Ludology

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Disposition

- What is ludology?
- What is a game?
- What is gameplay?
- Game spaces
- Questions

Ludology

- Game Theory (the economic study of competitive situations involving rules, strategies, and players)
- Theories of Play (psychological, pedagogical etc. studies)
- Game Culture (why gaming?; what is the role of games in contemporary culture?)
- Ludology: the need for "own" concepts; especially when liberated from The Humanities

Website

- Ludology's own site:
  - www.gamestudies.org

Ludology

- The Narratology - Ludology Debate
  - Games are not "texts"
  - Games *can* entail a kind of fictional element; but games are, well, games
  - A narrative structure is a fixed sequence; a game is a framework for a number of (dominant) sequences

Ludology …

- Three different senses of "narrative:" (from Juul '05)
    - Story as a structured sequence of events (film, novel)
    - Story as a topographical setting (e.g. a painting, labyrinth, building)
    - Story as the way we see the world (pan-narrativism)

- The "games-are-stories" position often confuses two levels:
    - the content level: events and existents, found in games, stories (and paintings etc) and in the real world: Setting, Characters, Actions
    - the structural level: narrative is different from simulation is different from reality (and from dreams, religious truths, mirror images, etc)

Ludology ...

- One solution to the ludology vs. Narratology debate is to think of games as QUESTS

  - A game with a concrete and attainable goal, which supercedes performance or the accumulation of points. Such goals can be nested (hierarchic), concurrent, or serial, or a combination of the above.

  - A game where you have to move from A to B

Ludology - the quest scheme

- However, you move differently from A -> B:
  - The unicursal corridor (Half-Life, Halo, Riven)
  - The nested quest (semi-open landscape; Knight of the Old Republic)
  - Open landscape (Morrowind, Ever Quest)

A ludological methodology

- Gameplay
- Game Structure
- Game World

What is a game?

- A game consists of

- Rules
- Strategies (or tactics)
- And interaction patterns

- Rules are commands
- Strategies are plans for game executions
- Interaction patterns define the actual path through the game and specifies the topography of human-computer (or player vs. rule) relations

Rules

- Limit and restrict player actions.
- They are unambiguous, explicit, and finite
- All players of a game must share them
- Rules are fixed, i.e. unchangeable
- They are binding, i.e. non-negotiable
- They can be repeated; i.e. they are portable and indepedent of technology platform or fictional representation

