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CALL: #FROG2023
„Money & Games“
vom 13. bis 15. Oktober 2023,
im Wiener Rathaus.
Einreichfrist: 01. September 2023

Katharina Kaiser-Müller

While thousands of enthusiastic players are gathering annually at the Game City in the Vienna City Hall, the FROG invites to an academic discourse on the subject of games and play. This year the conference addresses issues of “Money & Games” in the field of play & games and invites game scholars, creators, youth workers, activists and enthusiasts from around the globe to come together and “follow the money” by discussing the traces it leaves on the field of games & play. Contributions can be submitted until September 1st 2023.

*Während sich jedes Jahr tausende begeisterte Spieler in der Game City im Wiener Rathaus versammeln, lädt das FROG zum wissenschaftlichen Diskurs rund um das Thema „Money & Games“ ein. Spielwissenschaftler*innen, Entwickler*innen, Jugendbetreuer*innen, Aktivist*innen und Enthusiast*innen aus der ganzen Welt sind eingeladen „dem Geld zu folgen“ und über die Spuren, die auf dem Spielfeld hinterlassen werden, zu diskutieren. Einreichfrist ist der 01. September 2023.*



1. Call for Abstracts 2023 “Money & Games”

Money makes the world go round – and the world of games spins especially fast in this regard. While terms like money, finances, or economy sound much too serious (and boring) to be easily associated with games, they describe concepts that are at the very heart of many game-related phenomena. They are the secret ingredient that greases the wheels of the mechanics of play & games themselves.

First of all, there is hardly a game that can do without one or the other kind of in-game money; these currencies might not be called “money” or “dollar” or even “coins”, but games are abstract

pleasures, and whether we deal in diamonds, teeth (mad, but true), or bottle caps, we can hardly imagine a game in which our efforts are not being translated into some kind of easily tradable mediating resource: a coin by any other name would buy as much.

But the presence of “money” in games is just the tip of the iceberg: as the various mechanics and practices of turning one resource into another are at the core of the very idea of economy, virtually any game is on some level a game about economy and economic structures, and playing a game is always related to matters of economic thinking and economic behavior.

This begs the question: are games themselves inherently tied to matters of money and economy, or is our mindset so deeply ingrained with capitalist logics that we cannot but reproduce them even in the games we create and play? Both answers suggest a critical stance towards the ways money and economies are modelled in games – but at the same time, the ease with which games and money intertwine also makes games a potential tool for talking about economic issues, either as educational games aiming to teach financial literacy skills – especially to younger players – , by highlighting the opportunities and survival strategies we need to be aware of when navigating the economic waters of our time; or as a method of economic critique, by uncovering the downsides of our economic systems, exploring alternatives, or asking if (and how) can we even imagine a (game) world in which money or its equivalents do not play any role at all?

At this point, the relation between money and games inverts, as it is only a small step from games as tools of economic critique to viewing economy itself as a game. While this is not a new idea, it has certainly gained some momentum since mathematical game theory has introduced games as a metaphor to the study of economic behavior in social interactions and has since then become a staple of economics itself – rarely without underlying ideological implications. But just as economies have changed in the age of digital globalization, so have games and our understanding of their complexities and possibilities. What, then, can concepts derived from studying increasingly complex digital games bring to the table when it comes to understanding modern economies?

And it is the digital age which adds yet another layer to the many relations between games & economies: since games have become digital, they have also become a monetary factor themselves. They have become a billion-dollar industry, estimated at almost thrice the value of the music and movie business combined. So, games make a lot of money (and quite often it is minors whom they are making money from) – and yet, money is always an issue, either for smaller studios, but especially for workers, who often have to balance precarious employment with high-stress working conditions or are even outsourced laborers or micro-workers altogether. And even paying jobs do not pay the same for everyone, as access to and compensation for jobs in the gaming industry are still notoriously dependent on currencies of class, race, and gender.

And yet, the promise of making money with games does not limit itself to a job in the games industry, and the proverbial “kids today” don’t cease to astonish their elders with increasingly specialized game-based career plans; job labels like Gaming Influencer, Esports Trainer or Cosplay Event Manager might seem unusual today, but they might very well anticipate the working environment of the not so distant future.

