?
- How do students accomplish a playful stance?
- What strategies do they adopt to become playful?

*Data driven:*

- What themes emerge spontaneously in students' writing?
- How do students reflect on their own actions?

The literature review informed the design decisions in the creation of the educational material. The empirical part establishes evaluative answers to the design questions: what worked and what didn't work?

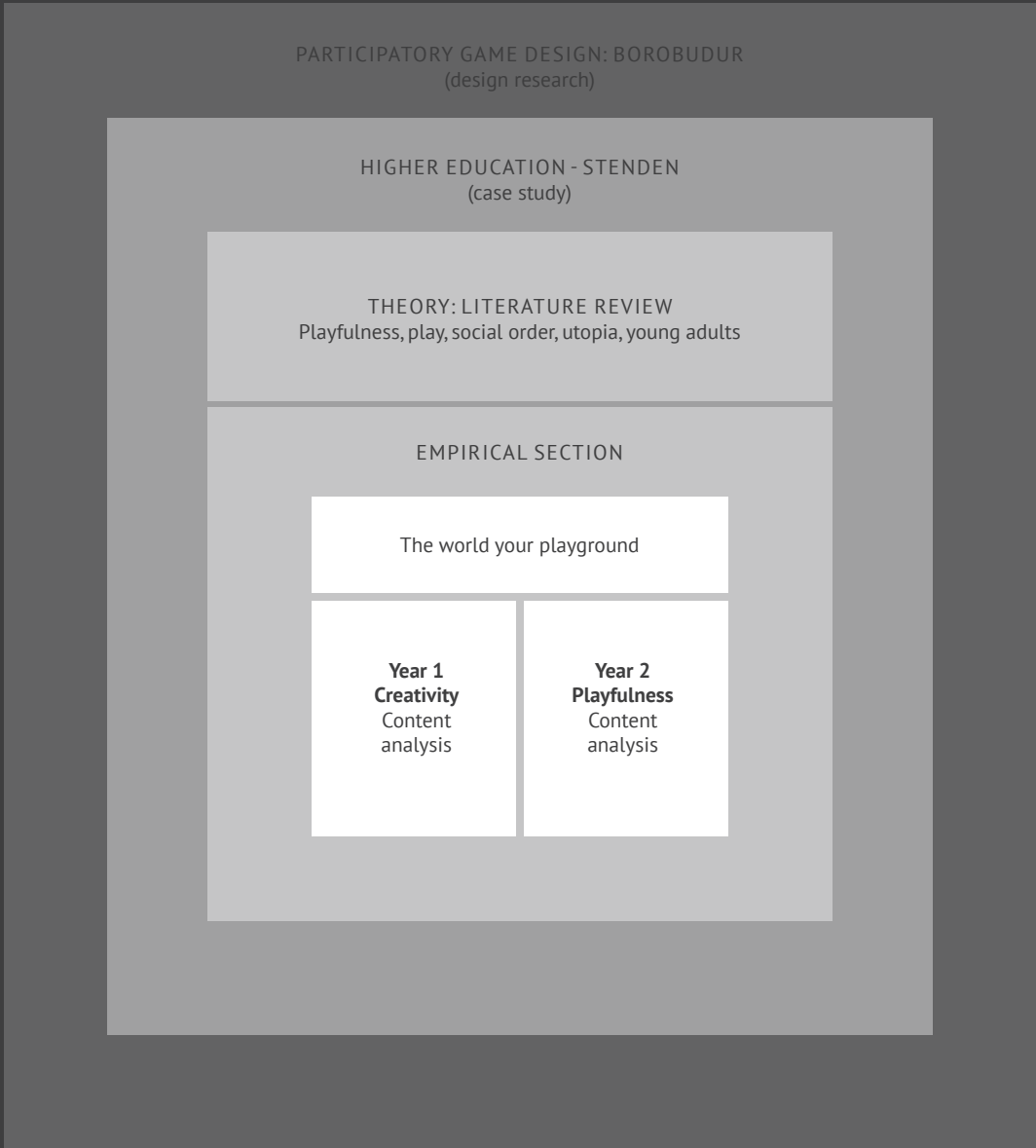


Figure 5. Overview of the methods in relation to different parts of the project

## 2.2 MAIN METHOD: PARTICIPATORY GAME DESIGN AS DESIGN BASED RESEARCH

The process of designing educational material together with students can on the one hand be considered a form of *applied* design research, in the sense that it seeks a specific solution for a specific situation based on generic theoretical insights (Van Aken & Andriessen, 2012) regarding the construction of educational material as can be found in different handbooks (e.g. Moust & Schmidt, 1998; Moust, Bouhuijs & Schmidt, 2001; Oost, 2008c; Woolfolk, 2004). If the newly created assignment shows up in evaluations as meeting the educational needs, there is no need to write a thesis about this: it is just part of the primary process of education and its Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle.

On another level, the creation of the assignments is a form of design oriented *scientific* research because it seeks generic knowledge and design principles for solving generic problems, and asks: what are the mechanisms behind playfulness? <sup>7</sup>

The defining characteristics of design research are:

- It is driven by a wish to solve field problems and not pure knowledge issues. It is not primarily concerned with “truth” but with improvement, and
- it looks from the perspective of the player and does not make use of the perspective of the disinterested observer.

Table 1. Characteristics of design research as a research method (derived from Van Aken & Andriessen, 2012)

	Design Research – <i>does it work?</i>	Fundamental Research – <i>Is it so?</i>
Problem type	Field problem	Knowledge problem
Focus	Improvement	Truth
Perspective	Player/practitioner	Disinterested observer
Orientation	Problem solving	Description and Explanation
Validity assessment	Pragmatic	Epistemological

The answer to the design part of the main question helps to better understand playfulness and with that, aims to contribute to what is called the knowledge stream of design research (cf. Van Aken, 2005; 2012). It also contributes to the development of design principles in creating educational material to invoke playfulness and in that sense contributes to the *practice stream* (cf. Andriessen, 2007). These streams can sometimes be at odds with one another, depending on the actual situation a researcher is in; the means available to perform the research and what the urgency is of solving the practical problem. The researcher takes on three different roles in the research process: researcher, designer, change agent (Akkerman, Bronkhorst & Zitter, 2012).

A more detailed reconstruction of the iterations in the process is discussed in [section 2.5](#). The following graph briefly connects the research design to the process in which theory and practice intersect. The starting point of these iterations was in the academic year 2007, when students had to write a research essay on the different academic fields that are part of their future profession as managers. This assignment was considered boring and irrelevant by students, and their performance in the assignment was poor (CHN, moduul-evaluatie 2007). When the assignment was redesigned, a small group of students was invited to come up with a new version of the assignment. They were given the learning goals for the original assignment and were asked to come up with a way to still meet these goals, but find a more mediated approach to it. This approach had to be less text oriented, and more media oriented.

In 2008, two goals came together: the wish to design a philosophical game and the need to revise the research assignment. The new assignment was first commissioned in 2008, when its the output was used to draft the Ph.D. research proposal that underlies

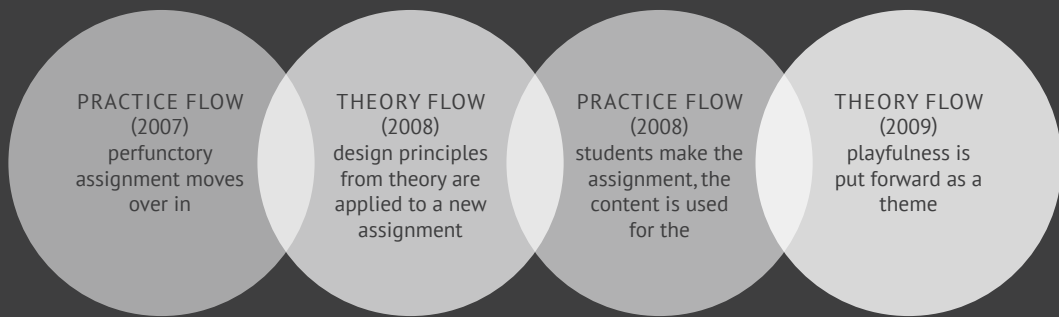


Figure 6. Movements from practice flow to theory flow in different years

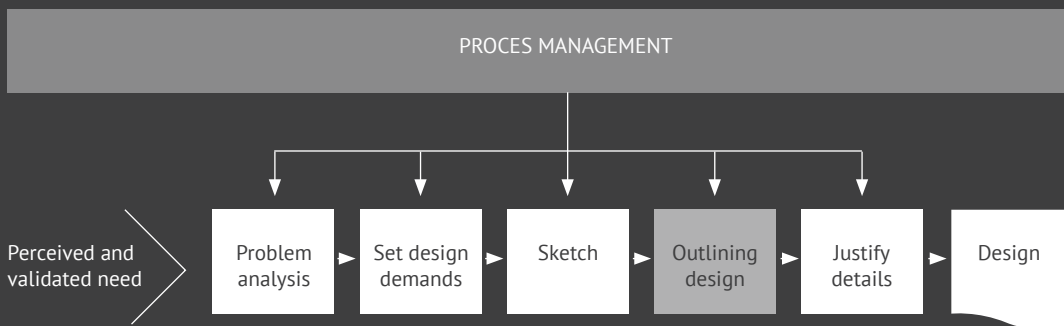


Figure 7. Phases in Design Based Research  
(Translated and adapted from Van Aken (2012, p. 47).

this thesis. In 2009, the purposes of the game (to be designed) and the assignment (to be revised), became more clearly formulated. The design of the game serves two purposes - 1) to invite playfulness in students and at the same time 2) to better understand how it works by turning the game itself into a research tool. Games can both be the result of a research process as well as an instrument for research itself (cf. De Caluwé, Hofstede & Peters, 2008). Although the game itself, as the final intervention to test, has not been realized, different small-scale interventions have taken place and have been evaluated.

## 2.2.1 THE DESIGN PROCESS IN GENERAL AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The design process itself, at least from a linear perspective, is directed along the following steps: 1) problem analysis ([section 2.3](#)), 2) formulating design demands, 3) first drafts, 4) general outline, 5) justification, 6) actual design (examples of the assignments can be found in appendix [1](#), [2](#) and [9](#)).

The following elements fall under the heading of “design demands”:

1. Functional demands – what should the design be able to do, contribute or provide?
2. User demands – what does the intended user want to see?
3. Conditions – what are non-negotiable elements of the intended design?
4. Design limitations – limitations set upon all possible design in advance of the process

In the example of a fridge (Van Aken, 2012)	Applied to a design for a playful learning environment	Applied to the development of the TWYP assignment
1 Size of the cooling space, temperature interval	An engaging environment that induces playfulness (and a sense of wonder) in the player while allowing space for reflection on a range of topics from moral philosophy, psychology and the sociology of knowledge	Invite reflection on the construction of ordinary life within a time frame of approx. 17 hours
2 Must be easy to defrost	Must be easy to engage with, connect to players' interests and affinities	A manageable assignment that can be executed within the time frame of the module and in a way that's motivating for students to engage with
3 Needs to be 220 volts	Installation space on platform to be used, availability when not in school	Grading caesura at 5.5 mark
4 Make use of already existing compressors	Game should be suitable for multiple players Can be played within three consecutive years without becoming 'old'	Has to fit within the content of the module

Table 2. Illustration and Application of Design Demands, derived from Van Aken (2012).

Additionally, these demands themselves have their own specifications, to wit: simplicity, completeness, consistency, controllable, recent, realizable, clear (non-polysemic), binding, and verifiable (Van Aken, 2012, p. 45-46).

Specification	Playful Learning Environment	Research assignment The World Your Playground
Simplicity	Yes	No
Completeness	No	Yes
Consistency	Yes	No
Controllable	No, not yet	Yes
Recent	Yes	No longer in curriculum
Realizable	Pending funding and programming	Yes, 2008 2009
Clear (non-polysemic)	Ambiguity is part of the design	Students differ in opinion
Binding	No, not yet	Yes, mandatory
Verifiable	No, not yet	Yes

Yes: the requirement was met according to the stakeholders and parties involved in the design process  
No: the requirement was not met or evaluations of in between processed proved otherwise.

Table 3. Application of design demands to both the game concept and the assignment

## 2.2.2 DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR GAMES AND PLAYFULNESS

Design principles can be derived from so-called domain-independent design theory (Van Aken, 2012), as discussed in the section above. They can also be derived from additional sources more specific to the topic being studied. For this study, that means it is useful to look into design principles for games, education, online worlds and playful experiences.

We have made use of publications in the field of game design, such as Salen & Zimmerman (2004) and Bjork & Holopainen (2005). Game design theory is suitable, not just because of the game to be developed, but also because of its close connection to play and playfulness. At the same time, we realized later on in the process that playing a game to establish playfulness would be tautologous. We chose to use the term “playful learning environment” over “game,” as the latter might create the wrong expectations.

From an educational perspective, we used Gergen, Schrader & Gergen’s *Constructing Worlds Together* (2009). This is a general introduction to social constructivism for students in higher education. We used it to see how we could incorporate the notion of the social construction of reality into the assignments. This work introduces excerpts of several seminal texts by authors in the field, such as Goffman (1974) and Garfinkel (1967). Copies were ordered for all participants of the design group and were browsed for themes we would then try to make “playable” (cf. Kücklich, 2004). We also consulted more specialized literature on simulation gaming (e.g. Duke, 1973; Duke, Geurts & Vermeulen, 2007) to determine the possibility of the transfer of skills from the game world to students’ real lives. Moreover, we studied literature on “entertainment-education” (EE) (e.g. Singhal & Rogers, 1990; Bouman, 1999; Wang & Singhal, 2009) used it for pointers, ethical guidelines, and (the prevention of) common mistakes.

Entertainment Education is “a theory-based communication strategy for purposefully embedding educational and social issues in the creation, production, processing, and dissemination process of an entertainment program, in order to achieve desired individual, community, institutional, and societal changes among the intended media user populations” (Wang & Singhal, 2009, p. 272 - 273).

Design strategies in entertainment-education include thorough analysis of the intended target group and involvement of the audience in the pre-testing of concepts and pilots. This generates a fit that is as close as possible with the intended audience. In recent years, an increase in participation in the design process itself has become more occurring, especially in the field of interactive media and what is called “transmedial storytelling” (Wang & Singhal, 2009; Singhal, Wang & Rogers, 2012).

The game design process is at odds with the EE strategy because the strategy is usually designed for people who are not actively enrolled in a course of some kind, to intentionally contribute to their own knowledge and skills: by creating a learning opportunity in an already fun and engaging moment, the strategy aims to increase people’s capacities to better their own lives and those of others. There is obviously an ethical dimension to this pro-social approach, as there is a risk that it is decided top down what is good for the audience (Brown & Singhal, 1993, Bouman & Brown, 2010). This criticism is partly countered by the active involvement of the target group. In addition, although the EE strategy for social change (Singhal, 2004) is generally geared towards groups in society that are less fortunate, it does not preclude use of the strategy for relatively privileged groups like students in higher education.

We also applied publications in the field of Human Computer Interaction were also applied (Gaver, 2002; Costello & Edmunds, 2007, Korhonen, Montola & Arrasvuori, 2009). These were applied at a later stage in the design process, however, because at the time part of the field was being done (2007 - 2009), these frameworks (e.g. the playful experience framework [PLEX]) had not yet been published. Since these frameworks are specifically about playfulness, they will be addressed below in more detail. The difficulty with designing for playfulness as a (learning) effect (more difficult than other topics, such as math and similar to topics like art appreciation) is that it will be hard to establish whether someone has actually become more playful, as it is hard to define what playfulness is at all (let alone predict what specific playful behavior a person might exhibit!).

Gaver (2002) wonders how we can “invent and develop systems that legitimize wonder, even encourage it? How do we encourage people to meander, rather than to accomplish tasks with speed?” (2002, p. 3).

For this, he establishes two guiding principles specifically useful when “Designing for Homo Ludens”:

1. Scientific approaches need to be complemented “by more subjective, idiosyncratic ones,” because “designers need to use their personal experiences as sounding boards for the systems they create” (2002, p. 3). It is of vital importance to engage the intended player in this. “Ambiguous, open-ended forms of engagement can also produce inspiring results” (2002, p.3). It is okay for the methods used to create this engagement, to be ambiguous.
2. The design needs to allow people the space to meddle with the technologies themselves, to appropriate them.<sup>8</sup> People can bring technology “into their own complex life stories” in different ways:
  - a) by creating suggestive media (“design to encourage or impel ludic activity”);
  - b) by employing ambiguity at all phases of design – this “gives space for people to intermesh their own stories with those hinted at by technologies”, or
  - c) pleasure comes before performance, engagement before clarity.

Moreover, game designer Rodriguez (2006) has formulated pointers for playful education and for game design: “serious game designers can enhance the playfulness of education by treating the learning process as an exploratory arena” (p.19). He recommends game designers take a look at the *inherently* “ludic features” of education (2006). With this, he aims to disrupt the current image of education as “not being any fun,” he proposes a “serious rethinking of the essential nature of [teaching’s] methods and subject matter” (p.22). It would also be possible to invite playful learning for the “cultivation of an open, receptive and exploratory frame of mind” (p.20). He stresses that “the purpose of playful learning is not to improve the ‘effectiveness’ of teaching”(p.22) and is critical of the misuse of play: “Playful activities are sometimes co-opted in the service of coercive institutions or functional ends.” We should not so much play in order to learn, but rather “*think of learning as a form of play*” (p. 22, italics in original).

Korhonen et al. (2009) aim to understand the role of playfulness in user experiences. This understanding is meant to enable playful designs that in turn generate playful experiences. They came up with the PLEX framework, an inventory of 20 kinds of playful experiences (see appendix 5 and 6). Although it is not a scientifically validated instrument, they do consider it an aesthetic tool, useful for the purpose of designing playful experiences. (Although they wonder to what extent the 22 categories encompass the diversity of playful experiences: “Are ‘playful experiences’ any more finite than the group of ‘human experiences’?” (2009, p. 283) <sup>9</sup> In this thesis, it has not been used as an aesthetic tool for the design, but it has been used to check what specific kinds of playful experiences the game concept might evoke later on in the process. It has also been used in the data analysis to establish what types of playful articulations students came up with and the extent to which the experiences students describe can be considered playful.

Johansson & Linde (2005) have developed a way to “describe a design process that is exploratory, rather than problem-oriented” (2005, p. 15). A problem-oriented approach can be limiting sometimes, because it focuses on logic and “why” questions, rather than narrative and “how” questions. The playful participatory approach they developed is on the one hand inquiry based and as such empirically grounded, while at the same time it is open-ended and allows for the data collected to *inspire* more than just *inform*. They have established a set of preconditions (“rules of freedom,” p. 11), which enable the “playful collaborative exploration” they seek.

1. The researchers invite the participants to play a game with all the data that was generated. The game rules themselves structure the interaction and create a focus within the group.
2. They have created physical vignettes to refer to fragments of video clips (the data) to explore and refer to.
3. Although it was collected through fieldwork, the meaning of the data is open for interpretation.
4. The rules and the establishment of a theme may at times evoke resistance. At the same time, because of the game rules and the possibility of every member to contribute, power differences are decreased.
5. The facilitator plays an important role in guiding the group back on track once they seem to lose their focus

and in making sure “no single participant can dominate the story” (p.14).

Though we have not made the data analysis into a game itself (as per condition 1), we have created tangible objects to fiddle with during brainstorm sessions, and have actively sought different meanings that could be attributed to the data that was collected over the years. A more detailed reconstruction of the design process, which highlights the enabling and constraining conditions we experienced during the process, can be found in [section 2.5](#).

## 2.2.3 METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS OF DESIGN BASED RESEARCH

Design based research shares many concerns with social sciences research. At the same time, its pragmatic orientation decreases the relevance of some regular concerns, while other concerns increase. The chart below provides a summary of the main concerns and the way in way in which they were addressed in both the game design process and in the creation of the TWYP assignment. Some elements are elaborated upon in more detail in the section that discusses the complementary research methods ([2.4](#)).

One important element that can decrease the reliability of the research is the triple role of the researcher: researcher, designer and change agent (Akkerman, Bronkhorst & Zitter, 2012). Since these roles are united in one person, the final solution may not work, not because of the research, but rather as a result of, for instance, a design flaw. Since the teacher simultaneously has the role of researcher in the process of co-creating/co-designing educational material intended to invoke playfulness, this is difficult to untangle. Personal motives to become a teacher differ from motives to become a researcher. The role of the researcher, while also being the teacher and also - in some way - an advocate for more playfulness can create blind spots in the design of the educational material and can also create imbalances in the equality between participants.

On the one hand, there is an inequality in the amount of knowledge all parties have. Students cannot be expected to study the same amount of literature for their participation in the game design project as the researcher. Moreover, a school situation is never void

of power differences (Schön, 1991). There is risk of the teacher sidestepping students' opinions in certain design choices and phases. It is also possible that the students in the project do not feel comfortable expressing their opinions freely, for risk of assessments in regular school projects that may follow in later years.

Table 4. Application of Quality Criteria for Design Based Research. Translated from Van Burg (2012, p. 13).

Criterion	Strategies to enhance these in design based research	Application in 1) the game design project 2) the iterations of the TWYP assignment
<b>Reliability</b>	Definition: The extent to which the research is stable and consistent over time and between researchers and methods	
<u>Consistency:</u> The extent to which research results are mutually comparable	Replication in different case studies	1) Not applicable – in the sense that we hope the concept of the game itself is 'one of a kind' 2) The assignment was commissioned two years in a row among second year students – this allows for comparison between two years (see <a href="#">2.4.1</a> )
<u>Stability:</u> The extent to which the research results remain stable	Repeated research of a data source	1) Not possible in a direct sense – as a result of a onetime process 2) Interpretation over the data over time has changed as a result of changes in the analytical framework
	Member checks	1) Ongoing conversation with panel 2) Checks by peers (also discussed in <a href="#">2.4.1</a> )
	Intelligibility of research protocols	1 & 2) The history of the process has been documented, including meeting notes. For the content analysis, coding sheets are available for inspection
<b>Validity</b>	Definition: the extent to which the procedures followed make it possible to make valid claims about the research object	
<u>Construct validity:</u> The extent to which the instrument measures the intended "construct".	Provide a chain of evidence in the measurement of the construct	The "validity" of the game as an instrument to invoke playfulness cannot be accounted for at this point. Section <a href="#">2.4.1</a> , <a href="#">4.1.2</a> and <a href="#">4.1.3</a> discuss the specific limitations of the research. Triangulation did not take place, systematic coding did, based on the coding scheme (see appendix 5 and 6). The data was compared with different theoretical positions, as is fitting with an exploratory approach. The results display a variety of possible interpretations, rather than a unified perspective.
<u>Convergent validity:</u> The way in which measurements of the same construct provide the same results	Make use of multiple sources, triangulation Systematic coding	
<u>Discriminant validity:</u> The extent to which measurements of different constructs provide different results	Make use of multiple sources, triangulation Systematic coding	

<p><u>Internal validity:</u> The extent to which there is a real relation between two measured constructs</p>	<p>Logic and consistency of the explanation (following CIMO logic: Context, Intervention, Mechanism, Outcome</p>	<p>1) Context: 2.3 Innovation in Education Intervention: <i>to be tested</i> Mechanism: chapter 3/4 case study – TWYP Outcome: <i>to be tested</i> 2) Context: second year research program Intervention: assignment to approach everyday life in a playful manner Mechanism: chapter 3/4 case study Motivation to do something at all Motivation to do it in a socially meaningful way</p>
<p><u>External validity:</u> The extent to which the results are applicable in a larger group or in different contexts</p>	<p>Determine characteristics on the basis of which generalization is possible</p>	<p>1) Not applicable at this point 2) Not representative for all students in higher education, but somewhat for those in creative industries</p>
	<p>Apply in a different case</p>	<p>The assignment was moved to a first year program</p>
	<p>Expert review</p>	<p>1) Experts in game design reviewed the game concept 2) Experts in methodology, game design and creativity reviewed the assignment</p>
<p><u>Pragmatic validity:</u> The extent to which the research provides guidelines that actually provide the desired outcomes in the application of those guidelines</p>	<p>- Research actions or make use of “think aloud” protocols</p>	<p>1) Not applicable 2) Not applicable</p>
	<p>- Clear design principles</p>	<p>1) See discussion on principles that were used in <a href="#">2.2.2</a> 2) See above</p>
	<p>- Making use of narrative (to convince others)</p>	<p>1) The concept was presented as an adventure story 2) The assignment was created together with students</p>
	<p>- making use of visualizations</p>	<p>1) See <a href="#">appendix 4</a> 2) See <a href="#">appendix 10</a></p>
	<p>- testing the design</p>	<p>1) Concept tests have been done with - Aspiring members of the design group (actively recruited) - General management of M&amp;EM - Team of M&amp;EM - Manager of Computer Engineering - Game designers from research communities Digra and Isaga - Independent design company, actively recruited for creation of a demo</p>

Gaver (2002) mentioned that, along with the need for scientific approaches to design, we need “subjective idiosyncratic ones” to complement them. Akkerman et al. (2012) state: the researcher is both researcher, designer and change agent. In addition, education itself is not a neutral, objective enterprise (Robinson, 2012). It is informed by notions of the kind of society that is worth living in and by ideas of productivity and citizenship. For these reasons, the section on the reconstruction of the design process (2.5) opens with contextual information about the researcher and her position on education. This enables the reader to determine whether she agrees with the position and what that means for the usefulness and trustworthiness of the analysis.

Though design research should strive to be scientifically rigorous, there is a component to the creativity required to come up with solutions to “wicked problems,” which cannot be derived from logic only. The following section frames the topic of innovation in higher education as a wicked problem.

## 2.3 PROBLEM ANALYSIS (2): THE WICKED PROBLEM OF INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This section sketches the background setting from which this study into playfulness originates. [Section 1.2](#) has outlined reasons for studying playfulness. This section analyzes *how* and *why* more space for playfulness would be desirable in higher education and the extent to which this is possible. The quest for innovation as an outcome of the learning processes of students is what Rittel & Webber (1973) might label “a wicked problem.” They use the term “wicked” to designate a meaning close to “malignant,” “vicious,” “tricky,” or “aggressive” (p.160). Wicked problems are the opposite of “tame” problems, which have a clear solution and which can be approached in a linear fashion. Under examples of “tame” problems, they list solving a mathematical problem, dealing with a chemical reaction, and playing a game of chess.

Wicked problems have ten characteristics, one of which is that “there’s no definitive formulation of a wicked problem”. The problem definition and the problem (re)solution are concomitant: “the formulation of a wicked problem is the problem!” (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 161) To connect the idea of wicked problems to the example of Mockus’ Super Citizen: his response to the problem of illegal advertising was a strategically smart response to the problem at hand; there is no way to logically derive “posing as superman” as a solution. Somewhere between the research performed and the solutions suggested, there is an undecided and unpredictable gap that is dependent on circumstances and participants. The moment, however, that posing as Super Citizen becomes a viable (even if partial) solution, the problem definition

has also changed from fighting illegal acts in and of themselves, into engaging citizens in the attempt to minimize these illegal acts by standing up against them. The root of the original problem definition (illegal acts and their perpetrators) is different from the root of the problem definition - and causation - of the problem definition that now becomes possible (engaged citizenship counters and maybe even prevents these acts).

The definition of the problem is inseparable from its potential solution. This seems a-synchronous, but a wicked problem is not defined until there is some sense of direction in which a solution can be sought. As such, this problem analysis is as much the starting point of this thesis as it is an end result.<sup>10</sup>

Policy issues in education are never “tame.” This is due to the multiplicity of stakeholders in education and the impossibility of a neutral approach to education.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, there exists an inherent tension between the goals education and the means through which these goals should be achieved. Students in higher education prepare to become productive employees in organizations. One of the demands placed on students is that they become creative and are capable of creating innovative approaches to today’s problems. But they are part of a school system that has its origins in reasoning that belong to the industrial age (Robinson, 2011).

If we look at recent policy documents regarding education, three general demands can be found:<sup>12</sup>

1. a return to quality as a core concept of teaching,
2. an increase in control over the output of educational institutions, and
3. an increase in innovative and creative output.

The remainder of this section discusses the tension between these demands and characterizes the position of adolescents and young adults in higher education at this moment.

## 2.3.1 QUALITY AS DEDICATION: CAN A PLAYFUL APPROACH TO EDUCATION ALIGN POLICY GOALS?

The document “Kwaliteit als Opdracht” (HBO Raad, 2009) (Quality as dedication: The Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences), expresses the need for teaching students to be creative and innovative so the Netherlands – in time – can achieve a higher ranking in the innovation index (cf. Innometrics, 2011a, 2011b). The indicators of innovativeness that are used in policy documents to compare for instance the Netherlands to other countries in Europe and the world, are measured on a macro-level. The abstraction in these criteria for establishing a country’s innovativeness, however, provides only a few clues as to how (higher) education should be shaped to actually promote creativity. This leaves little room for a hands-on translation to teaching practices: how should a teacher assess a student’s innovativeness, let alone provide a learning space in which innovativeness can be practiced? If we teach conformity, we cannot expect much innovation.

Reports on innovation reference concepts such as “creative destruction” and “fundamental uncertainty” of innovation (Nooteboom & Stam, 2008). There is limited space for “fundamental uncertainty” in higher education. It is output-focused in its organization. Diversity in assessment, teaching methods and teaching styles are continually at risk of being minimized in favor of efficiency and equality. A skill like “problem finding” is at odds with the requirement of efficiency, because it requires introducing open-endedness into a curriculum.<sup>13</sup> But both law and prospective students have a legitimate need to understand in advance what will be offered and how it relates to students’ future prospects and society’s needs. Additionally, schools are required to deliver graduates that are capable of performing their jobs as a beginning professional. The mastery required for developing actual innovations or innovative approaches usually develops when working life has begun (Grauerholz & Main 2013). If the organization of (higher) education is at odds with the open ended, yet structured educational space needed to promote creativity in learning, then how do we “teach for innovation”? (Sawyer, 2006)

As a main thread, the policy document “Kwaliteit als opdracht” states that it is apparent that the quality of education should be

safeguarded on different levels: the quality of and the connection to preparatory education, the *quality of student coaching and guidance*, the quality of the curriculum, of the employees and of the organization (2009; p.5). This resulted in a guiding framework for all parties involved in higher education. As the report puts it:

“Traditional” professions have been traded for more “dynamic” professions, in which it is important to be able to think and act in an interdisciplinary fashion. There is no longer a clear distinction between the development and the execution of tasks. This means institutions of higher education will have to ensure the investigative capacities of students, so they are capable of contributing to innovations in professional practice. Lastly, our society demands responsible professionals capable of accounting for the results of their actions in an international setting (2009; p. 7, 10, *my translation*).

The report further states the need for adaptation on the side of the institutions for higher education. On the one hand, this is because their strong footing in professional practice provides excellent opportunities for applied research (p. 12). On the other hand, because at present, the innovation level of The Netherlands seems to be dropping to the point that it is clear The Netherlands are in no way a leader in innovation: “The Netherlands are one of the Innovation followers. Its innovation performance is just above the EU27 average but the rate of improvement is below that of the EU27” (European Scoreboard 2008, quoted in HBO-Raad 2009, p. 12).

The Scientific Council for Government Policy does not explicitly state a need for more playfulness, but it does state five considerations that would help improve the level of innovation. Some of the building blocks of playfulness are imagination, ideational fluency, and divergence in thinking (Tegano, 1990). These can be helpful in fostering an attitude that - if not capable of innovating - is at least open to innovation.

These five considerations are <sup>14</sup>:

- Innovation is more than science and technology. It includes entrepreneurship, commercialization, marketing, organization, diffusion, and transfer of knowledge.
- Innovation is the development of what does not exist yet (exploration) *and* the application and improvement of what already exists (exploitation). The combination of

the two is the central challenge for innovation policy on all levels.

- The dynamic of exploitation and exploration requires an opening to new branches; new collaborations of and between companies; surprise; unpredictability and challenges.
- Innovation is for a larger part fundamentally insecure. As a result, planning innovation can be limiting (debilitating). It requires the organization of coincidence and the facilitation of creative destruction.
- Diversity is crucial. Innovation requires the appreciation, stimulation and mobilization of diverse, dispersed, local knowledge, ideas and opinions (WRR, 2008, p. 108, my translation).

The requirement for an interdisciplinary approach, the dynamism, the lack of clear distinctions and the investigative approach required for one's future profession, could be supported by a school system that promotes a playful attitude. A playful attitude might also connect well with the current generation of learners altogether.

However, the changes and challenges, both on a policy level and on a generational level, are palpable. Universities of Applied Sciences have agreed to determine a standard for a professional bachelor together. This standard serves as the explication of the core of a Bachelor level education. It entails the following aspects:

[S]tudents will obtain a solid theoretical basis; develop the investigative capacity that enables them to contribute to the development of their field of practice, that they possess enough professional workmanship and that they develop the professional ethics and societal orientation that fits a responsible professional. An international dimension is, of course, a part of each section of this standard (HBO-Raad, 2009, p.16, my translation).

Competency based education – while an important innovation and better suited to the current generation of learners in their time - has tended to neglect the importance of domain related knowledge:

[S]tudents need to have developed enough theoretical baggage to look at their own field critically and creatively. [...] The

association also considers it crucial for BA students to develop their investigative potential leading to reflection, evidence based practice and innovation. (HBO-Raad, 2009, p. 17, my translation).

These developments seem to require another revision of the role of teachers in the facilitation students' problem solving skills.

## 2.3.2 LOOKING FOR TROUBLE: PLAYFULNESS AS PREPARATION FOR A WICKED FUTURE

In recent years, there has been a transition from the attention for playfulness in children to playfulness in adults and adolescents, and – for these latter age groups – from leisure settings to educational, therapeutic and workplace settings (Schaefer & Greenberg, 1997; Guitard et al., 2005; Glynn & Webster, 1992; Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006; Kiefer, 2011). This transfer is connected to the rise of video games and the rise of the academic field of game studies (see Mayra, 2008; Deterding et al, 2011; Deterding, 2013; Boellstorf, 2006; Malaby, 2008; Rodriguez, 2006 as well as the rise of positive psychology (see Seligman et al, 2005 and Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Adolescents and Young Adults face different challenges in education at the moment. For students that are taking part in higher education now, (new) media are no longer part of their leisure time; rather, they are connected to every element of their everyday lives. They bring their laptops with them into the classroom and connect to the Wi-Fi networks, download PowerPoint slides, and photographs the notes on the whiteboard with their digital cameras. Studying without the Internet has become unthinkable (De Mul, 2005; Veen & Vrakking, 2007; Boschma & Groen, 2006). There appears to be a generational gap between teachers that remember a time before the Internet and mobile phones, and students that can hardly imagine what this must have been like. In educational and marketing literature (i.a. Veen & Vrakking, 2007; Boschma & Groen, 2006; Gee, 2005; Mayer, Stegers-Jager & Bekebrede, 2007) we see a quest to better understand the current generation of youthful learners. This generation is labeled in different ways: Generation Einstein, the Gamer Generation, *homo zappiens*, Generation Y. Some argue this generation has a fundamentally different approach to

learning than other generations. The challenge then, as teachers, is to prepare students for *their* future, with only our own past as a reference.

The skills required for dealing with information overload are different from those needed 15 years ago, because the overload is of a different nature. Since students are in higher education, chances are their future tasks consist in part of policy making and problem solving, facilitating the jobs of others based on a set of pre-defined goals. But the problems they will encounter will be practical and multi-layered, and will involve the interests of many different stakeholders. These problems are likely to be “wicked problems” (Rittel & Webber 1973). Moreover, the goals, which are often difficult to determine in creative industries, will not be preset. As organizational researchers Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) indicate, it is not at all clear where exactly goal orientation begins:

To work, one must have a purpose; to do creative work, one must move freely and erratically so as to discover and understand what is the purpose. From this point of view, the very purpose of work is often invented in play (Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006, p.115).

To find purpose – also known as “goal seeking” (cf. March, 1973), a “subjunctive” or “as-if” mode is often useful. March describes playfulness as

the deliberate, temporary relaxation of rules in order to explore the possibilities of alternative rules. When we are playful, we challenge the necessity of consistency. [...] Playfulness allows experimentation. At the same time, it acknowledges reason (1973, p. 261).

He juxtaposes “the theories of childhood” with “the theory of adulthood” and notices how odd our common approach to children is: we expect them to change over time and think we need to help them develop more interesting wants. As adults however, “we emphasize choices as a consequence of our intentions”, but we do not tend to believe that goals may develop over time into a more interesting direction, because we assume our mature goals to be correct. However: “values develop through experience” (1973, p.258). This is an ongoing process. Adults should look at themselves more in the way they look at children. We never become “finished adults”,

although we act based on a model that suggests we are.

The “goal seeking” that March mentions is in part a skill, one for which a playful approach may be particularly suitable. March is critical of three characteristics of today’s culture, which increases dogmatic approaches to problem solving. These are: the pre-existence of purpose, the necessity of consistency and the primacy of rationality. In order to create more opportunities for the development of (more) interesting goals, we need a “technology of foolishness,” in which playfulness is one of the required components. This means we should treat “goals as hypotheses,” “intuition as real,” “hypocrisy as a transition,” “memory as an enemy,” and “experience as a theory” (1973, p 262 - 263).

He does not suggest these should be permanent approaches, or that all rationality should be discarded. He calls this kind of foolishness “sensible,” because he considers play to be an “instrument of intelligence.” It is supposed to complement reason, even if reason and foolishness are often “behavioral competitors” (p. 261). His main concern is the creation of a space in which exploring more interesting goals is not just allowed, but also desirable. Recently, Statler et al. (2011) have explored this thought further in their work on serious play. They describe this as a practice of paradox, specifically a “paradox of intentionality.” This occurs “when actors engage when actors engage deliberately in a fun, intrinsically motivating activity as a means to achieve a serious, extrinsically motivated work objective” (2011, p. 236).

Although there is no generic way to “teach creativity” (cf. Robinson, 2011; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 1999), given how playfulness is connected to creativity and innovation, students might benefit from new, playful ways of learning to reflect on their surroundings. And given the ambiguity they will come across in their future progressions, learning to actively deal with paradoxes (Beech, Burns, De Caestecker, MacIntosh & MacLean (2004) may be a useful way to learn to deal with “wicked problems.” Because of all the conflicting interests between stakeholders, the solving of wicked problems is better described with the term “resolutions,” rather than solution. From a design research perspective then, inviting playfulness constitutes one way to resolve the ambiguities of wicked problems. As such, it is one possible generic solution that can be tested: can we learn to be playful?

## 2.4 COMPLEMENTARY METHODS: CASE STUDY, LITERATURE REVIEW AND DIRECTED CONTENT ANALYSIS

The previous section discussed the main approach taken in this research project and the resulting problem analysis from which the design process took its course. This section discusses the complementary methods used to support the design process and substantiate the design decisions.

### 2.4.1 CASE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN – THE USE OF A CASE AS A NATURAL EXPERIMENT

The starting point of the research reconstructed and reported in this thesis was the design and evaluation of a school assignment for students in higher education: The World Your Playground. The case study is comprised of the data collected over the course of two academic years. Van Aken & Andriessen (2012) define “case study” relatively simple: “[a] description of an existing practical situation in which a topic is researched” (2012, p. 3, my translation). The “existing practical situation” was a second year research course in Media & Entertainment Management, at Stenden University in Leeuwarden. The topic under study is that of playfulness, specifically the way students construct and articulate playful ideas and how they reflect on them.

To create a situation – what is known as “an intervention” in design research terminology – that would generate relevant data for analysis of playful behavior of students, an assignment was

developed that could be relevant both to the students' learning experience as well as the research project. Studies into creativity (e.g. Tegano, 1990; Zenasni, Besançon & Lubart, 2008) often commission a brief, creative assignment and connect its output to the results of different questionnaires that measure, among other things intelligence, self reported creativity, playfulness, and tolerance of ambiguity (cf. Proyer, 2011, Proyer & Ruch, 2011). This case study follows this design, which means that an assignment is commissioned and analyzed along the lines of what is already known about playfulness, from the perspectives of psychology (playfulness as a character trait), sociology (playfulness as an interpersonal phenomenon) and culture.

The educational goal of the assignment was to have students explore <sup>15</sup> the way the world around us is constructed. The assignment mentions the approach common to action research: one way to get to know the world is by intervening in it (Delnooz, 1998, 2008). In the assignment this was indicated with the following:

The world often presents itself to you in a self-evident manner. You wake up in the morning and assume the world you left behind while going to sleep, will be the same world you wake up to. You follow a common ritual and rarely stop to think that out of nowhere, you could do something entirely different today.

The core of what the students had to do in the assignment was the same in both years: "to do something different", "create a surprise" and "turn things upside down." But in the first year, the focus was on creativity and in the second, it was on playfulness. Students were instructed to follow three steps in the assignment: one, reflecting on a given topic in a brief essay; two, find inspiring examples that illustrate this topic for them and three, come up with their own initiatives to create a similar surprise.

The positions students take are analyzed primarily as philosophical stances, which calls for an analysis of their position and argumentation. The analysis creates an understanding of the constraining and enabling conditions. Prior studies into playfulness have made use of questionnaires (Glynn & Webster, 1992; Barnett, 1990, 2007), observation (Lieberman, 1977; Skard & Bundy, 2008), and interviews and panel conversations (Zenasni, Besançon &

Lubart, 2008, Staempfli, 2007). By developing the school assignment and repeating it in different forms, tweaking certain formulations, the case took on the form of a natural experiment (cf. Lee, 1989).

This way, it is an instrumental, exploratory case study. Instrumental, because the case described seeks to understand *not the situation itself*, but a phenomenon that can be witnessed via the situation (Swanborn, 1996/2003). Swanborn (2003) distinguishes between the general phenomenon to be studied and the actual “carrier” of this phenomenon. Although in some instances, the choice for a carrier is not freely at the disposal of the researcher, pragmatic choices should not interfere with the phenomenon itself being chosen primarily (p. 18). In this case study, the role of teacher and researcher go hand-in-hand, which is not uncommon in educational design research (Zitter, 2012).

Yin (2008) provides a technical definition of case studies in two layers:

- A case study is an empirical inquiry that
- investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when
  - the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (2008, Kindle Locations 635-638).

The assignment the students do has been designed for both educational and research purposes. In that sense, the investigator has a reasonable amount of control over “actual behavioral events” (Yin, 2008, Kindle Location 432/433), which leans more toward the direction of an experiment than a case study. The investigator has no control over the actions students will actually take in completing the assignment, but by design and function has some control over the fact that they will participate in the assignment. The heading “design based research” does allow for a form that is something in between a case study and an experiment. In addition, it is possible to treat case studies as “natural experiments,” thereby establishing a “rapprochement, in which the subjectivist and objectivist schools of thought are no longer seen as necessarily opposed and incompatible” (Lee, 1989; p. 119).

Common oppositions in the objectivist and subjectivist school of thought are:

Oppositions		Refer to
Objectivist	Subjectivist	the question whether it is true for everyone or true for me
Nomothetic	Idiographic	the types of statement: general (true) vs. particular (contingent)
Quantitative	Qualitative	the nature of data and the kinds of statements that can be derived from them: can they be formulated into logical or mathematical form (Lee, 1989, p. 120)
Outsider	Insider	the position of the researcher in relation to the object of study (whether it is an organization or a subculture).

Table 5. Common oppositions in the objectivist and subjectivist schools (derived from Lee (1989, p. 120).

Because of the difficulty in establishing the validity or reliability of case studies, they do not have a great reputation (cf. Swanborn, 2005, Yin, 2008; Flyvbjerg, 2005). But they can be important strategies, specifically in education (Firestone, 1993). Although sample-to-population generalization is not possible in a case study, theoretical generalization *is* possible, as is case-to-case transfer (Firestone, 1993). Both Firestone (1993) and Flyvbjerg (2005) mention the importance of case studies as instruments for learning.

Flyvbjerg (2005) refers to the general role that case studies play in human learning writ large. He mentions two arguments for this:

1. The case study produces the type of context-dependent knowledge which research on learning shows to be necessary to allow people to develop from rule-based beginners to virtuoso experts.
2. In the study of human affairs, there appears to exist only context-dependent knowledge, which thus presently rules out the possibility of epistemic theoretical construction (Flyvbjerg, 2005, p. 221).<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, according to Firestone (1993) there are several scholarly traditions, such as law or medicine, in which cases help transfer learning. The responsibility for this process however, lies not in the hands of the researcher but in the hands of the reader. Judges use four criteria to determine whether a specific case can be seen as a precedent for other cases: 1) the material facts; 2) appropriateness; 3) the reason for the decision and 4) the generality of the decision. Teachers could use these criteria as well, in establishing how they want to use the results of one case study for their own practice.

The case study approach can be seen as a natural experiment (Lee, 1989). This is because of the possibility to both intervene in the school situation and to evaluate the outcome: the situation, to some extent, allows the possibility for controlled observation. In addition, *if* the case study is conducted as a natural experiment, Lee claims it is possible to make controlled observations. That is to say, if there are enough observations to observe conditions under which a specific phenomenon does or does not occur, it is possible to use the data for checks on these occurrences. Given the participation of nearly all second year students, it is possible to make comparisons (see also: [2.4.3.3](#)).

Lee stresses the importance of looking at experiments in an alternate way: although laboratory experiments are the “ideal form of experimentation” (p.134), this does not invalidate all other forms of experimentation per se. It is less convenient perhaps, but not invalid. This inconvenience also categorizes disciplines such as “astronomy, geology, human biology, and evolution” (1989, p. 134). When the requirement for controlled observation is met, the other three requirements of the natural science model can also be met: (b) replicability, (c) generalizability and (d) qualitative analysis. These are discussed in more detail below, along the discussion of these criteria in case studies in general.

### 2.4.1.1 METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS OF CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Lee (1989) mentions four methodological concerns of the natural science model that according to him can be applied to case study research as well.<sup>17</sup> These four concerns are 1) how the case researcher would be able to make controlled observations; 2) how the case researcher would allow for replicability; 3) how the case researcher allows for generalizability and 4) qualitative data does not lend itself to logical or mathematical propositions that can be tested.

This first concern has been partially met in this study, by repeating the same assignment – with slight alterations – in a second year. Even though the individual students were different, we were curious to see whether there were differences between the cohorts. Both the overall curriculum and the research assignment were practically

the same, as was the team of teachers. The main variables that were altered in these years were related to the description of the assignment.

The fourth concern is fully met in this thesis. The data generated 270 photos, but the interpretation of these has not been cast in a hypothesis or mathematical formula. Given the exploratory nature, hypothesis generation as a result of the analysis is more likely to occur to hypothesis testing.

The second and third concern are the same as Yin (2008) mentions in his discussion of the four tests that all methods in the social sciences need to subject themselves to, in order to establish whether or not a research design is useful. The first one he mentions is construct validity: “identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied.” The ambiguity of play and playfulness immediately create difficulty with construct validity: there is no agreed upon operational definition of playfulness (cf. Deterding et al., 2011; Greenberg & Schaefer, 1997, Glynn & Webster, 1992, 1993).

The second criterion Yin mentions is that of internal validity: “Seeking to establish a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships.” These are most important for explanatory and causal studies but less so in descriptive or exploratory studies. Even though this study is *exploratory* in its outset – trying to see what might work in invoking playfulness – *causation is implied* in the use of the notion of enabling and constraining conditions.

The third criterion is that of external validity: “defining the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalized.” Although the study has been performed among a group of students in higher education, the results of the study will be highly contextual. This raises concerns for the extent to which this group of students is different from other groups of students. Another group of students from another training program are likely to come up with completely different kinds of articulations of playfulness, in terms of content. However, the reflection on the process itself – the generation of ideas – may be similar nonetheless. The approaches students use to generate a playful stance, may differ per group, but at the same time,

may contain recurring patterns that are the same in other groups.

This leads to the fourth criterion, that of reliability. This entails “demonstrating that the operations of a study – such as the data collection procedures – can be repeated, with the same results.” As Lee (1989) states, “events which the case researcher observes to unfold in their natural, organizational setting tend to be unique and non-recurrent (1989, p. 121). The nature of education is to some extent cyclic. Although the students in the different years have made their own unique assignments, the situation itself is not unique, because it is repeated every college year. And as Lee says: “The underlying objective is to replicate a particular experiment’s finding [...], not necessarily the experiment itself” (p. 134). The situation is not entirely natural, in the sense that the triple role of researcher, designer and change agent allows for a natural experiment: it has been possible to not just observe the natural situation, but to intervene in it. Additionally, it would be possible to repeat the experiment, should a teacher want to use the assignment in a different setting.

Yin (2008) also mentions different strategies case study researchers can apply to ensure their data and their analysis are as valid as is possible within a case study. The chart below outlines these strategies and summarizes how these were applied. He distinguishes six types of documents: “documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical artifacts” (Yin, 2008, loc. 2055). These documents are briefly characterized below:

*Table 6. Application of Yin's (2008) strategies for enhancing validity and reliability*

<b>TESTS</b>	<b>Case study tactic &amp; phase of the research</b>	<b>Application in this thesis</b>
Construct validity	Use multiple sources of evidence (during data collection)	Educational policy documents, (formal) self management conversations with students, panel meetings with the design group, consultations with game designers, feedback from students on assignments, team meetings, module evaluations (survey and open questions).
	Establish chain of evidence <sup>18</sup> (during data collection)	The assignments were rewritten each year, to match the new questions based on the data of the year before
	Have key informants review draft of case study report (composition)	Students have read and commented on the papers written on the pilots
Internal validity	Do pattern matching	Recurring themes were analyzed
	<i>All during data analysis</i> Do explanation building	Different theoretical approaches were used to interpret the differences in expressions
	Address rival explanations	Explorative, seeking explanations at all
External validity	Use logic models	No formal models were used
	Use theory in single-case studies (during research design)	Theoretical reviews have been a continuous part of the research process
	Use replication logic in multiple case studies (during research design)	The assignment was repeated in another academic year
Reliability	Use case study protocol	Not applicable, as the case was determined in advance by the design research approach
<i>All during data collection</i>	Develop case study database	Developed (appendix 3)

Now that the overall framework of both the design based research approach and the case study approach has been formulated, structured literature review (2.4.2) and directed content analysis (2.4.3) will be discussed.

## 2.4.2 LITERATURE REVIEW – THEORETICAL EXPLORATION OF PLAYFULNESS ACROSS DISCIPLINES

The literature review is both exploratory and systematic. Playfulness is regarded as a sensitizing concept, not a definitive one. Sensitizing concepts give

the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look. (Blumer, 1954, p.7)

Empirical research in the social sciences in most cases is preceded by a literature review. This is also the case in design based research.

In design based research, preference is given to “systematic” literature review over “regular” literature review (Weber, 2012). A regular review is said to often be a subjective approach to the topic that is being studied. Often, in these reviews, the criteria of validity, reliability, relevance, and completeness are assumed but not addressed (Weber, 2012, p. 177). If these are properly addressed, chances of a delay between the research performed and the design solution to be implemented are diminished.

A systematic review needs to meet the following criteria:

1. a clear purpose of the goal of the literature review;
2. a thorough search of relevant existing literature;
3. the explication of the selection criteria, and
4. a critical evaluation of the primary studies and an assessment of the extent to which they can be reproduced when it comes to relevance, selectiveness and methodological soundness.

Reflection on these criteria is noted in the upcoming section and the literature review itself. This current section discusses the explication of the selection criteria.

### 2.4.2.1 THE LITERATURE REVIEW AS EXPLORATION: “THE AESTHETIC” AS A DESIGN PROBLEM

The literature review is a reconstruction of a back and forth review of documents that took place over the course of three years. It started out with general theory on educational game design and serious games, then merged into a review of playfulness and examples of playfulness. This part took place in collaboration with students, where we looked for the most applicable ideas that we could use in our own game design. This included newspaper clippings, articles students came up with themselves, and references found in assignments that students had made in previous years. These reviews did not serve a systematic function of developing an overview of the field of the study of playfulness, but rather were used to inspire brainstorm sessions and meetings in which we would design the game further (cf. Lockwood, 2010).

On the one hand, design research – much like “regular” social science – demands a rigorous process of problem analysis and its connection to the design that needs to be implemented. At the same time, several authors affirm there is such a thing as a “creative gap” (Van Aken, 2012; Rittel & Webber, 1973; March, 1973). This justifies the choice for not only scholarly (valid and factual) literature, but also for the addition of resources that are inspirational (cf. Gaver, Dunne, & Pacenti, 1990; Johansson & Linde, 2005). Especially in the design of games and playful artifacts, the need for an aesthetic (and hedonic [cf. Korhonen, Montola & Arrasvuori, 2009]) approach alongside the problem solving approach can truly make the difference in functionality and likability.

Some conceptualize “the aesthetic” as a design problem with its own demands, in the sense that – along functionality – an aesthetic approach fills a need for beauty and as such can be defined as a problem on the ground of its current lack of beauty (Oost, 2008b). Moreover, the process of learning itself can be conceptualized as a process not just of functionality or personal achievement, but also of art and beauty. As Alexander (2003) states: “If art can be conceived as a form of cognitive inquiry in addition to affective expression, then the appreciation and assessment of education as art requires not merely a new research paradigm or an alternative epistemology. Rather, it entails a

reshuffling of our very conception of the relations between science, art, and ethics” (2003, p.2).

In this manner, we have used different resources that students themselves proposed, to see to what extent we could use these in the process of the game design. Resources used for these explorations have been documented in the Electronic Learning Environment Blackboard. Some of the participants in the design group have also written their BA thesis, analyzing both the literature and sources that other students had collected.

### 2.4.2.2 SYSTEMATIC REVIEW: MAKING SURE WE DON'T MISS ANYTHING

Aside from the exploratory review that took place off and on over the course of three years, a more systematic approach to the literature was also taken. A brief first exploration revealed that very few sources pay distinct attention to playfulness, except for the field of psychology. This insight led to the decision to consider three strands of study:

A) Characteristic studies that have “play” as a main theme, from which the meaning of playfulness can be derived through its use (e.g. Huizinga, 1955; Caillois, 1961; Bateson, 1955, Suits, 1973; DeKoven, 1978; Sutton-Smith, 1997, Turner, 1982).

B) Studies that have playfulness specifically as a theme (e.g. Lieberman, 1977; Glynn & Webster, 1992, 1993, Barnett, 1990, 2007; Korhonen et al., 2009; Deterding, 2013).

C) General sociological (Goffman, 1974; Garfinkel, 1967; Giddens, 1984, 1991) and psychological works (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 1999) that are intrinsically connected to the key-terminology surrounding playfulness.

The selection of sources is based on the extent to which these studies *explicitly* discuss a definition of play, the extent to which they *separately* discuss playfulness, and the extent to which they are necessary to understanding the meaning of playfulness in the broader perspective of culture and society of the individual.

This means that studies that take a definition of play for granted are excluded and that studies that discuss the observation of play behavior, but are not concerned with defining play, are also excluded. To name an example, Abt (1981) discusses serious games and as such is relevant for the study of the field of play studies, but although he discusses games, he makes no attempt to come to a definition of play, nor one of playfulness. Other studies, while concerned with the definition of play, do not discuss playfulness in any other way than as an adjective or as the attitude synchronous to play (e.g. Spariosu, 1989). As such, they shed no light on its specific meaning.

Several studies that do not include the topic of play at all can nevertheless be seen as studies in play, depending on how broad one defines the category of play. Huizinga, for instance, claims there is a deeply aesthetic quality to play, from which basically all cultural endeavors spring. Many studies can then be seen as closely related to play. If one lends credence to Huizinga's tenet that culture finds its origin in play, then every study into culture is an advanced study into play. However, this makes it difficult to pay separate attention to play as something somewhat separate from (high) culture. This means that the study of poetry, music or painting is a play study. Few authors however, actually fully accept Huizinga's idea of culture originating in play – see: Krul (2006). These kinds of studies have therefore not been included in the discussion of the literature.

### 2.4.3 DIRECTED QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS: THE “HOW” OF PLAYFULNESS

Both the pilot year (2008) and the second year (2009) in which the assignment was commissioned yielded a total of 110 essays on the topic of creativity and virtual worlds (2008) and playfulness (2009). These documents have been studied through content analysis. Krippendorff (2004) describes content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (p. 18). Contemporary content analysis has three distinguishing characteristics that separate it from an all too referential, literal approach (p. xvii).

1. it is “an empirically grounded method, exploratory in process, and predictive or inferential in intent” (p. xvii). It is about *what texts mean to people*, not what their intrinsic meaning may be.
2. it “transcends traditional notions of symbols, contents, and intents” (p. xviii).
3. it “has been forced to develop a methodology of its own” (p.xx), because of an increase in *complexity of the context* that needs to be analyzed: if analyzing a message alone is no longer sufficient to understand the meaning of a text, a researcher also needs to understand more than just text. Moreover, the large amount of data that is available these days requires different analytical techniques and different scales of collaboration.

He says he disagrees with the general idea that content analysis would be “nothing more than what everyone does when reading a newspaper, except on a larger scale” (p. xxi). Krippendorff would prefer to do away with the term “content analysis,” since it implies the presence of “content” as a package that can be transferred - like a container on a ship - and unpacked elsewhere, ignoring the requirement of systems of meaning and social (power) relations that need to be present before anyone can understand anything about anything at all (2004). He continues: “We must do our best to explicate what we are doing and describe how we derive our judgments, so that others – especially our critics – can replicate our results” (2004, p. xxi). For this thesis, this means it is necessary to not just analyze the assignments themselves, but also to pay attention to the role of the setting in which they were created, the general culture from which their creative expressions derive their meaning, as well as the extent to which other researchers would come up with the same conclusions.

For this case study, students’ responses were analyzed to look for philosophical stances in their perspectives. Inventories were made of the language and concepts students use to make sense of this world. Krippendorff (2004) distinguishes between (a) text-driven, (b) problem-driven and (c) method-driven content analysis. Problem-driven analysis is “motivated by epistemic questions about currently inaccessible phenomena, events or processes that the analysts

believe the texts are able to answer” (p. 340). Text driven analyses “are motivated by the availability of texts rich enough to stimulate the analysts’ interests in them” (p 340). The content analysis in the next section is both text-driven and problem-driven, but not method driven. It is a mixture of two approaches, labeled by Hsieh & Shannon (2005) a “conventional” and a “directed” approach to content analysis.

Hsieh & Shannon (2005) distinguish between “conventional content analysis,” “directed content analysis,” and “summative content analysis”. In conventional content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from the data. It is very similar to the approach of data one can find in grounded theory approaches (cf. Wayne, 2010; Thornberg, 2012). Directed content analysis “starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes” (Hsieh & Shannon, p. 1277). Directed content analysis is used when some research about a specific phenomenon already exists, but “is incomplete or would benefit from further description” (2005, p. 1281, cf. Thornberg, 2012). Directed content analysis is similar to Krippendorff’s notion of problem-driven analysis. Conventional content analysis is similar to text-driven analysis.<sup>19</sup>

The main strength of a directed approach is that “existing theory can be supported and extended” (p. 1283). According to Staempfli (2007), Barnett (2007), Glynn & Webster (1992), Proyer (2011,) and Guitard et al. (2005), there is a need for a deeper understanding of playfulness in adolescents and young adults. Furthermore, this approach explicates the position of the researcher better, in that they do not have a naive perspective. They are already informed about what they might encounter (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, see also: Thornberg, 2012).

#### 2.4.3.1 METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS IN DIRECTED CONTENT ANALYSIS

The challenges Hsieh & Shannon (2005) see in directed content analysis are the following:

1. The use of theory in advance can create bias
2. In the use of interviews, there is a risk of socially desirable answers after probe questions
3. Contextual elements might get lost if too much

focus is put on theory. Not taking into account the context in which the phenomenon occurs can lead to over-exaggeration of the importance of the theoretical construct.

Two ways to meet these challenges are an audit trail and an audit process. (These are similar to member checks; chain of evidence and case study database, see under [2.2.3](#) and [2.4.1.1](#))

Coding can begin with two strategies: 1) For identifying and categorizing all occurrences of the phenomenon under study, coding begins with highlighting all the instances at first sight. Then the specific codes can be properly labeled. 2) One can begin coding with the predetermined codes. The risk of the latter strategy is missing out on new possible codes and categories. The first category, therefore, increases the trustworthiness (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The data from the first two years was analyzed through conventional content analysis. Core themes derived from these analyses have also been used in the coding scheme used to analyze the data

The challenges described above were met in the following manner:

1. We used coding strategy 1 for the first two years of data generation. The data of the first year of data collection (2007-2008) was analyzed via conventional content analysis, using techniques borrowed from ground theory (Wayne, 2010; Thornberg, 2012). In between the first and the second rounds of analysis, we sought theory to help understand better what we found. This part of the analysis is data-driven, in the sense that over the course of the collection of these assignments, recurring themes that were not specifically invited in the assignment popped up as themes that are important in the ordinary lives of these students. These are categorized as: a) the tension between epistemology and ethics, b) Utopian ideas of childhood in relation to creativity, c) anxiety over the pervasiveness of technology in our ordinary lives.
2. We used this assignment, rather than interviews, as a primary source. The approach we took here is more

problem-driven, directed content analysis. The assignment itself, which generated the data, was created specifically to suit the research questions (however preliminary these were in the early stages of the design process). This does not mean social desirable answers will not occur, but it is not likely to be reflective of an invalid answer. In whatever way the students respond to the assignment, it is natural behavior for a school setting. Social desirability may occur as students hope to pass the assignment. This is, however, no less telling of the way playfulness is constructed in a school setting. Wanting to write a good or sufficient report, and in doing so, not offending the teacher, is fairly normal behavior for students.

3. Over the course of the two years, we monitored and documented the context in which we worked. This time frame also allowed us to see several of the students graduate and occasionally ask some follow up questions. There are some limitations to the data (see section below). The potential effect of the assignment should not be overrated: for many students it is just another school assignment among dozens of other pressing issues commanding their attention. As such, these limitations are reflective of the messiness of ordinary, educational life. [Sections 2.3](#) provided a problem analysis. [Section 2.5](#) presents the case story, which lays out the contextual situation for the reader.

### 2.4.3.2 COURSE OF THE CODING PROCESS

The two years in which students participated in the assignment yielded a total of 110 reports containing some 270 creative ideas of their own in which they express their thoughts about creativity, playfulness and social order. Each year had a different theme. In the second year, the theme was inspired by the output of the previous year, the design questions of the research group, and the progress in the development of the game design. The coding was partly based on the literature review and partly on the themes that were put forward as assignment topics. The theme in year one was creativity and virtual worlds, in year two it was playfulness. The coding scheme itself can be found in appendix 5 and 6.

The theory-driven part of the analysis started with browsing the assignments for specific themes that are mentioned in the literature about playfulness (chapter 3). These are: manifest joy, social, physical and cognitive spontaneity, sense of humor and coping as well as the connected traits of tolerance of ambiguity and coping skills. It is moderately redundant to analyze some of these components of playfulness as variables, as they are a given of the assignment. Students are invited to let go of what March calls “behavioral consistency” (1973) and that already creates more opportunity for spontaneity than a “regular” assignment that does not require students to intervene in this world themselves.

On the one hand, part of the spontaneity they either display or in some cases are resistant to is not actually that spontaneous. This makes the assignment itself (“be spontaneous”) paradoxical. On the other hand, it does leave room for spontaneity in the execution of the assignment. The results of the content analysis in the first year revealed an unexpected richness in the topics students discuss in the assignment. Students used the opportunity to not just reflect on the topic requested for the respective year, but also voiced their concerns about this world and their position in it. A thematic analysis of the reports can be found in chapter 4.

### 2.4.3.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA

Students do not have their full focus on learning while they are also in the process of growing up. Students have to perform these kinds of assignments in the course of a full program. Policy document on education sometimes display the very optimistic sense that students know what they are learning while they are learning. But they do not. An indicator for this is the response on a small questionnaire one and a half year later, where hardly any student could really remember the assignment at all ( $n = 35$ ).

Some students did not actually perform the assignment or parts of the assignment. In some instances, they reflected on the creative ideas they generated for the overall assignment in the module (to come up with a concept for an experience in Disney), but paid no attention to the three photos they entered in the report. In many cases, students do not actually write an essay, but they answer the questions as though it were a test or a homework assignment.

Some students divided their work. Often this meant that someone who was good with software like SPSS did the statistical part of the assignment and someone who was generally creative did the TWYP part. As a result, although the assignment was supposed to be done in couples, some were clearly made by only one student, considering some wrote their reports in the first person.

## 2.5 RECONSTRUCTION OF THE DESIGN PROCESS: DESIGNING EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL FOR PLAYFULNESS

This section reconstructs the course of the development of the material we designed to invoke playfulness. It summarizes three years of an ongoing iterative research process in which we attempt(ed) to promote playfulness in an educational setting. It places the assignment “The World Your Playground” (TWYP) in the overall context of the original goal of this research project: to design and test a game or learning environment for philosophical reflection. This exploration consisted of a collaboration with second, third and fourth year students, in which we co-designed educational material for the game’s design and assignments for research, self-management and creativity.

The purpose of this section is to provide an experiential account of the enabling and constraining conditions of playfulness in the process of trying to design for playfulness. Although the content analysis of the design case in this thesis is limited to the output of the assignment “The World Your Playground” and does not address the content of the other assignments, the process of creating and testing all these assignments provided some insights into the institutional constraint of playfulness. This is worth mentioning under the heading of the possibility of case-to-case transfer, for the use of others who may also wish to engage in participatory game design with students and/or find ways to promote playfulness. In a sense, this is already a reflection on the research process as a whole, which would normally be discussed after all the data has been reported. Given the fact that the game design process itself has informed all the different steps taken in the course of the analysis

of the content and the formulation of the research questions, the rest of the thesis can be better put in perspective, if this case or design history is narrated as well. The main thing we, as a research and design team, did not expect, was the amount of resistance we encountered in our attempts to generate playful, paradoxical assignments. Some of the information presented here is anecdotal, but informative of what constrains playfulness.

There exists a tension between the various roles one can occupy in design based research: researcher, designer and change agent. A reconstruction of the design process is based on the distinction between these three roles, the additional role of teacher and the tensions between these roles. This section also includes a researcher's biography, containing a learner biography and a play biography. The section opens with this biography. It then describes a reconstruction of the design process. First, the concept of the game will be presented, followed by a brief timeline of events (see also: appendix 4), along with a description of the way in which we collaborated throughout the process. Important moments in the course of the process are reported and commented upon.

This section will mostly be written in the first person plural, paying tribute to the efforts of the students who participated in this project. Where I think the background information relates not to the group process, but to my professional and personal position, I will use the singular form.

## 2.5.1 RESEARCHER'S PROFESSIONAL BIO: WHO AM I TO QUESTION MYSELF?

An introduction to self management I once browsed said that a good way to get to know yourself better, was by filling out questionnaires: personality and career tests. This annoyed me, as it seemed more about finding the right labels for a future job application than about the exploration of one's identity through experience. Flyvbjerg (2005) calls experience the most important part of all learning: "Context-dependent knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity" (2005, p. 222). In a sense, metaphorically hitting your head a number of times may provide a richer opportunity for reflection than rating your career profile on a scale of 1-10 ranging from "ambitious" to "non-ambitious." This is not to say there is no point to filling out

these kinds of tests: learning your learning style can greatly increase your capacity to direct your own learning process. At the same time, however, these tests run a risk of essentializing certain traits which in turn may be limiting to one's perspective on future choices more than they enhance the possibilities. There seems to be a tendency towards smoothing out individual particularities and "selling yourself", rather than celebrating idiosyncracies and authenticity; mistakes are to be avoided, rather than hailed as great opportunities for reflection (cf. Dweck's [2002] work on mastery oriented approaches to learning which focuses on embracing mistakes as an important means of learning).

Meanwhile, there seems to be no way to straighten out the complexity and messiness of everyday life, so that we can actually be prepared for whatever comes our way, unless we learn how, to quote the Red Hot Chili Peppers, to "complete the motion when you stumble." (In the same song, they say: "Live not a life of imitation.") Books with self-improvement and reflection techniques are useful, but perhaps only to the extent that they help you get out of the way of your self-imposed obstacles. As Loesje puts it: "Who am I to question myself?" Developing the assignments together with students allowed me to share some of my own favorite quotes and perspectives with them, as they shared theirs with me. The Loesje quote became one of the titles in a self-reflection assignment in a course we dubbed "Media & You." A song and video clip by Radiohead that was a student's favorite became one as well (see appendix 9 for a full description of these assignments).

Tenni, Smyth & Boucher (2003) state there is "a growing trend for researchers working in a range of settings to view themselves simultaneously being both a subject (or the subject) and a researcher" (2003, p. 1). Researchers should build on the substantive and methodological knowledge in their domain: the research community establishes what is worth knowing and how to conduct the actual research. Researchers are "expected to be critical and reflexive with regard to the knowledge claims that are done in their field" (Akkermans et al. 2012, p. 264, my translation). This implies the researcher has to aspire to provide a "transparent, substantiated and acceptable research process that led to the research findings" (Akkerman, Bronkhorst & Zitter, p. 264, my translation). This researcher's background aims to provide the reader with background information about herself; "me", as I am writing this.

Autobiographies are to some extent paradoxical (part fact, part fiction, private yet public, with a risk of self delusion and overpraise of research skills, cf. Tenny, Smyth & Boucher, 2003). Yet, they are also common practice in the field of education and nursing and in research strategies such as action research and research traditions in which “the personal experience of the researcher is viewed as being inexorably bound up with data generation activities” (Tenny, Smyth & Boucher, p. 3). The participatory nature of the project as a whole and the triple role of the researcher in design research (researcher, designer, and change agent [Akkerman, Bronkhorst & Zitter, 2012]) require some reference to the reflexive researcher performing the actual research. I will first begin with the additional role I had that is not mentioned in their distinction, which is that of teacher.

In a brief “learning biography” (Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1994; Schratz, 1996)) and brief play history (Journal of Play, 2009) I will reflect on the way I perceive my function as teacher. After this, the design process is reconstructed based on the threefold distinction Akkerman et al. (2012) make in the “cultural-historic activity theory” model.

### 2.5.1.1 LEARNING HISTORY: TWO VALUABLE FAILURES

In my fourth year in high school, I was held back a year. Unsuccessful in catching up on the work I fell behind on as a result of a recurring sinus infection, insufficient grades stacked up. One of our German teachers, when reading everyone’s grade out loud in front of the whole classroom, told me he could not give me a grade. I looked puzzled. He said: “You have not been around much this year, so I have no way of telling whether your knowledge is insufficient or not. You have not been in a position to demonstrate any of it. It would not be right to state your grade is insufficient.” I did not realize the value of this difference at the time, but I keep it in mind often when students come to discuss their troubles getting by in their first year. The system of higher education in the Netherlands is increasingly achievement oriented. In the past twenty years, different demands have been placed on the progress of students, one of them being the so-called “binding recommendation” for the continuation of their studies. The demands that need to be

met increase every year. The distinction between “not meeting the demands while having tried” and “not having been in a position to begin meeting the demands” is helpful in explaining students whether or not it might be meaningful to try to continue and appeal to the decision or whether to call it quits.

In 1995 I received a negative recommendation myself, for starting a master program in journalism. I strongly disagreed with this assessment and decided to give it a go anyway. The assessment itself was not binding at the time, so it was possible to get started regardless. I managed to pass the first module, to the great, but enthusiastic surprise of one of the teachers. I flunked the second. Although they had told me in advance I was not suited for their program, I did not understand what it was they were trying to say. Today, this would be called “unconsciously incompetent.” In hindsight, I realize I really would have made a poor reporter, but I did not see it at the time. One of my disappointments in the course however, was that I felt they only wanted to teach those who were already skilled. (This has also been dubbed the Harvard mystery – is it the quality of the teachers or the quality of the selection of freshmen that creates the excellence?). This experience made me decide I would always try to teach someone who wanted to learn something, no matter how difficult. This has been one of my main motivations to be in education at all: to tell the uneasy ones, who have the odds against them, that I cannot guarantee their success, but that I will help them fail to the best of their ability.

On the one hand, these are embellished anecdotes that I have recounted at prior moments, such as during a course called “Teaching in Higher Education” and for a very short time while preparing to get a teaching license in philosophy. But as Mattingly (1991) says: “Experience is obviously an inconstant teacher; it is perfectly possible to live through something and not learn much as a result” (1991, p. 237). According to her, it is the process of casting experiences into a story that can be told, in which “chart talk” can be transformed or enriched by narrative discourse. “Chart talk” is the term she uses for conversations and meetings in which technical terms for situations and cases are used rather than humans and their emotions and lived experiences. Upon reflection, I learned that these anecdotes, in their essence are connected to the notion of informed or “fair play.” In the first one, the implication of the statement of my German teacher was: “you were not a player, hence

you cannot have lost the game”. In the second, the implication was: “since you do not seem to understand the rules, you should not play.”

This is connected to the enabling and constraining conditions of playfulness, because the constantly tightening demands we need to meet can significantly stand in the way of playfulness and creativity (cf. Kim, 2011). When someone decides to change their curriculum in the course of the first year, they are not applauded for making a better choice for their future. There is little time for meandering, for wondering what might fit. Rather, it seems the demand is to know immediately what you want and make the right choice straight away.

### 2.5.1.2 PLAY HISTORY: TRY TO LEARN SOMETHING, WOULD YOU?

Although it will be a truism to some, wanting to learn something implies you do not know something yet or are not yet capable of doing it. Obvious as this may sound to many, I still tend to forget. I was (almost) in my final year of college as a philosophy major (and flunked journalism student), when there was a – somewhat famous – guest lecturer in the university where I was taking writing classes. I really wanted to write a piece that would impress him. I asked a friend who studied journalism if he had any writing tips for me. Instead, he suggested: “Why don’t you just try and learn something from him?”

This simple sentence – try to learn something from someone – marked a change in my approach to learning. Until that moment, I had taken several classes and passed them with reasonable success – although I was no stranger to common student distractions and procrastinations. But I had gotten completely stuck in my master’s thesis – on the philosophical concept of “identity” in current day media research – and I did not know which way to go. And suddenly I realized that all that time, I had only tried to prove to people that I could do it, but had never really granted myself the time and space to actually learn and be comfortable not “being there yet.” Without the incident mentioned above, I doubt I would have become a teacher.

This too, is an embellished anecdote, and one that seems to belong to the prior section at that. Yet it was in this situation, that the

opposition between learning and playing vanished and learning itself became a playful activity, as described by Rodriguez when he states that “[t]he player does not only use playing *in order to learn*; instead, the player now thinks of *learning as a form of play*” (2006, p. 22, italics in original). The aesthetic quality of play can be connected to the aesthetic quality of education. The latter is outlined by Alexander (2003). He describes how the so-called qualitative turn in education disrupted the position “that cognition and affect on the one hand, and truth, beauty, and goodness on the other, can be clearly distinguished from one another” (p.2). He proposes an aesthetic approach to learning, which acknowledges the inseparability of these distinctions. Rodriguez (2006) says: “*Playing can be part of the learning process because the subject to be learnt is, at least in some respects, essentially playful*” (Rodriguez, 2006, italics in original).

Although I have been interested in play since my early college years, I do not consider myself a gamer. As a child, I had a lot of opportunity to play outside, in the woods, playing “police,” “karate,” or “the A team” with my friends. I loved writing my own stories and poems and filled a clumsy magazine about animal protection together with a friend. (A Dutch Donald Duck copy of 1983 contains a letter with my exposition on the work of Greenpeace.) I liked computer games the moment they appeared (Pong, Ribbit). But after I failed an exam in my second year in college, which I partly attributed to playing Tetris, I deleted all games from my computer. I am fascinated by the medium nonetheless. I understand Dweck’s (2002) and Juul (2013) position on embracing mistakes and failing with pleasure in a rational sense, but in many cases, will still check whether I am confident I did “the homework” properly.

## 2.5.2 BOROBUDUR: THE CONCEPT OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AS DEVELOPED

The outcome of the design process has been a concept for a philosophical learning environment, called “Borobudur.” The name is derived from the Buddhist temple Borobudur on the island Java, Indonesia. The temple itself was built in the 9<sup>th</sup> century<sup>20</sup>. The different reliefs on the side of the temple depict the life of the Buddha. By meditating on the meaning of each relief, the pilgrim (in

the game: explorer) vicariously experiences everything the Buddha experienced and as such, will attain enlightenment at the top. We have taken Borobudur as a game metaphor: the Borobudur in a sense is virtual learning environment *avant la lettre*. In the game concept, the player is an explorer who comes across the remains of the temple and starts a project to excavate it. Every relief the player comes across contains an assignment that deals with paradox, ambiguity, or playfulness and is related to topics students may come across in the course of their training to become managers. For the student to move forward in the game, these assignments need to be realized and reflected upon, together with peers who also play the game.

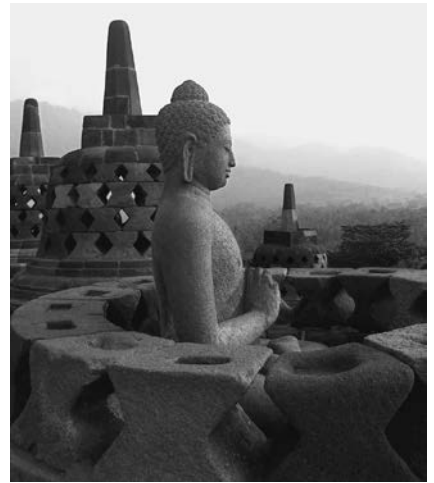


Figure 8. The Borobudur Temple Complex on Java (© Jan-Pieter Nap, 2004).

## 2.5.3 ALIGNMENT AND TENSION IN THREE ROLES: RESEARCHER, DESIGNER AND CHANGE AGENT

Akkerman, Bronkhorst & Zitter (2012) make use of the “cultural-historic activity theory” model to analyze the different roles of the researcher in design based research. In these separate roles, different instruments are available to realize goals, but the goals change in accordance with the community one is accountable to. The general model is charted below. Next, the concepts connected to each role are summarized and reflected on. In this discussion of the three roles, with a focus on those of the designer and change agent, the course of the design process is reconstructed.

The tensions that exist between these three roles are concerned with engagement with the students as teacher and collaborator while needing to keep an analytical distance for the research itself. It is difficult to take a critical step back from your own designs and be open to the idea that they might just not work, as we learning in letting go of Media & You.

Another tension is that of time constraints. This is related to the roles of researcher, teacher and change agent. The research project

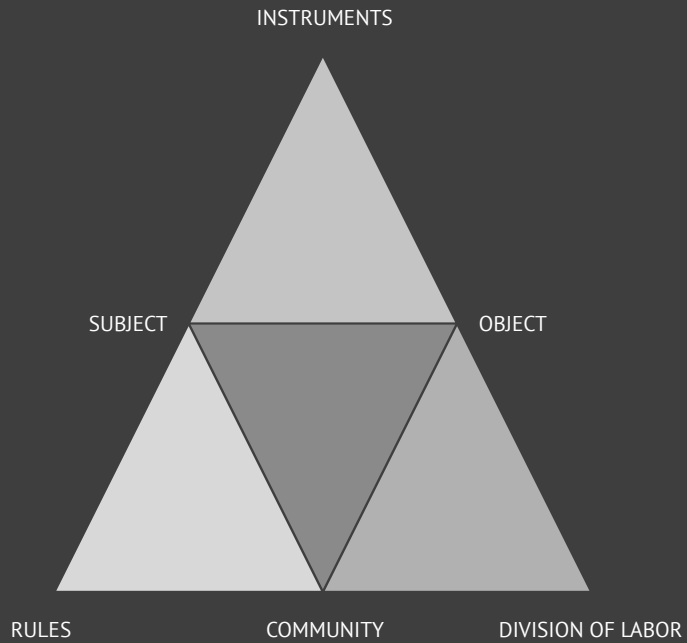


Figure 9. Adapted model of the “cultural-historic activity theory”, as discussed by Akkermans et al. (2012).

was initiated alongside regular teaching activities. This allowed for some overlap between research, curriculum development and teaching, but at the same time, this contained a risk of spending too much time on the teacher role and not enough on the design or research roles, let alone that of a change agent who manages to find time to create the support needed for creating playful alterations to the curriculum.

### 2.5.3.1 RESEARCHER: AN ODD DUCK, OR RATHER A PLATYPUS

In a couple of conference presentations of papers I wrote as preparation for writing this thesis, I used an image of a platypus to describe the relative awkwardness of my position. This platypus is reference to both a joke about God and creation (Does God have a sense of humor? Of course he does, just look at the platypus!) as well as a book by Umberto Eco called *Kant and the Platypus*, which narrates how scientists, who have just determined the different categories of birds and mammals, are confused by the appearance of the platypus, which defies the neat categorization.

