

# **Newsgames –**

**Typological approach, re-contextualization and  
potential  
of an underestimated emerging genre**

Dr. Anna Wiehl

University of Bayreuth

Department for Media Studies

# I. "News+ Games = News-games?" - In Place of a Definition

News = actual, topical facts and arguments, critical reflection

Games = amusement, leisure and entertainment



# Newsgames

Tell me and I'll forget;

show me and I may remember;

**involve me and I'll understand.**

*Chinese Proverb*

# Newsgames



# Survey

## I. "News + Games = News-games?"

In Place of a Definition

## II. "Play the news! – Play *any* news?!"

### 1. Genres and sub-Genres

A typological approach and re-contextualization

### 2. Making playful sense –

Discussion of a systematic-analytical and interpretive model

## III. "Journalism@play?"

Challenges and opportunities and for journalistic games

I. "News + Games = News-games?" - In Place of a Definition

## a definitorial *approach*

- *procedural* coverage of the topic
- play and experience
- insight and understanding of system dynamics at large

game content and/or dynamics are based on **actual facts**  
usage of **digital media**

## II. "Play the news! – Play *any* news?!"

Genres and sub-Genres – A typological approach and re-contextualization

### Interactive infographics

- **purpose:** tool to help understand visualized data by synthesizing it through play
- **re-contextualization:** traditional infographics
- **examples:** *Budget Hero*; [Hurricane Makers](#)

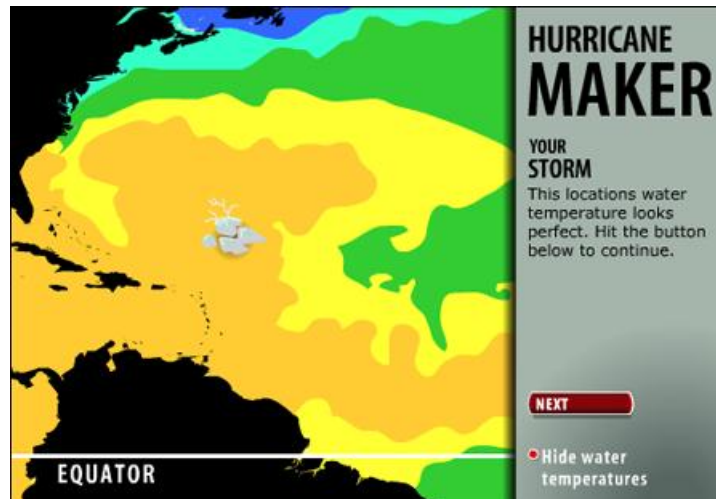


Illustration 1: Interactive infographics – *South Florida Sun Sentinel's Hurricane Maker*

## II. "Play the news! – Play *any* news?!"

Genres and sub-Genres – A typological approach and re-contextualization

### Current event games

- **purpose:** conveying opinion on topical events
- **re-contextualization:** editorial of newspaper, equivalent to column, letter from the editor; feature
- **(sub-)genres of current events games**
  - if used as an equivalent to column, article:
    - short, bite-sized works, conveying small bits of information or opinion
  - if used as an as equivalent to feature (i.e. more complex):
    - reportage game



## II. "Play the news! – Play *any* news?!"

Genres and sub-Genres – A typological approach and re-contextualization

### Editorial games

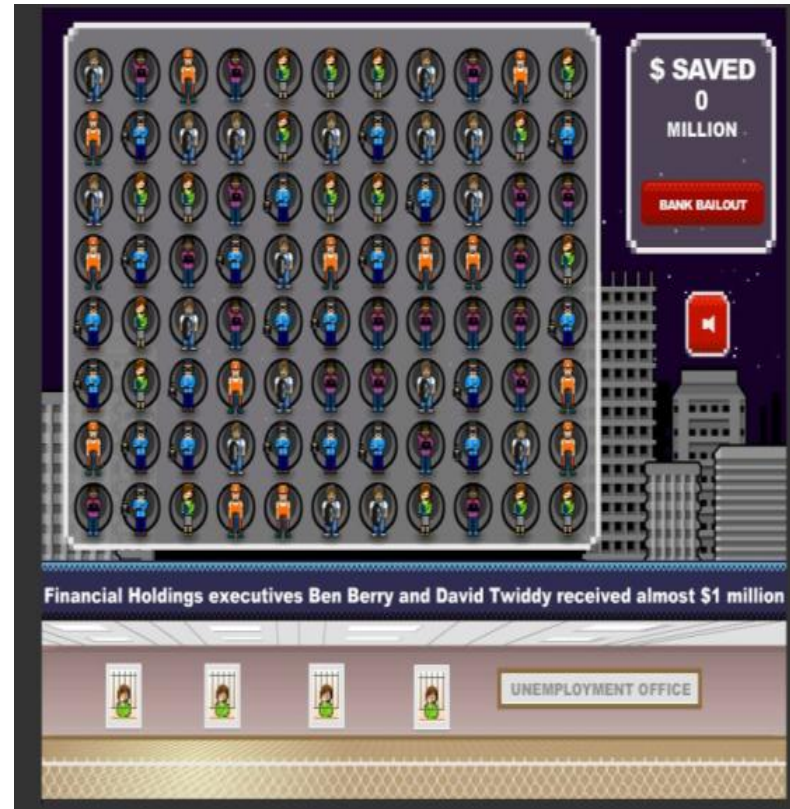
- **re-contextualization:** convey opinion, equivalent to column, letter from the editor
- **examples:** *September 12th*; *Kabul Kaboom!*; *Layouff!*