But, then again, games are often a scapegoat for making money by victimizing unsuspecting (and often underage) customers: especially for younger players, playing is not always an affordable activity, and many players are more than willing to take a seemingly good offer. But what is advertised as free-to-play can quickly turn into a bottomless money pit, and when loot boxes promise the chance to get more than you bargained for (but in a good way!), the question of who’s being looted is rarely answered in the players’ favor. The uninvited intrusion of hidden costs and costly game-of-chance-mechanics often targets younger players specifically and highlights the necessity to introduce game-related transactions as part of financial literacy – ideally taught in the form of games – bringing us full circle to the beginning. (Well, money does make the world go round after all).

The 17th Vienna Games Conference – FROG 2023 welcomes submissions that address issues of “Money & Games” in the field of play & games and invites game scholars, creators, youth workers, activists and enthusiasts from around the globe to come together and “follow the money” by discussing the traces it leaves on the

field of games & play. We will also accept submissions of “vorwissenschaftliche Arbeiten” (VWA/High School Theses) that deal with issues of game studies on a broader scale.

Furthermore, we welcome submissions to the planned anthology “Money | Games | Economy” (working title)“.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- *Money in Games & Game Economies*: How is money modelled in games? How are money, worth, and value related as game design elements? Are in-game currencies just an exchangeable game mechanic, or are they of special significance? Can we even imagine a game without some form of money or economy, and why (not)?
- *Games about Money*: Are games especially suited to teach economic thinking and financial literacy (to children and youths, but also to adults), and why? Is the systemic character of games comparable to that of economic systems, or are there crucial differences? Are there examples of games being used as tools of economic critique, and what are the potentials and limitations of doing so?
- *Game Theory & Economy as a Game*: What are the mechanics and limitations of economic thinking in games and society? Is a playful attitude possible (or even necessary?) to operate in modern economies? Who are the players in this “game”, and who is a commodity? And does our understanding of digital games and gaming add something new to traditional socio-economic “game theory”?
- *The Business of Gaming*: What is the state of the gaming industry? What are strategies of making (& losing) money with games? What are the risks of running or working in a game company, how can they be minimized? How sustainable are

current business strategies from an entrepreneurial, an environmental, a social and a diversity perspective?

- *Game-based Career Paths*: What new career opportunities are emerging as our societies become ever more (and ever more evidently) saturated with games and gaming practices? Do game-based career aspirations call for careful reality checking, or just for a little more faith and dedication? And is the younger generations' desire to create their own game-based career path an indication of a shift towards playfulness and individuality in the job market, or towards increased anxiety and despair?
- *Playing for Money*: What do games of chance look like today (and tomorrow)? Is the gamification of society accompanied by a hidden "gamblification" of economy that purposefully blurs the distinction between real and play money? Do we need better strategies to protect children and youths from hidden gambling in games, and what could such strategies look like? Are chance-mechanics in games a way to heighten our fun, or just another tool to rid us of our money? And – is gambling even a game?
- *Vorwissenschaftliche Arbeiten (VWA) / High-School Theses*: these do not have to fit the conference topic specifically, but must address the broader field of game studies.

Contributions to FROG 2023 can be submitted for the following formats:

- Option 1: talk (20 min presentation + Q&A)
- Option 2: interactive poster presentation
- Option 3: VWA/High-School Theses (10 min presentation + Q&A)

The conference will be held in a hybrid format, allowing participation as a speaker on-site or remotely.

Submission Deadline: September 1st 2023

Submission includes:

- title of your presentation
- short abstract (200 – 350 words)
- short bio (max 100 words) and photo of the author

Please indicate in the form if you are interested in writing an article for the planned anthology “Money | Games | Economy” (working title).

Conference language: English

Please submit your Abstract here:

<https://forms.office.com/e/n5uuVhh1gD>

Contact

Mail: contact@frogvienna.at

Twitter: @FROG_Vienna_

Facebook: @frogvienna

Weitere Informationen finden Sie auf der [Tagungswebseite](#).