The platypus seemed like a suitable example for use in play settings, as play is also difficult to define in scholarly categories. I have also used the image to refer to my research position as that of an odd duck. My original field is philosophy, not social sciences, though I have taken several courses in communication sciences. This eventually landed me my job as teacher in media research at a school for media & entertainment management, where I also became a tutor and coordinator in a marketing module. To stay up to date on changes in education and learning, I attended



*Figure 10. Image of a platypus that I used in powerpoint slides*

a game studies conference. There I learned several scholars had already found answers to some of the questions I had about play while in college. This motivated me to explore this path further. When my school provided the opportunity for teachers to pursue a Ph.D. degree, these things all came together. The wish to create a philosophical game nudged me in the direction of design based research.

In order to be applied to the model mentioned above, theories connected to play theory, education, design theory, psychology and sociology of play, psychology of playfulness, and game studies fall under the heading of “instruments.” The concepts studied are playfulness, play, game, culture, utopia, and self. The methods are design based research, case study, and directed content analysis. The subject and object, researcher and problem statement, have been discussed extensively above. The rules have been discussed with regard to the reliability and validity in the previous sections. This reconstruction of the process is supposed to contribute to its intelligibility. The research ethics will be discussed in more detail in the section concerning change agent. As this thesis itself is the research report and as such belongs to the outcomes of the role of the research (under the heading theory, knowledge and publications), many of the elements of the specific roles of the researcher are already addressed in the previous sections and will not be repeated in detail.

### 2.5.3.2 DESIGNER: DESIGNING PLAYFUL INTERACTIONS ?<sup>21</sup>

The role of designer can be split into two: first, there is the role of a research teacher developing general elements of the curriculum, who is looking for a different way to bring this material to the students. Then, as a result of this exploration, the designer can also be seen as a “game designer.” Theories that were used for the development of the material were mostly educational theories on constructivist instruction (Moust, 2001, Gergen et al. 2009). Studies at Stenden are organized around the problem based learning, which originates in social constructivism. As a result, the focus in the design of educational material is said to be on real life situations. The material is simplified to enable a connection to students’ prior knowledge and can be worked on in group settings. Collaborative

learning is valued, both by staff and students, although sometimes students exclaim that they just want someone to stand in front of a classroom and explain something from beginning to end. Additionally, the benefits of social constructivism are questioned by educational researchers (Grauerholz & Main, 2013).

The assignment itself originated with the need to teach students to reflect on the different disciplines they encountered in their studies. As such, the original angle of the assignment was an epistemological one. In prior years (before 2008), student were invited to write an essay in which they had to compare the different disciplines that comprise the field of management; an assignment they considered boring and that did not meet the curriculum aims.

In the course “Teaching in Higher Education,” which I started shortly after working as a research teacher, I formulated my own learning goals in a reflection document. While browsing these reflections for the construction of the researchers’ biography, one of these goals struck me as relevant for this reconstruction. It said:

Truly get to understand our students on their entry-level, their first year level, second year level etcetera. So far, in the complexity of the tasks I write, I always seem to be one year off their level. I wish to learn how to design teaching/learning programs that are true to this level (2005, personal document).

In trying to prevent this “year gap,” in 2006, I asked a student to aid me in finding examples that were closer to students’ experiences. We created sample essays to provide students with better examples of what was expected of them and looked for news items about research they might find appealing. But the evaluations turned out negative nonetheless and the students’ essays did not reflect the critical thinking we hoped they would display.

What we looked for next was a way to invite students to reflect on their notions of reality in a way that is appealing to them. As our BA students are not in training to become philosophers or scientists, yet would benefit from philosophical skills for analyzing the world around them, an assignment was developed to promote this kind of thinking, not so much by reading classic texts as by interfering with this world. One does not need Plato to be able to question the nature of reality or enjoy the activity of testing assumptions and

reframing one's interpretations. With reference to the field of "action research" (Delnooz, 2008) – in which we learn about the way things work by altering something in the way we do things – we labeled this "action philosophy."

This way, a less "textocentric" approach is taken (Singhal & Rattine-Flaherty, 2006) and students may be invited to "act into thinking differently" (Papa, Singhal & Papa, 2006, p. 240). If we were to redevelop the assignment, it should invite them to actively create something, co-operate with one another and basically, go out and play. As Stenden University is a University of Applied Sciences, its students tend to be practically oriented. Reflecting on notions of knowledge and truth is generally not students' idea of time well spent. However, checking what your assumptions are can be practical in dealing with your future profession. Students have to develop a kind of agility in their thinking, as agility, as well as playfulness in thinking are said to lead to more creativity (Duke, Geurts & Vermeulen; 2007).

The theoretical framework of the module "Imagineering," in which the assignment was placed, rests partly on the notion of co-creation (Nijs & Peters, 2002; Pine & Gilmore; 1997). Four students who had to redo part of the curriculum were involved to gather ideas and co-design this assignment. From these ideas, a format was developed in a brainstorm session with two game developers. This was discussed with both a methodologist and game researcher, walked through with a befriended artist and finally discussed with a small panel of third year students. The general goal of the assignment was to induce a sense of realization of the way the world is constructed. One way to do so is by turning this world or the meaning of things in it upside down. In 2008, this was formulated as an incorporation of Glynn & Webster's (1992) notion of playfulness and Salen & Zimmerman's idea of being playful (2004). The result was the first formulation of the assignment "The World Your Playground."

In the first run of the assignment in 2008, the goal was to have students explore the way the world around us is constructed. The assignment mentions the approach common to action research: one way to get to know the world is by intervening in it (Delnooz, 2008). In the assignment this was indicated with the following:

The world often presents itself to you in a self-evident manner. You wake up in the morning and assume the world you left behind while going to sleep, will be the same world you wake up to. You follow a common ritual and rarely stop to think that out of nowhere, you could do something entirely different today. (Modulebook Imagineering, 2008, my translation)

The core of the assignment was the same in both years, namely “to do something different,” “create a surprise,” and “turn things upside down.” (The assignments themselves can be found in Dutch in appendix 1 and 2. Relevant sections have been translated in this chapter). Students were instructed to do so by first reflecting on a given topic in a brief essay, then find inspiring examples that illustrate this topic for them and finally come up with their own initiatives to create a similar element of surprise.

In the same period, another student was looking for a thesis topic. I had just developed more concrete plans to develop a philosophical game and suggested he could write his thesis about the suitability of a game concept for self-management. He was enthusiastic about this and while he started performing his research on the development of the concept, we also started recruiting students who were interested in extra credits to help out with the concept development. This was the birth of what we jokingly called “The Borobudur Gang.”

The division of work was determined primarily based on student’s personal



*Figure 11. A decisive “drop in meeting”: during this session in 2009, we finalized the concept (2009, personal files).*

interests. They could choose what part of the project they wanted to be working on. Sessions for developing the concept of the game and the assignments took place in Leeuwarden and occasionally in Utrecht, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam. Meetings consisted of brainstorm sessions about the concept, either with or without a game designer present, and of discussions of the content of the assignments their fellow students had made. Individual meetings – e.g. in the form of thesis counseling – were part of the process as well. Three students wrote their BA-thesis connected to the game design. The aim was to have meetings on a bi-weekly basis. In many cases, however, it turned out to be impossible to get all group members together in the same room. Meetings were documented either via minutes or via audio recordings. Also, a Blackboard learning environment was used to exchange ideas and documents. Minutes of the meetings were posted here. In later stages, a Facebook group was created to stay in touch and exchange ideas, as the students in this group found Facebook more appealing than Blackboard.

### 2.5.3.3 CHANGE AGENT: ARE WE STILL ANSWERING THE SAME QUESTION?

My position at the outset of this project now strikes me as naive. On the one hand, because of the resistance several of the initiatives provoked. I had not anticipated a negative response to some of the assignments. On the other, because any kind of change on the so-called KAP (knowledge, attitude, practice) variables generally takes a more systemic approach and is rarely accomplished by a single school assignment. We would be moldable as clay if it were.

The original research question in the first year of the research assignment was: “How can an activating approach to philosophy invite students to reflect on (their assumptions about) ordinary life?” Based on the analysis of the documents of the first year of the TWYP assignment and the game design process, this question transformed into the (working) question “how can students be invited to engage playfully with their ordinary lives?” This latter question gave rise to the theoretical exploration of what playfulness actually is, which transformed into the question what the constraining and enabling conditions are. In retrospect, the very first and the last question seem to be entirely different, yet, the underlying assumption was

that 1) this philosophical approach to ordinary life will shed light on the possibilities you have – as a person – to meaningfully engage with the world around you, and that 2) this will invite making use of those possibilities.

This way, the practical result provided by the answers to these questions, would be an increase in the capacity to see “scripts” or “frames” operating in the construction of social order and as such, create an increase in the freedom that is necessary to be playful. Students do not need to be normatively “woken up” to or warned of the structural constraints of the society they live in. We deem them capable to make up their minds about the amount of manipulation in their lives without imposing a frame on them. Nevertheless, these were topics we thought were worth considering, so the learning environment was also intended to raise questions on several of these topics. It is, however, intended to make them wonder, not tell them what to think.

Reflection on the options to engage differently with social order may increase the chances of actually taking these options. However, the assumption itself does not hold up in many cases. After all, reflecting on the options you have may also make you realize they are actually limited – the equation between these two assumptions has generated a problem statement that was acceptable to all involved parties. Although we set out to develop a game, we also encountered a conceptual difficulty: playing a game is generally already considered to be something playful. As such, understanding playfulness by playing a game begs the question and makes it difficult to understand the role of playfulness in non-play areas. We tried to circumvent this in the game design by avoiding the word “game” itself and by referring to the intended playground as a hangout and a playful learning environment. But it meant we could not just start building the content for the game (the reflection assignments in the panels). We had to understand playfulness itself a lot better, before we could create a game to promote it.

The project therefore started out with a design challenge: to create a philosophical self-management game with students through participatory game design and to test its effectiveness in relation to other methods of learning (about) self-management. The first assignment in the academic year 2007-2008 yielded surprising results as students spontaneously used the opportunity to not just “study”

this world, but also to voice their concerns about it, in a playful and surprising way<sup>22</sup>. We used this data to consider what elements and examples we could use for the development of the game.

In the year 2008-2009, we decided to explicitly offer playfulness a topic for exploration. This way, we made the whole upcoming cohort of second year students into research collaborators. In the new formulation of the TWYP assignment, students had to write their essay for the research assignment about playfulness. Content wise, this was justified in connection to their module assignment (designing a new experience for Disney), since theories about the experience economy as well as the image of the Disney brand are easily connected to playfulness. Understanding the need for playfulness of the prospective visitors may provide students with a better understanding of the market they are operating in.

At that time, through studying literature on playfulness and creativity, we were exploring the role of ambiguity as an important factor in playfulness. We started exploring the possibilities of introducing ambiguity as a topic for reflection. There has been little study into the increasing tolerance for ambiguity or openness as a result of engaging in philosophical activities. But when considering some principles in philosophy regarding rules of argumentation, the principle of benevolence and in some cases, the mere confrontation with a multiplicity of perspectives, it is not unthinkable that an increase in philosophical skills on the one hand leads to an increase in critical thinking skills (reference), while at the same time the required epistemological doubt can also create a difference in one's ontological stance. This is where cognitive playfulness in part may originate from: the kind of imaginary "what if" thinking that originates in a willingness to be wrong: "what if what I think is not correct?" An increase in tolerance for ambiguity can lead to an increase in the opportunity to either be playful or be open to it.

#### 2.5.3.4 CHANGE AGENT: FAILING MEDIA & YOU

Enabling or facilitating change is a skill that is quite different from teaching a lesson or performing research. Where a design is a potential beginning of change, the actual realization of a design requires the capacity to both formally organize a project as well as find support for this. This requires both confidence in one's ideas,

in order to bring them across, as well as support in the form of informal alliances. Conditions for creating a positive, sustainable change in the form or actually creating space for playfulness were not in place. In the course of developing content for the game, we put our focus and energy in the creation of assignments that would be fun and relevant for students and informative for our purposes. With the new insights we developed, it was not an option to address these topics in the second year TWYP assignment, but the self management program – which was to be the final destination of the game itself – had some room available for a pilot program in which we could set out a few ideas. During a meeting with a number of students from the design group, we started exploring what kinds of ambiguity would be possible to address in a first year course: what would be a good “warm up assignment”? What would push the limits of what was acceptable to ask from students? We were sensitive to the fact that there were some boundaries here, regarding self-disclosure in a peer group and regarding potential discomfort students might experience while exploring paradoxes. Bateson himself writes that paradoxes are uncomfortable (1955). We developed four assignments in the first year of a program we dubbed “Media & You.” In the next year, we revised these first four assignments and created four more. The program was met with great discomfort and anger.

The first four assignments concerned (a) finding beauty in an ugly spot, where students had to visit a neighborhood in Leeuwarden that did not appeal to them and walk around until they found something of beauty, (b) an assignment called “carpe diem” in which they had to develop an idea of the kind of life artists they were, based on a typology of five profiles and an example of Patch Adams, (c) an analysis of a song and video clip by the band Radiohead, which is highly ambiguous and (d) an assignment called “blind date”, which was supposed to invite reflection on the idea that questionnaires, for instance on dating sites, can actually determine what you like. It was specifically this latter assignment that angered students, since they thought they actually had to sign up for a dating site. Students were scared their significant others would react negatively, even if they told them it was for a school assignment. As one student wrote in an e-mail: “What will my girlfriend think if I tell her this is what I have to do for school!”

It is an understatement to say that several things did not run

smoothly with Media & You. Most of the issues were start-up troubles on an organizational level. Students expressed their concern and anger about the lack of communication about the assignments. During the introduction of the first assignment, the combination of teaching, research and trying to coordinate the Borobudur project became difficult to manage. As a result, communication about Media & You, its purpose and its demands lacked clarity. Although it was supposed to be a part of self-management, it was never intended to be a part of the curriculum that could cause a student to obtain a negative binding study advice. When discussing the upheaval among first year students among the design group, we realized we had to try to make amends while also putting our money where our mouths were. If we truly wanted to create more playfulness, we could not pretend we did not make mistakes in our attempts to design something that was supposed to be fun and that had taken such an unexpected turn.

Dweck (2002) states that mistakes are not to be avoided, but rather to be embraced as learning opportunities. We decided to try and learn as much as we would from the course of events and invited the students who did not complete the assignments, to write a reflection about their response to the program, so we could incorporate it into an improved version of the program. In doing so, we learned a lot about the resistance against the assignments we had made. We changed the program for the next year, providing a brief rationale for the program, connecting it to themes of creativity and their future professions. We also trained second and third year coaches to guide the reflection process and the group processes and provide feedback on the assignments students made. But we also wrote a disclaimer. It stated that although we provided a formal rationale for the program, we could not define the purpose of each assignment, because that would kill the process of exploring the meaning and the value of the exploration itself, rather than the textbook learning.

This helped a bit in countering the resistance to the assignment, but still – because I was project coordinator – my mailbox was flooded with angry and concerned e-mails. The second and third year in which the “Media & You” assignments were clearly embedded in the course structure of self-management, was nevertheless still met a lot of resistance among first year students. Some claimed they

were not in kindergarten, others claimed they had not signed up for a study in creative therapy, others stated they had already gone through the reflection cycles these assignments seemed to want to invoke. But the reports at the end of the year, in which they were invited to reflect on their resistance – why did the assignments upset them so? – contained many revisions of their original statements, in which they mentioned they now saw the value of these assignments.

We concept-tested the assignments with several second and third year students, who claimed they saw the relevance of the assignments and would have liked to participate in the program (Poon, 2010). But the first year students hated this. During meetings in which we reflected on this, we learned that the need for clarity is a lot stronger in first year students compared to second year students. The assignments were – again – one year off. This led to a revision of the design of the game, incorporating relatively straightforward assignments about learning styles, biorhythms and group dynamics in the level of the first year and introducing the more ambiguous assignment at a later stage in the game.

From this painful process, we learned that if one wishes to stretch students' tolerance of ambiguity on a cognitive level – regarding assumptions about this world and the “truth” of one's thinking – there can be no ambiguity on a relational level – regarding the trust students need to have in the system serving their interests rather than attempting to fail them. Students expressed an enormous distrust of the assignments, because they were led to believe that they had to do these things for someone else's research, an unstoppable gossip that went unchecked. They also distrusted it, because they could not tell whether this was actually a formal part of the curriculum and other teachers could not properly inform them about this. The changes we made did not help. At one point, management asked us, if there was a way to keep the positive elements of the program, but make it less of a problem child. There was not. The coaching of the second and third year students, in spite of their dedicated efforts, was not sufficiently backed by their personal and professional experience to actually aid students in addressing the paradoxes of the assignments. Knowing this, it would not have been ethical to continue asking students to dive into these topics. I asked for the program to be stopped as soon as possible.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the educational background against which the problem statement of this thesis has been formulated. The final section addressed the lessons we learned, not from the theory or the data, but from the design process itself. In this section, an experiential account of the design process was provided, in order to shed light on the potential resistance that can be met when designing for playfulness. Conditions for a playful approach to learning that can be derived from this case story, are a clear course structure and communication, mutual support among key staff members on the relevance of a playful angle and skilled coaches in guiding the reflection on ambiguous topics, playful approaches may be met with distrust as they do not belong in a setting where serious learning is to be done.



SIBLINGS OF OUR  
IMAGINATION:  
PLAY AND  
PLAYFULNESS



The previous chapters introduced the reasons for studying playfulness and presented the scope, outline and method of this thesis. This chapter presents a *conceptual framework* for the study of playfulness. It connects this framework to the elements that are relevant for the study of playfulness among young adults in higher education. It also derives *design principles* from both the theory about playfulness as well as the empirical findings of studies into playfulness in this age group. Different disciplines have different definitions of playfulness. The conclusion of the chapter highlights elements of these definitions that are relevant to connect to in the empirical section of this study.

Playfulness is addressed as a sensitizing concept. A sensitizing concept “gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look” (Blumer, 1954, p.7). As such, the aim of this chapter is not to come to a “fixed” definition of playfulness, but to explore its meaning, thereby providing a conceptual insight in the term and some touch points on the empirical study of it. Studies in play are said to have a paradoxical effect (Sutton-Smith, 1997): the moment one focuses on the different oppositions, contradictions, ambiguities, and paradoxes connected to play and playfulness, it suddenly becomes impossible to not see “play” everywhere. When this happens, the terms play and playfulness lose their distinctiveness, and with it, their analytic use (cf. Boellstorff, 2006; Malaby, 2008).

As in quicksand, if one has flat surfaces below ones feet and keeps a steady pace, it is possible to get some grounds covered without drowning. As such, the chapter moves from the one field to the next, to then revert back to the previous field to look at some elements again and so on, keeping the reader out of the mud. In that sense, the organization of the chapter is cross-eyed.

## 3.1 GIDDENS, SUTTON-SMITH AND THE PLAYFULNESS OF PLAY

This section outlines the analytic framework of the third chapter as a whole. It discusses Giddens' notion of constraining and enabling conditions, which are the three lines of analysis that constitute the core of the chapter and the difficulty of defining play and playfulness, based on Sutton-Smith's description of the ambiguity of play and his distinction between seven rhetorics of play.

### 3.1.1 GIDDENS CONSTRAINT/ ENABLEMENT RELATIONSHIP

The exploration in this chapter builds a conceptual understanding of the constraining and enabling conditions (in the expression) of playfulness. The focus is primarily on playfulness in general – to then seek application to young adults in higher education. In structuration theory, Giddens (1984) speaks of the constraint/enablement relationship of human actors in relation to social structure: each form of constraint is in one way or another also a form of enablement. “They serve to open up certain possibilities of action at the same time as they restrict or deny others” (1984, p. 173, loc. 3767). His division between different kinds of constraint is used in this chapter as an analytical tool to identify the constraining and enabling conditions for playfulness. Giddens distinguishes three types of constraint:

#### MATERIAL CONSTRAINT

Constraint deriving from the character of the material world and from the physical qualities of the body

### (NEGATIVE) SANCTION

Constraint deriving from punitive responses on the part of some agents towards others

### STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINT

Constraint deriving from the contextuality of action, i.e. from the “given” character of structural properties vis-à-vis situated actors (Giddens, 1984, loc. 3833 - 3837).

This division between types of constraint is part of Giddens “structuration theory”, in which he discusses how social order is constituted in the interaction between the structure of society and the capacity of individuals to meaningfully interact with and potentially alter this structure: “Society only has form, and that form only has effects on people, in so far as structure is produced and reproduced in what people do” (Giddens & Pierson, 1998: 77).

Material constraints refer to elements such as the finiteness of the human body, the fact that we exist in time-space and are limited by our senses. (Negative) sanctions refer to interpersonal relations and the power relations in which we are embedded. The term “structural constraints” suggests an imposition of constraints that is beyond human control, but this is explicitly not Giddens viewpoint: structures are created and repeated by human agents who have, to some extent, the capacity to alter or continue these structures. He writes: “The structural properties of social systems do not act, or “act on; anyone like forces of nature to ‘compel’ him or her to behave in any particular way” (1984, loc. 3919-3921).

## 3.1.2 THREE LINES OF ANALYSIS: PLAY & CULTURE, SITUATED INTERACTION AND THE SELF

Play and playfulness are deeply connected, so to understand playfulness it is important to relate it to play as well. The chapter therefore consists of a *conceptual exploration* of playfulness along three lines:

*Line 1* – the *meaning* of playfulness in relation to *play and culture*, as can be derived from those rhetorics of play (derived from Sutton-Smith, 1997) that allow space for a difference between play and

playfulness: the imaginary, the self and frivolity.

*Line 2* – the *situated* aspects of playfulness in interpersonal interactions, as can be derived from Bateson, Goffman and Giddens.

*Line 3* – the *empirical* study of playfulness as a characteristic of “self”, with a focus on the research into the playfulness of young adults and adolescents

Several dualities play a role in the demarcation of play and playfulness. Sutton Smith describes these as “work and play, the adult and the child, the serious and the non serious, the heavy and the light, the corrupted and the innocent” (1997, p. 147). Some of these dualities are touched upon under each line. Each line of analysis concludes with a summary of the constraining and enabling conditions that can be derived from these sources and remarks on the implications for designing educational material and promoting playfulness.

#### *Line 1*

The chapter opens with a discussion of the ambiguity of play as discussed by Sutton-Smith and the distinction he makes between the rhetorics of play. The “elusive” the play concept, as it is so often called (Spariosu, 1989, p. xi, Turner, 1986, p. 31), makes it difficult to pinpoint the exact factors contributing to or hindering playfulness. Where play itself is ambiguous for many different reasons, playing with the ambiguity of play “is the most ambiguous form of play” (Sutton-Smith, 1997, p. 150). This discussion followed by a one concerned the concept of playfulness in the works of Huizinga and Caillois. After this, a comparison between definitions of playfulness is made.

The comparison of definitions necessitates a brief discussion of the definition of play and its relation to culture (line 1). The ambiguity is taken as a reference point first, for a discussion of Bateson’s Theory of Play and Fantasy, where the message “this is play” is a meta-communicative message, with paradoxical components. Play and playfulness are intrinsically linked, yet distinguishable from one another. This section as a whole describes a number of key concepts in play and game studies (e.g. Huizinga’s definition of play, Caillois’ distinction between *ludus* and *paidia* and the different play forms of *agon*, *alea*, *mimicry* and *illinx*). These will help outline the extent to which play and playfulness are different. Play is often seen as an activity or as the framing of an activity.<sup>23</sup> In game (design) studies,

in human computer interaction (HCI) and in psychology, playfulness is often seen as the attitude with which one engages in a play activity. This analysis forms the first line of analysis in this chapter.

### *Line 2*

It is possible to analyze “playful play” from the comparison between a lusus or gameful attitude (conforming to the play rules) and a playful attitude a (deliberate) lack of conformity to or deviation from at least one specific rule type). This distinction helps analyze the types of playfulness one sees in social interactions, depending on the “definition of the situation” that shapes participants’ actions together with the “evaluation of the situation” in terms of its desirability. The enhancement of the enabling conditions, demands being attuned to the wishes of the parties involved, without prioritizing – in advance – one specific definition of the situation or demanding conformity.

Playfulness does not stand apart from ordinary life, or from social order. Frames play an important part in this. On the one hand, we develop our sense of self through play – which makes it vital for learning about the different primary frames through which we navigate our daily lives. Frames also enable (and constrain) playfulness, since they provide the reference point in relation to which we are playful. For an interaction to be labeled playful, it has to be meta-communicatively successful. Not only an individual’s propensity, but also their meta-communicative skill and interpersonal competency enable playful interactions. These refer to a primary frame, which provides the ingredients from which to act and alter (and alternate) behavior. A distinction can be made between successful playful interactions as a form of permissible deviance and as a form of excellent rule breaking.

Suits described “playing a game” as a “voluntary attempt at overcoming unnecessary obstacles” (1973, p.55). This requires a *lusory* attitude: an attitude in which one accepts these game rules. In relation to Giddens’ notion of the constraint-enablement relationship, in games it is the *self chosen* constraint that is a precondition that enables a situation in which one can play at all. To tease out this strand of thought, the chapter continues along an analysis of the philosophical stance of Bernard Suits, via the concept of Utopia.

*Line 3*

The fields of Human Computer Interaction (HCI) and psychology specifically have studied playfulness as separate from play (line 3). These are discussed in a review of the literature specifically concerned with playfulness where it is conceptualized as an individual characteristic, whether this is conceived of as a character trait (Tegano, 1994), a propensity (Glynn & Webster, 1992) or an attitude (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Lucero & Arrasvuori, 2010). On the one hand, some of the psychological studies reveal the relationship between playfulness and tolerance of ambiguity. On the other hand, the potential seriousness of play is analytically excluded from the realm of playfulness, leaving little room for ambiguity. The localization of playfulness in the individual alone is problematic because it leaves out the conditions for playful interaction (as argued in line 2).

The chapter ends with a summary of the enabling and constraining conditions, the design principles that can be derived from them and an analytical approach to assess different types of playfulness. To establish playfulness, a playful agent needs to determine three things: 1. What is it that's going on here (what frame am I in?), 2. Do I like what is going on here (assessment of the situation as desirable, undesirable or ambiguous) and 3. what freedom of motion do I have to engage with this situation as I would like? (conformity – excellence in rule following/breaking).

It would have made sense to start the chapter with a review of the specific studies that have been performed into playfulness, and hence start out at line 3. However, then the reader would lack background information on the relationship between culture, play, and playfulness. It is this relationship (the role of play in the constitution and continuation of culture and the role playfulness *can* have in its alterations), which reveals the importance of playfulness. As such, the chapter moves from the outside in, rather than the other way around. *Can* is – is emphasized because this chapter offers one possible interpretation of playfulness, thus not only matching the purpose of sensitizing concepts, but also paying tribute to the modal, subjunctive (in-between, as-if) character of playfulness as a space in between worlds. The opposite of playfulness is not seriousness, but rigidity.

### 3.1.3 PLAYFULNESS, THE ADJECTIVE “PLAYFUL” AND PLAY

Where Giddens provides the analytical tool for establishing the constraining and enabling conditions of playfulness, renowned play scholar Sutton-Smith's contribution to the study of play “The Ambiguity of Play” (1997) is taken as a map for the explorations in all three lines of analysis. Sutton-Smith distinguishes seven so-called “rhetorics” under which play is studied and in which it receives a distinct meaning and function. Sutton-Smith defines “rhetoric” as: “a persuasive discourse, or an implicit narrative, wittingly or unwittingly adopted by members of a particular affiliation to persuade others of the veracity and worthwhileness of their beliefs” (1997, p. 8).

These rhetorics are important, because part of the discourse on playfulness is organized around certain dichotomies that impair our capacity to see adult playfulness. It is not possible to distinguish playful behavior from our thinking about our behavior, because – as the section about framing hopefully illustrates – the label “playful” is itself already a communicative assessment of that behavior; an evaluation has already taken place. Before discussing the extent to which these discourses are also relevant for the study of “playfulness”, as separate from play, it is important to look into the conceptual possibilities of this separation.

On the one hand, the adjective “playful” seems to denote nothing other than that something is “full of play” (whatever “play” may be exactly). This suggests there is no need to distinguish between play and playfulness, but only to look into the uses of the adjective and study the play phenomena that accompany it. Literature on play refers to the *elusiveness* of the play concept (Berlyne, 1972; Lieberman, 1977; Turner, 1982, 1986; Spariosu, 1989; Barnett, 1990, 2007; Sutton-Smith, 1997; Malaby, 2008). Barnett wonders: “If the layperson, naive to the methods of science and research, can reliably discern play, why then has it been so hard for the play research community?” (1990, p. 320) We tend to know “play” when we see it, but have a hard time defining it. This goes for playfulness as well. Playfulness is often highlighted by ostensive description: we point it out. When we look at the use of the adjective “playful,” it is clear it is not just a quality of individuals, but also of animals (Fagen, 1981; Pellis & Pellis, 2009), cultures (Turner, 1982, 1986; Raessens, 2006),

eras (Huizinga, 1955; Spariosu, 1989), and objects (Dunne, 1999; Gaver, 2002; Gaver et al. , 2004; Lucero & Arrasvuori, 2010). At the same time, semantically, some combinations seem excluded in the daily use of the word “playful.”

In spite of its agonistic, game-like character that belongs to the concept of play, warfare cannot easily be called “playful” (See: Huizinga, ch.V). Therefore, even if there is a connection between warfare and play, the adjective playful seems inappropriate. This is partly because of the “serious” character of warfare. Dictionary definitions (e.g. Merriam-Webster) however, state that seriousness is the antonym of playfulness. The seriousness of warfare then, seems to preclude the use of an adjective such as “playful”, This indicates the inherently optimistic connotation of the word. But that does not mean seriousness and playfulness cannot ever go hand in hand. As Huizinga says: “the contrast between play and seriousness proves to be neither conclusive nor fixed” (1955, p. 5).

### 3.1.4 THE AMBIGUITY OF PLAY: THE MEANING OF PLAYFULNESS IN SEVEN RHETORICS

What Sutton-Smith describes as “the ambiguity of play” can help shed some light on the possibilities of the distinction between play and playfulness. There are several things that make play an ambiguous phenomenon, such as “the great diversity of play forms [...] the parallel diversity of players, [...] the diversity of multiple kinds of play equipment (1997, p. 5-6). All the different ways in which play is studied are also of influence: “Some study the body, some study behavior, some study thinking, some study groups or individuals, some study experience, some study language – and they all use the word play for these quite different things” (1997, p. 6). Scholarship on play is itself diverse.

The seven rhetorics that Sutton-Smith distinguishes are that of play as a) progress (distinguished between animal play and child play), b) fate, c) power, d) identity, e) the imaginary, f) the self and g) frivolity. Each rhetoric is briefly discussed below, along with a brief implication for the connection between play and playfulness. Huizinga’s and Caillois’ definitions of play will be discussed in more detail in section 3.2, but one important element to already mention

here, is that they both discuss the non-consequentiality of play: play – as an activity separated by time and space – is thought to have no consequences outside the demarcation of the play space. Sutton-Smith highlights how the notion of play in some rhetorics contest this idea.

Sutton-Smith speaks of a *ludic turn* in Western culture, which might be similar to the aesthetic turn in the eighteenth century and in which the role that art previously had, namely “the center of moral existence,” may now be taken up by play (1997, p. 144). This reflection on the ludic turn is connected to the rhetoric of play as the imaginary, which as a rhetoric is more deeply connected to playfulness than others, given its more “free play” character (as compared to e.g. the rhetorics of power, in which athletics and sports play a greater role, but not “free play.”) Along with the rhetorics of the self (and that of progress), the rhetorics of the imaginary is one of the most important rhetorics for the study of playfulness, as distinct from play.<sup>24</sup>

- a. The rhetoric of play as progress is the most dominant rhetoric in Western culture. It assumes play has a function, specifically for animals and children, and this function is to help them build the skills they may need later in life. Play is the medium of adaptation and development, and specifically imitative role play is seen as “a form of children’s socialization and moral, social, and cognitive growth” (1997, p. 9-10). In the field of education – the embodiment of the rhetorics of progress *pur sang* – both play and playfulness have been studied empirically. Play is considered children’s primary occupation (Skard & Bundy, 2008) and playfulness is seen to refer to their *style* of playing (Lieberman, 1965, 1966, 1976, 1977). In some cases, these styles are rated as productive or unproductive (Starbuck & Webster, 1990) or a difference is made between academic and “social-emotional” playfulness (Lieberman, 1976).
- b. The rhetoric of play as fate refers to gambling and games of chance (unfairly excluded by Huizinga, according to Caillois). This rhetoric is currently marginal in Western culture, but used to be the oldest rhetoric, in which our lives are determined by fate and destiny, and not by

ourselves. Here, play refers to the “illusion of mastery over life’s circumstances” (1997, p. 53) and since this is considered an illusion (either the playful Gods determine the course of our life or our playful brain does), the playfulness of man is not that significant. Playfulness is not a way in which we can change a course of action, but perhaps it can be a way in which we carry our fate, in alignment with the fate of humankind. As Sutton-Smith states:

Given that there is nothing more characteristic of human achievement than the creation of illusory cultural and theoretical worlds, as in music, dance, literature, and science, then children’s and gamblers’ full participation in such play worlds can be seen not as a defect, or as compensation for inadequacy, but rather as participation in a major central preoccupation of humankind (1997, p. 54).

- c. In the rhetoric of play as power, the use of play is seen as “the representation of conflict and as a way to fortify the status of those who control the play or are its heroes” (1997, p. 10). Sutton-Smith describes it explicitly as a form of adult play, in which either physical skill or intellectual strategy is tested in a diversity of activities: “Warfare, hegemony, conflict, competition, glory, manliness, contest, and resistance” (1997, p. 75). Playfulness in the rhetoric of play as power refers to the attitude with which one engages in agonistic (actual) contests as compared to ritual contests, which represent this agonistic quality, but are essentially an imitation. The adjective “playful” here, in part, seems to refer to “not to the death”; “unserious” play, if one will (which apparently is *not* a tautology, cf. Geertz’s notion of “deep play” [1973]).
- d. The rhetoric of play as identity “occurs when the play tradition is seen as a means of confirming, maintaining, or advancing the power and identity of the community of players” (1997, p. 10). It refers in part to the anthropological term *communitas*, which was coined by the anthropologist Victor Turner. Turner has

written extensively about play and playfulness. He sees *communitas* as part of the anti-structure of society (together with *liminality*, discussed in more detail in section 3.4.5, see: Turner, 1982, 1986). The rhetoric of identity is expressed in “ludic performances” and playful activities, through the processes of which a group identity is re-affirmed. They are “forms of bonding, including the exhibition and validation or parody of membership and traditions in a community” (1997, p. 91). The playfulness in these festivities belongs both to the psychological disposition of the participants, as well as the activities in themselves. Through these cultural acts, individuals are “persuaded” into a sense of belonging (Sutton-Smith, 1997, p. 92).

- e. The rhetoric of play as the imaginary “idealizes the imagination, flexibility, and creativity of the animal and human play worlds. This rhetoric is sustained by modern positive attitudes toward creativity and innovation” (1997, p.11). One of the core assumptions of this rhetoric is that play has transformative power. This is at odds with Huizinga and Caillois’ definition that play is of no consequence, unless one would call the transformation itself inconsequential – if there would only be a play of forms, but no one form preferable over the other. Most often, however, the word “transformation” is used to denote positive changes, while “regression” denotes negative ones. Sutton-Smith traces the origin of this rhetoric back to the Romantic age that consisted of an “attitude of mind that glorifies freedom, originality, genius, the arts, and the innocent and uncorrupted character of the childhood vision” (1997, p. 129).

With the modern focus on creativity as an important quality in establishing innovation, this approach to the imagination as playful does not seem novel. Nevertheless, this was the first time that play was compared in parallel to art and was no longer seen as a “secondary source of knowledge” (1997, p. 127) as had been the case since Plato and Aristotle (cf. Spariosu, 1989). As such, the rhetoric of the imaginary is more playful and has a “lighter mood” than the other rhetorics (1997, p. 127).

This does not mean that there are no agonistic elements in this rhetoric. Sutton-Smith discusses elements of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, in which playful conversation has a very agonistic undertone and in which the playfulness is of a nagging kind. He also notes that in literary forms – which the rhetoric of the imaginary is closely connected with – we immediately recognize this kind of playfulness. Yet, we often find it unsettling in ordinary life: “When nonsense happens in the behavioral and social sphere, it is a kind of frivolity that makes adults mad, as in the case of the hilarious disorders of infants, the obscene parodies of children, and the cruel mockeries of adolescents” (1997, p. 141).

Another important element for the study of playfulness in respect to this rhetoric is that of meta-communication. Bateson's approach to the ambiguity of play (to be discussed in more detail in section 3.3), is relevant here. Play has a paradoxical and communicative nature, as Sutton-Smith paraphrases Bateson: “Play is not just play but is also a message about itself (a meta-message), being both of the world and not of the world (paradox)” (1997, p. 139). The role of meta-communication and ambiguity are not just important in literary forms, where they are not seen as disruptive or unsettling for ordinary life *per se*, they are also important in relation to the modern notion of “self”. This will be discussed in more detail in relation to Giddens' notion of ontological security (1984) and the psychological construct of tolerance of ambiguity (Budner, 1960) in section 2.4.

- f. The rhetoric of self “are forms of play in which play is idealized by attention to the desirable experiences of the players – their fun, their relaxation, their escape – and the intrinsic or the aesthetic satisfactions of the play performances” (1997, p.11). When we compare the rhetoric of the imaginary with that of the self, the difference lies in the importance that is ascribed to imagination in the former and freedom in the latter. Play is seen as “having its basis in the psychology of the individual player” (1997, p. 173). Sutton-Smith expresses his surprise over the way in which individual, subjective

experience is prioritized over other, more communal origins of play, such as culture and institutions: “The self rhetoric’s retreat from institutional and cultural interpretations, which have dominated the history and anthropology of play, is quite remarkable and rare in human history” (1997, p. 175).

The non-consequentiality of play (as will be discussed in the definitions of Huizinga and Caillois) does not hold up in this rhetoric either, as play itself slowly moves into the modern discourse of self-improvement, in which the “self,” or one’s identity, is seen as an ongoing, self reflexive project (cf. Giddens, 1991). Play is seen as a “worthy,” even therapeutic experience (Sutton-Smith, 1997, p. 177). Some scholars describe this process of individualization as a loss, leading to social alienation, lack of a sense of community and belonging (cf. Gergen, 2001); others celebrate the endless possibilities of establishing a multitude of possible selves (cf. Turkle; 1995, Giddens, 1991; Sutton-Smith, 1997). In modern society, however, the playfulness of culture is seen as a consumerist veil that stands in the way of truer forms of creativity (cf. Krul, 2006). There is a shift in culture from work oriented to play or leisure oriented.

- g. The rhetoric of frivolity belongs to the rhetoric of fate, power and identity, and is one of the more ancient rhetorics. It is best characterized by the trickster and the fool, who, in their frivolous approach to the powers that be “enacted playful protest against the orders of the ordained world” (1997, p.11). The rhetorics of frivolity can be seen as the “opponent to the seriousness of all other rhetorics,” no progress, no transformation of self, no purity and innocence of childhood. It is a non-elitist approach to play, lacking in pretense. This rhetoric found its strongest opposition from the Protestant ethic, also known as the Puritan ethic, which saw all play “as waste of time, as idleness, as triviality and as frivolity” (1997, p.201).

Sutton-Smith mentions how a disdain for this rhetoric is even visible in the appreciation for scholars who

have this perspective, but at the same time, this disdain represents “what is politically suitable for some dominating groups” (1997, p 207). He continues: “The frivolity of playfulness, which seemed at first to be just a mildly amusing relic of Puritanism, takes on a much more serious purpose when we view it as an implicit form of political or scholarly denigration” (1997, p. 207).

And yet, in this trifling with play, it is possible to comment upon social order. The tricksters, or dilettantes who “play with play itself” and as such are the “personification of playfulness” create, in their frivolity, an inversion of the social order in which up is down, and which is an important element in rituals and so-called “rites of inversion” (1997, 210). Here, Sutton-Smith quotes Turner, who has coined the term “inversion” for these kinds of rites. These rites teach the participants in these rituals “the meaning of the generic humanity; so that each person becomes the joker in the pack, the card who can be all cards, the method actor” (Turner, 1978, p. 287 as quoted in Sutton-Smith, 1997, p. 210).

There is a difference within cultures, geographically as well as historically, in the types of playfulness that are admitted and the locus of this playfulness. As Sutton-Smith states: “Modern play seems to have much to do with individualized narrative, whereas that of these forebears has more to do with communal myth. The latter suggests stronger cultural constraints on the individual playful mind but not on the playful mind that is in service of communal and traditional forms of festival play” (1997, p. 105). Sutton-Smith calls the rhetorics of power, fate, identity, and frivolity ancient and contrasts them with the ones he calls modern: progress, the imaginary, and the self. Especially the rhetoric of the imaginary and of the self is closely related to playfulness.

As becomes apparent in the seven rhetorics that Sutton-Smith distinguishes, there is a struggle over the “proper” definition of play, which contributes in part to the ambiguity of play. He states: “Different academic disciplines also have different play interests. [...] Furthermore their play theories, which are the focus of this present work, rather than play itself, come to reflect these various diversities and make them even more variable” (1997, p. 6). The term play is

used for studies into actual play behavior, but also in a metaphoric sense, such as when life itself is considered a game. Lastly, there are also “the ambiguities that seem particularly problematic in Western Society, such as why play is seen largely as what children do but not what adults do; why children play but adults only recreate; why play is said to be important for children’s growth but is merely a diversion for adults” (1997, p.7).

With this latter comment, he refers partly to legitimacy issues that studies on play face in academic discourse. These are similar to those of game studies and studies in popular culture: are there not more important things to focus on? <sup>25</sup> Advocates for the study of play say though, that any element of human (or animal) behavior can be a topic for serious study, even if the object of study does not serve serious purposes (Sutton-Smith, 1997, Henricks, 2006, Pellegrini, 1995; Spariosu, 1989). Indicative of this attitude towards playfulness is an anonymous person’s response to an article about the Adult Playfulness Scale (by Glynn & Webster, 1992): “Genius! The person who invented this assessment, clearly has too much time on their hands”. The quote shows both the duality of work and play, where “having too much time on your hands” is negatively appreciated.

Playfulness is identified by Sutton-Smith in two ways. Firstly, as an adjective: playful is the mood that generally accompanies play. This is not a necessity; it is possible to engage in play activities that are not playful. In general, however, play and playfulness go hand in hand. Secondly, as a way of playing with the frames of play, in which playfulness is a form of meta-communication as well as a form of meta-action which includes cognitive, but also performance elements. Sutton-Smith considers this duality – between “play” and “the playful” – an interesting suggestion: “Perhaps instead they are more subtly the ends of some continuum, one end of which has play genres that are framed, follow the rules, and have relatively predictable expectations (as in games and sports), and the other end of which doesn’t play within the rules but with the rules, doesn’t play within frames but with the frames, as in farce and comedy” (1997, p. 150). At the same time, Sutton-Smith discards this suggestion, as it is impossible to escape being governed by play rules: “He who is breaking the play rules is being ruled by some other rules of play” (1997, p. 150). He concludes this section about the “playful, witty, trickster person” (p. 150) with the statement

that “one who plays with the ambiguity of his own pretense must ultimately be perceived as being at play in some form. Playing with just that ambiguity – whether he really means it or is just playing – is the most ambiguous form of play” (1997, p. 150).

Each rhetoric, with its different focus on play, also has a different way of making room for playfulness. Enabling and constraining conditions are: the extent to which play is communal (fate and identity – social constraint), the extent to which rules are formalized (progress and power, conformity), the extent to which imagination is appreciated (psychological well-being). This means there is reason to create a space for the study of playfulness as separate from yet closely related to play. The connection then, between culture and play, calls for a closer inspection of those scholars who have written extensively about the topic, to see what the implications are for their perspectives on the study of playfulness. The following section discusses the perspectives of Huizinga and Caillois, to be followed by a comparison of definitions of playfulness, play and their relation to culture.

## 3.2 DEFINING PLAYFULNESS MORE INDEFINABLE THAN PLAY?

Play scholars, Huizinga chief among them, often refute the distinction between play and seriousness (e.g. Huizinga, 1955; Spariosu, 1989, Abt, 1981; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; DuCharme & Fine, 1994). As a result of the intricate connection between play and playfulness, playfulness receives little to no separate attention. It is sometimes seen as the *quintessence* of play (Lieberman, 1976), but also – at the same time – the residue of play: it is what “survives the play situation and becomes a personality trait at later age levels” (Lieberman, 1966, p. 1278). It is seen as the attitude that *accompanies* play (Lucero & Arrasvuori, 2010), but also as a *prerequisite*, as a characteristic of human nature that enables play (only if we are playful can we have a capacity to play). Game designers Salen and Zimmerman describe it as an attitude “that refers not only to typical play activities, but also to the idea of being in a playful state of mind, where a spirit of play is injected into some other action” (2004; p. 303).

The previous section showed – Sutton-Smith’s reasoning – that it is imaginable that play and playfulness do not coincide. This section first discusses Huizinga and Caillois’ definitions of play and their relation to playfulness. Their definitions and distinctions are important, because they inform much of the academic discussion about play (even in the refusal of their definitions, their definitions themselves are unavoidable as reference points, cf. Dixon, 2009). Next, it illustrates how – at least currently – play not only has consequences for ordinary life in effect, but also *by design*. Games (including play spaces) are currently designed to have an effect beyond their (supposed) limitation in time and space.

### 3.2.1 HUIZINGA'S PLAY, PURE PLAY AND PUERILISM AND CAILLOIS' PAIDIA AS PLAYFUL PLAY

For a comparison of play and playfulness along the lines of important works in play theory, the Dutch historian Huizinga is a good starting point. He was the first to coin the term *homo ludens*, which can be contrasted with terms such as *homo sapiens*, *homo faber* or the *homo economicus* (see: Huizinga, 1955, p. 6; De Mul et al., 2013; Henricks, 2006). Huizinga has provided a much quoted and also much contested (Caillois, 1961; Copier, 2007; Sutton-Smith; 1997; Björk & Holopainen, 2005; Dixon, 2009; Pargmann & Jakobson, 2008) definition of play:

A free activity standing quite consciously *outside* "ordinary" life as being "not serious", but at the same time *absorbing* the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with *no material interest*, and no profit can be gained from it. It proceeds within its own *proper boundaries* of time and space according to *fixed rules* and in an *orderly manner*. It promotes the formation of *social groupings* which tend to surround themselves with *secrecy* and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or another means. (Huizinga, 1955; p. 13, my emphasis)

Huizinga (1955) does not specifically define playfulness and the use of the word throughout *Homo Ludens* indicates no specific distinction between play and playfulness. Nonetheless, a few comments are worth highlighting here. First of all, his definition makes clear that although he recognizes the play of children, animals and also solitary play, he is interested in play forms, which are "socially manifested" (1955, p. 7). He distinguishes between the primitive play of children and animals and higher forms of play. And though he claims (all) play is "not susceptible of exact definition, either logically, biologically or aesthetically" (1955, p.7), this is even more so the case with primitive play, where "we come up against that irreducible quality of *pure playfulness* which is not, in our opinion, amenable to further analysis (1955, p. 7, my emphasis).

Aside from the exclusion of primitive play on grounds of *the purity of its playfulness*, he excludes "puerilism" from the realm of

playfulness, on ground of its *lack* of purity. In the epilogue of *Homo Ludens*, Huizinga diagnoses his current day and age (the 1930s) and is appalled by what he calls “false play,” which masks as play, but is started for instrumental reasons. He also claims that “modern social life is being dominated to an ever-increasing extent by a quality that has something in common with play and yields the illusion of a strongly developed play-factor” (p.205), but which is everything but play, because of its lack of cultivation. He labels this “puerilism” and describes it as “a blend of adolescence and barbarity” (p. 205) in which “it would seem as if the mentality and conduct of the adolescent now reigned supreme over large areas of civilized life which had formerly been the province of responsible adults” (p.205). He deems the “gregariousness” of this type of behavior most unsettling.

Huizinga does place play on the children’s side of the duality of the adult and the child, although he values the adult forms of play more positively. And while he does address the duality of seriousness and play and calls play to some extent “unserious,” he is one of the first to recognize the serious, earnest engagement that rises in play (the player’s absorption). And in his quest for those forms of play that are worthwhile, he excludes the abhorred puerilism from the realm of playfulness: “According to our definition of play, *puerilism is to be distinguished from playfulness*. A child playing is not puerile in the pejorative sense we mean here. And if our modern puerilism were genuine play we ought to see civilization returning to the great archaic forms of recreation where ritual, style and dignity are in perfect unison” (1955, p. 206, my emphasis). This quote illustrates Huizinga’s *prevalence* of morality over play as well as the elitism in his position (cf. Malaby, 2008; Deterding, 2013; Krul, 2006; Aupers, 2006).

Sociologist and play theorist Caillois is critical of Huizinga’s approach, claiming he is not so much concerned with play itself, as he is with the attitude that is involved with (or a precondition for) play: “His work is not a study of games, but an inquiry *into the creative quality of the play principle in the domain of culture*, and more precisely, of *the spirit* that rules certain kinds of games – those which are competitive.” (1961/2001; p. 4, my emphasis). If one agrees with this criticism, it might be said that the playful attitude – the “proper” playful attitude even – is at the core of Huizinga’s work. Besides this attention for the “spirit” of games, rather than

games themselves, Caillois is also critical of Huizinga's work on other counts; he finds his definition of games both too broad and too narrow. Too broad, because of the sphere of secrecy he creates around play, which includes rituals as well. Caillois excludes rituals from play, because they have a certain outcome.<sup>26</sup> He finds it too narrow, because of the exclusion of games of chance.

Caillois himself provides another definition of play, which is hardly different from Huizinga's in terms of the elements it contain. Most elements of Huizinga's definition occur in this definition as well, except for the "secrecy."<sup>27</sup>

Though Caillois does not literally discuss playfulness, his work is relevant for the study of it, because of his classification of games, in which he makes a distinction between "ludus" and "paidia" as two ends of the continuum on which play activities can be placed. He distinguishes four categories of games, namely: *agon* (competition), *alea* (chance), *mimicry* (mimesis) and *illinx* (vertigo) (Caillois, 1961, p. 15 - 26). Within these categories, it is possible to scale the activities along the lines of the ludus – paidia continuum. The latter, he described it as: "an almost indivisible principle, common to diversion, turbulence, free improvisation, and carefree gaiety. It manifests a kind of uncontrolled fantasy that can be designated by the term paidia" (1961, p. 13).

Opposed to this "frolicsome and impulsive exuberance" (p. 13) is ludus, which in a way *domesticates* paidia. This suggests that paidia, as a pure creative energy, come first, temporally speaking. It is from chaos that we build structure, as opposed to chaos that structure later on may seem (see also: Spariosu, 1989; Dixon, 2009). Ludus is structured, rule bound play. Caillois describes it as binding paidia "with arbitrary, imperative and purposely tedious conventions, to oppose it (paidia) still more by ceaselessly practicing the most embarrassing chicanery upon it, in order to make it more uncertain of attaining its desired effect" (p.13). This means that even though games classified at the ludic end of the spectrum are rule bound, these bindings do not have a structure that is comparable to "logical" or "reasonable" rules like traffic rules or law. These rules seems to exist merely to create the opportunity to play a game at all, which can be derived from Caillois' further description of ludus as being "completely impractical, even though it requires an ever greater amount of effort, patience, skill, or ingenuity" (1961, p. 13). This is similar to Suits' definition of a game as a voluntary attempt

at overcoming unnecessary obstacles (which will be discussed in section 3.5).

Play as *paidia* is free play then, in the sense that the play itself – within the activity – is not rule-bound. This does not mean there are no rules to establish the space in which this free play can occur, or there would be no need for the six elements of Caillois' definition. In that sense, the elements of both Huizinga and Caillois' definitions seem preconditions for play. If these are not met, we cannot speak of play proper. The discussion of Caillois' key terms reveals that playfulness and play do not necessarily go hand in hand, or this distinction would not be needed: *paidiaic* play is different from ludic play. The term "ludic" however, as used in the "ludification of culture" seems to be used to indicate the playfulness of culture in a *paidiaic* sense, more than its rule-bound structure.

A distinction that is currently being made in game studies is that between playing and gaming. Regarding the latter, both Dixon (2009), Deterding et al. (2011), and Deterding (2013) propose to a theoretical distinction between play and game and between playfulness and what – as a result of this distinction – can now be called "gamefulness." *Paidia* belongs to the former, as less predictable and more open to free improvisation. *Ludus* seems more connected to logical rules, that is say, rules that have some form of internal coherence and as such are (internally) reasonable. After all, Caillois does mention the "folly" of these rules when he speaks of "arbitrary, imperative, and purposely tedious conventions", which is completely "impractical" (Caillois p. 13). Where "playfulness" broadly denotes the experiential and behavioral qualities of playing (*paidia*), "gamefulness" denotes the qualities of gaming (*ludus*) (Deterding et al., 2011, p. 3).

Spariosu (1989) distinguishes between Apollonian and Dionysian play. With this distinction, he aims to exemplify how Apollonian play is governed by rationality and Dionysian is not. Spariosu analyzes the history of the play concept in Western philosophical and aesthetic thought. In his study, play and its different manifestations are the main topic of study. Dixon (2009) also distinguishes between an Apollonian and a Dionysian approach, but he applies it specifically to the aesthetics of play and games, with a specific focus on videogames.

Dixon states that both the Apollonian and the Dionysian are aesthetic principles: “They present worlds of illusion, the Apollonian is the world of dreams and narrative and the Dionysian is the world of intoxication and sensuality. The Dionysian recognizes that everything is transient and temporal and that fixed truths can only be hinted at via the Apollonian” (2009, p. 4). Dixon (2009) proposes that “there is *no continuum* between the experiences of gaming and playing; these are two separate aesthetic qualities both present during the playing of games” (2009, p. 1, *my italics*). Gaming refers to the Apollonian element, playing to the anarchic Dionysian element of the aesthetic experience. A tendency exists to call paidia “unreasoned”, or Dionysian play and “ludus” “reasoned” or Apollonian play.

This suggests the following ordering:

Table 7. Traits of Game and Play

Game	Play
Ludus	Paidia
Apollonian	Dionysian
Rational	Irrational

For playfulness, the distinction between ludus and *paidia* is relevant, as *paidia* seems to refer to the playful qualities of games or rather, the extent to which different types of games are inherently playful or not. Some scholars argue that the core distinction to derive from Caillois is basically that the one between “play” and “game”, “with the former remaining undefinable [sic] and the latter being defined as freedom limited by rules, or institutionalized play” (Spriosu, 1989, p.2). But there is difficulty here, since although the “ludus” that Caillois refers to might internally logical, it is not rational. In part, this is because play is itself excluded from the realm of the rational – as Caillois considers it unproductive, achieving nothing. (1961, p. 10).

### 3.2.2 PLAY AS CONSTITUTIVE OF CULTURE AND THE PARADOX OF LUDIFICATION

As discussed above, play and game are said to not have real life consequences (Huizinga; 1955, Salen & Zimmerman; 2004). They are often considered activities that take place outside the realm of ordinary life. Yet, there is more going on than “just play, as many

play scholars will also attest to. Some claim this boundary between ordinary life and play is not at all clear. Others demonstrate how “real life consequence” is relative, when your perspective on the world might change completely as a result of playing a game. Also, the notion of “serious gaming” debunks the idea of “inconsequential” play. The moral outcry over violent video games illustrates that many people at least *think* games are not without consequence. The million dollar projects for the development of simulation games suggest more than “just play” (see: GATE (n.d); Raessens, 2013), but also in playful protests by small action groups that aim for social change (cf. Greiner, 2010).

Deep concern for social issues can give rise to very creative and playful ways of drawing attention. One of the Guerilla Girls, a group of feminist artists that challenged the male dominated art world in a playful manner addresses this in an interview, saying: “We wanted to have some fun with our anger. Then it snowballed” (in: Crawford, 1995, p. 161). This resulted in a famous series of playful and witty protest posters ([guerrillagirls.com](http://guerrillagirls.com)). The ludification of culture suggests changes occur in the way everyday interactions take place. Mobile technologies play a role in the organizations of flash mobs and guerilla marketing aims to playfully capture audiences’ attention in order to enhance brand experiences.

Generally, theorists state that in play there is an absence from imposed rules (e.g. Barnett, 1991). But we witness forms of civic engagement which are highly playful and game like, yet also highly strategic and purposeful in relation to changing ordinary life and the discussion of the rules in order to permit more freedom or foster social change (Singhal & Greiner, 2008, Greiner & Singhal, 2009). Critics worry about the spectacle surrounding politics, which always had agonistic game-like elements, but now seems to have become a form of entertainment (Aupers, 2006; Kuitenbrouwer, 2014).

We have debating contests in which we call a winner. We evaluate this winner based not just on the content soundness of his arguments, but also on the *style* of reasoning, their wittiness and their talent for improvisation. The debates between contestants are preferably viewed and contemplated upon by an engaged citizen, ideally a human being that is free from manipulation and experiences freedom of choice in a situation that approaches

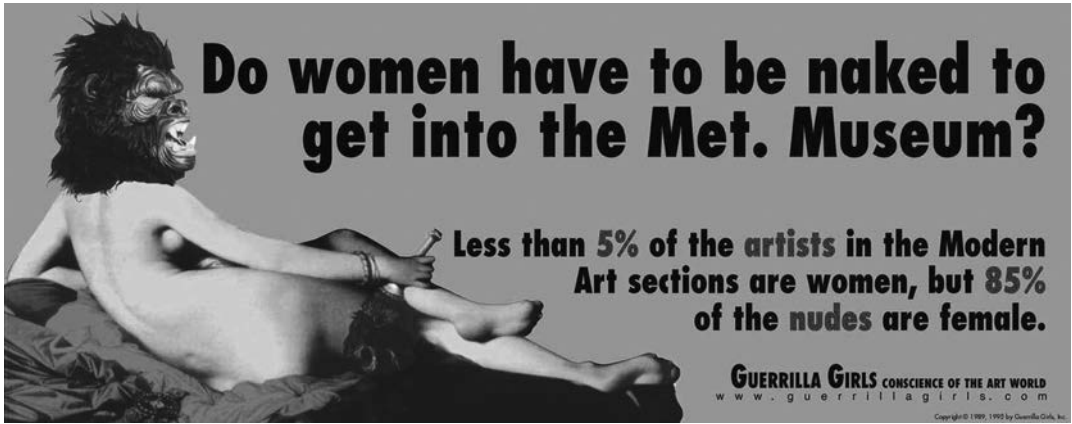


Figure 12. Playful Activism - Famous bus poster (copyright © GuerillaGirls)

Habermas' space for power free dialogue as much as possible (Habermas, & McCarthy, 1984): a critical, engaged agent, capable of making a responsible choice. A citizen who is also free from the pitfalls of self-delusion (Mele, 1987). Both play and rationality are important here, without being contradictory.

Two things are problematic about rationality, however. On the one hand, human beings do not behave as rationally as they might hope. The ideal of the rational citizen is under theoretical and empirical scrutiny. Psychological studies into human irrationality demonstrate our decision making process and our lines of reasoning are often informed differently (see: Ariely, 2008; Mele, 1987; Sternberg, 2002). On the other hand, one can wonder if rationality, specifically instrumental rationality, is a supreme value (cf. Taylor, 1989). The notion of instrumental or functionalist reason is criticized for ultimately leading to an authoritarianism that is rendered anonymous (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947; Habermas & McCarthy, 1984; Habermas, 1988/1992).

The question about the meaning of play and, subsequently, playfulness is in part a question about human nature (cf. Rodriguez, 2006). The Romantic ideal of authenticity that informs much of our thinking about "the self" (Giddens, 1991, Taylor, 1989) suggests that we are playful and creative by nature, yet lose our playfulness over time as a result of society's constraints. Huizinga distinguishes

between *homo sapiens*, *homo faber* and *homo ludens* (Huizinga, 1955, foreword; Henricks, 2006).<sup>28</sup>

Huizinga sees play – and according to Caillois’ criticism, specifically the kind of agonistic, socially manifested play in which one engages with the proper play ethos – as *constitutive* of culture.<sup>29</sup> He wishes “to show that genuine, pure play is one of the main bases of civilisation” (1955, p.1). This would mean we cannot understand cultural activities, in the broadest possible sense, if we do not understand “play” and “playfulness.” Huizinga wishes to show that his statement, that culture is born *in* and *of* play, “is more than a rhetorical comparison to view culture *sub specie ludi*” (1955, p. 5).<sup>30</sup> Viewing culture “in the light of play” entails accepting the conclusion “that civilization is, in its earliest phases, played. It does not come from play like a babe detaching itself from the womb: it arises in and as play, and never leaves it” (1955, p. 137).

Huizinga’s notion of *homo ludens* then, is to be seen as a valid alternative to *homo faber*: it is not in productivity, but in play that the full potential of human beings is realized. If we were to consider this alternative a valid perspective on the nature of human beings, worthy of serious analysis, we could transfer Habermas’ idea of reason as a regulative principle (1992) to play. We could then see Huizinga’s definition of play not so much as an empirical given, but rather as a regulative ideal. The way we may not encounter a truly power free dialogue, that same way we may not encounter a situation in which all these criteria for play are met. But this does not mean we could not use these notions to see whether we are perhaps approaching this ideal. This strand of thinking will be discussed in more detail in the section on Suits’ classic ‘The Grasshopper: Games, life and utopia’ (1978).

Sutton-Smith places Huizinga’s position in the rhetoric of play as power. He describes Huizinga’s position as one of “morphological parallelism between playful contests and the actual contestive conduct of politics, the law, scholarship, and the arts” (1997, p. 78). The distinct, actualized forms of culture appear through this opposition between play forms (playful play and actual context). This form of “playful play” refers in part to the rituals that shape cultural habits, where contests were a part of the rituals that - at least from the perspective of the participants of these rituals - influenced the course of the season and the growth of the crops (cf: Sutton-Smith, 1997, p. 78).

If one fully agrees with Huizinga, that culture originates in play, then culture “proper” cannot be anything but “ludic.” What then, is the added playfulness in culture as mentioned in the ludification of culture? Huizinga signaled that the plays spirit proper was on the demise. If there is indeed a ludic turn taking place right now, that may suggest a “re-turn” to the nobler spirit of play, more than a fundamental contemporary alteration of culture that has never been witnessed before. The ludification of culture however, *paidiaic*, as it appears to be, has no apparent agonistic components in it. Some also claim that there seems ever less room for play in society, both in the academic focus of elementary school programs, as well as in the focus on ever increasing productivity (cf. Robinson, 2011; Bodrova & Leong, 2003; De Koven, 1978; Brown & Vaughan, 2009).

## CONCLUSION

This section discussed Huizinga and Caillois notions of play in relation to culture as both an enabling and a constraining factor. The definitions provided by Huizinga and Caillois can be seen as pre-conditions for play. In that sense, for play to arise (at least ideally), the following conditions have to be met: that there is a time, a space and a freedom to play, along with a set of rules, an uncertain outcome and no special need to be filled by playing. This is not the same as stating they are also conditions for playfulness. Playfulness has been discussed here mostly as an adjective form of play, not as a potential opposition. Play is said to be separate from ordinary life, although we already encountered this thought in numerous criticisms. But using criteria for play as a way to establish the extent to which a play situation approaches a certain ideal of play (regardless of whether one agrees with this ideal), creates an analytical tool to make comparisons (as is done by several authors who contest these definitions themselves).

On the one hand, this is because these conditions are rarely entirely met, because the boundaries themselves are blurry: an educational game is a productive one, while it might still meet all the other requirements. On the other, it is because the organization of ordinary life allows space for playfulness in realms we would not necessarily designate as play spaces.<sup>31</sup> The concept of *paidia* is often referred to in play and game scholarship, but since Caillois meant it for use of the analysis of play and games, it is more difficult to apply to playfulness in ordinary life.

After a more detailed discussion of playfulness and what Sutton-Smith calls the ludic dialectic, the relation between playfulness and social order will be discussed, so the relationship with ordinary life becomes clear.

## 3.3 THE MESSAGE “THIS IS PLAY” AND THE LUDIC DIALECTIC

If one takes Huizinga’s perspective, culture can be seen as the result of play. At the same time, culture can enable or constrain the ways in which play and playfulness are expressed. It makes sense to distinguish between play and playfulness, but not in every situation. This section continues the discussion on the ambiguity of play, from Bateson’s perspective. It then moves on to a discussion on Sutton-Smith’s notion of the referential and ludic dialectic. In what Sutton-Smith calls the “ludic dialectic,” play moves into playfulness, away from its reference to what we call “real.” These dialectics rest heavily upon Bateson’s formulation of play as a form of meta-communication (1955).

### 3.3.1 THE MESSAGE “THIS IS PLAY” ACCORDING TO BATESON

Even if Sutton-Smith does not consider play and playfulness to be a duality *per se*, he does acknowledge the paradoxical, tautologous possibility of “playful play.” As he states: “Playful refers more to a mood of frolicsomeness, lightheartedness, and wit. But there is nothing fixed about the distinction, because play is also usually thought to include the playful” (1997, p. 147). Yet:

It is suggested here that these ambiguities of usage might be clarified by reserving the concept of playful for that which is metaplay, that which plays with normal expectations of play itself, as does nonsense, parody,

paradox, and ridiculousness. Playful would be that which plays with the frames of play (1997, p. 147-148).

In the rhetoric of self, he discusses this ambiguity in more detail, developing two dialectics that are involved in play, to wit: the *referential* dialectic and the *ludic* dialectic. All in all, it can be said that play is characterized on the one hand by the different rhetorics that make the discourse around play ambiguous. On the other hand, there is also *something intrinsically ambiguous about play itself*. To come to a better understanding of this specific ambiguity of play, it is relevant to first discuss Bateson's conception of this. Though Bateson's work does not uncover a difference between play and playfulness, the importance of his typification of play as meta-communication is important, and later on, will be connected to the tolerance of ambiguity.

In "A Theory of Play and Fantasy" (1955), Bateson sets out to discover the underlying (epistemological) principles for the development of psychiatric theory: how does the human mind operate when faced with logical incongruence? Our minds operate on levels of abstraction that are not only different from one another, but can also be at odds with one another. Bateson states that man's capacity for play may be at the heart of the development of his thinking skills. It is in the realm of pretense and imagination, for instance, that we are capable of projecting ourselves into an unknown future or where we have the possibility of questioning the world we are in in the first place. But this is not an easy feat, as paradoxes cause discomfort.

Two classic paradoxes that Bateson refers to are Epimedes and Russell's paradoxes. The paradox of Epimedes is of the kind "all Cretenzers are liars," which is an unproblematic statement that can easily be tested for its truth or falsehood, until more contextual information is added: Epimedes is a Cretenzer. This latter bit of information turns the statement into a self-reflexive statement, creating a paradox: if the statement is true, it is not. If it is not, it is. This is similar, but not completely equal to Russell's paradox. Paradoxes of this form are of the type of question: does the barber who shaves everyone who does not shave himself, shave himself? Although there is no formal solution to this paradox, it is possible to avoid it by making a clear distinction between categories (classes) and excluding this kind of self referentiality.

In play, this is not entirely possible, especially not in the ambiguous situation where it is not clear whether a situation, or rather, a message, is “play.” This is the kind that Sutton-Smith labels as the most ambiguous. Bateson distinguishes three levels of abstraction in communication and also three ways we have of expressing ourselves. These levels of abstraction start at the denotative level. Language is used to refer to something that exists in the world outside.<sup>32</sup> This is the level of “literal” reference: there is a cat in the real world and I can say that the cat is there.

The second level is that of meta-linguistic messages, where the message is about language, rather than the use of language to make a statement about the real world. Think of a statement such as: “Cat” is a funny word. The third level is that of meta-communicative messages, in which we are capable of making statements about the relationship between speakers. These are the kinds of messages that tell us how to interpret the other messages. The message “this is play” is a meta-communicative message.

This is where a typology in three types comes in, namely: a) mood signs, b) simulations of mood signs and c) messages which enable the receiver to discriminate between mood signs and those other signs which resemble them. To be able to communicate a meta-message such as “this is play,” means being able to simulate a mood sign in such a way that the other party understands this particular mood sign is a simulation. Bateson derived this observation from watching the play behavior of animals. Humans obviously are not only dependent upon mood signs themselves, but can express themselves verbally in ways that contain these meta-communicative cues as well.

The ambiguity of play then, lies in the denotation and negation of one and the same act: “more complex than the message ‘this is play’ – where “these actions, in which we now engage, do not denote what would be denoted by those actions which these actions denote”. The playful nip denotes the bite, but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite” (1955/2005, p. 317). What establishes the paradox is “that the messages or signals exchanged in play are in a certain sense untrue or not meant [...and...] that which is denoted by these signals is nonexistent” (1955/2005, p. 319).

Bateson likens the “this is play” message to the setting of a picture

frame, which marks off the boundaries of the message, both including what should be seen, excluding what – for the moment of interpretation – can be left out, and a handle on *how* to interpret what is now seen. He describes a “double framing” in the sense that the frame provides both a reference point for the denotative content of the message as well as a meta-communicative message, as an instrument to properly understand the message. If all things are clear, I know both what I see (how it is referred to: the map shows me the territory) and how to work with it (knowing how to interpret the map).

“This double framing is, we believe, not merely a matter of ‘frames within frames’ but an indication that mental processes resemble logic in needing an outer frame to delimit the ground against which the figures are to be perceived. This need is often unsatisfied, as when we see a piece of sculpture in a junk shop window, but this is uncomfortable” (1955/2005, p. 324). We prefer “avoiding the paradoxes of abstraction” (1955/2011, p. 324). Bateson can be said to have a cognitive approach to play. But this does not yet show how the ambiguity of playfulness comes about. To be able to move from the playful bite that is not a bite to the conception of playfulness as a character trait of a post-Romantic, modern self, first, Sutton-Smith’s conception of the referential and ludic dialectic will be discussed. The paragraph after that will discuss what statements about playfulness can be derived from the different rhetorics.

### 3.3.2 THE REFERENTIAL AND THE LUDIC DIALECTIC

Sutton-Smith discusses the difference between play and the playful both in the “rhetoric of the imaginary” and in the “rhetoric of the self.” Normally, if there is a distinction between play and the playful, this is in light of a difference between an activity and an attitude. A playful attitude is what accompanies a play activity. Yet, sometimes there is a tension between the two, and the playful can be disruptive of play. In the rhetoric of the imaginary, Sutton-Smith concludes with the statement that to play with the question whether or not something is play is itself the most ambiguous form of play. As mentioned previously, in rhetorics of the self, his concluding remark of this specific ambiguity is that “these ambiguities of usage might be clarified by reserving the concept of playful for that which is

metaplay, that which plays with normal expectations of play itself, as does nonsense, parody, paradox, and ridiculousness. Playful would be that which plays with the frames of play” (1997, p. 147-148).

Sutton-Smith introduces the notion of performance here as well, in the sense that play does not only have a cognitive component (in the sense of understanding the meta-communicative message “this is play”), but also a performative component: play requires action, too. In seeking a better understanding of this playing with the frames of play, and as such, coming to a “conceptualization of a structural and performance theory of play,” it is important to look at what Sutton-Smith calls “the referential and ludic dialectics” that mark a difference between a) the mundane and the virtual world and b) a move, within this virtual world, from play to playfulness. With “virtual worlds” Sutton-Smith does not refer to current, digitized online worlds whose “reality” we question. Here, “virtual” refers to the play world, which refers to the “real” world at the same time that it ambiguously does not. The way a playful bite is at the same time a bite and not a bite, that way the “unreal” world of play is at the same time real and not real. The “ludic experience” as such, is characterized by “incongruity and ambiguity” (1997, p. 200).

Historically speaking, there has been an epistemological preference for the “real” world in the duality of “the real and the unreal.” However, studies into the connection between culture and play have revealed that the story of the “real” world does not tell the story of “real” human experience. As Sutton-Smith puts it: “Now that we realize that human cultures are built out of imagination and fantasy, not just out of physical discoveries, the present duality of mundane and virtual is more appropriate. It concedes that the mundane and the virtual are both real worlds but in different ways, without in general privileging one over the other” (1997, p. 195).

Between the mundane world (everyday reality) that can serve as a model for play, i.e. provides the building blocks for play action, and what Sutton-Smith calls “ludic commentary” on this world, there is “a binary tension that, it can be argued, is the initial source of the dialectical enjoyment of play” (1997, p. 195). Play actions are actions in themselves, but at the same time, they are also actions about other actions and in that sense, the play is not only meta-communicative, but also a meta-action. This introduces the importance of “performance” into the discussion of playfulness.

Meanwhile, throughout the course of play, this initial incongruence (it is a modeled world and in that sense it is referential, but at the same time it is not identical to it) can transform from play into playful. In that way, it moves from a referential dialectic (though not identical, the reference of the virtual world to the real world remains present) to a ludic dialectic, where the player, in this meta-world with its meta-actions, can make a move from “sensible play” to “non-sensible playfulness,” and as such make a move from play into the playful.

The relationship between the mundane and the virtual transforms play leads to the play transformation, while the player is perfectly aware to be playing and is aware of the referential relationship between the one world and the other. Think here of the way play time allows for instance for the condensation of “real time,” by skipping the time our “pretend food” can fairly quickly “pretend cook,” without having to obey the time-constrained rules of actual cooking. Within the frame of the virtual world then, is a space for the performance elements of play – which are about meta-action, more than meta-communication, and as such is no longer about “representing the external world” (1997, p. 198).

Sutton-Smith has placed Huizinga in the rhetoric of play as power. There is little space in that rhetoric for the playfulness of the imaginary as Sutton-Smith describes it here. It is apparent, nonetheless, that culture is a condition in which both play and playfulness can arise. For play, culture is enabling through the agonistic components that Huizinga identified. For playfulness, culture can be seen as enabling when it allows space for the imagination. Although the way in which culture enables or constrains playfulness is likely to differ per culture, culture is certainly one of the conditions that need to be taken into account when identifying the possibilities for promoting playfulness. The other rhetorics also have implications for the meaning of playfulness and the conditions that restrain and enable it. The following section discusses these rhetorics and the implication of the rhetoric for the meaning of playfulness.

The previous sections have provided a broad outline of the distinction between play and playfulness, the distinction between play and game, and the role play has in culture. Along the lines of the seven rhetorics that Sutton-Smith distinguishes, the role

playfulness can have in these rhetorics, as distinct from play, was explored. The main arguments of Huizinga, Caillois, Bateson and Sutton-Smith have been put forward. They provided the analytic framework along which the three lines of exploration were formulated based on Giddens' notion of enabling and constraining conditions. This section did not so much reveal what the enabling and constraining conditions are, as much as it outlined the constraints of our thinking about playfulness if we see it as the opposite of seriousness. Language and discourse constrain our thinking about playfulness and as such, the possibilities we see. To a hammer everything is a nail,<sup>33</sup> so there is no playfulness to be found where we do not expect it or where we do not look. The rhetorics do not constrain playfulness itself, but constraint our study of it. The rhetoric we adhere (to), determines what we look for, and as a result, what we see.

## 3.4 SACRED, DIRTY PLAYFULNESS: A QUALITY OF INTERACTION

*“Sir, in my heart, I know I am funny.”*

Lt. Stephen Hawk  
*Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987)

Stutton-Smith highlighted the different ways in which play is ambiguous and “playfully playing with the frame of play” even more so. The rhetorics constrain what we look for when we research playfulness. Culture constrains the different forms playfulness can take. This connects playfulness to the organization of ordinary life and of everyday interaction and as such, to the topic of “social order” and the “social construction of reality” (Handelman, 1974, 1977; Turner, 1982; cf. Berger & Luckmann, 1967). “Social order” because studies on this topic discuss the way in which human actors/agents (Giddens uses both terms to designate the same thing [1984, loc. 263]) moving within the structure of society or engage with it in such a way that is changes. The “social construction of reality” because social order can be studied as a social construct: the “rules”<sup>34</sup> that constitute social structure – which in effect become reality – and the agents that enact these rules or generate new ones, are not random, nor are they pre-determined by either agent or structure. They are not “laws,” but rather routines and habituated sequences of action that together constitute society and social reality.<sup>35</sup>

One of the main questions regarding the topic of social order is “how” we arrive at it (Raffel, 2007). Some scholars place the primacy in the way society is structured; “social facts” determine people’s actions and outlook on life. This perspective is often criticized for its determinism. Others place the primacy in individuals and their interaction. Individual experience and action is the start of social order. This perspective is often criticized for

its subjectivism. In sociology, this is known as the micro-macro problem or the structure and agency duality.

This section combines elements of Goffman's theory of frames (1974) with elements of Giddens' theory of structuration (1984). Goffman's and Giddens' perspective is that they are neither structuralists, nor subjectivists. The value of Goffman and Giddens lies in their subsequent (complementary) views, in that they see social order as the result of the continual interplay of the interactions between people and their engagement with social structure. Giddens builds on Goffman to create a social theory that bridges the gap between structure and agency. Participation in this interplay is neither fully freely chosen, nor fully structurally determined. This implies that although the stability of social is practically achieved in continuous (routine) interactions, it is also subject to change - sometimes consciously commenced, sometimes unconsciously transformed.

This section therefore discusses Goffman's notion of *framing* and *keying* (1974) and Giddens' notion of *routinization* and *ontological security* (1984). Giddens draws on Goffman's studies of identity management in social encounters. This provides a basic framework for analyzing everyday interactions. His discussion of the topic of ontological security (and "trust" in reference to Garfinkel) builds a bridge between social structure and individual engagement with that structure. His theory illustrates that neither psychology nor sociology alone can resolve the pressing issues that need to be analyzed differently in modernity.

### 3.4.1 GOFFMAN ON FRAMES AND TRANSFORMATIONS

"Frames" play a role in these continuous interactions. This is where Goffman's work is relevant for understanding the relation between playfulness and social order. Goffman (1973) uses the term "frame" for the basic elements that constitute the organization of experience of situations in such a way that we find them both meaningful and understand what is expected of us. He states: "I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them" (1974, p.10). A frame

helps us answer “what is going on here” and – though not in a lawful sense as in a “code of conduct” – provides guidance on how to act accordingly. When I enter a hospital to visit a friend, the frame that organizes the experience is vastly different from entering, for instance, a theme park with that same friend. The conventions of a frame establish both epistemological, but also normative rules: I may shriek in exhilaration from riding a rollercoaster, but although I may be just as exhilarated if my friend turns out to be okay, I am likely to refrain from shrieking right then and there. In their capacity to organize experience, frames are important both for how much room for playfulness is present as for the form playfulness may take (based on Sutton-Smith’s notion of playfulness as “play with the very frame of play,” this means the original frame is the building block).

Goffman distinguishes between primary frames and secondary frames, known as transformations. A frame is an institutionalized type of situation that we come across often and that – in a sense – provides the script for that situation. This can range from having dinner in a restaurant, waiting in line for grocery shopping, entering one’s place of work, attending classes. A transformed frame (or keying) is a *modulation* of a primary frame: it looks and feels similar, but is precisely not the same. In spite of its great formal similarity, its meaning changes significantly. The slightest exaggeration in someone’s facial expression or tone of voice can indicate someone means what they say ironically. Rules and rule-following are essential in the establishment of frames.

There are not only rules that govern our behavior in primary frames, but, for the capacity to modulate a primary frame, there are also rules that govern the transformation of primary frames. Goffman distinguishes two kinds of transformations: fabrications and keys. A fabrication is a way in which participants of a social situation “will be induced to have a false belief about what it is that is going on” (Goffman 1986: 83). They are covert (to at least some participants) and belong to the realm of strategic interaction.<sup>36</sup> A key, a term, just like modulation, derived from transformations in musical ladders, is overt. Keys are “the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else” (Goffman, 1986: 43-4). Connecting this to Sutton-Smith’s suggestion that playfulness entails a play with the frames of play, leads to four kinds of frames

for play and playfulness:

1. Play itself can be a primary frame: there are “institutionalized” forms of play, where we know what is expected of us<sup>37</sup>. E.g. the category “board games” is clearly framed so you do not have to know a specific board game, to understand what the frame “playing board games” denotes in terms of material artifacts, but also “attention, perception, understanding, experience, motivation, emotion, action, and communication” (Deterding, 2013, p. 13).
2. We can transform a primary frame into a play frame (keying): an ordinary activity can retrieve new meaning by adding meta communicative cues to the activity to indicate it is now a play activity. E.g. while waiting for a red traffic light, a playful glance and an overt “on your marks” starting position on a bike can invite the other biker to a brief speed contest (which would make it a “spontaneous gamelike interaction” (cf. Deterding, 2013, p. 243). These transformations can be playful or gameful.<sup>38</sup>
3. We can playfully transform the play frame while being in the frame: in a way that is sometimes clear and sometimes ambiguous to participants. This can be done in a playful or a gameful manner as well.
4. We key play in an instrumental way, transforming play into work or education. This transforms the primary play frame into an exotelic goal-driven activity, comparable to what Statler et al. (2011) call a “paradox of intention”, where we are purposefully trying to be without purpose in order to enhance our intended purposes at a later time.

