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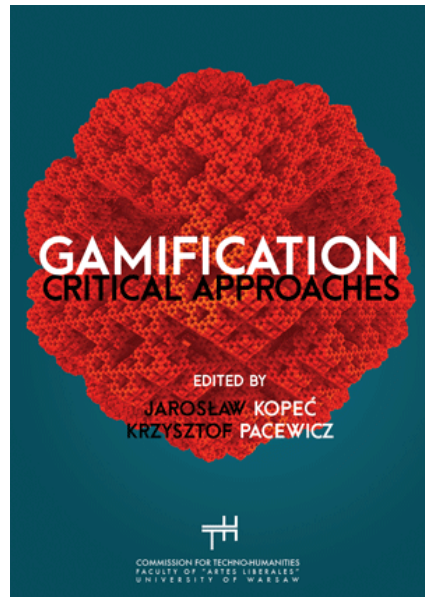
*Gamification. Critical Approaches*

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# GAMIFIED GAMEPLAY: GAMIFICATION IN GAME DESIGN

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Mateusz Kominiarczuk

Commonly accepted definitions of gamification explicitly prohibit the “gamification of games”, stating that even if it occurs, it is either impossible to distinguish from regular “game design”, or else limited to achievements. However, careful examination of design trends observed in games published after 2010 indicates otherwise. A case study of two game series by Blizzard Entertainment was performed: *Diablo* and *StarCraft*. The recent releases in each of these series were compared with their predecessors. In light of each series’ design history and ongoing development through patches and expansions, we arrive at the conclusion that the “gamification of games” trend is quite real, and not limited to achievements.

## Problems with “gamification”

Like other papers collected in this volume, this chapter, too, deals with gamification, and the question of “gamified games” in particular – as we will see, a hardly uncontroversial concept. The authors of *From Game Design Elements to Gamefulness* define “gamification” as “the use of game design elements in non-game contexts” (Deterding et al., 2011, p. 2). Thus, their definition explicitly excludes the possibility of “gamification of games”, since – in their own words – “that would simply be game design” (Deterding et al., 2011, p. 4). The basis for this argument is the notion of “gamefulness” and “gameful experience” (“complementary but distinct” from “playfulness” and “playful experience”), and the presupposed link between “gamification” and “games”, as illustrated in the paper (Deterding et al., 2011, p. 3-5).

However, notable critics of gamification – Ian Bogost chief amongst them – have long since demonstrated that the so-called “game mechanics” so readily implemented by gamificators are neither core nor specific to games (Robertson, 2010; Bogost 2011, p. 2; Kelly, 2012; compare Zichermann and Cunningham, 2011, p. XV).<sup>1</sup> Huotari and Hamari (2012a, p. 18) raise a similar point, going so far as to state that “[t]here are no game elements, or if there are, they are not unique to games as we understand them”, and “[t]here are no non-game contexts... or game contexts for that matter” (2012b). Therefore, some other term may be more suitable – perhaps “pointstification” (Robertson, 2010) or “exploitationware” (Bogost, 2011).

Despite their differences from Deterding et al. (2011), Huotari and Hamari (2012) actually preserve the link between “games” and “gamification” in their own definition of the latter, alternative to the one formulated by Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, and Nacke. According to Huotari and Hamari, “[g]amification refers to a process of enhancing a service with affordances for gameful experiences in order to support user’s overall value creation” (Huotari and Hamari, 2012, p. 19). Viewed from the perspective of service marketing, it can be further compared with “enhancing services” accompanying the “core services” in the “service package” (Huotari and Hamari, 2012, p. 18-19). In their own words, “gamification describes a service system where a core service is enhanced by another one” – whether the service in question is or is not a game itself (Huotari and Hamari, 2012, p. 20). As we can see, gamification as defined by Huotari and Hamari does not preclude the “gamification of games” in the slightest.

Personal preferences aside, given that these are the only two peer-reviewed academic definitions of gamification to date, how are we to determine which one is more accurate – the one by Deterding et al. or rather the one proposed by Huotari and Hamari? Although well-argued, the latter fails to address one of the strongest points raised by Deterding et al. (2011, p. 4-5), namely whether it is even possible to distinguish supposed “gamification of games” from regular “game design” (as opposed to merely a “meta game platform”), or in Huotari and Hamari’s (2012) terms, how one is to differentiate the “enhancement” from the “core service” when the service in question is a game itself. Before we answer this question, we have to establish what a “meta game” is, and how one can determine whether he or she is dealing with a “core game” or a “gamification/enhancement service”. Then we shall not only answer the questions, but also resolve the problem of the choice between the two competing definitions.

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1 In fact, they are not even universal amongst games. Zichermann and Cunningham in particular cite social games as the inspiration behind gamification, as opposed to “games overall” (2011: 23, 24).

