

Zurich Game Mechanic Manifesto: Game mechanics Manifesto Version 1.0 (2013)

The world has turned into a game and behind its stage the small and large game mechanics rattle. The social world provides opportunities for action that we can use and adapt. For our actions we get this and that or we are punished (Never ask what the mechanics are about). Foucault once called these socially shaped spaces discourses. Discourses as game mechanics draw and steer the rewarding or punishing and are motivating at the same time. We can only act or participate where policy options are allowed. Anything else is cheating in the electronic world and amounts to revolution, crime or even terrorism in our social world.

Game mechanics as control circuits organize the (own) game world with their (joint) players and establish motivations. Thereby a game mechanic may gather all kinds of rules to generate motivation. The game mechanic may even make other minor game mechanics work for itself. In "society of the spectacle" Debord shows how a bunch of spectacle games are used as distraction to help people continue to play the 'great social game'. Be it on talk shows, in art or in politics, we are always distracted from the concrete mechanism with spectacle games and shows. In electronic games, analog media and their game mechanics are nothing more than slaves of the great mechanics: text, image or movie, they are all just media that are in the mechanics' payroll.

The simplest game mechanic is a simple game loop (cybernetic control circuit) of challenges, options for action and resulting rewards and punishments. Narration here becomes a special form of game mechanics. This special game mechanics has long ruled the world, but its reign is coming to an end. Today, we are thrown and strapped into little game mechanics. There we fizzle out with our self-motivation, rather than we place ourselves in the great mechanics of history by asking questions about it and redefining it.

Today in a world that has become meaningless, electronic game mechanics generate sense (or spectacle) for us on a specific, local and worldwide level. Game mechanics are the last great utopias of our society: Here, we find clear rules. She or he, who obeys them will make it. Game mechanics are thus the ultimate social hope in an unjust and unfair world.

We are the mechanics of these senseless new meaning systems. The game mechanics with their rules (and rule cycles) own the past, the present and the future! And we are their engineers.

The Game Mechanics