This paragraph addressed what this means for an understanding of playfulness as a quality of interaction. As March indicated, playfulness can be seen as temporary relaxation from the constraints of behavioral consistency (1976). This implies that the consistency we are normally supposed to display is part of the basic material from which we can establish a “play frame.” The building

blocks of the primary frame are relatively consistent over time and understood by the participants of a face-to-face interaction when they establish “what is going on here” and act accordingly. The transformation of a frame involves a meta-communicative activity of establishing “rules about rules.” Playfulness can be seen as the keying of what Goffman calls a primary frame. In some situations, playfulness is a form of excellent rule breaking.

### 3.4.2 GIDDENS ON ROUTINIZATION AND ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY

What is relevant here is Giddens concept of *routinization*. He defines this as: “The habitual, taken-for-granted character of the vast bulk of the activities of day-to-day social life; the prevalence of familiar styles and forms of conduct, both supporting and supported by a sense of ontological security” (1984, loc. 7585).

Routinization is what puts the “ordinary” into everyday life. And with it, our expectations and as such our sense of trust regarding what might happen next. We are sensitive to breaches in these expectations, the interruption of daily routines: “They indicate that the prescriptions involved in the structuring of daily interaction are much more fixed and constraining than might appear from the ease with which they are ordinarily followed” (1984, loc. 950). What is ambiguous then, is that some forms of play express the desire to break away from what is familiar, while at the same time, only familiarity with what we see enables us to make sense of our world. (This is one of the reasons play and exploration are not always considered to be each other’s equivalent: the lack of familiarity which results in exploration may actually prohibit play – cf. Costello & Edmonds, 2007.) We want play to be different from ordinary life in such a way that it is no longer routinized, but not so different that it becomes nonsensical.

When scholars claim play stands outside of ordinary life, it stands outside of it in the sense that it is not “routinized” (even if we can have a “play routine” or develop play habits). The interruption or the break that play can provide from the ordinary is not an interruption on an ontological level – it would not be any fun if it were.<sup>39</sup> Play does stand apart from routine in the sense that by establishing a play frame, we actively create a time and space within the “normal

space” of our routine interaction and in this act of “making special,” we play (cf. Deterding, 2013).

Tolerance of ambiguity, to be discussed in more detail in the upcoming sections, can be connected to what Giddens calls “ontological security.” If we consider “ambiguous situations desirable” (see section 2.6 and 2.7), this can help “in curbing the sources of unconscious tension that would otherwise preoccupy most of our waking lives” (1984, loc. 285). Giddens defines “ontological security” as: “confidence or trust that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity” (1984, loc. 7571). In *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991) he defines it quite similarly: “A sense of continuity and order in events, including those not directly within the perceptual environment of the individual” (1991, loc. 4442). Ambiguous situations have the potential to disrupt this sense of continuity, thus creating a possible breach in our sense of security.<sup>40</sup>

This is important in relation to the factors under which playfulness occurs, i.e. the enabling and constraining conditions. Extreme insecurity, as a form of ontological crisis, in many cases, is likely to constrain playfulness.<sup>41</sup> Ontological trust on the other hand, the presence of trust indicating an absence of extreme insecurity, is an enabling condition which he connects to “emotional inoculation against existential anxiety” and which provides a “protective cocoon” (location 80 and 716).

The concept of ontological trust is relevant for the study of playfulness, because of the way playfulness is connected to ordinary life. While “play” is often constructed – though problematically – as standing outside or ordinary life, this is not fully the case with playfulness. Playfulness lingers on the edges of the boundaries more, as a “threshold” between different worlds.

### 3.4.3 THE SELF DEVELOPS IN PLAY, SAY BATESON, GOFFMAN AND SYMBOLIC INTERACTION

Giddens draws on Goffman’s notion of co-presence in his discussion of the reflexive self monitoring that takes place in these smallest daily interactions.<sup>42</sup> We have these very subtle rules that constitute

what Goffman calls “the interaction order” (1983), that help us not look like an inconsiderate fool (or a brute, or a simpleton) when we are in a social setting. Co-presence – face-to-face interaction between two or more people in each other’s (physical) vicinity - is related to framing, as the primary frame establishes the kinds of interactions that are expected of the participants.

Goffman’s notion of framing is derived from Bateson and can be seen as an elaboration of it.<sup>43</sup> Bateson placed the origin of meta-communication in play, and as such, man’s capacity for symbolic communication originates in play. The message “this is play” is a meta-communicative message. This makes play *symbolic* activity, or rather: it places the origins for our capacity for symbolic action in play (cf. Rodriguez, 2006). To be able to meta-communicate a message like “this is play” requires, no matter how primary, symbolic understanding – understanding that the one gesture or utterance actually means something else, even if its meaning is largely referential. You have to understand that pretense is *possible* before you can pretend anything, which says that you have to have an understanding of this world before you can alter any of the meanings that you have already derived from this world<sup>44</sup> (as discussed in 3.3.1). As Rodriguez states: “where there is play, there’s also ‘meaning’” (2006, p.2).

Play can be seen as the beginning of our sense of self, that is: our capacity for understanding relations with others and their expectations. We can imagine the other’s response and develop possible courses of action based on this. This allows strategic responses in anticipation of the other’s behavior. Because of this, imagination, individual consciousness and the capacity to reflect on our actions are also important elements of our behavior. For Bateson, attributing meaning to gestures and signs is largely dependent on the context in which a gesture or sign is made.<sup>45</sup>

On the one hand, the transformation from a primary frame into a play frame, chronologically speaking, comes after the establishment of a primary framework. This is a capacity that adults who already have knowledge of primary frames have. As a result, they can play with these frames. On the other hand, the establishment of primary frames can itself be seen as a result from childhood play. This is at least the position that Symbolic Interactionism takes on play: role playing games of children play an important role in the

development of frame-specific roles, role expectations, and from that evolves a stable notion of self as a set of role expectations and experiences a “generalized other” has of us. As Deterding summarizes: “Free imitative play provides experiential access to the inner attitudes of the behaviours of various roles” (Deterding, 2013, p.39). We give cues to others to get them to notice the frame we are in (e.g. the play frame). This means frames do not just organize experience cognitively, but also affectively: we learn not just how to react to situations, but also what accompanying mood is appropriate (aside from the appropriateness of the expression of them).

As Skard & Bundy put it: “In play, cues are exaggerated and thus easier to learn. Furthermore, people do not need language to learn about play cues, making infant-adult play and excellent early medium for learning to give and read social cues” (2008, p. 73). This suggests play has a part in the way social reality is constructed.<sup>46</sup> Children, in play, learn to take the perspective of a “Generalized Other” (Mead, 1934). In that sense, role playing is constitutive of selfhood, which in its essence is a social construct, i.e. can only be built in connection the immediate people in our social surroundings with whom we engage in dialogue.

The practical accomplishment of this is worked out in more detail in symbolic interactionism – which as a main tenet holds that “people act toward things, including each other, on the basis of the meaning they have for them” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2 quoted in Snow, 2001). In symbolic interactionism, it is not in the individual himself, but in the relation of the individual with the people who surround him. And as Deterding (2013) says, “social order itself is grounded in conscious meaningful action which arises from social interaction, always open to deviation and creative change” (p. 36). We derive meaning from the gestures we see in others and from the role playing processes in which we are capable of taking the perspective of the other person. We then make this meaning our own so we can both understand and anticipate his or her actions. This means play and playfulness are enabled only by the presence of and interactions with others.

Deterding (2013) stresses that, especially in frame theory, it is important to distinguish between play as a way of learning about the primary frames that help us understand the world around us and play in a more mature or adult sense, where we play to transform

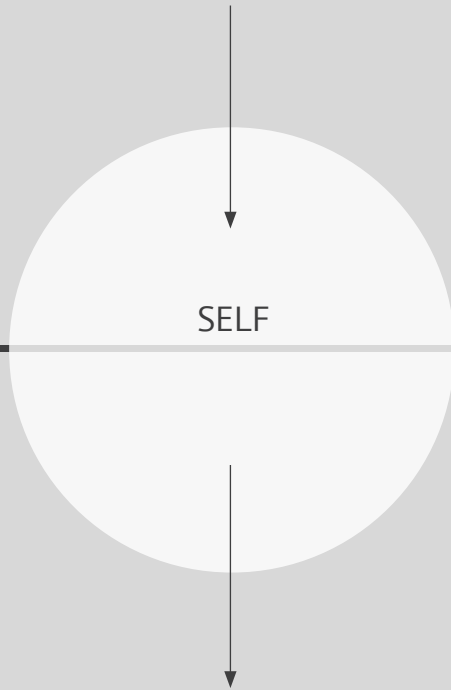
those frames or where playing is a transformation of those frames<sup>47</sup>. This has implications for what playfulness is for adults, beyond their psychological propensity: “[A]dult playfulness is a type of transformation of activity, characterised by certain transformation rules: exaggeration, varied repetition, explorative recombination, non-functional performance, and metacommunication, such as a play smile” (Deterding, 2013, p. 149).

The analysis of play as meta-communication is relevant for the description of playfulness in adults, as it demonstrates the difficulty of transferring (the measurement of) the play experience of young children to that of adults.<sup>48</sup> Children have not yet developed their interpretation of the world; they have not developed yet certain skills that you may expect adults to already have if they set out to play. So, for the enabling and constraining conditions of playfulness in young adults, they do require a basic *knowledge* of what it is they are playing with. As Miller (1973) states, play is not (just) an activity itself, it is mostly the way in which an activity is organized, or “framed” as Goffman would say. For Goffman (1974) playfulness falls in the category of play as a form of “make believe”, which involves the transformation of a primary frame, known as a “key.”

Frames organize our experience and help us make sense of “what it is that’s going on here.” Vital – but sometimes overlooked (as discussed in Deterding, 2013) – in Goffman’s conception of frames is that the term refers to both individual, subjective experience as well as the way frames are organized and as such, capable of producing that experience. It is both the structure of our interactions and our experience of those interactions that creates the frame. Our experience is “organized,” meaning that, although we are not determined to experience the world as the frame we are in dictates, we are in all likelihood inclined to experience them as such. Our individuality is not really all that individual. It is precisely the common ground of frames that makes it possible to, for instance, exchange aesthetic experiences and discuss them in a meaningful way. Playfulness may partly be a personal characteristic, but it is enabled by our interactions with others, both in its development in childhood and in its expression in adulthood.

CHILDHOOD PLAY  
(IMITATION & EXAGGERATION)

- establishment of primary frames in play (empathy / embodiment)
- development of sense of self through social interaction (Generalized Other)



ADULT PLAY  
(KEYING & FABRICATIONS)

- transformation of primary frames
- expression of sense of self (impression management)

*Figure 13. The self develops through play and then expresses itself in play*

### 3.4.4 GIDDENS ON PRACTICAL AND DISCURSIVE CONSCIOUSNESS: CAN I BE ROUTINELY PLAYFUL?

Frames refer to the organization of experience, both situationally and psychologically. This experience is not fully determined by the frame, yet routinization does create habitual repetitions of types of interaction, which place barriers on deviating from the norm that has risen from these interactions. As Goffman suggests, even the deviant assumes the interaction order will enable his deviance from it, by being precisely as normal as usual. Our consciousness of this interaction order is important in the perpetuation of it. Although we competently interact with one another, we are not always aware of the competence displayed since this usually requires conscious deviance or overt conformity.<sup>49</sup>

Giddens distinguishes between practical consciousness and discursive consciousness.<sup>50</sup> Practical consciousness can be equated with tacit knowledge – knowing what to do and how to do it, without being able to put them in words in such a way that others understand. It is different from our unconsciousness, in the sense that the lack of access to this kind of consciousness is not the result of some form of inner repression. But at the same time, we often are reflexively aware of what we are doing: human agents have “the capacity to understand what they do while they do it” (1984, loc. 265). They are not drones or “judgmental dopes” (cf. Garfinkel, 1967).

Discursive consciousness, then, is the part of our consciousness is capable of reasoning about our actions and reflecting on our selves. However: “The line between discursive and practical consciousness is fluctuating and permeable, both in the experience of the individual agent and as regards comparisons between actors in different contexts of social activity” (1984, loc. 610). Giddens attributes the often anxious responses in Garfinkel’s “experiments with trust” (1967) to the “essential significance” of the “apparently minor conventions of social life” (1984, loc. 282). Sutton-Smith described a similar upset in situations where people display nonsensical behavior (1997, p. 141).

This distinction between practical and discursive consciousness is relevant for the analysis of playfulness/playful behavior, because it allows for the distinction between forms of playful behavior that

are part of routine interactions and forms of playful behavior that are conscious, intentional and break from routine or help establish a new routine. We can make the same joke to a colleague every morning. Although the joke might become lame at one point, we would generally still consider the joking behavior playful.<sup>51</sup> This is different from for instance a therapist who consciously uses humor to establish a rapport with a new client, though even in those cases, one can “routinely deploy humor and playfulness” as a way of interacting with others. Ontological security is sustained by routinization, which belongs to the realm of practical consciousness: “Routine drives a wedge between the potentially explosive content of the unconscious and the reflexive monitoring of action which agents display” (1984, loc. 282).

However, it is also possible to be routinely, yet consciously and discursively playful, to help others break away from their routines. Some consider Patch Adams the world’s first Cliniclown. Adams chose to bring joy to his interpersonal relationship by being a clown. It is his way of connecting with people. He is also a medical doctor. His clownish approach to healthcare rises from his personal convictions of what health is and what health care should be. It is an approach he established based on his own experiments with the social spaces of human interactions. This indicates that his approach is not just “fun-based” but also based on skill, trial and error: “inquiry-based.” Although his behavior might lead others to think he is mainly goofing around, he is highly capable of explaining his “foolish” behavior in a discursive manner. About this, he says: “I consider myself a designed person – meaning I don’t perform very many unintentional acts. I’m trying to be a person who might inspire passion. I get good feedback, which is why I do it. You can do the same thing for yourself. Get involved” (Adams & Mylander, 1998, p. 187). Adams’ actions, as such, are seriously motivated by the desire to fight hospital bureaucracy by playful interventions and to alleviate the pain, mental or physical, of patients by humor (patchadams.org, 2009).

### 3.4.5 SYMBOLIC ACTION & SOCIAL ORDER: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

Handelman described the intimate relation between play and reality as follows: "Because play is first and foremost experiential, whether personal or social, and reality does not exist without its experiencing. In the creation and practice of realities of play, the imagination is crucial. Without the cognitive, the capacity to imagine realities, there is no play, just as, without the practice of experience there is no reality" (2001, p. 11504). Handelman focuses strongly on the relation between play, ritual and social order. Although he claims play is by definition an unserious activity and the social order "denoted by play is 'non-existent' in terms of the official reality of a setting, it nevertheless is experienced by participants for the duration of play, and subverts official reality" (1974, p. 67).

Handelman observed the behavior of a number of participants in a role playing session, in which they were mocked because of their social status. These participants, through play, created a way to "criticize this order and offered alternatives which reversed the hierarchy of the workshops roles so that the players were periodically enabled to assume whatever they perceived as their rightful central positions in the moral order" (Handelman, 1974).

Turner connects play to the capacity to rearrange social order as well: play is seen as an enabler for change, or minimally a questioning of authority: "The wheel of play reveals to us [...] the possibility of changing our goals and, therefore, the restructuring of what our culture states to be reality" (Turner, 1986, p.31). Turner's formulation also suggests that there is an ongoing interplay between culture and (groups of) individuals: "Since play deals with the whole gamut of experience both contemporary and stored in culture, it can be said perhaps to play a similar role in the social construction of reality as mutation and variation in organic evolution" (Turner, 1986, p. 32).

In Turner's view, play is a liminal, subjunctive phenomenon. Subjunctive refers to so-called "as if" thinking: we have the capacity to imagine *how* social reality might be different from what it is. He uses "liminal" to refer to the typical second phase in "rites of passage" in which group members are secluded from

their group and have their status as group members temporarily lifted. The three phases typically are “separation, margin (*limen*) and aggregation” (Turner, 1964, p. 47). The first and third phases are “more closely implicated in social structure than rites of liminality,” while this liminal phase does hold a lot of power for change and subversion. Turner labels this “anti-structure” (1964). The “initiate” or “neophyte” is not only temporarily “invisible,” but also “structurally indefinable,” because she is in the process of becoming.

Since the structure of society is determined, in his view, by the structure of our positions, to be without position, is to be “betwixt and between” societal structure. Within this phase, outside of society’s structure, there is nonetheless an inner structure, composed of a strong hierarchy between instructors and neophytes and great equality among the neophytes themselves. The symbolism surrounding this marginal state has two distinct characteristics: death and birth. Death, because of the previous position the neophyte cannot return to and birth, because of the opening towards a new kind of being appearing at the end of the initiation: a new position in the structure. As such, “their condition is one of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of all the customary categories” (1964, p. 48).

Other symbols characteristic of the liminal state are pollution and sacredness. Pollution refers to the confusion of common, clear, “clean” categories that can be contaminated by contact with the liminal. Turner refers Douglas’ work *Purity and Danger* (1966) which reveals how the concept of pollution “is a reaction to protect cherished principles and categories from contradiction” (quoted p. 48). Another way to establish this exclusion is by making these “particularly polluting” transitional beings sacred by ascribing super powers to them. Two final qualities then, are androgyny and (sacred) poverty. But, although the structure of the liminal situation itself may be relatively simple, it is nonetheless culturally complex (p.51).

The liminal stage however, is also a potential moment for *reflection*. “Liminality is the realm of primitive hypothesis, where there is a certain freedom to juggle with the factors of existence” (Turner, 1964; p. 53). This connects “play” with the notion of subjunctivity, as a particularly liminal phenomenon. Playfulness has a possibility to disrupt (“pollute”) the categories with which we organize everyday

life and the “social order” (taken as the repeated interaction and normative expectations in social routines) with it. In play, as Handelman says, we “shift into a conditional or subjunctive sense of being, one that opens toward a multiplicity of possibility” (Handelman, 2001, p. 11504; cf. Malaby, 2008). This multiplicity of possibility can create an increased attractiveness of one of the other options (other than the role awaiting after the initiation).<sup>52</sup> Turner describes *playfulness* as “a volatile, sometimes dangerously explosive essence, which cultural institutions seek to bottle or contain in the vials of games of competition, chance, and strength, in modes of simulation such as theatre, and in controlled disorientation, from roller coasters to dervish dancing-Caillois’ ‘ilinx’ or ‘vertigo’” (Turner, 1986, p. 33). These “bottling” strategies suggest the subversive potential of playfulness. Playfulness may upset social order.

Yet, this potential is not easily visible, since “invisibility” is exactly one of the characteristics of liminality. Handelman (1974) sees play as intrinsically connected to social order, but states that this is often obscured because play is “usually relegated to a peripheral location in the ordering of adult social life” (Handelman, 1974, 1977, p. 158). This is mainly due to the attitude towards play as being something “unserious” and this gets in the way “of thinking about play as a systemic mode of meta-communication and therefore as central to social life” (1977, p. 185). In Handelman’s view “... contexts of play are meta communicative in their relationship to social order: play communicates to its participants not only how to play but how such playing relates to social order.” It is possible to criticize social order from the “unreality” of play, because while play may for instance mirror social order – and in that sense be referential – it is not social order itself.

Broad as the topic of social order may be, some authors have specifically discussed the extent to which *playfulness* is important in this (Garfinkel, 1967, Goffman, 1974). In anthropology, Turner (1982, 1986) and Handelman (1974, 1077, 2001) have discussed the theme in more detail. Since the core of this thesis is playfulness, the theme of social order is not given further attention), this chapter follows Goffman’s description in *Relations in Public* (1971). It serves as the outline for the way “social order” will be dealt with in this section. This description is as follows (underscored items receive separate attention):

“The dealings that set any set of actors *routinely* have with one another and with specified classes of objects seem universally to become *subject to groundrules of a restrictive and enabling kind*. When persons engage in regulated dealings with each other, they *come to employ social routines or practices*, namely *patterned adaptations to the rules* – including conformances, by-passings, secret deviations, excusable infractions, flagrant violations and the like. These variously motivated and variously functioning patterns of actual behaviour, these routines associated with ground rules, together constitute what might be called a ‘social order’” (Goffman, 1971: x, my emphasis).

The routine with which these regulated dealings take place and the enabling and restrictive nature of these ground rules is important. Although some suggest Goffman is a micro-structuralist (DuCharme & Fine, 1994), he does not place *all* the power on the way the frames of our everyday encounters shape our interactions. That we are embedded in a social order does not preclude change, nor does it give us only the freedom to play but not to alter this reality. We influence the way they are shaped, we just do not do so with full comprehension, attention or intention (hence the importance of practical consciousness).

“Reality” is generally not considered a playful event – or, as Jane McGonigal puts it, reality is that which is not optional (2006). As Henricks puts it: “Perhaps no academic field confronts these contradictions and ambiguities quite as directly as the study of human play. For play is the laboratory of the possible. To play fully and imaginatively is to step sideways into another reality, between the cracks of ordinary life. Although that ordinary world, so full of cumbersome routines and responsibilities, is still visible to us, its images, strangely, are robbed of their powers” (p.1). But at the same time, that ordinary world is rather powerful.

The different rules of what is called “the interaction order” are not just functional rules, they are also *normative* rules, or rather,, that is what they become: the interaction order is also a moral order. “Constrained by the ritual structure of social situations, actors are obliged to defer to the demands of the moral order” (DuCharme & Fine, 1994, p. 92). Deviant acts, as long as they can be rendered deviant, are still affirmative of the ground rules. Nonsensical acts appear most disruptive. To break the rules in an incomprehensive

manner is to disengage from this moral order, rendering one a lunatic, psychopath or unsetler of ontological security. At the same time, our *perception* of the alterability of the social construction of reality enables our playful engagement with it. As symbolic interactionists say: our definition of the situation governs our actions in that situation and the symbolic meaning of those actions. The primary frame itself can constrain the keys and transformations.

Viewing deviance as nonetheless affirmative of the norms of social interaction, reveals that the transformation from a primary frame into a play frame can take place in both a socially accepted manner and a socially deviant manner. Yet, this demonstrates, to some extent, that there is something inherently positive about “playfulness.” If you are playful, you still behave in such a way that others understand that that is what you are doing – nonsense is only possible if it is preceded by sense, otherwise we would not be able to identify it as nonsense. We need a frame of reference to see nonsense. Calling someone or certain behaviors “playful” means the playful person has at the very least succeeded in their meta-communicative intent: the “play with the frame of play” has been successful (regardless of what possible strategic, exotelic motivation may have influenced the behavior).

It seems we use the word “playful” for styles and interruptions that are communicatively successful – in the sense that the deviation of the rule nonetheless affirms the rule.<sup>53</sup> When we label someone “playful,” they may have been somewhat disruptive, but not in such a socially awkward way that this person will be considered someone ultimately unreliable, untrustworthy and as such irrational and unsettling. Intention is important here though, because it is also possible to have been labeled playful *without* having had any intent of meta-communicating a message like “this is play.” This way, by labeling something “playful,” the other party may be disengaging with the potentially disruptive content of the message, an avoidance strategy for listening.

### 3.4.6 RULES AND RULE FOLLOWING: PERMISSIBLE DEVIANCE AND EXCELLENT RULE BREAKING

Goffman has written extensively about rule following. He does not distinguish between a rule and a norm (a norm is itself a rule as well). He does distinguish “substantive” from “ritual” rules. Substantive rules concern our immediate physical well-being and safety in a way that ritual rules do not, meaning, not immediately. Ritual rules are symbolically expressive. Rule following is not about blind conformity, it is a competence we develop as social actors: to assess a situation properly and act according to the frame that matches our assessment (and that we have available, that is part of our repertoire). Rules and rule following are helpful in understanding how this competence is demonstrated: we build or alter social order in every interaction. “The embodied, situated, and sequential accomplishment of an action as intelligibly ‘following the rule of the frame’ is the process through which a framing is situationally established or shifted” (Deterding, 2013, p. 76).

This indicates that playfulness is not just an attitude, play mood or character trait, but also in part a social competence: we need skills to be playful. This brings us to the point where rule following needs to be examined in more detail. How is rule following practically accomplished? Raffel (2007) states that it is relevant to distinguish between (mere) rule following and excellent rule following, in which excellent rule following moves beyond that which is “merely orderly.” The example he uses is that of a dinner party, in which the guests and the host are not merely attending and organizing the dinner party, but are set on having an excellent time. The conformity to social rules in excellent rule following is a form of motivated conformity: “The persons concerned must see the need and value of what is expected, of what the rule requires. Only that can give them a sense of the worthwhile difference that doing the thing could make and only that could inspire them, not matter how competent they are and how expected it is, to achieve excellence at it” (2007, p. 334).

This demonstration of competence in rule following *and* motivation to do so is highly relevant to playful encounters, in the sense that (successful) playful interactions are meta-communicative balancing acts: “Playful encounters are even more demanding and precarious than might otherwise appear to be” (Ducharme & Fine, 1994, p. 97).

Participants in play have to adhere to two kinds of rules: *rules of irrelevance* and *rules of engrossment*. Rules of irrelevance refer to the set of elements that are to be excluded from play and those that are to be included: what is to be neglected, in order to establish the play frame? This is in part accomplished by our imagination: should my chess pieces be stolen, I can easily create paper notes representing the chess pieces and play the game nonetheless. Their physical form in this example is irrelevant.<sup>54</sup> Rules of engrossment are more difficult, because they contain a paradox of spontaneity: the involvement has to be “just right” to sustain the play frame – to display what Goffman calls “aliveness-to-the-situation.” The effort to engage in play has to seem natural and spontaneous. “In forcibly manufacturing engrossment, the player would not be able to *be* spontaneously involved in playing due to his excessive concentration on *becoming* spontaneously involved in playing” (DuCharme & Fine, 1994, p. 97). Through reflexive self-monitoring, the proper amount of involvement is displayed.

Consider the comic character of Lt. Steven Hauk in the movie *Good Morning, Vietnam*. Lt. Hauk is a polka loving radio dj in Vietnam competing with the “truly” funny character of Adrian Cronauer. Hauk’s sense of humor leaves the viewer with an awkward feeling, as every attempt he makes to be funny causes a socially embarrassing situation. As a character, he is comically tragic because of his own inability to see that of all the things he is, funny is not one of them. In an act of self defense he cries out that of course there are people that appreciate his music and jokes, exclaiming: “Sir, in my heart, I know I am funny.” We may consider ourselves very playful individuals, but if we do not have a reflexive sensitivity to our surroundings that warn us when our behavior borders on awkwardness so we may engage in “face saving,” the expression of this playful self misses its mark.

Mockus’ example is another story about this. Even if he subjects himself to potential ridicule by showing up in a Superman costume, this mere act itself demonstrates his awareness of the rules. He did not wake up in the morning as a confused soul and, not knowing what to wear, took a blind guess and chose this outfit, the way a sleepy professor might put on two different socks or wear a shirt inside out. He transforms the routines of the primary frame of “law enforcement” (“combating illegal advertising”) and the rules that usually govern this frame. With a playful keying, he does not

establish a play frame but messes with the boundaries of the frame. His intentional deviance from the primary frame creates an ambiguity and makes people wonder what they are looking at. His deviance is more than “permissible,” more than a joke to pass the time in between a series of serious interactions. Moreover, his deviance actually affirms the rules of social order and aims to re-establish a norm with new means. By breaking the rules of the primary frame in an excellent way, he helps establish new possibilities of engaging with the frame, providing new scripts for behavior of others.

Rule following builds ontological trust through routinized action. A recurring joke every morning may have lost its novelty and surprise in a cognitive sense, but can still be quite effective in establishing rapport and be affirmative of affective bonds.<sup>55</sup> That then, is the level on which routinized playful behavior can be predictable yet playful. The playfulness of for instance a therapist working with someone who is traumatized, should not be disruptive in an ontological sense (cf. Akhtar, 2011; Bornstein, 2011). Excellent rule following builds enjoyment upon that trust: “aliveness to the situation.” Rule breaking can take the form of permissible deviance or of excellent rule breaking, depending on motivation as well as perception. Permissible deviance is communicatively successful in being an accepted short break away from routine. Excellent rule breaking breaks through routinized action without disrupting ontological trust.

### 3.4.7 REASONABLE RULES: FOLLOWING, BREAKING AND COMMENTING ON RULES

The term “rule following” is associated with logic and reason in the sense that rules are often formulated from a perspective of logic – i.e. rules of language, truth and meaning are often about referential meaning, more than relational meaning. Combinations of rules that together constitute a rule system, are often said to have a “logic”, in the sense that these rules are interconnected and together are capable of generating an outcome that is either desirable or not. If we say that we know how to “game a system,” it means we understand its logic and are capable of using it to our advantage. Most often, this includes the unexpected consequences of rules, the loopholes and backdoors that not everyone is aware of.

Giddens states that the rules related to “the constitution of meaning” and rules related to the “sanctioning of modes of conduct” (1984, loc. 853) are similar, but *not identical to game rules*. The latter are generally *less diverse* than the rules we encounter in society.<sup>56</sup> In society we encounter formal rules in the field of law, which explicate the rights and obligations of citizens. These help formally sanction undesirable behaviors and actions, ranging from crimes to misdemeanors. And we encounter social rules, whose transgressions have consequences for being considered a fully competent participant of this society. These are in part “the way we do things,” the frames that have been built from routines more than rules and regulations, but that nevertheless become connected to social sanctioning because of their habitual character.<sup>57</sup>

Earlier on in this section, we made a distinction between three forms of frame relating to play and playfulness: 1) play as a primary frame itself, where participants know “play is what is going on here”; 2) the keying of a primary frame into a play frame, in which participants know “this is an allusion to the primary frame and I understand this is now play;” 3) the (playful) keying of either a play frame (as primary) or a transformed frame (already secondary) to an ambiguous situation where the challenge is to establish what is going on here and 4) the instrumental keying of a primary play frame. The third may be most likely to disrupt our sense of ontological security, because of its ambiguity. This may also be the site where commenting on social order, more than (mere) referencing as Handelman described may invite reflection on that order or disrupt common conceptions of either play or social life and the space where they merge.

Earlier on in this chapter, the topic of rationality was discussed in relation to play rules. Paidiaic play is the most playful kind of play, which can be categorized as Dionysian while ludic play is rule bound and can be considered Apollonian. However, this rationality can be contested. Caillois suggests that the rules of ludus are not rational. It is also possible that the inner logic of the game is incompatible with the outer logic of – for lack of a better word – “reality.” Problems that are analyzed in, for instance, systems thinking and/or simulation gaming analyze situations in which the different steps of participants are all rational, but the overall outcome is ludicrous. If it makes sense to comment on social order via play, for instance by mirroring a rationality that

has irrational outcomes (e.g. the tragedy of the commons or the prisoner's dilemma are rational steps, but that suggests it is possible to address the ambiguity), it may be a very rational act to come across as irrational, in order to playfully break through rules that are unreasonable. This means that even though the behavior may seem erratic, the rational strategy behind it is such that an unreasonable rule is broken. Exaggeration (thinking something through to the most extreme possible outcome – as in a subjunctive mode) is also a strategy for pointing out unanticipated consequences of one's intentions.

Furthermore, in some cases a playful resistance to rules does not have to be a resistance to rule based play per se (as would be imaginable with someone who is notoriously non-conforming to any kind of rule), but just to play by specific rule sets. This may invite a player to playfully resist these rules, but not out of disregard for rules altogether. Deterding (2013) proposes a way out for the analysis of games:

If playfulness is a paidic keying and gaming a ludic frame, a simple act of combination suggests that there are also ludic keyings and paidic frames. The former we encountered as *gameful keyings* – spontaneous transformations of a given activity into an autotelic contest – the latter as *playing* – a specified type of activity socialised adults usually only engage in with children (Deterding, 2013, p. 234).

Games, with their rule structure, may provide a sense of relief, of temporary security where in ordinary life there is none. In games, we may also accept a rule (or a task or assignment in the game) if it is not immediately clear why exactly this is needed. There is an unspoken trust that the design of the game will reveal this reason to us later on. But when we take the metaphor of play and games seriously for the analysis of ordinary life, we cannot assume this similarity with the trust we may have in a game's design: there is no reason to assume anything is there for a reason and has been put there with the intent of allowing a player to enjoy the game. Different kinds of policy are about intentional design, be it of urban spaces, infrastructure or even social interactions (democracy allows for a "design" of society to some extent), but the core of these designs are not informed by what players enjoy.<sup>58</sup>

The ideal of “man the player” is said to be a Utopian ideal.<sup>59</sup> Should we take the “ludification of culture” as a given, this indicates we now live in a timeframe that sees a return of play and playfulness in relation to the constitution and the practices of culture (Huizinga, 1955; Raessens, 2006, 2013). The utopian aspects that had a brief revival during the ludic sixties seem to have undergone a transformation to consumer society (Krul, 2006; Achterhuis, 1998). Some scholars are critical of the new ways of commercialized play that seem culturally empty upon close inspection (Duncombe, 2007). If we are being “real” with ourselves, there are more important things to do than engage in these trivialities. A utopian ideal is not attained by having fun, or is it? The next section discusses how we might be able to distinguish different kinds of playfulness, depending on the convergence between the situation we would like to be in and the extent to which we are in that situation. In *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia* philosopher Bernard Suits (1978) indicates that if we ever were to attain a desired end state we could truly call Utopia, playing games is what we would be doing there. If all other needs were met, we would think of challenges worth pursuing, without having actual problems to overcome. The upcoming section explores what that might mean for playfulness.

## 3.5 SEPARATING THE PLAYFUL FROM THE LUSORY ATTITUDE IN BERNARD SUITS' CONCEPTION OF UTOPIA

*"G: Quite the contrary, Skepticus. I believe that Utopia is intelligible, and I believe that game playing is what makes Utopia intelligible."*

Bernard Suits  
*The Grasshopper*

The previous paragraph discussed some elements regarding the difference between excellent rule following and excellent rule breaking, both of which are connected to personal motivation on the one hand, but also on the constraining and enabling elements of social order in which rule following or rule breaking are enabled or constrained by the primary frame. Playfulness can be seen as an extension of the play spirit required for playing a game, as much as it can be a disruption of playing. At the same time, playfulness can be a way of commenting on social order, outside a "typical" play situation as much as it can be a dismissive strategy for ignoring critical comments. Even though it is not necessary, there can certainly be strategic (hence *exotelic*) ways in which playfulness is a strategy to create a change in or awareness of the way primary frames organize experience. Play can be a primary frame as well as a transformed frame. Playfulness can be seen as a keying of a frame.

Whether we are successful in doing so (keying) depends on personal skill and society's openness to this approach. We can playfully comment on the rules of society and alter them over the course of a number of altered interactions, but we cannot escape having to engage with the rules of society in one way or another. But we can *opt to do so* in a playful manner. In between rule-bound play (in which we freely choose the constraints to enable playing) and rule-bound society (in which we live in constraints that we have not freely chosen), we have another choice, though perhaps in part a metaphoric one, to see this rule-bound, constraining and enabling

society as a play space and *to treat it as such*.

What could help in establishing a demarcation criterion for “playing” what we call “ordinary life,” is imagining an ideal situation and deriving some analytical principles from it. The concept of Utopia, as described by Bernard Suits, helps to understand how play and playfulness can sometimes be in line with each other and sometimes be at odds. Suits’ definition of a game is: “[A] voluntary attempt of overcoming unnecessary obstacles” (1978). If we lived in a society in which *every* possible need was met, what we would be doing is playing games. Suits states that taking part in any activity that is to be considered “playing a game” requires a *lusory* attitude: an attitude in which one accepts the rules of the game, precisely because these rules make the activity of the game possible in the first place (as a form of “happy conformity”).

Suits himself equates his lusory attitude with a playful attitude<sup>60</sup> but – as the previous section demonstrated – the attitude with which we comply to game rules does not have to be the same attitude as a playful stance, if by playful we mean we are disrupting the frame of play. If playfulness is considered a specific form of mastery over social rules, a playful attitude is not necessarily the same as a lusory attitude: a playful attitude can be the subversion of a lusory attitude, depending on the context in which some form of self-reflexive rule following is required. Under what conditions then, is Suits’ lusory attitude the same thing as the playful attitude, and when is it not?

### 3.5.1 USING THE CONCEPT OF UTOPIA FOR A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT: WHAT WOULD WE DO IF...

Bernard Suits (1978) decided to continue a job the philosopher Wittgenstein left unfinished, which is to define what a game is. Wittgenstein used the indefinability of games to illustrate his concept of family resemblances. Different authors have used this description to illustrate the difficulty of defining play (e.g. Spariosu, 1989). In addition, Suits discusses what playing games means for our definitions of Utopia (1978). He contends that it is actually very possible to determine what a game is, because when we are gaming, for the fun of being able to play, we build barriers that make it less easy to realize our goals: “My conclusion is that to play a game is to

engage in activity directed towards bringing about a specific state of affairs, using only means permitted by the rules, where the rules prohibit more efficient in favour of less efficient means, and where such rules are accepted just because they make possible such an activity” (Suits, 1978; p. 184).

From a normative viewpoint, say in a running contest, it is against the rules to hit your opponent on the head to slow him down, even though that would increase your own chances of winning. If we connect games to the morality of the world outside of games, to Suits it is apparent that game rules are never ultimately binding, moral rules are. Gaming, therefore, is not about problem solving in actuality, but about solving the problems of self-imposed obstacles. There is no real problem, but we create one in order to play. Suits also describes the kind of attitude that is required to play games: the *lusory* attitude (from the Latin *ludus*, game (1978; p.35)).

Up until this point, the worries of ordinary life and the joys of play are theoretically separated. But as the previous sections demonstrated, we see games that are being used for real problem solving purposes. Analytically speaking, Suits would describe this as a potential mix up between what he calls *lusory* and *prelusory* goals of a game and the potential “life goal” that does not have much to do with the game itself. The *prelusory* goal is the kind of goal which describes the state of affairs that is to be brought about by the game (e.g. in a running contest a runner needs to step over the finish line prior to another runner) and the *lusory* goal is the kind of goal that relates to the definition of the kind of game that is being played (to bring about this state of affairs is to win and the *lusory* goal of the game is to win). If we wish to learn something from a game, the learning part is not really part of the goals of the game itself, nor of the game itself. One might say it is an intentional side effect – but it is not the game (unless we design it to be so).

Suits calls the attitude that is required for playing games the *lusory* attitude. This attitude has to do with the acceptance of the so-called constitutive rules of the game. It is an attitude needed for playing games because the acceptance of the rules is what makes it possible to play the game at all: “... games require obedience to rules which limit the permissible means to a sought end, and where such rules are obeyed just so that such activity can occur” (1978; p. 183). Before a potential distinction between a *lusory* and a playful

attitude can be further explored, Utopia and the conformity of the *lusory* attitude need to be examined more closely.

### 3.5.2 IN UTOPIA, THE MAGIC CIRCLE IS ALL ENCOMPASSING<sup>61</sup>

In *The Grasshopper; Games, Life and Utopia* Suits indicates that if we ever were to attain a desired end state we could truly call Utopia, playing games is what we would be doing there. If all other needs were met, we would think of challenges worth pursuing, without having actual problems to overcome. “Suits proposes an analysis of playing a game and then argues that game-playing is the supreme human good, since in the ideal conditions of Utopia, where all instrumental goods are provided, it would be everyone’s main pursuit” (Hurka, in Suits, 2005).

In the previous section, Suits definition of a game and his notion of (*pre-*)*lusory* goals and the *lusory* attitude have been discussed. Suits’ argument is built dialogically, using Aesop’s Grasshopper and two of his companions – Prudence and Skepticus – to engage in an attempt to define games and the meaning of Utopia. The Grasshopper would “like to begin by representing the *ideal of existence* as though it were already instituted as a social reality. We will then be able to talk about a Utopia which embodies that ideal – that is, a state of affairs where people are engaged only in those activities which they value intrinsically” (1978; pp.166 – 167).

Suits elaborates briefly on all the wealth and riches that would then be available to everyone. “Let us, then, further imagine that all possible interpersonal problems have been solved by appropriate methods” (1978; p. 167). People would no longer strive for love, attention, or material goods. This, of course, calls the morality or our situation into question – a morality he is quite clear about in the prior section where he defines games: moral rules preside over game rules. However, “morality is relevant only the extent that the ideal has not been realized, but there is no room at all for morality in the ideal itself, just as there is no room for revolution in the ideal which inspires revolutionary action” (1978; p.169).

It is important to consider that Suits presents this as a thought experiment. The world portrayed here may seem rather void of all

the potential struggles that not only make life difficult but also worthwhile and that allow for personal growth. On the one hand, his portrayal of Utopia follows logically from his reasoning: “We then appear to be left with game playing as the only remaining candidate for Utopian occupation, and therefore the only possible remaining constituent of the ideal of existence” (1978; p. 171) but at the same time he also mentions: “What we have shown thus far is that there does not appear to be anything to *do* in Utopia, precisely because in Utopia all instrumental activities have been eliminated.” Playing games is really *the only thing* left to do, as it is an “activity in which what is instrumental is inseparably combined with what is intrinsically valuable, and where the activity is not itself an instrument for some further end. Games meet this requirement perfectly” (1978; pp. 171 – 172).

This means that playing games really is the only thing to do. If we now connect Huizinga’s Utopian ideal of play to Suits’ idea of Utopia, representing playing games as the ideal of existence, this would mean there is no need for a distinction between a *lusory* and a playful attitude (as was discussed in the previous section). Huizinga’s sacred space of play, *the magic circle*, would encompass all of Utopia. The conformity required for sticking to constitutive game rules is unproblematic, because in a supposedly ideal situation, all rules are fair. Nevertheless, Huizinga was a pessimist and Suits turns out to not exactly hail the potential realization of the Utopia he sketches. He identifies the potential dissatisfaction of this prospect himself. Once the fulfillment of Utopia is in sight as a starting point for our reasoning, we see that this would lead us to do things very similar to the things we are doing right now, even though we are not in Utopia at all: “Come now, Grasshopper, you know very well that most people will not want to spend their lives playing games. Life for most people will not be worth living if they cannot believe they are doing something useful, whether it is providing for their families or formulating a theory of relativity” (1978; p. 178).

We are now left with the question how playfulness then relates to play, in situations where the *lusory* attitude and the playful attitude are not the same thing and where – next to the magic circle<sup>62</sup> – we do have our ordinary life with its binding moral rules, its struggle and our ways of deviating from the norms. By connecting the Utopian ideal of play as put forth in the notion of the magic circle to the development of human beings as beings capable of pretense, we

could say play lies at the heart of our potential for moral reasoning.

For moral reasoning, it is required to think of ourselves as endowed with free will as even the deliberation about the consequences of not having free will, takes place in the realm of the conceptual). We have to believe our moral notions make sense and that it is meaningful to discuss them. We build our lives in dialogue with the people that surround us (Gergen, Schrader & Gergen, 2009; Taylor, 1985, 1989). It is in the conceptual realm of pretense and imagination that we are capable of projecting ourselves into an unknown future. Generally, the magic circle is conceptualized as a space where we voluntarily create an illusion: a suspension of disbelief. We know what we do is not “for real”, yet we are willing to pretend and basically, play along. But not only disbelief is suspended; we also temporarily lift the moral barriers we usually impose on our actions. In play, we can safely act out what it would like to be a murderer. In games, we can explore what it would be like to have a fully instrumentalist stance in warfare.

It gets tricky when we start saying that play has also a transformative quality about it. It is ironic that this is largely demonstrated from the functionalist perspective: we play, we learn. In therapy: we play, we heal. In simulating gaming: we play and we master the underlying dynamics of a system and are now able to make strategic decisions (Duke; 1974; Duke, Geurts & Vermeulen, 2007). This means that although we enter the magic circle on a voluntary basis, lifting the moral imperatives that bind us in daily life and enjoying ourselves, we cannot be certain that we come out the same way. If play is transformative, what we really mean with “no consequences for real life” is that for that present moment, in which we are playing, we are not in physical danger and our house is not burning down, we have no engagement that bind us morally or practically. But other than that, who we may have become after play is quite unpredictable. Nevertheless, that is the person we take with us as we leave the conceptual space and return to “ordinary life.”

### 3.5.3 AVOIDING UTOPIA: PLAYFULNESS AS AN AMBIGUOUS GUARD OF BOUNDARIES

Conceptually speaking, to be free means to be able to reason about the consequences of our actions so that having a choice also has a meaning. For that, we need a conceptual space in which we can also explore what the scenario of an undesirable action looks like. If we do not have some liberty to choose that undesirable action, the meaning of our moral freedom is empty. The conceptual space the magic circle provides would then truly be only an escape from an apparently rigid system that does not allow people any free choice or action. Though we need the magic circle, we cannot promise in advance that we will not change our minds about the moral assumptions we had before. What bubbles up in the magic circle, can become real.

There is a quest for purity that underlies several strands of Utopian thinking (Achterhuis, 1998). This quest may be morally righteous and is often well-intended (Rorty, 1989), but at the same time it denies the complexity and ambiguity that is framed by some as an inherent part of ordinary life (Rorty, 1989; Taylor, 1985; 1989, Turner, 1982). While it seems a valid point to state that play may be conceptually different from ordinary life, we see several forms of playfulness in our everyday engagements. Some of them can be considered frivolous – we may sway to the beat of a lovely song without wanting to change the world – and some can be about liberating humor, in situations where more freedom and a breakaway of the constraints of a certain situation is desired.

On the one hand, Suits illustrated that we can frame play as a legitimate ideal of existence. In that abstract situation, the magic circle and “reality” would be the same and hence a playful attitude and a *lusory* attitude would be the same. However, this abstract situation is not as desirable as it would seem at first glance. In boundless play, we would have boundless freedom. But boundless freedom ultimately is no freedom at all, as there is no urgency left in the moral issues we have to weigh (Taylor, 1989). The risk of the magic circle – liberating though it may be – is that it can also lead to moral rigidity and dehumanizing tendencies (cf. Bandura, 1999). We need playfulness, not only to make sure we do not take ordinary life too seriously, draining it from fun and joy, but also to mirror

the potential rigidity that can happen when we take play too far, as DeKoven (2009) puts it:

Sometimes, this is a very hard lesson. Because we want to make the game as real as we can. And we forget who we're playing with or why. And we hurt each other. [...] To be reminded what games are really all about. Because otherwise, we forget. And the games get too important. And we play too hard. And we break (DeKoven, 2009)

Although “disengaged playfulness” would be a contradiction in terms, we may be deeply committed to finding an escape from our responsibilities. Obviously, several forms of the things we find entertaining provide us with a much-desired escape: it may be the core of self-delusion that we do not happily seek out our blind spots ourselves. It is important, therefore, to also look into the personal conditions that enable or constrain playfulness: what does it mean to be a playful self? The following section discusses the research that has been done on playfulness as a personal characteristic.

## 3.6 FROM CULTURE TO THE PLAYFUL SELF: THE MULTIFACETED CONSTRUCT OF PLAYFULNESS

*Tiny ambiguity during an intake:*

*Q: Do you consider yourself a self-reflective person?*

*A: No.*

**C**uriosity, uncertainty, exploration, imagination, illusion, cognitive spontaneity, freedom to suspend reality, creativity, effectance, internal control, framing, physical activity, physical spontaneity, sense of humor, pleasure, joy, arousal, pleasure, intrinsic motivation, joy, unpredictability, liberty, social spontaneity, social interaction, social and verbal flexibility.

These are only some of the words that have been used to describe the components of playfulness by several authors (discussed in: Guitard, Ferland & Dutil, 2005, p. 11). While “play” in general has been studied extensively in children (cf. Sutton-Smith’s discussion of the rhetoric of progress) playfulness specifically, has been operationalized for empirical study by Lieberman (1966, 1977), Barnett (1990, 1991); Skard & Bundy (2008), and Schaefer & Greenberg (1997). The following sections are about “the social and psychological self as agent of playful performance and product of cultural codes” (Bogen & Spariosu, 1994, p.x).

Since Lieberman’s first psychometric studies, additional studies have been performed to, among other things, assess the validity of the playfulness metrics in general, to extend the use of these measures to adolescents and adults, and to explore further uses for the measurement of playfulness. Fields of application are, for instance, the effect on car sales via the assessment of the playfulness of sales representatives (Maxwell, Reed, Saker & Story, 2005), the effect of the playfulness of teachers on the playfulness of children in the classroom (Graham, Sawyers & Debord, 1989) and the playfulness

of therapists in establishing a secure relationship with their clients (Schaefer & Greenberg, 1997; Akthar, 2011; Bornstein, 2011).

More recently, a number of studies on playfulness and academic achievement have been performed (Proyer, 2011, 2013). Additionally, there is an increase in attention for playfulness across the life span (Yarnal & Qian, 2011, Barnett, 2013). Studies into the relationship between playfulness and creativity have been performed by Tegano et al. (1990) and Fix & Schaefer (2001). Work specifically on adolescents and young adults was published by Barnett (1997, 2007), Staempfli (2007) and more recently Proyer (2011) and Proyer et al. (2013). In design research and game design, especially in the field of Human Computer Interaction, studies into playfulness are related to the building of playful *experiences*. Playfulness is explored as “a desirable user experience or mode of interaction” (Deterding et al, 2010, p. 2). Although quite a few studies have been performed in this field, there is little consensus about the meaning of playfulness. One very relevant study from the HCI approach has been the development of the so-called PLEX framework, in which 22 different kinds of experiences are distinguished and explored further in research (Korhonen, Montola and Arrasvuori, 2009) (see [appendix 8](#)).

This paragraph opens with a comparison of the way several definitions of playfulness are operationalized in the field of psychology ([3.6.1](#), [3.6.2](#) and [3.6.3](#)). From that, it moves on to a review respectively ([3.7.1](#), [3.7.2](#) and [3.7.3](#)) about playfulness and creativity; ([3.7.4](#) and [3.7.5](#)) about playfulness and tolerance of ambiguity (ToA). From the discussion of the construct of tolerance of ambiguity (ToA), a connection is made to Giddens’ notion of ontological security (1984).

The gregariousness that Huizinga (1955) wrote about as an element of puerilism can be seen as a positive component of playfulness in some psychological descriptions of playfulness (Lieberman, 1966, 1976, 1977; Starbuck & Webster, 1991). Lieberman (1966) initiated the psychological research in playfulness, looking for differences in the styles in which children play which she labeled “playfulness in play” (1966, p. 1278). The first operational definition of playfulness was “spontaneity in physical, social and cognitive functioning, manifest joy, and sense of humor” (1966, p. 1278). It turned out to be related to “divergent thinking factors of ideational fluency, spontaneous flexibility, and originality” (1966, p. 1278). She writes: “There is a quintessence of play that transcends play itself and

becomes a personality trait of the player” (1977, p.7). This means that even if later in life play is no longer the main occupation of adolescents, young adults or mature people, playfulness becomes part of the personality. Play goes, while playfulness remains.

Playfulness is related to academic achievement (Proyer, 2011). Early research into playfulness by Getzels & Jackson (1962) that Lieberman refers to revealed that children with high intelligence and high creativity are more playful than children with high intelligence and low creativity.<sup>65</sup> This playfulness is displayed in so-called “divergent thinking.” Children with high creativity and low intelligence “did not know how to channel their playfulness productively” (1976, p. 198). Playful behavior is different from “impulsive and disruptive behavior” (Lieberman, 1976, p. 198). This shows the inherently positive connotation of the word “playful.”

### 3.6.1 PRODUCTIVE PLAYFULNESS

Although playfulness is present in all kindergartners (a “unitary trait” [1977, p. 198]), this is not in the case in high school children. In them, it was possible to distinguish between “academic” playfulness and “social-emotional playfulness.” The former is considered “teacher approved” (p. 198) and consists of the following dualistic traits: “physical alertness-physical apathy, enthusiasm-discouragement, intellectual curiosity-intellectual stagnation” (1977, p. 198). Achievement orientation is also addressed in this. “Social-emotional playfulness” consists of the following dualities: “physical mobility-physical rigidity, spontaneous joy-tenseness, humor-lack of humor, group orientation-self-orientation, friendliness-rejection, play-conscientiousness” (1977, p. 198).

After Lieberman’s measurement of playfulness as “spontaneity in physical, social and cognitive functioning, manifest joy, and sense of humor” (1966, p. 1278), different measures have been developed (see: Guitard, Ferland & Dutil, 2005; Henry, 2008; Proyer, 2011; and Barnett, 2013) to assess playfulness in children. These are (a) the Children’s Playfulness Scale, by Barnett (1991, 2007), who refined Lieberman’s original questionnaire and tested measures both for children (1991) as well as young adults (2007), (b) the Test of Playfulness by Bundy (Hess & Bundy, 2003; Skard & Bundy, 2008), and (c) the Assessment of Ludic Behavior (ALB), by Ferland

(1997), followed up by Messier, Ferland, Majnemer (2008), which is accompanied by interviews with the parents. The importance of play in the lives of children is taken as a given in these studies. Play scholar Stuart Brown recently introduced the term “play deprivation” and describes it as one possible cause for certain kinds of violence (American Journal of Play, 2009). This does not mean playfulness in higher education or in the workplace is considered as important.

Skard & Bundy also include the supportiveness of the environment as a factor in playfulness. They (2008) propose a four component model, consisting of three characteristics of playfulness: intrinsic motivation, internal control and freedom to suspend reality (p. 73). They later added the importance of “frames” to their model of playfulness. Following Bateson, they state: “In play, cues are exaggerated and thus easier to learn. Furthermore, people do not need language to learn about play cues, making infant-adult play and excellent early medium for learning to give and read social cues” (2008, p. 73).

Lieberman’s (1976) distinction between “teacher approved” styles of playfulness and forms that are disruptive is a difficult, but relevant one, especially for the field of higher education. On the one hand because playfulness in adolescents and young adults is expressed in a less obvious manner compared to young children. On the other hand, because of the expectation of maturity among this age group and the surrounding culture, which does not label playfulness as something positive. As Miller writes: “Play is less overt in adults because most of them have had to adjust to living in a society that expects them to be ‘mature’” (1973, p.94). Yet, highly playful individuals seem better prepared to meet the challenges this society places on them, to the extent that they call it a life skill (Proyer, 2011; Staempfli, 2007). Playfulness is not only found to be positively correlated to academic achievement in some studies, but also coping skills and emotional well being (Proyer, 2011; Staempfli, 2007; Hess & Bundy, 2003).

If playfulness has positive effects, then how do we create a proper space for it? Lieberman call this a “vexing question”: “to know how and when [playfulness] is appropriate and productive, particularly in the classroom” (1977, p. 198). This is an important question not just in the classroom, but also for adults in the workspace (Glynn & Webster, 1992; Starbuck & Webster, 1991). There are instances in

which play and playfulness are clearly relevant, productive elements of work, for instance for people who work in the creative industries (Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006; Florida, 2003; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) but this goes for people who are “highly skilled experts, such as analysts, consultants, or researchers” as well (Starbuck & Webster, 1991, p. 72). It is important then, that the environment is conducive to playfulness: “For play to be effective, people must want to participate and must have requisite play skills. In addition to this energy and inspiration, play typically requires shared knowledge” (Henricks, 2006, p. 95).

Starbuck & Webster (1991) discuss the productivity of play in more detail. While they follow Lieberman’s description of playfulness (1976), they also highlight some problematic aspects of it: the five variations in playfulness (cognitive, humorous, joyous, physical, and social) will result in forms and styles of playfulness that are “roughly as diverse as the variations in activities, and as difficult to describe” (Starbuck & Webster, 1991; p. 81). They indicate *why* playfulness is so hard to define: it is “a characteristic trait of some people, but it is also a temporary state of mind that almost everyone manifests on occasion. Passive playfulness mainly involves reframing so that activities seem more playful; active playfulness makes a player an engineer of her activities” (1991; p. 81).

Starbuck & Webster’s (1991) definition of play is relatively narrow. They define play “simply as an activity that produces both immediate pleasure and involvement. An activity is not playful if it pleasant but uninvolved, or involving but unpleasant” (1991, p. 73). They do not distinguish between play and playfulness, other than playful being the adjective to the kind of activity they consider to be play. They do distinguish between *types* of play, *properties* of play and *goals* of play. These “goals” are especially interesting, since this includes a purpose to play that is often explicitly excluded from the definitions (cf. Caillois, 1961; Brown & Vaughan, 2009). In total, they identify nine different *types of play*, each with their own evoking conditions, goals and properties. These types are: a) therapeutic play, b) diversion, c) creative play, d) exploration, e) mimicry, f) puzzle solving, g) competition, h) riding and i) observing (1991, p. 77). When comparing these to Caillois fourfold distinction of games, it is clear that competition belong to *agon*, mimicry belongs to *mimicry*, riding belongs to *illinx*, while chance (*alea*) does not seem to have a place in this, other than perhaps under diversion.

In their overview, Starbuck & Webster (1991) distinguish different properties of play, such as fantasy, imagination, formal, structured, repetitive, informal, challenging, tension and focused on stimuli. They place fantasy and imagination – said by Sutton-Smith to be most connected to playfulness as separate from play – only under the heading of therapeutic play, diversion, creative play and observing. These properties do not belong to exploration, mimicry, competition or riding. They also connect *goals* to these different types of play. Pleasure, according to Starbuck and Webster's definition of immediate pleasure and involvement, is a main goal of play. Other goals are more extrinsically oriented: competence, reduction of anger, learning, superiority, mastery, extreme sensations or second hand sensations.

Starbuck & Webster (1991) mention that there are some ambiguities to the idea of play as something productive. To explain this, they focus on the use of microcomputers in the workspace. These are illustrative because of their ease of use and tailorability. They are also capable of providing immediate feedback, which is what make them pleasurable to engage with, but possible also very distracting. Depending on the nature of the work and the type of productivity that is demanded, the results from playful interactions may or may not be considered useful.

The field of Human Computer Interaction also deals with the tension between the function of computers and the pleasure we derive from them. In HCI this is described as a tension between utilitarian and non-utilitarian properties of design artifacts. These are often both useful *and* appealing and as such permit playful experiences. Based on the theoretical framework developed by Costello & Edmonds (2007), Korhonen, Montola & Arrasvuori (2009), developed the so-called PLEX framework for the analysis of PLAYful EXperiences (2009; Lucero & Arrasvuori, 2010). Lucero & Arrasvuori (2010) have defined playfulness “as a state of mind, and as an approach to an activity [...] playfulness is foremost a state of mind that provides *enjoyment*” (2010, p. 36).

In order to better understand how to design interactive art so that playful behavior may emerge, Costello & Edmonds (2007) looked into the different categories of pleasure related to play behavior. They see exploration as a precursor to play. What is relevant is that they consider boredom a cue for moving back from play behavior

to exploratory behavior. In exploratory behavior, two questions are important: 1) “what can this object do?”, and 2) “what can I do with this object?” The distinction between ludus and paidia comes to the fore again here, in the sense that 1) contains the restraints as the result of a rigid structure while 2) permits free movement. Lucero & Arrasvuori add to this a distinction between designing for playfulness and designing for games: The latter is involved with creating systems with rules and content” (2010, p. 37), while designing for playfulness involves “designing for minor actions that people can perform impulsively and with little effort, and that provide enjoyment” (2010, p. 37). This way, playfulness is understood as “spontaneous enjoyment arising from an action” (2010, p. 37).

In Costello & Edmunds’ (2007) overview of pleasures related to play, the categories are similar to other categories that have been related to playfulness as competition, fantasy and creation (see above). They also add categories that are more ambiguous compared to the psychological description, such as: difficulty, danger and subversion.<sup>64</sup> In the PLEX framework that Montola et al. (2009) derived from their work, they also add cruelty, submission and suffering. These are very different from for instance the fun oriented Playfulness Scale for Adults that Greenberg & Schaefer (1997) developed.

### 3.6.2 THE MEASUREMENT OF PLAYFULNESS IN ADOLESCENTS AND (YOUNG) ADULTS

For the measurement of playfulness in the workplace and playfulness in education, different measures for adolescents and adults have been developed. Barnett (2007) emphasizes that “efforts to more systematically characterize the playful person and to capture these apparent playful qualities have been more successful with children than with adults” (Barnett, 2007, p. 950). Lieberman “sought to extend her original work with children to adolescents and then to adults, but with less success as the age of the player increased” (Barnett, 2007, p.950). Playfulness in overt behavior is not really allowed in mature adults (cf. Handelman, 2001, Norbeck, 1974). Playful qualities seem more apparent in children than in adults. External playful characteristics of adults become less clear and maybe even more ambiguous.

Barnett has transformed the scale for children to be suitable for young adults. Then, there is the Adult Playfulness Scale (APS) (Glynn & Webster, 1992) as well as the Playfulness Scale for Adults (PSA) (Greenberg & Schaefer, 1997). Guitard et al. (2005) have also studied playfulness in adults, but their research was based on interviews using a grounded theory approach. They have not developed a measure for playfulness. They did conceptualize the constituents of playfulness by identifying the same constituents as Lieberman did. They state however, that “physical and cognitive spontaneity seem to decrease with age and the manifestation of joy and humor are less tolerated in adults” (2005, p. 13). These constituents are: creativity, curiosity, sense of humor, pleasure and spontaneity. (2005, p. 16). Although spontaneity is divided into physical and cognitive spontaneity, they need not both be present. Pleasure is sometimes also equated with joy (Guitard et al, 2005).

While the measures of playfulness for children are often based on observation, those for adults are often based on self-report. This brings out issues of social desirability (Glynn & Webster, 1993; Staempfli, 2007). According to Proyer (2011), some of the concerns regarding self-report could be met by the use of observation and peer-report. The construction of the measures for adults is often done via panel sessions and interviews to establish the “natural language” with which the research participants, as well the later sample to be retrieved from them, express themselves (Barnett, 2007; Staempfli, 2004; Yarnal & Qian, 2013, Guitard et al., 2005).

These approaches are valuable because they connect closely to the lived experience of the research participants. The questionnaires built from these findings will not contain alienating language that the participants cannot identify with (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2012). The risk of it though, is that other elements of playfulness that participants may not think of are excluded. It is very possible that these panel meetings, while informative and instrumental, may have avoided the ambiguity of play, meaning they did not address the types of playfulness that may rise from settings that are not generally associated with play. Upon first association, playfulness calls into mind notions connected with fun, enthusiasm, energy, freedom, etc. This is in itself no problem, when one is researching “common sense” meanings. It may however lead to an empirical blind spot with regard to the types of playfulness that are not part of common sense. So called “dark play” – bullying, nagging or

trolling on the internet – is excluded this way (cf. Sutton-Smith, 1997; Buckels, Trapnell & Paulhus, 2014). The PLEX framework does address these motivations, analytically speaking.

Barnett (2007) came to a definition of playfulness by “asking lay persons to provide content based on their natural language and experiences” (2007, p. 950). This yielded 42 characteristics playful individuals.<sup>65</sup> She defines playfulness as “the predisposition to frame (or reframe) a situation in such a way as to provide oneself (and possibly others) with amusement, humor, and/or entertainment. Individuals who have such a heightened predisposition are typically funny, humorous, spontaneous, unpredictable, impulsive, active, energetic, adventurous, sociable, outgoing, cheerful, and happy, and are likely to manifest playful behavior by joking, teasing, clowning, and acting silly” (Barnett, 2007, p. 955). With the enclosure “and possibly others” Barnett hints at the interpersonal dynamic behind playfulness and as well as its more performance-related aspect (cf. Sutton-Smith, 1997; Lobman & O’Neill, 2011).

These descriptors led up to four “component qualities” for playfulness, namely: “gregarious,” “uninhibited,” “comedic,” and “dynamic” (2007, p. 949). The element of “dynamic” seems at odds with the notion of “passive” playfulness that Starbuck & Webster describe. Barnett’s definition has many things in common with the definition that organizational researchers Glynn & Webster (1992) provide. They define playfulness as “a propensity to define (or redefine) an activity in an imaginative, non serious or metaphoric manner so as to enhance intrinsic enjoyment, involvement and satisfaction” (Glynn & Webster, 1992, p. 85). Guitard et al. (2005) define playfulness slightly differently from Glynn & Webster, namely as “an adult’s internal predisposition that varies in intensity according to the presence and quality of the following components: creativity, curiosity, sense of humor, pleasure, and spontaneity” (2005, p. 21).

Glynn & Webster (1992) look at playfulness from the perspective of organizational science. They are most interested in playfulness as an individual characteristic. Although they acknowledge the existence of playfulness on for instance the level “of interpersonal interactions,” they choose to analyze the individual: in organizational literature there is “a recognized need to develop measures of individual differences with which to examine main and interaction effects in studies of work design [...] because personality has

been shown to affect work attitudes and performance [...]. More specifically, there have been calls for an appropriate individual difference measure with which to assess interactions when tasks are labeled as play” (1992, p. 84). In spite of the original tendency to oppose play and work, “play may be part of the fabric of organizational life” (1992, p.85). In the development of the Adult Playfulness Scale, they consider playfulness “a multidimensional construct, encompassing cognitive, affective and behavioural components, which together constitute a continuum along which individuals range from low to high” (Glynn & Webster, 1992; p. 85).

Playfulness correlated positively with innovative attitudes, intrinsic motivational orientation, and negatively with personal orderliness. Playfulness did not correlate with gender or social desirability and had a low correlation with age (Glynn & Webster, 1993). Glynn and Webster are the ones that provided the initial validation of the Adult Playfulness Scale. “Scale scores were correlated positively with measures of the psychological traits of creativity and cognitive spontaneity and negatively with quantitative functional orientation and organizational rank” (1993, p. 1023).

Schaefer & Greenberg (1997) developed the Playfulness Scale for Adults (PSA) in response to Glynn & Webster’s measure. In their view, Glynn & Webster’s scale does not measure the components of playfulness, but *its correlates*, such as spontaneity and creativity. They argue that the one thing nearly all scholars agree on, as a core component of playfulness, is fun. This is their reason for excluding seriousness altogether: “This scale was constructed to focus only on the fun aspect of play. Such a parsimonious definition of playfulness has the obvious advantages of clarity and simplicity” (1997, p. 22). They do so for the benefit of therapists – because playfulness may be a relevant characteristic in the appeal a therapist has for a client. Although they refer to the definitions of playfulness by Lieberman, Barnett and Glynn & Webster, they do not come to a theoretical definition of playfulness. Their scale was developed in collaboration with Master students engaged in a course on play. In testing the scale, data analysis revealed five factors to “define the dimensions of playfulness; fun-loving, sense of humor, enjoys silliness, informal, and whimsical” (1997, p. 26).

Theoretically speaking, there is no big difference between a propensity and predisposition. Nor is the difference between

“redefining” and “reframing” very large, considering that these are both likely to refer to the definition of the situation, including the management of self-identity and expectations in that situation (Goffman, 1963, 1974; Deterding, 2013). Barnett focuses on amusement and fun, explicitly excluding seriousness, while Glynn & Webster leave room for this by including “metaphoric and imaginative.” Barnett reports that seriousness and creativity were not considered “to be a meaningful part of the playfulness construct in this study. Seriousness has been regarded in previous work as the antithesis of playfulness, and it has been especially prominent in definitions specifying what playfulness is not” (Barnett, 2007, p. 956). The words “as to enhance” in the definition by Glynn & Webster introduce an additional purpose to the situation, beyond (mere) entertainment.

### 3.6.3 THE ASSUMPTION OF FREEDOM AND THE EXCLUSION OF SERIOUSNESS

If playfulness was easy to measure, there would be no need to develop different scales. This section discusses some ambiguities in the – mostly – psychological approaches to playfulness, notably a) the assumption of playfulness as intrinsically motivated, b) the assumption of freedom from imposed rules and as a result of these two, c) the exclusion of seriousness and ambiguity from the measures for playfulness. As indicated above, the co-constructed development of the measures for playfulness is valuable in connecting within the everyday language of research participants, but it also means other aspects of playfulness are easily overlooked.

The example of Mockus, in the opening of this thesis, can help in exemplifying how playful behavior can be a mixture of motivations and intentions as well as oriented towards different outcomes than mere fun. The basic assumption is that we play because we want to. While playing, we do not feel compelled to achieve anything specifically (outside what for instance game invites us to achieve). Playfulness, then, is characterized by intrinsic motivation. Mockus however, is not being playful just for the fun of it; in being playful he tries to bring a message across on how to act differently.

Starbuck & Webster (1991) are critical of the concept of intrinsic motivation, as it is assumed in the literature. They oppose a couple of common assumptions that other playfulness researchers have pointed out. One of them is that “playful activities are undertaken solely for immediate pleasures arising from activities themselves, without regard for future consequences” (1991, p. 73). In their view, this mixes up intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, which may very well go hand in hand. They also note that many play activities should then formally be excluded from play, since “people rarely ignore future consequences altogether” (1991, p. 73). This corresponds to Giddens’ notion of “reflexive self monitoring.” Mockus has certainly taken these future consequences into account, regardless of the immediate pleasure his actions may have also provided.

But intrinsic motivation is a recurring theme in the psychological literature on playfulness. Glynn & Webster introduce it in their definition (1992). Occupational therapy researchers Skard & Bundy (2008) also present it as an important component of playfulness (2008): “Players engage in a play activity simply because they want to, not for any other reason” (p.71). The idea of playing a game while not really wanting to is at odds with the self chosen character of many games, and as such with the freedom from imposed rules. While it is possible to play a game because it is socially desirable to participate, on the whole, we play a game because we think we will enjoy the activity. But as Starbuck & Webster note, playing a game can also be engaged in for the purpose of achieving something else, whether it is learning, liberation, therapeutic effects, bonding, or skills training (1991). Trying to learn something by playing introduces a goal oriented motivation to playfulness.

Starbuck & Webster have compared different theories on motivation and conclude that these are fairly tautological theories: they all say “people like pleasant situations and dislike unpleasant ones” (1991, p. 75). More importantly, “an observer cannot verify independently that a player feels she has demonstrated competence, or that a player’s stimulation has reached an optimum, or that a player’s capabilities precisely balance the challenges of a situation, or that a specific player finds an outcome rewarding. Play is in the mind of the player” (1991, p. 75-76). They also debunk the idea that playfulness should be without effect or without consequence. Mockus’ strategic playfulness is certainly engaged in with an intended effect.

So far, the example of Mockus reveals that playfulness can be goal oriented and strategic, but the underlying assumption of freedom from imposed rules suggests we only play when we are free. This excludes the possibility of using playfulness to *create* more freedom. After all, the lure of play in psychotherapy is in part its liberating effect. If we are already free, what do we need to be liberated from? This ambiguity is not addressed in the literature, except for an article by Zinsler (1987), who wrote about the way children negotiate play spaces in typically constrained situations, such as being taken out shopping. This neglect of play under constraint means we cannot adequately analyze the way playfulness seeks to possibly enhance freedom, as that would make playfulness into a propensity to redefine something for extrinsic reasons.

To demonstrate the one-sidedness of the definition in terms of ambiguity requires developing an example of playfulness that is about the “propensity to redefine of a situation, in a metaphoric manner” that is *not about* “enhancement of enjoyment or satisfaction”. The movie *La Vita è Bella* (1997) provides such an example. When the movie was first released, there was a debate about whether or not this movie was appropriate, as it was labeled “a comedy about the holocaust” (Morreall, 1997). This touches on the ambiguity of humor and its boundaries (Berlyne, 1963): what we are and are not allowed to redefine for reasons of amusement. The concern here, however, is not with the definitions and redefinitions in culture of what is or is not a cultural expression. It is about the playful character of Guido Orefice, who is said to be a lot like his creator Roberto Benigni and whose “playfulness” can now be taken into further account.

Looking at a number of these definitions of playfulness, we can establish that Guido Orefice is a playful human being interacting with the world in a playful manner. The first part of the movie demonstrates this in slapstick-like cheerfulness that is about goofing around. As soon as the family is deported, however, the redefinition of the situation in the camp into a game is possibly the biggest opposition one can think of in terms of the grimness of everyday life and the metaphoric manner (a game!) in which this is redefined. Should we take Guido Orefice to be a real character, i.e. treat him, for the sake of argument, as a real human with a personality that can be called playful, we can fairly state that he does have a propensity to redefine situations, and he does so

in an imaginative and metaphoric manner. The intent however, is not to enhance enjoyment but to prevent his son from being psychologically damaged should he grasp the reality of his surroundings.

Starbuck & Webster (1991) identify the different kinds of consequences that playful activities have, the most complex one being related to learning. In part this is because both learning as well as playful activities are very diverse categories. A result of this diversity is that “some types of play discourage some types of learning, even as other types of play encourage other types of learning.” If we have the option to choose an activity that is designed in a fun way over one that is designed in a less fun or playful way, we will obviously choose the fun one, “other things being equal. Yet, other things are never equal. People with important, practical goals prefer activities that enable them to reach those goals” (1991, p. 78). This is an important design principle, especially for education, where the notion of a perceived goal is virtually inescapable.

The notion of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and that of the freedom from imposed rules can be useful in establishing what *type* of playfulness we are dealing with. The perception of the importance of specific goals can be a determinant in the kinds of playfulness a person permits themselves. Starbuck & Webster (1991) suggest that the opposition between play and work is vanishing. They come to a new description of the traditionally undefined fields of work that is a) pleasant and involving, while being productive, and that is also b) unpleasant, uninvolved while also being unproductive. Glynn & Webster (1991, 1992) emphasize the need for more refinement both over populations, as well as *styles* of playfulness – as some may have a preference for intellectual, social or physical play. But the assumption of intrinsic motivation as an explanation for playfulness, is limited in helping explain why people play, because it rules out the *variety of reasons* we may have to play.

An analytical distinction that is often made in play and game studies, is that between a) telic and paratelic motivational states (Apter, 1991 as mentioned in Deterding, 2013) and b) between autotelic and exotelic reasons. “Telic” stems from the Greek word *telos*, meaning “goal.” a) refers to a focus on either goals and ends (telic) versus a focus on activities and means (paratelic)

(cf: Deterding, 2013). The terms telic and paratelic refer to the meta-motivational states that accompany play b) refers to the goal of play as an “end in itself” versus play as a means for establishing other ends. This latter motivation does not exclude enjoyment in the activity. Even if we turn out not to enjoy ourselves, this enjoyment is at least a normative expectation surrounding playfulness (cf. Deterding, 2013). Here too, Caillois’ distinction between ludus and paidia is thought to be relevant again, where playfulness refers to paratelic/autotelic play and structured play and gaming refer to telic/exotelic play. But still this distinction excludes explicitly playful strategies from the realm of analysis.

Because of this changing meaning of work and play and the rise of what is called “creative industries”, it is important to not only look at the measurement of playfulness, but also at its relation with creativity. Playfulness in organizational theory and research is considered to be a psychological trait, a “propensity.” On the hand, playfulness is defined as a propensity that can only come to fruition when the requirement of liberty or freedom is met. On the other hand, it is also possible to consider situations in which there is no or little freedom, where playfulness or playful behavior can be observed. The intrinsic enjoyment and the supposed freedom in the “regular” definition of playfulness, leaves little room for a form of purposeful playfulness that can be considered to be reflexive in way the Mockus’ is. As such, this definition does not help us understand the meaning of Mockus’ actions, nor does it provide an understanding of observable behavior that more ambiguous than “mere joy.” We can identify several playful behaviors that are non-serious and in such situations, the concept of playfulness leaves us without analytical tools for addressing situations that are both playful *and* serious, that carry that ambiguity and in which it is desirable and/or important for understanding the situation at all.

This is relevant, because by refining the definition, or adding alternatives to it, it is possible to analyze the way in which playfulness is not just an expression of the use of so-called free space (in the sense that theorists claim freedom is a prerequisite for any kind of play), but also a way of creating the space to break out of scripts. The psychological approach leaves out the ambiguity and possible seriousness of play. Whereas elsewhere in the field of play scholarship the dichotomy between playfulness and seriousness is contested or at least problematized and reconceptualized, in the

psychology of playfulness the distinction between playfulness and seriousness is upheld. This leads to potential blind spots in the analysis of playful behavior. The distinction between autotelic and exotelic rather than intrinsic and extrinsic reasons to be playful can help clarify this distinction.

For educational purposes, understanding these motivations better in relation to learning can shed a light on approaches to exploration, creativity and problem solving. The relation between playfulness, creativity and the construct of tolerance of ambiguity is discussed in the next section.

## 3.7 PLAYFULNESS, CREATIVITY AND TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY

Playfulness and creativity are closely connected, but this connection is not yet properly understood (Tegano, 1990). In part, this is because creativity itself is hard to define, let alone measure (Czikszentmihalyi, 1997; Amabile, 1996, Weisberg, 2006). This goes for playfulness as well (see previous section). It is possible, therefore, that some measures of creativity do not correlate with some measures of playfulness, but that the two are related nonetheless. Some also state that in Western theories about creativity a lot of focus is on individual accomplishment whereas others see that as the outcome of a system that is capable of fostering the creativity, but not the source of creativity itself (Czikszentmihalyi, 1997). The difference and overlap between creativity and playfulness in part depend on what we choose include in or exclude from these two realms.

This section discusses the general theory of creativity, via a) a brief summary of Csikszentmihalyi's work on creativity (1997, 2001), as this provides a current general the framework on creativity that is fairly widely accepted (Weisberg, 2006; Steinberg, 2002, Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006), b) its connection to play via a discussion of organizational researchers Mainemelis & Ronson (2006) and c) the empirical findings on the relation between the two via the study of Tegano et al. (1990), Glynn & Webster (1993) and Fix & Schaefer (2005). Especially Tegano et al. (1990) is relevant because of the connection with the construct of tolerance of ambiguity.

### 3.7.1 CSIKSZENTMIHALYI'S SYSTEM APPROACH TO CREATIVITY

Csikszentmihalyi's work on creativity has revealed several characteristics of creative people. In addition, he has developed a framework which helps us understand how we come to recognize creativity. On the one hand, every person is to some extent creative and is him- or herself an agent in the creation of their ordinary life. But this is not yet the kind of creativity we look for when discussing topics like innovation. Although Csikszentmihalyi dives into the topic of individual creativity, he clearly emphasizes the systems that need to be in place to both foster and also recognize creativity. Figure 14 displays this system.

The characteristics of creative individuals, according to Csikszentmihalyi, seem paradoxical. Creative individuals combine two opposing qualities in such a way that it becomes productive, more than chaotic. These ten traits are:

1. Creative people have a great deal of physical energy, but they're also often quiet and at rest [...]
2. Creative people tend to be smart, yet also naive at the same time [...]
3. [Creative people have a] related combination of playfulness and discipline, or responsibility and irresponsibility [...]
4. Creative individuals alternate between imagination and fantasy on one end, and a rooted sense of reality on the other [...]
5. Creative people seem to harbor opposite tendencies on the continuum between extroversion and introversion [...]
6. Creative people are also remarkably humble and proud at the same time [...]
7. Creative individuals to a certain extent escape [the] rigid gender role stereotyping [...]
8. Creative people are thought to be both rebellious and independent [as well as] traditional and conservative [...]
9. Most creative people are very passionate about their work, yet they can be extremely *objective* about it as well [italics in original] [...]
10. [T]he openness and sensitivity often exposes them to *suffering and pain, yet also to a great deal of enjoyment* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 56 - 71 ).