## Of achievements, services, and (meta) games

According to Huotari and Hamari, “[t]he core service of the game is to provide hedonic, challenging and suspenseful experiences for the player(s)”, evaluated by the “flow” phenomenon (Huotari and Hamari, 2012, p. 19) as described by psychologists (e.g. Skok, 2013). They also note that even though the game is already “gameful”, it “can be further gamified, creating so-called meta games” (Huotari and Hamari, 2012: 20). They do not define “meta games” further (nor in fact reference them anywhere else in the published paper), but another study co-authored by Hamari – *Framework for Designing and Evaluating Game Achievements* (Hamari and Eranti, 2011) – goes into more details.

Hamari and Eranti (2011, p. 15) note that “[a]chievements are always simultaneously related to at least two coinciding games, the achievement completion (meta-)game and the one in which the achievement’s fulfilment conditions are met”. Such a “(meta-)game” can be either part of the “game platform” (Valve’s Steam is one example) – and thus external to the game itself – or else part of the “game proper”. Most of Hamari’s and Eranti’s work deals with the first case, also briefly discussed (and critiqued) by Deterding et al. (2011, p. 4-5). The second one, however, is far more interesting, if only because it was merely touched upon by all the researchers mentioned.<sup>2</sup>

Since their introduction in Microsoft Xbox 360 in 2005 (Bycer, 2013), achievement systems have become nearly omnipresent (Hamari and Eranti, 2011). Along with levels, badges, and points, they have become the staples of the “gamification” strategy (Bunchball, 2010; Zichermann and Cunningham, 2011). The identification of these two is so strong that the mere mention of “game achievements” provokes questions about “gamification of games” (Deterding et al., 2011; Bycer, 2013) – not without some merit, according to Hamari and Eranti, who analysed several achievement systems and provided a framework for their evaluation (2011).

But this poses a different problem. If achievement systems in their current form (although with some recent variations) (Bryce, 2014) were introduced for use with games a few years before gamification became a trend, does that mean that Deterding et al. are right, and there is nothing to differentiate “gamification” from “game design”? Not necessarily. For one thing, what is now called “gamification” arguably existed in various forms long before 2008 (Deterding et al., 2011, p. 1-2). Moreover, we have yet to decide whether “enhancements” such as achievements systems are separable from games themselves. In their case, the answer ap-

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<sup>2</sup> Note: in gamers’ jargon, “metagame” (“meta” for short) is the way the game is generally played at a certain level at any given time. It includes common character builds and item choices (in *Diablo*), as well as the build orders, timings, and army compositions (in *StarCraft*), among others. This common usage bears no resemblance to the academic usage and should not be confused with it.

pears to be in the affirmative, with full discussion in Hamari and Eranti (2011). But is it enough to add achievements to a game to call it “gamified” if it is so contested? Probably yes, but a stronger argument is required.

Since Deterding et al. (2011) consider any attempts at separating the supposed “gamification” from the “core game” unnecessary at best, and impossible at worst, whereas Huotari and Hamari (2012) do not pose such objections, all we need to do in order to decide who is right is to falsify this claim. If we are able not only to find a game that was supposedly “gamified” (preferably not just by its inclusion in a platform-wide achievement system), but also to show that the “gamification” layer can be separated from the “core”, then it logically follows that the more inclusive approach advocated by Huotari and Hamari is closer to the truth than the exclusive definition proposed by Deterding et al. (2011).

In order to do this, we have to empirically compare at least two titles, if possible from the same genre and franchise. To this end, two long-running game series by Blizzard Entertainment were selected, specifically *Diablo* and *StarCraft*. *Warcraft* – another iconic Blizzard franchise – was also considered for analysis, but ultimately abandoned due to its far less uniform nature and very different release history<sup>3</sup>. In the end, five games (along with their official, Blizzard-released expansions) were analysed, particularly *StarCraft 2*, a sequel to the critically-acclaimed RTS *StarCraft: Brood War*, and *Diablo 3*, an heir to *Diablo* and *Diablo 2: Lord of Destruction*, highly-successful hack-and-slash action role-playing games (HnS ARPGs).

What they have in common – besides their popularity, the company behind them, and the release in the 2010s, over ten years after the original games in the respective series – is how they deviate from their predecessors, as well as their “online-only” nature (and thus, the reliability of obligatory official patches). As we will see, while their core gameplay has remained mostly unchanged from the older games in the series, they also tend to engage players in various “meta games” which were introduced after their original releases.

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3 Besides the original RTS series, *Warcraft*, (1995, 1996, 2000), the franchise also encompasses the arguably more popular subscription-based MMORPG *World of Warcraft* (2004), as well as a recent free-to-play electronic collectible card game *Hearthstone: Heroes of Warcraft* (2014). *Diablo* was at one point adapted to a tabletop RPG supplement (2000), and *StarCraft* was the inspiration for a board game of the same name (2007), but neither of those attempts has any consequence for the following analysis. The same is true for *StarCraft: Ghost* (a stealth TPP spin-off, cancelled in development) and very early, never-published MMO-oriented designs of *Diablo 3* by Blizzard North. In the same vein, although both *StarCraft: Brood War* and *Diablo 3* were released on consoles as well as PCs, this paper deals solely with their PC versions.

