

Preface and Acknowledgements

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The fact that new communication media have always produced new possibilities for cultural evaluation, analysis, and participation is particularly true of digital games. In recent years, video games have found a wide variety of new thresholds that lead to novel paths for us to approach them. Gaming no longer only takes place as a ‘closed interactive experience’ in front of TV screens or PC monitors at home (or at work), but also as broadcast on video-sharing and streaming platforms or as cultural events in exhibition centers and e-sport arenas. The development and popularization of new technologies, forms of expression, and online services—from Let’s Play videos to live streams, from video essays to podcasts—has a considerable influence on the academic and journalistic as well as on the popular discourse about games.

In 2015, Ian Bogost asked: How to talk about video games?¹ To further investigate and to expand upon this question was the idea of our Game Studies Summit that took place at the Cologne Game Lab of TH Köln in November 2019 as part of the tenth *Clash of Realities—International Conference on the Art, Technology, and Theory of Digital Games*. At that time, we did not just want to ask which paratexts gaming cultures have produced, i.e., in which forms and formats and through which channels we talk (and write) about games. We have also dealt with questions like: How do paratexts

1 Bogost, Ian: *How to Talk about Videogames*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2015.

influence the development of games? How is knowledge about games generated today, and how do boundaries between (popular) criticism, journalism, and scholarship have started to blur? How do new forms of communicating about games affect the medium of the game itself? In short: How does the paratext change the text?

This anthology attempts to provide some answers to this question. It documents the lectures given at this summit and adds further perspectives and contributions, collecting various analyses of new forms of paratexts, their relationship to games and gaming culture as well as more theoretical work on the concept itself.

In the introductory essay “Paratext | Paraplay. Contextualizing the Concept of Paratextuality,” Gundolf S. Freyermuth outlines the cultural and media technological conditions of the concept of paratextuality in three chapters. He explores the emergence of modern text culture, the development of modern audiovisuality, and the rise of digitalization, resulting not only in a multitude of new paratextual forms but also new ways of dealing with games that transcend regular playing—paraplay.² After that, the contributions are divided into three major areas: “Histories,” “Performances,” and “Peripheries.” An overview of the individual contributions to these three parts, their highly diverse topics, methodological approaches, and insights, can be found at the end of the introductory essay.³

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2 In this volume pp. 13-52.

3 In this volume pp. 42-46.

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