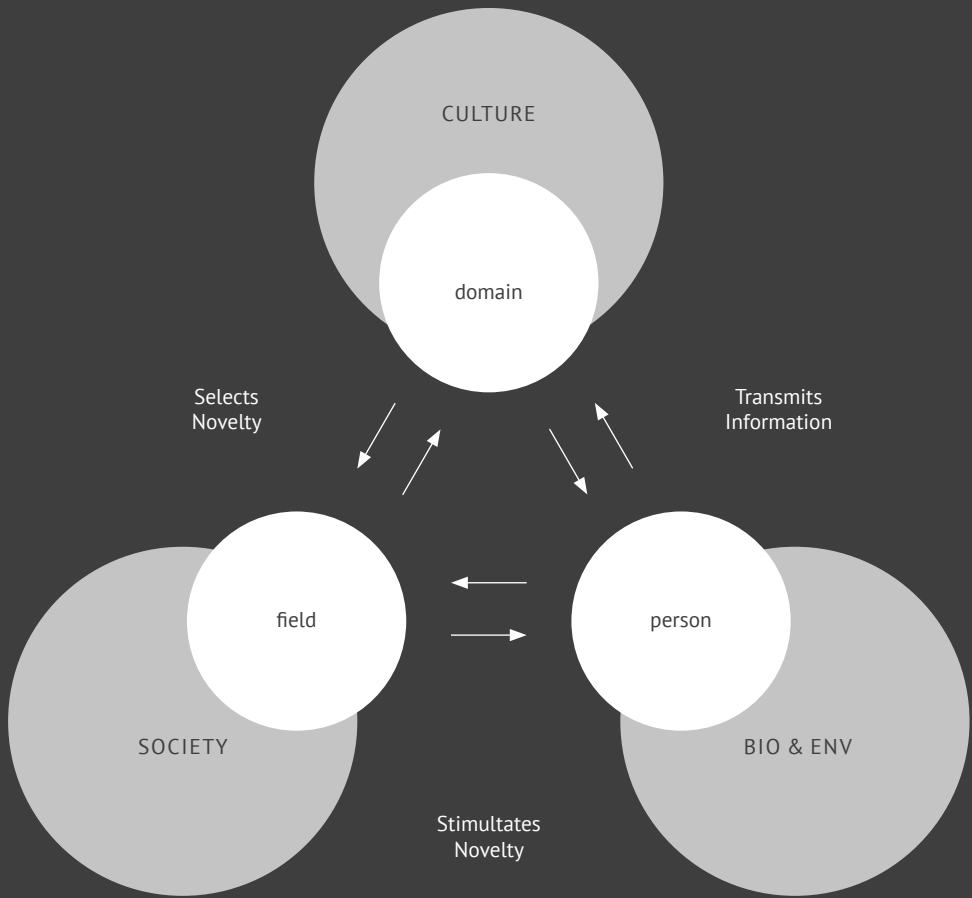


Figure 14. Creativity emerges as the result of a system (adapted from Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

Some of these traits are character traits, in the sense that they are not likely to be alterable, such as introversion and extroversion (unless for instance the introversion is undesired insecurity regarding the presence of others, in which case it would be more an anxiety than a character trait). Others can be fostered, nurtured, trained, developed and balanced. In all traits, what becomes clear is that an apparent contradiction can be productively present in one person, without a need for dissolving one side: there is no need for a resolution of the ambiguity - it is the ambiguity that enables the creativity (cf. Beech, Burns et al. [2004]; Holiday, Statler & Flanders [2009] and Statler, Heracleous & Jacobs [2011]).

### 3.7.2 IDEAS ARE BORN IN FIELDS OF PLAY – MAINEMELIS & RONSON

If there is a close connection between creativity and playfulness, that means those elements that either constrain or enable creativity may also constrain or enable play. At the same time, play is seen as an enabler for creativity. This is at least the argument Mainemelis & Ronson make in “Ideas are born in fields of play” (2006). They pose the question what play does in relation to creativity and they answer this by saying play “is very important because it is a *context of behavior* that can simultaneously encompass all the elements and processes identified by previous research as *stimulants of creativity*” (2006, p. 85, my emphasis). Though they do not consider *all* play to be creative, they do believe creativity is born from play. As such, a focus on play can enhance the creativity: “When play is marginalized by being viewed as detrimental to work its benefits to creativity are also likely to be marginalized. We argue that the full benefits of play to creativity are more likely to be realized when play is accepted and encouraged as an integral part of organizational life” (p. 85).

Mainemelis & Ronson (2006) make a core distinction between “play as engagement” and “play as diversion.” The latter one is often labeled as unproductive (cf. Starbuck & Webster), but can, by way of providing relaxation, nonetheless increase overall productivity. The former is a way of engaging with work related tasks in which the work itself becomes play. This is particularly important for people with complex jobs which are ambiguous, which demand experimentation and in which the relation between means and ends is not fully clear: “These sorts of tasks leave open the possibility

for creative engagement and play, as one searches for the best approach to the task” (2006, p. 109).

Based on their review of the literature, Mainemelis & Ronson isolate five core characteristics, some of which apply to playfulness as well. These are 1) threshold experience, 2) boundaries in time and space, 3) uncertainty – freedom – constraint, 4) loose and flexible association between ends and means, and 5) positive affect (2006, pp. 86 - 92). The first refers in part to the ambiguity of play. Play as a threshold experience syncs with Turners notions of liminality and subjunctivity (1982, 1986). The second refers to the boundaries within which we call something play, as opposed to ordinary life, which is characterized by constraint. Terms they use for this are: “rigid structural requirements,” “social pressures for conformity,” and the demand for “behavioral consistency” (2006, p. 88). Important in what they mention about freedom and constraint, is that on the one hand, the separation of play in time and space designates a freedom from constraints of ordinary life, while at the same time, “play poses its own internal constraints, which are determined or voluntarily accepted by the players themselves” (2006, p. 89).

Mainemelis & Ronson do not consider “play” a set of activities, but “a behavioral orientation to any activity” (2006, p.108). Since they consider play to be highly important for creativity, they have analyzed the conditions under which play can be nurtured. These are: job complexity, environmental threat, a legitimate organizational time and space for play, and individual differences. Playfulness belongs to the category of individual difference. Even though their discussion of all that can be playful extends to playful interactions, playful work chores, playful office cultures, playful situations and so on, they do not analyze playfulness as something separate from play. They do claim that people who have the capacity to play are sometimes also capable of transporting their abilities to non-playful situations. They are, however, critical of the research on playfulness – it has some contradictory and narrow assumptions: “The APS views playfulness as the opposite of reason, but playing chess does not seem to be the opposite of reason. While in the APS playfulness involves a preference for social interaction rather than for solitary activity, acclaimed studies have shown that individuals often engage in solitary play” (2006, p. 113).

The other three elements – job complexity, environmental threat and

a legitimate organizational time and space for play – disclose other elements that are relevant for fostering in education. Regarding job complexity, they claim that is probably *mainly in creative jobs* that the distinction between play as diversion and play as engagement becomes blurred. “The creative mind does not stop working at the end of the workday, but, rather, transcends and blurs the boundaries between ‘work’ and ‘non-work’” (2006, p. 110). There are many jobs, however, in which there is no ambiguity regarding these boundaries.

The environmental, and therefore external, threat is often met with rigidity and an increase in control on the part of the management. This reduces the liberty that members of an organization feel in approaching their work as play. “Play as engagement is highly likely to suffer” (2006, p. 111). The creation of a “protected and clearly delineated space and time of play” (p. 111) for employees, in which they can surely be released from the pressures of behavioral consistency and be sure that they will not be punished “for potential accidents or errors associated with play behavior” (p.112) is a prerequisite to invite employees to try out play behavior. They quote March (1976), who discusses the way playfulness allows experimentation, but also acknowledges reason: “It accepts an obligation that at some point either the playful behavior will be stopped or it will be integrated into the structure of intelligence in some way that it makes sense” (March, 1976, p. 81).

### 3.7.3 TEGANO’S STUDY INTO CREATIVITY, PLAYFULNESS AND TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY

So far, the ambiguity of play has come to the fore a few times in these studies, as a characteristic of play, as a balancing of traits in playful individuals, and also as something that organizations have to deal with. Tegano (1990) has looked into the relationship between playfulness, creativity, and ambiguity tolerance. She writes that “playfulness and ambiguity tolerance may also be viewed as dimensions of personality or perhaps even as manifestations of cognitive style” (Tegano, 1990, p. 1048). In reference to Rogers, Meeks, Impam & Frary (1987) she defines playfulness as “a psychological construct involving individual differences in the disposition of play, that is, a measure of the quality of playfulness or a playful style” (1990, p. 1053).

Tegano's paper is about the "relationship of tolerance of ambiguity and playfulness to creativity." She has used three different measures to establish these relationships:

1. Adult Behavior Inventory of Playfulness – The ABI is adapted from the Child Behaviors Inventory of Playfulness.
2. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Creativity Index. This index makes a distinction between intuitive and perceptive types who each have a different creative style. Both types are found to be equally tolerant of ambiguity.
3. AT 20, the scale for the measurement of ambiguity tolerance as designed by Budner (1960).

Tolerance of ambiguity is defined as "the tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as desirable" (Budner, 1962, p. 28). Ambiguity Intolerance is defined as "the tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as sources of threat" (Budner, 1962, p.39). Ambiguity is different from uncertainty, although ambiguity can create insecurity. In the case of uncertainty, an answer is not known, but through research or experiment, one can find it out. If one is intolerant of uncertainty, this often refers to "the future prospect of a negative result" (Kajs & McCollum, 2010, p. 78), rather than the perception of an immediate threat, as is the case in ambiguity intolerance. Ambiguity is in part about the impossibility of finding an answer. Terms that are connected to ambiguous situations in ordinary life are: "numerous meanings, uncertainty, incompleteness, vagueness, contradictions, probability" (Kajs & McCollum, 2009, p. 2). Novelty, complexity and insolubility contribute to the extent in which a situation is perceived as ambiguous and respectively appreciated or dreaded as such by an individual (Kajs & McCollum, 2009).

Tolerance of ambiguity is relevant because people with ambiguity intolerance are "disinclined to think in terms of probability" (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1949, p. 268) and have been found to solve problems without adequate information. This thinking in terms of probability is comparable to Turner's notion of liminality – as a phase in which everything is still possible and Vaihinger's notion of "subjunctivity"; "as if" thinking (cf. Spariosu, 1989). These are skills that are currently considered valuable in education. As Tegano puts it: "Ambiguity tolerance may be a critical link in operationalizing a measurable and understandable personality trait which is central to creative thinking (1990, p. 1047).

Tegano notes the difference between creativity as a personality trait and as a cognitive trait. Originally, creativity was thought of as cognitive trait, measurable by what is called “ideational fluency”; “the generation of original ideas in response to some stimulus.” This kind of creativity may not be related to playfulness. As a personality trait however, it seems that tolerance of ambiguity augments the creative process, as does playfulness. “Individuals with playful dispositions are guided by internal motivation, an orientation toward process with self-imposed goals, a tendency to attribute their own meanings to objects or behaviors (i.e., not be dominated by a stimulus), a focus on pretense and nonliterality, a freedom from externally imposed rules, and active involvement” (Tegano, 1990, p. 1049).

Tegano claims “tolerance of ambiguity may be hypothesized as a covariate in examining the relationship of playfulness and creativity [...] tolerance of ambiguity may indeed be a critical link in facilitating an understanding of how creativity and playfulness are related (1990, p. 1052). The correlation of playfulness and creativity remained significant when tolerance for ambiguity was controlled. Tegano’s research reveals there is a moderate significant correlation between tolerance of ambiguity and creativity (.31) and between playfulness and creativity (.48). Between playfulness and tolerance of ambiguity, there was a significant, strong correlation ( $r = .81$ ,  $p < .001$ ). “Individuals with playful dispositions may also be creative, and this relationship is only slightly modified when tolerance of ambiguity is controlled” (p. 1053).

### 3.7.4 TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY, COPING SKILLS AND ACADEMIC SKILLS

One of the current goals in higher education is to foster creativity in students, so they can become capable problem solvers, critical thinkers, or even innovators (HBO-Raad, 2009). Playfulness may not fully predict creativity, but it is an important factor for it. Playfulness has a role in creativity (Fix & Schaefer [2005], Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006; Tegano, 1990, Zenasni et al., 2005), in academic achievement (Proyer, 2011), and in general well-being (Glynn & Webster, 1992; Bozionelos & Bozionelos, 1999; Starbuck & Webster, 1991; Staempfli, 2007; Hess & Bundy, 2003). In turn, tolerance of

ambiguity is correlated to playfulness. Even if the amount of data connecting playfulness to tolerance of ambiguity is limited, it is relevant to look into the construct to see what other elements it affects, especially in relation to learning.

Different authors have studied playfulness in relation to coping skills (Saunders, Sayer & Goodale, 1999; Hess & Bundy, 2003, Staempfli, 2004). These studies, in a way, are indicative of what can be labeled an *exotelic* function of playfulness that differs from the descriptions Glynn & Webster (1992) provided. The use of humor is connected to coping (Berlyne, 1963). The theme of coping or the need for it is also closely related to the tension between the reality we desire and the reality we see ourselves faced with (see section 3.5). Skard & Bundy (2008) relate playfulness to play: “The high correlation of playfulness with adaptability and coping suggests that playfulness may be one of the most important aspects of play” (Skard & Bundy, 2008, p. 71).

Coping – the way a person successfully deals with stressful and problematic situations – has been studied in children by Saunders, Sayer & Goodale (1999). They describe the relationship between the playfulness of preschool children and their coping mechanisms. What they call “effective play” can be an important determinant for the adaptive capacities of children. They found a “positive, significant correlation [...] between children’s level of playfulness and their coping skills”. Overall, girls were rated as more playful than boys and scored higher in coping skills. Younger children (36-47 months of age) were rated as better players and copers than older children (47-57 months of age). They suggest that alongside play environments, playful interactions can also be seen as a means to help them build life skills (Saunders et al., 1999).

Hess & Bundy (2003) studied the association between playfulness and coping in adolescents. They compared thirty male adolescents, some “typically developing” (TD) and some with “severe emotional disturbance” (SED). One of the findings was that “TD adolescents were rated as more playful than those with SED and scored higher in effective coping skills” (2003, p.1). They suggests the use of play and playfulness in therapeutic settings, as “high correlations between playfulness and coping support the idea of using play and playfulness to improve coping skills particularly the ability to adapt and to approach problems and goals in a flexible manner” (2003,

p.1). Their findings also hint at the possibility of unfortunate life events intervening with our capacity to play: we can actually lose the skill to play (Akhtar, 2011) and do not develop fully if we are deprived of play.

Staempfli's (2007) research deals with "normal adolescents," not children or exceptionally gifted or emotionally troubled youngsters. The construct of personality is considered to be capable of predicting well being over time. Her analysis suggests that "playfulness has mainly an *indirect* effect on adolescents' psychological health." It is through leisure participation and leisure satisfaction that playfulness moderates psychological wellbeing. The playful attitude is also connected to positive attitudes regarding school. Staempfli did not find a relationship "between the coping *styles* of playful adolescents and their psychological health" (2007, p. 408).

Staempfli also studied the relation between stress moderation and the context a person is in. There are indicators that being playful helps in stress moderation and that playfulness influences coping in different ways, depending on whether or not it is socially or personally oriented. She developed an independent measure, to match it properly with the lived experience of the age group of adolescents. It was also meant to allow people to use their own words as much as possible: "It is beneficial to allow individuals to use everyday language and laypersons terms when describing constructs reflective of themselves and others" (Staempfli, 2007, p. 394). For stress moderation, the following personality traits have been identified: self-esteem, shyness, locus of control, and boredom, as well as neuroticism and introversion (Staempfli, 2007).

Several psychological experiments indicate that ambiguous situations can sometimes lead to aggression and hostility (Garfinkel, 1967; Bateson, 1955). The lack of behavioral consistency that accompanies play spaces can be unsettling once they are displayed outside this designated area (cf. Sutton-Smith, 1997). The "permissible deviance" of play (Henricks, 2006) only goes so far. However, if the traditional boundaries between play and work and between play spaces and "ordinary life" are actually blurring as a result of the ludification of culture, learning to deal with ambiguity could therefore be a relevant element of education (Tegano, 2005; Staempfli, 2007).

The positive connotation of play, however, does not imply a sense of safety *per se*. The use of play forms in training is no guarantee that a game automatically creates a safe space for exploration. Research by Hijmans, Peters, Van de Westelaken, Heldens & Van Gils (2008) revealed that participants sometimes see “a simulation game as threatening, making them feel insecure and unsafe” (Hijmans et al., 2008). Participants indicated that “unexpected and uncontrollable incidents may happen during the simulation game that might have undesirable consequences beyond the game, which turns the simulated situation not that safe at all, especially not at the personal level, where feelings of insecurity may interfere with learning processes” (Hijmans et al., 2008).

Aside from to studies into the relationship between coping skills and playfulness (as discussed above), there have also been studies into the relationship between ambiguity tolerance and the transition into an academic context (Bardi, Guerra, Sharadeh & Ramdeny, 2009) and ambiguity tolerance and educational leadership and ambiguity tolerance in relation to the need for course structure (De Roma, Martin & Kessler, 2003).

Research by DeRoma, Martin & Kessler (2003) demonstrates how ambiguity tolerance is related to the need for clear course structure. “Results indicated significant, negative correlations between tolerance for ambiguity scores and anxiety and ratings of importance of course structure in a number of areas.” Interestingly, Deroma et al. (2003) are among the few who claim students should be assessed on their ambiguity tolerance, which would make it easier to prepare them better. This implies they consider ambiguity tolerance a dependent variable.<sup>66</sup>

According to Dunn (2004), several other studies indicate that “intolerance for ambiguity is significantly related to the concern about the dangers of technology and that both desire for control and ambiguity intolerance were significant factors in an individual’s risk perception [...] Risk perception, risk taking, and risk aversion appeared to exist in a self-fulfilling loop. Individuals who are more willing to take risks did so more often” (Dunn, 2004, p. 44). Modern society is often referred to as a risk society (Beck, 1992) or even an apocalyptic society (Giddens, 1984). Risk is continually assessed. The loss of traditional frameworks makes us rely on so-called “expert-systems” that surround us and that we employ to help us navigate

these risks (Giddens, 1991). Furthermore, the loss of tradition requires that we build our own reflexive identity through our self narrative (what Giddens calls the reflexive project of the self in modern identity, 1991).

We seek consistency over time – a logical connection between our previous and our current selves. The ambiguity of research into creativity and playfulness is partly that it fails to show this connection: the traits that characterized our childhood selves are not the same as our mature traits (cf. Casas, 2003; cf. Zenasni, Besancon & Lubart, 2005, discussed below). As adults as well, our narratives over time are not always consistent (Plumridge & Thomson, 2003).

### 3.7.5 OTHER STUDIES RELATING PLAYFULNESS TO CREATIVITY

Tegano's (1990) study is the only study so far that connects both playfulness and tolerance of ambiguity to creativity. Other studies have either addressed tolerance of ambiguity and playfulness or tolerance of ambiguity and creativity, but not all three. Glynn & Webster (1993) as well as Fix & Schaefer (2005) have studied the relationship between creativity and playfulness. What has been researched so far, demonstrates a relation between creativity and playfulness. Playfulness and creativity "are correlated but are distinguished by their different relationships to instrumentality and external demands [...] and seem to parallel the differences between adaptation and innovation" (Glynn & Webster, 1992).

Fix & Schaefer (2005) have compared the different measures designed by Schaefer & Greenberg (1997) and by Glynn & Webster (1991). According to Fix & Schaefer (2005) the scales used for measuring playfulness in adults – the Playfulness Scale for Adults (Schaefer & Greenberg, 1997) and the Adult Playfulness Scale (Glynn & Webster, 1992) – both demonstrate high internal consistency and good construct validity. They indicate also, that playfulness "has been described as a measurable personality trait that refers to a person's proclivity to engage in playful behavior" (Fix & Schaefer, 2005, p. 993).

They also connected two different measures for creativity to the

two scales for playfulness, but found little to no support for the connection between the two: “Correlations between scores for the Playfulness Scale for Adults and the Similes Test ( $r = .04$ ) and between scores for the Adult Playfulness Scale and the Similes Test ( $r = .13$ ) were not significant. Significant, but small, correlations obtained between the Playfulness Scale for Adults and the Franck Drawing ( $r = .23, p < .01$ ) and between the Adult Playfulness Scale and the Franck Drawing ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ), giving support for a weak association of these measures of playfulness and creativity” (2005, p. 994).

Zenasni, Besançon & Lubart (2005) have studied the relationship between creativity and tolerance of ambiguity. They used a task for divergent thinking, for story writing and a self-report measure of attitudes and behavior regarding creativity. Tolerance for ambiguity was established via two different measures: “the Measurement of Ambiguity Tolerance and the Behaviour Scale of Tolerance/Intolerance for Ambiguity.” They tested the following relationships:

1. tolerance of ambiguity and creative output
2. the creativity of the parent and that of the child
3. the tolerance of ambiguity of the parent and that of the child
4. the parents tolerance of ambiguity and the creativity of the child

The first and second relationships were supported by the data: both were positively, significantly correlated, especially for fluidity and uniqueness, more than for originality. The third and fourth relationships were not established. The authors ascribe this to the relative instability of adolescence. Another limitation of the study was the focus on verbal tasks (Zenasni, Besancon & Lubart, 2005).

Another study into the relationship between playfulness and creativity was done by Casas (2003) who tried to see whether childhood playfulness could be seen as a predictor for adult playfulness and creativity. She used data that had been collected 15 years earlier via the Child Behavior Inventory for Playfulness and compared the respondents' own current assessment of their playfulness with the assessment of the children's mothers, then and now. The only significant result was in the match between the assessment of the mother at present with the self-assessment of the

former child (Casas, 2003). Although it may be a result of the sample size, it is hard to establish whether the playful quality of children does indeed transfer into the creativity of adults. Since there does not exist that much longitudinal research into playfulness from child to adult, it is difficult to establish how the relationship between playfulness and creativity comes into existence.

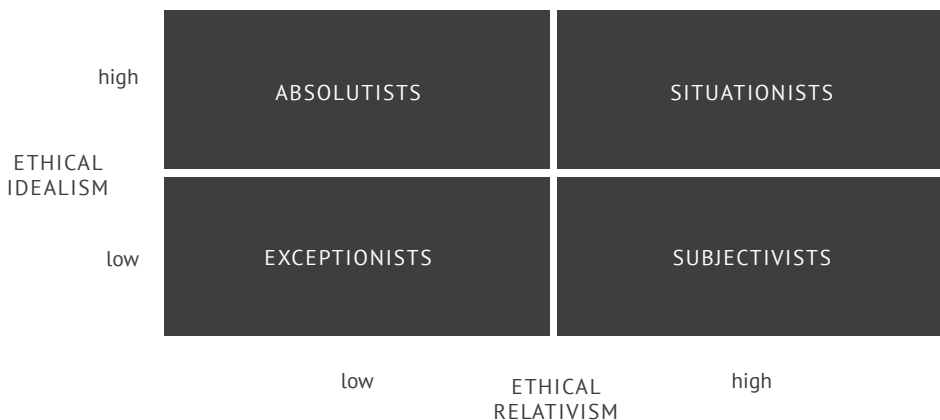
Intelligence is also one of the variables that has been tested for its influence on playfulness as well as creativity. In their validation study of the Adult Playfulness Scale, Glynn & Webster (1993) specifically looked into the concurrent validity. They did so “by relating playfulness with variables of theoretical interest for a sample of highly intelligent adults. Playfulness was expected to correlate positively with measures of both innovative attitudes and intrinsic motivational orientation” (1993, p. 1023). They expected a negative correlation with individual orderliness: playful individuals are expected to be less disciplined. Although they found this correlation, it is unclear to what extent this lack of orderliness is part of a stereotype surrounding playful people. For instance, Proyer (2011) connects playfulness to academic achievement, which is often thought to be the result of disciplined and organized study.

The idea that playful people are not as organized is also contradicted by research into creativity. Research by Csikszentmihalyi (1997, 2010) demonstrates ten traits of highly creative people that seem to be at odds with one another, but are balanced within the person. One of these is that they “combine playfulness and discipline, or responsibility and irresponsibility.” A second one is that they “alternate between imagination and fantasy, and a rooted sense of reality” (1997). It is of course possible that on the whole, these tense traits only coincide in creative people. One of the things that complicate the study of creativity is the romantic myth that surrounds it (Steinberg, 2002; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Bierly III, Kolodinsky & Charette (2009) state there has been a tendency both in ordinary language and research methodology to frame the creative personality or to place the creative personality somewhere in the spectrum of amorality or immorality. “There is a pervasive stereotype that people who are creative tend to be less ethical. [...] The psychology literature has also helped to perpetuate this belief through their use of creative personality scales” (2009, p. 101).

This connection is important because the supposed immorality or amorality of creativity is in part connected to its “play-character”. Research into play and creativity indicates that the “moral order” that is part of normal, everyday life, is temporarily “lifted” in the play space. The freedom to “suspend” reality, to “bracket” it for a moment, creates a temporary order in which it becomes possible to say or do things that would normally not be sanctioned (cf. Handelman, 1984). It is conceivable that highly creative people do not leave this play frame. If the boundaries between play and work do indeed blur (Starbuck & Webster, 1997) and the creative mind is at work even during leisure time (Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006), this may have consequences for the way they engage in social contexts. Bierly III et al. (2009) make an interesting suggestion for the opposite. They claim: “Creativity may be a predictor of more (rather than less) ethical behavior. Creativity may enable individuals to develop complex solutions to difficult ethical problems, where simply following a set of rules will not suffice. It has been argued that creative, imaginative and entrepreneurial people tend to use cognitive processes that are consistent with higher levels of moral development, which may lead to a higher level of ethics” (2009, p. 102).

Bierly III et al. (2009) come to a division of people with high and low relativism and high and low idealism, which leads to the following division:

Adapted from Bierly, Kolodinsky & Charette (2009)



Their research demonstrates that the group they call “situationists,” score the highest in terms of creativity. The avant-gardist movement “Situationists” from the sixties and seventies are known for both their praise for *homo ludens* and their serious activism and

criticism of capitalism. Their actions constituted playful, deliberate disruptions of everyday life designed to interrupt the frames. If one relates this to the motivation for excellent rule following, this sense of idealism, along with a pragmatic approach to moral rules, may be what connects creativity and playfulness to excellent rule breaking: a moral concern for the betterment of this world.

# CONCLUSION

This chapter opened with a comparison between play and playfulness. It discussed the extent to which there is a need to analytically distinguish between the two. This is not always necessary: in many cases the word playful is the adjective form of the word “play,” and the use of the word “playful” means nothing other than that something is full of play. In some cases, however, it is relevant to distinguish between a play frame and a playful engagement with a frame. This allows for the analysis of playfulness apart from play, for instance as an intricate element of ordinary life. In that case, playfulness refers to the process of framing itself. Playfulness, in this sense, does not only involve a character trait but also an element of skill: the capacity to play with the frames. This is an increasingly important skill in a society that is increasingly complex and uncertain. Playfulness can be connected to so-called 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

Play and playfulness are not always separate, but they can be separate in some instances. Also, playfulness and ordinary life can go hand in hand. Other concepts that appear antonymous but need not be are playfulness and seriousness as well as playfulness and maturity. The Scientific Council for Government Policy (HBO-Raad) does not explicitly state a need for more playfulness, but it does state several considerations that would help improve the level of innovation: innovation strategies should include entrepreneurship, they should combine exploration with exploitation, include new perspectives on collaborations, welcome diversity and mobility and accept insecurity, maybe even promote creative destruction. The new

policy even embraces an ambiguous position in “the organization of coincidence” (HBO-Raad, 2009). Some of the correlated traits of playful people (being imaginative, having ideational fluency and divergence in thinking, and being tolerant of ambiguity) could be helpful in fostering an attitude that – if not capable of innovating – is at least open to innovation.

Educational research indicates that a mastery oriented approach to learning, requires not just a tolerance for making mistakes, but embracing mistakes (Dweck, 2002). This is paradoxical, as many processes in society are designed to avoid making mistakes. There is good reason for this if mistakes are the result of laziness and not putting enough effort. The opposite is true if mistakes are the result of a fundamental uncertainty of the outcome of certain processes. The educational system can be both enabling and constraining, depending on the room it leaves for error as a substantial part of the learning process. (In that sense, science itself is a playful endeavor, cf. Spariosu [1989].)

The division in three lines of analysis already suggests that there are three major sources of constraint and enablement, namely culture (and institutions), social order (constituted from framed interactions), and the self (personality). What allows for play is not entirely the same thing as what allows for playfulness. The distinction between play and game is relevant in the following: many people who are in the mood for playing a game are probably also capable of doing so once they know what is required for game playing (although that is obviously not the same thing as mastery; think of a game of chess). And play – although perhaps less clear in terms of rules to be followed – also allows for participants to join, as soon as they know what is expected of them. If we are having a good time while we are playing, it definitely makes sense to call this behavior playful as well. At the same time, there is a quality to playfulness – as the play with the frames of play – which requires a meta-communicative skill beyond signaling “this is play,” in that it calls the other person’s frames into question.

As argued in [section 1](#), the rhetoric of play a scholar or educator adheres to determines in part what is observed. Thinking about the relationship between play and education typically belongs to the rhetoric of play as progress. For education, this means it is important for educators to reflect on the current discourse surrounding

education and its dichotomies: what are we missing? There is an imaginary opposition between learning and enjoyment, as if “school” is by definition “unfun.” But if the study of games reveals anything, it is that frustration and failure do not impede progress, but may actually be an intricate part of the enjoyment itself (Juul, 2013). Furthermore, the self-directedness that is required of learners these days suggests that they know what they are learning while they are learning it. But part of the meaning of what you are learning only reveals itself in the process: we do not yet know what we are in for. This ambiguity could be more explicitly addressed in the coaching of students, but it begins with an awareness of this in the teachers themselves.

There is a difficulty with “flow,” as it is related to mastery. This (mastery) is what we aim for in education, but it is exactly our aim that indicates the learners have not reached it yet. On some level we may not really be sure what it is that we are learning, or what we are learning it for. We do not immediately see the purpose of it. Flow comes from mastery. But if we master the skill of learning, we are faced with an interesting paradox, because it means we have mastery over the insecurity that not knowing can generate. The “ludic qualities” that were mentioned before – “curiosity, exploration, and reflection” – have “doubt,” “uncertainty” and “not knowing” as the basis, along with an interest and motivation to learn (assuming reflection is a learning activity). We could consider “learning to learn” as a form of “mastery of not knowing,” i.e. being (ontologically) comfortable with the unknown. At the same time, the “professional” curiosity that is expected of a designer is different from that of a student in training. A professional designer with a in possession of a degree may be expected to be more comfortable with not knowing than an adolescent or young adult still in the process of learning to learn.

A distinction that can be made between playfulness and play is that in “play” the frame through which to interpret a situation has been set, while in playfulness, this process is in motion. That is to say, the ambiguity that is part of the logical paradoxes discussed by Bateson is similar to the ambiguity in determining whether or not something is playful. This refers in part to the process orientation that some consider part of play, but which might be more appropriate for playfulness. Playfulness refers to the process of meaning making, in which it is difficult to establish what the meaning is, while play can be said to be a frame in which “what it is that’s going on here” has been established.

This is not the case for all playfulness; some of it is just in the extension of play. However, in some forms of playfulness, this is the continuous motion an interpreter makes, the same as with Russell's paradox. What we call "reality" enables that which we engage with playfully. Although the "chaotic" form of paidiaic play is domesticated by ludic play, as Caillois proposes, we are only capable of calling it chaotic if we have established some sense of order. In that same way, for playfulness to be "nonsensical," it requires first that we understand "sense." Playfully playing with the frames of play requires that we "get" play at some level.

Sutton Smith's seven rhetorics of play reveal that playfulness – as it differs from play – belongs mostly to the rhetoric of the self, of the imagination and frivolity. Enabling and constraining conditions are: the extent to which play is communal (fate and identity – social constraint), the extent to which rules are formalized (progress and power, conformity), the extent to which imagination is appreciated (psychological well-being). Playfulness can be considered a play with the frames of play. This requires first that frames of reference be present, next that these are then ludically transformed. In this process of transformation, a space is created for the absurd, the nonsensical and the irrational. Although the description of paidia suggests otherwise, playfulness is not irrational *per se*. It is also possible to strategically intervene as a rational approach to irrationality that masks itself as rational.

Social order is both constraining and enabling for playfulness. It is enabling because most of the things we engage with playfully, are informed by social order, that is to say, the whole set of rules and expectations we tacitly know of when engaging with co-present others. (Nonsensical play is hard to grasp and analyze.) it is constraining because these rules and expectations can be very strict and we have to do a lot of work to establish ourselves as stable, unthreatening identities. There is a risk involved in being playful, of being misunderstood and potentially losing face. This is always context dependent. Among those with whom one is "habitually" playful, this risk is much lower than with strangers. At the same time, playfulness can bring great relief in tight social settings, when it can help people relax.

The social construction of reality illustrates how "knowledge," in all its forms, plays a role in our definitions of this world and as

such, our expectations of what is possible. Routinization enables playfulness, meaning that it helps establish ontological security. In many cases, we are only playful when – to some extent – we feel secure enough to be playful. At the same time, routinization constrains playfulness, in the sense that our perspectives are not open to surprise or changes in our routines. However, some people cannot stop making awkward jokes when they are nervous. Would it be wrong to call that playful?

Frames themselves are both enabling and constraining for playfulness. A play frame as a primary frame is very likely to be accompanied by playfulness. A game frame as a primary frame may not be. Some frames do not lend themselves to be playfully keyed. This is not to say it is not possible, just that it is uncommon. And if it is not common, it is more likely to cause commotion. The discursive consciousness of meta-communication requires mindfulness: reflexive awareness, not just of our actions and our motives for our actions (in the sense that we can provide a rationale should we be requested to do so) but also about the way we communicate, i.e. knowing what frame the other is in. A mindful, strategic playful approach is quite different from someone goofing around, improvising and just seeing what happens next. We do not need to be (reflexively) self-aware to be playful. We do need to be self-aware when we try to label ambiguous behavior. But not all playful behavior is ambiguous in the sense that it might be ontologically disruptive. Playfulness can also restore a sense of order. Once we are capable of making jokes, immediate threats are relieved.

Physical alertness, enthusiasm, and intellectual curiosity all enable “academic playfulness.” Physical mobility, spontaneous joy, a sense of humor, group orientation, and friendliness enable “social-emotional playfulness.” Constraining are physical apathy, discouragement, intellectual stagnation for “academic playfulness” and physical rigidity, tenseness, lack of humor, self-orientation, rejection and conscientiousness for “social-emotional playfulness.”

Intrinsic motivation, internal control and freedom to suspend reality are three other components of playfulness, though motivation can be exotelic as well. The environment has to be supportive of playfulness. Studies into computer playfulness reveal that immediate feedback enabled playfulness as well. In human communication, “responsiveness” may be a more appropriate term.

Challenge (here used to mean competition and winning) is a theme that occurs often in relation to discussions about play, but this is less a theme when it comes to playfulness (unless it is about making a challenge of a boring task, but that, then is a purpose of playful engagement; to alleviate boredom, but a challenge itself does not seem to induce playful behavior – in some cases potentially it even does the opposite).

Constraining are: society's expectations of maturity – what it means to be an adult (it is not that we do not want to play). The organization of work is constraining or enabling - as is the way we organize our organizations in which work takes place (cf. March, 1973, Rittel & Webber, 1973).

# DESIGN PRINCIPLES

**D**esign principles can be derived from the enabling and constraining conditions. Play itself is an enabling condition for playfulness. As Lieberman (1976) argued, although they differ in their intensity, all children are playful. As Brown & Vaughan (2009) indicate, play deprivation can be considered a serious concern for people's mental health. However, we can lose our playfulness over time as a result of the expectations of parents, school and society. The HCI component suggests that playfulness is enabled by artifacts that are designed to induce playful experiences. Gaver (2002) asserts ambiguity is important in these designs, because they allow the user to attribute their own meaning to the objects.

For these principles to be operational however – that is to say, principles a policy maker or educator can actually work with – they need to lie within their sphere of influence. A teacher alone may be quite playful, but in a rigid environment with little support, chances are slim this playfulness will catch on. Even though culture and education mutually influence one another, it is very difficult for one person alone to change a whole culture.<sup>68</sup>

Tegano (1990) discussed the extent to which teachers can enhance creativity and playfulness depending on their own tolerance of ambiguity, although she does indicate more research into this is required: “As teachers, intuitive perceiving types may be more tolerant of ambiguity and more playful and may thereby approach classroom interactions differently than less playful teachers who

are uncomfortable with ambiguous classroom situations” (Tegano & Catron, 1990, quoted in Tegano, 1990, p. 1051). Kajs & McCollum’s research (2009, 2010) reveals, in a way, that “the teacher is the message”. If a teacher or educational leader displays low tolerance for ambiguity, this does not enhance the appreciation of ambiguity in others.

Regarding the constraining and enabling conditions for playfulness in young adults in higher education, a number of factors can be teased out from this chapter. On the one hand, regardless of the limitations of the personality research (it eliminates the seriousness that can accompany playfulness and it diminishes the importance of social interaction), individuals can differ in their personality, being more or less playful. Tolerance of ambiguity also varies among individuals, resulting in different expression of playfulness.

Teacher styles, however, are also certainly enabling or constraining. A near-rigid school system may stifle spontaneity. Children’s exploratory play is constrained by a physical environment that offers no building blocks to move around, is pre-determined, or socially not sanctioned to engage with. In a setting in which we are physically constrained, we may still enjoy daydreaming, maybe even more so than in a setting which is inviting to play with. This means that daydreaming is enabled partly by physical constraint. Even though adults are no longer expected to physically explore their surroundings, creativity facilitators (that work with a mature clientele) will often vouch for the mobility of furniture (cf. Lipmanowicz & McCandless, 2014).

In playful interactions, mutual understanding (even nonsensical understanding, in the sense of a willingness to explore another’s nonsensicality together and “play along”) is enabling for playfulness. An encounter in which one person is playful and the other person does not pick up on it quickly becomes awkward. A “mere” psychological approach to playfulness is not enough to understand its different manifestations, since much seems to depend also on the way interaction facilitates playfulness. Playfulness, although in part dependent upon a playful personality and/or attitude, may often manifest itself as “acceptable” playfulness if the interaction is approved by the involved parties. “Unacceptable” playfulness is not likely to be labeled playful behavior, but sooner as annoying, disruptive behavior. This too can lead to blind spots in the analysis

of play behavior, as it tends to leave out negative forms of play or “dark play”.

In children’s education, there is preferably little difference between playing and learning. Play is considered children’s “main occupation.” It is in part inconceivable that this would go for adults and adolescents as well, if play involves not so much pre-supposed lack of consequence, as well as the indeterminacy of outcomes that characterizes much of today’s work. Learning requires goal directedness or at least a goal orientation, especially when it takes place in an institutional setting: we do not go to school just to see if maybe we have acquired more knowledge at the end of the day, we go there *for exactly that* reason – to become more skilled at something (and learning to play is not on the curriculum). Mainemelis & Ronson (2006) indicate that “many organizations continue to see play as, at best, an occasionally affordable distraction from work that may boost employee morale but has little overall impact on their core business” (p. 83). Because of the required functionality of education, this may not be much different in educational settings.

There seems to be a mismatch between what 1) policy states should be realized through education (creativity and innovation), 2) how present day learners organize their studies (surrounded by multiple media and with decreasing focus on one single thing), and 3) the way “class room learning” is organized. The open ended space required for fostering creativity is not part of the institutionalized educational space. When the connection between learning and playing is addressed, this takes place within a functional discourse that discusses the value of play for learning (and not the other way around). Concepts like “serious games” and “non-entertainment-games” affirm the dominance of the instrumentality of this play approach: they leave little room for playfulness as something of value in itself.

Huizinga signals that there are play forms that are worthwhile – that display the kind of noble spirit that constitutes culture and “false” forms of play that are misleading. Goffman distinguishes between transformations and fabrications, where in the latter, the participants are left in the dark. The word “playfulness” has a positive connotation – but darker forms of playful interaction are left out this way. There seems to be some urgency to the question

what forms of play, then, are worthwhile and which ones are not. What criteria should we use, if we do not want to base these criteria on the image of *homo sapiens* or *homo faber*? In one way or another, these criteria will be informed by a notion of the kind of life that is worth living. Escapism – in the negative sense of the word – is a move away from this kind of life.

In combining the concept of utopia with the concept of play as a voluntary way of overcoming unnecessary obstacles, we can create a regulative ideal – never objectively – that enables meaningful discussion between participants. Ordinary life is *not* a game, precisely because we call it ordinary. But our imagination allows us to picture *what it would be like* if it were. This process of imagining contains an assessment of how “what it would be like” is different from “how it is now.” The assessment of this difference is not a neutral process, as it contains assumptions of the ways in which this life would be more enjoyable if it were playable. The lusory attitude as a gameful attitude requires that two levels of motivation are addressed: the motivation to play *at all* now that we are obviously not in Utopia, as well as the motivation to play by these specific rules.

The empirical part of this thesis, which follows next, contains a description and analysis of data collected in two years in which second year students had to perform an assignment called “The World Your Playground.” In this assignment, they were invited to let go of behavioral consistency and play with expectations. After that, they were invited to reflect on their assumptions regarding the construction of ordinary life. Building from the theoretical framework provided in this chapter, three elements are analyzed: 1) the way in which students come to a definition of the situation (their construction of reality), 2) the way they formulate their assessment of the situation (their underlying notions of what is and is not worthwhile), and 3) the way they make use of available space to reframe this situation (their ways of rule following and rule breaking: *how do they practically accomplish playfulness?*).

THE WORLD YOUR  
PLAYGROUND:  
WHAT A MARTIAN  
NEEDS TO KNOW

4

One of the most important machines in our life is the computer, we agreed on that. We then thought about the role of the computer in our lives and what it is we use it for. [...] The computer is a machine that makes human life easier. [...] It plays a big part in our social life: ICQ, Skype and hotmail and a number of online forums are an example of this. After we'd thought about this, we came to the conclusion: the computer is man's new best friend! (2008, r134)<sup>68</sup>



*Figure 15. A computer on a leash, being presented as man's best friend*

This chapter contains an analysis of the output from the assignment “The World Your Playground” (TWYP). This output was generated over the course of two consecutive years, 2008 and 2009. It consists of a directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, see chapter [2.4.3](#)) of the assignments the students made in these years, with *a focus on the year 2009*. Playfulness was the main theme in this year, creativity the main theme in 2008. The analysis reveals the way in which students construct and perceive the relationship between playfulness and reality and how they describe what constrains or enables it. This analysis aims to address the three questions that were formulated in the closing of the previous chapter:

1. How do students come to a definition of the situation? (construction of reality),
2. How do they formulate their assessment of the situation? (underlying notions of what is worthwhile), and
3. How do they make use of available space to reframe this situation? (their ways of rule following and rule breaking)

Question 1 and 2 cannot be answered separately, as students’ construction of reality is informed by the things they find worthwhile. Answers to these two questions are woven into the analysis of the way students formulate enabling and constraining conditions of playfulness, as these are connected to their assessment of the social world they inhabit.

The aim of the chapter is to a) provide an exposition of the diversity of perspectives on what enables and constrains playfulness according to students (Q 1 and Q 2), b) reconstruct the approaches they take to developing a playful attitude (Q 3), and c) connect student’s perspectives to the theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapter. This answers questions 1, 2 and 3 in an integral way.

[Section 4.1](#) contains a presentation of the data, highlighting the coding procedure; it discusses the relevance of the application of the PLEX framework to the data and outlines some key differences between the first and second year of running the TWYP assignment. [Section 4.2](#) discusses the constraining and enabling conditions of playfulness as formulated by the students, along the lines of Giddens’ division between material constraints, (social) sanctions

and structural constraint. The material world is seen as both constraining and enabling for playfulness. Social sanctions are seen as one of the core constraints hindering people from expressing their playfulness once expectations about maturity kick in. The structural constraints are perceived as the most ambiguous, yet at the same time invite the most critical questions:

It did make us think though. Why do we see this world as it is? Why do we think in advance cola (a black soda in a plastic bottle) tastes good, why is it so hard to think “out of the box”? Is there so little stimulation for us to think creatively? Or is that just too much trouble in our hurried world full of certainties and things that have been decided in advance? (2009, r.136)<sup>69</sup>

[Section 4.3](#) looks at the things students actually did and the way they reflected on them. This section discusses what the “how” of playfulness looks like for this group of adolescents and young adults. It discusses the approaches students took to generating a playful stance and while doing so, illustrates how they moved from playful approach to playful expression. The approach to playfulness concerns the mood students are in, the preparations they make, their openness to serendipitous encounters with the world around them, as well as “recuperation” strategies when it turns out the playful mood does not let itself be summoned at will.

There are some differences between the two formulations of the assignment, but the overall structure was identical in both years (see [appendix 1](#) and [2](#) for the original assignments). In 2008, more serious topics were discussed compared to 2009. In the former year, the assignment was labeled “creative.” However, the assignment labeled “playful” also generated a diverse amount of playful solutions to moral dilemmas, environmental concerns and everyday situations. Playfulness is not just sparked by joy and spontaneity, but also by boredom and frustration. Ambiguity is key: several students present it as their design strategy for making the assignment, but they also express their concern for the ambiguities of ordinary life as well as a quest for authenticity in a highly mediated world. Not all of them hail the notion of an inner child that needs expression, but more space for adults to be playful is welcomed.

Two paradoxes are inherent in the assignment itself: a) a paradox

of intentionality – as described by Statler et al. (2011) as a way of purposively engaging in non-serious activities, to attain a serious goal, and (b) a paradox of spontaneity. Not only does the assignment itself have a prelusory goal, it is a paradoxical one: “be spontaneous!” One student reflects on this in a critical assessment of her playfulness, where she states the ideas she presented may not have been playful enough:

And maybe I still try to fall back on serious issues too much, like the environment. Yet I find it difficult, looking playfully at “the world” in a forced way. I indicated this before. I think that because these [are] forced playfulness and creativity, the expressions are less playful as well, compared to when they just come to you, spontaneously. (2009, r. 154)<sup>70</sup>

[Section 4.4](#) looks at the way different concepts that have been discussed in [chapter 3](#) play a role in students’ formulations of playfulness and creativity. Utopian strands of thinking are present mostly in their ideas of freedom, creativity, and childhood. Ordinary life, especially its routines, is seen as a source of constraint. Although students do not refer to sociological works explicitly, they do use notions very similar to Goffman’s idea of framing and Turner’s idea of liminality. The “ludic dialectic” that Sutton-Smith describes, as a play with the frames of play, is visible in many of the creative expressions that students made and in which they start out with a reference to an ordinary situation and turn it into something playful and often absurd and impossible.

The assignment itself was clearly set in what Sutton-Smith calls the rhetoric of the imagination. In the terminology of the PLEX framework, this generates an almost automatic focus on the categories “exploration,” “fantasy,” and “humor.” In addition, students were explicitly invited to make something into something else, which may have generated a focus on (functional) objects. Furthermore, because of the paradox of spontaneity, it is not entirely clear to what extent the dynamics of playfulness here are different from fully spontaneous situations. Yet, one of the tenets of the theoretical framework is that playfulness need not always rise in a self-chosen situation or one that is free from constraint.

The distinction Sutton-Smith outlined though, between a referential

and a ludic dialect turns out to be meaningful in analyzing the way students explore the question of “what else” rather than “what if.” Ordinary life is taken as a reference point in many cases, but analysis along the lines of the PLEX framework revealed little to no playful experiences connected simulation or imitation. Rather, the explorations that took place were about impossibility, simultaneity, and absurdity, more than possibility, potential scenarios, or “sensible” play.

## 4.1 PRESENTATION OF THE DATA, CODING PROCEDURE AND BIAS

The assignment “The World Your Playground” served different purposes:

- a. An educational function: to invite reflection on the social construction of ordinary life;
- b. A design function: to inform the game development of Borobudur and
- c. A design function for the development of educational material that may invoke playfulness in students.

The educational function a) was assessed in year 2008 and 2009, with the author taking on the role of research teacher, within the time frame of three weeks in which teachers are expected to grade their students work. This also comprised a first reading of the material as research material, to create a general impression of the way in which students performed the assignment and what themes they addressed in their essays (aside from the ones they were instructed to address in the assignment).

For the design function for the game Borobudur, the data was analyzed both by students and the author, with the goal of finding information, ideas, and inspiration that might be useful for the design of the game (specifically content and style: the appeal of the game in terms of its tone of voice and themes to address). Students Niels Nieman (2009), Shan Poon (2010) and Peter Paskamp (2011) wrote their BA theses about the game concept. Paskamp had access to the data that had been made anonymous of the two years and

used this as material. (Poon analyzed students' evaluations of another assignment that is not part of this thesis.)

Papers containing a first exploration of the first year and of the similarities and differences in the two years were presented during conferences in Kaunas (Isaga, 2008) and Tartu (Transforming Digital Cultures) (De Jong, 2008; 2010). The design function for *developing of inviting playfulness and/or a playful stance c*) is analyzed and reported on in this chapter. This concerns a more fundamental question with regard to the mechanisms that may actually lead to the desired outcome (the “mechanism” behind playfulness, as to enhance the intended – exotelic – result of the game). The illustration and quotation in the opening of this chapter is an example of student's reconstruction of the creative process in their assignment. Their essays and reflections shed light on the way they perceive the enabling and constraining conditions of playfulness.

## 4.1.1 PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The analysis in this chapter is based on a total of 110 essays about creativity and playfulness. The focus with regards to the constraining and enabling conditions is on the 55 essays from the year 2009, in which students wrote an essay about playfulness and came up with their own playful expressions. The focus with regards to the way in which students accomplish a playful stance and the way they reflect on these expressions is also on 2009. The expressions themselves – all 270 – are compared over both years.

The 45 essays of 2008 generated 110 images with narrative that were suitable for analysis, the 55 essays of 2009 generated 160 images with narrative, creating a total of 270 images. Images were suitable for analysis if they were self made and contained a narrative that helped the reader make sense of the story. In some cases, parts of reports were missing entirely. In other cases, there were images but no narrative. The essays belonging to these reports were included in the analysis, but the images were excluded. If the images were not a display of a concept the students came up with, they were included in the analysis because they may nonetheless reveal something about their reasoning about playfulness.

Of the creations in 2008 (N=160), 42.8% addressed a serious or

somewhat serious topic. Of the creations in 2009 (N= 110), this was 17.1%. In 27 out of 55 reports in 2009, communication technology is a theme. In 41 (25%) cases in 2009, compared to 19 (17%) in 2008, students did not create something themselves, but used something that already existed, either as an additional example of creativity or playfulness or as something they had done in the past. This means the photo they added to the report was their own, but they wrote about something they thought of earlier, either as a creative solution they had already developed as or something they now – as a result of the assignment – had come to consider as playful.

Students' reports are discussed anonymously and are referred to by their year and the number ascribed to the report in the coding process.<sup>71</sup> Since the quotations are derived from the thematic codes, page numbers are omitted. When a student has done the assignment alone, he or she is referred to in the third person singular; otherwise students are referred to in plural or as group. (13 reports [24%] in 2009 were individual efforts, rather than group efforts, judging from personal statements made in the text, such as "I came up with this idea when ..."). The translations of the students' quotes are the author's. The original Dutch quote can be found in the footnotes. Language errors in the original language are only translated where they have implications for the logic of what is being said.

Students did the assignment during an already busy module. Several of them mention time as a constraint to doing a good job on this assignment. In some essays, this is expressed through irritation with the assignment itself:

... that we sometimes felt like a cow on the work floor, because all we do is stupidly type papers, when we don't feel we make any progress with that. We were, again, not really doing anything in particular, when we came to the thought that we're not really performing meaningful assignments for school. (280, r.160)<sup>72</sup>

The fact that other students were feeling constrained by time can be deduced from the fact that some groups have taken a number of old holiday photos to determine whether they express anything creative or playful. In some cases, these were images of students playing with their cameras and perspective on their vacations, lifting

a Taj Mahal or Eiffel Tower held between their fingertips (2008, r.129, 2009, r. 84). In other cases, students shared information about precious and formative memories, including in their reports images of the landscape of their childhood (2008, r. 137) or of strange experiences during an art festival (2008, r. 146).

## 4.1.2 CODING: THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND APPLICATION OF THE PLEX FRAMEWORK

The data collected over the course of the two years was analyzed earlier on, at the same time as we prepared the design of the game. Before the final round of data analysis, a coding sheet was composed containing metadata about the way the assignment was executed: concepts derived from the literature review and concepts that emerged during the first rounds of data-analysis (see [appendix 5](#)). After the coding process was completed, some categories turned out empty. This was the case for categories derived from Goffman, such as “aliveness to the situation” that later turned to be applicable to another code that arose in the coding process, namely “mindfulness,” which had been categorized under “mood strategies.” This was also the case for the category of “play,” which turned out to be such a broad category for the purposes of this analysis that it lost its meaning.

At the same time, there were categories that needed additional subcategories, such as the category “oppositions,” in which not only Sutton-Smith’s categories of adult-child, rational-irrational and seriousness-playfulness turned out to be relevant for analysis: public-private, courage-fear, necessity-lovability also popped up as differences that were relevant in students’ perception. For sake of brevity, many parts of this coding sheet were omitted in the reporting phase. An important function of the sheet proved to be keeping the author in “researcher mode” over “teacher mode”: making sure time was only spent on reporting and analyzing the data and not commenting on the essays or re-evaluating them the way a teacher might.

The coding process took place in four steps: 1. an analytic read-through of all enabling and constraining conditions in the essays about playfulness, followed by 2. an analytic read-through of all enabling and constraining conditions in students’ reflections, 3.

concurrent coding of sections connected to the different theoretical themes, 4. coding of all images and narratives of the year 2008 and 2009 based on themes and the 22 categories of the PLEX framework. These steps are briefly elaborated upon below.

- 1/2. All essays on playfulness were browsed for statements regarding constraining and enabling conditions. Some of these were made explicit while others could be derived from assumptions the students made in the text. Many of these were very theoretical in nature and were partially repeated some of the literature that was made available to students.<sup>73</sup> The reflections on the images and photographs also revealed additional statements about constraining and enabling conditions. These were more personal in nature and reveal more practical aspects of the (mostly) constraints they encountered. All these statements were grouped along the distinction Giddens makes between enabling and constraining conditions of a material, social and structural nature (1984). The results of this part of the coding process are discussed in [section 4.2](#).
3. A next step was a thematic walkthrough of the papers for statements that were connected to the different themes discussed in the theoretical chapter. For instance, during reading, if a passages stated: "People are often programmed. We get up in the morning, perform our tasks during the day and in the evening, obediently go home" (2009, r. 91)<sup>74</sup>, it would be coded "routinization" (a code derived from Giddens' structuration theory) and would later be summarized along with other citations from reports under that heading. If a passage stated: "Back in the days when you were still a child, you recognized what was good and evil did not touch you. The world was pretty and you were not worried about a thing" (2009, r. 95),<sup>75</sup> it would be coded under "childhood utopia," a code derived from a comparison in earlier years. The results of this part of the coding process are discussed in section 4.4.
4. The 270 images and their narratives were coded with a section of the coding sheet that was applicable only

to the images students created. It contained Caillois' fourfold distinction between *agon*, *alea*, *illinx* and *mimicry*, yes/no questions regarding the occurrence of the themes and the 22 Playful Experiences. Where applicable, the narratives were also thematically coded. The coding sheet was later exported to SPSS to enable cross tables and make comparisons between the two years. The PLEX categories were useful on the one hand to distinguish analytically between the foci of students. The categories "exploration," "fantasy," and "humor" occurred so frequently they lost their analytical use. The category "simulation" on the other hand, remained nearly empty.

During the course of the coding process, a distinction was made between the playfulness of and expression itself and the playfulness of the process leading up to this expression, as these turned out to be quite different things. The PLEX category of "exploration," for instance, can be about the process of coming to an expression. One group literally used the term "travels": "During out travels through this world, we have takes many photos and captured many thoughts" (2009, r. 98).<sup>76</sup> It can also apply to the creative expression students came up with, where they invite others to explore the world through their concept. This was the case in a group which entered an image of a tunnel of arched trees into their report, suggesting the tunnel was a portal for people to be transported to another world, in which they would be able to do what they wanted (2009, r. 90). This double way in which the PLEX framework can be applied, leads to come difficulties in the coding, which will be addressed in the upcoming section.

### 4.1.3 LIMITATIONS: THE FORMULATION OF THE ASSIGNMENT IS STEERING

The assignment belongs to the rhetoric of "play as imagination," especially since it focuses on creativity and innovation that is present in the assignment itself. This lessens the chance of inviting students to reflect on themes that belong to the other rhetorics, such as fate, power or identity (cf. Sutton-Smith, 1997). At the same time, the rhetoric of the imagination is also one of the three rhetorics in which Sutton-Smith distinguishes playfulness from play (the others are that of self and that of frivolity).

The PLEX framework was used to both describe what experiences the students had while doing the assignment: the extent to which they are playful and the playful *experience* that the idea may generate in others. On the one hand, the PLEX framework is said to describe playful experiences, and in that sense, the focus should have been only on the extent to which students' experiences were playful in one way or the other. On the other hand, the developers of the framework explicitly state that the categories might be useful for designers of playful experiences. Considering the students as designers of playful experiences is a legitimate perspective, given their future profession and their module assignment of creating an experience for Disney.

But the usability of the PLEX framework for these purposes was more problematic for the analysis than anticipated. So far, the PLEX framework has been used to establish the nature of playful experiences *during play activities*. This suggests that whatever experience is being had, it is a playful one. This is implied in the setting of the use of these studies so far. But the play setting for this group of students is not a given, because of the paradox of intentionality: they have to make a serious school assignment about a topic that is considered non-serious. Playfulness is not implied in this, and according to some students even its opposite. Frustration is labeled as one of the PLEX categories, but although students report experiences of frustration, this does not mean this is a playful experience of frustration, because the play setting is not implied.

Lieberman (1977) considers manifest joy a core characteristic of playful behavior, but not many students explicitly report having fun. This can be attributed partly to the "paradox of spontaneity" in the assignment and partly also to the distinction between displaying playful behavior and developing something that is playful or generates playfulness. In some cases though, students expressed what Lieberman calls "manifest joy": they were obviously having fun and have stated so in their report (see: 4.3.3.3 silliness).

Some formulations in the assignment have steered students in specific directions. In the first year, the topic of virtual words was introduced in the assignment as a topic for reflection. This is already a morally laden topic, surrounded by a public debate that is filled on the one hand with negative assumptions about escapism and on the other with positive expectations of knowledge exchange and

online citizenship, for example. Although this does not make it any less of an important topic for students to reflect on, it makes it less surprising that they frame their reflection in a normative framework more than an epistemological one.

The questions themselves were not formulated neutrally. There was an explicit question about the role of technology and media. Some questions – accidentally – presented an either/or distinction between reality and virtual worlds, which may have primed the students into taking the solidity of this distinction for granted – even if it was intended to invite reflection on it. This was also the case for a question about the locus of playfulness, whether this can be found within individuals or situations. Several students answered the questions that were suggested for reflection as though they were homework answers that needed to be looked up and answered.

In the assignment, students were not asked to make an explicit distinction between playfulness and creativity. Rather, these were presented as connected topics and students were asked to come up with examples they found to be both playful *and* creative. For the educational purposes of the assignment, it was meaningful to do it this way, but for the research purposes it might have been more enlightening to ask them for example they considered playful but not creative, or creative but not playful.

This section provided a general impression of the data presented in this chapter: the coding process and the limitations of the data. In the upcoming section, students' formulations of enabling and constraining conditions are addressed.

## 4.2 ENABLING AND CONSTRAINING CONDITIONS OF PLAYFULNESS

This section discusses the enabling and constraining conditions that could be derived from the essays written by the students. They are presented and analyzed along the lines of Giddens threefold framework of enabling and constraining conditions: those of a material kind, those related to (negative) sanctions, and those of a structural kind. They are presented in that order. The discussion of the examples is elaborate, mostly to illustrate how playfulness on the one hand is connected to somewhat abstract constraining and enabling conditions, or better yet, to big placeholders that summarize these conditions, like “the ludification of culture” or “media convergence” and on the other is constructed from and generated in minute elements of ordinary life: an interaction, a change in mood, a funny conversation, a weird association, a memory or the weather. The presentation of the reports in this form illustrates the way in which students come to a definition of the situation they are in and how they express their assessment of that situation. Readers less interested in these details are advised to move on to the conclusions of the subsections.

### 4.2.1 “A DEAD CHICKEN ENABLES THE PLEASURE OF OTHERS” – MATERIAL CONDITIONS

Students formulate several kinds of conditions that can be headed under “material conditions,” Giddens discusses the extent to which new computer technology is both constraining and enabling for new

kinds of interaction, now that the physical presence of the involved parties is no longer required. Computers and software have been labeled under the heading “material” as it is still the material “wiring” that enables the communication. Comments have been grouped under 4 categories in total: physical space (9); computers, games and software (6); objects (2) and the weather (2). Under “other” fall statements that have no similarity to other statements (5).

The category of “weather” as enabling for playfulness is relatively straightforward: one pair of students reported all they needed was the summer sun, to develop their ideas. They connected this to the mood it helped generate (2009, r. 65). Another pair states: “It can be something simple like the sun, when it’s there again for the first time after long, gray winter days” (2009, r.80).<sup>77</sup> In another report, students mention how the frozen water in winter enables new kinds of play (2009, r. 89). In an attempt to situate playfulness, one pair discusses the importance of the mixture of a person’s inclination and the presence of objects in a room – in this instance a guitar (2009, r. 98). The mere presence is not enough, but it helps. However:

A person who has no affinity with music or instruments might not pick up the guitar. This person might for instance start making the bed, because cleanliness is more important to them than music. (2009, r.98)<sup>78</sup>

Playfulness can also be derived from the act of cooking, where cooking is considered to be a creative process. This student provided a picture from her personal archive, called “Christmas chicken 2008.”

This oven-roasted chicken is her expression of playfulness. She wrote:

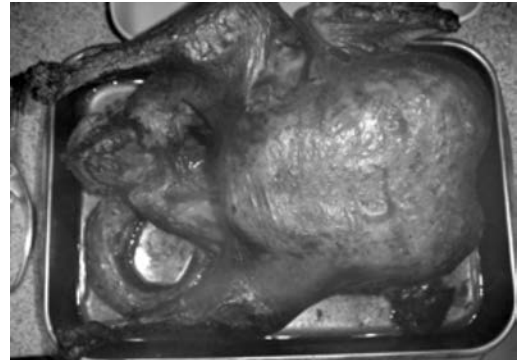


Figure 16. “Even if the chicken can’t experience the pleasure it brings, it does temporarily turn the world upside down” (2009, r. 89).

Playfulness should not only have to do with being a child, it can also be a passion with a playful influence. Cooking allows a combination of creativity and individuality. This way you can create nice compositions that are playful looking and emit (playfulness). (2009, r. 89)<sup>79</sup>

The categories “Computers, games and software” and “Physical space” will be discussed in more detail below, since these are categories – unlike the weather – in which it is possible to meaningfully intervene and design spaces and software that afford playful experiences.

#### 4.2.1.1 COMPUTERS, GAMES AND SOFTWARE

The comments students made regarding “Computers, games and software” display a concern about technology as much as they display optimism. A pessimistic student states:

I think that through the use of media, playfulness diminishes for a great part, because you also have a lot more freedom than when you let your own playfulness come to the fore, because with that, you can determine your own leisure time and that is not dependent on a series of levels. (2009, r.64)<sup>80</sup>

A more optimistic approach is the one in which the students place more emphasis on the capacity that children have to create their own stories. They disagree with the idea that computer games cause children to lose their imagination, and are actually positive about the development of problem solving behavior they develop as a result of the many choices they have to make. Their statement resembles Sutton-Smith’s attentiveness to the way children’s play is subject to, yet also escapes rational control (Cf. Ch. 9. Child Phantasmagoria). They state:

Also on the computer, children create their own imaginary world and make their own stories in their minds. It doesn’t even have to be the mission (assignment) to empathize in the way the designer intended you to. In most cases, children have a different experience in all the thousands of games that exist. (2009, r. 80)<sup>81</sup>

Some students reflect on the affordances of creative media:

When is media use actually playful: I *do* think that means you wind up with design programs like Picasa and Photoshop. A person can express his or her feelings and emotions there, and also express a lot of creativity. (2009, r.64)<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore, according to one pair, these creative media not only enable playfulness, playfulness has enabled these technologies themselves, especially when it comes to phone production:

Thinking up new functions can be seen as an innovation in the area of mobile communication. This innovation did not just occur overnight. Playfulness transports you to another world, which is different from the “real” world. You see things differently and start thinking from another frame of reference. Especially this latter element is a great stimulant for creativity. And via this creativity, new ideas or viewpoints rise. (2009, r. 103)<sup>83</sup>

The “materiality” of the constraints of media, games and computer software has a tense relation with the material world in which children and adults can play outside. Students (N=17) signal and discuss the changes in children’s lives, from playing outside to playing inside with modern technology. In many cases, students (N=12) merely signal this change. Others express a concern with the extent to which children still play outside as a result of digitization and the increase of digital games. One student expresses this concern in terms of alienation:

There’s no more fantasy involved in it, it’s only about relaxation and escape. [...] It [play] still remains voluntary, but you don’t have to do anything more than press buttons. You are being animated. You don’t have to think for yourself what you will do when. You don’t communicate with each other anymore. Looking at one another is no longer required either. The screen is the most important point everyone looks at. (2009, r. 79)<sup>84</sup>

Another connects it to the potential loss of creative capacity:

Children play inside and with electronic toys much more than they did fifty years ago. Optimists think this is good for the children, because it enables greater problem solving capacity and may even lead to a higher IQ. Pessimists, however, think that these innovations make children lose their imaginative capacities. Children these days have characters and stories presented to them, while children used to come up with their own adventures. So, playfulness is not always a positive thing. (2009, r. 72)<sup>85</sup>

Playing outside and playing together with others are considered enabling factors for social relations: if you have not done these things, you relate to people differently (2009, r.89, r.90). Concern over media, games and technology is partly expressed in a concern for the well-being of children, specifically their creativity and imagination. Physical space – going outside – is considered important for both children and adults.

#### 4.2.1.2 PHYSICAL SPACE

Students were asked to reflect on the question whether playfulness is a trait that is inherent to people or whether it is enabled by situations. Although it is difficult to distinguish between the material components of people's surroundings and the social elements of situations, some students discuss in more detail how the physical surroundings themselves help bring out playfulness. Although out of all the reports, only one student claims human beings need to be taught what playfulness is (2009, r. 82), students do report a need for the activation of playfulness through the design of physical space.

In one case (2009, r.63), they claim adults can become playful, given the right to be.

The activation should occur by participating in outdoor activities such as a survival track, or by a stimulating environment:

Playfulness is present in people unconsciously, so we think this needs activation. Sometimes people are playful without them realizing it or sometimes it is lurking and they just need a little push. (2009, r.63)<sup>86</sup>

Google headquarters is considered a good example of the way in which an office environment can enhance or activate playfulness in adults (2009; r.59; r. 78; r.101). This idea is not hailed uncritically though, as one pair wonders whether we should apply Google's strategy to every office.

This means that is not necessarily inherently playful, but that this playfulness can also be brought to the fore by the environment. Employees in Google headquarters are more creative than the average office drone. This means that playfulness and creativity are connected to each other in a sense. But should we start furnishing all offices in a playful way, hoping for more productive, cheerful employees? (2009, r. 78)<sup>87</sup>

Later on, they answer their own question in the negative: if you need control and regulation in your office, you need to wonder if this is something you want (2009, r.78).

Another way in which students consider playfulness to be connected to the material world is the sheer change of environment, either through taking a walk outside (2009, r.78) or by working in a different environment from what one is used to (2009, r. 83).

"Through this change of environment, one can gain new inspiration. The situation contributes to the playfulness of human beings" (2009, r.83).<sup>88</sup> Another report highlights the importance of our *senses* in gathering inspiration and claims we are mistaken about how to *get* inspiration:

This [claiming to feel uninspired] is a myth, since inspiration is all around you. Anything can function as a source of inspiration. Often this inspiration comes to people in the form of feeling, tasting, seeing certain things, etc. In actuality, all information that the senses can perceive constitutes a source of inspiration. (2009, r.64)<sup>89</sup>

A last way in which playfulness is enabled by the material world is through physical objects that may invite playfulness or playful reflection. One example is of a pin board on a restroom door that was so stuffed with fun photos and intriguing quotes that it caused a playful stance in the group. In their reflection they



Figure 17. *Bicycle Stories*: “How many owners has this bike had?” (2009, r. 79).

explore what it would mean for the world if everything looked like this pin board:

People will be in a good mood more easily because of the beautiful things they see. And because the effect of the images is that they bring them back to their childhood, people will become more playful. As a result, the world will be more like a playground. (2009, r. 73)<sup>90</sup>

Another student curiously looks at the bikes she comes across in her surroundings and wonders what the number of owners is this student’s bicycle may have had before (2009, r.79). In turn, she made a game out of picturing and imagining these bicycle stories.

A last example is a description of the interplay between playfulness and environment, where they continually influence one another.

“By taking inspiration from their surroundings, material, people, and information and by appropriating them by experiencing, feeling, thinking and attributing meaning to them and expressing this, playfulness arises. By doing so, you influence your surroundings, creating a vicious circle. (2009, r. 65)<sup>91</sup>

Some of these reactions suggest the material world plays a part in enabling playfulness. That is to say, when an environment lends itself to be played with, either by design (Google HQ) or by nature (weather), chances are that students may take that opportunity. At the same time, when it comes to the extent to which media enable playfulness, students have mixed emotions, which they partly project onto children. If media tell students what to think or do, they consider this limiting to the imagination, whereas if media afford autonomy and the expression of skills, they are considered to enable playfulness. Although this does not generate a clear cut design principle, theories of motivation (Csikszentmihalyi,

1996) underpin the idea that (some degree of) autonomy, along with a sense of mastery, generates flow and or joy. The material organization of schools can say something about the educational approach, the importance of hierarchy, and the autonomy granted to students. This can be expressed in things as seemingly trivial as the mobility of chairs, the interior decoration of classrooms and offices, the organization of interaction between staff and pupils by segregating or integrating lunchrooms. A bleak school environment may be less inviting for the expression of playfulness (although resistance to that bleakness may also generate playful expressions).

## 4.2.2 “DON’T FEEL EMBARRASSED, DO IT YOUR WAY!” – CONSTRAINT OF (NEGATIVE) SANCTIONS

Students do not discuss many constraints that have to do with negative sanctions. They mention “rules” as potential constraints, e.g. “rules are also often limiting” (2009, r. 95), but they do not discuss in much detail which rules exactly.<sup>92</sup> Some discuss the moral and ethical limitation of for instance the workplace as a constraining factor:

It might be that your playful way of working is at odds with the ethical rules. Everyone has his or her own way of working and if at home you want to hang upside down in your naked butt, you obviously will realize your other colleagues don’t do this. You actually act against the norms and values and this can interfere with the process (2009, r. 148)<sup>93</sup>

Some students also consider the extent to which society is regulated a constraining factor (N=6). This is expressed the following statements, among others:

For many people, it is difficult to let this playfulness come out, because of all the rules, laws and habits that today’s society is bound to. That’s why creativity is a needed skill to develop new insights. (2009, r.62)<sup>94</sup>

Three topics are related to the fear of (negative) sanctions: a) social rules and pragmatic sanctions, b) embarrassment, and c)

expectations of maturity. Social rules and pragmatic sanctions are seen as constraining, not as enabling. As one student describes, social rules may constrain creativity and as a result – according to them – playfulness:

An outsider should be aware that every part of this world has its own rules, laws and habits. These influence the possibilities to be creative. When you are constrained by rules and such, it will be very difficult to be creative within these boundaries. (2009, r. 62)<sup>95</sup>

There are also pragmatic sanctions, like getting fined for a traffic violation. These fall into the category of regulative rules, rather than constitutive rules (cf. Giddens, 1984). These rules are connected to the topic of risk in two ways. On the one hand there is the risk of a social or punitive sanction when breaking a rule. On the other hand, there is the risk of the behavior itself, which has consequences for which these rules have been established. The legislative control to prevent these anticipated consequences is seen by some as constraint. As one student mentions in relation to playful behavior in traffic:

If someone moves playfully through traffic, this is described as reckless driving, which is the deliberate quest for risks. And that's not allowed according to the rules. So, in this case too, playfulness is suppressed through a limitation, a limitation of rules. (2009, r. 81)<sup>96</sup>

Regarding embarrassment, students mention a fear of ridicule as a constraining factor. Expectations of maturity are connected on the one hand to (fear of) negative sanctions (mostly social), while at the same time, from a perspective of structural constraint, they function on the level of practical, rather than discursive, consciousness. By students' reflections on these expectations, they are raised to discursive consciousness. Both embarrassment and expectations of maturity will be discussed in more detail below.

#### 4.2.2.1 EMBARRASSMENT AND FEAR OF RIDICULE

One pair explains why adults are less playful than others:

If you express playful ideas as an adult, this easily comes across as childish or in some situation, as anti-social. People quickly take the perspective of the other person and how they will evaluate your behavior. This generates such a constraint that in many cases, we, as adults, suppress our playfulness. (2009, r. 81)<sup>97</sup>

Three reports explicitly mention embarrassment as a constraint (2009; r.148, r.95, r.81). Others make an appeal to an imagined audience to let go of their embarrassment. To quote one pair:

During our research, we came across many funny, shocking, fun and strange expressions of playfulness. The most important thing we learned through this research is that playfulness is there for everybody and can contribute a lot to everyone's life. So, don't feel embarrassed and get out there! (2009, r. 148)<sup>98</sup>

Embarrassment is also a topic with one pair who finds that the repression of playfulness can have unanticipated, undesirable consequences:

Eventually this emotion will have to come out. What you find often is that people will display playful emotions under the influence of alcohol or chemical agents. Unfortunately, this is often uncontrolled, so that embarrassing situations can occur. That's a far cry from creativity. (2009, r. 81)<sup>99</sup>

The fear of embarrassment is placed within the individual: if you are afraid that others will laugh at you, this may limit the expression of playfulness (cf. 2009, r. 148). This worry of not being taken seriously is implicitly present in the discussion of the expectation of maturity:

Adults do also still possess playfulness. But often this is snowed under by all the serious activities we (have to)

engage in and the social roles we need to adopt, along with the desired behavior that accompanies them. This often robs us of the opportunity to totally be ourselves and to surrender to our playfulness. (2009, r.55)<sup>100</sup>

Another group expresses it more strongly: “As people get older, the desire to play is still present, but it is squashed by learned principles” (2009, r. 84). They state this is visible especially in organized jobs like factory work, where playfulness is not appreciated, rather than the relative spaces of reclusion a creative person might find. Given that these students opt for a career in the creative industries, negative social sanctions may not be seen as a big concern at this moment in their lives. Their future workspace may actually appreciate some non-conformity.

#### 4.2.2.2 EXPECTATIONS OF MATURITY

Adults are expected to create their own playful engagement with the world: it is not handed to them anymore, as is the case with children. An exception to this is the gaming industry (2009, r. 55). Several students put videogames in relation to adults: “Play has made a move from child play to a sort of mature play, like video games” (2009, r. 103).<sup>101</sup> Students differ in their appreciation for adult playfulness and in their attribution of playfulness. In comparing it to the playfulness in children, they state:

This difference lies in the amount of responsibility, experience and level of capacity to put things in perspective. Conversely: the amount of fantasy, passion and light-heartedness. (2009, r.82)<sup>102</sup>

Some say it is a matter of perspective whether or not we play. They refer to an image they enclosed of a construction worker (figure 18).

He has a shovel in his hand and you can see an excavator. Children often use a shovel on the beach. Children are often building things and digging. This construction worker might therefore be playing in this spot. You can't properly see what he is digging. The place is his play ground, so to say. (2009, r. 83)<sup>103</sup>

There is little agreement among students on whether adults lose their capacity to play or whether they repress it. One group states that playing may be something you cannot unlearn, but that does not mean you will actually do it: “like riding a bike, you’ll always be able to do it. Yet, a person continues to ride his bike but they don’t continue to play” (2009, r. 152).<sup>104</sup>

Others deny that playfulness in adults is diminished at all:

Adults are also involved with playfulness all day. Take a joke at work, for example, or a game of tennis, or pushing the pedal of the gas of your car just a little bit further than needed when you’re in no rush whatsoever to get home. (2009, r. 100)<sup>105</sup>

Others indicate it is simply not expressed that often anymore:

Playfulness in adults is a lot more difficult to research, because playfulness is not visible with them. And playfulness can be seen as childish with them. (2009, r. 61)<sup>106</sup>

Some affirm this:

Adults don’t reveal that they fantasize and they ask less questions. This is because they think they’ll look ridiculous with certain questions. They try to stay within the frame of reference. This keeps barriers in their thinking intact. (2009, r. 66)<sup>107</sup>

Adults are also thought to have completed certain processes, limiting “the playfulness factor” (2009, r. 67). When they refer to the playfulness of children, they sometimes do so reminiscing about their own childhood and regretting to some extent having grown up:



*Figure 18. Children may imitate the work of a construction worker in their play, but maybe the construction worker imitates children’s play (2009, r. 83).*

Nowadays, you're a mature person with many responsibilities. There are many things that hinder you in finding the child within yourself. (2009, r.95)<sup>108</sup>

At the same time, they sometimes refer to playfulness of adults as childish, by describing it as a midlife crisis:

In adults, playfulness can also be seen as something that causes them to feel young again. They want to be unpredictable and feel like a child again this way. At a certain age this is also called "the transition."<sup>109</sup> In general, the elderly wind up in a state of denial in which they don't want to be suggested (associated) with old. To feel younger, they often buy new clothing, a new car and if they're lucky, they get a new boyfriend or girlfriend who preferably is 20 years younger. (2009, r.84)<sup>110</sup>

In short, even if according to some, adults repress their own playfulness to make sure they fit in and to prevent them from being seen as childish, they are also thought to be able to use it as an enrichment of their perspective and ordinary life. In praise of human agency, one group states:

Playfulness comes to the fore when people in certain situations let their emotions govern their behavior. Playfulness is a positive thing for people in most cases, because they enjoy their own behavior in these situations. (2009, r. 67)<sup>111</sup>

Another group suggests that differences in playfulness and conservatism are what enables or constrains a difference in interpretation, as well as in reflexive self-monitoring:

In this, we notice that people who call themselves playful will more often call other people's behavior playful rather than find that behavior weird whereas people who are conservative will shake their heads sooner when they see something playful. So people compare the behavior of other people to their own behavior and their own standards and values. (2009, r. 85)<sup>112</sup>

A distinction can be made between role expectations of children and adults on the one hand and deviations from these roles on the other. One group described this difficulty as follows:

We learned that it is difficult for adults to call themselves playful. If you call yourself playful as a grown up, we think that means you're saying you're not a complete adult. On the other hand, if you say you are not playful, you're associated with a boring and serious person. (2009, r. 61b)<sup>113</sup>

The phases of childhood and adulthood as such are not directly linked to their correlated value labels of childishness and maturity. We tend to call a mature child "wise beyond her years," although it makes little sense to talk of a childish child. In the same vein, we seldom speak of a mature adult, as this is implied in the life stage, but we will call an immature adult childish. As discussed above, some students consider the worry of being called childish a constraint.

With regards to design principles that can be derived from these statements, there is optimism with regards to the idea that some constraints can be lifted. Some groups formulate what it is that children do or can do, that adults may have lost the capacity to:

To think like this, you need to be able to think like a child and see the world as if there are no rules and no codes of conduct. As if you see everything for the first time and make up what everything you see is, and what it is for. To think like this, you need to be capable of (temporarily) diving completely into this world and forget about the real world. (2008. r. 133)<sup>114</sup>

On the whole, students consider fear of ridicule an important constraint for the expression of playfulness in adults. That does not mean, however, that they think adults are not playful or that they have no desire to be playful. Children are described as untroubled by this fear, in part because of their supposed "openness." They are also said to be unaware of the way they come across and as such are not bothered by the impression they leave on others. As long as playfulness is not expressed at socially inconvenient moments or an expression of immaturity, students are generally positive about adult playfulness. Moreover, some build on the idea that

playfulness in adults is repressed, suggesting it may be possible to uncover it again. The notion of the ludification of culture suggests that what is happening is a cultural lifting of the potential sanctions of playfulness in spaces where this was previously unacceptable.

Since playfulness is in part a meta-communicative interaction between individuals, we should not be looking for design principles in the regulative sphere: speed limits and traffic regulations have some sensibility to them. Social dynamics are not changed overnight, so the social sanctioning that students describe – being laughed at or not being taken seriously – is not a constraint that can easily be lifted “by design.” However, it would be possible to introduce students to some of the successful projects in what is currently being called “social innovation” and see what reflection on these kinds of changes may have in their perspective of social sanctions. Different collectives actively try to create different kinds of interactions between people to generate new styles of collaboration through social innovation, on the one hand to create new ways to meet the needs of the community and on the other, to be connected to each other differently, less instrumentally. Becoming acquainted with new forms of interaction may open up space to replace some expectations of maturity or at least open up to the diversity of interaction that is possible in a professional situation as well.

