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Documentation - Queering innovation

Workshop in Karlshamn 2015-09-23
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Lecture

We started off with a one hour lecture about games, rules and how rule systems are not neutral but affected by worldviews and how they mirror norms in our society. Queer game mechanics is a way of looking at rules in a new and critical way. Games can be designed to test new ways of constructing the world in the attempt to make it better.

Workshop

The next step was to divide the participants into groups. They now had to come up with their own game idea inspired by queer game mechanics. At the end of the workshop they were to have a short presentation of their ideas. It was a delight to see all the creativity and enthusiasm of the groups set out to make their own game! All the game concepts that came out of the workshop are listed below.

Concepts

Concept #1

This concept was called "A 100 years ago" or, in Swedish, "Familjens egna spel till julafton". It's a family game designed to be played at christmas, to bridge the gap between generations. The theme is historical knowledge, and the game is based on question cards about situations. There is a timeline to put answers on, containing both words and pictures. There is also a guideline as for to make your own version of the game, to expand the game with your own question cards arbout different themes. The concept creates awareness about different cultures and traditional knowledge.

Concept #2

This concept is called "Travel with Oginski", and promotes cognition, learning and creativity. The platform is mobile, and the concept takes place both in a fictional world as well as in the real world. It's transmedial, and uses roleplay as one of its components. The queer mechanic used is "fluid characters".

The app part of the concept makes the user learn about the Oginski family. The activity is connected to around 80 spots, in f eg Belarus, Poland and Italy, and the user gets to travel and collect bonuses from the spaces. The users embody the members of the Oginski family, role-playing them while moving in time, transferring the characteristics and traits of the played character from past times to present day. Projects can be created in-game and then transferred into the real world, implemented in reality through for example a crowd-funding platform. Players can win prizes, find friends through playing, and realize their ideas.

Concept #3

This concept is called "Winyourteam.com" and is targeted towards managers/owners of SMEs and startups. The manager is the player, who through a simulation gets to try out managing a team. The learning outcome is to make players aware that tasks can be handled very differently by people with different personalities, thus recognizing the importance of handing the task to the right person.

The player starts by answering questions, which determine if s/he is a "hands on" or "hands off" leader. The player is then given a team consisting of "the lamb", "the monkey", "the elephant", "the bear" and "the fox". They all have different characteristics. Now the player and his/her virtual team has to perform tasks, such as: "Gather information about a client", "Develop a strategy of negotiations", "Conclude negotiations and sign a deal". The player has to decide which one of the employees is best suited to perform the task. The player's leadership style also affects the outcome.

This concept challenges the stereotypical boss, who isn't understanding of people's differences. Through acknowledging those, the team can become a happy team.

Concept #4

This concept is called "Our space", and is a team building game. The player gets to play a character with some predetermined characteristics. Before s/he knows about the game's challenges, s/he will have to form a team with others. The players know who they are and what their skills are, but they don't know what tasks are at hand. Since they team up without knowing the goals, they have to calculate risks. Forming a bigger team might for example be better but also risky. The next step is that the team goes to "the building space" and gets an assignment, for example building something such as a roller coaster or house.

When done, the team is invited to a "culture party" where they will get to know how well they succeeded. In the evaluation room their process is evaluated through some criteria, based mainly on characteristics of democratic processes, for example how well they adressed social issues, gender equality et cetera.

If they pass, they go on to "the good neighbourhood space". If they haven't passed they will go back and redo the building phase, now with some more knowledge of the process. The successful team advances to the next level.

The game is digital and cross platform, but could also be done IRL. The queer mechanic is "fluctuating meanings". The game adresses team building, team diversity, unclear rules, quality of social interaction, and participation in small societies that are constantly changing.

Group discussion

After the completed workshop there was a group discussion, these are some of the topics discussed:

- The method used in the workshop is one that could be used again and developed futher. A range of different ideas were created in a short amount of time, showing that women need to be included into IKT and Game Design. The method is a good way to release the creativity in a group. As a tool it applies to several age groups.
- To handle difficult issues we need new and different methods such as games. Making a game about integration could be interesting to work on. Games are good tools especially for a younger generation. It's easier to transmit values through games for this target group.
- Sharing is very important, we have to break barries to get people to talk about their ideas.