Illustration 2: Editorial Newsgames - Bejeweled as 'role-model' for Layouff!

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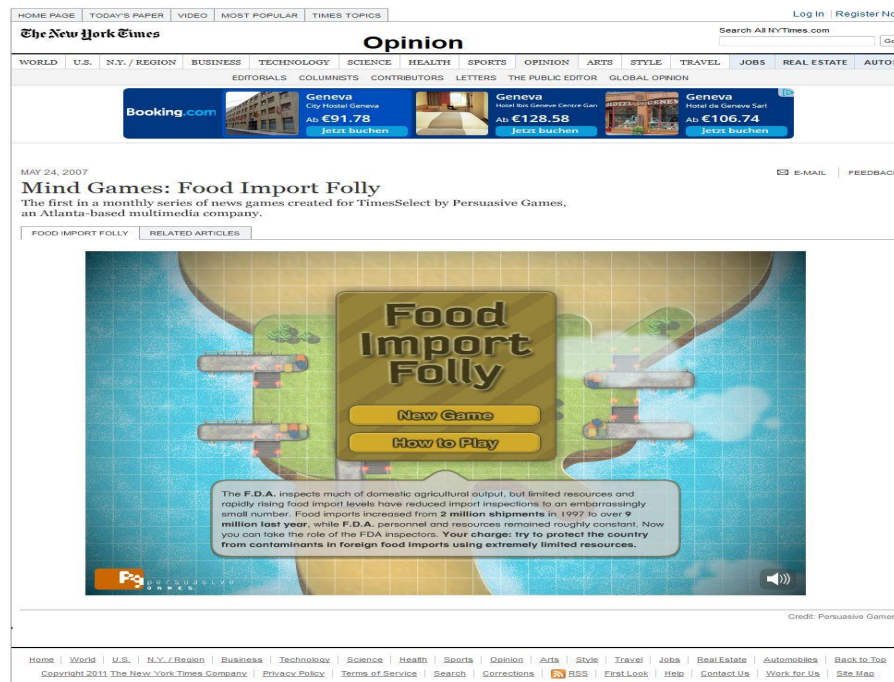


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### Reportage games

- **re-contextualization:** emulate factual *reporting*  
more complex in content
- **examples:** *Food Import Folly*; *Mama Kills Animals!*



The screenshot shows the New York Times website's Opinion section. At the top, there are navigation links for 'HOME PAGE', 'TODAY'S PAPER', 'VIDEO', 'MOST POPULAR', and 'TIMES TOPICS'. The main header includes 'The New York Times' logo, the word 'Opinion', and a search bar. Below the header is a navigation menu with categories like 'WORLD', 'U.S.', 'N.Y./REGION', 'BUSINESS', 'TECHNOLOGY', 'SCIENCE', 'HEALTH', 'SPORTS', 'OPINION', 'ARTS', 'STYLE', 'TRAVEL', 'JOBS', 'REAL ESTATE', and 'AUTOS'. A 'Booking.com' advertisement is visible, showing hotel listings for Geneva. The main article is dated 'MAY 24, 2007' and titled 'Mind Games: Food Import Folly'. The sub-headline reads: 'The first in a monthly series of news games created for TimesSelect by Persuasive Games, an Atlanta-based multimedia company.' Below the article title is a 'RELATED ARTICLES' section. The game interface for 'Food Import Folly' is displayed, featuring a central title 'Food Import Folly' with buttons for 'New Game' and 'How to Play'. A text box below the game interface states: 'The F.D.A. inspects much of domestic agricultural output, but limited resources and rapidly rising food import levels have reduced import inspections to an embarrassingly small number. Food imports increased from 2 million shipments in 1997 to over 9 million last year, while F.D.A. personnel and resources remained roughly constant. Now you can take the role of the FDA inspectors. Your charge: try to protect the country from contaminants in foreign food imports using extremely limited resources.' The game interface also includes a 'PERSUASIVE GAMES' logo and a speaker icon. At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with navigation links and copyright information: 'Copyright 2011 The New York Times Company | Privacy Policy | Terms of Service | Search | Corrections | RSS | First Look | Help | Contact Us | Work for Us | Site Map'.