### 4.2.3 HABITUALLY INHABITING A SYSTEM THAT STIFLES CREATIVITY – STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS

Constraints that the students describe that are neither material nor about sanction or reward are grouped under structural constraints. This includes those comments that are about personal capacity or personality that at first glance seems exempt from structure, rather than intricately connected. But the experience of individuality is shaped by modernity and by the role of different institutions (Giddens, 1991). Seeing playfulness as an individual trait in itself rather than a collective accomplishment is already characteristic of Western society (cf. Sutton-Smith). All in all, students’ responses can be categorized along 4 themes that they consider constraining or enabling for playfulness.

These are: 1. cultural conditions, 2. institutions, with as dominant subcategories a) school and b) media, 3. individual conditions, subdivided in a) affective components, b) character traits, c) cognitive traits and d) skills and 4. interpersonal conditions.

#### 4.2.3.1 IS THIS A LUDIFIED CULTURE? – CULTURAL CONDITIONS

Students consider culture both a constraining and an enabling factor in the space that is possible for playfulness. Some of the constraints students experience are articulated in relation to situations that would be opposite. One student suggests that we should “look at the creative thinking capacities of babies and toddlers, assuming these have not been influenced by society, causing them to repress their playfulness” (2009, r.62).<sup>115</sup> This suggests that society plays a part in the constraint of playfulness, but also that toddlers are not subjected to this yet.

One student labels expectations of the future as constraining for playfulness:

The push to have a career, the desire for a good income later in life: this is expressed in a continuous occupation with this. Education and future are a very important factor these days. (2009 r.95)<sup>116</sup>

Not just the desire to have a career, but also materialism and consumerism are seen as constraining factors for playfulness. One key element in this is not so much that people long for possessions – one group designed a coffee maker that saves time in the morning – but that they have so little time to look around. This is expressed in statements like the following: “people have little time to themselves” (2009, r. 58); “We are all busy, racing through life and are moody if we have to wait for an order for a pair of minutes” (2009, r.70) and “people are busy, are stressed and have a busy life. They have no more time to look around. Because of this, many beautiful aspects of life are overlooked” (2009, r. 149).<sup>117</sup>

One group of students expressed this sentiment in an image of a bird overlooking a busy street in a city center where people are out shopping (figure 19). They write:

You see people shopping, but no one looks around feeling at ease. The bird indicates that the world sometimes moves as quick as lightning. The magnifying glass reveals that everything is always seen in a large way. People can also feel watched this way, in the sense of being placed on a pedestal. People look up to someone who is “big,” because this person for instance has a great career or a significant status. The combination of expectations and hurry that people have in our big little business world, radiates through the bird and the expectations are enlarged via the observing magnifier. (2009, r. 88)<sup>118</sup>

The pace of today’s society can even be witnessed in the lives of children. One pair expresses their concern over this as follows:

Nowadays, children have a busy day. They come home and do not have any free time to play, because they have to follow appointments. Even little children have to learn to play an instrument and sport preferably every day. There’s ever more homework that they have to do and then it makes sense that children feel too burdened and want to withdraw into a different world. A world in which they can determine the pace, where they know what’s going on and where they feel understood. (2009, r. 79)<sup>119</sup>



Figure 19. A shopping bird enlarged, but also magnifying the hurriedness of society (2009, r.88)

The idea of ludification of culture is at odds with the amount of strain that is put on young children and adults alike. These comments do not suggest culture as a whole is more playful if the consequences of career and status are deemed so important. But students also report about the playfulness of culture (N=17). They see this in what is called the “experience economy,” a term coined by Pine & Gilmore (1997), and use it to describe the importance of experiences over services, products and commodities. As one

student states:

Playfulness and the experience economy that we live in, go hand in hand. The experience economy is shaped by the playfulness that man is continuously looking for. This can be seen in everything that happens around you. Especially advertising makes thankful use of this. (2009, r. 86)<sup>120</sup>

Another student points to the playfulness of today's culture:

You see playfulness in society everywhere these days. Let's take Hyves (a highly successful Dutch social networking site, before the advent of Facebook) as a big example. Who had ever thought we would ever "tickle" and "tag"? The names in themselves reveal enough: playfulness lives. It is nice, funny, and also very multimedial. (2009, r. 57)<sup>121</sup>

In addition cultural characteristics such as a strong focus on the status and career of adults and the pace of today's culture, students also discuss the extent to which organizations can be constraining for playfulness. School is an important one in this, and media institutions are another.

#### 4.2.3.2 INSTITUTIONS: SCHOOL AND MEDIA

Although some students discuss the difficulties of entrepreneurship (2008, r. 137) or analyze situations for imaginary or future offices (2009, r.103), students mostly mention school and the media as important institutions. Given that their daily occupation is to be in school to prepare for a career in the media industry, this is no surprise. They express a fairly amorphous and monolithic image of "the media." They also consider the media and school to be constraining of playfulness at times. For school, this ranges from practical limitations, such as not finding it easy to create something playful in collaboration (2009, r. 103), to considering school a prison (2009, r. 60). This latter group took a picture of one of the group members behind the banisters of the school stairs, claiming he was imprisoned. They wrote: "The picture indicates that sometimes, as a student, you are trapped in school, just like a prison." They do add to this: "This is obviously not really the case, it's only a joke" (2009, r.60).<sup>122</sup>

Others do not find the notion that school constrains playfulness as funny, because adult society pushes the creative mind away:

Adults don't create fantasy worlds, or they don't show this to the outside world. Because of this, they stay within an existing frame of reference and thus keep the barriers of their thinking intact. Our educational system, a system in which only right and wrong exist, helps to create this framework. (2009, r. 55)<sup>123</sup>

Another pair also indicates that it is school itself that teaches you how to be less playful. Although they refer to the teaching of children rather than adults, their points are worth sharing. They refer to the use of playfulness as an indicator to establish a pupil's readiness for learning in school: "In school, you are taught to be mature and this doesn't go together with playfulness" (2009, r. 61b).<sup>124</sup> While children are still content with their imaginary world until second grade, they lose this imaginativeness as they get older (2009, r. 61b).

One pair is positive about school as an enabling condition for playfulness, because children could "learn investigatively in a playful way. By involving children in something and by teaching them math through puzzle-like games, they may find it so much fun that you can continuously climb a level higher" (2009, r.63).<sup>125</sup> A last pair is of the opinion that school *could* enable playfulness as long as certain preconditions are met:

We regret that in our current educational system, children are not taught to think outside the [customary] frame of reference. If primary school were to do this, there would be more creative people. Also, more problems would be solved and more innovation would take place. (2009, r. 66)<sup>126</sup>

The media are thought to sometimes enable, and sometimes constrain playfulness. One pair excludes the news and other informative programs from playfulness, but states:

...there are programs that can evoke playfulness in the consumer. If the consumer can enrich his or her interpretation of certain statements, art forms and

behaviors by looking at the world differently, it is possible to state media use is playful. (2009, r. 73)<sup>127</sup>

Others too, highlight the capacity of media to evoke playfulness: “In the media many playful elements are used, these are used to stimulate the consumers and to stimulate thought” (2009, r. 78).<sup>128</sup> Others (2009, r. 154; r. 73) attribute the increase in playfulness among adults to the media:

As was mentioned before, playfulness is not just for children, but older people also become more playful. The media have played a large part in this. Think of games for instance. [...] The media anticipate people’s playfulness, but they also play with people’s playfulness and make use of it. (2009, r. 154)<sup>129</sup>

And:

If the curiosity of media users is combined with technology, this leads to innovative forms of media use with an open and playful collaboration, critical attitudes and new ideas. (2009, r. 73)<sup>130</sup>

As shown in the section concerned with the material conditions of playfulness, autonomy is also an important element in the extent to which students consider something playful. Media that nourish the creative imagination are valued positively. Although they do not use Goffman’s terminology, students implicitly make use of the notion of frames as ways of organizing experience. Their main focus, however, is on the extent to which these frames constrain the development of other perspectives, rather what the experiences afford and enable.

#### 4.2.3.3 ROUTINIZATION – HABITUAL ANIMALS WITH A PERCEPTION OF TIME

Both the constraints of school and the constraints of media are also connected to routinization. Routinization shapes habits. This plays a part in the constraint of playfulness, because there are situations in which behavior is so organized that there is little space for playfulness. As one group writes:

These kinds of situations ( in which creativity is limited) can mostly be seen in automated (factory-)work and

the like. In this, actions are so standardized and set up according to patterns, that it is generally not appreciated when someone provides their own interpretation of the situation and works differently as a result of that. (2009, r. 77)<sup>131</sup>

On a more psychological level, routinization is not so much connected to the normative expectations of “maturity” as it is to expectation that comes along with habit: being able to predict what happens next. It is more about habit and the perception of time than a fear of negative sanction. The perception of time, then, is partly related to worry about the future. One group of students expressed their concern over time in a photograph (figure 20).

These students state that on the one hand, rhythm, both in a musical sense as in a sense of routine, is important for organizations and workflow, from a farmer having to feed his animals on time to a corporate office in which efficiency is key. At the same time, people tend to have a strong desire to break away from these time-constraints and do what they enjoy. They say:

If he (the Martian) would understand, he might conclude from this that mankind is feeling too limited, and that we are only engaged with dangers and prohibitions, pressure and obligations and that we should perhaps spend a little more time on our free choice. (2009, r. 138)<sup>132</sup>

Students tend to report negatively about the habitual character of ordinary life. One group fulminates against office culture, stating:

The office is a place for rules, procedures and automatism. People work and do mostly the same thing. Routine is a very common thing in the office and this is dangerous. Routine kills creativity and eats motivation! (2009, r. 138)<sup>133</sup>



Figure 20. The rebellious image of a flying V guitar expresses the desire to break away from time-constraints (2009, r. 138).

Another group laments the herd mentality many people display, though they do find that playfulness may provide an appealing escape:

The vast majority of people goes along with this and follows the system without complaints and without wondering why. We are seemingly nothing but small little pawns and in the greater scheme, we don't amount to much. Yet, we all worry: we have to do this, we have to do that! If we looked at everything in a more playful way, a great weight would be lifted off our shoulders. (2009, r. 95)<sup>134</sup>

One group expresses faith in the possibility of teaching children in a playful way so they will act accordingly when they are grown up. At the same time, however, they suggest this is in part possibly because human beings are such creatures of habit (2009, r. 91). Although students do not write about the enabling aspects of routines, they do implicitly display "creative routines" in their approaches to playfulness ([section 4.3](#)).

#### 4.2.3.4 PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL CONDITIONS

Students also report several constraints in playfulness that belong on an individual level, yet are mediated by constraints of a structural nature. This means that given the culture we live in, certain individual characteristics, such as a propensity to be playful, are either valued or not and as such may contribute to playfulness. Students described several affective, cognitive, personality and skill components related to the expression of playfulness. These are discussed in the following subsections.

##### PERSONAL CONDITIONS: AFFECTIVE COMPONENTS

Positive affect is considered an important component of playfulness (cf. Lieberman, 1976, 1977; Barnett, 1990, 1991, 2007). Students do refer to positive emotions they or others experienced as an enabling element of playfulness (2009, r. 65, r. 77, r. 102):

The feelings and memories people have of an event are very important, as is the way in which people react to

an event as it is going on. These feelings, memories and reactions need to be positive in order to conclude it has been playful. (2009, r. 65)<sup>135</sup>

A goofy mood (2009, r.65, 69) is considered enabling for playfulness, as is boredom (2009, r.92) (or even seeking relief of boredom by starting to goof around, 2009, r. 69; r. 148). Anxiety is suggested a couple of times as an emotion that constrains playfulness (2009, r. 55; r. 71; r. 84; r. 113; r. 134; r. 141; r. 149):

Fear, or anxiety, is the major counterpart to playfulness. Anxiety over the fact that life can be worse, despite the fact that life is already limited for many people because they're so used to everything that feels safe. This anxiety blocks the playfulness that is so vital for people. (2009, r. 152)<sup>136</sup>

People who are not afraid to do what they want are considered playful by some. One group tried to develop concepts that would invite people to pay more attention to the ordinary objects they pass everyday and state that if they should succeed to do so, they could call themselves playful:

If you know how to achieve that, you can see the world as your plaything. You can use anything for your expressions, you are not afraid to think of something new and you know how to creatively work with your surroundings. (2009, r. 149)<sup>137</sup>

Although anxiety is relatively easy to understand as a constraint for playfulness, boredom and comfort are less apparent, as they can be seen as both constraining and enabling. In play theories, it is often suggested we play when we feel safe. At the same time, when we feel safe and comfortable we may play to combat the boredom and may engage in risky behavior to feel alive. A difference between adults and children, according to one group, is that children are not cognitively capable of assessing the risk of their behavior (2009, r. 81). This may result in risky behavior that they are unaware of. Adults may be inhibited in their playfulness because of the perceived risk, but at the same time, the perception of risk may be motivating to alleviate boredom.

Barriers to playfulness can also come from within the condemnation of one's inner playful voices by calling it crazy (2009, r. 149). As one group reports:

... [I]t is also possible that you yourself are a limitation. You may have a feeling of embarrassment when you show up with a creative/playful idea and your group members don't take you seriously. You won't do this a second time then. (2009, r. 148)<sup>138</sup>

Other components of the mood to be in refer to a state of mindfulness, of being present, awake and open to the moment:

It is interesting to recognize that if your eyes are open wide enough, there are fun things to be seen everywhere. You have to be awake and open to it! And with fantasy, it's possible to make something fun out of everything. (2009, r. 79)<sup>139</sup>

This state of mind itself enables playfulness, because it allows one to see more opportunities in ones surroundings. One student refers to this as having "the right kind of eye." He calls this the third eye, which entails "looking around as objectively as possible and then redefining everything you see around you anew" (2009, r. 57).<sup>140</sup> In contrast, another student described the state between waking and dreaming as conducive to playfulness (2009, r.91). Students not only describe these mind states as enabling, they also deliberately try to invoke some of them in order to develop a playful stance. (Examples of these are discussed under playful approaches in [section 4.3.](#))

#### PERSONAL CONDITIONS: PERSONALITY COMPONENTS

In addition to affective components as enabling in developing a playful stance, there are also elements of people's personality that students consider relevant to playfulness. Students do not label their personalities in analytical psychological terminology, on axes like introversion-extroversion, neuroticism, etc., but they do ascribe certain relatively fixed traits to themselves or other people which can best be considered as an ascription of personality traits, rather than, for instance, skills or attitudes: "Actually, an individual decides themselves whether or not there is playfulness in him or her, since this is determined by ones personality" (2009, r. 76),<sup>141</sup> Students

report traits such as openness to change, gutsiness, imaginativeness, childlike nature and self-confidence.

One group indicates there is some unpredictability between personality and context. In a way, we can be mysteries to ourselves:

“[...] it can't be determined what ones playfulness may unleash in any kind of situation. Nor is it clear in advance to the person himself how he will behave in a certain situation. Nor can a person discover his playfulness for a specific element in a situation where this is element is not present. (2009, r. 98)<sup>142</sup>

This group does claim that openness to change is what enables a playful engagement with ones environment. This was formulated as “giving elements their space” (2009, r.98). Another group states that playfulness can be recognized by guts and oppositions:

Crossing boundaries, marketing something that is not finished and changing things that are apparent or decidedly opaque – are examples of how one can deal with business playfully. (2009, r. 64)<sup>143</sup>

One group is critical of the idea of personal identity, specifically people who consider themselves as fixed:

But in our opinion, someone does not just consist of a person, you are partly shaped and through development, some aspects of your personality fade. Developments provide a change in perspective, a change in possibility. (2009, r. 95)<sup>144</sup>

The developments they refer to have to do with the limitations reality forces upon us. The extent to which one can stay connected to one's inner child determines the extent to which one continues to see the possibilities beyond the limitations:

As a child, anything is still possible: you become a pilot or a fireman. Daydreaming about later, how things will be, not knowing what changes he or she may go through. “Later” is only time that has traveled forward, you as a person with your perspective on the world will

remain the same, right? But that is not reality; too many limitations occur which suddenly limit the possibilities. (2009, r. 95)<sup>145</sup>

As a result, according to this group, we stop taking our dreams seriously and lose our creativity. This is in part the result of circumstance, but also in part a lack of courage. The idea of having a fixed personality, in their view, enables complacency and results in a lack of playfulness. They comment on the ideal of “a house with a picket fence” as a constraint for playfulness, not because of the ideal itself, but of the lack of courage they ascribe to this strand of thinking, and the resignation it implies:

We don't think “out of the box;” but have a limited way of thinking. “That will never work!” and “Unfortunately, that is not an option for me!” are statements you often hear. People don't see that anything is possible in this world as long as you believe in it. (2009, r. 95)<sup>146</sup>

Another group is critical of the idea that an outsider would be able to decide what is and is not playful:

Who decides when there actually is playfulness? If the question were formulated this way, everyone would believe there are people who get to determine whether or not something is playful. But isn't it so being playful testifies to the idea that everyone could potentially be playful? In this counter-question lies the answer. (2009, r. 82)<sup>147</sup>

This group then wonders, if people decide themselves if they want to be playful and make choices to enhance their playfulness, what makes the difference? Why are some people more playful or more creative than others? They too claim it is the extent to which we are capable of remaining childlike.

This childlike quality that people can retain is connected to courage and self confidence by another group:

But some people, or at some moments, it turns out they are playful. Playfulness thus is an expression of lightheartedness and self-confidence. Because it takes

self-confidence to engage in activities that are actually considered childish. (2009, r. 63)<sup>148</sup>

In these different formulations too, the quest for authenticity and originality is connected to the perspective children are still able to take on this world – without the limitations of frames. Courage is a requirement of the playful adult personality because of the unpredictability of playfulness itself and the need to not care too much about the opinions of others. Maturity clearly does not enable playfulness itself.

#### PERSONAL CONDITIONS: COGNITIVE COMPONENTS

Students discussed affective components and personality components that can be constraining or enabling for playfulness, but have also identified several cognitive components: elements that have to do with either our general capacity to think and reason. Statements in this category range from an assessment of our thinking – e.g. ‘thinking too complexly’ – to asking the right kinds of questions.

One group considers media (also discussed above) as enabling for playfulness. They do so, because of the potential to change people’s way of looking at the world:

If media are used in a creative and imaginative way to make people think, they can be said to be playful. The media are actually an excellent way to invite people to look at things differently. (2009, r. 73)<sup>149</sup>

Though these students do not explicitly connect this to cognitive processes, it is implied here that it is not just the media, but also partly the capacity of people to actually change their minds when provided with the opportunity, that enables playfulness. Some indicate that a requirement for this is having prior knowledge:

In short, to create playfulness, you first need to be aware of everything that goes on in this world, what the cultural differences and opinions are and how you can creatively and innovatively turn that into a playful expression. (2009, r. 96)<sup>150</sup>

In connection to this, one student refers to our capacity to ask

the right kinds of questions are enabling for playfulness. This can be done by turning off the filters we use to make sense of our surroundings. He calls this a “trick” (and as such, this will also be discussed under the heading “strategies”) that one can use while developing a new perspective on an environment.

After this, you can ask yourself: through what filter do I normally look at this? Why do I do that? What other filter can I use to see with? And last but not least: what do I see without a filter? Seeing the world without a filter is nearly impossible for adults, but trying it out generates fun ideas. (2009, r. 57)

This playfulness enabling approach is connected to its counterpart: seeing things in a fixed or predetermined way (2009, r. 154). Students also write about this in terms of rigidity and strictness of their thinking. One group reflects on their creative process, stating: “We were thinking far too complexly at first” (2009, r. 90). Another group states that what is needed to turn the world into a playground, is to banish “strict thoughts within guidelines” (2009, 73). Freeing ourselves from the constraints of our own thinking can lift these limitations, although specific guidelines for this are not provided. Except for one: “If we assume the Martian is playful too, we will tell him that if you look for playfulness long enough, you will find it eventually” (2009, r. 151).<sup>151</sup>

One group discusses these constraints to the level of brain development. They suggest playfulness is constrained both by

... the brain and the influence of one’s surroundings. Because one can’t be creative, one can’t behave in a playful manner. If one were to not let themselves be influenced by their surroundings, it is possible to stimulate the brain through creative processes to play more with all the different patterns one takes in. (2009, r. 59)<sup>152</sup>

In short, in students’ perception, the mixture of the input and the way we process information together either enable or constrain playfulness. One group considers “perceptiveness” a key factor (2009, r.151). Some call this brain development while others call it “using imagination,” but it is clearly the interplay of the way we think and

what we are surrounded by that allows free space for exploration or that results in narrow, predictable thinking. One group refers to our imagination as a core instrument for problem solving. They state it is also

... possible that playfulness is awoken by way of fantasy. It is possible for instance, to tickle your playfulness by letting your imagination go over numerous objects. By finding a solution to a problem, for instance, you think of multiple solutions. These can be predictable, but they can also rise by looking at the problem in a different way. What counts here, is that the problem arises in a specific situation and is solved via the person's imagination. (2009, r. 98)<sup>153</sup>

But not every problem situation lends itself for playful solution finding:

We feel playfulness does not have an added value in a problem that contains many rules and regulations. You can't let playfulness run free. It is not immediately negative, except that you can't apply it to the problem. A playful solution demands a problem in which you can apply your ideas optimally. (2009, r. 148)<sup>154</sup>

One group refers to risk assessment as a hindrance to playfulness, specifically in adults. On the one hand, this is connected to fear of sanctions. On the other, it is connected to the capacity to reason through potential consequences, whether they will occur or not. Children have not developed this capacity to think things through and as such, do not experience a constraint of their playfulness when it comes to risky play behavior:

The sky is the limit, and if something is new, it is especially worth trying. Children take risk almost unconsciously, probably because they don't know the risks yet. You can see this for instance in the way they swing, they can't get high enough! (2009, r. 81)<sup>155</sup>

Although here too, the childlike mind is the most uninhibited one, some characteristics of adulthood and also rationality are valued more: the potential or reasoning, thinking a problem through and collecting information about a situation to be able to create something new.

## PERSONAL CONDITIONS: SKILL COMPONENTS

Students use different formulations to indicate that skill is also an important enabler of playfulness. One group refers to the individual management skills that a leader needs to transform a regular company into a creative, innovative one:

Playfulness begins with management. The managers have to be the ones who begin and who will have to ignite the playfulness in their employees. As such, the manager will have to assume a role that fits a playful manager. (2009, r. 59)<sup>156</sup>

Others indicate that some – for instance through their imagination – are better equipped to be playful or see the opportunities. One group attributes this to their preparation for the assignment. After they puzzled on the structure and intent of the assignment, they thought thoroughly about what they wanted to accomplish. They stated: “This was very important for the development of the different innovative expressions. Without a good preparation, the assignment would not have become this playful” (2009, r. 94).<sup>157</sup> Others attribute a difference in skills to be playful to individual differences in perspective. They states in their reflection:

One person sees something playful in an object or a place more quickly than another. Your creativity needs to be triggered by it, and if this doesn’t happen, it is difficult to develop an idea. (2009, r. 88)<sup>158</sup>

Lack of skill or a concern over a lack of skills also differs in the assignments. Some students are meticulous about the execution of their assignment: if they lack the skills to create a technically adequate picture, they chose to go with another example they found less strong conceptually, but easier to execute (2009, r. 64; r. 65; r. 78). As one group states in reference to the photos they found when looking for examples of playfulness:

These photos were so professional though, that we would never be able to take pictures like this. In the end we decided to just see what we came across and what we’d be able to make of it. (2009, r. 64)<sup>159</sup>

Some also begin their concept development with something they

can actually make (r.119; r.116). Others actually have the skills to create a realistically photoshopped image of their ideas (2009, r. 88; r. 148) and report it helped make their original idea more creative (2009, r. 88). Some groups suffice by taking a picture of something they see around them and just write about what they would like to make of it, without using a camera or Photoshop.

On the whole, it is difficult to tease out to what extent any of these personal elements actually *determine* one's playfulness. As one group suggests:

Often, playfulness already resides in people. But people will be more easily moved to express this playfulness when they land in certain situations. A person can make every situation a playful. It depends on the mood one is in and whether the situation is convenient and speaks to one's interest. (2009, r. 65)<sup>160</sup>

Personality traits are often considered fixed. As such, if those are the main constraint for playfulness, designing for playfulness would be of little use. But the affective, cognitive and skill components are all things that can be translated into specific forms of curriculum design. Affect can be altered via exercises, either ones to create a mindful or an energetic atmosphere. Reasoning, specifically problem finding and problem solving can to some extent be taught, as well as skill, especially to those students who only feel comfortable doing something new if they can rely on the skills they built.

#### INTERPERSONAL CONDITIONS:

##### INTERACTION WITH OTHERS

In addition material and structural conditions, individual components play a role in enabling or constraining playfulness, as do interpersonal aspects. Several of them have already been discussed under the heading of (negative) sanction. However, the focus in these was mostly in terms of constraint: worry about exclusion or ridicule. But interpersonal interaction also makes things possible. Seven groups (2009, r. 65, r. 68, r. 73, r. 88, r. 89, r. 93, r. 101) have made use of a blog post called "Three principles for the enhancement of playfulness" (Tiemens, 2008) which featured a model containing three steps that could lead to the enhancement of playfulness in organizations. The three steps are

a) inspiration, b) co-creation, and c) experimentation. Co-creation and experimentation require collaboration and in this model, the collaboration itself is seen as something that enables playfulness.

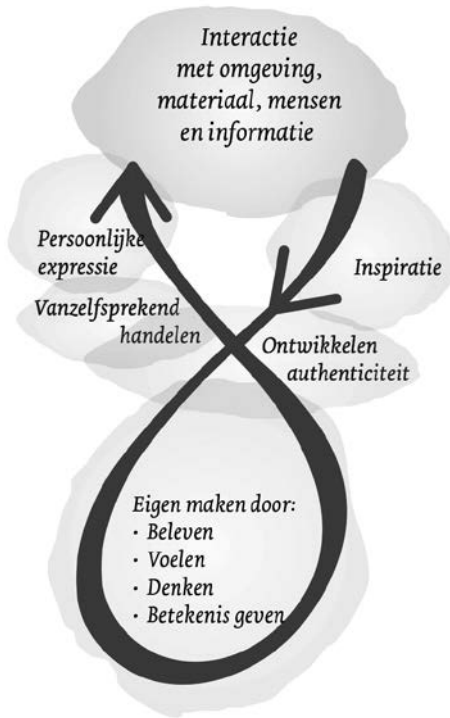


Figure 21. Inspiration, co-creation and experimentation to enhance playfulness

Students also reported they actively sought collaboration and dialogue with their peers to enhance their playful ideas. This implies interpersonal interaction is seen as enabling while at the same time, it is something that can be actively initiated, making it a strategy as well. As one group states:

Another situation in which playfulness occurs, is when two people let their thoughts dwell on different topics. In such a situation, it occurs often that the most diverse thoughts are connected to a certain topic. For instance in the form of humor, but it can also be an addition to what the topic is missing. (2009, r. 98)<sup>161</sup>

Another group mentions the possibility of stimulating others or being inspired by others to be playful:

You don't play football all by yourself, but you ask someone to come join you. Or your boss or teacher gives you an assignment to develop a new concept. (2009, r. 61)<sup>162</sup>

Some suggest it is possible to somewhat "coerce" (especially) adults into playing, for instance by inviting them to join in "survival" activities: "It ensures that people are under obligation to 'play'. Crawling through the mud, walking over ropes above the water, climbing trees, etcetera" (2009, r. 63).<sup>163</sup> One important factor, according to some, is the compatibility of group members. For instance with classmates, some students write affectionately about the chemistry between group members, relying on having a good time when they are together. These students may also seek each other out for these kinds of assignments, because they enjoy collaborating together (2009, r. 92).

Where negative sanctions weigh most heavily as a constraint of playfulness in interpersonal interaction – as a worry about being laughed at – interpersonal interaction is at the same time enabling for playfulness. Hanging out with like-minded people can enhance playful interactions. Granting students the freedom to work with whomever they want, may on the one hand be a way of enhancing the chances of playful collaboration. At the same time, there is an inherent risk of routine interaction present, as well as a risk of exclusion of fellow students.

## 4.2.4 PLAYFULNESS ITSELF AS AN ENABLING CONDITION FOR CREATIVITY

Students write about the things that enable or constrain playfulness. They also write about the things that playfulness itself enables or constrains. Creativity, on the one hand, enables playfulness, but playfulness also enables creativity. As requested in the assignment, students connect creativity, playfulness and innovation (e.g., 2009, r. 65, r. 73, r. 97, r. 148, r. 149, r. 151). They discuss them as interrelated concepts with unclear causal directions, though several groups opt for the formula "creativity + playfulness = innovation" (mentioned specifically by 2009, r. 65). Some describe creativity as the force that helps ideas become specific (2009, r. 149). Creativity is connected

more to our problem solving capacity, playfulness more to the spirit with which we solve problems (2009, r. 151):

When a person is playful, they will come to a creative solution sooner. But too playful can also be detrimental. An individual may lose sight of reality because of it. (2009, r. 65)<sup>164</sup>

Other students indicate that playfulness plays an important role in the development of identity: “Especially during puberty it is important for people to express their playfulness, to be able to find themselves” (2009, r. 90).<sup>165</sup> These students also claim playfulness also encourages activity and leadership skills in adolescents and adults (2009, r.90). Again others claim playfulness enhances our intelligence:

Playfulness provides the possibility to look beyond objective perception. And it is this quality of people that separates us from animals and plants. Okay, maybe playfulness requires a little more than that, but without playfulness, our intelligence level would drop a few IQ points. (2009, r. 92)<sup>166</sup>

As indicated before, playfulness can also be a constraint itself, in group processes for instance:

Think about your module and/or PBL group. If you're in a group in which people always approach problems in a businesslike manner and in a fairly conservative fashion, there's a chance they will consider your behavior as slacking. In our opinion, it is important to have counterparts in a group, but you have to give each other space to let each other's creativity roam free. (2009, r. 148)<sup>167</sup>

But playfulness can also help alter an atmosphere. One group describes how a playful approach might benefit a bad neighborhood, by adding play elements (figure 22). They write:

The atmosphere is not optimal, even the employees on the building site work hard and fast. It's a place where you would not quickly find a game. Yet, the addition of a game is something this is suitable for this location. (2009, r. 103)<sup>168</sup>



Figure 22. The grimness of a tear down location may improve from adding play elements (2009, r. 103).

One last group connects playfulness not only to creativity, but also to the capacity to carry yourself lightly. People who can do so “are less troubled by stress, have a pragmatic approach to life and are generally labeled as easy going” (2009, r. 97).<sup>169</sup>

Some of the statements made by students here, are taken from articles that were recommended reading for them. Others are the results of their own, collaborative thinking. Playfulness is not thought to constrain many things itself. What it constrains is relatively straightforward: in a playful mood, it is difficult to have a serious meeting and playfulness can disrupt the course of formal events in an undesired way. It can be inappropriate, and as such disrupt the order of events. But the overall benefits of playfulness are considered to make important contributions to creativity, organizational processes, problem solving, etc.

## 4.2.5 CONCLUSION: CREATIVE MYTHS OF BOUNDLESS FREEDOM CONSTRAIN ACTUAL PRACTICE OF IT

Students are concerned that children do not play outside as much as they used to, but they also affirm that they do still play and also, that adults *do* in fact play and game: there is little question for them *that* we play. The largest part of this section consisted of an analysis of what students have put forward as constraining and enabling conditions. This was an analysis of statements “on the surface.” Stating it, however, does not make these students “right.” As Staempfli (2007) and Barnett (2007) suggest, it is valuable to understand students’ perception of playfulness in their own words. But their thoughts and statements on what constrains and enables playfulness, cannot be transposed one on one to design principles. That is, it provides no guarantee that playfulness will actually increase in students once the constraints they describe have been lifted. They might be wrong.

This means that, in order to derive valid statements from the things that are implied “under the surface,” the structural constraints that we – as agents – might have limited awareness or knowledge of is a wholly different task. A brief comparison to what is known about creativity is relevant to consider what could and could not be formulated for the design principles. Giddens’ statement about “the confusion that structural sociologists tend to make” (1984, loc. 6331) applies to the statements of the students as well, namely that they consider structure as constraining only and not as enabling. Students frame the different rules that they refer to as regulative rules, with potential sanctions when they are broken. But they rarely consider them constitutive for, for instance, their imagination.

As indicated in [section 4.1.3](#), the assignment itself is set within the rhetoric of play as imagination. According to Sutton-Smith, this rhetoric finds its origin in the Romantic period, “with its emphasis on the individual’s personal freedom to be original” (1997, r. 176). The students’ reflections clearly indicate a desire to be original and authentic. At the same time, they associate this with unlimited freedom or at least a freedom from certain constraints. But theory about creativity is often cast in the sphere of problem solving, meaning that constraints are in part what enable creativity. In that sense, the students’ wish to be free from constraints may limit their perspective on the structures that might actually enable their playfulness and creativity. How they establish a playful stance and what techniques they use to develop a playful idea is addressed in the next section of this chapter.

## 4.3 “IF WE GO OUTSIDE, IDEAS WILL COME”: APPROACHES TO DEVELOP A PLAYFUL STANCE



Figure 23. *Optical illusion* (2009, r. 78).

Several of the approaches students took to develop a playful stance are optimistic and open to serendipity. They display faith in their creative process and rely on the steps they take to generate a successful outcome. One statement that is indicative of this is: “we felt that, if we would go out onto the streets with a number of items, the ideas would come to us” (2009, r. 78). Their focus was on performing playful tricks with perspective.

These students continued: “Even though we brought items along that we wanted to use, we did not exactly know what for. We then took a picture of it. If it turned out not to work, we would not use it. But in most cases something fun popped up” (2009, r. 78).<sup>170</sup> They call it playful because in the picture, the head is replaced with something that does not belong there and is out of proportion.

The presentation of the reports in this section answers the third question in the opening of this chapter: how do students make use of the available space to reframe the situation they are in? How do they accomplish playfulness? On the whole, students use different approaches to generate ideas for the assignment. The

students did not have to answer an immediate question on *how* they became playful, but were asked to describe the process that led up to their ideas. This means a number of the assignments are actually about the creative process of idea generation, rather than “invoking the play spirit”. But an analysis of these steps does help shed light on the way students navigate the constraints of either their environment or their own imagination. And this in turn can help develop some design principles for playfulness. Gaver (2002) mentioned ambiguity as a design principle for *homo ludens*. This is in fact one of the approaches students took to the assignment (N=9), for instance by actively looking for double meanings in things and by expressing the wish to create something that others can puzzle on.

The paradox of spontaneity that was discussed in the opening of this chapter is present in this part of the analysis as well. A strategy to be spontaneous sounds paradoxical. If somebody wants to become a comedian, it is unlikely that they become successful by reading an instruction manual on joke telling, even if these kinds of manuals exist (see: Amazon, keywords “how to tell a joke”). But although comedians have an air of spontaneity about them, they take the creative process of constructing new jokes very seriously. And for some people, in order to allow themselves some spontaneity in one area, they want to be organized in another. A musician may want to feel comfortable with his skills in recognizing what scale a piece is played in, before being willing to improvise. Not being sure the stove is turned off can diminish someone’s openness to what was supposed to be a relaxing evening out. It can take some planning for spontaneity to emerge. For this reason, all approaches the students took were analyzed.

The term “approach” is taken broadly here and concerns actual strategies on the one hand, but to some extent, the division also includes motives, if these motives have determined the further choice of action for the execution of the assignment. Particularly interesting strategies are the ones that either focus on lifting the constraints they encounter (e.g. approach 11) or that place a self imposed constraint to generate a better outcome (e.g. 9c).

Students deploy different strategies at the same time and adopt different strategies in different phases of making the assignment (see table 8). The strategies are not exclusive. It is possible for

students to be mindfully present walking through the city while using a prop to generate ideas and brainstorming with their peers. As such, the number of statements that is analyzed for this section exceeds the number of essays in total.

The categories are discussed in the following order: 1) (allowing) serendipity; 2) looking for inspiration; 3) getting in the right mood; 4) brainstorming; 5) focusing on objects; 6) getting in motion; 7) seeking collaboration; 8) play with subversion; 9) play with meaning; 10) discarding and selecting ideas; and 11) recuperation.

The subcategories to some of these approaches are introduced at the opening of the sections. Table 8 summarizes the occurrence of each approach.

Table 8. Overview of the different approaches students took

<b>(1) (Allowing) serendipity (20)</b>
a) Serendipity - No strategy (7)
b) Serendipity - Associations and fantasy (10)
c) Serendipity - Space (3)
<b>(2) Looking for inspiration (37)</b>
a. Inspiration – Content (24)
a) objects and space (9)
b) the internet (7)
c) personal files (2)
d) imitation (3)
e) examples from lessons and books (3)
b. Theory (concept) strategies (13)
a. studying (8)
b. reflection (5)
<b>(3) Getting in the right mood (17)</b>
a. Relaxation (6)
b. Mindfulness (5)
c. Silliness (6)
<b>(4) Object oriented approaches (14)</b>
a. Playing with the function of objects (9)
b. Bringing props along for idea generation (5)
<b>(5) Brainstorms throughout the process (23)</b>
a. Brainstorming in advance (8)
b. Brainstorming during the process (6)
c. Brainstorming afterwards (2)
d. Following the steps of the creative process (7)
<b>6. Getting in motion (25)</b>
a. Walking around (15)
b. Start doing something (10)
<b>(7) Collaboration (13)</b>
a. Conversation and dialogue (7)
b. Checks & similarities (6)

**(8) Subversion – actively looking for rule breaking (2)**

Looking for rules to break and how to shock people (2)

**(9) Meaning & combinatorial play (36)**

a. Ambiguity and multiplicity (9)

b. Self-imposed constraint and set targets (16)

a. Exotelic intentions (3)

b. Playful problem solving (6)

c. Creative constraint (7)

**(10) Discarding and selecting ideas: killing their darling (or not)**

a. Because you have to

b. By making a list (5)

c. For (lack of) realism (2)

d. Realizability & executability (6)

e. Challenging themselves to be original (8)

f. Increased consciousness (1)

g. Playful appeal and fun (3)

**(11). Recuperation approaches – unblocking constraints (8)**

Failed plans & attempts at recuperation (8)

## 4.3.1 (ALLOWING) SERENDIPITY

Several students report coming up with their ideas by chance. Some of these are really accidental strategies, or rather displays of a lack of strategy. But in other cases, students describe how they were actively on the lookout for chance encounters, having developed a mindset to encounter the unexpected and especially recognize it as such. Students regard culture as constraining for playfulness to the extent that they describe it as “hurried,” “stressful,” and “fully booked.” They feel it leaves little room for spontaneity, yet the students are capable of overriding this hurried mind state to pay more attention to detail. All in all, there are three general strands or approaches to serendipity that will be discussed below.

The first is labeled “no strategy,” because in these instances students report they did not do anything specifically to become playful or to generate playful ideas (2009, r. 59; r. 69; r. 74; r. 75; r. 93; r. 95 r. 150). The second is labeled “associations and fantasy.” Here students let their imagination run free, to see what associations pop up. It also includes the ways in which they actively go out, to encounter an idea (2009, r. 59; r. 64; r. 69; r. 74; r. 78; r. 83; r. 84; r. 91; r. 97; r. 150). The third was labeled “space,” as the students reported the physical space they were in at the moment to be decisive for the idea that occurred to them (2009, r. 78; r. 82; r. 87).

#### 4.3.1.1 SERENDIPITY – NO STRATEGY

Some students did not set out to do anything playful in particular, but took a few photos on the spot when they encountered something they considered funny. It was only later that they realized this would be useful for the assignment: “We did not think it was all too difficult to take suitable pictures” (2009, r. 69).<sup>171</sup> Others stated: “Our playful nature was the silent force behind our ideas” (2009, r. 75).<sup>172</sup> Again others say they were in the process of trying to come up with an idea when they realized their activity in itself – having a drink on a terrace – was already something playful (2009, r. 93). Or they saw playfulness all around them, once they started looking. Some rely on their creativity and innovativeness to bring them something good, as it cannot be clearly found in the literature (2009, r. 93). Others describe their doubts concerning the creative process of discarding their first ideas (see also under 10):

Maybe it was just coincidence that we have not made use of our first ideas. The ideas that came later were simply better; we have not made use of any specific technique. (2009, r. 95)<sup>173</sup>

This open approach also enables inspiration for some:

Since we did not have a clear idea, we could critically look at our own photos and not get stuck on one specific idea. In a way, we have let ourselves be inspired by our own photos. (2009, r. 83)<sup>174</sup>

Students also report these instances as coincidences, using words such as “randomness,” (2009 r. 83) “chance,” (2009, r. 59; r. 69; r. 74) and “encounters” (2009, r. 150). Students also report being caught off guard, daydreaming during a brief moment away from work:

During work, one of us had to wait for the guests to arrive. At a moment like this, you begin to look around you and notice those elements that you normally don’t see. Especially when you want to take a break from work, you begin dreaming. You begin to see other expression in different objects or situations. (2009, r. 91)<sup>175</sup>

#### 4.3.1.2 SERENDIPITY – ASSOCIATIONS AND FANTASY

Another approach that seems related to a lack of strategy, but that was a deliberate course of non-action, was labeled under “associations and fantasy.” These are the instances in which students report letting their creative imagination do the work, being present mainly to capture the ideas. As one pair put it:

The ideas came to us at different times. Once, the best ideas came in the morning, while waking up. The beauty of waking up is that the transition between dreaming and waking creates a very free moment. The cares of reality are not there yet and the mind is open to the most beautiful ideas. (2009, r. 91)

This student was prepared to capture this ephemeral moment: “By keeping a notebook by the bedside, we could also immediately write down these ideas” (2009, r. 91).<sup>176</sup>

Others indicate they did not go out into town with a preset idea:

We agreed to just go into the city and let ourselves be inspired by it. Once in the city center, there are plenty of things and objects around you that you can do playful, creative things with. This way, we encountered two art objects and a giant plastic ice cream cone. With these objects, we have done different things. (2009, r. 150)<sup>177</sup>

Students who have chosen this “approach” combine a lack of direction with a sense of openness to chance encounters:

In addition, it is super important to keep your eyes open to maybe come across something that might be able to do something with.



Figure 24. Optical illusion and serendipity - there are plenty of objects to be found outside to create a playful photograph (2009, r. 150).

Besides that, you have the chance of bumping into a coincidence that you can do something with. (2009, r. 74)<sup>178</sup>

### 4.3.1.3 SERENDIPITY – SPACE

A third, brief, category here, is students' descriptions of the space they were in while they had ideas. Although this only occurs three times, it is relevant, because (physical) space is also among the constraining and enabling conditions of playfulness. One student describes getting stuck in traffic and a result realizing she should have taken the train. This informed her idea to create an advertisement that invites people to take the train more often (2009, r. 87). Another student describes being on his way out of the house when he and his group saw a smoke detector, which created a wave of associations (2009, r. 82). Others were also just about to leave when they noticed a half open book on the coffee table (2009, r. 78). This inspired them to stop and create the photograph in figure 25.



Figure 25. Deliberate ambiguity in a picture after stumbling upon the idea because a book was lying around (2009, r. 78).

They also kept the meaning of the photo deliberately ambiguous (Deliberate ambiguity – as a strategy – is discussed in more detail under 10): “the picture of the book [...] makes the observer think, because you don't see straight away that it is about a book [...] It can be interpreted in multiple ways” (2009, r. 87).<sup>179</sup>

## 4.3.2 LOOKING FOR INSPIRATION

Students also prepared their ideas by looking for inspiring examples. They did this by a) looking for examples that they considered playful and b) looking for theory that discusses playfulness and creativity. Both are discussed below.

### 4.3.2.1 INSPIRATION – CONTENT

This section discusses the approaches students took to look for playful examples and develop their own ideas. Five different approaches can be distinguished: looking for examples in objects and spaces (2009, r. 73; r. 74; r. 80; r. 82; r. 83; r. 94; r. 97; r. 101; r. 151), on the internet (2009, r. 63, r. 64; r. 73; r. 78; r. 84, r. 85; r. 102), in personal files (2009, r. 84; r. 89), through imitation (2009, r. 59; r. 61; r. 98) and in examples provided in textbooks and lectures (2009, r. 68; r. 80; r. 101).

#### A INSPIRATION – CONTENT: OBJECTS AND SPACE

Some students started out with looking at the PowerPoint presentations from the lectures on the assignment, which contained examples of so-called guerilla marketing, and kept some of the images in mind (2009, r. 80). Others let themselves be inspired by artwork of Escher: “In his drawings, you see many small details that you can pay attention to” (2009, r. 83).<sup>180</sup> They wanted to imitate this sense of detail in their own expressions. Some have looked at objects beyond their original function (2009, r. 74; r. 82; r. 94; r. 101). Another group made use of a “ball pool” that belonged to the niece of one of them. Their idea was to invite her niece to sleep in it, rather than play with it (2009, r. 61). A last group took an odd but real life situation as a starting point. They saw a bike sign which indicated bikes should not ride there, but it was turned upside down. This made them look for bikes that were turned upside down (2009, r. 151).

Other students did not take objects, but specific spaces as inspiration. In most cases, the space was the city in which students took a walk, as described under 6). One group came across a restroom that was decorated with images, photos, cartoons and funny lyrics. These made it a joy to hang out in. Inspired by this space, they elaborated on the idea what the world would be like if every space was that cheerful (2009, r. 73). One group used the Groninger Museum, a building famous for its eclectic, postmodern appearance, as inspiration for the development of their own idea. The museum was first used as an example of playfulness, and the students added to that in the creative phase of their project (2009, r. 97).<sup>181</sup> As mentioned before some students were inspired not

just by their excursions outside but also by the trip to Disneyland they took during this module. One group states it was inspired by the ride “It’s a small world” for their ideas (2009, r. 73). This group interpreted the assignment rather freely and did not specifically create their own expression based on this inspiration, but added their own picture to the report.

#### B INSPIRATION – CONTENT: THE INTERNET

Several groups have made extensive use of the Internet to search for inspiration (2009, r. 63, r. 64; r. 78; r. 102; r. 84, r. 85). Here, they looked for “playful images that were made in the rest of the world” (r. 78) and “creative advertisements” (r. 102).

#### C INSPIRATION – CONTENT: PERSONAL FILES

Some groups of students made use of personal files to draw photos from for the assignment. In some cases, they seem to have done so because they experienced a lack of time to complete the assignment otherwise. This is not the same thing as looking at these files specifically to generate ideas. One group got stuck in their creative process and looked into the files and pictures they made during their Disney trip (2009, r. 84). Another group deliberately sat down with their personal archive to browse for pictures they found playful. From this they picked three images that they used for illustration. Although they did not execute three separate ideas, they did use their inspiration to create a collage/mood board of playfulness (2009, r. 89).



Figure 26. One group did not generate three ideas of their own, but they did create a collage that thematized playfulness (2009, r. 89).

## D INSPIRATION – CONTENT: IMITATION

Three groups of students generated ideas by looking for something they could try to imitate (2009, r. 59; r. 61; r. 98) or build on while imitating. One group tried to come up with a new way to toy with the perspective of pyramids, the way tourists often do. They did not push them away, but tried to make an image in which they balanced them on their fingers (2009, r. 61). This group also imitated a composition of an image they found in an article:

There was an image of a student on the couch who was thinking. Above his head were wads of paper directed toward the garbage can. We thought it was very creative, because the wads with the garbage can reminded us of the thinking clouds you see in comics. (2009, r. 61)<sup>182</sup>



Figure 27. An imitation of an existing image - dreaming of things to toss into the trash (2009, r. 61).

Another student wanted to imitate an existing image and tweak it – as often happens with for example the Mona Lisa, but wound up creating her own Photoshop composition out of existing photos (2009, r. 59). The third group describes how they had just seen the movie *Saving Private Ryan*. When they came across a sandpit, they tried to imitate a war scene (2009, r. 98).

## E INSPIRATION – CONTENT: EXAMPLES FROM LESSONS AND BOOKS

Students also drew from lecture slides in which the topic of playfulness was presented, along with examples. One group looked into a picture book on Guerilla Marketing and on creative advertising (2009, r. 68), one looked into the PowerPoint slides of one of the lectures in the module (2009, r. 80), and another used the module book for inspiration (2009, r. 101).

### 4.3.2.2 INSPIRATION – THEORY

Students also took inspiration from theory. When they actively looked for this, they either did so to learn about the creative process or by reflecting on the topics they came across. Both are discussed below.

#### A INSPIRATION – THEORY: STUDYING

Some students state that they deliberately did not look at the literature, since they relied on their own creative minds. Moreover, they considered playfulness a topic about which a lot of information can be found on the internet (2009, r. 84).

Seven groups also made use of a more cognitive approach to the development of their ideas (2009, r. 66; r. 68; r. 74; r. 75; r. 76; r. 80; r. 84; r. 101). They did so by studying and reviewing literature before formulating their ideas. One group consulted the dictionary for a definition and synonyms, to build a collection of examples. Of this process, they said:

By providing examples it slowly became clear to us that playfulness is everywhere. Even in issues and situation of which you would not immediately expect it, you find playfulness. (2009, r. 101)<sup>183</sup>

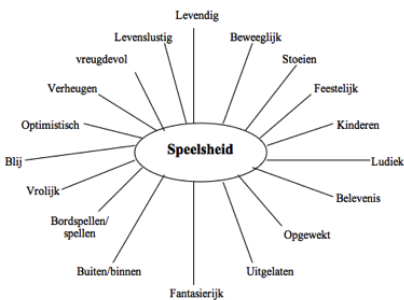


Figure 28. Mind map containing the summary of a brainstorm on playfulness (2009, r. 80)<sup>184</sup>.

In some cases, students studied literature on creativity, to develop an understanding of the creative process and as such, learn to apply it (2009, r. 66, r. 74, r. 76). One group used De Bono's thinking hats (2009, r. 74) and two others used the theory on semiotics they learned about in a previous module (2009, r. 75, r. 76). One group drew their associations with playfulness in a mind map, after brainstorming and summarizing the theory (2009, r. 80).

Only four groups explicitly built on the essay they wrote for the A part of the assignment, to develop their ideas (2009, r. 66; r. 68, r. 76, r. 80).

## B           INSPIRATION – THEORY: REFLECTION & THINKING

Students also make use of their own critical and creative thinking to develop their ideas (2009, r. 61b, r. 80, r. 86, r.94, r. 96). This is also a more cognitive than physical approach to the development of their ideas. One group began by critically reviewing their own ideas about playfulness (2009, r. 61b). Another group stated they made sure to continuously keep the term “playfulness” itself in mind, as they came to believe playfulness can be seen in everything. They combined this with looking around outside and inside to look for objects (2009, r. 96). Others sat down to reflect together on what it is that makes the world a playground (2009, r. 86) or what questions from the assignment would be the best to select to provide a complete picture of playfulness (2009, r. 94).

### 4.3.3 GETTING IN THE RIGHT MOOD

Students also report that the mood is important in the development of a creative idea. As discussed in the previous section, some students already consider themselves playful and as such report having no problem creating the assignment. Others refer to the playful mood they were in at the moment of (accidentally) shooting pictures (2009, r. 69). Some report the value of a playful mood in relation to creativity:

Often, it's not that easy to get into a playful mood, but once you're there it will enable any, often useful, new insights. People who are creative often are called playful for a reason. (2009, r. 92)<sup>185</sup>

Two moods – or mind states - are brought about on purpose: relaxation or a relaxed state (2009, r. 57; r. 58; r. 74; r. 101; r. 103; r. 154) and a mindful or attentive state (2009, r. 72; r. 74; r. 79; r. 88; r. 104). A silly, mischievous, playful mood is not attempted consciously, but is arrived at (2009, r. 61; r. 65; r. 69; r. 75; r.92; r. 148). Boredom turns out to be a factor in some of these instances (2009, r. 148; r. 69; r. 92).

#### 4.3.3.1. MOOD – RELAXATION

For some students, active relaxation or working in a relaxed state of mind is a precondition for the establishment of a playful stance. In some instances, this has been reported as something they deliberately looked for (2009, r. 57; r. 58; r. 74; r. 101; r. 103; r. 154). Some report letting their ideas rest for a while, after they had brainstormed with their peers (2009, r. 101), approaching the subject in a quiet manner (2009, r. 103), taking a moment from cycling around the city (2009, r.154), or taking time in general (2009, r.74). Some also seek relaxation in a cognitive sense, by trying not to complicate their thoughts (2009, r. 58). One student explains how this influences “having the right kind of eye”:

I think people all use filters depending on the situation they are in. These filters influence all the senses. For instance: if I am in a hurry to, for example, catch my train, I am not likely to quickly notice the graffiti on the walls on my way to the station. But if I quietly ride around town, I may notice the graffiti. So, when I am in a hurry, I have a filter on. (2009, r. 57)<sup>186</sup>

#### 4.3.3.2. MOOD – MINDFULNESS

Aside from relaxation, five pairs also report developing a mind state that is attentive to their surroundings: “We started keeping our eyes peeled for everything we encountered, and tried to engage with it in a playful way” (2009, r. 74).<sup>187</sup> This increased attention for their surroundings can also be found in this story, where a student describes going home:

Just before I left my parentss house, I decided to pay close attention to the fun, exciting details of the outside world. By looking around you and seeing what playfulness and creativity exists in the immediate human surroundings, the best ideas can rise. (2009, r. 72)<sup>188</sup>

Another group states that playfulness can be found in the tiniest of things:

The core of it is about looking for details (and) how

suddenly the world can be seen in a completely different way. (2009, r. 88)<sup>189</sup>

Another student describes how the assignment kept him busy during the first barbecue of the year:

When I was busy with the food, I was very aware I had to pay attention to everything to come to a fun idea. This wasn't easy, but with this picture eventually I succeeded. (2009, r. 104)<sup>190</sup>

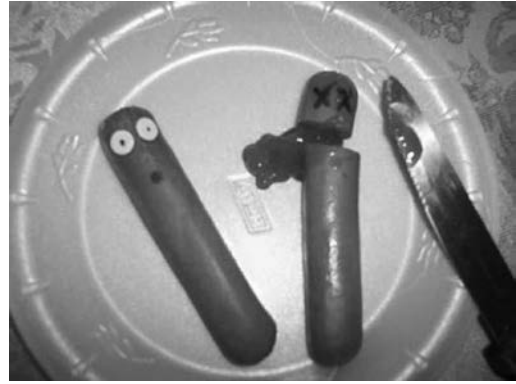


Figure 29. The first barbecue of the year caused a student to mindfully cut and decorate his sausages (2009, r. 104).

One student reports how the assignment itself altered her perspective and her intention: "To walk in around in Leeuwarden every now and then, bring my camera and be on the lookout for interesting things" (2009, r. 79). Further along in the report she continues:

It gives me the sense of play. Playing with my surroundings, myself, and with others if I let them guess (about the game she developed, MdJ). Play without aids. Seeing the world as a playground. To enjoy oneself and others too. That is playing. (2009, r. 79)<sup>191</sup>



Figure 30. Students had fun creating the same picture of pushing the pyramids over and over again (2009, r. 61).

#### 4.3.3.3. MOOD – SILLINESS

A third mood that is associated with the development of a playful stance is a silly mood. Here students report how they moved from a regular state into a silly one, generating different ideas.

Two students were waiting for their favorite soap stars at the TV studio where the series was filmed. The waiting took so long, they decided to start taking pictures of themselves: "We tried to make our world a bit more fun and have the waiting take less long, by entertaining ourselves through making pictures" (2009, r. 69).<sup>192</sup> In their reflection on their playfulness, they consider their images "ludic" and "foolish." They described the pictures they took while they were waiting "jumpy" and "wanton." They were having fun by "laying on the floor in a funny way or climbing a pole" (2009, r. 69).

Other students report how the repetition of taking the same photo over and over again created a silly atmosphere. They created an optical illusion of pushing a pyramid (figure 30) and reported:

The fact that we were there, pushing away these pyramids, is something we'll obviously never forget. It was hilarious and funny to create these pictures. It was especially hilarious because we had to do it over so many times. That we did it served no purpose, obviously, because it doesn't help us do anything. That's why these images are examples of playfulness. (2009, r. 61)<sup>193</sup>

Others also report how the duration of their creative process built this silly mood:

After a number of bad ideas and poor pictures, we had become very cheerful and silly and this has also helped greatly in the creation of and being patient with new ideas. (2009, r. 65)<sup>194</sup>

Finally, in a reflection on their playful expressions one pair describes the connection between the non-consequentiality of the literature and their actions:

We can consider these expressions to be playful, because they all attest to the intrinsic attitude that playfulness expresses. Everything was initiated in a non-serious way and it brought along direct pleasure (it was hilarious). Fun to see who we can determine based on definitions on the literature that our personalities demonstrate playfulness. (2009, r. 75)<sup>195</sup>

## 4.3.4 OBJECT ORIENTED APPROACHES

So far, openness to serendipity, inspiration seeking and mood strategies have been discussed as approaches to playfulness and/or the generation of a playful idea. Another approach that occurred several times was a form of play with objects. These could be divided into two groups: a) play with the function of objects: establishing a new function for it (2009, r. 61b; r. 77; r. 82; r. 85; r. 92; r. 103; r. 148; r. 151; r. 153), and b) bringing objects along as tools for idea generation such as students bringing props along on their trip through the city, to weave them into the environment and create a playful expression that way (2009, r. 78; r. 79; r. 136; r. 92; r. 148).

### 4.3.4.1 PLAYING WITH THE FUNCTION OF OBJECTS

The play with function as a strategy is different from “play with function” as analyzed on the whole of all the photos (N=270, of which 2008 yielded 24 pictures in which the function of an object is changed and 2009 yielded 49 such pictures), because in the instances reported here, students *actively looked for different functions*, rather than stumbled upon them. (Which at the same time means this can be placed under the strategy of setting self imposed boundaries on their creative process. However, it is treated separately because of its multiple occurrences.)

One pair described how their idea to turn the bathroom into a bedroom was the result of their attempt to change a normal environment into a different one:

We wanted to take different spaces with their own uses, rituals and actions and mix them up. We have looked at different spaces in the house and looked at what the similarities are and especially what the differences are. (2009, r. 148)<sup>196</sup>

The bathtub thus became the bed and two hands came out of the sink, to illustrate the entry and exit points. Another pair sought to gamify an office space by changing the function of the lighting in the different cubicles (2009, r. 103). In their overall assignment, these students looked for a way to make offices more playful and



Figure 31. Cubicles with lighting that indicates the occupation density to invite personnel to sit together more (2009, r. 103).



Figure 32. The eye could become a DVD player (2009, r. 61b).

so get rid of the anonymity of not knowing your co-workers and get rid of the boring elements of office training programs.

They state:

The responsive cubicle reveals how many members of personnel are present at this island. The deeper the color, the better it is occupied. This stimulates personnel to sit close together and improves the interaction. It also indirectly stimulates personnel to stay seated more. This increases productivity. (2009, r. 103)<sup>197</sup>

Aside from the alteration of spaces, students also tried to find ways to make constructions stand out more, so people would not take them for granted anymore. They developed guerilla marketing ideas, using the poles of a railroad crossing for a Viagra advert and making a soccer ball of the orb on top of a new building to promote soccer (2009, r.149). Some students report they took a walk in the school's surroundings to look for objects and contemplate possible alterations (2009, r. 151) or by looking differently at objects to see whether an object had what they called "playground potential" (2009, r. 82). One pair took a DVD and associated the notion of "viewing" with "eye" and then decided to use the eye itself as a player (2009, 61b)

Others tried to improvise a solution to a practical problem, such as using a coat hanger for accessories (because of a lack of space); using a magazine to open a beer bottle (because of the absence of an opener); using a bike lock to prevent a closet door from opening (2009, r.77); using a beer bottle

as a vase for roses; placing a ladder by the window to enable sitting in the sun (2009, r. 85); using the handle of an axe for a shift stick (2009, r. 153). One student needed a solution for the different bicycle frames he had lying around. He repurposed them into a self created bar:

There are several things you can do with old bicycles. You can sell them or throw them away. You can also look beyond these standard patterns and get rid of your old bicycles creatively. In this case, this latter option was chosen and a bar table was made of the bicycles. (2009, r. 92)<sup>198</sup>

Some of these solutions seem more practical than playful, but students label them as playful nonetheless:

If we look at our own examples of what can be playful now, one thing immediately captured our attention: we seem to make playfulness dependent on our innovation and creativity a lot. The examples [...] have something in common: they came into existence from the importance of taking something old and using this in a new way, in a new combination or perspective. (2009, r. 77)<sup>199</sup>

Lastly, one student came home and realized she might as well take a look around in her own house. It was only then that she realized that “I had been using my lamp in a playful way for ages. So why not take this as an example?” (2009, r. 92).<sup>200</sup>

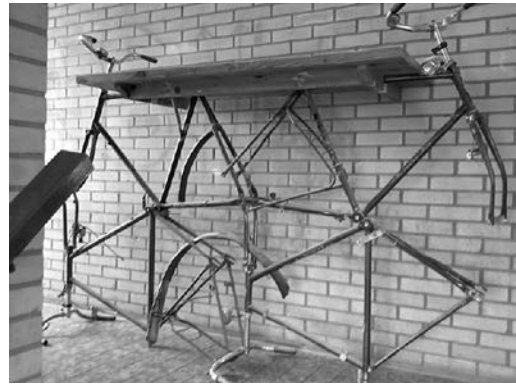


Figure 33. What to do with old bicycle frames? Build a bar! (2009, r. 92).



Figure 34. Using items on the kitchen counter to make faces (2009, r. 85).

#### 4.3.4.2. USING PROPS OR BRINGING THEM ALONG FOR IDEA GENERATION

Aside from repurposing objects, students also brought props along to help them develop their ideas. One group describes this process as follows:

We considered what kind of photographic subjects we had around and how we could combine these with the environment. We had a camera-hamster (from Albert Heijn) (a super market chain in the Netherlands, MdJ), a baseball and a bottle of water. We took it with us and went to see whether what we had in mind could also really be executed. (2009, r. 78)<sup>201</sup>

Others literally emptied their wallets to see what of the contents they might be able to use (2009, r. 136) or used all the things that were on the kitchen table to develop their idea (2009, r. 85). This last pair wound up making faces of the objects they had (figure 34).

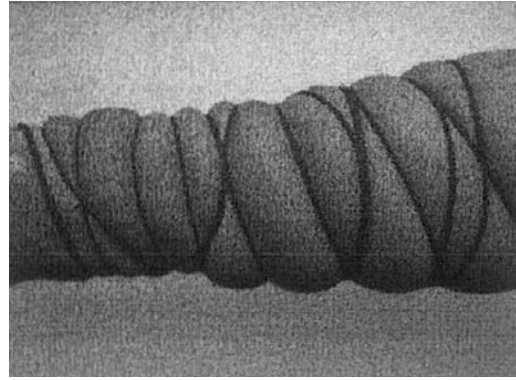
One student – who also took a mindful stance towards the assignment – literally took multiple glasses with her into the city. She states:

I had hoped to really alter my perspective this way. It didn't work, because I found it painful to walk through the city with for instance pink glasses on. And things only looked darker with the sunglasses on, but my perspective has not changed because of it. I did develop a more open stance and walked through life more consciously. (2009, r. 79)<sup>202</sup>

One student used a piece of rope as a prop. She states she was feeling a bit bored and in fact the use of a piece of rope was not intended to generate a playful idea. But in the movement from boredom to curiosity, she playfully explores the qualities of the material and the effect of it on her skin:

I was playing around with a piece of red rope and started tying it around my finger. Because it was rather tight, small bumps of skin appeared. This felt funny and so I did it on my arm as well. The effect of the squeezing of my arm by something as simple as a bit of red wool was

interesting to me. I tried some things and while on the one hand it looked like a kind of roulade, it also felt a bit lugubrious. The picture I eventually chose, doesn't show it's my lower arm and that's what is playful about this photo. Because you can't immediately identify it, it leaves enough room to the imagination. It is different, strange, and sometimes scary. (2009, r. 148)<sup>203</sup>



*Figure 35. Exploring both the tactile and visual effect of a piece of rope around skin (2009, r. 148).*

### 4.3.5 BRAINSTORMS THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS

Students collaborated in pairs or threesomes for the assignment. In some cases, this meant they divided the work and one would write the research report and the other the essay about playfulness. In other cases, they collaborated closely and really developed ideas together. Using the creative technique of brainstorming is something they are trained in as a result of the problem based learning approach their school takes. They brainstorm on a weekly basis, to pool their collective knowledge and share ideas constructively. At the same time, brainstorming has become such a routine to them, that they may do it without serious attention or preparation. Though the brainstorming techniques used in the assignment are fairly similar, there was some variation in the moment in which they started doing so. They started either before they started taking pictures (2009, r. 66; r. 84; r. 86; r. 87; r. 94; r. 95; r. 101; r. 102) or while they were taking pictures (2009, r. 68; r. 77; r. 80; r. 94). Two groups started brainstorming after they had taken pictures (2009, r. 80; r. 152). Some also report generally taking the steps they have learned about creative processes (2009; r. 66, ; r. 68; r. 74; r. 79; r. 82; r. 94; r. 101).

#### 4.3.5.1 BRAINSTORMING IN ADVANCE

Eight pairs report having brainstormed in advance of the project to generate ideas for the assignment (2009, r. 84, r. 94, r. 95, r. 101,

r. 102). They did so to determine where to take this assignment (2009, r. 94); to consider the topics (2009, r. 102); to display the way in which the world can be understood as a playground: “we came up with the craziest ideas” (2009, r. 86); to determine “just how boring garbage cans are” (2009, r. 87) and to develop an understanding of the assignment itself:

When we read the assignment, we didn’t know exactly which objects, experiences, situations etc. to connect to this. That’s why we sort of brainstormed at first. We wrote down everything we consider creative and playful. This gave us an overview and helped us along in the assignment. (2009, r. 66)<sup>204</sup>

Others started to brainstorm, mentioning everything they associated with playfulness. “This turned into a big brainstorm, because there is so much to mention that is connected to playfulness” (2009, r. 101).<sup>205</sup>

#### 4.3.5.2 BRAINSTORMING DURING THE PROCESS

Four pairs used brainstorming as a technique during the execution of the assignment, similar to the process in which they go out and shoot pictures or take in inspiration. Some used brainstorming to prevent getting stuck in first ideas and help them build on them (2009, r. 68), others report taking a moment to brainstorm in between collecting illustrations of playfulness and their own ideas (2009, r. 94). Others report sticking to the rules of creative sessions and not judging any of the ideas that came up:

This guaranteed that all the ideas we had in mind, also came to the fore. Only later did we look at the pictures together, evaluate them and make a choice. (2009, 77)<sup>206</sup>

Others report brainstorming about the entire archive of photographs they took in Disneyland Resort. This made them realize they should use a picture from this archive, because:

With this picture it became clear to us how you can turn the world into a real playground with a theme park like this. Here too it goes: “away from the cares of everyday

life and letting yourself be carried away to a different, new and enchanting world. (2009, r. 86)<sup>207</sup>

One pair reports having brainstormed

...by looking at all the objects in a playful way, by thinking creatively and by imagining items that were not there. (We have literally looked at the world upside down.) Through knowledge and experience, we could do this and also understand one another when one of the two tried to explain to the other when she saw something in it. (2009, r. 80)<sup>208</sup>

#### 4.3.5.3 BRAINSTORMING AFTERWARDS

Three pairs report they did not generate specific ideas until after they were done taking photos. Following the mantra “collect first, judge later,” they took numerous pictures and then brainstormed to collect three to make the assignment with: “We did stick to simple photos. We did not take pictures of works of art or very strange objects. They had to be ordinary objects that you might encounter everywhere” (2009, r. 152).<sup>209</sup> In addition to brainstorming, they also imposed a self-chosen constraint on their creative process (see under 10). Another group did a similar thing, also waiting for the process of taking pictures to be done to brainstorm about them: “Because of these photos, we have learned to look better, which turned it into a challenge for us to find a better example. It made us think. What seemed like a good idea at first, was no longer a good idea on the computer. When we got home, we chose the best pictures” (2009, r. 80).

#### 4.3.5.4 FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS

In addition to using brainstorming as a creative technique, some students report following the creative process as they were taught. Sometimes, however, they got no further than describing how they “thought outside the box” (2009; r. 66, r. 82). Students brainstorm before, during or after other steps in the process of generating, selecting and executing their ideas. In several cases, additional



Figure 36. Emmakade Memory - compilation of nostalgic and characteristic elements of a street in Leeuwarden (2009, r. 79).

rounds of idea generation were initiated to come to an addition or a better formulation of their idea (2009, r. 68). Five groups of students reflected on these ideas or at least made comments about them (2009, r. 64; r. 68; r. 74; r. 101; r. 94). One student writes about the street she encountered, the Emmakade. She had already executed an idea of photographing bicycles in the city. In continuation of this idea, she writes: “I have to ride through this street a lot and have noticed many small fun details. A street full of creative ideas” (2009, r. 79).<sup>210</sup>

Some describe that they would “try to look at an idea critically and try to make more of it, by improving it, adapting it or doing nothing with it at all” (2009, r. 74).<sup>211</sup> Others describe the process of connecting their ideas after the “very big” brainstorm session they had (2009, r. 101). The session was so big, because so much was connected to playfulness. This process itself led to the generation of ideas.

### 4.3.6 GETTING IN MOTION

Aside from these more cognitive orientations towards playfulness, students would also just move in space to see what would happen. In part, this was obviously based on the description of the assignment, which states “take your camera and go outside,” but as can be seen from the prior description, several students first collected ideas and then went out to execute them. Others started with the execution and then reflected on their actions. Two main categories are a) walking around (2009, r. 58; r. 60; r. 65; r. 66; r. 75; r. 77; r. 78; r. 79; r. 85; r. 86; r. 88; r. 149; r. 150; r. 151; r. 152) and b) doing something (more specific than just walking, like meeting a friend or taking a ball out into the park) (2009, r. 64; r. 74; r. 77; r. 78; r. 80; r. 85; r. 88; r. 93; r. 101 ; r. 152).

#### 4.3.6.1 WALKING AROUND

15 groups report beginning with a walk as a starting point for the development their ideas. Some students describe merely walking through their house, or the school building or the street they live in, to look for playful ideas (2009, r. 58; r. 60; r. 66; r. 75; r.77; r. 79; r. 151). Others, frustrated with the lack of ideas they were able to generate over the phone, decided to each take a separate walk (2009, r. 85). Some deliberately brought props to help them generate ideas while walking, even if it turned out they encountered so many things they found playful that they did not need them (2009, r. 78). Others just brought their cameras and relied on the city to provide them with enough potential for playful ideas (2009, r. 88, r. 150). Others wanted specifically to step out “to illustrate the playfulness of today’s society” (2009, r. 86).<sup>212</sup> Others relied on the summer sun to guide their way and waited for the ideas to come present themselves (2009, r. 65) or noticed they automatically began thinking about the ways in which you can look at your surroundings differently (2009, r. 66). Others made sure to take a walk, because of the “pointlessness” of hanging around in the house (2009, r. 152). Some deliberately tried to look for three objects whose function they wanted to alter (2009, r. 149).

#### 4.3.6.2 START DOING SOMETHING

Ten groups did not only start walking around, but decided to just do something outside to either generate or execute their ideas. In that sense, this approach to playfulness in part follows the exact formulation of the assignment: take your camera and step outside. This is what they did, combining walking around with shooting photos, in one case for three days in row (2009, r. 152). One group describes how they went out to just “do” something. This was what helped them generate their ideas: “after we had taken the picture, we started to see something differently in the photos” (2009, r. 64).<sup>213</sup> Others, too, report that the generation of ideas was the result of going outside to get the execution of their ideas started (2009, r. 80, r. 85, r. 101, r. 77), or they would try to engage playfully with anything they came across (2009, r. 74) or see what objects they “could turn upside down so they would represent something other than what they were in reality” (2009, r. 80).<sup>214</sup>

Some relied not so much on the generation of ideas (which would require labeling it under “serendipity”), but on the multitude of “playgrounds” they would come across:

We initially had the idea to photograph certain spaces in Groningen as though they were playgrounds. Many places in Groningen can be seen as playgrounds basically. Only so much is needed and the space is magically transformed into something else. (2009, r. 93)<sup>215</sup>

Another group tried to photograph objects in such a way that it would not be immediately visible what they really are (2009, r. 88). One group brought objects along to photograph in odd surroundings, as discussed before (2009, r. 78).

## 4.3.7 COLLABORATION

Obviously, students communicate with one another when making a group assignment. Moreover, in some groups, the focus on the communication and collaboration was a clear part of their attempt not just to get the assignment done, but also to generate a playful stance. Statements about this could be divided in two broad categories, namely: a) conversation and dialogue (2009, r. 60; r. 61; r. 66; r. 76; r. 89; r. 93; r. 94) and b) checks and similarities (2009, r. 58; r. 74; r. 82; r. 84; r. 85; r. 92). Although these are highly related, the first one focuses on being in conversation and the second one on the compatibility of group members.

### 4.3.7.1 CONVERSATION & DIALOGUE

Students report building on each other’s ideas and having conversation as ways to generate both examples of playfulness as well as their own ideas (2009, r. 66, r. 93). Proper communication and organization also helped them in these matters (2009, r. 94; r. 76). One group reports wanting to focus on the diversity of playfulness rather than commercial thinking (2009, r. 89). They find agreement on the ideas they find most appealing and on what the assignment itself is actually about (2009, r. 94) or they sit down together to determine what would be fun to do (2009, r. 60, r. 61). One group found out in the course of their conversation that almost everything has a playful

component to it (2009, r. 93). Another group was dissatisfied with their dialogue over the phone, so they looked for another way to generate ideas that would be suitable for both of them (2009, r. 85).

#### 4.3.7.2 CHECKS AND SIMILARITIES

Aside from communication about the assignment, students also highlight the importance of checking for feedback and being compatible. The incompatibility of collaborators can be seen as a constraining condition for playfulness. At the same time, when seeking out fellow classmates for compatibility (2009, r. 92), it is also a way to turn this influential factor into an enabling condition. One student writes about the atmosphere during a get together with classmates: “Everyone was also working on the creative, playful assignment and as such there was a lot of attention [for examples, MdJ]” (2009, r. 92).<sup>216</sup> Some groups comment on the efficiency of their teamwork which enabled the swift execution of ideas (2009, r. 84). Others report challenging one another to be creative in their thinking (2009, r. 82). Some students check for feedback with friends and peers (2009, r. 58) or with one another (2009, r. 74). Aside from these general ways of seeking collaboration, one group developed an explicit strategy to keep their minds fresh. They excluded one group member from participating in the process of making pictures: “One member stayed behind inside, to evaluate the images on their multi-interpretability as objectively as possible when we returned” (2009, r. 82).<sup>217</sup>

### 4.3.8 SUBVERSION – ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR RULE BREAKING

Although the analysis of the images along the PLEX framework revealed that several expressions had a subversive component, only two groups (2009, r. 63; r. 68) have actively wondered how they could create something that would be considered provocative (rather than thought provoking).

	2008	2009
Not applicable	87	137
Somewhat subversive	5	15
Subversive	18	8
	<b>110</b>	<b>160</b>

Table 9. The extent to which the creations contain subversive elements

One group actively looked for situations in which the rules that govern ordinary life were broken. They consider the idea of the playful adult an interesting one, because adults have to be both careless and self-assured. Self assured, because this is a quality you need when you engage in activities that are considered childish by many. They state:

The world also exists of unspoken rules and oppositions that everyone considers to be opposed. This is why we have chosen situations in which it is visible that these rules are broken or that these oppositions collide. This is why the playful adult is interesting. (2009, r. 63)<sup>218</sup>

Even if these students favor a somewhat subversive approach, they have not entered their own ideas into the report.

The other group that actively looked for subversion wanted to bring a serious message across in a playful way. Their main concern was with the how a pregnant woman smoking endangered her unborn child. They state:

In the first expression, we thought about ways in which it we could really make it hit home that smoking during pregnancy is dangerous for the unborn child. The intention was to shock people, to leave a deep impression. (2009, r. 68)<sup>219</sup>

One group entered a photo that many might find somewhat disturbing – of a student urinating in a garbage container – but they showed no subversive intent with this. Rather,



Figure 37. A subversive motive in an advertisement warning for the dangers of smoking for the unborn child, while implying the pending mother will eat a Ricola candy after smoking (2009, r. 68).

their comment was:

The image refers to the anti-social behavior many people display nowadays. People's behavior in society is becoming worse and worse. An extreme example like this is not even shocking anymore. (2009, r. 95)<sup>220</sup>

So, even if there is a covert desire to come up with something subversive and shocking, these students feel there may not even be a point to this.

## 4.3.9 MEANING AND COMBINATORIAL PLAY

Aside from strategies in which students seek to get into the right mood, seek collaboration, boost their creative thinking, students also develop strategies to actively engage with the meaning of their ideas and how that meaning suits the assignment. Statements of this sort are connected closely to motivation, in the sense that they sometimes clearly want to make a statement and start from there or they may formulate criteria in advance that their playful ideas will have to meet in order to be elaborated upon. These types of statements can be divided into two broad categories: a) ambiguity and multiplicity, in which students actively seek out ideas that have ambiguous meanings (2009, r. 61b; r. 68; r. 69; r. 78; r. 82; r. 83; r. 89; r. 91; r. 100) and b) self imposed constraints and set targets. In the latter, students create additional criteria to establish meaning, aside from those commissioned by the assignment (2009, r. 58; r. 61; r. 61b; r. 63; r. 68; r. 70; r. 76; r. 82; r. 87; r. 91; r. 96; r. 152; r. 153; r. 154).

### 4.3.9.1 AMBIGUITY AND MULTIPLICITY

Nine groups have deliberately tried to instill ambiguous or minimally double meanings into their creations (2009, r. 61b; r. 68; r. 69; r. 78; r. 82; r. 83; r. 89; r. 91; r. 100). In doing so, they express a wish for their viewers to create their own meaning from these images (r. 82; r. 83) to make them think (r. 68), or to create confusion (r. 78). One group states the detail in M.C. Escher's work has been important for the development of their ideas because of the amount of detail (2009, r. 83). They did not want to include this exact



Figure 38. A picture called “Waterfall”: inviting a connection between a rubber ducky and jets of water coming from a torn down building (2009, r. 83).



Figure 39. Ambiguity serendipitously stumbled upon: Baker, you butcher (2009, r. 91).

amount of detail in their images, but they did want everyone to be able to look at their images closely and create their own meaning.

One student reports he wanted an idea with a double meaning that was simultaneously connected to everyday life (2009, r. 100).

Another group states they have chosen non-obvious, varied ideas, because “they want to emphasize the individuality of playfulness, or rather, the individuality of the interpretation of playfulness” (2009, r. 89).<sup>221</sup> Some groups have chosen to visualize uncommon expressions or make visual word jokes (r. 61b; r. 68; r. 69). In some cases, these are fun coincidences they stumbled upon, like a sign that stated “Bakker, Uw Slager”, which, with some fantasy, can be translated into “Baker, your Butcher” (“Bakker” is a common last name in the Netherlands).

These students found this playful, because “we have all learned what the words ‘baker’ and ‘butchery’ mean. When these two are combined as a company name, this can create confusions” (2009, r. 91).<sup>222</sup>

Another group took a more serious stance. They wanted to “connect a playful expression to a product, service or opinion” (2009, r. 68).<sup>223</sup> To do so, they created two protest images – one against smoking by pregnant women and one against animal cruelty. In one of them, they combined a cartoon image of a cow with the belly of a pregnant woman, ensuring this would first surprise people and then invite them to think about its meaning.

Another group has also made use of the expression “to come out of the closet,” making a picture of one of their class mates who was

...in a playful mood and wanted to find out what it was like to be in the closet. Besides, this boy had “come out of the closet” a year ago. Through this expression, it is clear to the rest of his environment that he prefers boys to girls. (2009, r. 69)<sup>224</sup>

A last group created a visual creation of the expression “to kick someone to the moon”, of which at they did not know was an expression at all (2009, r. 61b).

#### 4.3.9.2 SELF-IMPOSED CONSTRAINT AND SET TARGETS

The second category is that of self-imposed constraints and set targets. A sub-division between three approaches is possible here: 1) exotelic motivation, in which students purposefully try to address a serious topic (2009, r. 68; r. 87; r. 96), 2) problem solving, in which students try to solve a real world problem in a playful manner (2009, r. 58; r. 61b; r. 68; r. 70; r. 87; r. 153), and 3) creative constraint, in which students limit their possibilities in advance to generate a more powerful outcome (2009, r. 61; r. 63; r. 76; r. 82; r. 91; r. 152; r. 154).



