

Ludological Investigations

Game Design in Terms of Cultural Techniques

The INTRA-Project at the Angewandte's Department of *Experimental Game Cultures* (chaired by Prof. Margarete Jahrmann) is carried out by the transdisciplinary **Ludological Symposium** (headed by Dr. Simon Huber).^{*} This collective examines **elementary gameplay operations** — **throwing dice, stacking cards, placing bets, etc.** — as fundamental **cultural techniques**. The aim is to outline a potential Ludology: a coherent science of games and play. To this end, we are building a growing collection of gameplay operations to analyze processes of ludification.

*„A game is a system in which players **engage** in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome.”*

— Salen/Zimmerman 2004

Cultural techniques are older than the abstract notions they produce.

- calendars calculate time
- lines drawn demarcate space
- play actions formalize game systems

Engagement is expressed through cultural techniques, where primitive gameplay actions draw players into complex systems and tacitly process knowledge.

Ludology studies incorporation and visualization of knowledge

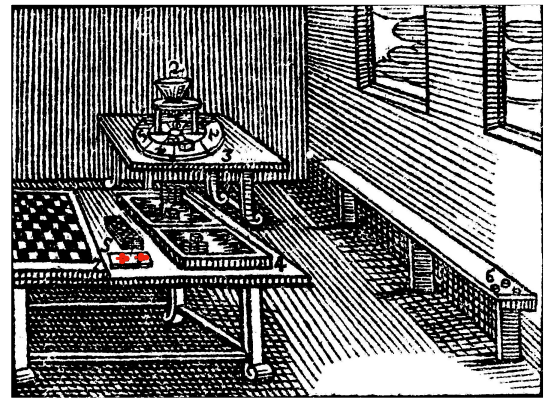
Attempts for autonomous Ludology often sought to separate game mechanics from story. But instead of asking how players extract meaning, a **truly ludological approach highlights the ludic frame of reception** itself — the necessary but meaningless actions through which a message is accessed. Just as one might ask how books have always been played: browsed, looked up, stacked.

Ludification as research object

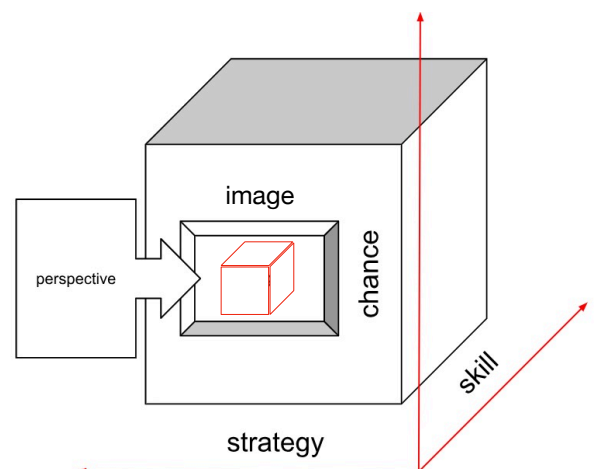
While Game Studies may rely on established methods suited to their objects, a potential ludology must address Huizinga's claim that culture originates in play. As play withdraws, it leaves rigid rules but no living action. **Tracing how anarchic play ossifies into rule-bound games and conventional culture** is key to the transformative potential of play for shaping environments.

Ludicity as potential

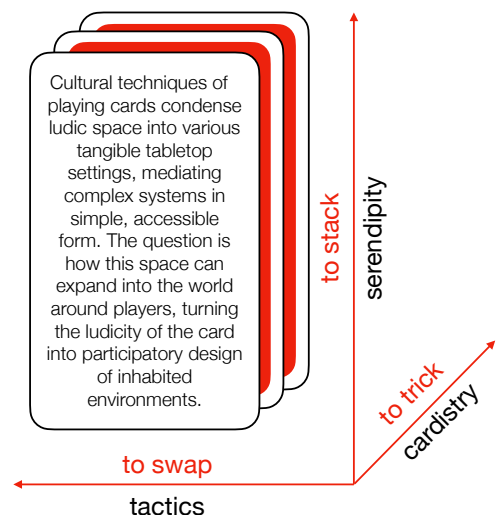
Unlike gamification, nudging or serious games, Ludicity confronts forces that narrow action. It doesn't instrumentalize playfulness, but **highlights games as experiential spaces for the co-creation of norms to foster pluralistic intelligence** over herd behavior, opening new participatory practices.



Jan Amos Comenius: *Orbis pictus*, Nürnberg 1658



Schematic view of the represented ludic space.



Game space within the materiality of the card.

^{*} **The Ludological Symposium** formed as an affinity group for the research of games and play and has since developed into a systematically advancing research collective. Members are:

Laurenz Adami · Simon Allmer · Wassily Bertuska · Klemens Franz · Ivo Herzl · Simon Huber · Michael Masching · Felix Koberstein · Veronika Kocher · Joachim Schätz · Jakob Schindler-Scholz · Fabian Seiser · Nicola Supukovic · Leander Vettinger · Michael Wiktora

Results are continuously published in a sustainable way for free online. Visit ludology.uni-ak.ac.at for details on each enquiry — the paradigmatic investigation of gameplay operations and its methodology — as well as further dates for meetings, printable zines and related literature.

Research project by Dr. Simon Huber, 09/2025



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