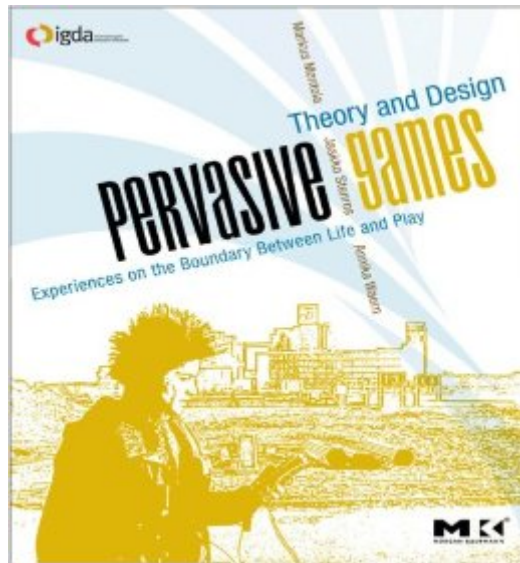


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Pervasive Games: Theory And Design (Morgan Kaufmann Game Design Books)



Synopsis

Emerging quickly from the fast-paced growth of mobile communications and wireless technologies, pervasive games provide a worldwide network of potential play spaces. Now games can be designed to be played in public spaces like conferences, museums, communities, cities, buildings or other non-traditional game venues...and game designers need to understand the medium (challenges and otherwise). This book shows game designers how to change the face of play - literally - who plays, when and where they play and what that play means to all involved. Montola and Stenros explore a number of aspects of pervasive games for game designers: what makes them compelling, what makes them possible today, how they are made, by whom, theoretical and philosophical reasons behind the designs for game designers. "Pervasive Games" covers everything from theory to design, history and marketing. Designers will find 12 detailed game descriptions, a wealth of design theory, examples from dozens of games and a thorough discussion on past inspirations - directly from the game designers themselves. --Clear, illustrated set of "how it works" descriptions demystify pervasive games for game designers - so that they can learn how to engage players real-time experiences beyond the card table or computer screen. --Includes 12 case studies with illustrative and inspiring examples that make the entire design space tangible. --Explores what makes pervasive games compelling, how they are made, and by whom. Covers in-depth theoretical and philosophical background for designers - creates a springboard for creation of their own designs. --Provides practical design tips, pitfalls, design problems from real-games, and solutions from pervasive game design luminaries (including Matt Adams, Frank Lantz, and other top designers in the field.)

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Customer Reviews

The first time I saw this book, it was in manuscript form on the laptop of one of the editors, next to whom I was sitting as a bus brought us to the airport from the a conference on live action roleplaying. I was immediately taken with the project: an attempt to catalog the variety of instances in which game-play has spilled out beyond the special "magic circle" of the gaming table, playground, or sports field and into "real life": live-action Pac-Man on the streets of Manhattan, Killer on college campuses, even races on reality television. The finished product comprises 13 case studies describing a different sort of "pervasive game." Each case study is accompanied by a longer analytic essay, moving from the descriptive (what are pervasive games and where do they come from?) through the technical (how are pervasive games designed, run, and played?) to the philosophical (what are the ethical implications and aesthetic ramifications of pervasive games?). In order to make sense of the sprawling breadth of material that they have collected, the editors have divided the chapters into three parts, labeled "Theory," "Design," and "Society." More importantly, they provide an analytic framework based on the idea that pervasive games are best understood as extending play spatially, temporally, or socially. In other words, pervasive games are those in which the game somehow intersects with or infringes upon ordinary life. "Pervasive games," say the editors, "can take the pleasure of the game to ordinary life," and the "immediacy and tangibility of ordinary life to the game." In spatial extension, the playing field is overlaid upon regular spaces: the whole world is the playground.

I've let this book simmer for a while. I'm not a big reader anymore; that is, I read a lot, but in the fragmented and impatient way I've been taught by the internet. Reading through several hundred pages in one go isn't for me, these days, if it ever was. So I've attacked the book from several angles. Jumping into one chapter, checking out a reference to another, occasionally googling interesting games or reading up on the book's official blog. And, luckily for me, the book lends itself well to this form of reading. The text is full of interesting tidbits, fun and strange ideas that provide

inspiration and matter for reflection. Jumping back and forth through the chapters also highlights a specific feature of the book: There are many voices, many situated authors, many discernibly different agendas*. These multiple frames of reference make for a multifaceted view of the pervasive games phenomenon. While creators of pervasive games are often good at hyping their own games, making it sound like they've changed the lives of everyone involved and are on the verge of creating a social revolution, the editors let the projects speak for themselves; they describe the games objectively, cite research and questionnaire responses, and let the reader make up his/her own mind as to the quality and effects of the game. This is refreshing and relaxing after reading so many hyped-up articles about different pervasive projects. It also makes reading chapters like "Art and Politics of Pervasive Games" more rewarding; having facts** contrasted with vision and opinion make both parts stand out more clearly. All in all, this is a brilliant book both for laymen, designers and researchers. I recommend it heartily, and remain a fan-boy.

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