Figure 40. “I will kick you to the moon!” – making an unfamiliar expression visual (2009, r. 61b).

#### A EXOTELIC INTENTIONS

Three groups deliberately chose a “heavy” topic, while at the same time looking for ways to create a simple message (2009, r. 68; r. 87; r. 96). As one group stated: “We wanted to create ideas that are not too farfetched, simple but not too easy. People need to understand immediately or only need a brief moment to contemplate it” (2009, r. 96).<sup>225</sup> Another group added that it was “important to create more than just heavy-handed expressions” (2009, r. 68).<sup>226</sup>

## B PLAYFUL PROBLEM SOLVING

Other students did not so much seek to create a clear, simple, communicative expression. Rather, they focused on potential problems to solve (2009, r. 58; r. 61b; r. 68; r. 70; r. 87; r. 153). One group created a solution for chilling beer by using a bidet; used a crocodile game to help their indecisiveness and made use of a handle of an axe to replace a stick shift (2009, r. 153). Another group created a new purpose for a garbage container:

These garbage containers are always visible and they leave a bad impression. You always have the feeling they're dirty and smell bad. [...] The idea came up when someone put his stuff in the garbage and later wiped his hands on his pants. (2009, r. 58)<sup>227</sup>

To resolve the issue of the unattractiveness of garbage containers, they suggested a design which turned the containers into chessboards, inviting people to play on them. The group also came up with an idea for a park bench with an umbrella over it and a speaking alarm clock that makes coffee (2009, r. 58).

One group took the ubiquity of technology as a starting point for their exploration of new ideas. They added the image of one of the students with a headband with a cell phone tucked into it. They mockingly stated:

We are faced with new communication possibilities, but on the other hand, we also have to deal with ever more rules and regulations. Not all people know how to handle the rules well and make up their own versions of practical aids. In this picture, we respond to this in a playful way. You don't need hands free techniques on mobile phones anymore, or in the car. There is a simpler and cheaper way! (2009, r. 61b)<sup>228</sup>

Another student wrote about his daily irritations and came up with possible solutions for them: a way to guide passengers on a train in and out of their compartments without hindrance; a way to resolve the waiting issues at the local cafeteria, and a more inviting way to place computers in the study landscape in school. The playfulness of these ideas lies not so much in the ideas themselves, as well

as the resulting happiness and space for playfulness that they enable (2009, r. 70). Another group developed their ideas to create awareness for a couple of serious issues:

This seemed like an original idea, because serious messages can be delivered with a humorous touch, and because of this, the expression is thought about more. We did not have one single idea, but rather have thought about different wrongdoings in the world. (2009, r. 68)<sup>229</sup>

Another group took a playful stance to very serious topics as well, using playfulness as a conscious strategy to increase the potential impact. “Playfulness can obviously be connected to serious topics, because especially these serious topics can become very playful in a serious way. That’s why we started thinking about serious topics” (2009, r. 87).<sup>230</sup> They decided to use the topic of human trafficking for their expression and created an image of female silhouettes with a sticker on their heads that said “sold” (2009, r. 87).

## C CREATIVE CONSTRAINT

Although this was not required of them, students also imposed constraints on their own creative process in order to make sure they would not become complacent. In some cases, they told themselves to stay critical (2009, r. 63; r. 154) or they took regular breaks (2009, r. 61). Others placed constraints on themselves or their collaboration that were similar to game rules: “We wanted to find at least one object that might also be placed in a playground” (2009, r. 80).<sup>231</sup> “We sent out two group members whose characters were the most diverse” (2009, r. 82)<sup>232</sup> and “We did not take pictures of works of art or very strange objects, they had to be everyday objects that you might come across anywhere” (2009, r. 152).<sup>233</sup>

One group had their members take different pictures over the course of ten weeks. This way, they assumed, some of them would be useful for the assignment (2009, r. 76). One group started looking for photos that were not about playing. This was the result of discarding their first interpretation of playfulness (2009, r. 63). Another group tried to not write down their ideas, to force themselves to look beyond their first ideas (2009, r. 91). Furthermore, one group let two group members walk outside for a minimum of twenty minutes (2009, r. 82).

## 4.3.10 DISCARDING AND SELECTING IDEAS: KILLING THEIR DARLINGS (OR NOT)

After collecting their ideas, students adopt different strategies and criteria to select ideas to build upon and to discard other ideas. Students were asked explicitly to reflect on the process of killing their darlings. Some refer to exactly that catchphrase, saying that that was what they did. Others describe the reasoning process behind every image they took and elaborated on the reasons to discard specific images. In total, statements about this process were narrowed down to 8 overall categories. These are a) because you have to (2009, r. 74; r. 84; r. 94; r. 150), b) making lists to narrow things down (2009, r. 76; r. 84; r. 85; r. 95; r. 101), c) lack of realism of the idea (2009; r. 78; r. 100), with connected to that d) realism and executability (2009, r. 64; r. 65), e) challenging themselves to be original (2009, r. 58; r. 64; r. 66; r. 72; r. 79; r. 94, r. 90, r. 101), f) awareness (2009, r. 92) , and g) the appeal of the idea in terms of fun and playfulness (2009, r. 69; r. 72; r. 84).

### 4.3.10.1 BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO...

Some of the reports about killing their darlings acknowledged the requirement to do so. Students report how they liked the ideas they had, but continued to develop more ideas to see if they would come up with something even stronger (2009, r. 150, r. 94, r. 84, r. 74).

### 4.3.10.2 BY MAKING A LIST

Students report making lists in different ways for different purposes. One group made a top ten of the ideas they collected through brainstorming and then chose to give their ideas a rest, then narrowed them down to the three best ideas and executed those ideas (2009, r. 101). Two groups deliberately developed more ideas than needed, so they would be forced to discard some (2009, r. 76; r. 85, r. 94). One group kept their ideas listed to see whether later on they could use them to build on another idea (2009 r. 84).

### 4.3.10.3 FOR (LACK OF) REALISM

Two groups considered realism the key criterion to develop their ideas. One group approached this from a very technical viewpoint: they did not appreciate the depth contrast in a photo because it made it look unrealistic (2009, r. 78). So, the photo did not make the cut.

This group also started creating ideas before they went outside to take pictures, but over the course of photographing they realized the many ideas they had were farfetched, so they chose to do something more simple (2009, r. 78). Another student writes that it was important to discuss real-life ideas, because it provides an extra dimension for the reader, making him more curious (2009, r. 100).



*Figure 41. Some also included photos they discarded in their report: not suitable for the assignment, but illustrative of their creative process (2009, r. 78).*

### 4.3.10.4 REALIZABILITY AND EXECUTABILITY

Realism can also play a role in the extent to which the students are technically capable of realizing the idea they had in mind (see also skill). In the previous example, the lack of realism – in a representative way – was reason to discard an idea. But in some instances, realism also refers to the extent to which students are capable of doing something. In this way, it's the criterion to begin doing something in the first place. Students report how they discard ideas because of lack of applicability (2009, r. 65) or because of the difficulty they had realizing their first idea (2009, r. 64).

### 4.3.10.5 CHALLENGING THEMSELVES TO BE ORIGINAL

Students also discard ideas for lack of originality or express a desire to at least create something original. Originality in their cases serves as a criterion to determine whether and how they should proceed with an idea (2009, r. 58; r. 64; r. 66; r. 72; r. 94, r. 90, r. 101). One student discarded the idea of “tear-down-calendar,” in which the

owner has the power to destroy one ugly house each day because a friend said it already existed (2009, r. 79). Some turn this into a challenge for themselves; discarding ideas when they think they are “too easy” (2009, r. 58) or when they suppose everyone does it that way:

Then I came to the idea of doing something with a bridge in the city, but then I'd have to take a picture of that and Photoshop it, and I believe everyone is already doing that, so I didn't want to do that either. (2009, r. 55)<sup>234</sup>

#### 4.3.10.6 INCREASED CONSCIOUSNESS

Increased consciousness in this instance is closely connected to mood strategies, but not with the main purpose of generating ideas, but rather, selecting them. This student says: “I did start to look at things very consciously, so I could easily discard my first idea” (2009, r. 92),<sup>235</sup>

#### 4.3.10.7 PLAYFUL APPEAL AND FUN

Three groups chose the appeal of their idea as the main criterion in adopting one idea over another. The appeal consisted of fun, playfulness, or interest. They either took multiple photos and then selected the ones they found most playful (2009, r. 69) or kept everything in mind that had any kind of appeal, to then later choose which one was most fun (2009, r. 72). A third group kept the idea of pulling pranks in mind, after they had discarded every other idea (2009, r. 84).

### 4.3.11 RECUPERATION APPROACHES – UNBLOCKING CONSTRAINTS

Some pairs report getting stuck on the assignment or in the creative process. Although their strategies are very similar to the other ones reported in the previous sections, in these instances students use them specifically to get back on their creative feet. Or not: in some cases their plan failed. One group reports being

on the phone together, but not making any progress that way. They then moved over to separate strategies, each doing what they felt most comfortable with, after which they joined forces again (2009, r. 85). Another group reports getting completely stuck in their own assumptions about playfulness: they looked at playfulness too much from the perspective of children and in terms of games. It was only when they connected it to creativity and let go of these two prior associations, that they were able to generate a new idea (2009, r. 62). The other instances also describe how students got back on their feet after a botched creative process (2009, r. 62; r. 64; r. 83; r. 84; r. 85; r. 90; r. 91; r. 153).

Seven groups report about the difficulties they encountered in the process and what they did to resolve this. For some, it is about changing the collaborative style, while for others, it is about taking a moment to relax or even rebooting the project as a whole: starting over. Some students actually found the assignment easier to do once they got started:

At first, we were not looking forward to this, because we really didn't have a clue what kind of pictures to take. Our conception of playfulness was still very abstract and mostly based on the themes we had written about in the essay. (2009, r. 83)<sup>236</sup>

Other students report going into the city to look for playful examples, after realizing they had no inspiration (2009, r. 90). Some would leave the project to rest for a while to enable starting afresh (2009, r. 91); Some dove into their personal archives, because they remembered the playful moments during their Disney trip (2009, r. 84) or they would just stop and discard their first idea, go out and take pictures and determine what they meant afterwards (2009, r. 64). A final group made use of one of the creative techniques they learned in management skills training:

Develop as a target for yourself to put forward at least five ideas and each idea is worth contemplating on. This turned out to work very well and within an hour, we had developed a new concept. (2009, r. 153)<sup>237</sup>

## 4.3.12 SEEING THE WORLD AS YOUR PLAYGROUND IS THE STRATEGY

Some groups describe how their way of looking at the world playfully – accepting the invitation of the assignment to see it as their playground – helped them in finding challenges in ordinary physical things. Here students would also walk around, but they claim that while walking they realized the freedom that comes with the perspective of seeing the world this way. (Although this is connected to cognitive approaches as mentioned under 4.2.3.4 their reflection is explicitly the result of them stepping outside.)

One group states that just by starting to think differently about their physical surroundings, they could imagine the city center to be a playground (2009, r. 66). Another group described how a wall with a few bricks sticking out became a climbing wall (2009, r. 152).

One student described how he once took a long trip, and now likened it to the assignment, concluding the trip itself was “in its entirety comparable to a playground, the unfamiliar surroundings brought along a lot of curiosity without obstructions. And having fun was the main goal” (2009, r. 81).<sup>238</sup> Another group stresses the importance of openness of interpretation: “Easily said, our idea says nothing about the world, but at the same time it says everything. The pictures are tremendously open to interpretation. As such, everyone can interpret this in their own way. Of course, this indicates that the world is a big playground” (2009, r. 83).<sup>239</sup>

One group adds to this that you can consider the world your play *ball*, if you are able to make other people notice something they would not have otherwise (2009, r. 149). A last group places playfulness apart from the realm of finding practical solutions for things: “This idea says about the world that anything can be seen as a playground. That every object can be a play apparatus” (2009, r. 154).<sup>240</sup>

## 4.3.13 CONCLUSION

These approaches to playfulness reveal that although playfulness is partly a character trait, there are things one can actively do to establish a playful stance. Although students have their own preferences for how to do this, none of these approaches are impossible to weave into a curriculum in a way similar to how one can create assignments with appealing elements to, for instance, different learning styles. Some students will be more comfortable first developing an understanding of a process before entering into it. Other students may just be ready to dive in and see what happens next. Important is the extent to which both (or all) approaches are considered relevant, more than choosing one as superior over the other.

The term serendipity suggests a lack of control. Today's society, according to Giddens, is characterized by risk (1984). At the same time, serendipity is characterized by risk assessment, risk management and as such, risk control. This suggests that allowing space for playfulness to emerge also means abandoning some of the certainty that control supposedly provides. This is counter intuitive to some extent, as generally, when we want to accomplish anything, we are supposed "to have a plan." Risk is less involved with the serendipitous occurrence of ideas, as long as one does not find one's own thoughts risky. The way the material spaces we inhabit are organized, can be considered to enable playfulness.

Seeking understanding of playfulness via the use of theory – for instance by learning about creativity – is more cognitively oriented and seems connected to control and risk management more than seeking inspiration in the form of examples does. The way in which students look for inspiration is more connected to routinization. Students reported that thinking is limited by patterns and habits. This constraint is lifted by actively seeking inspiration and surprise, thus actively trying to break these patterns. This goes for the use of brainstorming as well, regardless of the moment in which this takes place in the process. Students rely on brainstorms and their understanding of the creative process to enable their capacity to look beyond what is common.

Under structural constraints on an individual level (4.2.3.4), affective components were mentioned as enabling conditions for playfulness.

These also show up in the approaches, in the case of silliness as a mood resulting of boredom or fatigue, but in the case of relaxation and mindfulness as moods that were activated by the students.

As is assumed in the field of HCI, objects can be designed in such a way that they afford playful behavior. On the one hand, this falls under the heading of material enablement, but at the same time – by design – these objects are cultural artifacts, imbued with meaning, even if that meaning is (preferably) ambiguous. Some students have expressed a worry about the preprogrammed toys that children play with. But the approaches students take to objects, either in an attempt to playfully alter their function or by bringing them along to toy with suggest that artifacts on the whole enable playfulness more than they constrain it.

In instructional literature about creativity, taking a walk after a period of intensive thinking is often recommended to allow the brain to do its creative work, free from the pressure of having to perform. Furthermore, the material organization of society favors speedy transportation over leisurely walks. Students walk around in and around the school building, looking for ideas. This suggests the importance of their immediate physical surroundings in their idea generation, even if it is within an institution some consider fairly constraining.

Although social interaction plays a role in students' formulations of playfulness, it is not constraining in the sense of concern for negative sanction. And while students have reported this as a possible constraining condition, it plays no role in their execution of the assignment. It is likely they have not chosen to do things that might cause real embarrassment to them, or have displayed behavior that would feel uncomfortably childish to them. As such, they may not have encountered this constraint. Judging from the reports, students have also not engaged in any illegal activity, so constraints of a regulative or punitive kind are not encountered either. It is clearly something that they have considered as enabling in the course of making their assignment. Even if expectations of others constrain playfulness to some extent, peer presence and peer conversation can be seen as enabling.

Despite the invitation to “turn things upside down,” not many students actively sought to break to the rules for the sake of

doing something provocative (and those who did wish to provoke, did so for a good cause). Concern for negative sanction may in fact play a role here; students were either afraid of violating (school) regulations, or concerned they might fail the assignment. Although very few rules were broken or bent, rules of meaning were actively played with, often with the intention of making people think for a while, or waking them up. This became visible mostly in the conscious attempts students made at constructing ambiguous meanings. Particularly interesting, from the perspective of constitutive rules, were students who added constraints in advance of the assignment. Some turned the assignment itself into a game, by turning it into a competition of originality with their peers. Others place self-chosen constraints to enhance their creative process. Self-chosen constraint – “unnecessary obstacles,” as Suits calls it – is something that distinctly belongs to the realm of play.

Constraints also play a role in the way students discard their ideas. The students are mostly concerned with constraining their thinking themselves and as such do not seem all that connected to Giddens’ threefold distinction of constraints in the duality of agent and structure. Yet, the criterion of realism is an interesting one, as this is connected to ideas of what students construe to be real, realistic and realizable. Personal skill is a constraint for some, not because the assignment dictates this, but because their own criteria state that if it cannot be real or realistic, it is not worth making. This, in turn is informed by cultural criteria of imitation and aesthetics.

Lastly, the recuperation attempts that students describe suggest that there is such a thing as an unsuccessful attempt at being playful and there is a way back from this, namely by lifting the (possibly self-imposed) constraints of the situation.

## 4.4 MAGIC CIRCLE: THE DESIRABILITY OF AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING PLAYGROUND<sup>241</sup>

So far in this chapter, students' formulations of enabling and constraining conditions for playfulness have been analyzed (4.2) as well as the way in which they themselves accomplish a playful stance or a playful expression (4.3). This final section connects the concepts that have been discussed throughout chapter 3 to the creative expressions students made, as well as their reflections on them. By discussing these, two of the three opening questions of the chapter are revisited: 1) how do students come to a definition of the situation (construction of reality)? and 2) how do they formulate their assessment of the situation (underlying notions of what is worthwhile)? Some paragraphs in this section are taken from a prior paper about the comparison between the two years (De Jong, 2010).

The focus in this section is on a) the way they construct oppositions to reality and b) the Utopian strands in their thinking. Students contrast the notion of reality with either virtuality, escapism, fantasy, fiction, or play. In several reports, "being in touch with reality" or "not losing touch with reality" is considered a very important touchstone for maturity, competence, autonomy, seriousness, and rationality. At the same time, they express an enjoyment of playing with the boundaries of reality in their photos and ideas. The "ludic dialectic" that Sutton-Smith describes, as a play with the frames of play, is visible in many of the students' creative expressions in which they start out with a reference to an ordinary situation and turn it into something playful and often absurd and impossible.

Utopian strands of thinking are present mostly in the students' ideas of freedom, creativity and childhood. Notions of utopia and dystopia are intertwined with their concerns over and joy of technology. Students sometimes display a concern with the pervasiveness of computers and media, along with a concern for the convergence of human bodies with computer technology. Although students do not explicitly refer to sociological works, they do use notions very similar to Goffman's idea of framing. Students express enjoyment of playing with the frames, as is visible in their attempts to create deliberately ambiguous messages. They also use their play with the frames to come to a solution. In some cases this takes the form of a real pragmatic solution to a problem, in other cases it is a sense of informing others, waking them up to the world around them.

#### 4.4.1 REALITY AS OPPOSED TO VIRTUALITY, ESCAPISM, FANTASY, FICTION, OR PLAY?

As indicated before, the first year of the assignment yielded surprising results as students spontaneously used to opportunity to not just "study" this world, but also to voice their concerns about it in a playful and surprising way. Rather than take an epistemological perspective to test their own assumptions, they express what they think this world should be like. Different ideas about what reality is like are present in this. As indicated in the discussion concerning the distinction between childhood and adulthood and the analysis of the way in which they express their concerns of media use of children ([section 4.2.2.2](#)), media are sometimes thought to contribute to the creation of a fake world in which it is ever more difficult to decide what is real.

It is possible to distinguish four different types of (closely related) tense oppositions in relation to reality: a) real world and virtual world, b) realism and escapism, c) reality and fantasy, and d) reality and play.

#### 4.4.1.1 REALITY AND VIRTUAL WORLDS

A first tension is the one between what students construct as a) the real world versus virtual worlds. Here, students report concerns with potentially not being able to tell the difference. This is an epistemological tension couched in a normative ontology: we should be able to tell that difference. As one group states:

The real world has more authenticity and coziness and prevents the isolation of people. In virtual worlds, people are at risk of losing touch with reality. Chat partners become friends and computer games become reality. (2008, r. 104)<sup>242</sup>



Figure 42. A man caught inside a computer screen (2008, r. 125).

Not all of reality is lost as a result of for instance media use, as long as there is a balance: “Media use should not take first place in life” (2009, r. 67).<sup>243</sup> Another student mentions the importance of staying grounded: “Taking a good look around you and reflecting on the world is also very important to stay connected to reality” (2009, r. 83).<sup>244</sup> One group addressed their concerns in the image in figure 42.

It is accompanied by the following explanation:

We see a computer screen with a man that apparently is trapped. He doesn't look happy and his hands are around the bars. Why is there a man trapped behind the computer screen? [...] For some people the realization that they're caught up in a virtual world comes too late. That's why they're alienated from the normal, real world, making it impossible for them to function normally. (2008, r. 125)<sup>245</sup>

Sanity – as a capacity to distinguish between what is real and what is not – is attributed to researchers, but less so to gamers:

A sensible researcher would never go too far in an experiment by jeopardizing people's lives and as such, is capable of thinking outside the box, but a disturbed playful gamer would, and he had to play with the reality with the required boundaries" (2009, r. 74).<sup>246</sup>

Another student laments today's consumer society in which adults indulge in the first opportunity they have to enter virtual worlds:

... adults too withdrew behind their computer with a console and completely immersed themselves into this challenging digital world. The same goes for the internet. It has become ever easier to push one button and participate in an entirely new world. (2009, r. 86)<sup>247</sup>

Although the assignment was intended to invite reflection on people's *difficulty* of discerning what we call real or not, the effect seems to be a distinction between sane people who are capable of making this distinction, unstable people who cannot tell the difference and spoiled, complacent people who do not want to take any trouble to do so.

#### 4.4.1.2 REALITY AND ESCAPISM

A second tension is that between b) realism – escapism, where escapism is related to a person's psychological motivation (more than the epistemological possibilities of being able to tell what is what). It is not that the escapist does not "see" reality, but she wishes to move away from it because of its supposed lack of appeal. Statements about escapism are often normative statements that have to do with courage and moral fiber. Judgment of escapism is about the willingness to face what is real and what is not. If the statements are not normative, they express a desire to move away from the dread of ordinary life. One student photoshopped an imaginary door that would allow people to escape the busy, stressful and unhealthy world (figure 43).

Escapism is closely connected to students' thoughts about virtual



Figure 43. *The Escape* - a photoshopped door on a marketplace leading us out of our stressful society (2008, r. 111)

worlds and computer games. Sony's PlayStation is thought to help people escape the imperfection of their own world (2009, r. 100) One group refers to the capacity of computer games to help people retreat into a fictional world. "This is attractive especially for adults, because they want to escape ordinary life for a few moments, to forget their worries and to shortly be someone else" (2009, r. 85).<sup>248</sup>

Escapism is considered something positive if you just need a break (2008. r. 119, 2009, r. 89; r. 90, r. 105). "Life shows us there are many opportunities to escape ordinary life" (2009, r. 89). One group considers play a positive break from the imperfection of the world, *specifically* because it offers an escape:

The world is not a perfect place and not everyone can be themselves in the way they want to. People constantly play roles, for societal reasons, recognition and self-actualization. Except when one is involved in play. (2009, r. 153)<sup>249</sup>

The tension between reality and escapism is characterized by an approval of temporary escapes and a negative assessment of actual withdrawal. Students connect it to virtual world and computer games, but here the capacity to tell real from unreal is not diminished.

#### 4.4.1.3 REALITY AND FANTASY

Another tension is that between c) reality – fantasy (and fiction), where often fantasy is valued (as long as it is not used for escape). According to one group, playfulness enables fantasy:

Playfulness transports you into a different world that is different from the "real" world. You also start to see things differently and from a different frame of thinking. Especially this latter thing greatly enhances creativity. (2009, r. 103)<sup>250</sup>

Another group, too, claims that our imagination, with its irrationality and lack of awareness of what is and is not possible, allows creativity and a fresh perspective:

As if you see everything for the first time and you reflect – with everything you see – on what it is and what it's for. To think in such a way, you need to be able to (temporarily) immerse yourself in this world completely and forget about the real world, (2008, r. 38)<sup>251</sup>

Realism is thought to get in the way of fantasy. Age is a major contributor to our sense of realism:

The more mature one becomes, the more realistically one looks at this world, instead of completely immersing oneself into a fantasy world like a child. This realism ensures logical thinking, resulting in a lack of courage of asking questions the way children do, such as: "Why does the moon come with us when we move?" (2009, r. 59)<sup>252</sup>

Another group mentions how playfulness is enabled by the imagination:

It is a freedom for everyone to create new worlds in his or her own imagination. All it takes is some fantasy. It returns in all aspects of life. Playfulness is not only experienced when there is a positive atmosphere. When times are worse, people will fantasize about a better world or participate in activities to feel happy again. (2009, r. 80)<sup>253</sup>

Where the temporary retreat into a virtual world or game world is considered troublesome by different groups, retreating into the imagination is put forward as energizing, reviving and creativity affirming, even if it also requires a break away from reality.

#### 4.4.1.4 REALITY AND PLAY

Lastly, there is a tension between d) reality – play, where play belongs to the realm of the "unreal" or something that is "away from reality." Here too, is a difference between a healthy escape

from reality as a way to re-energize and find relaxation in order to be able to move on (2009, r. 85) and an unhealthy way of escaping reality, resulting in, for example, game addiction (2009, r. 62). Some groups attribute the incapacity to distinguish between what is real and what is not to someone's sanity. One group refers to situations in which, according to them, boundaries are blurred: "Play and reality are mixed up by psychologically unstable people" (2009, r. 77).<sup>254</sup> Another group connects the difference between reality and play to responsibility, specifically when it comes to game addiction. They attribute this to:

The extent to which people take playfulness seriously. When someone exaggerates this, the boundary of childlike playfulness and childishness can fade and someone can lose themselves in the game and as such lose the responsibilities reality bring. (2009, r. 62)<sup>255</sup>

Students' responses indicate a discomfort with the idea that questions concerned with what is real are different per time frame, per lifetime, per school of thought and so on. Although the question "what is real?" is an important one, the answers to it are never fixed or static. Moreover, we can act based on "mistaken" notions of what this world is about and yet, be a fully functioning human being. Students express a tension in their creative and playful wish to stretch boundaries, and their – possibly adolescent – need to know what to count on.

Turner's concept of "liminality" is applicable to these responses in two ways. In one way, a person's time in college as a whole can be considered a rite of passage into adulthood. Students themselves – for as long as they are students – occupy a *liminal* position in society. Although formally unemployed, they do not belong to the general category of unemployed people. And though often somewhat privileged, they have yet reap the benefits of this privilege while they are relatively "poor" compared to an average family. In another way, students express discomfort with the ambiguity of categories that typify play. Turner described how pollution and sacredness categorize liminality. The worry students express about the fissures in the distinction between what is real and unreal can be seen as a worry about pollution of these categories: what is real and unreal should be kept clean and separated.

If the echoed quest for thinking outside the box is to lead to an approach in which boundaries are called into question rather than reaffirmed, the challenge is to invite students to be okay with the discomfort and uncertainty of an ever-changing world while at the same time being an agent in this world. After all, the liminal stage is also a stage that lends itself for reflection.

#### 4.4.2 BEAUTY, ALIENATION AND FUN: UTOPIAN ELEMENTS IN STUDENTS' THINKING<sup>256</sup>

The previous section revealed the importance for students to have a clear sense of boundaries for discerning what is real and what is not. This can be connected to Turner's notion of liminality and also to notions of utopia in the students' definitions of reality. Because aside from the potential "pollution" of the categories of the real and the unreal, student also seem to ascribe a sense of sacredness to the purity of childhood. Students portray a childhood utopia: they mention the loss of childhood in which an ideal state existed, that consists of boundless freedom and originality and that can be regained by resisting elements of today's culture. Their thoughts about the mediation of everyday life and the role of technology nonetheless express a dystopian stance towards the society they are bound to face as future managers. This is presented as a technological dystopia that closes this childlike mind and numbs the imagination. Their concerns range from the speed and demands of today's society to anxiety over alienation through online life and worries about the transgression of boundaries through digital game play.



*Figure 44. A captured puppy wired and tangled in the strings of a guitar: innocence caught (2008, r. 138).*



*Figure 45. An apple hanging from a tree expresses environmental concern (2008, r. 147b).*

One pair connects the innocence of children and puppies to being imprisoned in one's own world (figure 44).

This image with the stuffed animal is also one with which the softness and childlikeness is expressed. It depicts the imprisonment of children as well as the coercion and distortion of children as a result of auditory [in reference to the noise the guitar makes, MdJ] and domestic violence. It's also a metaphor for people who are imprisoned in their own world. (2008, r. 138)<sup>257</sup>

One student connects her concern for the environment to the theme of media and technology (2008, r. 147b). She visually expresses this via an image of a plant in her living room, which is placed in front of her laptop so that it suggests the apple logo on her computer is hanging from a tree (figure 45).

My idea says about the world that I inhabit that it is strongly influenced by media and technology. Furthermore, I value nature and consider the environment as important. The first idea with the apple tree reflects exactly the symbolism between nature and technology the natural plant and the technology in the form of my laptop. In the meantime, this idea is also a criticism against the technology, because the developer often leaves out nature. And technology and nature are closer to one another than people think. (2009, r. 147b)<sup>258</sup>

Compared to Huizinga's idea of play as a constitutive element of culture, many of the reports display a faith in the open mindedness and imagination of youth and also a criticism of society as it is or was at that moment that seems at times pessimistic (Krul, 2006). The utopian mark in Huizinga's thinking lies in of the way it sketches a society whose members actively and freely participate in ritualized forms of play that display both aesthetic and moral engagement (Krul, 2006, p. 23; cf. Huizinga, 1955). Theories of play and culture have different implicit, sometimes explicit notions of the kind of life that is worthwhile (cf. Sutton-Smith, 1997). As discussed in chapter 3.5, these notions concern images of an ideal state of existence that we can use as a reference point or a horrifying perspective we wish to steer clear of. Although not always consistently articulated, students' expressions contain similar implicit notions.

#### 4.4.2.1 THE OCCURRENCE OF SERIOUS TOPICS IN THE EXPRESSIONS

Students express idealistic strands of thinking in different ways, quite often in a way that is both playful *and* serious. Some of the images they provide as examples of playfulness are critical of consumer society (such as Adbusters' ads or social commentaries on current events). In their own expressions, they discuss their concerns over a range of serious topics. In this way, they use the assignment to not just make this world more surprising, but at the same time, they try and make it a better place. Suits' distinction between a *lusory* and a *playful* attitude is relevant remember here, as students sometimes playfully turn an existing game upside down. They mess with the potential to even adopt a *lusory* attitude and they sometimes develop their own games, promoting a *lusory* attitude. Sometimes they try to address and alter non-game rules in a playful way, with reference to real life situations they find morally wrong.

As indicated before, in 2008 more explicitly serious topics were addressed. A distinction was made between topics that were addressed in a playful way that contained a presentation of a certain topic as somewhat serious. There are also topics that students have addressed in a very serious, yet playful manner. In the latter case, they sometimes actively looked for solutions or tried to create awareness. The somewhat serious topics in 2008 were:

- boredom alleviation, creative constraints, dirty streets and environments, the environment (in general), alleviation of frustration, the inefficiency of their study



Figure 46. A man trapped, this time behind guitar strings, to protest against the use of tropical hardwood for the creation of guitars (2008, r 130)

environment, marketing madness, media convergence, music piracy, relationship between man and nature, smoke pollution, social constraints and the decline of successful marriages.

In 2009 these were:

acceptance of homosexuality, authenticity (being a diverse self), boredom alleviation, lack of collaborative options, marketing madness, obesity, office boredom, pool safety for children, social standards of hygiene, stench and travel ennui.

Topics that were addressed in a serious way in 2008 by the students were:

American cultural hegemony, autonomy over physical body, child abuse inside the home, worldwide contrasts between poverty and wealth, the decline of the rain forest, environmentalism, loss of communality in dining rituals, human fear, laziness, suffering as a result of stress, relation nature-technology, smoking in society, terrorism, time constraints, unemployment, whale hunting, and the world's energy resources.

In 2009, the serious topics were:

animal suffering, environmentalism, human trafficking, pollution through trash, smoking during pregnancy, and traffic jams.



*Figure 47. A pebble with a scrunchie around it: the "eye" looks at a polluted world and watches the world deteriorate (2008, r. 109).*

In students' expressions, the difference in focus, creativity in the first year and playfulness in the second, yielded some differences in the way students approached the assignment. The expressions in the assignments of the first year are more directed towards problem solving, often expressed in attempts to create awareness of certain topics, while the assignments that involve playfulness are a bit more often directed towards having fun and also goofing around. This indicates that framing an assignment as playful already has a *performative* effect on the way the assignment is carried out.

Sutton-Smith (1997) mentions different dualities he claims play a role in the different rhetorics on play, such as work and play, adult and child, the heavy and the light (p. 147). Students' responses contain an additional number of oppositions that are worth mentioning. They also construct different dualities in their creations. Some examples from 2008 are: human-technology (concern with convergence between the two; past – future (concern with technology), present-past (nostalgia), and useful-useless (play with function). In 2009, these were: animal-machine (concern with environment), human – animal (concern with animal welfare), indoor-outdoor (pretending outdoors is inside), motion-stand still (while standing still you see motion), nature-culture (creating greener cityscapes), safety-danger (bungee jumping), war-peace (playing war during peace time) and young-old (by displaying playful behavior as an adult).

Thematically, students also have discussed distinctions between rationality and irrationality, public-private, productive-unproductive, old-new, necessity-lovability, and courage-fear. Where their expressions are playful and contain dualities, and as such, make active use of paradox and ambiguity, thematically, students discuss them as oppositions, meaning they discuss their



Figure 48. A hamster on a treadmill, fueling a car to create awareness about the way we handle natural resources (2009, r. 55).

role in the distinction between playfulness and non-playfulness. In the opposition between rationality and irrationality, playfulness belongs to the irrational. In the oppositions between public and private, playfulness belongs to the realm of the private. “Necessity-lovability” refers to the tension between something functional and required, like a fire hydrant and its shape and design that made students think of a flower (2009, r. 82).

#### 4.4.2.2 THE PROBLEM WITH THE PROBLEM: SIGNALING, REDEFINING OR SOLVING

Students address a range of problems in their essays, which can be categorized along the lines of combating social issues like discrimination or poverty, environmental concerns, moral issues topics like justice and equality and also aesthetic concerns, among those students who want to make the world more beautiful. All images and narratives were analyzed along four possible intentions with their assignment: an aesthetic intention, a pragmatic intention, a socially engaged intention and a frivolous one. The percentages below should only be considered as a very careful indication. The categories themselves are not exclusive; students could have a positive value on all four labels. They are also questionable: why would making the world more beautiful not be a highly engaged stance? Overall, however, it is visible the creative assignment was executed more in an atmosphere of problem solving.

Table 10. Comparison between the motives behind the creative expressions.

	2008		2009		Difference
	N	%	N	%	
Aesthetic	29	(26,3 %)	54	(33,8 %)	7,5 %
Engaged	55	(50 %)	34	(21,2 %)	28,8 %
Instrumental	49	(44,5 %)	49	(30,6 %)	13,9 %
Fun	86	(78,2 %)	120	(75 %)	3,2 %

Several students have reported a couple of practical problems they have solved in a playful way, as discussed in the section on their approaches to playfulness. Others have signaled specific problems, trying to create awareness around them. But some of them have taken the opportunity to reflect on the way problems are defined and to alter the problem definition (2008, r. 115; 2008, r. 109, 2009; r. 103).

One group wondered why society thinks so negatively about unemployment. They tried to turn this negativity upside down and look at the upside of unemployment:

We have made a picture of two happy unemployed people, to show how motivated they are stop working if someone were to provide for their survival. Then people would have the time available to do what they really want to do. Now these people are no longer unemployed people, but happy and free people. (2008, r. 115)<sup>259</sup>



Figure 49. The white posters on the wall say “unemployed” and “without a job” - two students, drinking and smiling under a poster of paradise (2008, r. 115).

They visualized this by placing two supposedly unemployed people (fellow students) under a picture of paradise.

Another group looked at a bad neighborhood and tried to add game elements (2009, r. 103, see also *Figure 22*) and one tried to create game elements in an office space (2009, r. 103). These examples suggest there is not so much a problem to be solved, as much as there is a perspective to be altered.

#### 4.4.2.3 ANIMATING OBJECTS AS A WAY TO PLAYFULLY ADDRESS CONCERNS

The transition from a world that was fairly analogous when they were born to one in which communication technology is ubiquitous is not one that students find easy, regardless of the etiquette “digital natives.” One indicator for this is their tendency to “animate” objects, for instance by making a computer human, calling it man’s best friend (*Figure 15*), or by imagining a computer as a potential prison (*Figure 42*)

Anthropomorphizing and animating objects is old as either Pygmalion’s myth or Frankenstein’s monster, and as recent as pop culture movies like *Mannequin*, *Cast Away* or at present Spike Jonze’s *I am here*, a love story between two robots. We attribute feelings to

inanimate objects, especially if they move and we can be touched by watching a little robot like Asimo holding hands with a researcher – even if we know that it is just a measurement test run (Honda, 2009). What is interesting though, is that the same group of students that expresses concern about the boundaries between life on- and offline and the convergence of the human body with technology, at the same time tend to humanize technology and also everyday (non-digital) objects in their creative imagery (e.g. 2008, r. 112; r. 114; r. 117; r. 127; r. 134; 2009, r. 85; r. 79; r. 92)

### 4.4.3 PLAYFUL COMMENTARIES ON GAMES AS A PLAYFUL KEYING OF A PLAY FRAME – THE LUDIC DIALECTIC

Upon analyzing students' creations and processes along the line of the PLEX framework, it seemed that many of the creations students came up with had elements of simulation to them: ordinary life was being imitated in some way. And at the same time it was not, because obviously – given the assignment to take something and turn it into something else – ordinary life was to be the starting point of their explorations. But they did not just mimic it; they transformed it into something absurd or impossible. As discussed in chapter 3, Sutton-Smith (1997) distinguishes between a referential dialectic and a ludic dialectic, which may mark the difference between play and playfulness. Play in the latter frame, is play with the frames of play. This kind of play generates meaning away from reality, where absurdity can happen. In several of the expressions, this is indeed what happened. In some cases, the creation of the students was still a clear “sense-making” reference to ordinary life, but in other cases, students explicitly were on the lookout for impossibilities.

Two groups of students themselves make a distinction between play and playfulness (2009, r. 85; r. 87). One group indicates that “playfulness is part of many everyday things. It allows for a different way of looking at things” (2009, r. 87).<sup>260</sup> The other states:

Playfulness is even more present in ordinary life than most people imagine. Playfulness is no longer just connected to ‘playing’, it is also about reaches like gossip magazines and decorative kitchenware. (2009, r. 85)<sup>261</sup>

Other students do not take a position like this, but they do often playfully comment on play. In the coding process, concepts behind the expressions were analyzed for their ludic qualities, in Caillois' sense of the word: do they express "gameful" elements or do they refer to gameful activities (but take a walk with them)?

In 2008, three expressions contained references to ludic activities: a transformation of "the shell game"<sup>262</sup> (2008, r. 120) (figure 50); an image of a sticker of a body builder between two heating pipes (2008, r. 130) and an image of a student surfing the "trim tab" award in school. The award is shaped a bit like a surfboard (2008, r. 143).<sup>263</sup> But although all three expressions contain references to ludic activities (the one a game and the others competitive sports), they are not about playing a game.

In 2009, 24 expressions contained references to ludic activities, of which 11 were actually games themselves. The expressions other than those 11 that were clearly games, made reference to ludic activities but at the same time made fun of them or commented on them. In these cases, the term ludic refers to activities that are in some cases gamelike and in other instances not. For instance: a student in Disney pulls on the sword Excalibur, the sword enchanted by Merlin in the legend of King Arthur. Although it refers to a test for the true king of Camelot, and in that sense contains an agonistic component, there is obviously no real competition in pulling the sword while in Disneyland.

Another example is that of a rope bridge, that was used as an illustration for fun survival activities for adults. This can be just fun to walk over as play as *illinx* in one setting, and be an element of competition (*agon*) in another. One group protests against bull fighting – and in that sense refers to game activities, but develops a playful way to comment on the activity. In six expressions, by two groups, the students made it a game for themselves to come up with something more original than their peers. In short, although there



Figure 50. Playful commentary on a game: three coffee cups represent "the shell game"; one cup contains coffee (2009, r.120).

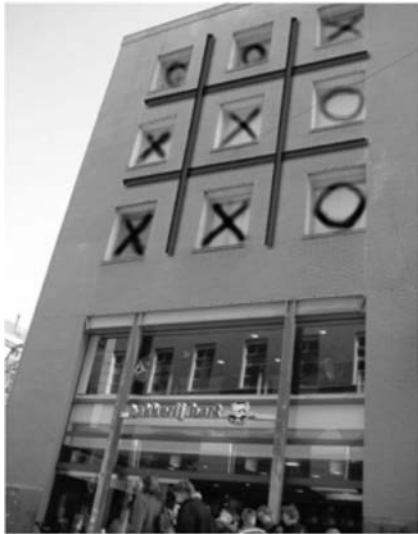


Figure 51. Playing tic-tac-toe on grid structures of buildings in the city (2008, r. 88; 2009, r. 56).

Redefining its ambiguity

is no ludic, rule bound component to their expressions, their overall style of performing the assignment can be considered ludic.

When considering the idea of a play with the rules of play, in those assignments that thematically have an agonistic component – a game, specifically competitions of some sort – students, in their playful approach actually comment on it or make it impossible to play.

Real games were those in which students came up with a way to combat their indecisiveness by formulating a game in which a toy crocodile should bite their hand (2009, r. 153). Another group (2009, r. 79) developed three different games that invite the player to have a more attentive look at the outside world, one group developed three small office games that could bring people closer together and that might alleviate boredom (2009, r. 103), and one student wanted to make a jungle experience out of a park in the city, creating a play space (2009, r. 97).

Two groups, one in 2008 and one in 2009, made use of the grid structure of buildings to play a game of tic-tac-toe. One of the groups explained what this idea said about our world:

Buildings [...] are not only made for their function. You can also do something with the looks of it. [...] The building is used as a bakery and based on this picture, it would be fun to tell the Martian what the connection is between bread and banquet and the rounds and crosses, the tic-tac-toe game on the windows (2008, r. 88)<sup>264</sup>

## 4.4.4 CONCLUSION

Students indicated that in some cases, considering the world your playground was the strategy with which playfulness could be invoked. But they report concerns about loss of touch with reality, game addiction, and lack of imagination, while also reporting about the legitimacy of escaping ordinary life. In students' theoretical explorations, they echo the theories they learn about creativity and "thinking outside the box," while at the same time echoing discourse on popular media, especially regarding the moral concerns. They perhaps did so without noticing that by their insistence on clear boundaries between human beings and technology, they keep reality neatly boxed in.

In their reflections, they display two kinds of "what if"-thinking. On the one hand, the uninhibited playful kind of thinking: a play of the imagination. And on the other hand a more concerned kind of thinking: what happens if I lose touch with reality? In this mixture, they develop their own games for the assignment, and they playfully comment on games or mess with games entirely. Ordinary life is indeed the starting point for most of their exploration, as is the city they inhabit, and the school they go to. From these everyday surroundings, their imagination does allow them to jump into a frame of reference that is no longer immediately connected to these surroundings, but follows its own path into sometimes absurd, sometimes concerned, sometimes delicate, but rarely predictable paths.

## CONCLUSION: THE MARTIAN SHOULD UNDERSTAND FRAMES

Students construct their “definition of the situation” in a combination of statements about the way reality is and the way it should be. On the one hand, they touch on concerns for this world – wanting to wake people up, solving problems with the environment. On the other hand, their normative claims are telling of the way in which frames play a role in their thinking: students activate specific narratives that fit within the rhetoric of the imagination. In doing so, they express normative concerns about a moral obligation: we have to stay in touch with reality. At the same time, in their description of this reality, they formulate the routines and habits of ordinary life as constraining for playfulness and imagination, two things they are generally positive about.

As such, their assessment of the situation is deeply intertwined with their construction of reality. Their normative claims about the way the world should be inform their assessment of it as problematic or desirable, worthwhile or dreadful. The rhetoric of the imagination is recognizable in underlying notions of the good life as a life lived creatively and authentically. With the different approaches they use to establish playful ideas, they are not out to break social rules for the sake of provocation. But they do play with rules, something in the form of an open exploration, to see what happens next, sometimes to wake people up to the joy and beauty of everyday life, sometimes to express formative moments in their own development, and sometimes in the form of inexplicable formulations and vague images that are a puzzle to the reader.

There are some design principles that can be derived from these overall findings. Given the importance of physical space, moving around and using physical objects, to enable playfulness among these students, it is possible to develop (material/physical) spaces that allow exploration, that have hidden meanings in them and that have objects that can be moved, replaced and reordered *without punitive consequences*.

Another principle can be explicitly designed for ambiguity. In this, it is important that the guidance of the process is not ambiguous: the exploration of conceptual ambiguities that may touch on ontological security requires a coach to whom students are comfortable expressing their findings. It would for instance be possible to explicitly discuss the ambiguities regarding the constraints of “reality” mentioned above. In different kinds of creativity training, this could be made an explicit topic of reflection in which it would be relevant to address

- a. How the quest for certainty is at odds with the requirements of the creative process (as an inquisitive journey and not for instance an artisanal expression for which only technical skill is required). It might be possible to develop elements in a curriculum that address this not just thematically, but also more existentially, coaching students in the idea that “reality” is not as fixed as might be comfortable. Addressing this explicitly may increase students’ tolerance of ambiguity.
- b. That problem solving can never be done with complete information and in most cases, cannot be approached as a neutral enterprise so. Institutions in higher education sometimes claim they deliver “real world” situations, but this lack of neutrality is not often addressed. Perhaps education can guide students better in dealing with the uncertainty that we may not be able to definitively and permanently define what is real and learn to make choices nonetheless.

Although students do not explicitly reflect on the distinction between playfulness and play, their expressions do not contain many “gameful” concepts, nor are they about gamification. Sutton-Smith’s ludic dialectic – in which the reference to reality is taken to

a new frame that allows absurdity and impossibility – is expressed in the many expressions in which games are being played with.

Though playfulness is seen as a cheerful character trait, this does not imply that “manifest joy” is also what enables it. Frustration, seen as the experience of unwanted constraint, was one of the experiences that inform the creation of different playful expressions. The serendipity that students were open to is at odds with their description of society as hurried and status-driven. Yet, at the same time, upon invitation they are open to creating a situation in which there is free space in which unexpected things may actually happen. This might mean that extending an invitation for playfulness more often, albeit couched in the paradox of intentionality and spontaneity, might already enable playfulness in these students.



# CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION



This thesis explored two main questions: a theoretical question and a design question. The theoretical question concerned the enabling and constraining conditions of playfulness in young adults. The design question concerned the creation of educational material that may invoke playfulness. The core of the thesis as such was not to compare whether or not a playful approach to learning generates better outcomes than a non-playful approach, but to explore the possibilities of learning to be playful.

# ENABLING AND CONSTRAINING CONDITIONS OF PLAYFULNESS IN YOUNG ADULTS

Playfulness was explored as a sensitizing concept. Playfulness can be considered a propensity or disposition of a person but is also an element of social interaction that has not just motivational but also skill components: the capacity to play with the frames of play. That is the sense in which playfulness is different from play. “Play” can be a primary frame; a primary frame can be keyed into a play frame, but on the whole, “play” refers to a set frame in which it is clear for the participants that play is indeed “what it is that’s going on here.” Playfulness is connected more to the process of establishing the meaning of a frame and the extent to which this is done playfully. In that sense, playfulness is more ambiguous than play.

A person’s personal disposition is a factor in playfulness, but it is not the only thing that enables it. Personality is considered to be relatively fixed. Without any inclination to be playful, there would be little point in invoking it. At the same time, the increasing acknowledgment of the importance of play in human development *and* in adulthood warrants a closer look at the conditions that can be constraining and enabling for playfulness and the extent to which these can be either lifted or improved. A difficulty in this is the meta-communicative quality of play together with its ambiguity.

Play communication is ambiguous because it is a message about what is happening while it is happening that seems contradictory but is not: two opposite things are true at the same time – a playful bite is not a bite and not not a bite. Because playfulness is not only located within a personality, but also between the interaction between two or

more people, the playfulness of the situation can only be established in some form of agreement on what is being communicated.

Someone's intention may be playful, but if the other party inadvertently misinterprets the play message or does not interpret it at all, then playfulness is initiated but not actually accomplished. This suggests playfulness is easily and reliably recognized in animals, children and people with whom one shares a similar background, but that this is not as easy when this familiarity is not a given.

The diversity of forms of playfulness, does not contribute to a unanimous framework for the analysis of it, as can be witnessed in the difference rhetorics of play. There are forms of playfulness that have an immediacy to them, that take place in the moment, sometimes even only in a single moment of interaction and then never again. There are also playful art forms and aesthetic expressions that can be transmitted via media and that have a consistency over time. Students' examples and creations contain elements of both: they recall funny memories of trips they took, but they also generate slogans and images the value of which they wish would last for more than just a moment.

Constraints of playfulness of children can lie in their upbringing, their social environment, their culture, or their temperament, but also in the extent to which their physical environment enables play. Playfulness in children is considered important for the development of their imagination, their social skills and their empathy. Playfulness is thought to enable all these things. Constraints of playfulness in adults can lie in their personality – as a result of their childhood – but is also much more constrained by the way rules of social interaction organize experience: frames. On the one hand, these constraints are structural: routinized action inhibits the playful transformation of (primary) frames, largely because of habit. They are also connected to potential negative sanctions: a worry to be subjected to the derision of others. These constraints are mainly present in students' thinking rather than in their expressions. A worry of punitive sanction is mostly absent in their reflections; playfulness does not easily get one into legal trouble.

The structural constraints that are important in the context of this thesis are related to culture and its institutions. A school system can be seen as a reflection of cultural mores, as it is thought to transmit or convey cultural values to students. A rigid school system can

stifle spontaneity, which is considered an important pre-condition for playfulness. Although policy documents express a need for innovation and creativity, the result-oriented organization of higher education leaves little room for constructive failure and exploration. Although these are not constraints that can be easily lifted, there is an active debate on so-called 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that may open up some possibilities for redesign on an institutional level. Teachers' playfulness would be supported by an environment that allows (learning from) mistakes; an environment that emphasizes the complexities of ordinary life rather than reduce them. Complexity reduction can be required for didactic reasons, to build basis skills. This is different from suggesting 'ordinary life' or 'the work place' is actually uncomplicated.

As constraints for playfulness, students mentioned the structure of today's society, which some of them frame as hurried, status oriented and overly organized. Moreover, they express a concern for the role of media and technology in our ordinary lives and whether this may limit the imagination. On the whole, they consider playfulness to be a positive trait that contributes to creativity; that connects people and that allows for fun in life, unless people cannot distinguish between play and reality anymore. Then it becomes a negative trait. Media are also thought to be enabling, if they permit creative freedom. As enabling conditions, students mention a variety of possibilities, ranging from personal traits such as being in a silly mood, to having the courage to make a fool of yourself, to more interpersonal conditions, such as the groups they collaborate with and the match with their peers. Their ideas are often kick-started by their material environment and the different objects that play a role in it.

In their reflections on how they came to their creative ideas, students report different approaches they have taken to develop a playful stance. These can be connected to the enabling and constraining conditions: in their approach, the students try to lift the constraints or fortify what enables them. They try to alter their mood to enhance their potential for playfulness and creative ideas. In their brainstorm processes they try to circumvent the potential criticism of the rational mind that is thought to inhibit playfulness. In their collaboration they exchange ideas and seek like-minded souls or try to work in a way that suits all parties best. Students are often critical of the idea of routines, claiming they stifle playfulness. In their thinking, they pay little attention to the way in which routines

can also be enabling. Nonetheless, in the reconstruction of their creative process, they do display several “creative routines” – habits that do seem to enable a playful approach.

Depending on one’s assessment of a situation as desirable or undesirable, it is possible to make a distinction between a playful attitude and a lusus attitude. In an ideal situation, these attitudes are the same: conformity, then, is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of the activity that can be considered – by utopian definition – a game. People engage in the activity for the sake of the enjoyment of the activity alone. In a situation that is considered undesirable, the question of conformity is not only one about subjecting oneself to game rules, but also one of reflecting on moral rules. Several expressions are commentaries on games the students consider an injustice, such as bull fighting, or on situations they consider undesirable and that they would like to change, in some cases by developing a game or by creating a playful protest. However, students also express a wish to just brighten up this world, make it prettier, nicer, kinder or funnier, simply because they consider playfulness part of a life well lived. Students play with the rules of play and the rules of social interaction, but rarely in such a way that they deliberately break these rules in a way that might cause embarrassment to either them or an onlooker. In that sense, they do not display the fearlessness that seems part of excellent rule breaking.

Students use different oppositions to construct their image of reality, such as maturity-childishness, adulthood-childhood, rationality-irrationality and private-public. Although they express a desire to think outside the box and to be original, they also express having difficulty with categories and distinctions that are not clear. They distance themselves from the idea that reality is not clear-cut by labeling people who do not know this distinction as “unstable” or “addicted.” In the themes that popped up spontaneously, technology and childhood turn out to be important. The students idealize childhood, and in doing so, they express a deep concern for retaining the “purity” of childhood. This is cast in terms of the simplicity of being a child, versus the complexity of the world of adults. Technology is a source of ambivalence – students express a concern over the dominance of computers and media, while at the same express they cannot imagine living without them. A source of connection as well as one of potential alienation, different concerns found a way into each of their playful expressions.

# DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Some of the assignments we developed throughout the Borobudur project as a whole were met with skepticism and disapproval. This was rarely the case in the assignment “The World Your Playground.” The students who resisted the assignment did so in a playful way. Parts of the assignment enabled playfulness in some students and in that sense the assignment seems to match their interest and predispositions. A difference between this and the other assignments was that this one was clearly set within a course structure. Although it was nonetheless found confusing by some, this structure seems to have countered potential resistance.

In designing the TWYP assignment, we made sure to invite active use of creative media, allowing students to develop a visual expression to accompany their thoughts and ideas. We also invited an active approach: do something and reflect on what happened. Furthermore, failure and mistakes were allowed, meaning that students were informed that their reflection was what counted and not the creativity of the idea per se.

Ambiguity seems to be an important design principle. Students express enjoyment of a multiplicity of meanings in the examples they provide of playfulness and they express enjoyment in creating images that have ambiguous meaning and that may invite reflection in others. This ambiguity needs to be content related, while there should be little ambiguity regarding the benevolence of the educational surroundings. In the other assignments, students expressed mistrust of the school system serving their interest.

Students report very different approaches to adopting a playful stance. Several of these can be woven into elements of a curriculum if that curriculum lends itself to a playful approach, i.e., if there is something playful about the (specific elements of the) learning process. Topics could include the construction of reality, the power of social interactions, and myths surrounding creativity. As students have put these themes and approaches forward themselves, these would be suitable in this specific curriculum. For other curricula, it would be useful to consult students concerning the development of material.

It is also possible to develop assignments that explicitly address some of the ambiguities that are put forward in students' assignments. If students are to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, the complexity and indeterminacy of the real world problems they will be invited to work with, can be more explicitly addressed. This requires structural empowerment of the teacher to be more than (just) a coach, as is sometimes suggested in problem based learning, but also a co-learner with an advanced and advantageous position.

The material facilitation of a learning environment that promotes playfulness would have to take students' autonomy and self-directedness to heart, that is: the alteration of the space in which students are invited to be playful, should not have punitive consequences. The paradox of intention and the paradox of spontaneity both contain an inherent risk of coercive play – where the consequence of choosing not to play equals failing a class or not receiving a passing grade. Alternatives to the playful approach have to be available. The invitation to play and to explore has to be an open one, to be met with an open mind of students or else freely refused. While students can learn to be playful, they cannot be forced to be playful, only invited. This does not mean playfulness cannot be facilitated, but the facilitation should ideally be formulated in such a way that it increases the likelihood of playfulness.

# DISCUSSION

The research reported in this thesis was entered into from a perspective that was part philosophy, part social sciences. It started from the wish to design a game that would allow a learner to experience the fun of philosophy as (reflection on) the act of thinking. From this wish arose an interest in playfulness as a starting point for philosophy, specifically playfulness in ordinary life. The connection between social order and self-management was not immediately apparent, but it is in the alteration of the routines of ordinary life that we are able to rescript our stories of self. As a result of taking this angle, the research started with a design approach instead of a systematic exploration of what has already been written by philosophers about play. In hindsight, starting with this exploration would have already highlighted the difference Sutton-Smith mentions between playfulness in literature versus playfulness in ordinary life and the extent to which those are perceived as acceptable or desirable. Some theoretical hiatuses in the opening chapters are unaccounted for – authors left undiscussed in the theoretical section that – in hindsight – would have deserved more attention, such as Geertz (1973), Spariosu (1989) and Winnicott (1971). The focus in the assignment of the second year would then have been on one of the two (text or interaction), creating perhaps more focus in the reports of the students and also more focus in the themes of the analysis.

Should anyone wish to follow up on these kinds of assignments, it would be interesting to distinguish more between types of playfulness and see what kind of expressions the assignments

afford. To put forward three possible approaches to this: a specifically narrative approach on the stories students tell about their playful experiences might shed light on the relationship between playfulness and identity construction (cf. De Mul, 2013). A performance related analysis, based on recent work in the field of performance studies and game would be interesting, as this would highlight the distinction Schechner (2002) makes between “is” and “as” performance: something that “is” technically and formally not a performance, can be seen “as” performance, as a result of a keying of the frame in which the activity takes place. This would shed light on the performance related elements of interaction (cf. Lobman & O’Neill, 2011). Another approach that might be interesting is a closer analysis of “things,” by contrasting Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton’s ‘The Meaning of Things’ (1981/2013) to Latour’s notion of things in ‘Reassembling The Social’ (Latour, 2007). This could provide an interesting framework for the functioning of playful artifacts in social relations and their subjective meaning in one’s identity and personal narrative.

As indicated in the section about the coding procedure, for analytical distinction, it would have been relevant to ask students to come up with examples that are not playful *and* creative, but that are either playful *or* creative, but not both. At the same time, this distinction is relevant only to those who uphold Csikszentmihalyi’s difference between “creative for me” and creative for a greater community. Some students attempt to assess their own originality; others are simply content with a small problem they solved. Interviews with the students would have enriched the data in the reports, in order to validate the interpretations made by the researcher. It would also have provided an interesting learning opportunity for them. In retrospect, it would also have been useful to ask students whether they considered themselves playful and whether they would like to be more playful. Moreover, other than defining playfulness, it would have been interesting to know what role playfulness plays in their lives. Answers to these questions would have served as a reference point with which to compare the outcome of the assignment. Since the data was originally not collected for the specific purposes for which they have been used in this thesis, by the time this realization dawned, most of these students had already graduated. At the same time, the relatively late analysis of these reports enabled an analysis based on more recent insights in playfulness. Since 2008, literature on the topic of

specifically playfulness boomed, allowing a wholly different analysis five years later compared to what the analysis would have been like had it been finalized in 2009.

With regards to the validity of the assignment as a research tool for analyzing playfulness, bias can easily occur when the researcher also assumes the role of teacher. There is a real chance of mixing up these two roles, resulting in a review of an essay as “a job well done” rather than a distanced analysis of the themes students present. The coding scheme helped in keeping an analytical distance towards the essays, but at the same time, it was difficult to keep “myself” separated from the assignment. Anonymizing the data in some cases did not prevent me from remembering who the student was that did a specific assignment, even if it had been five years ago since I read it. In addition, some of the pictures contained recognizable images of the students themselves. Since the total student population of our curriculum did not exceed 500 at the time and all of the second year students were in my research classes, I knew most of the second year students by name. Another difficulty is that the assignment was not developed to be purely used for research – it is not “just a test,” it contains things students need to learn about, thematically – on playfulness, creativity and innovation – as well as in terms of skills: writing a brief literature review, reporting an experience. This turned out to be something in which they have not had enough training – something that is now taken up in the overall school curriculum, but which leaves some assignments incomprehensible. Moreover, some but not all students picked up on the idea behind the assignment, while others misread what was expected of them. Some students were very critical - indicating they had not learned anything from it. When students were asked in their fourth year what they remembered from the assignment, some recalled it, but most students had completely forgotten about it. As such, the assignments reveal their thoughts about playfulness *at the time*. The constraints they mention are likely to be shared by at least some of their peers of other curricula, but the examples themselves and the specific references to Disney are mainly snapshots that cannot be generalized beyond the scope of this specific M&EM curriculum.

At the same time, with regards to the design function of the assignment ([Ch. 4](#)), the findings from these assignments did inform the game design process, particularly when it came to

the importance of ambiguity. They also provided a collection of examples to take inspiration from for the development of the assignments in the game. The TWYP assignment informed the assignments for the Media & You assignments. The latter assignments have been tested in two consecutive years and have been altered to fit within the game concept. Design challenges that are still open and that will have to be addressed in new iterations of the design process, are the extent to which the TYWP assignment and the other assignments succeeded in really making the philosophical aspects of the assignment image oriented, rather than word oriented. In the assignment, the introduction and the first steps to take often still begin with thoughts, rather than actions or images.

# NOTES



1. The concept can be requested by contacting the author. The concept serves as the overriding context within which this thesis is set. A test of its "effectiveness" is not yet part of this thesis. The concept has not been realized. After some consideration, we refrained from calling it a game, but chose to call it a playful learning environment.
2. Foucault suggests discipline as power in essence creates drones, but human agency can't be left out: "Rather, it is that Foucault's 'bodies' are not agents. Even the most rigorous forms of discipline presume that those subject to them are 'capable' human agents, which is why they have to be 'educated', whereas machines are merely designed" (Giddens, 1991 / 2013, Kindle Locations 3405-3407, p. 154). As Gauntlett (2002) summarizes: "Human agency and social structure are in a relationship with each other, and it is the repetition of the acts of individual agents which reproduces the structure. This means that there is a social structure - traditions, institutions, moral codes, and established ways of doing things; but it also means that these can be changed when people start to ignore them, replace them, or reproduce them differently" (in Gauntlett, 2002, p. 93).
3. He compares them to Wittgenstein's descriptions of children's play, more than often referred to chess metaphors. Drawing on Caillois' distinction between ludus and paidea (1961), Giddens can be said to take a paidiaic standpoint, where rules emerge, more than from the strictly structuring properties of any given system.
4. "Failing forward" is a term we borrowed from San Francisco's Mayor Gavin Newsom. In "Stories from the future", the theme of the New Yorker 2008 Conference, Newsom talked about the environmental policy of his city. At the end of the conference, Newsom used the phrase "failing forward" - by trial and error, the city was able to implement a revolutionary policy from which other cities could take an example. When he was asked about the sustainability of his approach to the environment in the city, he said: "we're not doing things perfect yet, but we're failing forward." The term made it into one of the reflection assignment, where students were invited to reflect on a situation in their lives where they messed up, but eventually were better for it.
5. This concerns both innovativeness as a skill in students (as future professionals) and innovativeness as output of creative processes (as marketable products and services).
6. Arrangement is defined as: "a collection of interventions which eventually have to lead to the achievement of the final outcome" (Andriessen, 2012, p.9, my translation).
7. At the same time, there is a component of *artistic* research as well (e.g. Nevejan, 2007), where design solutions are not only meant to solve a problem and create improvement, but to create beauty as well. Since play is deeply connected to aesthetics, the notion of aesthetics has informed the process of the research design, but it has not been articulated in more detail until the very end of the process. Introducing it here as a systematic approach would make things too complicated.
8. In fact, as Spink, (1994) argues, the moment new technologies are introduced, people will start using them for their own purposes, rather than what they were intended for. Rogers (1962) encountered this already in the diffusion of innovations, though at that time, this "appropriation" of new technologies was seen as "improper" use, rather than as behavior quite typical for *homo ludens*.
9. Lucero & Arrasvuori (2010) later created and tested a set of design cards of these 20 kinds of experiences and invited designers to work with them.
10. The other nine characteristics are:
  - 2) Wicked problems have no stopping rule
  - 3) Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad
  - 4) There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem
  - 5) Every solution to a wicked problem is a "one-shot operation"; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial-and-error, every attempt counts significantly

- 6) Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or an exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan
- 7) Every wicked problem is essentially unique
- 8) Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem
- 9) The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution
- 10) The planner has no right to be wrong (Rittel & Webber, 1973, pp. 161 - 166)
11. In the sense that the design of a country's educational system is informed by political choices, which in turn are informed by citizen's positions on the kind of society they would like to inhabit.
  12. The organization of higher education in the Netherlands is under close scrutiny of the Ministry of Education, as well as journalists and society at large (MinOCW, 2012; HBO Raad, 2012, Volkskrant, 2011). One University of Applied Sciences in The Netherlands was revealed to have a structural lack of proper examination in a number of Bachelor dissertations. As a result, a large scale investigation of the examination conditions of other UAS is taking place (during writing, 2012-2014) This situation is considered by some to be the culmination (and/or bad but only possible outcome) of a number of tensions in higher education today. The core tension exists between quality and quantity: the core indicator for quality in education – on which funding for teaching is based – is the output percentage of the number of students that graduate each year. This is expressed in the so-called "onderwijs-vraagfactor" (HBO Raad, 2012). But as the standards for graduation are altered to secure funding for the future, the same quality standards cannot be maintained. This places a significant responsibility in the hands of the teachers who are expected to maintain these standards, while they have little control over students' entry level and the deficits they may have as a result of system flaws earlier in the process of education.
  13. See Kangas (2009) for a review of what is required from teacher to guide students in exploring open-ended situations.
  14. 1) Innovatie is meer dan wetenschap en technologie en omvat ook ondernemerschap, commercialisatie en marketing, organisatie binnen en tussen bedrijven, diffusie en kennisoverdracht. 2) Innovatie is ontwikkeling van wat nog niet bestaat (exploratie) plus toepassing en verbetering van het bestaande (exploitatie) en de combinatie van de twee is een centrale uitdaging voor het innovatiebeleid op alle niveaus. 3) De dynamiek van exploitatie en exploratie vergt opening naar nieuwe gebieden, samenwerking binnen en tussen bedrijven, verrassing en onvoorspelbaarheid, en naar uitdagers. 4) Innovatie is voor een belangrijk deel fundamenteel onzeker, waardoor plan ning zeer beperkend kan zijn. Het gaat om de organisatie van het toeval en het faciliteren van creatieve destructie. 5) Diversiteit is cruciaal, en innovatie vergt waardering, stimulering en mobilisatie van diverse, verspreide, lokale kennis, ideeën en opvattingen. (WRR, 2008)
  15. This passage has been reworked from papers written for conferences on behalf of this research, see also: De Jong 2008, 2010)
  16. The five misunderstandings in case study research, according to Flyvbjerg (2006) are:
    - "(1) General, theoretical (context-independent) knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical (context-dependent) knowledge.
    - (2) One cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development.
    - (3) The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses; that is, in the first stage of a total research process, whereas other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building.
    - (4) The case study contains a bias toward verification, that is, a tendency to

confirm the researcher's preconceived notions.

(5) It is often difficult to summarize and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of specific case studies." (2006, p. 221)

17. Lee does differentiate explicitly between psychological and organizational case studies, as an organizational setting, more than a single individual allows for comparisons on multiple levels in a way that the study of a single individual does not (Lee, 1989).
18. A chain of evidence contains "explicit links among the questions asked, the data collected and the conclusions drawn".
19. Summative content analysis is different from method-driven content analysis though. Summative content analysis "is not an attempt to infer meaning, but, rather, to explore usage" (Hsieh & Shannon, p. 2005 1283).
20. It was excavated in the year 1814 and has been restored to its original state. The temple itself cannot be entered (it is a stupa), but the plateaus can be traversed.
21. This passage is derived and reworked from a section previously written for conference papers on behalf of this research. See also: De Jong 2008, 2010).
22. This passage is reworked from De Jong (2008).
23. "if by "play" we are trying to signal a *mode of human experience* [...] – a way of engaging with the world whatever one is doing – then we cannot simultaneously use it reliably as a label for a *form of distinct human activity* (something that allows us to differentiate categorically between activities that are play and those that are not)" (Malaby (2007, p. 5) paraphrasing Stevens (1980), emphasis in original).
24. In tribute to the authors he is indebted to the most (Huizinga, 1955; Spariosu, 1989 and Fagen, 1976), Sutton-Smith states that they have "wittingly or otherwise, contributed to our playful illusion that the time of the 'ludic turn' in Western culture is about to arrive" (1997). Though he calls this "ludic" turn an illusion in the acknowledgements, at the same time, he welcomes the ludic turn in literature as a match to "the aesthetic turn at the end of the eighteenth century. Where once art was at the center of moral existence, it now seems possible that play, given all its variable meanings, given the imaginary, will have that central role" (1997, p. 143-144).
25. cf. Hall (1992), Grossberg, Wartella & Whitney (1998), Ang (1985), Radway (1983), Van Zoonen (1994), Singhal & Rogers (1999) and Bouman (1999) for discussions about pop culture, Sutton-Smith (1997), Boellstorff (2006), Mayra (2008), Kücklich, (2004), Raessens & Goldstein (2005), Salen & Zimmerman (2004) and Ensslin (2012) for discussions about play and game studies.
26. Both ritual and play are considered to have this capacity to "make special" and yet they do so in different ways (cf. Huizinga, 1955; Turner, 1982; Handelman, 1974, 1977). Huizinga describes the intricate connection between play and ritual as "formally indistinguishable" (1955, p.20) and wonders about the lack of attention that anthropology and comparative theology have paid to these similarities: is the play form of rituals accompanied by a play mood and attitude? (1955, p. 20). Anthropology has caught up on this lack of attention (see: Norbeck, 1974, Turner, 1982, 1986; Malaby, 2008, Mäyra, 2008) and the study of the relationship between play and culture has gained more attention. This is especially so with the rise of computer games and the advent of virtual worlds, which confront researchers with new questions and urgent considerations regarding the justification of their respective fields (see: Malaby & Burke, 2009). Huizinga's perspective is considered romantic, elitist and also ethnocentric/Western (cf. Krul, 2006; Malaby, 2008; Deterding, 2013). And although many contest his specific definition of play, the underlying argumentation about the importance of aesthetics is a view on culture that receives ever more resonance from a number of fields that study symbolic action. As Deterding puts it: "the basic line of reasoning, that play is foundational for aesthetic practices, indeed for culture in the sense of symbolic action – chimes with evolutionary anthropology and aesthetics,

- developmental psychology, performance studies, and the anthropology of ritual and play”(Deterding, 2013, p. 141).
27. Caillois' definition of play is: “1. Free: in which playing is not obligatory; if it were, it would at once lose its attractive and joyous quality as diversion.  
2. Separate: circumscribed within limits of space and time, defined and fixed in advance.  
3. Uncertain: the course of which cannot be terminated, nor the result attained beforehand, and some latitude for innovations being left to the player's initiative.  
4. Unproductive: creating neither goods, nor wealth, nor new elements of any kind; and except for the exchange of property among the players, ending in a situation identical to that prevailing at the beginning of the game.  
5. Governed by rules: under conventions that suspend ordinary laws, and for the moment establish new legislation, which alone counts.  
6. Make-believe: accompanied by a special awareness of a second reality or of a free unreality, as against real life” (Caillois, 1961/2001, p. 9)
  28. One might say Marx' theory, with its focus on the material world of economy producing human experience, is one of the first theories to debunk the notion of human rationality. Yet, in Marxist thinking, there is a lot of attention for the life lived fully. As Henricks (2006) summarizes Marx's thought: “The human challenge is to be engaged actively and creatively throughout the day in a wide variety of ways (Henricks, 2006, p. 36) There is a Utopian element in Marxist thinking, where “history is ultimately a project of self realization, an attempt to make the changing relations of the world conform to a deeper logic. To be separated from this logic, to live a life that denies its very foundations, is the essence of yet another Hegelian concept: alienation” (Henricks, 2006; p. 3). Marx's notion of alienation however, steps away from Hegel's notion of 'spirit', and is connected to the relationship between man and his material world, especially the fruit of his own labor (Taylor, 1985).
  29. Though it is often interpreted as an element *in* culture (Krul, 2006) the English translator of the book states that though Huizinga may logically be correct, “as English prepositions are not governed by logic I have retained the more euphonious ablative in this subtitle” (1955, Translator's note).
  30. sub: under/in; specie – aspect / light / reference to seeing / viewing; ludi – genitive form, “of play”. Compare to sub specie aeternitatis – in the light of eternity / from the view of eternity / from the perspective of eternity).
  31. I consider gamification the intentional design and alteration of these spaces into play spaces, which is not the same as designing them for a playful experience (c.f Deterding et al., 2011).
  32. This is, epistemologically speaking what the correspondence theory of truth aimed for: finding a real world referent for all the elements of the language we use and believing that 'truth' (and language) correspond with reality. This is questioned in sociology, specifically Berger & Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality (1967), but more importantly in Symbolic Interactionism).
  33. That is, if we define a hammer by its designed functionality alone and not all the other uses we can think of (cf. Gaver, 2002, where he says: “Contrary to traditional thinking about interaction, ambiguity is an invaluable tool because it allows people to find their own meaning in uncertain situations. Used in design processes, concepts and products, ambiguity gives space for people to intermesh their own stories with those hinted at by technologies”).
  34. See section 3.4.6 for a discussion of rules – routines between people perpetuated over time also become rules – in the sense that they generate normative expectations that can become sources of unease when they are no longer met.
  35. Although Berger & Luckmann (1967) are more concerned with the circulation of knowledge in society – i.e. sociology of knowledge, than with the way everyday life is shaped – i.e. sociology of ordinary life (except when explicitly shaped by knowledge).

36. It is possible to argue that “gamification” runs a risk of being a fabrication, rather than a keying of a primary frame into a game frame. On the other hand, a gamified version of something affords the player – as that will still be what it is - to determine him-or herself to “complete” the ingredients (cook, if one will) into a game or not, depending of the attitude of play/game? Deterding et al. state: “It is not possible to determine whether a given empirical system ‘is’ a gamified application or a game” without taking recourse to either the designers’ intentions or the user experiences and enactments” (Deterding et al., 2011, p. 6).
37. “The game frame is the total mesh of actors and their dispositions, objects and settings and their features, actions, communications, events, and experiences that reproduces- and-changes their perceivably similar co-occurrence as situations of gaming or gameful keying across space and time.” “The play frame is that total mesh with regard to situations of playing and playful keying. Playlike interactions are configurations that incidentally facilitate a playful keying [...] Playful interactions are configurations intentionally designed to facilitate a playful keying. Playful keying is the process in which actors with their environment frame a situation as playful” (Deterding, 2013, p. 235).
38. Deterding (2013) uses the words gameful and playful to denote the keying, and gamelike/playlike to denote the material setup (stoplight, bikes) affording such a keying.
39. Although some independent art games do aim to establish a meaningful ontological disruption of some sort - but often this happens within an artistic framework, which does not stand outside of “reason.”
40. As Giddens states, in reference to the “experiments in trust” performed by Garfinkel: “Because the deviant responses or acts that Garfinkel instructed his ‘experimenters’ to perform disturbed the sense of ontological security of the ‘subjects’ by undermining the intelligibility of discourse” (1984, loc. 953).
41. He does not discuss this literally, although he does discuss play, rules, the play like character of rules, he mentions Caillois.
42. He defines “Reflexive Monitoring of action” as “The purposive, or intentional, character of human behavior, considered within the flow of activity of the agent; action is not a string of discrete acts, involving an aggregate of intentions, but a continuous process”. Reflexive self-regulation as: “Causal loops which have a feedback effect in system reproduction, where that feedback is substantially influenced by knowledge which agents have of the mechanisms of system reproduction and employ to control it”.
43. Although it does deviate on some counts, Goffman’s is more multi-layered: we can play at playing. Also: Bateson is largely psychologically oriented, whereas Goffman places play specifically inside people’s heads AND in their interactions. I.e.: frames organize experiences - and the organization of experiences is not only a matter of subjective presence, but also part of a collective, shared understanding about the way in which we should define the situations we are in.
44. Animals and humans alike are capable of playing. The play of animals, though not verbal, is meta-communicative as well. Yet, some forms of play are only witnessed in humans: rule based play. As Deterding (2013) puts it: “Humans are among the most playful species, and show two unique forms of play: strong symbolic, sociodramatic or pretend play (which is otherwise present in only basic forms in other higher primates), and rule play involving pre-defined and not spontaneously renegotiable rules, which has no counterpart in other species” (Deterding, 2013, p. 138).
45. For Mead, not contextuality but reflexivity was the key to understanding symbolic action (see: Deterding, 2013). Especially important in symbolic interactionism is the deviation from “mere subjective experience” by presenting our sense of self and the meaning we attribute to the world around us as *a result of our interactions with others* (hence the term: symbolic interactionism). Even in solitary play, we still seem engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the

- world around us. Some neurologists claim our brains are involved in a constant chatter, in the (creative) process of making sense of our world (as mentioned in Sutton-Smith, 1997, p. 146)
46. This matches both the rhetoric of play as progress as well as that of play as imagination. Sutton-Smith is critical of this position however, arguing that adults have a tendency to explain the play behavior of children in terms of the future purpose of this behavior. This neglects the erratic and irrational elements that are part of children's play: "Paradoxically children, who are supposed to be the players among us, are allowed much less freedom for irrational, wild, dark, or deep play in Western culture than are adults, who are thought not to play at all" (1997, p. 151).
  47. "It is only for socialised human adults who have acquired primary frames and social meanings for all situations and objects of their everyday life that engaging playfully with any non-toy object or non-playing situation (like juggling pencils in a meeting) is a spontaneous keying of those primary meanings and framings" (2013, p. 138).
  48. Deterding disagrees with the way Bateson and Goffman summarized all play under "pretend play" because "by far not all animal and human childhood play is pretend play that transforms a source activity in the frame analytic sense. [...] It is only for socialized human adults who have acquired primary frames and social meanings for all situations and objects of their everyday life that engaging playfully with any non-toy object or non-playing situation (like juggling pencils in a meeting) is a spontaneous keying of those primary meanings and framings" (Deterding, 2013, p. 138).
  49. The fact that rules are general "is not to say that the individual can formulate the general terms upon request; ordinarily an act of deviance or an act of notable conformance is required before he can demonstrate a competency to make judgments as if geared by a rule" (Goffman 1971: 97).
  50. Practical consciousness is defined as: "What actors know (believe) about social conditions, including especially the conditions of their own action, but cannot express discursively; no bar of repression, however, protects practical consciousness as is the case with the unconscious" (1991, loc. 7574). Discursive consciousness is defined as: "What actors are able to say, or to give verbal expression to, about social conditions, including especially the conditions of their own action; awareness which has a discursive form" (1984, loc. 7573).
  51. Research into ordinary conversations, for instance, shows that we often smile during conversations, but we are not aware of the smiles, or the number of smiles during a conversation. We can indicate whether or not we found a conversation pleasant. But we can also train ourselves to smile more during conversations, in order to consciously create more pleasant conversations with others. This demonstrates both the fluctuating line, as much as it demonstrates the reflexive project of the self, in the sense that we consult experts and self help books containing a vast body of knowledge on how to be a better self, an ongoing project of potential self improvement.
  52. Turner says in "Brain, Body, Culture" (1986): "You may have guessed that play is, for me, a liminal or liminoid mode, essentially interstitial, betwixt-and-between all standard taxonomic nodes, essentially 'elusive'--a term derived from the Latin *ex* for 'away' plus *ludere*, 'to play'; hence the Latin verb *eludere* acquired the sense of 'to take away from someone at play, thus 'to cheat' or 'to deceive.'"
  53. Social ground rules always come with expectable spectra and forms of deviation from a rule. What is key here is that Goffman sees deviations of the rules as affirmations of the rule nonetheless. "People in everyday life do not so much plainly execute rules than employ routine practices of relating to rules, including practices of deviation. The ultimate epistemic and moral constraint that remains is that the existence of the rule be mutually acknowledged in the course" (Deterding's paraphrase of Goffman 1971; xi-xii).
  54. This is similar to the labile nature that Huizinga's describes as a characteristic of play: "The play-mood is labile in its very nature. At any moment 'ordinary life'

- may reassert its rights either by an impact from without, which interrupts the game, or by an offence against the rules, or else from within, by a collapse of the play spirit, a sobering, a disenchantment” (1955, p. 21).
55. Skard & Bundy (2008) later added the importance of “frames” to their model of playfulness. “Framing seems somewhat more difficult to explain than the other elements of playfulness, perhaps because giving and reading cues are so much a part of culture that knowledge of them is tacit: only their impairment or absence is obvious. Furthermore, social cues may involve affective processing as much as cognitive” (2008, p.74).
  56. Although it is common to make a distinction between *constitutive* rules and *regulative* rules, Giddens implies that constitutive rules – the rules that define the nature of an activity or a social engagement – bring notions of sanctions along with them (regulative rules). And regulative rules would be meaningless if they did not also have a constitutive component to them.
  57. The strongest form of sanctioning is that of the rules of law, but these formal rules do not create what Goffman calls “the interaction order.”
  58. This is currently changing: several architectural designs and designs for urban spaces, take *homo ludens* as their design principle. Deterding proposes the term “playlike interactions” (following Goffman’s gamelike interactions to designate: “The material configuration of objects that ‘serendipitously afford a playful keying’ (without designed intent)” (Deterding, 2013, p. 234).
  59. This section is derived from a section previously written for a conference paper on this research. See: De Jong, 2010.
  60. Suits takes the lusory attitude as constitutive of gaming. It would be possible here, to state that the proposed difference between playing and gaming solves this potential difference between a playful attitude and a lusory attitude. The lusory attitude then belongs to gaming, the playful attitude to playing. But that does not resolve “playful play” yet, nor does it help understand when playfulness is simply in alignment with a play frame or when it’s a play with that frame.
  61. Passages in this section are retrieved or reworked from papers written for conferences on behalf of this research, see also: De Jong, 2010.
  62. for those who claim there is no magic circle to be found empirically, I agree. Neither is Utopia.
  63. Note that creativity is approached here from a cognitive angle only. See section 3.6.
  64. The thirteen pleasures are: creation, exploration, discovery, difficulty, competition, danger, captivation, sensation, sympathy, simulation, fantasy, camaraderie, and subversion (2007, p. 79).
  65. To wit: “active, adventurous, aggressive, attention-seeking, clowns around, cheerful, cooperative, coordinated, creative, curious, disruptive, domineering, emotional, energetic, expressive, fearful, friendly, funny, happy, humorous, imaginative, impulsive, independent, inhibited, intelligent, jokes or teases, nonconforming, open-minded, outgoing, relaxed, reserved, restless, self-confident, sensitive, serious, shy, silly, sociable, spontaneous, talkative, unpredictable, unusual”
  66. Results suggest that tolerance for ambiguity may be an important variable to assess and train so that students are better prepared for unstructured elements of a course that promote critical thinking and parallel the complexities of the applied world (Deroma, Martin & Kessler, 2003, abstract).
  67. It is considered symptomatic of Western culture, with its focus on individual accomplishments, that “we” believe one individual can make a big difference through individual effort and discipline, while neglecting the surrounding requirements, from something as difficult to pinpoint as “zeitgeist” to wider organizational support and recognition. (see: Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Taylor, 1989; Sutton-Smith, 1997).
  68. Een van de belangrijkste machines in ons dagelijkse leven is de computer, daarover waren we ons eens. We hebben nagedacht over de volgende vragen:

Welke rol speelt de computer in ons dagelijkse leven en waarvoor gebruiken we de computer eigenlijk? [...] Het computer is eigenlijk een machine die het werk van de mens gemakkelijker maakt. [...] De computer speelt een grote rol in ons sociale leven, icq, skype, hotmail en een groot aantal forums zijn een voorbeeld hiervan. Nadat we goed nagedacht hadden over de rol van de computer hadden we plotzelijk een soort ingeving: de computer is de nieuwe beste vriend van de mens!

