Call for Paper

Beyond Play:

The Transformative Power of Digital Gaming in a Deeply Mediatized Society

30. September – 2. October 2024

International conference at the University of Bremen, Germany

Digital Games and gaming are carriers, accelerators and subjects of change in media culture and society. In this capacity they serve as an interlink between media industries, digital technologies, media cultures, and social practices, making them ideal cases to analyze contemporary transformation processes in the context of (deep) mediatization, digitalization, and datafication.

This conference call hence builds on the premise that to understand the significance of digital games and gaming in a deeply mediatized society we need to look beyond play, i.e., the contents of games and the interaction with games alone. We call to go beyond reducing games to mere playing, examining their placement and connection within digital media environments as gamevironments to research how our communicative practices and their contexts transform through games, as well as how these games are reshaped through communicative practices. A perspective that goes beyond play indicates that researching games and gaming also allows for insights into the deepening of the mediatization and datafication of society.

It is quite obvious to consider digital gaming a central aspect of the spread of digitalization in virtually all areas of social life: Computer and console games, as well as mobile games, are now an integral part of deeply mediatized lifeworlds across generations. They have become one of the dominant sectors in the media industry in terms of economic relevance and ubiquity. Games and gaming have been catalysts for the emergence of unique media cultures, playing a crucial role in mediatized everyday culture for several generations of players. Game development has become well-established and professionalized, fostering innovative forms of media expression, communication contexts, and peripheral media (e.g., video game journalism, game streaming, fan-fiction, modding). Additionally, under the concept of gamification, principles of gaming and playful elements are increasingly transferred to non-gaming contexts (e.g., health prevention, educational settings). This positions computer games and gaming as a comprehensive subject of research in communication and media studies as well as an indicator for transformation processes in media, culture and society that extend the scope of gaming.
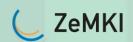
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We invite submissions that explore the transformative power of digital gaming in deeply mediatized society, how gaming shapes mediatization, digitalization and datafication of society and how games and gaming are conversely shaped by the same processes. We invite conceptual, theoretical and methodological contributions as well as empirical studies from all disciplines. Topics to be addressed include but are not limited to

- The transformative power of digital gaming for the proliferation and diffusion of new digital technologies, devices and imaginaries
- The transformative power of digital gaming for representation, inclusion and the negotiation as well as transformation of social norms and values
- The transformative power of digital gaming for media and communication environments around playing and beyond (e.g., games journalism, game streaming, Let's plays, reviews and walkthroughs; gamification and language use in non-gaming settings; serious games)
- The transformative power of digital gaming for individual and collaborative communicative practices and experiences (e.g., informal learning, co-creation, modding, etc.)
- The transformative power of digital gaming in the context of the media manifold (e.g., transmedia storytelling, franchises across multiple platforms and multiple media formats)
- Conceptual and methodological challenges and innovations for researching the transformative power of digital gaming in deeply mediatized societies
- The impact of digitalization and datafication on digital games and gaming
- The transformative power at play in the gaming (related) industries
- The transformative power at play in the academic, ethical, and regulatory evaluation of gaming

Formats: papers, pre-arranged panels, roundtables

This conference welcomes contributions in various formats:

- Papers: Normally the paper presenters can expect to have approx. 15 minutes for the presentation and 5-10 minutes for discussion.
- Closed panels (120 minutes): we encourage pre-arranged panels. These panels will have 3-4 papers per panel session and probably a critical response. Normally the paper presenters can expect to have approx. 15 minutes for the presentation and 5-10 minutes for discussion.
- Roundtables (120 minutes): these are pre-arranged sessions where a group of scholars (usually no more than five) discusses themes/issues of general scholarly interest in front of (and subsequently with) an audience for the duration of a single session. The roundtables should address a topic from an interdisciplinary perspective. While a roundtable can include short (5 minutes) contributions, the aim is to create a lively debate rather than focus on any one presenter.
- Poster format: There will be also the possibility to present your work in form of a poster. These posters will be accessible throughout the whole conference and there will a time slot where everybody can present his/her poster.

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In addition, we are in the middle of organizing the possibility to play the games analyzed and discussed during the conference in a gaming studio which will be accessible throughout the conference.

Abstracts (350-500 words) for all formats should be submitted by email as an anonymized pdf-file no later than **15.06.2024** to **beyondplay2024@uni-bremen.de**. An additional file should include title, four to six keywords, name of author(s), institutional affiliation, and contact details for each author. All submissions will undergo double blind peer review. Authors will be notified of proposal acceptance/rejection until **30.06.2024.**

The event is hosted by the Centre for Media, Communication and Information Research (Zentrum für Medien-, Kommunikations- und Informationsforschung; ZeMKI) at the University of Bremen in Germany and supported by the ECREA Digital Games Research Section and the International Academy for the Study of Gaming and Religion (IASGAR).

Additionally, IASGAR is hosting its annual **IASGAR Research Day** as pre-conference workshop on September 28th in a hybrid form – at site at the University of Bremen, Germany, and online. Exclusively for early-stage researchers, graduate students and doctoral students, the workshop welcomes research on media-centered approaches, perspectives of game developers and publishers, and viewpoints of gamers.

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