Creative Play and Social Impact

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YourTurn! The Video-Game

 "YourTurn! The Video-Game" (http://yourturn.fm) is a social network game about creating YouTube video mash-ups with other players made to foster social interaction, communication and the reflection of cultural identity among juveniles, primarily in Vienna, Austria, but the game has also been released internationally. YourTurn! is accessible on Facebook where players engage in ›versus‹ battles. Taking turns, they select short snippets of Youtube (music) videos, which they append to a mutual video mix. Playing against each other leads to a shared and creative result; a video mix made by two players who previously did not know each other. Thus YourTurn! brings together youth of different ethnicity, gender and place of residence who normally would not be in contact with one another. Thereby, music acts as identity-related tie (Solomon 2009). The sustained yield of the forming relationships is supported by a series of events and workshops.

Figure 1: The start page of YourTurn!, which shows the most popular video mixes and opportunities to contribute.

A pre-study in Vienna, Austria and insights on media use and everyday social interaction shaped the design of the game. YourTurn! builds on core mechanics which enable it to become a playful means of communication, transform competitive play into cooperative play, facilitate a shared reflection of culture and identity and train media literacy.

Background Information

Preceding studies show that youth in Vienna tend to segregate into closed ethnic groups (Weiss, 2007; Götzenbrucker & Franz, 2010; Thomas & Crul, 2007). To answer the central research question

›*Can an online social music game allow Viennese teenagers to change their understanding of cultural diversity in order to overcome cultural and ethnical boundaries?*‹ a game is designed, developed and evaluated within a multidisciplinary academic setting (Kayali et al. 2011) involving partners from social and political sciences, informatics, game research and game industry. The game builds on 51 personal interviews conducted between March and June 2011 with 27 male and 24 female teenagers living in Vienna. The results of this research helped identify touch points for the game intervention and provided starting points for drafting the game's design. The interviews showed that an overwhelming majority uses Facebook and Youtube on a regular basis. It also became clear that these web services are not only used daily but that they have become an essential means for social interaction and media consumption. Hence we decided to use communication through media especially through music videos to be the core of our design.

The study led us to use the following core mechanics, which shall foster social impact through creative play:

- The back and forth of cutting and appending videos becomes a playful means of communication, fosters togetherness and helps expand social boundaries.

- Players engage in a VS battle but in the end they create something together. The transformation of competitive play into cooperative play is a crucial step towards bringing participating youth closer to one another and supporting inter-ethnicity in their social networks.

- Videos are created based on a topic and for example allow players to reflect their place of residence together. Taking turns players negotiate meaning by submitting adequate video responses. The free association style of play enables shared cultural reflection and furthers the process of acculturation (Berry, 2001).

- Other topics allow players to express their identity. Doing this together fosters intercultural understanding. Striving for game goals together ideally overrides the cultural restrictions present in everyday life.

- Players gain media literacy. Finding a matching clip means learning to reflect communication, aesthetics and context.

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