

COMMUNICATIONS AND NEW MEDIA PROGRAMME

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

The Neoliberal Consolidation of Play and Speed: Ethical Issues in Serious Gaming

A Talk by Dr. Ingrid Maria Hoofd
Communications and New Media Programme

CNM Seminar Room, AS6 #03-33
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS
Wednesday, 24th October 2007, 4 p.m.



Serious games are a fascinating next stage in the continuous exploitation of digital media technologies over the last decades for training, learning, and education. The implementation of increasingly more sophisticated and technologically mediated methods for learning and education takes, as its starting point, the assumption that new interactive technologies themselves are the primary harbingers of a fair and blooming society through facilitating learner empowerment.

This research takes issue with this widespread techno-utopian perspective by focusing on the larger ethical implications of serious gaming. It will do so through foregrounding the relationship between global and local injustices and serious gaming aesthetics, practices, and discourses. The paper will start from the premise that the very quest for instantaneity that research around digital media has displayed through the development of interactive technologies for education – a quest that also implicitly informs the current development of serious games – is itself already by no means a neutral affair.

The ethical issue with serious games, this research claims, is therefore not only one of game content, or of the problematic stereotypical representations in such games. Rather, the issue is how serious games, as essentially a technology of distancing, militarisation, and archiving, lead to what I will call a 'double objectification' through its formal aesthetics, in favour of the new 'speed elite'. Therefore, serious games become complicit archives of the discursive and actual violence carried out in the name of the utopia of technological progress and instantaneity under neo-liberal globalisation. This archival function, this paper concludes, is possible exactly because cybernetic technologies promise the containment, alleviation, and control of such supposedly accidental violence, while in fact structurally exacerbating these forms of violence.

About the Speaker:

Ingrid Maria Hoofd is an Assistant Professor in the Communications and New Media Programme at the National University of Singapore (NUS). Her research interests are Serious Gaming, Issues of Representation, Feminist and Critical Theories, Philosophy of Technology, and Information Ethics. Her dissertation, *Between Activism And Academia: The Complicities Of Alter-Globalist Resistances In Speed*, discusses the ways in which alter-globalist activists, as well as left-wing academics, mobilise discourses and divisions in an attempt to overcome gendered, raced and classed oppressions worldwide. Ingrid wrote her Masters thesis on Cyberfeminism at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. She has been involved in various feminist and new media activist projects, like Indymedia, Next Five Minutes, HelpB92, and NextGeneration.

