Adaptations in play: Strategies of adaptation in digital and non-digital games.

In the long history of board games, certain games have been passed on in generations and have evolved and been shaped to fit different cultural and religious contexts and functions (Parlett 1999). More recently we have seen popular board games being repackaged to fit pop-cultural themes retrieved from television or cinema (Woods 2012). Furthermore, since the early days of digital games, tabletop games have served as a source of inspiration for many video-game designers, and more recently we have seen the occurrence of tabletop game adaptations of popular video-games such as StarCraft (Blizzard 2010).

Such adaptations make use of different strategies for capturing the various aspects of their source. Talisman: Digital Edition (Nomad Games 2014) largely adopts the same primary mechanics of the board game Talisman (Fantasy Flight Games 2008) while StarCraft: The Board Game (Fantasy Flight Games 2007) adopts characters and background story from its source but uses a completely different mechanical system.

As Wittgenstein (1958) pointed out, the concept of games however, refers to a range of very different and not easily comparable phenomena. Furthermore, the examples above travels across media with very different spatial and temporal logic (Backe 2015). Applying the concept of adaptations to such games is therefore not straightforward raises the question of what exactly is this an adaptation of?

Within the field of adaptation studies, adaptations are typically understood as exchanges between literature and cinema (Elleström 2013). However, recent adaptation theories such as Hutcheon (2006) stresses that adaptations should not only be limited to the so-called narrative media. Instead Hutcheon defines adaptations as repetition with variation (Ibid). Hutcheon’s definition makes it possible to study similarities and differences equally and thus challenges the ‘ideology of fidelity’ that has long permeated the field of adaption studies.

This presentation explores adaptations between digital and non-digital games. This analysis is inspired by intermedial studies (e.g. Elleström 2010) that distinguishes between different modalities of media. Relying on Aarseth’s and Calleja’s (2015) model of the cybermedia object, I will thus present three different aspect of games that can be adapted from digital to non-digital and vice-versa: 1) the
material artifact, 2) the game mechanics and 3) the representational layer. This
categorization will be discussed through a number of different case-studies of game
adaptations between digital and non-digital games. In these case-studies the
adaptation will be compared to its source in terms of the three different aspects and
the adaptations will furthermore be compared to each other.

Bio:
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of the research project Making Sense of Games that have received an ERC-advanced
grant. Ida’s current research interests mainly revolve around cross- and intermedia
studies and games as media.

Suggested literature:

Object” in Proceedings of the 10th International Conference on the Foundations of
Digital Games (FDG 2015), June 22-25, 2015, Pacific Grove, CA, USA.

Aarseth, E. 2011. “’Define Real, Moron!’ Some Remarks on Game Ontologies.”
DIGAREC Keynote- Lectures 2009/10. Edited by Stephan Günzel, Michael Liebe and

Hopkins University Press.

Game Adaptation” Well Played 4(1): 11-34.

Elleström, L. 2013. “Adaptation within the field of media transformations. In:
Adaptation Studies. New Challenges, New Directions. Edited by Jørgen Bruhn, Anne

Intermedial Relations” In: Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality. Edited

New Challenges, New Directions. Edited by Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik and Eirik


**Suggested ludography:**


Exozet Games GmBh. Carcassonne 2017.


Games Workshop. 2007. Talisman: The magical quest Game.

id Software. 1993. Doom.