- Games can be viewed as state machines:
  - Input events: rule system (the inputs that the machine accepts)
  - State transition function: interaction system (determines what will happen in response to a given action at a given time)
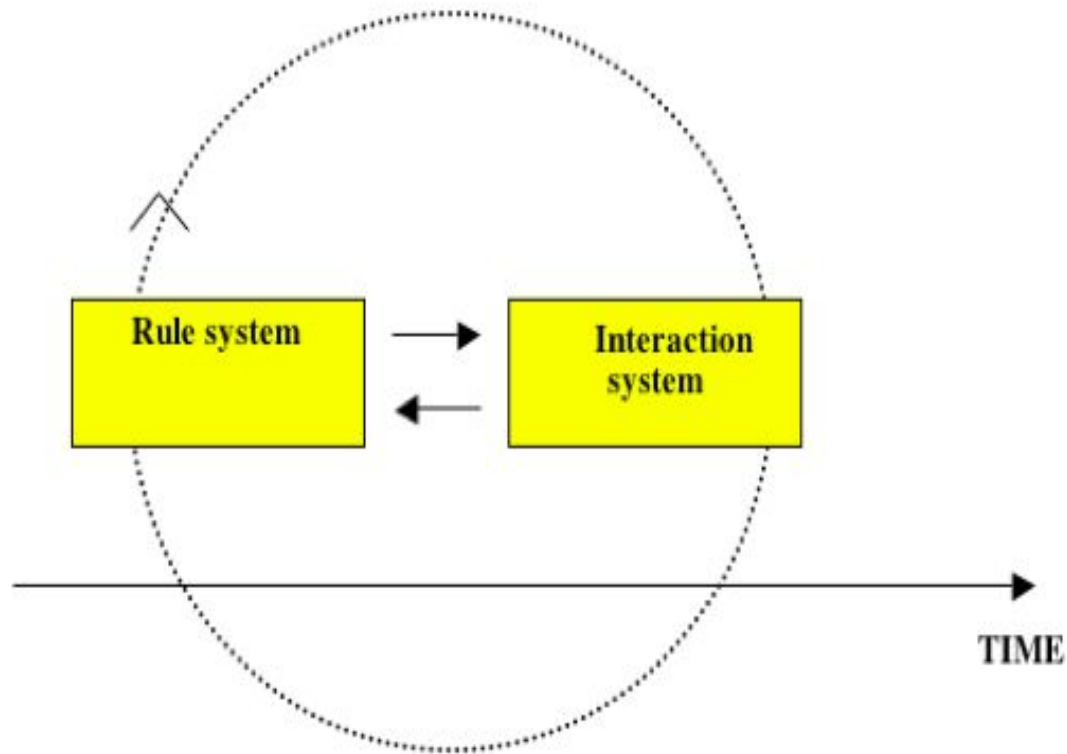
Illustration 2: Rule system and interaction system imply a combination of linear and circular movement, i.e. recursivity.
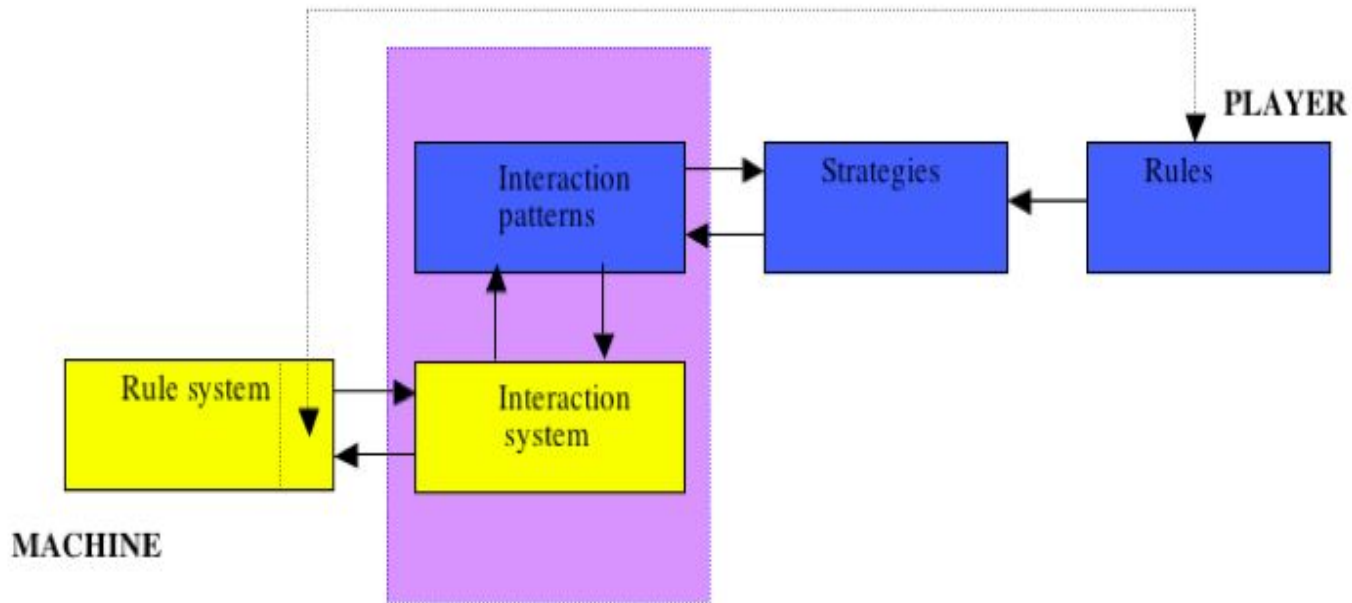
Illustration 3: Computer and player overlap in the interaction domain as a kind of middle ground.

Gameplay

- Interesting choices
- A state of flow between boredom and anxiety
- The entire collection of I-O's
- The range of interaction potentials throughout the game

----- or ...

Gameplay ...

- A combination of
  - Structure (gaming)
  - Exploration (playing)
- The correllation of
  - Topological space (levels: acting "playfully")
  - Geometrical space (progression: acting in accordance with a "strategy")

Game Spaces

- Narrative space
  - Back-stories: you search for the plot (adventure games, hybrid games)
- Phenomenological space
  - Being-ness in the game is what matters (shooters, match- and racing)
- Semiotic space
  - Search for signs, clues, and signification (puzzle, strategy, adventure)

References

- Jesper Juul: Half-Real (dissertation from ITU, will be published by MIT Press later)
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- Questions …