69. Het heeft ons echter wel aan het denken gezet. Waarom zien wij de wereld zoals die is? Waarom denken we van tevoren al dat cola lekker is (een zwart drankje in een plastic flesje), waarom is het zo lastig om 'out-of-the-box' te denken? Worden wij zo weinig gestimuleerd creatief te denken? Of is dat soms gewoon te lastig in onze haastige wereld vol zekerheden en zaken die al van tevoren vaststaan.
70. "En ik probeer misschien nog steeds te veel terug te vallen op serieuze kwesties zoals het milieu. Toch vind ik dat het moeilijk is, om gedwongen speels naar "de wereld" te kijken. Dit gaf ik toen ook al aan. Ik denk dat doordat dit gedwongen speelsheid en creativiteit, de uitingen ook minder speels zijn, dan wanneer ze zomaar in iemand opkomen, spontaan."
71. These numbers themselves do not mean anything, but can serve for later reference, should the data set be made available for review after the time constraint is lifted on the reports (2017).
72. We kwamen na deze filosofie er achter dat wij ons soms als een koe op de werkplek voelden omdat we maar dom stukken zaten te typen, terwijl we zelf het idee hadden dat we daar niks mee opschoten. We waren dus wederom niet echt iets aan het doen toen we op het idee kwamen dat we soms niet echt zinnige opdrachten voor school aan het doen zijn.
73. For instance, most of them read an essay called "De Spelende Mens: Over Volwassen worden in de Publieke Sfeer" ("The Playing Human: About Growing Up in the Public Sphere" by Aupers (2006). From this essay, they might copy a reference to the work of Mead, without grasping the full meaning of the reference.
74. Mensen worden vaak geprogrammeerd. We staan 's ochtends op, we doen ons taken overdag en gaan 's avonds bijna allemaal weer braaf naar huis.
75. Vroeger toen je nog een kind was herkende je het goede en het slechte deed je niets. De wereld was mooi en je maakte je nergens druk om.
76. "Tijdens onze reis door de wereld, hebben we veel foto's gemaakt en gedachtes vastgelegd".
77. "Het kan ook iets simpels zijn als de zon, die er voor het eerst weer is na lange grauwe winterdagen."
78. Een persoon die geen affiniteit met muziek of instrumenten heeft, zou misschien niet de gitaar oppakken. Deze persoon zou bijvoorbeeld eerder het bed netjes maken, omdat netheid belangrijker voor hem is dan muziek.
79. Speelsheid moet niet alleen te maken hebben met het kind zijn, het kan ook een passie zijn met een speelse invloed. Bij het koken kun je je creativiteit en individualiteit met elkaar combineren. Op deze manier kun je leuke composities creëren die er speels uitzien en uitstralen.
80. Door het gebruik van media denk ik toch dat de speelsheid voor een groot deel afneemt omdat je ook veel minder vrijheid hebt dan wanneer je je eigen speelsheid aan het bod laat komen, want daarmee kan je de vrije tijd indelen en is dat niet afhankelijk van een reeks levels.
81. Kinderen creëren ook op de computer een eigenbelevenis wereld en maken eigen verhalen in hun hoofd. Het hoeft soms niet eens de opdracht te zijn om je helemaal in te leven op een manier dat de maker bedoeld. Meestal heeft elk kind een andere belevenis bij de duizenden spellen die er zijn.
82. Wanneer mediagebruik wel speels is; ik denk dat je dan toch echt bij de ontwerpprogramma's terecht komt zoals Picasa en Photoshop. Daar kan de persoon zijn of haar eigen gevoelens en emoties in kwijt en ook vooral veel creativiteit in uitten.

83. Speelsheid heeft duidelijk de hedendaagse telefoonproductie beïnvloedt. Het bedenken van nieuwe functies kan men zien als innovatie op het gebied van telefonie. Deze innovatie is niet zomaar ontstaan. Speelsheid zorgt ervoor dat je in een ander wereld terecht komt, die anders is dan de 'echte' wereld. Je gaat ook dingen anders zien en vanaf een ander denkkader denken. Voornamelijk het laatste bevordert de creativiteit enorm. En via die creativiteit, ontstaan er nieuwe ideeën of opvattingen.
84. Er speelt geen fantasie mee in, het gaat alleen om ontspannen en ontvluchten. [...] Het is en blijft vrijwillig, maar moet je zelf niks meer doen dan knopjes drukken. Je wordt geanimeerd. Je moet zelf niet meer nadenken, wat je wanneer gaat doen. Je communiceert niet meer met elkaar. Aankijken hoeft ook niet meer. De beeldscherm is het belangrijkste punt waar iedereen naar kijkt.
85. In tegenstelling tot 50 jaar geleden spelen kinderen veel meer binnen en op elektronisch speelgoed. Optimisten denken dat dit goed is voor de kinderen omdat het ervoor zorgt dat de kinderen een groter probleem oplossend vermogen verkrijgen en dat het zelfs kan leiden tot een hoger IQ. Pessimisten beweren echter dat deze innovaties ervoor zorgen dat de kinderen hun beeldingsvermogen verliezen. De kinderen krijgen nu allemaal karakters en verhalen voorgeschoteld, terwijl kinderen vroeger nog hun eigen avonturen bedachten. Dus speelsheid hoeft niet altijd positief te zijn.
86. Speelsheid zit onbewust in de mens, wij denken dat dit dus geactiveerd moet worden. Soms zijn mensen speels zonder dat ze het door hebben of soms ligt het op de loer en moeten ze net even de drempel over.
87. Dit beoogt dus dat de speelsheid niet perse in een persoon zit maar ook naar boven gehaald kan worden door de omgeving. De medewerkers op het Google hoofdkantoor zijn creatiever dan de gemiddelde kantoorduif. Speelsheid en creativiteit heeft dus wel in zekere zin een verband met elkaar. Maar zouden we nou alle kantoren speels in moeten gaan richten hopen op productievare, vrolijke werknemers?
88. Door deze verandering van omgeving kan er nieuwe inspiratie worden opgedaan. Hierin werkt de situatie mee aan de speelsheid van de mens.
89. Mensen zeggen vaak geen inspiratie te hebben als iets even niet lukt. Dit is in feite een fabel aangezien inspiratie overal om je heen is. Alles kan als inspiratiebron dienen. Vaak komt deze inspiratie door bepaalde zaken te voelen, proeven, zien etc. tot personen. Eigenlijk vormt alle informatie die de zintuigen waarnemen als bron voor inspiratie (2009, r. 64).
90. Mensen zullen sneller een goed humeur krijgen door de mooie dingen die ze zien. En omdat de beelden als effect hebben dat men terug denkt aan de jeugd, zullen de mensen allemaal speelser worden. De wereld zal dan dus meer een speelveld zijn. (2009, r. 73)
91. Door inspiratie uit de omgeving, materiaal, mensen en informatie te halen en deze eigen te maken door te beleven, te voelen, te denken en er een betekenis aan te geven en dit uit te beelden ontstaat speelsheid. Door dit te doen beïnvloedt je de omgeving weer waardoor een vicieuze cirkel ontstaat.
92. A word query on "not normal" revealed 7 uses of this word combination (2008, r.124, r.134; 2009, r. 58, r.79, r. 85, r. 87, r.93) in relation to positive examples: things one might encounter that are not normal and because of that they are to be appreciated.
93. Het kan ook zijn dat jouw speelse manier van werken tegen de ethische regels in gaan. Iedereen heeft zijn eigen manier van werken en als jij graag in je blote kont over de kop wilt hangen thuis besef je natuurlijk wel dat andere collega's dit niet zo doen. Je gaat eigenlijks in tegen de normen en waarden en kunnen deze het proces verstoren.
94. Voor veel mensen is het echter moeilijk om deze speelsheid naar buiten te laten komen door alle regels, wetten en gewoontes waar men in de huidige maatschappij aan gebonden is. Daarom is creativiteit een nodige vaardigheid om tot nieuwe inzichten te komen. (2009, r. 62).

95. Een buitenstaander moet ervan op de hoogte zijn dat elk deel van deze wereld zijn eigen regels, wetten en gewoonten heeft. Hierdoor worden de mogelijkheden om creatief te zijn beïnvloed. Wanneer je begrensd wordt door regels en dergelijke, zal het erg moeilijk zijn om binnen deze grenzen creatief te zijn.
96. Als iemand in het verkeer speels beweegt, wordt dit als roekeloos rijgedrag omschreven. Wat weer expres het opzoeken van risico's is. En dat mag niet volgens de regels. Dus ook in dit geval wordt het speelse onderdrukt door een beperking, een beperking van regels.
97. Als je als volwassen persoon speelse ideeën uit, komt dit al snel over als kinderachtig of in sommige gevallen asociaal. Men denk al snel vanuit een ander persoon en hoe die over jouw gedrag zal oordelen. Dit levert een dermate beperking op dat wij als volwassenen in veel gevallen onze speelsheid onderdrukken.
98. We zijn tijdens ons onderzoek veel grappige, schokkerende, leuke en vreemde uitingen van speelsheid tegen gekomen. Het belangrijkste wat we door dit onderzoek geleerd hebben, is dat speelsheid voor iedereen is en veel kan bijdragen aan ieders leven. Dus schaam je niet en ga er op uit.
99. Uiteindelijk moet deze emotie er toch wel uit. Wat je regelmatig tegenkomt is dat mensen onder invloed van alcohol of chemische middelen, wel speelse emoties tonen. Helaas gaat dit vaak ongecontroleerd zodat er gênante situaties kunnen ontstaan. Wat ver van creativiteit staat.
100. Volwassenen bezitten ergens ook wel degelijk speelsheid. Veelal wordt speelsheid echter ondergesneeuwd door alle serieuze activiteiten die we (moeten) ondernemen en de sociale rollen die wij aan moeten nemen, met het daarbij behorende wenselijke gedrag. Hierdoor wordt ons vaak de kans ontnomen om totaal onszelf te zijn en daarbij aan onze speelsheid over te geven.
101. Spel is verschoven van kinderspel naar een soort volwassen spel, zoals videogames.
102. Dit verschil zit hem in de mate van verantwoordelijkheid, ervaring en relativering niveau. Andersom gezien, de mate van fantasie, passie en onbezorgdheid (2009, r.82).
103. Op de derde foto zie je een bouwvakker die aan het werk is. Hij heeft een schep in zijn hand en je ziet een graafmachine. Een schep wordt ook vaak gebruikt op het strand door kinderen. De kinderen zijn dan vaak dingen aan het bouwen en graven. Deze bouwvakker zou dus aan het spelen kunnen zijn op deze plek. Wat hij graaft, dat kun je niet goed zien. De plek is als het ware zijn speeltuin.
104. In iedereen zit nog het innerlijke kind, niemand zal ooit verleren hoe die moet spelen. Net als met fietsen zul je dat altijd kunnen blijven doen. Toch blijft een mens wel zijn hele leven fietsen, maar niet spelen.
105. Volwassenen zijn ook de hele dag bezig met speelsheid. Neem bijvoorbeeld een grapje op het werk, een potje tennis of even het gas van je auto iets verder intrappen terwijl je totaal geen haast heeft om thuis te komen (2009, r.100)
106. Onderzoek naar speelsheid bij volwassenen is moeilijker te onderzoeken, omdat speelsheid bij hen niet zichtbaar is. En speelsheid kan bij hen als kinderachtig worden beschouwd. (2009, r.61).
107. Volwassenen laten niet merken dat ze fantaseren en stellen minder vragen. Dit omdat ze denken dat ze zich dan belachelijk maken met bepaalde vragen, ze proberen binnen het referentiekader te blijven. Hierdoor blijven denkbarrières in stand (2009, r.66).
108. Vroeger toen je nog een kind was herkende je het goede en het slechte deed je niets. De wereld was mooi en je maakte je nergens druk om. Wou je iets doen dan deed je dat, (tot op zekere hoogte) je hoefde niet met allerlei verschillende zaken rekening te houden maar kon zorgeloos te werk gaan. Tegenwoordig ben je een volwassen persoon met heel veel verantwoordelijkheden. Er zijn een heleboel zaken die je eigenlijk tegenhouden om het kind in jezelf te vinden.

109. In Dutch, the students use the word “de overgang”, which is commonly used to indicate ‘menopause’. It seems students mix up menopause and midlife crisis. In this translation the word transition is used.
110. Bij volwassen mensen wordt speelsheid ook wel gezien als iets waardoor ze zich weer jong voelen. Ze willen onvoorspelbaar zijn en zich zo weer kind voelen. Op een bepaalde leeftijd wordt dit ook wel de overgang genoemd. Over het algemeen komen de ouderen in een soort ontkenningfase waarin ze niet met oud gesuggereerd willen worden. Om zichzelf jonger te voelen gaan ze vaak nieuwe kleren kopen, een nieuwe auto en als het mee zit een nieuwe vriend of vriendin die het liefste 20 jaar jonger is (2009, r.84).
111. Speelsheid komt naar voren als mensen in bepaalde situaties hun emoties over hun gedrag laten bestemmen. Speelsheid is meestal positief voor mensen, omdat ze in deze situaties genieten van hun gedrag (2009, r. 67).
112. Hierbij valt op, dat mensen, die zich zelf speels noemen, ook het gedrag van anderen vaker speels noemen dan dat ze hetzelfde gedrag raar vinden. Mensen die eerder conservatief zijn schudden sneller hun hoofd als ze iets “speels” zien. Men vergelijkt dus eigenlijk het gedrag van andere mensen met hun eigen gedrag en zijn eigen normen en waarden.
113. We kwamen erachter dat het voor volwassenen moeilijk is om zichzelf speels te noemen. Noem je jezelf speels als volwassene, dan zeg je volgens ons eigenlijk dat je geen volwaardige volwassene bent. Aan de andere kant, als je zegt dat je niet speels bent, wordt je geassocieerd met een saai en serieus persoon.
114. Om zo te kunnen denken moet je kunnen denken als een kind en de wereld zien alsof er geen regels en gedragcodes zijn. Alsof je alles voor het eerst ziet en je overal bij bedenkt wat iets is en waarvoor het is. Om op zo'n manier te denken moet je instaat zijn om (tijdelijk) volledig in deze wereld op te gaan en de reële wereld te vergeten (2008, r. 133).
115. Het is interessant om bijvoorbeeld eens te kijken naar het creatieve denkvermogen van een baby of peuter, ervan uitgaande dat deze nog niet beïnvloed is door de maatschappij waardoor hij of zij speelsheid zou onderdrukken. (2009, r. 62)
116. De drang naar carrière, het verlangen naar een goed inkomen later. Dit uit zich in constant daar me bezig te zijn. Opleiding en de toekomst zijn tegenwoordig een enorm belangrijke factor. (2009, r.95)
117. De mensen hebben weinig tijd voor zichzelf. (2009, r. 58) and We hebben het allemaal druk, racen door het leven heen, en balen al als we een paar minuten op een bestelling moeten wachten. (2009, r.70); Mensen hebben het druk, zijn gestrest en hebben een druk leven. Ze hebben geen tijd meer om om zich heen te kijken. Daardoor worden veel mooie aspecten uit het leven gemist. (2009, 149)
118. Je ziet de mensen winkelen, maar niemand die ontspannen om zich heen kijkt. De vogel geeft aan dat de wereld soms vogelvlug gaat en mensen in onze samenleving gehaast leven. De vergrootglas toont aan dat altijd alles groots wordt bekeken. Zo kunnen ook mensen zich bekeken voelen, meer in het gevoel van het op een voetstuk geplaatst worden. Mensen kijken naar iemand op die ‘groot’ is omdat die persoon bijvoorbeeld een geweldige carrière heeft en een flinke status. De combinatie met de verwachtingen en haast die mensen hebben in ons groot zakenwereldje, straalt zich uit in door middel van de vogel en het vergroten van verwachtingen via een toekijkende vergrootglas. (2009, r.88)
119. Tegenwoordig hebben de kinderen een drukke dag. Ze komen niet naar huis een hebben vrije tijd om te spelen, ze moeten afspraken volgen. Zelfs kleine kinderen moeten een instrument leren en sporten. Dit het liefste iedere dag. Er komt steeds meer huiswerk op de kinderen neer en dan is het logisch dat de kinderen zich te sterk belasterd voelen en zich in een andere wereld terug trekken. In een wereld waar zij het tempo zelf kunnen bepalen, waar zij weten wat gebeurd en waar zij zich begrepen voelen.

120. Speelsheid en de beleveniseconomie waar we tegenwoordig in leven gaan hand in hand met elkaar samen. De beleveniseconomie wordt gevormd door de speelsheid waar de mens continu naar op zoek is. Dit zie je terug in alles wat er om je heen gebeurt. Met name reclame maakt van deze wetenschap dankbaar gebruik.
121. Speelsheid zie je overal terug in de maatschappij tegenwoordig. Laten we hyves eens als grote voorbeeld noemen. Wie had ooit gedacht dat iedereen met elkaar zou gaan krabbelen en tikken? Alleen de benamingen zeggen al genoeg: speelsheid leeft. Het is leuk, grappig en tevens erg multimediaal.
122. De foto geeft aan dat je als student soms opgesloten zit op school, net zoals in een gevangenis. Dat is in het echt natuurlijk niet zo, het is maar een grapje.
123. Volwassenen creëren geen fantasiewereld, of ze laten dit niet merken aan de buitenwereld. Ze blijven hierdoor binnen een bestaand referentiekader en houden op deze manier hun denkbarrières in stand. Ons onderwijssysteem, een systeem waarin alleen goed en fout bestaat, helpt mee dit kader te creëren.
124. Op scholen wordt je geleerd volwassen te zijn en dit gaat niet samen met speelsheid.
125. Ook op basisscholen willen de docenten nog wel eens gebruik maken van onderzoekend leren op een speelse manier. Door kinderen ergens in te betrekken en ze bijvoorbeeld wiskunde te leren door middel van puzzelachtige spellen dan vinden ze het zo leuk dat je steeds een lever hoger zou kunnen (2009, r. 63).
126. Wij vinden het jammer dat door het huidige onderwijssysteem op basisscholen kinderen worden geleerd om niet buiten het referentiekader te denken. Als de basisscholen dit nu wel gingen doen, zouden er veel meer creatieve mensen bestaan. Ook zouden er meer problemen opgelost worden en meer innovatie plaatsvinden.
127. Naast het journaal en andere informatieve programma's zijn er ook programma's die de speelsheid in de consument kunnen oproepen. Als de consument door de media zijn of haar interpretatie van bepaalde uitspraken, kunstvormen en gedragingen kan verrijken door een andere kijk naar de wereld, dan kan er worden gesteld dat de media speels is.
128. Ook in de media worden veel speelse elementen gebruikt, dit wordt gebruikt om de consument te prikkelen en tot denken aan te zetten.
129. Zoals al eerder werd genoemd, is speelsheid niet alleen maar voor de kinderen, maar worden ouderen ook steeds meer speelser. De media heeft hier veel aandeel in gehad. Denk bijvoorbeeld aan games. [...]De media speelt in met de speelsheid van de mens maar de media speelt ook met de speelsheid van de mens en maakt daar gebruik van. (2009, r. 154).
130. Als de nieuwsgierigheid van gebruikers in de media gecombineerd wordt met technologie, leidt dit tot innovatieve vormen van mediagebruik met een open en speelse samenwerking, kritische houdingen en nieuwe ideeën.
131. Dergelijke situaties ziet men veel in het geautomatiseerde (fabrieks)werk en dergelijke. Hierbij zijn de handeling dusdanig gestandaardiseerd en volgens patronen opgesteld dat het over het algemeen niet gewaardeerd wordt dat iemand daar een eigen interpretatie aan geeft en op basis daarvan anders te werk gaat.
132. Als hij het zou begrijpen zou hij hieruit een conclusie kunnen trekken dat de mens zich te beperkt voelt, en dat we slechts bezig zijn met gevaar en verboden, druk en verplichtingen en dat we wellicht meer tijd mogen besteden aan onze vrije keuze.
133. Het kantoor is een plek voor regels, procedures en automatisme. De mens werkt en doet veelal hetzelfde. Routine is een veelvoorkomend iets op kantoor en dit is gevaarlijk. Routine dood creativiteit en eet motivatie!
134. Het overgrote deel van de menigte gaat hierin mee en volgt het systeem zonder te klagen of zich af te vragen waarom. We zijn als het ware maar kleine pionnetjes en in het grote beeld stellen we eigenlijk weinig voor. Toch maken we ons allemaal druk, we moeten dit, we moeten dat! Wanneer alles op een

- meer speelsere manier zou worden bekeken, zou er een grote last van je schouders vallen.
135. De gevoelens en herinneringen van mensen aan een gebeurtenis zijn erg belangrijk en de manier waarop mensen reageren op een gebeurtenis terwijl deze gebeurt. Deze gevoelens, herinneringen en reacties moeten positief zijn om te kunnen concluderen dat iets speels is geweest.
  136. Angst is de grote tegenhanger van speelsheid. Angst voor het feit dat het leven slechter kan ondanks het feit dat het voor veel mensen al een vrij beperkt leven is door te wennen aan alles wat veilig voelt. Deze angst blokkeert de speelsheid die zo belangrijk is voor mensen.
  137. Wanneer je dat weet te bereiken kun je volgens ons de wereld als je speelbal zien. Je kunt alles gebruiken voor je uitingen, je bent niet bang om iets nieuws te verzinnen en je weet creatief met je omgeving om te springen. Dan ben je volgens ons speels, en dan kom je met innovatieve ideeën.
  138. Naast deze factoren kan het ook zijn dat je zelf je eigen belemmering bent. Je kunt een gevoel van schaamte hebben als jij met een creatief/speels idee komt opdruiven, en je groepsleden nemen je niet helemaal serieus. Je zult dit dan niet voor een tweede keer doen.
  139. Het is interessant te herkennen dat als je jouw ogen maar wijd genoeg openend, dat er overal leuke dingen te zien zijn. Je moet wakker zijn, en open staan! En met fantasie kan uit alles iets leuks worden.
  140. Het derde oog zogezegd. Zo objectief mogelijk kijken en vervolgens alles wat je om je heen ziet opnieuw definiëren.
  141. Eigenlijk bepaald een individu zelf of er bij hem/haar sprake is van speelsheid aangezien dit wordt bepaald door de persoonlijkheid.
  142. Het van te voren niet is vast te stellen wat de speelsheid van de mens in welke situatie dan ook losmaakt. Ook voor de betreffende persoon is het van te voren niet duidelijk hoe hij zich zal gedragen in een bepaalde situatie. Ook kan een persoon zijn speelsheid voor een bepaald element niet ontdekken, in een situatie waar dit element niet aanwezig is.
  143. Iets dat speels is valt te herkennen door lef en tegenstellingen. Over grenzen gaan, iets dat nog niet af is op de markt brengen en zaken veranderen die vanzelfsprekend zijn of juist niet zijn voorbeelden van hoe men speels om kan gaan met zaken (2009, r. 64).
  144. Maar naar onze mening bestaat iemand niet uit een persoon, je wordt gedeeltelijk gevormd en door ontwikkeling vervagen sommige aspecten van je persoonlijkheid. Ontwikkelingen zorgen voor verandering in perspectief, verandering in mogelijkheden (2009, r. 95).
  145. Als kind is alles nog mogelijk, je wordt later piloot of een brandweerman. Dagdromend over later hoe het zal zijn, niet wetend welke veranderingen hij of zij zal ondergaan. Later is alleen de tijd die vooruit is gegaan, jij als persoon met je blik op de wereld zal toch hetzelfde blijven? Dit is helaas niet de werkelijkheid, te veel beperkingen treden op waardoor de mogelijkheden opeens veel geringer worden.
  146. We denken niet "out of the box" maar hebben juist een beperkte gedachtegang. "Dat lukt nooit!" "Dat is helaas niet voor mij weggelegd!" zijn uitspraken die je vaak hoort. Mensen zien niet dat eigenlijk alles mogelijk is in deze wereld zolang je er maar in gelooft (2009, r.95).
  147. Wie bepaalt waneer er sprake is van speelsheid? Als deze vraag op deze manier gesteld zou worden zou iedereen geloven dat er mensen zijn die bepalen of er sprake is van speelsheid. Maar is het niet zo dat speels zijn getuigt van het feit dat iedereen speels zou kunnen zijn? In deze wedervraag ligt het antwoord.
  148. Maar sommige mensen, of op sommige momenten blijkt het toch dat ze speels zijn. Speels is dus een uiting van onbezorgdheid en zelfverzekerdheid. Er is namelijk zelfverzekerdheid nodig als je activiteiten doet dat eigenlijk als kinderachtig wordt beschouwd.
  149. Als media op een creatieve en fantasie rijke manier worden gebruikt om

- mensen aan het denken te zetten, kan er worden gezegd dat het speels is. De media is eigenlijk een uitstekend middel om de mensen op een andere manier naar dingen te laten kijken. Zo kan een documentaire naast informatie verschaffen, ook de kijk op dingen veranderen.
150. Kort gezegd, om speelsheid te creëren moet je eerst goed op de hoogte zijn van wat er speelt in de wereld, wat de cultuurverschillen en opvattingen zijn en hoe je daar op een creatieve en innovatieve manier een speelse uiting van maakt.
  151. Wanneer we er van uitgaan dat het marsmannetje ook speels is, zullen wij hem vertellen dat wanneer je lang genoeg zoekt naar het speelse, het uiteindelijk ook gevonden wordt.
  152. Hieruit blijkt dat speelsheid bemoeilijkt wordt door de hersenen en invloed van de omgeving. Doordat men niet creatief kan zijn kan men ook niet zich speels gedragen. Als men zich niet laat beïnvloeden door de omgeving kan men de hersenen door creatieve processen stimuleren om meer te spelen met alle verschillende patronen die men binnen krijgt.
  153. Ook is het mogelijk dat de speelsheid wordt opgewekt doormiddel van fantasie. Zo is het mogelijk om je speelsheid te prikkelen door je fantasie over verschillende onderwerpen te laten gaan. Door bijvoorbeeld een oplossing te vinden op een bepaald probleem, bedenk je verschillende oplossingen. Deze kunnen voor de hand liggend zijn, maar ook ontstaan door het probleem op een andere manier te bekijken. Ook hierbij geldt wederom dat in de situatie het probleem ontstaat, en deze door de fantasie van de persoon opgelost wordt.
  154. Wij zijn van mening dat speelsheid niet een extra inbreng heeft bij een probleem waarbij heel veel regels en wetten aan verbonden zitten. Je kunt de speelsheid niet de vrije loop laten gaan. Het is dus niet meteen negatief alleen kun je het niet toepassen op het probleem. Een speelse oplossing vereist een probleem waarbij je de ideeën optimaal kunt toepassen.
  155. Niks is te gek, als iets nieuw is dan is het juist het proberen waard. Kinderen nemen vrijwel onbewust risico's waarschijnlijk omdat risico's nog niet bekend zijn. Dit zie je bijvoorbeeld aan de manier waarop ze schommelen, het kan niet hoog genoeg!
  156. De speelsheid begint bij het management. De managers zullen de genen moeten zijn die beginnen en hun werknemers moeten aansteken met de speelsheid. Zo zal de manager een rol moeten aannemen die past bij een speelse manager.
  157. Dit is erg belangrijk geweest voor het ontwikkelen van de verschillende vernieuwende uitingen. Zonder een goede voorbereiding zou de opdracht namelijk niet zo speels geworden zijn.
  158. De één ziet echter sneller iets speels in een voorwerp of plaats dan een ander. Je creativiteit moet er door getriggered worden, en als dit niet het geval is, is het moeilijk een idee te ontwikkelen.
  159. Deze foto's waren echter zo professioneel dat wij nooit zulke foto's zouden kunnen maken. Uiteindelijk hebben we besloten gewoon te kijken wat we tegenkwamen en wat we ervan konden maken.
  160. Vaak zit de speelsheid al in de mens. De mens zal echter wel sneller aangezet worden tot het uiten van deze speelsheid wanneer hij in bepaalde situaties belandt. De persoon kan namelijk zelf van iedere situatie een speelse situatie van maken. Het is maar net in welke stemming de persoon is en of de situatie gelegen komt en tot de interesse spreekt.
  161. Een andere situatie waar in speelsheid voorkomt is als twee personen hun gedachten laten gaan over verschillende onderwerpen. Hierbij komt het vaak voor dat de meest uiteenlopende gedachten worden gekoppeld aan een bepaald onderwerp. Bijvoorbeeld in de vorm van humor, maar dit kan ook als toevoeging zijn op hetgeen wat het onderwerp mist.
  162. Je gaat bijvoorbeeld niet in je eentje voetballen, maar je vraagt iemand anders om mee te doen. Of je krijgt van je baas of docent een opdracht om een nieuw concept te bedenken.

163. Het zorgt ervoor dat de mensen verplicht moeten "spelen". Door de modder kruipen, over touwen over het water heen lopen, in bomen klimmen etc.
164. Wanneer een persoon zeer speels is zal het ook sneller tot een creatieve oplossing komen. Echter kan te speels ook nadelig werken. Hierdoor verliest het individu namelijk het zicht op de werkelijkheid.
165. Vooral in de pubertijd is het voor de mens belangrijk om haar speelsheid ten uiting te brengen om uiteindelijk zichzelf te kunnen vinden.
166. Speelsheid geeft de mogelijkheid om verder te gaan dan alleen objectief waarnemen. En het is nou juist deze eigenschap van de mens die ons onderscheid van dieren en planten. Oké misschien vraagt speelsheid om iets meer dan dat, maar zonder speelsheid zou onze intelligentieniveau een groot aantal IQ-punten dalen.
167. Denk bijvoorbeeld aan jouwmoduul- en/of PGO groepje. Als jij in een groep zit bij mensen die altijd alle problemen te zakelijk en vrij conservatief tegemoet gaan, dan is er de kans dat ze jouw speelsheid als laks kunnen ervaren. In onze ogen is het belangrijk om tegenpolen in een groepje te hebben, alleen je moet elkaar de ruimte geven om zijn of haar eigen creativiteit op zijn of haar eigen manier de vrije loop te laten gaan.
168. De sfeer is niet optimaal, ook de werknemers op de bopuwplaats werken hard en snel.. een plek waar je niet gauw een spel zou vinden. Toch is de toevoeging van een spel iets wat naar onze mening op zijn plaats is op deze plek.
169. Mensen die goed kunnen relativeren hebben minder last van stress, staan nuchter in het leven en worden over het algemeen als prettig in de omgang betiteld.
170. Wij hadden het idee dat als we met een aantal spullen de straat op zouden gaan de ideeën vanzelf zouden komen. [...] Ondanks dat we wel spullen bij ons hadden die we wouden gebruiken, wisten we nog niet precies waarvoor. Dat zorgde ervoor dat het vooral ingevingen waren. Daar werd dan een foto van gemaakt. Als het bleek dat het niet werkte gebruikten we hem niet, maar vaak kwam er wel wat leuks uit (2009, r. 78).
171. In onze optiek was het niet heel erg moeilijk om geschikte foto's te maken.
172. Onze speelse aard was de stille kracht achter onze ideeën.
173. Misschien is het ook wel toeval dat we de eerste niet hebben gebruikt. De ideeën die later kwamen waren simpelweg beter, we hebben niet een speciale techniek gebruikt.
174. Omdat we geen duidelijk idee in ons hoofd hadden, konden we kritisch naar onze eigen foto's kijken en bleven we niet bij een bepaald idee hangen. We hebben ons als het ware door onze eigen foto's laten inspireren.
175. Tijdens het werk moest één van ons een keer wachten op de gasten. Op een moment als dit begin je om je heen te kijken en vallen de punten op die normaal niet te zien zijn. Zeker wanneer je even pauze wilt nemen van het werk begin je al snel te dromen. Dan begin je vaak andere uitingen te zien in verschillende voorwerpen of situaties.
176. Zo kwamen de beste ideeën één keer 's ochtends bij het wakker worden. Het mooiste aan het wakker worden is dat de overgang tussen dromen en wakker worden zorgt voor een heel vrij moment. De zorgen van de werkelijkheid zijn er nog niet en de geest staat open voor de mooiste ideeën. Dit moment duurt zeker niet lang, maar kan wel hele mooie ideeën oproepen. Door een kladboekje naast het bed te houden konden we de ideeën ook direct opschrijven.
177. Wij hadden afgesproken om gewoon de stad in te gaan en ons daar door te laten inspireren. Eenmaal in de binnenstad zijn er genoeg dingen en objecten om je heen waar je spelse, creatieve dingen mee kan doen. Zo kwamen we in de binnenstad twee kunstprojecten tegen en een gigantische kunststoffen ijshoorn. Met deze objecten hebben wij verschillende dingen gedaan.
178. Daarnaast is het superbelangrijk dat je continu je ogen open houdt om misschien wat tegen te komen waar je iets mee zou kunnen doen. Bovendien heb je kans om op een toevalligheid te stoten waar je iets mee kunt.

179. De eerste foto, die van het boek, zet de kijker aan het denken doordat je niet in één keer ziet dat het om een boek gaat. [...] Het is op meerdere manieren te interpreteren.
180. In zijn tekeningen zie je veel kleine details waar je op kan letten.
181. The student only explained the concept – a terrace hanging over the water with a see-through floor – but did not add a picture.
182. Er stond een plaatje bij van een student op een bank die aan het denken was. Boven zijn hoofd waren er papieren propjes naar de prullenbak toe gericht. We vonden dat zo creatief, omdat de propjes met die prullenbak ons liet denken aan een denkwolk wat je in stripboeken ziet. Dus hebben we die na gedaan. We bleven eigenlijk wel op de eerste ingeving hangen, omdat het slim bedacht is.
183. Door het geven van voorbeelden werd ons langzaam steeds duidelijker dat je niet om speelsheid heen kunt. Zelfs in zaken en situaties waar je het niet meteen van verwacht komt speelsheid voor.
184. Clockwise from the top, the words read: vivacious, moveable, frolic, festive, children, ludic, experience, cheerful, exuberant, imaginative, outside/inside, board games/games, merry (cheerful), happy, optimistic, rejoice (delight), joyful, euppeptic
185. Vaak is het moeilijk om in een speelse bui te raken maar als je er eenmaal inzit zal het zorgen voor veel, vaak bruikbare, nieuwe inzichten. Mensen die creatief zijn worden niet voor niets vaak speels genoemd.
186. Ik denk dat mensen bepaalde filters gebruiken afhankelijk van de situatie waar ze in zitten. Deze filters werken op alle zintuigen. Bijvoorbeeld: als ik haast heb, om bijvoorbeeld de trein te halen, zal graffiti op de muren onderweg naar het station mij waarschijnlijk niet snel opvallen. Maar als ik rustig rondfiets in de stad valt die graffiti mij misschien wel op. Als ik haast heb staat er dus een filter aan.
187. We zijn onze ogen open gaan houden bij alles wat we tegenkwamen, en probeerden er op een speelse manier mee om te gaan.
188. Ik bedacht mij vlak voordat ik mijn ouderlijk huis verliet en op weg ging naar Leeuwarden om eens goed te gaan letten op leuke spannende details van de buitenwereld. Door om je heen te kijken en te zien wat er allemaal aan speelsheid en creativiteit bestaat in de directe omgeving van de mens kunnen de beste ideeën ontstaan.
189. Het gaat juist om het zoeken naar de details hoe dat de wereld ineens op een compleet andere manier bekeken kan worden.
190. Ik zag m'n twee worstjes liggen en de ketchup en ik was erg bezig met de opdracht. Toen ik bezig was met eten was ik me er erg van bewust dat ik op alles moest letten om nog tot een leuk idee te komen. Dit was niet gemakkelijk maar het is met deze foto uiteindelijk goed gelukt.
191. Af en toe door Leeuwarden te wandelen, mijn camera mee te nemen en uit te kijken naar interessante dingen. [...] Het geeft mij het gevoel van spelen. Spelen met mijn omgeving, met mezelf, en met anderen als ik die laat raden. Zonder hulpmiddel spelen. De wereld als speelveld zien. Zich vermaken en andere ook. Dat is spelen.
192. We probeerden de wereld wat leuker te maken en het wachten wat minder lang te laten duren door onszelf te vermaken met het maken van foto's.
193. Het feit dat we daar die piramides stonden weg te duwen vergeten we natuurlijk nooit weer, het was erg lachwekkend en lollig om de foto's te maken. Het was vooral lachwekkend omdat we het zo vaak over moesten doen. Dat we het deden was natuurlijk doelloos, want we kunnen er verder niks mee. Daarom zijn deze foto's voorbeelden van speelsheid.
194. Na enige slechte ideeën en slechte foto's waren we heel erg vrolijk en melig geworden en dat heeft ook wel heel erg geholpen bij het creëren en het geduld hebben van nieuwe ideeën.
195. Deze uitingen kunnen als speels worden beschouwd omdat ze allen getuigen van een intrinsieke houding die speelsheid uit. Alles werd ondernomen op onserieuze wijze, en het bracht direct genot met zich mee (het was hilarisch).

- Leuk om te zien dat we op grond van de definities uit de literatuur kunnen stellen dat onze persoonlijkheden getuigen van speelsheid.
196. Voor het maken van deze foto zijn we gaan nadenken hoe we een normale omgeving kunnen veranderen in een andere omgeving. We wilden twee verschillende plekken met hun eigen gebruiken, rituelen en handelingen door elkaar gooien. We zijn verschillende ruimtes in huis afgegaan en gekeken wat de overeenkomsten zijn en wat juist de verschillen zijn.
  197. Het reagerende werkeiland geeft doormiddel van licht aan hoeveel personeelsleden aan dit eiland zitten. Hoe dieper de kleur hoe beter dit eiland bezet is. Dit stimuleert het personeel bij elkaar plaats te nemen en bevordert de interactie. Dit zorgt er ook voor dat het personeel indirect wordt gestimuleerd meer op de werkplek te blijven. Dit verhoogd de productiviteit.
  198. Dan zijn er een aantal dingen die je met oude fietsen kan doen. Je kan ze verkopen of weggooiden. Je kan ook buiten deze standaard patronen kijken en op een creatieve wijze van je oude fietsen afkomen. In dit geval is er gekozen voor het laatste en is er een bartafel van de fietsen gemaakt.
  199. Als wij nu gaan kijken naar onze zelf gemaakte voorbeelden van wat speels kan zijn valt ons iets direct op: Wij lijken speelsheid daadwerkelijk veelal afhankelijk te maken van innovatie en creativiteit. De voorbeelden vanuit hoofdstuk 2.2 hebben vervolgens allen iets gemeen. Zij zijn ontstonden door het belang om iets oud te nemen en dit op een nieuwe manier te gebruiken, in een nieuwe combinatie of verband.
  200. Ik besepte me toen pas dat ik mijn lamp al tijdens op een speelse manier gebruik. Waarom dus niet gewoon dit voorbeeld gebruiken?
  201. We gingen na wat voor fotografische onderwerpen wij om handen hadden en hoe we dat konden combineren met de omgeving. We hadden een camera-hamster (van de Albert Heijn), een honkbal en een flesje water. We gingen daarmee op pad en we gingen kijken of datgene wat we in ons hoofd hadden ook echt tot uitvoering gebracht kon worden
  202. Ik hoopte een echt andere kijkwijze daardoor te krijgen. Het is niet gelukt, want ik vond het pijnlijk met bijvoorbeeld een pink bril door de stad te lopen. En door een zonnebril was het alleen maar donker, maar mijn kijkwijze heeft zich daardoor niet veranderd. Wel stond ik open en ben bewuster door het leven gewandeld.
  203. Ik was een beetje aan het spelen met wat rood touw en ben het om mijn vinger gaan binden. Omdat het best strak zat, ontstonden er hobbeltjes van huid. Dit voelde welgrappig en toen ben ik het ook op mijn arm gaan doen. Het effect van het knellen van mijn huid tussen zo iets simpels als een stukje rood wol, vond ik erg interessant. Ik ben wat gaan uitproberen en het zag er aan de ene kant uit als een soort rollade, maar ik kreeg er ook een luguber idee bij. De foto's die ik uiteindelijk uitgekozen heb, laat niet duidelijk zien dat het mijn onderarm is, en dat vind ik ook het speelse a deze foto. Omdat je niet in eerste instantie kan zien wat het is, houdt het genoeg aan de fantasie over. Het is apart, vreemd, soms ook eng.
  204. Bij het lezen van de opdracht wisten we niet precies welke objecten, belevenissen, situaties etc. hieraan gekoppeld moesten worden. Daarom is er eerst een soort van brainstorm gemaakt. Alles wat wij als creatief en speels beschouwen hebben we opgeschreven. Dit gaf een overzicht en bracht ons op weg in de opdracht.
  205. Uiteindelijk werd dit een hele grote brainstorm omdat er heel veel te noemen is dat verband houdt met speelsheid.
  206. Hierdoor werd gewaarborgd dat alle ideeën die wij in ons hoofd hadden ook naar voren komen. Pas later hebben we samen naar de foto's gekeken, ze beoordeeld en een keuze gemaakt.
  207. We lieten elkaar de gemaakte foto's zien en met deze foto werd heel duidelijk hoe je met behulp van een dergelijk themapark een ware speeltuin kunt maken van je wereld. Ook hier geldt: even weg van de beslommingen van alle dag en jezelf helemaal laten meeslepen naar een andere, nieuwe en

- betoverende wereld.
208. We hebben alle objecten op een speelse manier bekeken door creatief te denken en ons andere voorwerpen te verbeelden die er niet waren. (We hebben letterlijk de wereld op de kop bekeken). Door kennis over de wereld en ervaring, konden we dit doen en ook elkaar begrijpen wanneer één van de twee de ander probeerde uit te leggen wanneer zij er iets in zag.
  209. We hielden het wel op simpele foto's. We maakten geen foto's vankunstwerken of hele vreemde objecten, het moesten alledaagse objecten zijn die je in principe overal kunt tegenkomen.
  210. Ik moet vaker door deze staat fietsen en mij zijn er bijzonders vele kleine leuke details opgevallen. Een straat vol van creatieve ideeën.
  211. Kwamen we op een idee, dan probeerden we er kritisch naar te kijken en er meer uit te halen, door ze te verbeteren, aan te passen, of er helemaal niets mee te gaan doen.
  212. We zijn ook de straat op gegaan om de speelsheid van de huidige maatschappij weer te geven.
  213. Nadat de foto gemaakt was gingen we pas iets anders zien in de foto's.
  214. Of er ook objecten waren die we op zijn kop konden zetten zodat ze iets anders zouden voorstellen dan ze in werkelijkheid waren.
  215. We hadden in de eerste instantie het idee om bepaalde plekken in Groningen te fotograferen als speeltuin. Veel plekken in Groningen zijn in principe speeltuinen. Er hoeft maar iets te gebeuren en de plek is omgetoverd tot iets anders.
  216. Iedereen was ook nog bezig met de creatieve, speelse opdracht en zodoende was er veel oplettendheid.
  217. Een lid is binnen achter gebleven om bij terugkomst zo objectief mogelijk de gemaakte foto's te beoordelen op multi-interpretabelheid.
  218. Ook bestaat de wereld uit onbesproken regels en tegenstellingen die iedereen als tegenstelling beschouwt. Vandaar dat we situaties waar te zien is dat de regels worden doorbroken of dat tegenstelling samengaan interessant vinden. Daarom is een spelende volwassen interessant" (2009, r. 63).
  219. Bij de eerste uiting hebben we erover nagedacht hoe op een indringende manier kan worden duidelijk gemaakt, dat roken tijdens de zwangerschap slecht is voor het ongeboren kind. De bedoeling was om mensen te schokken, om zo een diepere indruk achter te laten.
  220. De afbeelding verwijst naar het asociale gedrag dat veel mensen tegenwoordig vertonen. Het is allemaal steeds erger geworden met de manieren van mensen in onze samenleving. Een extreem voorbeeld als deze is niet eens meer schokkend.
  221. We hebben bewust voor deze variantie gekozen omdat wij de nadruk willen leggen op de individualiteit van speelsheid, of beter gezegd de individualiteit van de interpretatie van speelsheid.
  222. De laatste uiting is speels te noemen. Wij hebben namelijk allemaal geleerd wat de woorden 'bakker' en 'slagerij' betekenen. Wanneer deze twee gecombineerd gaan worden als bedrijfsnaam, kan dit voor verwarringen zorgen.
  223. Het leek handig om de speelse uiting te koppelen aan een product, dienst of mening.
  224. Hij was op dat moment erg speels en wilde kijken hoe het was om in de kast te zitten. Daarbij is deze jongen een jaar geleden 'uit de kast gekomen'. Door deze uiting is het voor de rest van zijn omgeving nu duidelijk dat hij op jongens valt in plaats van meiden.
  225. We wilden ideeën creëren die niet te vergezocht zijn, eenvoudig, maar niet te gemakkelijk. Mensen moeten het meteen begrijpen of er even over nadenken.
  226. Ook was het belangrijk om niet alleen uitingen te maken met een zware lading.
  227. Altijd zijn de vuilnisbakken te zien en deze laten een slechte indruk achter. Altijd heb je het gevoel dat deze vies zijn en slecht ruiken. [...]. Het idee begon

- toen iemand zijn spullen in het vuilnis stopte en hij zich later de handen aan zijn broek schoon maakte.
228. We krijgen te maken met nieuwe communicatie mogelijkheden, maar daar staat tegenover dat we ook steeds meer te maken krijgen met nieuwe regels en wetgeving. Niet alle mensen kunnen goed met de regels om gaan en verzinnen varianten van hulpmiddelen. Bij deze foto wordt er op een speelse manier op gereageerd. De hands-free technieken op mobiele telefoons of voor in de auto zijn niet meer nodig, een eenvoudige en goedkopere manier is er ook!
  229. Dit leek een origineel idee, omdat serieuze boodschappen met een humoristische lading verteld kunnen worden, en hierdoor wordt er ook meer over de uiting nagedacht. Er was niet één ingeving, er is vooral nagedacht over de verschillende misstanden in de wereld.
  230. Speelsheid kan natuurlijk ook met serieuze onderwerpen, want juist die serieuze onderwerpen kunnen op een creatieve manier heel speels worden. Vandaar dat we na gingen denken over serieuze onderwerpen.
  231. We wilden minstens een object vinden dat ook in een speeltuin zou geplaatst kunnen worden.
  232. Bovendien hebben we de twee meest uiteenlopende karakters van de groep op pad gestuurd.
  233. We maakten geen foto's van kunstwerken of hele vreemde objecten, het moesten alledaagse objecten zijn die je in principe overal kunt tegenkomen.
  234. Toen kwam ik nog op een idee iets te doen met een brug in de stad maar dan zou ik daar een foto van moeten maken en die photoshoppen, en naar mijn idee doet iedereen dat al dus dat wilde ik ook niet.
  235. Ik ben wel heel bewust naar dingen gaan kijken zodat ik me makkelijk van de eerste ingeving kon afzetten.
  236. In het begin zagen we hier erg tegen op, omdat we werkelijk geen idee hadden wat voor foto's we moesten gaan maken. Ons beeld van speelsheid was nog erg abstract en vooral gebaseerd op de theorieën die we in de essay hadden beschreven.
  237. Stel jezelf als doel om tenminste vijf ideeën op te werpen en elk idee is het waard om dieper over na te denken. Dit bleek heel goed te werken en binnen een uur was er een nieuw concept bedacht.
  238. Deze reis was in zijn geheel vergelijkbaar met een speeltuin, de onbekende omgeving bracht veel nieuwsgierigheid met zich mee zonder belemmeringen. Met als hoofddoel plezier maken.
  239. Makkelijk gezegd, zegt ons idee niets, maar ook alles over de wereld. De foto's zijn enorm vrij interpreteerbaar. Iedereen kan het dus op zijn eigen manier interpreteren. Dit geeft natuurlijk ook weer dat de wereld een grote speeltuin is. Je kan het op je eigen manier invullen.
  240. Dit idee zegt over de wereld, dat alles als een speeltuin kan worden gezien. Dat elk object een speeltoestel kan zijn.
  241. Some passages in this section are retrieved or reworked from papers written for conferences on behalf of this research, see also: De Jong 2008, 2010.
  242. De werkelijke wereld heeft meer authenticiteit en gezelligheid en voorkomt de vereenzaming van mensen. In de virtuele wereld lopen mensen gevaar de greep met de werkelijkheid te verliezen. Chatpartners worden vrienden en computerspellen worden realiteit. (2008, r. 104)
  243. Er moet alleen een goede verdeling aanwezig zijn tussen mediagebruik en het normale leven. Het mediagebruik mag niet op de eerste plek staan in het leven. (2009, 67)
  244. Goed om je heen kijken en over de wereld nadenken is ook belangrijk om bij de realiteit te blijven.
  245. We zien een computerscherm met daarin een mannetje die klaarblijkelijk gevangen zit, hij kijkt niet vrolijk en houdt zijn handen om de tralies. Waarom een gevangen mannetje in een computerscherm? [...] Voor sommige mensen komt het besef dat men opgeslokt is een virtuele wereld te laat, hierdoor

- zijn ze totaal vervreemd van de normale, echte wereld waardoor ze niet meer kunnen functioneren.
246. Een verstandige onderzoeker zou nooit voor een experiment te ver gaan door mensen levens in gevaar te brengen en kan dus out of the bos denken, maar een gestoorde speelse gamer wel, en die moet spelen met de werkelijkheid met de nodige grenzen.
  247. ook volwassenen trokken zich terug achter de computer met een console en gingen helemaal op in deze uitdagende digitale wereld. Hetzelfde geldt voor internet. Het is steeds gemakkelijker geworden om via één druk op de knop deel te nemen aan een hele nieuwe wereld. .
  248. Dat is aantrekkelijk bijzonders voor volwassenen omdat ze uit het alledagsleven willen vluchten voor enkele momenten om hen problemen kort te vergeten en kort iemand anders te zijn.
  249. De wereld is geen volmaakte plek en niet iedereen kan zichzelf zijn op de manier dat iemand dat wil. Er wordt constant een rol gespeeld, om de sociale behoefte, erkenning en zelfactualisatie te bereiken. Behalve wanneer men bezig is met spel.
  250. Speelsheid zorgt ervoor dat je in een ander wereld terecht komt, die anders is dan de 'echte' wereld. Je gaat ook dingen anders zien en vanaf een ander denkkader denken. Voornamelijk het laatste bevordert de creativiteit enorm.
  251. Alsof je alles voor het eerst ziet en je overal bij bedenkt wat iets is en waarvoor het is. Om op zo'n manier te denken moet je instaat zijn om (tijdelijk) volledig in deze wereld op te gaan en de reële wereld te vergeten.
  252. Hoe volwassener men wordt, hoe meer men realistisch kijkt naar de wereld in plaats van dat men als kind volledig op kan gaan in een fantasiewereld. Dit realisme zorgt er voor dat men meer logische na gaat denken doordat men niet zulke vragen meer durft te stellen als kinderen "waarom gaat de maan ook mee". (2009. R 59).
  253. Het is een vrijheid voor iedereen om in zijn of haar eigen belevingswereld nieuwe werelden te creëren. Het kost slechts fantasie. Het komt in alle aspecten van het leven terug. Speelsheid wordt niet alleen ervaren als er een positieve sfeer in de lucht hangt. Wanneer er slechtere tijden zijn zullen mensen gaan fantaseren over een betere wereld of aan activiteiten deelnemen om zich weer blij te kunnen voelen. (2009, r. 80)
  254. Hierbij worden speel en realiteit door elkaar gebracht van psychologisch labiele mensen.
  255. Of het positief of negatief is hangt volgens ons af van de mate waarmee mensen speelsheid serieus nemen. Wanneer iemand hierin doorslaat kan de grens van kinderlijke speelsheid en kinderachtigheid vervagen en zo kan iemand zich verliezen in het spel en daarmee de verantwoordelijkheden uit de realiteit verliezen.
  256. This section is derived from a section previously written for a conference paper on this reseach. See: De Jong, 2010)
  257. Ook is deze afbeelding met een knuffeltje, waarmee de zachtheid en kinderlijkheid wordt benadrukt. Het gevangen zetten van kinderen en ook de dwang en verstoring van kinderen door middel van geluidsgeweld en huiselijk geweld. Ook staat het voor mensen die gevangen zijn in hun eigen wereld. Zo blijven muzikanten altijd muzikanten en hebben ze eigenschappen die bij anderen niet naar voren komen.
  258. Mijn idee zegt over mijn wereld waarin ik leef dat deze sterk beïnvloed wordt door media en technologie. Verder hecht ik aan de natuur en het milieu vind ik belangrijk. Ik zelf probeer milieuvriendelijk te leven en de wereld waarin ik leef probeer ik te respecteren. Het eerste idee met de appelboom spiegelt precies de symboliek tussen natuur en technologie weer. De natuurlijke plant en de technologie in vorm van mijn laptop. Dit idee is ook tegelijk een kritiek op de technologie omdat de ontwikkelaar vaak de natuur buiten beschouwing wordt gelaten. Een technologie en natuur staan dichtbij elkaar dan sommige mensen denken.

259. Wij hebben twee gelukkige werkloze mensen gefotografeerd om te laten zien hoe graag zij het werk willen laten liggen waanneer er iemand voor overleven van hen zorgt. Dan hebben de mensen tijd voor dingen welke wij werkelijk graag doen. Nu zijn deze mensen niet meer als werkloze mensen te zien maar als gelukkige en vrije mensen.
260. Speelsheid wordt in veel alledaagse dingen verwerkt. Het zorgt er dus voor dat men op een andere manier tegen dingen aan kijkt.
261. Speelsheid is dus nog veel tegenwoordiger in het dagelijkse leven dan de meeste mensen geloven. Speelsheid heeft al lang niet alleen iets met "spelen" te doen heeft, het gaat ook om bereiken zoals roddelblaadjes en decoratieve keukenspullen.
262. Also known as: thimblorig
263. it was awarded by Steven Covey – a trim tab is a small surface connected to a boat that gives it speed.
264. Het zegt dat de gebouwen in de wereld niet alleen worden gemaakt voor hun functie. Je kunt ook iets met het uiterlijk er van. [...] Het gebouw wordt als bakkerij gebruikt en aan de hand van de foto is het leuk om aan een marsmannetje te vertellen hoe het verband is tussen brood en banket en de rondjes en kruisjes van het boter, kaas en eieren-spel op de ramen.



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# NEDERLANDSTALIGE SAMENVATTING: DE PARADOX VAN SPEELSHEID



De vraag die in het onderzoek centraal staat is wat bevorderende en beperkende factoren zijn voor speelsheid onder adolescenten en jong volwassenen in het hoger onderwijs en welke ontwerp principes hieruit kunnen worden afgeleid voor het ontwikkelen van onderwijs materiaal dat speelsheid zou kunnen bevorderen.

Het onderzoek is ingezet vanuit de hoek van design based research (Van Aken & Andriessen, 2012) als onderzoeksstrategie om oplossingen voor generieke veldproblemen te vinden en op basis daarvan tevens nieuwe theoretische kennis te genereren. Het veldprobleem is gedefinieerd vanuit de spanning in het huidige onderwijsbeleid in Nederland, waarin enerzijds om steeds meer uniformiteit en standaardisering gevraagd wordt in de toetsing en de aanpassing aan de wensen van het werkveld en anderzijds de noodzaak wordt uitgesproken dat Nederland zijn positie als innovatieland versterkt en dus de innovatieve en creatieve vaardigheden van studenten moet stimuleren.

Dit is een moeizame spanning, een 'wicked problem' (Rittel & Webber, 1973) waarvoor geen eenduidige oplossing bestaat. Gegeven de zoektocht naar de ontwikkeling van zogeheten 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, wordt gekeken in welke mate de ontwikkeling van een speelse benadering van het dagelijks leven van de studenten een bijdrage kan leveren aan hun probleem oplossend vermogen en hun verhouding tot de sociale orde. Speelsheid wordt hierin niet alleen gezien als een karakter eigenschap, zoals aan de orde is in de psychology (Lieberman, 1977; Glynn & Webster, 1992; Proyer, 2011) maar ook als een element van interactie tussen mensen, zoals meer thuishoort bij een sociologisch perspectief (Goffman, 1974; Giddens, 1984, 1991). In dit laatste perspectief komt ook nadrukkelijker de rol van vaardigheden aan de orde: wat is er voor nodig om speels te kunnen zijn? In Giddens' termen: wat zijn 'enabling and constraining conditions' van speelsheid?

Op basis van het onderscheid dat Sutton-Smith in de 'rhetoric of the imaginary' voorstelt tussen spel en speelsheid, wordt het tweeledige karakter van speelsheid geconceptualiseerd als enerzijds liggend in het verlengde van spel: natuurlijk zijn we speels als we spelen en anderzijds als een mogelijke tegenpool: het is denkbaar dat we 'speels' kunnen spelen, in plaats van 'gewoon' te spelen. Het is ook denkbaar dat speelsheid op gespannen voet staat met spel, bijvoorbeeld door de regels van het spel op een speelse manier

ter discussie te stellen. Sutton Smith noemt dit spelen met het raamwerk van spel de meest ambigue vorm van spel.

Om dit nader te conceptualiseren, maakt hij een onderscheid tussen een referentiële dialectiek en een ludische dialectiek in spel. In de referentiële dialectiek vindt een duidelijke verwijzing plaats naar de werkelijkheid, bijvoorbeeld de sociale orde zoals we die kennen. Deze kan – binnen het spel – echter een kanteling maken naar een ludische dialectiek waarin de speler door middel van de verbeelding afstand neemt van de verwijzing naar de werkelijkheid en daardoor ook het absurde en ongerijmde tot deel van het spel kan maken.

Op basis van dit onderscheid wordt geconcludeerd dat het dus in sommige situaties zinvol kan zijn om een onderscheid aan te houden tussen spel en speelsheid, maar in welke? Hiervoor wordt een beroep gedaan op Suits' definitie van games als een 'voluntary attempt of overcoming unnecessary obstacles': in spel onderwerpen we ons aan overbodige regels, precies omdat die regels het spelen mogelijk maken. Suits stelt een gedachten experiment voor: wat zouden we doen als we in Utopia leefden en al onze wensen waren vervuld? Dan zouden we games spelen. Voor het spelen van games noemt hij de houding die daarvoor nodig is, de 'lusory attitude'. De neiging bestaat om deze attitude een speelse attitude te noemen, maar precies die overeenkomst is alleen aan de orde in een situatie waarin we ons in 'utopia' bevinden, waarbij utopia gezien kan worden als een ideale spelsituatie. In deze situatie zijn een speelse en ludische houding aan elkaar gelijk. Maar in een niet-ideale spelsituatie (of andersoortige situatie die niet als wenselijk ervaren wordt), kunnen deze houdingen op gespannen voet staan.

In een ideale situatie is er immers goede reden om je te conformeren aan de spelregels: precies die regels maken spel tot een plezierige activiteit. In een minder ideale situatie is dit conformisme echter minder voor de hand liggend en kan een speelse houding een strategie zijn om de niet-ideale situatie te verbeteren. In dat geval vallen ze niet met elkaar samen.

Vanuit dit kader is gekeken naar de manier waarop HBO studenten van de opleiding Media & Entertainment Management in een opdracht met de naam 'De Wereld je Speeltuin' speelsheid tot stand brengen. In één jaar heeft deze opdracht het thema 'creativiteit en virtuele werelden' gekregen. In het andere jaar was het thema

‘speelsheid’. De opdracht bestond uit het schrijven van een essay, het vinden van voorbeelden van ofwel creativiteit, dan wel speelsheid en het zelf bedenken van enkele speelse of creatieve ideeën en deze toe te lichten op basis van de aannames die aan dit idee ten grondslag lagen. De opdracht had tot doel reflectie uit te nodigen op de sociale constructie van de werkelijkheid door studenten opdracht te geven hier zelf op een speelse manier mee om te gaan.

In de opdrachten van de studenten is vervolgens gekeken hoe zij tegen speelsheid aan kijken: hoe formuleren zij de door Giddens onderscheiden enabling and constraining conditions op het vlak van met name materiële beperking, beperkingen door negatieve sancties en structurele beperkingen. Hierbij moet aangegeven worden dat volgens Giddens elke beperking op zijn beurt ook iets mogelijk maakt en vice versa.

Studenten beschrijven hun fysieke omgeving als een voorname factor, maar benoemen vooral interpersoonlijke aspecten als belangrijk in de mate waarin zijzelf of anderen ruimte ervaren om speels te zijn. Angst om kinderachtig gevonden te worden speelt hierin een rol, maar ook de verwachtingen die in hun optiek horen bij volwassenheid.

Ook is gekeken naar de verschillende manieren waarop studenten speelsheid tot stand brengen. Sommigen proberen een bepaalde stemming op te wekken waarin ze verwachten speelse ideeën te krijgen, anderen vertrouwen erop dat er wel iets leuks op hun pad zal komen. Aan de hand van de diversiteit van de perspectieven van de studenten wordt enerzijds gekeken naar de condities die voor hen van belang zijn om ruimte voor speelsheid te ervaren. Anderzijds worden deze inzichten gebruikt om te komen tot ontwerp principes voor onderwijsmateriaal dat zich richt op het bevorderen van speelsheid.

Het gaat hierin niet om de vraag of studenten beter leren als ze speels materiaal aangeboden krijgen, maar om de vraag of het mogelijk is hun speelsheid zelf te bevorderen. Dit zou de ontwikkeling van de gewenste creativiteit en innovativiteit ten goede kunnen komen. Ambiguiteit wordt door de studenten als positief gewaardeerd als het om de betekenis gaat van bijvoorbeeld mediaproducten, kunstwerken of de functies van objecten, maar het wordt negatief gewaardeerd als het een rol speelt in sociale

verhoudingen. Om speelse ervaringen te ontwerpen en studenten te begeleiden in hun reflectie hierop, is het belangrijk om hier rekening mee te houden.

# ENGLISH SUMMARY: THE PARADOX OF PLAYFULNESS



What are the constraining and enabling conditions of playfulness among adolescents and young adults in higher education? How do we design educational material that fosters or promotes playful skills in this group? These are the central questions addressed in this thesis.

Design based research was chosen as a research strategy. This is a strategy to find solutions for generic field problems and to generate new theoretical knowledge based on these solutions (Van Aken & Andriessen, 2012). The field problem has been derived from a current tension in educational policy in The Netherlands: on the one hand, there's a demand for more uniformity and standardization in examination and a request for adaptation to the demands of the prospective workforce. On the other hand, a necessity is articulated for The Netherlands to strengthen its position as an innovative country. This requires a stimulation of the innovative and creative skills of students.

This is a difficult tension – a 'wicked problem' (Rittel & Webber, 1973) – for which there's no clear or easy solution. With the quest for so-called 21st century skills in the background, the author conceptualizes the way in which a playful approach to ordinary life can contribute to students' problem solving skills and their relationship to social order. Playfulness is seen here not just as a character trait, as is the case in psychology (Lieberman, 1977; Glynn & Webster, 1992; Proyer, 2011), but also as an element of interaction between people, as is common in a sociological perspective (Goffman, 1974; Giddens, 1984, 1991). This latter perspective highlights the role of skills in playfulness: what is required to accomplish playfulness? In Giddens' terms: what are 'enabling and constraining conditions' of playfulness?

In what he calls 'the rhetoric of the imaginary', Sutton-Smith (1997) proposes a distinction between play and playfulness. Based on this distinction, the author conceptualizes the ambiguous nature of playfulness as an extension of play on the one hand: of course we are playful when we are playing and as a potential opposite of it on the other: we can imagine 'playing playfully', rather than playing 'normally'. It is thus imaginable that playfulness is at odds with play, for instance by playfully debating the rules of a game. According to Sutton-Smith, playing with the frames of play is the most ambiguous form of play.

To articulate this further, Sutton-Smith makes a distinction between a referential and a ludic dialectic in play. In the referential dialectic, a clear reference to reality can be found, for instance to social order as we know it. *Within* play, this referential dialectic can tilt into a ludic dialectic in which the player – through the use of her imagination – can distance herself from this reference to reality and so make the absurd and incongruous into a part of play as well.

This distinction implies that there are cases in which it can be meaningful to distinguish between play and playfulness, but which? To answer this question, the author uses Suits' (1978) definition of a game as "a voluntary attempt of overcoming unnecessary obstacles". In play, we submit ourselves to unnecessary rules, precisely because these rules enable play. Suits proposes a thought experiment: what would we do if we lived in Utopia and all our wishes were fulfilled? We'd be playing games. To do so, we need what he calls a 'lusory attitude'. A tendency exists to call this lusory attitude a playful attitude but precisely this accord only occurs when we are in a situation we can consider 'utopia'. Utopia can then be seen as the ideal play situation. In this situation, a playful and a lusory attitude are the same. But in a non-ideal play situation (or another kind of situation that is not seen as desirable), these attitudes can be found at odds.

In an ideal situation there are surely good reasons to conform to the rules of play: adherence to these rules is precisely what makes play a pleasurable activity. In a less than ideal situation though, this conformity is less apparent: a playful attitude can be a strategy to improve the non-ideal situation. In these instances, the lusory and the playful attitude do not coincide.

From this theoretical framework, an analysis is made of the way in which students from the bachelor education Media & Entertainment Management accomplish playfulness in an assignment titled "The World Your Playground". In one year, the theme of this assignment was creativity and virtual worlds. In another year, the theme was playfulness. The assignment consisted of writing an essay; finding examples of either creativity or playfulness; creating their own creative or playful ideas and to exemplify these ideas based on the assumptions that underlie them. The purpose of the assignment was to invite reflection on the social construction of reality by inviting students to engage with it in a playful manner.

From their contributions to this assignment, an analysis was made of their perspective on playfulness: how do they formulate – in their own words – the enabling and constraining conditions of playfulness when it comes to the distinction Giddens makes between material constraints, (negative) sanctions and structural constraints. Note that to Giddens theory implies all constraints in their turn also enable things and vice versa.

Students describe their physical surroundings as an important factor, but mostly emphasize interpersonal aspects as important to the extent in which they themselves, or others experience the space to be playful. Fear to be considered childish plays a role in this, but also the expectations of being required to conform to society's standards of maturity.

The ways in which students accomplish playfulness is also analyzed. Some attempt to generate a specific mood in which they expect to develop playful ideas; others rely on the fact that something fun will come their way. From the diversity in the perspectives of these students, an analysis is made of the conditions that need to be met for them to experience the space to be playful. At the same time, these insights are used to develop design principles for educational material aimed at fostering playfulness.

The issue is not whether students learn better when they're offered playful educational material, but whether it is possible to promote playfulness itself. The promotion of playfulness might benefit the development of the creativity and innovativeness that is currently needed. Students value ambiguity positively when it comes to the meaning of media products, works of art or the functions of objects. They value it negatively when it plays a role in social relationships and interactions. To design playful experiences and to guide students in their reflection on this, it's important to keep this in mind.



# APPENDICES



## APPENDIX 1

### THE WORLD YOUR PLAYGROUND – 2008 – CREATIVITY AND VIRTUAL WORLDS

This appendix contains the full text of the first TWYP assignment. Relevant passages have been translated in chapter 2.

#### *Waarden, beleving, creativiteit en onderzoek*

“Stel dat twee onderzoekers twee verschillende theorieën hebben over het doof worden van vlooiën. Onderzoeker X heeft de theorie dat vlooiën doof worden door lawaai. Onderzoeker Y heeft de theorie dat vlooiën doof worden door ze de pootjes uit te trekken.

De onderzoekers hebben ieder 1000 vlooiën getraind om op commando van de ene fles in de andere te springen. Nadat ze van de ene fles in de andere gesprongen zijn, stelt X de vlooiën bloot aan lawaai en trekt Y ze de pootjes uit. Bij onderzoeker X springt 50% van de vlooiën in de andere fles, bij onderzoeker Y geen enkele.

De onderzoekers concluderen dat één theorie het beste is, namelijk de theorie dat het uittrekken van de pootjes van vlooiën leidt tot doofheid. (Delnooz; 2001; 59)

Helder en logisch nadenken. Op een systematische manier je informatie verzamelen. Geldige argumenten gebruiken om je betoog kracht bij te zetten. Je verdiepen in je doelgroep en deze leren kennen door goed te kijken wat haar beweegt. Onderzoek dus.

In een artikel over marketingblunders bespreken Van Eunen en Reichardt (2006) de mislukte introductie van een 'speciaalbier' voor vrouwen: 'Brunette'. Dit bier werd in '99 geïntroduceerd en in 2001 alweer uit de markt gehaald. De vormgeving: een normaal bierflesje met op het etiket een rondborstige dame met lang bruin haar. Geflopt: *“Het probleem van Brunette zat 'm niet in de smaak maar in de positionering. Het was duidelijk bedacht voor vrouwen door mannen. De naam alleen al...”*, stelt John Halmans, directeur van Gulpener brouwerij.

Toch is het volgens Halmans niet zozeer te wijten aan een gebrek aan marktonderzoek: *“marktonderzoek kan nooit als uitgangspunt dienen voor je beleid, in het beste geval vervult het een ondersteunende functie”*. De auteurs stellen dat Gulpener eerder geen marktonderzoek deed naar het mogelijke succes van speciaalbieren en ze niettemin op succesvolle wijze wist te introduceren. *“Voor Brunette werd wel marktonderzoek gehouden en dat flopte”* (Halman geciteerd in Van Eunen & Reichardt, 2006).

De relatie tussen marktonderzoek en productintroducties of -innovaties is dus niet eenduidig. Dat je onderzoek hebt gedaan, garandeert niet dat je succesvol zult zijn. Nijs & Peters, de auteurs van het basisboek 'Imagineren: het creëren van belevingswerelden' bevestigen dat er een spanning bestaat tussen creativiteit en onderzoek: *“met analyse alleen [zullen] nooit onderscheidende belevingsconcepten onwikkeld worden”* (Nijs & Peters, 2004; 113). Er komt meer bij kijken dan een gedegen analyse. Creativiteit, originaliteit en authenticiteit zijn net zo belangrijk. Je hebt kennis nodig van je doelgroep, maar voor belevingsconcepten is het niet mogelijk je doelgroep rechtstreeks te vragen waar zij behoefte aan heeft. Marketingonderzoeker Rex Briggs stelt hierover:

“Een van de domme dingen in marketing op dit moment is dat er gedacht wordt dat je consumenten direct moet vragen waarom ze iets gekocht hebben, of waar ze een reclame-uiting gezien hebben, of wat hen beïnvloed heeft om iets te kopen. Consumenten weten dat

helemaal niet. Ze geven je wel een antwoord, maar kunnen dat nooit met zekerheid bepalen” (Briggs, geciteerd in Gons, 2007)

Briggs bekritiseert het stereotype dat de marketeer eigenlijk een kunstenaar zou zijn: “De hype van marketing dat het zo uniek is, zo verschillend van welke andere discipline dan ook, is gewoon een afweermechanisme tegen het meten ervan. [...] Dezelfde principes duiken op zoveel verschillende terreinen op, waarom zou het [meten en experimenteren] dan in vredesnaam niet gebruikt kunnen worden in marketing” (Briggs, geciteerd in Gons, 2007)

Onderzoek kan dus wel degelijk interessante inzichten opleveren, mits het op een zinvolle manier wordt uitgevoerd. Voor onderzoek in *Imagineering* is de consequentie hiervan dat je niet aan je doelgroep kunt voorleggen of ze het door jou bedachte concept wel of niet interessant zal vinden. Je zult je onderzoek dus via een omweg moeten uitvoeren.

Dit doe je door aan de éne kant jezelf te trainen in het benaderen van een probleem vanuit meerdere perspectieven en aan de andere kant door onderzoek te doen naar de waarden van je doelgroep. In deze module doe je allebei.

We beginnen met de waarden. Nijs & Peters (2002) stellen hierover:

“... de (koop)motieven en het (koop)gedrag van consumenten [worden] bepaald door de (eind)waarden die zij nastreven: iemand die avontuur belangrijk vindt, gaat bungyjumpen, iemand die veiligheid hoog in het vaandel draagt boekt een pakketreis en iemand die gelijkheid en vrede op aarde nastreeft koopt Max Havelaar koffie en is lid van Amnesty International.” (2002; 116)

In *Imagineering* geven zij verschillende omschrijvingen van waarden. De meest eenvoudige formulering die zij geven luidt: “opvatting van een individu omtrent wat wenselijk of goed is” (2002;116). Een meer complexe omschrijving luidt:

“Waarden zijn mentale patronen die beschrijven hoe we aankijken tegen relaties, werk, technologie en het leven in het algemeen. Waarden zijn enorm krachtig, overal en altijd aanwezig en sterk verschillend van plaats tot plaats en van mens tot mens. Ook waarden veranderen, maar zeer langzaam: onze werkethiek, ons geloof in het hiernamaals, het belang dat we hechten aan feesten, aan andere culturen, aan het leven” (2002; 24).

Aan de hand van een databestand met de gegevens van een steekproef uit de Nederlandse bevolking, analyseer je de waarden van je doelgroep. Het gaat erom je een zo helder mogelijk beeld te vormen van je doelgroep op basis van deze analyse. De technieken die je nodig hebt om je doelgroep te karakteriseren, oefen je tijdens de computerpractica SPSS.

Zelf dien je vervolgens – door creatief te denken – de verstaalslag te maken van de waarden van je doelgroep naar de mate waarin het concept dat je wilt ontwikkelen, aansluit op deze waarden. Goed doordachte concepten zijn vaak het meest interessant. Je eerste ideeën gooi je dan ook vaak weg: “*Kill your darlings*”. Jullie hebben de noodzaak daarvan al ervaren in de module Media & Cultuur. Je zag dat verschillende groepen met een vergelijkbaar concept kwamen. Je eerste concept gooi je daarom weg, niet omdat het slecht is, maar omdat het voor de hand ligt. Het is daarom belangrijk meteen in week 1 te beginnen met het analyseren van het bestand. Des te eerder zie je wat jouw doelgroep beweegt.

“Marketing omvat de – op de markt afgestemde – ontwikkeling, prijsbepaling, promotie en distributie van producten, diensten of ideeën, en andere activiteiten om planmatig transacties te bevorderen, een reputatie te creëren en duurzame relaties met klanten op te bouwen, waarbij alle partijen hun doelstellingen verwezenlijken”. (Verhage; 2004; 37)

Misschien ken je bovenstaande definitie van marketing nog. Los van de invulling van de 4 P's, die bij Imagineering anders wordt ingevuld, zie je staan dat het erom gaat om 'een duurzame relatie op te bouwen', tot wederzijds profijt. Je doelgroep is daarin de partij met wie jij een relatie probeert op te bouwen. Dit doe je door haar goed te leren kennen. Het concept dat je ontwikkelt, is de verrassing waarmee je wilt laten zien dat je haar goed begrepen hebt. Je verklapt als het ware niet van tevoren wat het is.

Onderzoek maakt dus een ondersteunend, maar belangrijk deel uit van het Imagineeringsproces. (Nijs & Peters, 2002;113). Het Imagineeringsproces is opgedeeld in 6 verschillende fasen: de kennisverwervingsfase, de broedfase, de verdiepingsfase, de creatie- en reflectiefase, de uitvoeringsfase en de vernieuwingsfase. Onderzoek is in twee van deze fasen bijzonder belangrijk: de kennisverwervingsfase en de verdiepingsfase.

[Part A of the assignment was described here, but has been omitted for the sake of brevity]

Benodigdheden voor de opdracht

- . Lessenserie Dr Stat - [www.drstat.net](http://www.drstat.net) - aan te schaffen met creditcard of via certificaten
- . SPSS – zelf te bestellen via Surfspot ([www.surfspot.nl](http://www.surfspot.nl), inloggen met je studentaccount) of via geïnstalleerde programmatuur op schoolnetwerk.
- . Basisboek Statistiek met SPSS van Baarda & De Goede.
- . De reader van het moduulboek Imagineering
- . Het databestand: Waarden in Nederland (op Bello)
- . De vragenlijst bij het databestand 'waarden in Nederland' (op Bello)
- . een digitale fotocamera, filmcamera of foto toestel op je mobiel

De camera die je nodig hebt brengt ons op deel (b) van deze onderzoeksopdracht.

*Deelopdracht (b) De wereld je speeltuin*

De wereld doet zich (veelal) op een vanzelfsprekende manier aan je voor. Je wordt 's ochtends wakker en je gaat ervan uit dat de wereld die je gisteren voor het slapengaan achterliet, deze ochtend nog hetzelfde is. Je vult je dag in volgens een vast ritueel en staat er niet altijd bij stil dat je - uit het niets - iets heel anders zou kunnen doen dan de dag ervoor. Je agenda en planning staan al gereed en de toekomst lijkt een invuloefening.

Ga je echter 's ochtends een keer al je stappen na om te bekijken waarom je ze zet, waarom je de dingen doet die je doet, dan blijkt dat je elke dag een inspanning levert om die wereld hetzelfde te houden. Je vult de koffie aan die je 's ochtends drinkt door op tijd boodschappen te doen, je slaat je bed open om het beddegoed fris te houden (of niet), je wast je kleren. Om te kunnen zeggen dat alles 'zijn gangetje' gaat, is een onderhoudsproces nodig.

Het kost veel moeite om dingen vanzelfsprekend te laten lijken.

