A Pedagogical Experiment Involving Game Design Students in Producing Non-Violence Serious Games

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Who are we?
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The Play Research Lab is dedicated to both game & play studies.

www.playresearchlab.org

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Who are we?

We make academic studies, game evaluations, game prototypes and have built a Serious Game / Video Game museum.

www.playresearchlab.org
We describe a pedagogical experiment aimed at understanding the motivation drivers for the involvement of game design students in the development of serious game projects.
What is the context?
We believe that the design of serious games is less attractive to students than that of entertainment digital games.
Students on such courses often regard serious games as a sub category of digital games and consider them inferior in terms of production budget, aesthetics and technically to game titles dedicated exclusively to the entertainment market.
What is the Problematic?
Problematic

What solutions could be developed in order to involve game designer students with both the design and the topic of a serious game?
What is our approach?
Serious Gaming Approach

To propose students to modify AAA games in order to make them serious.
And a challenge!

To combine a non-violence approach through the modification of a AAA gameplay initially develop for violent setting.
But what is Serious Gaming?
Serious video gaming practices in general (Greitzer et al. 2007, Hlodan 2008, Knight 2010, de Freitas et al. 2011, Young et al. 2012, etc.)

“The From Serious games to serious gaming” (Jenkins et al. 2007): focus on the learning process
The idea of using already made games or toys for utilitarian approaches.

“Serious gaming” (Alvarez et al. 2011, Constant 2011, Deny & Chabi 2011, Ducrocq-Henry 2011, Ferreira 2014, etc.)
Why?

Because you have already the fun part, and you have only to focus on the “serious” part.

“Serious gaming” (Alvarez et al. 2011, Constant 2011, Deny & Chabi 2011, Ducrocq-Henry 2011, Ferreira 2014, etc.)
Serious Gaming concept

Thus, the idea is to identify the potential of a Toy or a Game to target utilitarian functions.

“Serious gaming” (Alvarez et al. 2011, Constant 2011, Deny & Chabi 2011, Ducrocq-Henry 2011, Ferreira 2014, etc.)
What are utilitarian functions?

We have identified 3 main categories of utilitarian functions for the Serious Games.

“Serious Game an Introduction” (Alvarez, Djaouti. 2010)
#1 - To broadcast messages

Messages could be dedicated to educational, informative, political, marketing, etc. aspects.

“Serious Game an Introduction” (Alvarez, Djaouti. 2010)
#2 - To Train

Cognitive and physical trainings are identified.

“Serious Game an Introduction” (Alvarez, Djaouti. 2010)
#3 - To exchange data

The game is linked to a database in order to play with data or to exchange and collect them.

“Serious Game an Introduction” (Alvarez, Djaouti. 2010)
But it is probably not exhaustive!

For instance...
The ESAR system identifies six main categories

The ESAR system has been made by Denise Garon (Canada)

“Serious Game an Introduction” (Alvarez, Djaouti. 2010)
The ESAR System let us to classify traditional game and toys...

The ESAR system is based on Piaget works.

“Serious Game an Introduction” (Alvarez, Djaouti. 2010)
In Fact it is very difficult to find non serious aspects in games and toys

Have you an idea?

“Serious Game an Introduction” (Alvarez, Djaouti. 2010)
Thus… What differences between Serious Games and Serious Gaming?

In many games you can find Serious parts.

“Serious Game an Introduction” (Alvarez, Djaouti. 2010)
A Serious Game is made to target both Serious and Game aspects...

“Serious Game an Introduction” (Alvarez, Djaouti. 2010)

Chiritori, Nintendo, 1979
And to target markets that are not the entertainment only.

“Serious Game an Introduction” (Alvarez, Djaouti. 2010)

Chiritori, Nintendo, 1979
In the Serious Gaming the utilitarian functions are posteriori added

The game used is made for the entertainment market...