Illustration 3: Reportage Games – *New York Times: Food Import Folly*



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MAY 24, 2007 E-MAIL | FEEDBACK

### Mind Games: Food Import Folly

The first in a monthly series of news games created for TimesSelect by Persuasive Games, an Atlanta-based multimedia company.

FOOD IMPORT FOLLY | RELATED ARTICLES



Credit: Persuasive Games

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## II. "Play the news! – Play *any* news?!"

Genres and sub-Genres – A typological approach and re-contextualization

### Documentary games

- **purpose:** present more complex topics; more thorough 'exploration'
- **re-contextualization:** feature; documentary film [// web-documentary]
- **example:** *JFK Reloaded*; *Gaza/Sderot*; *Fort McMoney*; *Prison Valley*

## II. "Play the news! – Play *any* news?!"

Genres and sub-Genres – A typological approach and re-contextualization



Illustration 4: Documentaty game – *JFK Reloaded*

## II. "Play the news! – Play *any* news?!"

Genres and sub-Genres – A typological approach and re-contextualization

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La vie malgré tout

GAZA 23 décembre 2008 Abu Khalil

SDEROT 23 décembre 2008 Yafa Malka

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Sefian Bakers Haus  
Hafen von Gaza  
Ahmed Guffahs Fest  
Ahmed Guffahs Turnhalle

Feld in der Näh  
Bei André  
Die neue Wohnung von Linaes Schwester  
A The Simis Küche umhülle  
Sasons Lebensm Sderot süß  
Markt von Sderot  
Sderot Gymnasium  
Mobiles Studio in Uziy 1 nahal

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Kassam Raketen (18)

Frisör (6)

Pessimismus (4)

Liebe (3)

Transport (1)

Markt (1)

Lebensmittelgeschäft (4)

Grenzen (1)

Armee (4)

Arbeit (3)

ärztliche Hilfe (1)

Kunst (2)

Familie (11)

Haus (5)

Jugend (3)

Hochzeit (3)

Benzin (3)

Landwirtschaft (6)

Fischer (5)

Träume (4)

Pessimismus (5)

Pharmazeutik (1)

Journalist (2)

Transport (4)

Optimismus (6)

chirurgischer Eingriff (4)

Barbier (1)

23 Dezember mit Abu Khalil

11 Dezember mit Heba Safi

9 Dezember mit Khalaf Gassim

23 Dezember mit Yafa Malka

23 Dezember mit Simi Zubib

19 Dezember mit Avi Vakain

9 Dezember mit Haviv Ben

17 Dezember mit Haviv Ben Abu

3 Dezember mit Avi Vakain

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### **Further (sub-)Genres:**

- **Puzzle games**
- **News literacy games**
- **Community newsgames**



## II. "Play the news! – Play *any* news?!"

Discussion of a systematic-analytical and interpretive model

### Treanor, Mateas, Michael et al.: towards a 'game wizard' (?)

- **analysis**
  - remove thematic mapping
- **interpretative model**
  - detect deep structure → deduct possible interpretations
- **design**
  - take '**message**' and break it down into '**formula**'
  - form meaning-classes/roles
- **implementation**
  - find signifying images to 'fill' roles

## II. "Play the news! – Play *any* news?!"

Discussion of a systematic-analytical and interpretive model

# "*Play* the news! – Play *any* news?!"

- risk to stimulate 'subversive play' or 'oppositional reading'
- 'serially' produced newsgames → dull
- digital media offer surplus features!
  - geolocative newsgames
  - integration of user-generated content

### III. "Journalism@play?"

Challenges and opportunities for journalistic games

#### **producer perspective**

- organizational challenges for realization  
timeliness
  - vs. accurate investigation?
  - vs. creative and effective design?
  - vs. procedurally proposed argument?

### III. "Journalism@play?"

Challenges and opportunities for journalistic games

#### **recipient perspective**

- lack of 'procedural literacy'
  - misinterpretation or no interpretation at all (due to false expectations as to games)
- possible solution:
  - newsgames first as supplements to establish the genre
  - then as independent medium for doing good journalism

### III. "Journalism@play?"

Challenges and opportunities for journalistic games

## research perspective

- very ephemeral, heterogeneous corpus
  - lack of interdisciplinary approaches
  - reflection vs. immersion?
- different kinds of engagement!
- naturally reflexive ('rule-based')
  - 'deeper insight' beyond the visible → underlying mechanisms!

### III. "Journalism@play?"

Challenges and opportunities for journalistic games

## research perspective

reflection

vs.

immersion?



### III. "Journalism@play?"

Challenges and opportunities for journalistic games

## research perspective

- different kinds of engagement!
  - naturally reflexive ('rule-based')
  - 'deeper insight' beyond the visible → underlying mechanisms!

### III. "Journalism@play?"

Challenges and opportunities for journalistic games

***Play the News –***  
**but maybe not *any* news**  
**and do so deliberately!**

Thank you for your attention ....

.... and looking forward to discussion!!