Kijk je vervolgens naar alle dingen om je heen. je woon- of slaapkamer, je keuken, je kleren, je fiets, dan zie je dat overal een ontwerp achter zit. Die ontwerpen geven ideeën weer over wat stevig of robuust inhoudt, wat mooi is, wat een goede nachtrust is, wat gezond eten is enzovoorts. Wat ze met elkaar gemeen hebben, is een combinatie van ontwerp en onderzoek. In dit geval geen onderzoek naar de wereld 'zoals die is', maar de wereld 'zoals die zou kunnen zijn': een wereld in wording, een creatieve uiting.

Er zijn onderzoekers die ervan uitgaan dat je de werkelijkheid leert begrijpen door haar te bekijken en te beschrijven. Er zijn er ook die menen dat je haar leert begrijpen, door er iets in te veranderen en te kijken wat er gebeurt. Dit kun je doen door gebruiksvoorwerpen te ontwikkelen en testen, of door mensen uit te nodigen dingen anders te doen en te kijken wat er vervolgens gebeurt. Deze manier van onderzoeken worden ook wel design- of action research genoemd (Delnooz; 2006). De aanname in dit soort onderzoek is dat de wereld geen statisch gegeven is dat onthuld of ontrafeld moet worden, maar dat de wereld constant in beweging is (mede) als gevolg van de bewegingen die wij maken: ze is constant 'onder constructie'. Daarbij worden de dingen die ontworpen zijn, vaak ook nog eens niet benut waarvoor ze oorspronkelijk ontwikkeld waren. Het Franse minitel bijvoorbeeld, bedoeld voor zakelijke boodschappen en advertenties, werd al gauw een medium waar Fransen in hun lokale gemeenschap afspraakjes mee maakten (Spaink, 1994). Niemand had kunnen voorspellen dat SMS benut zou worden als aanvulling op de telefoon. Het telegram als medium lijkt daardoor geheel verdwenen.

Wat we nu virtueel noemen kan dus werkelijkheid worden, wat nu werkelijkheid is, kan weer verdwijnen. De subtitel van het boek 'Walt Disney Imagineering' heet 'a behind the dreams look at making the magic real. Je 'weet' dat Disney niet 'echt' is, toch wil je erin geloven. Zozeer zelfs, dat kritieken op het imperium van Disney vaak niet welkom zijn (Wasko, 1991). Loop eens door je huis (boekenkast, kledingkast, jeugdherinneringen) en ga kamer voor kamer eens na hoeveel elementen van Disney er aanwezig zijn. Een Disney-karakter mag dan fictief zijn, de *merchandise* is dat niet. Als managers in wording, zullen jullie ook niet alleen maar deelnemen aan de wereld, jullie dragen bij aan de vormgeving ervan. Keuzes die jullie maken kunnen effect hebben op de dagelijkse handelingen van jezelf en andere mensen. Nu jullie toch met onderzoek en creativiteit bezig zijn, is het interessant om daar eens bewust naar te kijken. Het begrip 'creativiteit' is omgeven met mythen. Er zijn mensen die 'het' hebben en mensen die 'het' niet hebben, de X-factor zo je wilt. Het zou dan gaan om 'dat ene heldere moment', de mysterieuze creatieve ingeving.

Wat je minder vaak leest, is dat creativiteit vooral ook 95% hard werken is. Nu er Mondriaan-schilderijen bestaan, is het makkelijk om te zeggen dat een kleuter van vier dat ook kan. Kunstenaars die echter werkelijk vernieuwend bleken, kwamen zeer zelden *zomaar* met een nieuw idee. Daar gingen vaak jaren van werken en studeren aan vooraf, waarin een waardevolle mix ontstond van ambachtelijke vaardigheden en kennis van de codes, conventies en tradities (Csikszentmihalyi; 1998; 62-88). Onderzoek speelt hierin een voorname rol. Het gaat dan vooral om een onderzoekende houding, meer dan het analyseren van gegevens uit steekproeven. Tekenaars van Disney beginnen niet zomaar aan het tekenen van bijvoorbeeld *The Lion King* omdat ze op zich al voldoende tekenvaardigheid hebben. Ze streefden ernaar hun kennis van leeuwenwelpen te verdiepen en hebben een aantal leeuwenwelpen naar de tekenstudio gehaald om hun bewegingen te observeren en analyseren om op die manier tot een zo getrouw mogelijk beeld te komen van hun bewegingen (Boothe; 1994).<sup>1</sup>

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1 Disney laat sowieso zeer weinig aan toeval over als het gaat om het uitdiepen, ontwikkelen, doorontwikkelen en testen van ideeën. Een

Jullie zelf hebben in de moduulopdracht in Media & Cultuur een studie gemaakt van de jaren '60 tot en met '90, om een getrouw beeld van een fictief karakter neer te zetten. 'Fictief' wil in dit geval immers niet zeggen dat je dus zomaar iets kunt verzinnen. Zo is het ook met het ontwikkelen van een concept van Imagineering. Je krijgt in de moduulopdracht veel creatieve vrijheid om een mooi concept neer te zetten, maar dat wil niet zeggen dat je zomaar iets kunt doen. Je zult op onderzoek uit gaan, testen, proberen, ontwikkelen, weggooien en weer opnieuw beginnen. Hiermee komen we opnieuw bij het credo: *'Kill your darlings'*.

Deelopdracht (b) die je voor het onderzoeksgedeelte in deze module gaat maken, is bedoeld om je perspectief op onderzoek en creativiteit te verbreden. Met de opdracht oefen je jezelf dus in het kijken naar de wereld vanuit meerdere perspectieven. Je gaat - binnen de tijd die ervoor staat - manieren zoeken om de wereld 'op zijn kop' te zetten; er een speelveld van te maken. In de reader staan diverse voorbeelden van zogeheten 'guerilla marketing', waarin een humoristische, speelse draai gegeven wordt aan manier waarop je de wereld ziet.

De opdracht zelf omvat in totaal drie activiteiten:

1. studie van literatuur en bronnen over creativiteit, management en onderzoek
2. zoeken van voorbeelden en zelf voorbeelden aandragen
3. reflecteren op je bevindingen

Je voert de opdracht uit in tweetallen.

#### *Deel 1) creativiteit, management en onderzoek*

Je neemt deze module deel aan de workshops managementvaardigheden. Hierin komen verschillende creatieve technieken aan bod. Ook in Imagineering staan verschillende creatieve technieken beschreven. Ga aan de hand van de trainingen, literatuur en bronnen na:

1. welke omschrijvingen van creativiteit gegeven worden.
2. welke relatie met management geschetst wordt en
3. welke relatie met onderzoek geschetst wordt.

Tenslotte omschrijf je hoe je zelf tegen creativiteit aankijkt. Je kunt daarbij gebruik maken van verschillende vragen: Hoe definieer je zelf het begrip 'belevenis'? Waar komt het plezier vandaan dat mensen aan een belevenis ervaren? Als je 'de echte wereld' tegenover de 'fictieve wereld' zet, waar lopen dan de grenzen? Wanneer is het voor 'menens', wanneer is het 'slechts' spel? Wat is volgens jou het onderscheid tussen een virtuele wereld en 'de echte werkelijkheid'? Hoe verwacht je dat je deze inzichten zult toepassen in de moduulopdracht? Dit deel neemt maximaal 4 pagina's in beslag.

#### *Deel 2) Voorbeelden*

a) Verzamel 5 voorbeelden van uitingen, objecten, designs, belevenissen, die jij creatief zou noemen en waar een verrassingselement in zit. Het gaat dus om voorbeeld waarvan je meent dat ze de wereld even op zijn kop zetten of die je dwingen buiten je beeld van de 'gewone wereld' te stappen. Voorbeelden dus, die een uitnodiging zijn om anders tegen dingen aan te kijken. Je voorbeelden moeten verder gaan dan uitspraken als 'door naar de bioscoop te gaan, ben je er even uit'. Het gaat om het element van verrassing, dat je even denkt: he, zo kan het ook! of 'zo had ik het nog niet bekeken'.

----- kijkje op de corporate website van Disney illustreert welke eisen alleen al aan stagiairs gesteld worden [http://corporate.disney.go.com/careers/who\\_imagineering.html](http://corporate.disney.go.com/careers/who_imagineering.html), dd. 21 januari 2008.

De voorbeelden voeg je toe aan je verslag. Per voorbeeld breng je onder woorden waarom je in dit geval spreekt van creativiteit. Waar zit de verrassing in? Per voorbeeld gebruik je maximaal 1 a4.

b) Ga zelf op pad (met een camera) en *turn things upside down!*

In deel a) beschrijf je dus vooral dingen die anderen gedaan hebben en wat jullie daarvan vinden. In deel b) ga je zelf ideeën genereren om van iets anders te maken. Neem de camera van je mobiel, of je digitale foto- of filmcamera en ga naar buiten. Je kunt dit in Disneyworld doen of in Leeuwarden. Kijk om je heen, 'buiten', maar ook in tijdschriften, boeken, televisieprogramma's. Zoek drie manieren om van de wereld 'zoals die is' een speelveld te maken. Voeg je drie ideeën toe aan je verslag. Geef ze alleen weer, vertel er nog niks over.

### Deel 3) Reflecteren

In de laatste drie pagina's van je verslag, breng je onder woorden:

- . Wat is er in jouw optiek nodig is geweest om je idee te ontwikkelen? Was het een ingeving? Waar dacht je aan voordat je op het idee kwam? Wat was je aan het doen? Waar mogelijk grijp je terug op de literatuur die je bestudeerd hebt.
- . *Did you kill your darlings?* Hoe heb je ervoor gezorgd dat je niet bij je eerste ingeving bleef hangen?
- . Wat zegt je idee volgens jou over de wereld waar je in leeft? Als degene die jouw idee bekijkt, een marsmannetje zou zijn, wat moet hij dan weten over deze wereld om het te kunnen begrijpen? Welke aannames over de wereld spelen door in je idee? Wat wordt er precies op zijn kop gezet?

*Beoordeling:*

Deel 1) creativiteit, management en onderzoek	. geeft blijkt van grondige studie van de bronnen . spanning weergegeven tussen drie vakgebieden . inzichten in eigen woorden geformuleerd en goed beargumenteerd	5
Deel 2) Voorbeelden	. in de genoemde voorbeeld wordt een link gelegd met de theorie . serieuze inspanning om tot een eigen uiting te komen . oorspronkelijkheid	5
Deel 3) Reflecteren	. reconstructie van denkproces . heldere argumentatie bij idee . Heldere uiteenzetting van aannames	5
Literatuur	Correcte verwijzingen naar de gebruikte bronnen	1
		17
		punten

## APPENDIX 2

### THE WORLD YOUR PLAYGROUND – 2009 – ON PLAYFULNESS

This appendix contains the full text of the second TWYP assignment. Relevant passages have been translated in chapter 2.

*Onderzoek naar de spelende mens: over speelsheid, beleving, creativiteit en onderzoek*

“Stel dat twee onderzoekers twee verschillende theorieën hebben over het doof worden van vlooiën. Onderzoeker X heeft de theorie dat vlooiën doof worden door lawaai. Onderzoeker Y heeft de theorie dat vlooiën doof worden door ze de pootjes uit te trekken. De onderzoekers hebben ieder 1000 vlooiën getraind om op commando van de ene fles in de andere te springen. Nadat ze van de ene fles in de andere gesprongen zijn, stelt X de vlooiën bloot aan lawaai en trekt Y ze de pootjes uit. Bij onderzoeker X springt 50% van de vlooiën in de andere fles, bij onderzoeker Y geen enkele. De onderzoekers concluderen dat één theorie het beste is, namelijk de theorie dat het uittrekken van de pootjes van vlooiën leidt tot doofheid. (Delnooz; 2001; 59)

Helder en logisch nadenken. Op een systematische manier je informatie verzamelen. Geldige argumenten gebruiken om je betoog kracht bij te zetten. Je verdiepen in je doelgroep en deze leren kennen door goed te kijken wat haar beweegt. Onderzoek dus.

In een artikel over marketingblunders bespreken Van Eunen en Reichardt (2006) de mislukte introductie van een 'speciaalbier' voor vrouwen: 'Brunette'. Dit bier werd in 1999 geïntroduceerd en in 2001 alweer uit de markt gehaald. De vormgeving: een normaal bierflesje met op het etiket een rondborstige dame met lang bruin haar. Geflopt: "Het probleem van Brunette zat 'm niet in de smaak maar in de positionering. Het was duidelijk bedacht voor vrouwen door mannen. De naam alleen al...", stelt John Halmans, directeur van Gulpener brouwerij.

Toch is het volgens Halmans niet zozeer te wijten aan een gebrek aan marktonderzoek: "marktonderzoek kan nooit als uitgangspunt dienen voor je beleid, in het beste geval vervult het een ondersteunende functie". De auteurs stellen dat Gulpener eerder geen marktonderzoek deed naar het mogelijke succes van speciaalbieren en ze niettemin op succesvolle wijze wist te introduceren. Halmans stelt: "Voor Brunette werd wel marktonderzoek gehouden en dat flopte". (Van Eunen & Reichardt, 2006).

De relatie tussen marktonderzoek en productintroducties of -innovaties is dus niet eenduidig. Dat je onderzoek hebt gedaan, garandeert niet dat je succesvol zult zijn. Nijs & Peters, de auteurs van het basisboek 'Imagineering: het creëren van belevingswerelden' bevestigen dat er een spanning kan bestaan tussen creativiteit en onderzoek: "met analyse alleen [zullen] nooit onderscheidende belevingsconcepten ontwikkeld worden" (Nijs & Peters, 2004; 113). Er komt meer bij kijken dan een gedegen analyse. Creativiteit, originaliteit en authenticiteit zijn net zo belangrijk. Je hebt kennis nodig van je doelgroep, maar voor belevingsconcepten is het niet mogelijk je doelgroep rechtstreeks te vragen waar zij behoefte aan heeft. Marketingonderzoeker Rex Briggs stelt hierover:

“Een van de domme dingen in marketing op dit moment is dat er gedacht wordt dat je consumenten direct moet vragen waarom ze iets gekocht hebben, of waar ze een reclame-uiting gezien hebben, of wat hen beïnvloed heeft om iets te kopen. Consumenten weten dat helemaal niet. Ze geven je wel een antwoord, maar kunnen dat nooit met zekerheid bepalen” (Gons, 2007)

Briggs bekritiseert het stereotype dat de marketeer eigenlijk een kunstenaar zou zijn:

“De hype van marketing dat het zo uniek is, zo verschillend van welke andere discipline dan ook, is gewoon een afweermechanisme tegen het meten ervan. [...] Dezelfde principes duiken op zoveel verschillende terreinen op, waarom zou het [meten en experimenteren] dan in vredesnaam niet gebruikt kunnen worden in marketing” (Gons, 2007).

Onderzoek kan dus wel degelijk interessante inzichten opleveren, mits het op een zinvolle manier wordt uitgevoerd. Voor onderzoek in *Imagineering* is de consequentie hiervan dat je niet aan je doelgroep rechtstreeks kunt voorleggen of ze het door jou bedachte concept wel of niet interessant zal vinden. Je zult je onderzoek dus via een omweg moeten uitvoeren.

In de beide onderdelen van deze onderzoeksopdracht neem je deze ‘omweg’ door het concept ‘speelsheid’ centraal te stellen of beter gezegd: door je onderzoek en je analyse te benaderen vanuit de idee van de spelende mens. Volgens Nijs & Peters (2002) is het in onze huidige beleveniseconomie vooral nodig om onderzoek te doen naar de waarden van je doelgroep. De beleveniseconomie wordt volgens verschillende auteurs gekenmerkt door spel en speelsheid (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Aupers, 2002; De Mul, 2002). Valt speelsheid misschien zelf ook als een waarde te zien?

Aan de ene kant lijkt het niet meer dan logisch onze huidige cultuur als een speelse te beschrijven: de game-industrie is *booming*; entertainment is om vermaak en gaat daarmee in zekere zin om spel; de opmars van *serious games* in het onderwijs geeft aan dat we misschien liever spelend leren dan op een andere manier. De historicus Huizinga was van mening dat *alle* cultuur zijn oorsprong vindt in het spel (1938). Anderen menen dat het vooral de Westerse cultuur van dit moment is, die gekenmerkt wordt door speelsheid (Aupers, 2002; De Mul, 2002). De medialisering van de samenleving maakt het daarbij mogelijk in toenemende mate van alledaagse objecten ook een spel te maken (McGonigal, 2006). In de wetenschappelijke wereld wordt het vakgebied *gamestudies* daarnaast steeds volwassener (Raessens & Goldstein, 2005). Hierin wordt volop gezocht naar adequate definities van spel en spelen: wat doen we eigenlijk als we spelen? Wat is eigenlijk een spel? En ben je speels als je een spel speelt of is daar meer aan de hand?

Er is een Engels gezegde: *all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy* waarin een duidelijke tegenstelling bestaat tussen de serieuze aangelegenheid van werken en de kost verdienen en de niet serieuze aangelegenheid van spelen en dingen doen die je zelf leuk vindt. Dit laatste valt dan binnen de sfeer van de vrije tijd en ontspanning. Mensen die van hun werk hun hobby hebben gemaakt, benijden we soms. Tegelijkertijd vinden we soms ook dat het niet echt werk is dat ze doen. Dat hoort immers niet leuk te zijn. Vaak wordt geprobeerd ook werk steeds leuker en uitdagender te maken. Soms door de inhoud van een functie zelf, soms door aanvullende activiteiten te organiseren en soms door de werkomgeving zo aan te passen dat deze lijkt op een plek waar men ook graag vrije tijd zou doorbrengen. Het kantoor van Google in Zurich is daar een goed voorbeeld van.

Niet alleen de besteding van vrije tijd maar ook mediagedrag wordt wel als speels beschouwd (Wilson, 2003). Sowieso omdat het vaak entertainment betreft, maar ook de mogelijkheden van nieuwe media, lenen zich volgens sommigen het meest voor een speelse benadering van de content. Interactiviteit speelt daarin een grote rol (De Mul, 2002; Raessens & Goldstein, 2005). Niet alleen in het onderzoek naar games wordt gekeken naar de spelende mens, ook in de managementleer wordt veel gekeken naar de mogelijkheid van bijvoorbeeld een speelse werkplek (Costea, Crump & Holm, 2005). Moeten we misschien in ons 'ontwerp' van organisaties meer rekening houden met de speelsheid van mensen?

Er bestaat een verband tussen speelsheid, creativiteit en innovatie (Duke & Geurts, 2007). Daarnaast zijn creativiteit en innovatie zijn in de beleviseconomie belangrijker dan ooit (Pine & Gilmore, 2002; 2008). Spelen is dus (niet langer?) alleen interessant om het mogelijke plezier, maar ook omdat we er misschien scherper en creatiever van worden. Begrijpen wat 'de spelende mens' beweegt is dus om meerdere redenen interessant.

Laten we beginnen met een korte beschrijving van waarden. Nijs & Peters (2002) stellen hierover:

“... de (koop)motieven en het (koop)gedrag van consumenten [worden] bepaald door de (eind)waarden die zij nastreven: iemand die avontuur belangrijk vindt, gaat bungyjumpen, iemand die veiligheid hoog in het vaandel draagt boekt een pakketreis en iemand die gelijkheid en vrede op aarde nastreeft koopt Max Havelaar koffie en is lid van Amnesty International.” (2002; 116)

In *Imageneering* geven zij verschillende omschrijvingen van waarden. De meest eenvoudige formulering die zij geven luidt: “opvatting van een individu omtrent wat wenselijk of goed is” (2002;116). Een meer complexe omschrijving luidt:

“Waarden zijn mentale patronen die beschrijven hoe we aankijken tegen relaties, werk, technologie en het leven in het algemeen. Waarden zijn enorm krachtig, overal en altijd aanwezig en sterk verschillend van plaats tot plaats en van mens tot mens. Ook waarden veranderen, maar zeer langzaam: onze werkethiek, ons geloof in het hiernamaals, het belang dat we hechten aan feesten, aan andere culturen, aan het leven” (2002; 24).

Omdat er zoveel verschillende waarden zijn, zijn ze in deze module niet heel makkelijk te onderzoeken. Om daar goed onderzoek naar te doen, heb je het al gauw over onderzoeksprojecten van meerdere jaren. We houden ons er daarom in deze opdracht vooral zijdelings mee bezig en stellen speelsheid centraal, om hierboven genoemde redenen. Dit betekent dat jullie voor de opdracht te maken krijgen met een pittig operationaliseringsvraagstuk, zoals dat dan heet: het meetbaar maken van een abstract begrip. Er zijn diverse onderzoekers die zich wel eens over de vraag hebben gebogen wat speelsheid eigenlijk is. Zijn ze daar goed uitgekomen? Je gaat op zoek naar reeds bestaande omschrijvingen en bekijkt of er een manier is waarop je dit kunt koppelen aan je doelgroep.

Vorig jaar hebben jullie aan de hand van een reeds bestaand databestand een analyse gemaakt van je doelgroep. Dit jaar gaan jullie deze gegevens verzamelen aan de hand van een vragenlijst die jullie zelf op gaan stellen en gaan afnemen onder jullie doelgroep. In totaal zijn er voor je moduulopdracht vier doelgroepen onderscheiden. In de verschillende moduulopdracht-groepen werken jullie samen

aan het opstellen van de vragenlijst die jullie gaan afnemen onder de doelgroep. Ook ontwikkelen de groepen met dezelfde doelgroep een gezamenlijk deel zodat de gegevens ook onderling samen te voegen zijn en eventueel vergelijkingen binnen de groepen te maken zijn. Het gaat erom je een zo helder mogelijk beeld te vormen van je doelgroep op basis van deze analyse. De technieken die je nodig hebt om je doelgroep te karakteriseren, oefen je tijdens de computerpractica SPSS.

Voor de eerste twee weken betekent dit dat jullie heel hard aan de slag moeten om zo snel mogelijk helder te krijgen wat je precies wilt weten van je doelgroep. Je moet je bevindingen immers mee kunnen nemen in de ontwikkeling van je concept. Je begint dus in week 1 met bronnenonderzoek naar je doelgroep en met het opstellen van de vragenlijst.

Per PGO-groep wordt een onderverdeling gemaakt in de verschillende doelgroepen. Dit betekent dus dat er bijvoorbeeld zoveel groepen met de doelgroep 50+ werken als dat er PGO-groepen zijn. Een goed moment om je krachten te bundelen en in onderling overleg een vragenlijst op te stellen. Op deze manier kun je – als de vragenlijsten zijn afgenomen – de gegevens samenvoegen. In het eerste hoorcollege wordt dieper ingegaan op wat er komt kijken bij het opstellen en afnemen van een vragenlijst en op de manier waarop jullie het beste kunnen samenwerken.

Als je je onderzoek hebt uitgevoerd, dien je vervolgens zelf – door creatief te denken – de vertaalslag te maken van de informatie die je nu hebt van je doelgroep naar de mate waarin het concept dat je wilt ontwikkelen, hierbij zal aansluiten. Goed doordachte concepten zijn vaak het meest interessant. Je eerste ideeën gooi je dan ook vaak weg: “*Kill your darlings*”. Jullie hebben de noodzaak daarvan al ervaren in de module Media & Cultuur. Je zag dat voor de sterkere concepten diepgaand onderzoek gedaan was. Ook zag je dat verschillende groepen met een vergelijkbaar concept kwamen. Je eerste concept gooi je daarom weg, niet omdat het slecht is, maar omdat het voor de hand ligt.

“Marketing omvat de – op de markt afgestemde – ontwikkeling, prijsbepaling, promotie en distributie van producten, diensten of ideeën, en andere activiteiten om planmatig transacties te bevorderen, een reputatie te creëren en duurzame relaties met klanten op te bouwen, waarbij alle partijen hun doelstellingen verwezenlijken”. (Verhage; 2004; 37)

Misschien ken je bovenstaande definitie van marketing nog. Los van de invulling van de 4 P's, die bij Imagineering anders wordt ingevuld, zie je staan dat het erom gaat om 'een duurzame relatie op te bouwen', tot wederzijds profijt. Je doelgroep is daarin de partij met wie jij een relatie probeert op te bouwen. Dit doe je door haar goed te leren kennen. Het concept dat je ontwikkelt, is de verrassing waarmee je wilt laten zien dat je haar goed begrepen hebt. Je verklapt als het ware niet van tevoren wat het is.

Onderzoek maakt dus een ondersteunend, maar belangrijk deel uit van het Imagineeringsproces. (Nijs & Peters, 2002;113). Het Imagineeringsproces is opgedeeld in 6 verschillende fasen: de kennisverwervingsfase, de broedfase, de verdiepfase, de creatie- en reflectiefase, de uitvoeringsfase en de vernieuwingsfase. Onderzoek is in twee van deze fasen bijzonder belangrijk: de kennisverwervingsfase en de verdiepfase. Je hebt acht weken om je onderzoek te rapporteren. De uitvoering moet natuurlijk al eerder gedaan zijn, anders kun je de resultaten niet gebruiken voor de ontwikkeling van je concept. De voorzitters van de

moduulopdrachtgroepen spelen daarom een belangrijke rol om ervoor te zorgen dat het onderzoek op tijd is uitgevoerd.

[Part A of the assignment was described here, but has been omitted for the sake of brevity]

#### Benodigdheden voor de opdracht

- . Lessenserie Dr Stat - [www.drstat.net](http://www.drstat.net) - aan te schaffen met creditcard of via paypal <sup>2</sup>.
- . SPSS - zelf te bestellen via Surfspot ([www.surfspot.nl](http://www.surfspot.nl), inloggen met je studentaccount) of via geïnstalleerde programmatuur op schoolnetwerk.
- . Basisboek Statistiek met SPSS van Baarda & De Goede of een vergelijkbare introductie in SPSS.
- . De reader van het moduulboek *Imagineering*
- . een digitale fotocamera, filmcamera of fototoestel op je mobiel, flash, photoshop of wat je nog meer van pas komt bij deel (b)

De camera die je nodig hebt brengt ons op deel (b) van deze onderzoeksopdracht.

#### *Deelopdracht (b) De wereld je speeltuin*

De wereld doet zich (veelal) op een vanzelfsprekende manier aan je voor. Je wordt 's ochtends wakker en je gaat ervan uit dat de wereld die je gisteren voor het slapengaan achterliet, deze ochtend nog hetzelfde is. Je vult je dag in volgens een vast ritueel en staat er niet altijd bij stil dat je – uit het niets – iets heel anders zou kunnen doen dan de dag ervoor. Je agenda en planning staan al gereed en de toekomst lijkt een invuloefening.

Ga je echter 's ochtends een keer al je stappen na om te bekijken waarom je ze zet, waarom je de dingen doet die je doet, dan blijkt dat je elke dag een inspanning levert om die wereld hetzelfde te houden. Je vult de koffie aan die je 's ochtends drinkt door op tijd boodschappen te doen, je slaat je bed open om het beddengoed fris te houden (of niet), je wast je kleren. Om te kunnen zeggen dat alles 'zijn gangetje' gaat, is een onderhoudsproces nodig.

Het kost veel moeite om dingen vanzelfsprekend te laten lijken.

Kijk je vervolgens naar alle dingen om je heen. je woon- of slaapkamer, je keuken, je kleren, je fiets, dan zie je dat overal een ontwerp achter zit. Die ontwerpen geven ideeën en opvattingen weer over wat stevig of robuust inhoudt, wat mooi is, wat een goede nachtrust is, wat gezond eten is enzovoorts. Wat ze met elkaar gemeen hebben, is een combinatie van ontwerp en onderzoek. In dit geval geen onderzoek naar de wereld 'zoals die is', maar de wereld 'zoals die zou kunnen zijn': een wereld in wording, een creatieve uiting.

Er zijn onderzoekers die ervan uitgaan dat je de werkelijkheid leert begrijpen door haar te bekijken en te beschrijven. Er zijn er ook die menen dat je haar leert begrijpen, door er iets in te veranderen en te kijken wat er gebeurt. Dit kun je doen door gebruiksvorwerpen te ontwikkelen en testen, of door mensen uit te nodigen dingen anders te doen en te kijken wat er vervolgens gebeurt. Deze manier van

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2 Studenten voor wie het niet mogelijk is om met een creditcard of via Paypal de lessenserie aan te schaffen, tekenen zich in week 1 bij Maaike de Jong. Nadere informatie volgt hierover in het hoorcollege.

onderzoeken worden ook wel design- of action research genoemd (Delnooz; 2006). Een speelse houding blijkt hierbij handig te zijn. Maar wat houdt dat eigenlijk in?

De aanname in dit soort onderzoek is dat de wereld geen statisch gegeven is dat onthuld of ontrafeld moet worden, maar dat de wereld constant in beweging is (mede) als gevolg van de bewegingen die wij maken: ze is constant 'onder constructie'. Daarbij worden de dingen die ontworpen zijn, vaak ook nog eens niet benut waarvoor ze oorspronkelijk ontwikkeld waren. Het Franse minitel bijvoorbeeld, bedoeld voor zakelijke boodschappen en advertenties, werd al gauw een medium waar Fransen in hun lokale gemeenschap afspraakjes mee maakten (Spaink, 1994). Niemand had kunnen voorspellen dat SMS benut zou worden als aanvulling op de telefoon. Het telegram als medium lijkt daardoor geheel verdwenen.

Wat nu nog niet bestaat, kan dus ontstaan door de ideeën die we hebben en wat we daarmee doen. We spelen op dit moment zelf een belangrijke rol in hoe de wereld nu en straks eruit ziet. Wat echt is en wat niet, is constant onderwerp van onderhandeling en verandering. Creativiteit speelt een belangrijke rol in de manier waarop deze veranderingen kunnen ontstaan. Maar hoe geef je voeding aan creativiteit en welke rol speelt 'speelsheid' hierin?

Als managers in wording, zullen jullie niet alleen maar deelnemen aan de wereld, jullie dragen bij aan de vormgeving ervan. Keuzes die jullie maken kunnen effect hebben op de dagelijkse handelingen van jezelf en andere mensen. Nu jullie toch met onderzoek en creativiteit bezig zijn, is het interessant om daar eens bewust naar te kijken. Het begrip 'creativiteit' is omgeven met mythen. Er zijn mensen die 'het' hebben en mensen die 'het' niet hebben, de X-factor zo je wilt. Het zou dan gaan om 'dat ene heldere moment', de mysterieuze creatieve ingeving.

Wat je minder vaak leest, is dat creativiteit vooral ook 95% hard werken is. Nu er Mondriaan-schilderijen bestaan, is het makkelijk om te zeggen dat een kleuter van vier dat ook kan. Kunstenaars die echter werkelijk vernieuwend bleken, kwamen zeer zelden zomaar met een nieuw idee. Daar gingen vaak jaren van werken en studeren aan vooraf, waarin een waardevolle mix ontstond van ambachtelijke vaardigheden en kennis van de codes, conventies en tradities (Csikszentmihalyi; 1998; 62-88).

Mensen die creatief zijn, worden vaak speels genoemd. Daarom heet dit deel van de opdracht: de wereld je speeltuin. Een speelse houding kan ook samenvallen met een onderzoekende houding, een beetje zoals het zusje van Dexter uit Dexter's Secret Laboratory: "Oooh, what does this button do?" Door dingen te testen en op hun kop te zetten kom je soms tot verrassende inzichten en soms zelfs tot vernieuwing. Maar wanneer ben je nou iets 'gewoon' aan het testen en wanneer ben je op een speelse manier aan het testen?

Onderzoek kan veel meer zijn dan het analyseren van gegevens uit steekproeven. Tekenaars van Disney beginnen niet zomaar aan het tekenen van bijvoorbeeld *The Lion King* omdat ze op zich al voldoende tekenvaardigheid hebben. Ze streefden ernaar hun kennis van leeuwenwelpen te verdiepen en hebben een aantal leeuwenwelpen naar de tekenstudio gehaald om hun bewegingen te observeren en analyseren om op die manier tot een zo getrouw mogelijk beeld te komen van hun bewegingen (Boothe; 1994).<sup>3</sup>

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3 Disney laat sowieso zeer weinig aan toeval over als het gaat om het verdiepen, ontwikkelen, doorontwikkelen en testen van ideeën. Een

Deelopdracht (b) die je voor het onderzoeksgedeelte in deze module gaat maken, is bedoeld om je perspectief op creativiteit en speelsheid te verbreden door eens op een onderzoekende manier te gaan spelen met je eigen aannames. Met de opdracht oefen je jezelf dus in het kijken naar de wereld vanuit meerdere perspectieven. Je gaat - binnen de tijd die ervoor staat - manieren zoeken om de wereld 'op zijn kop' te zetten; er een speelveld van te maken. In de reader staan diverse voorbeelden van zogeheten 'guerilla marketing', waarin een humoristische, speelse draai gegeven wordt aan manier waarop je de wereld ziet.

De opdracht zelf omvat in totaal drie activiteiten:

4. studie van literatuur en bronnen over creativiteit, speelsheid en onderzoek
5. zoeken van voorbeelden en zelf maken
6. reflecteren op je bevindingen

Je voert de opdracht uit in tweetallen.

#### *Deel 1) onderzoek naar speelsheid:*

Je neemt deze module deel aan de workshops managementvaardigheden. Hierin komen verschillende creatieve technieken aan bod. Ook in Imagineering staan verschillende creatieve technieken beschreven. Daarnaast tref je op Bello enkele documenten aan die over spel en speelsheid gaan. Aan de hand van de trainingen, literatuur en bronnen kun je verschillende vragen verkennen:

- Welke omschrijvingen kom je tegen van speelsheid?
- Is speelsheid iets dat in mensen zit of in situaties?
- Wie bepaalt wanneer er sprake is van speelsheid? En hoe?
- Is (kwantitatief) onderzoek naar speelsheid eigenlijk wel mogelijk?
- Is speelsheid (altijd) iets positiefs?
- Hoe hangen speelsheid, creativiteit en innovatie samen?
- Wat is eigenlijk een experience?
- Wat maakt een experience speels?
- Wanneer is mediagebruik speels te noemen?
- Kan onderzoek ook speels zijn? Wanneer?
- Wat betekent het voor mensen om speels te zijn?

Dit zijn heel brede vragen. Ze zijn dan ook bedoeld om je uit te nodigen je gedachten eens vrij over het onderwerp te laten gaan. Kies een of enkele vragen uit die je nader onder de loep zou willen leggen. (Je kunt de vragen en je ideeën hierover ook gebruiken om te komen tot een formulering van je probleemstelling in deel A). Hierover schrijf je een kort essay van maximaal 4 pagina's waarin je komt tot een beschrijving van wat speelsheid volgens jou inhoudt en hoe dit het beste onderzocht zou kunnen worden.

#### *Deel 2) Voorbeelden*

a) Verzamel 3 voorbeelden van uitingen, objecten, designs, belevenissen, alledaagse gesprekken, situaties die jij zowel creatief als speels zou noemen en waar een verrassingselement in zit. Het gaat dus om voorbeeld waarvan je meent dat ze de wereld even op zijn kop zetten of die je dwingen buiten je beeld van de 'gewone wereld' te stappen. Voorbeelden dus, die een uitnodiging zijn om anders tegen dingen

----- kijkje op de corporate website van Disney illustreert welke eisen alleen al aan stagiairs gesteld worden [http://corporate.disney.go.com/careers/who\\_imagineering.html](http://corporate.disney.go.com/careers/who_imagineering.html), dd. 21 januari 2008.

aan te kijken. Je voorbeelden moeten verder gaan dan uitspraken als 'door naar de bioscoop te gaan, ben je er even uit'. Het gaat om het element van verrassing, dat je even denkt: he, zo kan het ook! of 'zo had ik het nog niet bekeken'.

De voorbeelden voeg je toe aan je verslag. Per voorbeeld breng je nauwkeurig onder woorden waarom je in dit geval spreekt van speelsheid. Per voorbeeld gebruik je maximaal 1 a4.

b) Ga zelf op pad (met een camera) en *turn things upside down!*

In deel a) beschrijf je dus vooral dingen die anderen gedaan hebben en wat jullie daarvan vinden. In deel b) ga je zelf ideeën genereren om van iets iets anders te maken. Neem de camera van je mobiel, of je digitale foto- of filmcamera en ga naar buiten. Je kunt dit in Disneyworld doen of in Leeuwarden. Kijk om je heen, 'buiten', maar ook in tijdschriften, boeken, televisieprogramma's. Zoek drie manieren om van de wereld 'zoals die is' een speelveld te maken. Voeg je drie ideeën toe aan je verslag. Geef ze alleen weer, vertel er nog niks over.

### Deel 3) Reflecteren

In de laatste drie pagina's van je verslag, breng je onder woorden:

- . Wat is er in jouw optiek nodig geweest om je idee/uiting te ontwikkelen? Denk hierbij aan vragen als: had je een ingeving? Waar dacht je aan voordat je op het idee kwam? Wat was je aan het doen? Waar mogelijk grijp je terug op de literatuur die je bestudeerd hebt.
- . *Did you kill your darlings?* (Hoe) heb je ervoor gezorgd dat je niet bij je eerste ingeving bleef hangen?
- . Wat zegt je idee volgens jou over de wereld waar je in leeft? Als degene die jouw idee bekijkt, een marsmannetje zou zijn, wat moet hij dan weten over deze wereld om het te kunnen begrijpen? Welke aannames over de wereld spelen door in je idee? Wat wordt er precies op zijn kop gezet?
- . Als je kijkt naar je eigen omschrijving van speelsheid aan het begin van de opdracht, zou je dan de uitingen die je gemaakt hebt ook speels noemen?

### Beoordeling:

Deel 1) ontwikkelen van een definitie	. inzichten uit operationalisering in deel A zijn opgenomen . samen met inzichten uit het aangeleverde bronnenmateriaal . inzichten in eigen woorden geformuleerd en goed beargumenteerd	5
Deel 2) Voorbeelden	. in de drie genoemde voorbeelden wordt een link gelegd met de theorie: waarom is deze uiting volgens jullie speels?	3
Deel 3) Eigen uitingen	. getuigt van een serieuze inspanning om tot een eigen uiting te komen . oorspronkelijkheid	3
Deel 3) Reflecteren	. reconstructie van denkproces . heldere argumentatie bij idee . Heldere uiteenzetting van aannames	5
Literatuur	Correcte verwijzingen naar de gebruikte bronnen	1
		17
		punten

## Doelen

Als je de opdrachten (a) en (b) hebt afgerond, heb je niet alleen de thematiek van de spelende mens verkent, maar heb je je daarnaast de volgende vaardigheden eigen gemaakt:

- 1) Je hebt kennis van de verschillende soorten onderzoek die van belang zijn voor marketing en consumentenpsychologie
  - a) je kunt beschrijven wat het verschil is tussen kwalitatief en kwantitatief onderzoek
  - b) je kunt de meest algemene methoden van dataverzameling in de sociale wetenschappen beschrijven.
  - c) je kunt een goede keuze maken uit bronnen en online databases die je gebruikt voor je onderzoek.
  - d) je kunt een abstract begrip operationaliseren of onderbouwen waarom een begrip moeilijk te operationaliseren valt.
  
- 2) Je hebt kennis van de verschillende soorten onderzoek die van belang zijn in het Imagineeringsproces.
  - a) Je kunt hierin een onderscheid aanbrengen tussen de analyse van de vraag en de analyse van het aanbod.
  - b) je kunt beschrijven welke methoden geschikt zijn voor deze soorten analyse.
  - c) je kunt deze methoden toepassen in het ontwerp van een experience.
  
- 3) Je kunt bivariate analyses uitvoeren met SPSS en de uitkomsten ervan correct interpreteren.
  - a) Je weet wat bedoeld wordt met statistische toetsing en met significantie, in het bijzonder: de chi-kwadraat toets, de t-test, correlatie en regressie.
  - b) Je bent in staat de juiste test toe te passen bij het meetniveau van de variabelen.
  - c) Je kunt de output van een procedure in SPSS correct analyseren
  - d) je kunt de juiste grafische output genereren, zoals: tabellen, taartdiagrammen, histogrammen en scatterplots.
  - e) Je kunt de inzichten uit je onderzoek vertalen naar de praktijk van het ontwikkelen van een experience.
  - f) Je kunt de inzichten uit het onderzoek rapporteren.

## Deadlines:

De deadline voor het inleveren van het onderzoeksgedeelte bij de modulopdracht is vrijdag week 8 tussen 13:00 en 15:00 uur bij de servicedesk.

## APPENDIX 3

### CASE STUDY DATABASE DOCUMENTATION OF BOROBUDUR

These documents have been collected to keep track of everything that goes on in the design process. These documents are not part of the analysis in this thesis though. The design process has only been reported in order to highlight the enabling and constraining conditions we encountered.

<b>Case study evidence</b>	<b>Documented are</b>
Documents	110 essays* Educational policy documents module evaluations (survey and open questions). panel meetings with the design group, consultations with game designers, feedback from students on assignments,
Archival records	. e-mail conversations . Blackboard Environment
Interviews	. interview with student dean about playfulness and self management – to establish design limitations . recorded conversations and panel meetings with design group members . (formal) self management conversations with students
Direct observations	Noted in logbook, journal and field notes taken during classes and meetings
Participant observation	As teacher and as member (and chair) of the design group team meetings,
Physical artifacts	One paper copy of the Borobudur temple

\*Although they are part of the case study database, these documents are confidential and can't be released anonymously until the school's requirement to store digital documents for seven years has passed. Until that point, there is still a possibility to lead an image or quote back to a specific student.

APPENDIX 4  
 RECONSTRUCTION OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS AS A  
 DESIGN PROCESS

<b>Knowledge stream</b> (aimed at theoretical output)	Attendance of 2007 Isaga Conference led to the wish to doing research on games	Collecting knowledge and information on collaborative learning, game design, play and game studies, formulating first ideas on the way students may be invited to reflect on the topic of virtual worlds, from a philosophical perspective	The analysis of the reports of the first year revealed students' unease with several ambiguities. Students report discomfort with a lack of clear boundaries between what is real and what is virtual. Playfulness turns out to be related to tolerance of ambiguity.	<b>Knowledge development:</b> . Interdisciplinary exploration of the concept PF . Empirical study of adolescent playfulness . understanding of constraining en enabling factors
		Turning point in design- new focus on understanding playfulness		
Practice stream:	A collaborative 'struggle' with students on how to design research assignments – testing first ideas with a small group	Try out of the co-created new assignment with the second year students. First analysis of findings reported at Isaga 2008. Playfulness was not yet the focus, but students reported enjoying the assignment	In the development of new assignments, we take ambiguity as a design principle and are met with skepticism and also anger. This helped us build an understanding of the relation between trust and learning about complexity	<b>Design principles:</b> building blocks for promoting playfulness
Orientation <	ESSAY 2006 -2007	TWYP 2007 – 2008	TWYP 2008 – 2009	2009>

*The time period consisted of three intersecting and concurrent design projects aimed at creating an educational space that promotes and fosters playfulness:*

The world your playground (TWYP): assignment designed to invite reflection on the rules of ordinary life. Students' reports are the core of the data used in the case study.

Media & You (M&Y): assignments designed to invite reflection on self management and ordinary life from academic year 2009 until 2012. Excluded from case study.

Bobobodur (Bb): concept in development for a philosophical game about self management. Its design is informed by the documents retrieved from TWYP and M&Y.

APPENDIX 5

CODING SHEET FOR DIRECTED CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE IMAGES

How do students make use of the available space to reframe the situations? (Rule following / rule breaking)

How do students practically accomplish playfulness?

Under what category of the PLEX framework can their creations be placed?

CREATIONS/INTERVENTIONS/  
EXPRESSIONS

How do students make use of the available space to reframe the situations? (Rule following / rule breaking)

How do students practically accomplish playfulness?

Under what category of the PLEX framework can their creations be placed?

(PLEX\_Captivation)  
etc.

**Experience**

**Description**

- Captivation Forgetting one's surroundings
- Challenge Testing abilities in a demanding task
- Competition Contest with oneself or an opponent
- Completion Finishing a major task, closure
- Control Dominating, commanding, regulating
- Cruelty Causing mental or physical pain
- Discovery Finding something new or unknown
- Eroticism A sexually arousing experience
- Exploration Investigating an object or situation
- Expression Manifesting oneself creatively
- Fantasy An imagined experience
- Fellowship Friendship, communality or intimacy
- Humor Fun, joy, amusement, jokes, gags
- Nurture Taking care of oneself or others
- Relaxation Relief from bodily or mental work
- Sensation Excitement by stimulating senses
- Simulation An imitation of everyday life
- Submission Being part of a larger structure
- Subversion Breaking social rules and norms
- Suffering Experience of loss, frustration, anger
- Sympathy Sharing emotional feelings
- Thrill Excitement derived from risk, danger

What quotes / descriptions illustrate this?

Are they in the ...

- narrative
- reflection

Building Blocks of Playfulness  
(Lieberman, Glynn & Webster)

- Sense of humor
- Spontaneity  ~~Spontaneity (doubled)~~
- physical  Expressiveness
- cognitive  Fun
- social  Creativity
- Manifest joy  Silliness

(BB\_Sense\_of\_Humor) etc.  
(APS\_Expressiveness) etc.

Is there	<input type="checkbox"/> deliberate ambiguity (enjoying play with meaning) <input type="checkbox"/> praise of polysemie <input type="checkbox"/> active use of paradox
What kind of style forms are used in their interventions? (After Stewart, as mentioned in Sutton-Smith)	<input type="checkbox"/> reversal <input type="checkbox"/> inversion <input type="checkbox"/> exaggeration <input type="checkbox"/> paradox <input type="checkbox"/> playing with boundaries <input type="checkbox"/> playing with infinity <input type="checkbox"/> playing with space <input type="checkbox"/> playing with time <input type="checkbox"/> pastiche (mimesis)
This becomes visible through	
Caillouis (paidia is assumed). Under which class can their articulations be placed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Agon (competition) <input type="checkbox"/> Alea (chance) <input type="checkbox"/> Mimicry (simulation) <input type="checkbox"/> Illinx (vertigo) <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable
Do they mention the feedback they got on their ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> no, they didn't execute their ideas <input type="checkbox"/> no, their ideas didn't lend themselves for it <input type="checkbox"/> no, they skipped this entirely <input type="checkbox"/> yes, they reflect on it <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but they only mention it <input type="checkbox"/> the idea was executed, but there was no feedback collected
Did they solve a problem?	<input type="checkbox"/> Of any kind?
If so, what kind of problem?	<input type="checkbox"/> social <input type="checkbox"/> moral <input type="checkbox"/> practical <input type="checkbox"/> environmental <input type="checkbox"/> cognitive <input type="checkbox"/> aesthetic / design <input type="checkbox"/> other
If so, how do they reflect on what they did?	<input type="checkbox"/> critical of their own creativity <input type="checkbox"/> not critical <input type="checkbox"/> no mention of it <input type="checkbox"/> critical of their own playfulness <input type="checkbox"/> not critical <input type="checkbox"/> no mention of it
What quotes or examples are illustrative of this?	
Do they comment on the assignment itself? If so, what comments	
Do they comment on what they learned from it? If so, what comments?	

APPENDIX 6  
 CODING SHEET FOR DIRECTED CONTENT ANALYSIS  
 OF THE ESSAYS

METADATA	Node for report number (x)
Anonymity & confidentiality (Anon)	<input type="checkbox"/> has the document been made anonymous in the text <input type="checkbox"/> have the student numbers been replaced by the respondents' numbers <input type="checkbox"/> has this been done for all nodes and subdocuments as well
In what year was the assignment made (year)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2007 -)2008 (creativity & virtual worlds) <input type="checkbox"/> (2008 -)2009 (playfulness)
How many students in the making of this report	(number)
Is it clear - from the descriptions - whether it actually was a group effort? (group effort)	<input type="checkbox"/> indeterminable <input type="checkbox"/> the essay clearly states "I" <input type="checkbox"/> the report is written in "we" form <input type="checkbox"/> from the description, it can be derived all students participated in the process of collecting and executing ideas.
What was the composition of the group in terms of gender? (group composition)	<input type="checkbox"/> all male <input type="checkbox"/> all female <input type="checkbox"/> mixed balanced (1-1 or 2-2) <input type="checkbox"/> one male, rest female <input type="checkbox"/> one female, rest male
Did the students make the assignment properly? (understanding)	<input type="checkbox"/> yes, all parts are present <input type="checkbox"/> yes, all parts are connected <input type="checkbox"/> yes, but they have difficulty understanding what is expected of them <input type="checkbox"/> no, they reflected on their module assignment, not the playfulness assignment <input type="checkbox"/> no, they did enter images of their ideas, but they don't discuss the ideas themselves <input type="checkbox"/> no, they make no connection between their thoughts on the topic and the things they came up with <input type="checkbox"/> no, they made up ideas to interact with social order differently, but they did not actually execute their ideas.
Did the students make the assignment properly? (performance)	<b>brief qualitative description of my assessment of their efforts - what stands out?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing in particular <input type="checkbox"/> highly original / witty <input type="checkbox"/> playful in a serious way <input type="checkbox"/> well executed <input type="checkbox"/> displays "sensible foolishness" <input type="checkbox"/> creating free space where there is little <input type="checkbox"/> courageous
Why does it stand out? (outstanding)	
What (if any) quotes are illustrative for the way it stands out (outstanding why)	

<b>THEORETICAL CONCEPTS</b>	<b>FOR THE PLAYFULNESS ESSAYS ONLY – 2009</b>
S-S: In what rhetoric can their comments be placed? (rhetoric)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 rhetoric of play as progress (animals and children adapt and develop during play in order to prepare for the adult life)</li> <li>0 rhetoric of play as fate (where the choices and outcomes of our actions are dictated by destiny, luck or whatever)</li> </ul>
Not applicable in the first year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 The rhetoric of play as power (which sees play as a representation of conflict and as a way to establish and enforce the power status of the winning players)</li> <li>0 The rhetoric of play as identity (as “a means of confirming, maintaining, or advancing the power and identity of the community of players” (1997, p. 10)</li> <li>0 The rhetoric of play as the imaginary (as applied to creativity and “playful improvisation” in arts and other aspects of life.</li> <li>0 The rhetoric of self (where the focus is on enjoyment or fun aspect of the participating players themselves)</li> <li>0 7) The rhetoric of play as frivolous (as in cases where play is regarded as something unnecessary, even foolish).</li> </ul>
What (if any) quotes and examples are illustrative of this?	(subnodes )
How do students define playfulness?	
(Giddens) What sorts of enabling and constraining conditions do students mention in regard of their options to be playful? (conditions)	if at all, they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 material</li> <li>0 (social) sanction</li> <li>0 structural</li> </ul> (these need to be thematically addressed, based on the literature review – so: expectations of maturity, construction of social order, playfulness of teachers, school system in general, a playful home).
This is visible in a quote like ...	
<b>THEORETICAL CONCEPTS</b>	<b>FOR BOTH YEARS</b>
(Giddens) What sorts of enabling and constraining conditions do students mention in regard of their options to be creative? (conditions)	if at all, they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 material</li> <li>0 (social) sanction</li> <li>0 structural</li> </ul> (these need to be thematically addressed, based on the literature review – so: expectations of maturity, construction of social order, the creativity of teacher, school system in general creativity at home, problem solving).
This is visible in a quote like ...	
What comments are expressive of ... ?	<b>Theoretical concepts</b>
one node for every keyword + node with that keyword & illustrative	How do students come to a definition of the situation? (social construction of reality) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 routinization</li> <li>0 rule following</li> <li>0 motivation to follow rules</li> <li>0 motivation to break or play with rules</li> </ul>
For the establishment of the definition of the situation, look for naturalistic statements - ‘nature of man’, ‘it is common knowledge’, ‘as we all know’, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 reflexive self monitoring</li> <li>0 rules of irrelevance</li> <li>0 rules of engrossment</li> <li>0 aliveness to the situation</li> <li>0 lusory attitude</li> <li>0 ‘bubbling effervescence’</li> <li>0 transcendence</li> <li>0 an aesthetic stance</li> </ul>
(concepts_routinisation) etc.	

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**Opositions (do they mention them)**

- rationality / irrationality
- productivity / non-productivity
- academic / social emotional playfulness
- adulthood / childhood
- seriousness / playfulness
- reality / fiction
- reality – escapism
- Reality – fiction
- Reality – virtual worlds
- Maturity – childishness

**Thematic concepts**

How do students formulate their assessment of the situation? (Underlying notions of what is good)

- play
- culture
- social order
- utopia
- ordinary life
- moral engagement
- communitas
- liminality
- subjunctivity
- authenticity
- freedom
- fun
- conformity
- self
- alienation
- boredom

How do students formulate their assessment of the situation?

- concern over convergence (technology)
- Childhood utopia in relation to creativity
- Epistemology / ethics divide
- Esp. “staying in touch with reality”

---

What examples / quotes are illustrative of this? Do they frame the situation they describe as

- desirable
- undesirable
- neither / not an issue

---

Characteristic of motivation (aside from completing the assignment) (motivation\_auto), (motivation\_exo)

- not applicable (getting the assignment finished is primary)
- autotelic
- exotelic

---

# APPENDIX 7 COMBINATIONS OF APPROACHES TO PLAYFULNESS IN THE DIFFERENT REPORTS

Redefining its ambiguity

	1a	1b	1c	2a	2b	3a	3b	4a	4b	4c	5a	5b	5c	6a	6b	6c	6d	7a	7b	8a	8b	9a	9b	10a	10b	10c	11a	11b	11c	11d	11e	11f	11g	11h	
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## APPENDIX 8

### COMPARISON OF OCCURRENCES OF PLAYFUL EXPERIENCE CATEGORIES PER YEAR

PLEX category	Description	2008	2009
		N = 110	N =160
Captivation	Forgetting one's surroundings	8,2	5
Challenge	Testing abilities in a demanding task	7,3	15
Competition	Contest with oneself or an opponent	0,9	3,1
Completion	Finishing a major task, closure	3,6	5,6
Control	Dominating, commanding, regulating	10	3,1
Cruelty	Causing mental or physical pain	0,9	1,2
Discovery	Finding something new or unknown	25	20
Eroticism	A sexually arousing experience	-	-
Exploration	Investigating an object or situation	U	U
Expression	Manifesting oneself creatively	U	U
Fantasy	An imagined experience	50	49
Fellowship	Friendship, communality or intimacy	7,3	10
Humor	Fun, joy, amusement, jokes, gags	63,3	61,3
Nurture	Taking care of oneself or others	13,6	11,9
Relaxation	Relief from bodily or mental work	13,6	14,4
Sensation	Excitement by stimulating senses	14,7	8,5
Simulation	An imitation of everyday life	5,5	5
Submission	Being part of a larger structure	-	-
Subversion	Breaking social rules and norms	16,4	5
Suffering	Experience of loss, frustration, anger	8,2	3,1
Sympathy	Sharing emotional feelings	0,9	3,8
Thrill	Excitement derived from risk, danger	3,6	5,6

Percentages of occurrence of a playful experiences in the images and narratives  
(U = ubiquitous)

## APPENDIX 9 FOUR ASSIGNMENTS OF THE MEDIA & YOU PROGRAM

### APPENDIX 9 A.

#### (1) WANT TO GET LOST WITH ME; I KNOW THE WAY (LOESJE)

##### **Amuse**

"If you look things from the right scale, everything is actually beautiful. Sometimes things are more beautiful when you magnify them. Sometimes they are prettier when you minimize them. An ugly photo can become beautiful if you enlarge it enormously and when you can witness the different pixels. On an atomic scale, everything becomes beautiful and from a great distance too! A cloud is lovely from afar; when you move closer it becomes mist, when you grab a microscope you see a beautiful whirl of tiny water drops. All modern art is made beautiful once you look at it with an electron microscope. A slowed down false note can be flawless. In slow motion rigid movements may become charming. When you take the chaos in traffic and speed it up in play, geometric patterns rise. Numbers are important too. A painter is not a painter if he's only made one painting, He needs to have made at least ten, en put them up the wall in a line, so a structure emerges. A personal style. Other things become beautiful because they are rare. Like big Eiffel towers.

A human life generally is lived at the wrong speeds, the wrong measures and the wrong numbers. A vague mix of apparently independent things.

But if you look in the right way, up close or from a large distance, structures arise, zoom in, zoom out, slow down, speed up, increase, decrease. That's what it's all about.

And when you really don't know anymore, you can always stand in front of a bakery. Mini chicken, giant eggs, larger than life hares and enormous ducklings.

If it's made of chocolate, it is always good!

Easy Aloha's (2004, April 10) Paashaas. Vrij Nederland. (Column called Easter bunny)

##### **Action**

For this assignment you find an area on the map of Leeuwarden that you've never visited and that maybe you would rather not visit. Next, you go to this area and find something beautiful there. Anything is possible. You don't leave this area until photographed this thing of beauty.

You place your picture on your group forum on Bello and you write a brief explanation. [It is possible to upload a picture in a thread on the board – by creating a thread en clicking on the icon for 'image'.

##### **Reflection**

In your explanation, you write down:

- . Where did you take this picture? At what time? At what hour?
- . What were your thoughts about this area?
- . How does this picture contradict these thoughts?
- . Where did you try to find beauty? (E.g. in people, objects, patterns, buildings, nature, animals?)

Next, you compare your picture to the ones of fellow students in your Bello group.

- . Which of the other 5 pictures surprises you most?
- . Do you think these pictures are comparable? In what way?
- . Looking back – would you have wanted to take a different picture?

The answers to these questions, you place below your own post. Next to that, you post a brief response to at least two pictures of your fellow students, in which you indicate what appealed to you in this picture.

The deadline for this exercise is Friday November 26.

## APPENDIX 9 B.

### (2) CARPE DIEM, KNOW THYSELF, MEMENTO MORI, ARS VITAE: LIFE AS A WORK OF ART

Turn your life into a work of art. As an assignment, this sounds simple, but to give it a concrete meaning and interpretation is quite a challenge. It even sounds a bit presumptuous: the art of life. Who calls himself a life artist without batting an eyelid? Yet, we will ask you, for this assignment in Media & You, to give the topic some thought. Self-management after all, has a lot to do with the life you consider worth living. If you don't want to go anywhere, you don't have to muster the skills to get somewhere. Or is 'not (having to) go anywhere' an art in itself? You develop skills to learn to realize your goals, you learn to plan, have meetings, budget, organize, direct and delegate and last but not least, reflect. Without reflection you learn less fast, and if you learn less fast, you can't do the things that matter to you as quickly as you can, or maybe leave them be

Are you a life artist? We start with an example. The next trailer contains a trailer of the movie "Patch Adams", a movie that – in a wonderful narrative – tells of the development of Patch Adams. Take a look.

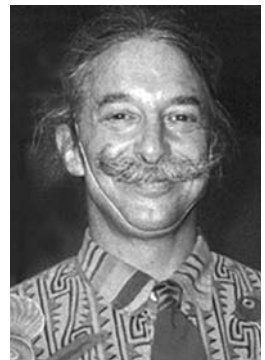
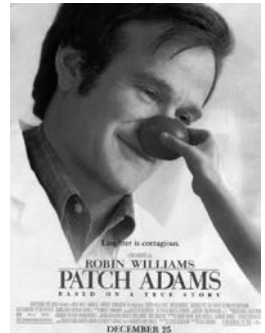
You could say about Patch Adams that he is a person who makes his life into a work of art: he shapes his own life very consciously, in an investigative manner, to turn it into something beautiful and joyful and to get in touch with other people in a refreshing way. He states:

"I consider myself a designed person – meaning I do not perform very many unintentional acts. I'm trying to be a person who might inspire passion. I get good feedback, which is why I do it. You can do the same thing for yourself. Get involved." (Adams & Mylander, 1993, p. 187)

The fact that Patch Adams considers himself a designed person, indicates he was not born with this attitude towards life. In a film fragment about the background of this movie, he discusses how it was a very dark period in his life that eventually gave him the spark to approach his own life and the life of the people around him in a different way.

#### Five profiles for life as a work of art

Joep Dohmen, a Dutch professor specialized in life artistry, wrote a book about this: "*Life as a work of art*". He briefly distinguishes different types of life artists. The five profiles he distinguishes are summarized below.



*The Epicurean*

Some people seem to be born for happiness, as if fate smiles at them. They are successful and enjoy a pleasant life. They're like a Sunday's Child, like *bon vivants*. They remain free from the pain and adversity other mere mortals face sooner or later. And should they be struck by disaster unexpectedly, they miraculously succeed in undoing the disadvantages and turn the course of events in their favor.

if they do unexpectedly struck by disaster, then they succeed admirably in this and undo the course of events still to turn in their favor. The epicurean is a vibrant figure. The Dutch artist and writer Jan Wolkers was a model of life as a work of art for many. The art refers here to the capacity of enjoying life for better or worse.

*The perseverer*

Every person finds a number of obstacles on his way in life, but some people seem born for doom. Nevertheless, a few people manage to keep their head above water in even the toughest of circumstances. Famous are the impressive testimonies of survivors of the concentration camps, like Viktor Frankl, Primo Levi, Abel Herzberg of Imre Kertész. We can look closer to home as well, and think of people with a serious chronic illness, struggling athletes or people that just suffer from life itself. The Austrian writer Robert Musil once aptly remarked: 'you have no idea how many people break down while they manage to live'. Surviving is not just about death, but also about sustaining, enduring, bearing. The art of life here means to persevere.

*The moral hero*

There are always people who do good deeds. Unexpectedly, they face a threatening situation and risk their lives to save someone from a burning house. Other quietly care for underprivileged people in society. In addition, there are moral superheroes, such as the South African Nelson Mandela. For twenty-five years he was imprisoned on Robben Island. After his release he managed, against all doomsday scenarios, to prevent a bloodbath between white and black. The art of life here refers to the connection of your own life with that of others. Truly devoting your life to the community, is indicative of life as a moral work of art.

*The all-rounder*

Some people manage to successfully combine very different activities. Some modern women believe they are successful only if they manage to combine and unite the different roles of motherhood, marriage partner, lover, manager and athlete. Such a centipede has to both be very firm and flexible at the same time. Several years ago a famous person from "the Amsterdam canals" died. A national newspaper headlined: "The end of an artist of life!" The man led both a nightlife and daily life. He was an architect and actually contributed to the realization of several of his projects. Besides that, he also wrote songs, books and poems, made music on stage and found time for a dynamic love life. He died in his fortieth year of a heart attack, but at least the man had lived a great and compelling life, it said in the comments. The art of life here refers to the ability to get absolutely everything out of life.

*The enlightened mind*

Sometimes someone has "seen the light" and finds an imperturbable calm. Such a person does not try to resist the inevitable and can not be hurt by life any longer. He (she) is no worried about whatever comes next. From the outside he might seem indifferent, but he is not. He has become detached and has found peace of mind, he has learned to 'let go' and to 'bend along'. On his way, he manages to find an attitude of equanimity. He has acquired an 'amor fati', a love of fate. Life as a work of art

therefore can also refer to the acquisition of a special understanding and a state of enlightenment.”

(Copied from: Dohmen, J. (2008) *Het leven als kunstwerk*. Stichting Maand van de Filosofie, Zutphen: Lemniscaat, pp. 30 – 32, translation by Maaïke de Jong, unauthorized)

### The assignment

*This first section, you make for yourself, under your own discussion board.*

- 1) If you look at the things Patch Adams does, under what profile do you think he fits best? Why so?
- 2) Find an example of a person who to you represents the other profiles. Find one person per profile and indicate why you think this is so. If possible, add a picture or image of this person.
- 3) Give your own account of life as a work of art

*This second section, you make with your group as a whole*

- 4) If you have formulated what life as a work of art is, you go to your group forum and see if you can come to a mutual understanding of what 'life as a work of art' means to you. You respond at least three times to a post of your fellow students.

- 5) You've seen that the groups in Media & You so far have been numbered. But being a number is not very inviting for self-reflection. Think of a group name for your group that you can all agree to. Respond at least twice to a proposal of a fellow student.

In argumentation theory there are, roughly speaking, two ways out of a discussion: solve or settle. Solving means that all parties have listened to one another in an honest way and have seriously considered each other's arguments. Eventually someone's position will be considered right, because this person had the best arguments. Settlement means that – within the given time – you were not able to solve the issue based on arguments and have therefore come up with a different solution than argumentation in and by itself.

- 6) Post the name that you came up with in the final thread of the discussion forum and indicate whether you feel you solved or settled your discussion on deciding the right name.

For more information about Patch Adams, see also: [www.patchadams.org/](http://www.patchadams.org/) or Adams, P. & Mylander, H. (1993) *Gesundheit!*

Images retrieved from:

[www.concordma.com/blog/2009/11/patch-adams-labors-an-international.html](http://www.concordma.com/blog/2009/11/patch-adams-labors-an-international.html)

and [http://slog.thestranger.com/files/2008/01/patch\\_adams\\_ver1](http://slog.thestranger.com/files/2008/01/patch_adams_ver1),

dd. 30 January 2010

APPENDIX 9 C.

(3) YOU DO IT TO YOURSELF – WHAT CAN THE MAN SAY ?

**gushusla**

at the end of the video, the guy laying on the ground says “ba da da da da, I’m lovin’ it”

**aRustedRoot (2 days ago)**

“The ground is comfortable”

**SuperiorSwagon1 (3 days ago)**

he said “Obama won something again because he’s black”

**ThisGuysRetarded (4 days ago)**

“First you have to all lie down, then I’ll tell you.”

The band Radiohead had its first official record release with the CD album Pablo Honey. Ever since that moment, the band has had a great influence on the worldwide music scene. It is one of the most discussed bands from the nineties up until now. Not just the music itself (and the way it is distributed) is often controversial, the video clips themselves also invoke lots of questions with the listeners and viewers. Images in slow motion, alienating lighting effects, ‘tracking shots’ and the use of cartoons are but a few of the things Radiohead has dabbled with. Often, the band collaborates with directors that are able to bring the emotions that belong to a certain song to live in images. You will experience one example of this by watching the video below. You can watch it by clicking on the link inside the photo.



If you look at the responses people give to the video on websites, you see a lot variation in the types of responses. Some seem to be a bit frivolous, others contain elaborate exposes on friendship and diagnoses of the time frame we live in. We seem startled by the man on the floor. Startled, and discomforted as well. One viewer, with the name ‘Peaches’ states cheerfully: “maybe he just said ‘Simon says lie on the floor’”. Haze015 says: “if you put your ears to the ground, you can hear the ocean”, Keys states: “I am a potato” (board.muse.mu) but Neilyboy states: “Knowing what he said would not have the same effect, it’s the not knowing that makes it.”

These remarks minimally indicate the fascination the video clip induces in viewers and listeners. There are also people who provide an analysis of the lyrics behind the video clip, about a friend of Thom Yorke (the lead singer of the band). Or remarks that are about identity and 'self', such as Ruth's response;

"The video seems better suited to an eastern philosophical outlook, or the emergent view in neuroscience that what we think of as the "I" of our inner experience does not actually exist. Our whole lives are spent working the economic treadmill to get our Self(s) somewhere in the world, and this man realizes its utterly pointless.

### **Action**

- 1) Find fora on the internet in which this video is discussed. Pick 4 responses that appeal to you personally and that you consider being indicative of why the man is laying there. (If you think this should not be mentioned or analyzed, find responses of people who you think formulate this in a fruitful manner).
- 2) Describe why these responses appeal to you and indicate what it would take for you to lay down there where the man is. This can be based on the words you assume the man utters. You may also sketch a situation that is different from this specific street, but in which you would lay down as well.
- 3) Videos are more and more often regarded as serious art forms. Provide an illustration (for instance by posting a link to YouTube) of a video clip you consider to be artistic and that you would like to analyze in an assignment such as this one. Mention also, why you consider it artistic. Why do you think it is necessary/fun/important/relevant for other people to take note of this clip?

### **Reflection**

Compare your own response to that of your group members. Can you identify with their fragments and arguments? Are there similarities in your responses? If so, which ones? Are there responses there that surprise you? If so, can you why?

View the video clips your fellow group members have referred to and briefly respond to these clips. Do you consider the clip to be artistic? Do you disagree perhaps? Clarify your arguments.

### **Collaboration**

Try to come to a description of the mutual characteristics of the video clips you chose and that you think make them artistic. Together, you write a brief line about this and post this inside a thread to end this part of the forum.

The remarks in this assignment were derived from:

<http://board.muse.mu/showthread.php?t=37345>

<http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/Just-lyrics-Radiohead/>

<DFBF034659BB0B0A48256866000FOCD9>

[www.Youtube.com](http://www.Youtube.com), keyword: Radiohead you did it to yourself

## APPENDIX 9 D.

### (4) BLIND DATE: HOW DO I KNOW WHO YOU ARE?

Parship, Lexa, Relationship Planet, Tagged, Knuz – or via connections? Through the internet we find several ways of getting in touch. Room Raiders, All You Need is Love: on TV we can also find lots of dating shows. The formats are often similar – without having met one another, we are eager to explore if someone could be a match. We use our imagination to formulate test questions we think will indicate whether we may like someone in the long run, or not. On the one hand a blind date involves a personal interest, on the other hand we use blind dates for entertainment: we make movies, series, game show formats, you name it. See the clip below for a general impression of Room Raiders.

[clip can't be copied]

The Room Raiders example illustrates the story you tell without knowing it. The room you live in tells a lot about you that you might not be aware of. The same may apply to the things you write.

You may have become faintly acquainted with the people in your Media & You group. Although you do not really know each other, you've probably formed an idea of what the other people in your group are like.

*Preparatory Action: make a profile of your peers*

In the past assignments of Media & You, you've been able to read each other's posts and reactions on the forum on Bello and also access each other's documents through file exchange. In this assignment, you will test if your impression of your peers is correct. So it may tell something about your perception skills as well.

Use up to one A4 to explore if there are topics that you miss in these kinds of questionnaires. What would you like to know yourself? What do you find relevant character traits or similarities?

*Group Action*

Make an appointment with your peers to get together to do something fun, preferably something that you all like to do. Bring a print of the profiles you've made to your get together. Hand out each profile to the appropriate person.

Compare the profiles and discuss how they all match. Discuss for each person if the profiles match, the differences and how this came about.

Fill in the reflection questions together, during the meeting, and post them on Bello afterwards.

*Group Reflection*

Although a profile you can give a rough idea of whom someone is,

What surprised you most about this assignment?

Did anyone in your group perceive her or his peers better?

Who received the most insightful profiles?

Which (elements of) the previous assignments gave the most insightful hints about your peers' characters?

The deadline for the individual part of the assignment is May 18<sup>th</sup>. The deadline for the group reflection is May 24

To make an appointment for the Group Reflection, you can use Outlook or an online tool for scheduling appointments.

*Sources:*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5yAzmUmPqQ>

<http://www.professorshouse.com/family/relationships/going-on-a-blind-date.aspx>

First, check out a dating site. Next, choose the profile questions from one or a few dating websites and fill in the answers for each of your peers. Create a short profile of the people in your group, Media & You. Choose a picture from the Internet in the profile. Upload your profiles among Bello file exchange.

## APPENDIX 9 E.

### REPLACEMENT FOR THE BLIND DATE ASSIGNMENT:

#### (4) BLINDDATE: HOW DO I KNOW WHO YOU ARE?

This is the assignment we used a year later, as a replacement for the one where students had to explore a dating site.

*Amuse*

In the second assignment of Media & You, you have already become acquainted with Patch Adams as a life artist. In this fourth assignment, you will meet him as a performer as well. If Patch Adams would only have contemplated the combination of fun and seriousness, we would never have heard of him. So, on from reflection to action! In the clip below (if you click the picture, the link opens) he discusses his different strategies in front of a group of people. Since, as you have already read, in *Carpe Diem*, he very consciously shapes his life, in an investigative manner, to create something beautiful from it and to come into contact with other people in a refreshing manner. He states:

"I consider myself a designed person - meaning I do not perform very many unintentional acts. I'm trying to be a person who might inspire passion. I get good feedback, which is why I do it. You can do the same thing for yourself. Get involved." (Adams & Mylander, 1993, p. 187)

In the video clip, you saw a presentation of the choices Patch Adams makes in the clothes he wears, the things he says, the objects he uses, the things he says and the jokes he pulls on people to get in touch with them. In the movie that was made about his life, he tells about the random phone numbers he dialled to talk with people about their lives and you see how he hangs upside down from a tree to connect to someone passing by. In another video, during a conference, he jokingly instructs his audience[1]:

"I want you to speak about the joy in your life, not anything bland or difficult, I want you only to speak about the joy in your life and if you cannot think of any, I want you to lie!"

*Action: meet a stranger*

For this fourth Media & You assignment, we ask you to arrange a meeting with someone that is a stranger to you, one way or another and to engage in a

conversation with this person about joy. You write a brief report about this meeting.

How you interpret 'stranger' is up to you.

How you define 'joy' is up to you too.

Where, when and how, is up to you as well, let your imagination run wildly and think of a meeting you consider fun or relevant. Or rather: fun and irrelevant.

You can think of inviting someone you don't know, to have a cup of coffee. You can also see what happens if – out of nowhere – you try to give someone a gift. Or you ask one of your groupmembers from Media & You to set up an appointment with someone you don't know. The possibilities are endless!

Describe in about 1 A4 what you have done. Whom did you meet? In which context? What activity did you engage in? What was your creative way to enter a conversation differently from what you normally would do? You do not have to put on a clown's nose, but maybe you've something else that provided an unusual entry.

What were your expectations in advance? Were these expectations met? What surprised you? In what way was the meeting or the conversation about joy? In what way has behaviour that may not be usual or common for you, led to a peculiar or extraordinary conversation?

Post your reflection under your forum in Media & You.

Note: you can make this assignment as broad or as narrow as you want. The idea with this assignment is not to put you in a situation in which you feel completely awkward or that you find embarrassing. You can also make the concept of 'stranger' as broad or as narrow as you want. You could, for a day, consider your best friend a stranger and describe what it means to meet him or her as if you meet them for the first time. Or you could take yourself out into an activity you would normally never engage in (go out for dinner by yourself, for instance) and then regard yourself as a stranger: what did you and did you not expect from yourself? If you consider it to be more fun or more comfortable to make this assignment along with someone from your Media & You group, this is okay, as long as each of you writes their own report. Should you intend to make a wild party out of this with dressing up extravagantly, using all the techniques Patch Adams would use, be our guest!

#### *Group reflection*

Read the reports of your peers and compare these to your own report. How did your peers define 'stranger' in this case? Do you find their examples appealing? What is new to them that was not new to you? And vice versa? In what way are your fellow group members strangers to you? Would you try out their creative way of entering a conversation in a different manner? What do you think of the different ways to engage in a conversation with a stranger? Share your reflections on the general discussion board. Is there a general conclusion you could draw from these stories?

Check the introduction book for self management for the deadlines. You can download it from course documents

#### *Source:*

Adams, P. & Mylander, M. (1993) *Gesundheit! Bringing Good Health to You, the Medical System, and Society Through Physician Service, Complementary Therapies, Humor.* Healing Arts Press

APPENDIX 10:  
MOODBOARD FOR THE BOROBUDUR GAME CONCEPT



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# A GAME OF CHESS WITH A JESTER AND DEATH



A man goes to the doctor. He says he's been feeling blue for the past couple of months and has not been able to enjoy anything. After listening for a few minutes, the doctor says: "Hey, you know what you should do? Go to the circus tonight, the world's greatest clown Grimaldi is in town. If he can't make you cheer you up, no one can!". The man sighs and says: "but doctor, I *am* Grimaldi".

In the week I was trying to write the conclusion to this thesis, the comedian and actor Robin Williams took his own life. Some of the roles he played in his movies implicitly informed my understanding of the distinction between seriousness and playfulness. His performance in the movie Patch Adams got me reading about the real Patch Adams, whose work has been informative for understanding the subversive potential of play. An example in this thesis that illustrates the extent to which playfulness has to be 'accomplished' is from the movie Good Morning Vietnam. If I hear the words *carpe diem*, I am reminded of Williams' role as English Literature professor John Keating in the movie Dead Poets Society. Sutton-Smith states: "the opposite of play isn't work, it's depression". But Williams' life ambiguously revealed depression and playfulness can go a long way together. Playfulness can be a way to ward off the demons, whether inner or outer.

In the past six years, I've been in several conversations about the nature of playfulness: what is it? A recurring conversation went something along these lines:

A: "So, what is your thesis about?"

Me: "It's about playfulness".

A: "About playfulness, really?"

Me: "Yes, really".

A: "So, how do you define playfulness"

Me: "That's what I'm trying to find out".

A: "Isn't it simple?"

Me: "Sometimes, it is. But most often, it's not. Can you tell me?"

A: "Hmm, let me see".

This would then result in a follow up conversation – via mail, phone or what have you – in which the person would express wondrous irritation with the topic: "I can't get my head around it and I can't stand it!"

What I've learned in the course of these years, is that the question 'what playfulness is', is itself a wicked question. Wicked, not because of its original complexity, but because of the effect it has on the person answering the question. The process of formulating an answer to the question can itself transform the one who is asking. Whoever provides the answer is not the same person anymore. Wondering what playfulness is, invites reflection on the preconditions of playfulness: what is needed to let playfulness arise? For some, its main constituent will be freedom, for others it will be safety; for some it is knowing to be loved or trusting to not be ridiculed. In that sense, it becomes a question of identity. To be playful is to reveal what we consider fun and enjoyable.

The process of writing this thesis has been transforming in many ways. Many people are to thank for that, some knowingly, some unwittingly. During the Isaga conference of 2007, Richard Duke was kind enough to not laugh at my preliminary idea to pursue a Ph.D. I had no idea who he was when we sat at the same table, drinking coffee, while he shared the meandering course of his academic endeavors with me. This meeting would not have been the starting point it turned out to be, had Jussi Holopainen not been present during that conference as well, offering me a list of inspiring authors (and a peek into his own brilliant mind). He also brought the Playful Experiences seminar to my attention in the spring of 2009. Jussi's work on the PLEX framework has been a nagging reminder to get my stuff organized.

Alle Pieron taught me an ongoing lesson in philosophy that started in high school. Without him, I might have questioned the importance of questioning. Antoine van den Beemt introduced me to the work of philosopher Bernard Suits and pointed out the importance of longevity. Arvind Singhal told a beautiful story about Antanas Mockus, one day after I handed in my original thesis proposal. Jos de Mul ate an important muffin with me. Bernie DeKoven wrote me a note, containing his 'declaration of love for fun'. It is printed on a creased paper in my wallet, to be taken out in times of despair. Sebastian Deterding endlessly complicated the course this thesis took by suggesting to 'Garfinkle' my way through. Without his smarts I would never have developed any understanding of what Garfinkling means. I am thankful for his chivalry in helping clean up the mess.

Stenden University enabled a structural amount of time and resources to work on the projects described in this thesis. I am thankful to Patrick Bemelmans and Klaas Wybo van der Hoek for their continued year-to-year positive decision to support these projects. Without the organizational talents of Pauline Hagenbeek, I would not have been able to clear my schedule and get my priorities straight. Jellie Visser and Alie Mud helped retrieve many articles and didn't mind hearing my status updates even if my books were returned late.

I want to thank all the students who participated in the Borobudur project. Over several years these are: Niels Nieman, Michael Ros, Dolon Knol, Monique Meijering, Shan Poon, Annelies Bos, Peter Paskamp, Chantal Koolhoven, Marloes Koning, Po Yeng Wong, Sander Bakkelo, Bart de Groot, Anne-Roos Bakker, Roland van der Horst, Merle Jacobs, Jorgen Kremer, Sanette de Groes, Michel van der Molen, Marten van der Meer, Marjan Brink, Chantal Hülle, Jana Lehmann, Anne van Noort, Jerrald Pieterman and supporting teachers and staff Bram Kleijweg, Alastair Wright, Sylvia van Oosten and Celine Schweizer.

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For endless patience, Paul Delnooz and Arie de Ruijter.

Marije Knapper-Wesseling, Nynke Quant-Ettema and Rosa Lageveen have been on my side for almost (almost!) forty (forty!) years. I feel blessed to see that even these past six years have not gotten in the way of our friendship.

Jan-Chris Plaggemars brings child like laughter and optimism to my life and promised to stick with me even if I'd never manage to complete a thesis. Our son Darius is the embodiment of his joyful spirit.

My parents, Klaas de Jong and Marianne Greefhorst, I thank for their patience, their critical questions and for hanging in there with me. It is a habit in my family to not let sickness and death get in the way of a good party. Although her illness would never have stopped my mother from coming to my defense, her passing away did. Six of her sisters will represent her and for that, I could not be more grateful.

And as life is for the living, my deepest gratitude goes out to our wonderful students, for their efforts, their candid feedback, their willingness to think along, for sharing their joys and frustrations, their life narratives and their playful moments, and for making my job so much fun. I hope to have portrayed them as beautiful, funny and witty as they are.