“Serious Game an Introduction” (Alvarez, Djaouti. 2010)

Pac-Man, Namco, 1981
2 categories of Serious Gaming

Serious Diverting & Serious Modding

“Serious gaming, serious modding and serious diverting... Are you serious?! ” (Bouko, Alvarez. 2014)
Examples of Serious Diverting

Using Sing Star to teach English (pronunciation)

“Serious gaming, serious modding and serious diverting...
Are you serious?!
” (Bouko, Alvarez. 2014)

Sing Star, Sony, 2004-2014
Examples of Serious Diverting (2/7)

Using Angry birds for teaching Physics.

“Serious gaming, serious modding and serious diverting... Are you serious?! “ (Bouko, Alvarez. 2014)
Examples of Serious Diverting

Serious Diverting from Desert Bus for Hope.

Serious game: questions et réflexions autour de son appropriation dans un contexte d’enseignement (Alvarez, J., 2014)

https://desertbus.org/
Examples of Serious Diverting (4/7)

Using Ico for Psychology Therapy.

“Serious gaming, serious modding and serious diverting... Are you serious?! ” (Bouko, Alvarez. 2014)
Examples of Serious Diverting

Using The Sims for Psychiatry.

“Serious gaming, serious modding and serious diverting... Are you serious?! ” (Bouko, Alvarez. 2014)
Examples of Serious Diverting

WOW at School from Lucas Gillispie

Serious game: questions et réflexions autour de son appropriation dans un contexte d’enseignement (Alvarez, J., 2014)

http://wowinschool.pbworks.com
Examples of Serious Diverting

MineCraft at School from Lucas Gillispie

Serious game: questions et réflexions autour de son appropriation dans un contexte d’enseignement (Alvarez, J., 2014)

http://minecraftinschool.pbworks.com/
Examples of Serious Modding (1/5)

In 1983, Coca-Cola asked a game to mobilize the Atlanta Firm against Pepsi.

“Serious gaming, serious modding and serious diverting...
Are you serious?!
” (Bouko, Alvarez. 2014)
Examples of Serious Modding (2/5)

An Half-Life Mod.

“Serious gaming, serious modding and serious diverting... Are you serious?! ” (Bouko, Alvarez. 2014)

Escape from Woomera, *Kate Wild et al.*, 2003
Examples of Serious Modding (3/5)

MineCraft Edu from Maxis

Serious game : questions et réflexions autour de son appropriation dans un contexte d’enseignement (Alvarez, J., 2014)
Examples of Serious Modding (4/5)

SimCity Edu

Serious game: questions et réflexions autour de son appropriation dans un contexte d’enseignement (Alvarez, J., 2014)

Examples of Serious Modding (5/5)

Serious Modding from Namco

Serious game : questions et réflexions autour de son appropriation dans un contexte d’enseignement (Alvarez, J., 2014)

Namco, 2014
Thus, what are the results of our experiment?
Results (1/3)

All students’ projects reached a significantly advanced development stage. This could be interpreted as a sign of student involvement.
Results (2/3)

All students’ projects reached a significantly advanced development stage. This could be interpreted as a sign of student involvement.
Results  (3/3)

Three Serious Modding projects close to a final product:
Sid Meier’s Civilization V

The « Nonviolent Challenge » game is a Serious Mod which invites the player to incarnate Gandhi, the leader of the Indian empire. The player must face the conquering ambitions of Catherine of Russia, leader of an unparalleled military power by using diplomacy only.
Starcraft II

The « Starcraft II – Intervention » Serious Mod offers the player the possibility to control Marines troops, initially combat units, as blue helmet peacekeeping units. The player’s units are deployed in between civil populations and oppressing troops and must maintain peace until a peace treaty is signed.
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

In the « Voice of Peace » Serious Mod, the player inhabits a quiet and peaceful village located in between two rival clans. In order to protect the area, the player is tasked to prevent a war by stealing weapons from both clans while trying to convince soldiers to oppose the conflict.
E-virtuoses Award

We associated student serious modding development to a real-life serious gaming contest: e-virtuoses. The jury panel nominated 4 “serious gaming” projects. Amongst these, two were selected: “Non-violent Challenge” and “Voice of Peace”.
Conclusion
We found that, in order to obtain student involvement, we had to adapt our approach by targeting Serious Modding as a task and associate game development to a real-life serious game contest. These two elements were significant factors in gaining student involvements with the projects.
Questions?

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