## In search of the “game core”: a look at the history of *Diablo* and *StarCraft*

To discuss the more recent releases in context, we have to first understand the original games in the *StarCraft* and *Diablo* series: what they were, and what they became. Only then will it be possible to discern the “core” parts of the game from various “enhancements”.

### ***StarCraft* and the Battle.net**

In *StarCraft: Brood War*<sup>4</sup> players can progress through the story in a series of increasingly-difficult missions organised into a single player campaign, play against computer and/or human opponents in custom maps, or even use the provided map editor to modify or create their own scenarios. At the time of its original release, one of the most defining features of *StarCraft* was the asymmetric, diverse design of the three playable factions: terrans, protoss, and zerg. Though enjoyable in the single player mode or with friends through a local network, one of the main strengths of *StarCraft: Brood War* is the free-of-charge matchmaking Battle.net platform provided by Blizzard for players looking for opponents online.

Thanks to Battle.net and the good game balance (achieved only after several patches), as well as the local conditions at the time, *StarCraft*'s popularity quickly rose, especially in South Korea – up to the point where it became a competitive electronic sport (or “e-sport”), with matches between professional players transmitted by dedicated television channels (*The Korean*, 2010). These entwined competitive and spectacular traits were further developed in subsequent releases of the game following Patch 1.0.8. (the one which first introduced “game recording”, or “replays”) for the original *StarCraft*.

A recent study by Simon Dor (2014) provides an accurate first-hand description of *StarCraft: Brood War* gameplay, as well as an in-depth analysis of “the heuristic circle of real-time strategy process”, as illustrated by an actual competitive match between professional *StarCraft* players. Dor depicts *StarCraft: Brood War* as an exemplar real-time strategy game and highlights what he considers to be its core gameplay elements, particularly “optimizing units’ actions” (Dor, 2014) (a part of the game often referred to as “micro” and “macro”, that is “micromanagement”, or direct control of units, and “macromanagement”, expansion and devel-

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4 Technically, *Brood War* is only an expansion for the original *StarCraft* (1998). However, due to the very short gap in release dates (less than a year), and the urgent need for a simple way to distinguish the franchise from the first game title, and that from its sequel(s), *StarCraft: Brood War* is often understood simply as “the first game in the series”. Since the point of this paper is a juxtaposition of original games from the late 1990s/early 2000s with their continuations from the 2010s, an additional distinction between a “base game” and an “expansion” released within several months from each other is unnecessary.

opment of army production facilities, economy, and technology). If we were to substitute the base play experience of *StarCraft: Brood War* with that of its sequel, *StarCraft 2* (either *Wings of Liberty* or *Heart of the Swarm*), we would not have to change much in Dor's description, except for a few very minor details (such as the number of worker units available to each player at the start of the match or the introduction of campaign-specific game difficulty regulation). One might argue that the same would be true for most RTS games, but it is exactly the "generic core" of the game that we are looking for.

Examining *StarCraft* and its sequel in detail, we encounter multiple rule changes not just between games (or even between the base game and its designated expansions), but also from patch to patch. Certainly they affect the way the game is played, but the overall experience remains quite consistent even as the strategies change. If we are searching for possible "enhancements", instead of recounting what were essentially balance tweaks we should pay very close attention to authentically new game features introduced over time. Of particular importance to us are functions which were missing from earlier releases, such as the replays system mentioned earlier or the achievements system from *StarCraft 2* (absent from *StarCraft: Brood War*). Before we proceed any further with the analysis of such non-core features, let us consider the *Diablo* franchise.

## **Diablo**

The original *Diablo* was not the first hack-and-slash action role-playing video game, but due to its immense popularity, other games of the genre were often called "Diablo clones". The goal of the original game was to delve deep into the randomised dungeons, at the bottom of which the final boss - "Dark Lord", or "Diablo" - waited to be defeated in combat by the player-controlled hero. Originally three character classes (warrior, sorcerer, and rogue) were available. Class choice affected the character's starting statistics and unique skills, such as the sorcerer's ability to recharge spell wands, as well as available equipment. Throughout the game, characters were awarded experience points, gold and items for killing monsters and fulfilling quests. After collecting sufficient experience, the hero advanced in level and power.

*Diablo's* strength lies in its simple yet mesmerising gameplay (kill monsters, collect items, kill stronger monsters in the hope of gaining even better items, etc.) paired with randomness of rewards (often compared to operating arcade slot machines). Both *Diablo 2* and *Diablo 3* further developed this idea, staying true to the tenets of an "endless randomized treasure hunt" while

introducing their own character classes and skill systems, as well as open-world exploration, story-oriented “campaigns” divided into “acts” (each one ending with a climactic boss fight), and new game modes – “normal” and “hardcore”.<sup>5</sup>

The original *Diablo* was Blizzard’s first game to utilise the Battle.net platform, which led to the game’s popularity. It was still primarily an offline game, as is apparent in the fact that only very few quests available in the single player mode were ever ported to multiplayer. Nevertheless, Jonas H. Smith placed *Diablo* “among the first truly successful commercial online games”. He also noted that due to the initial entirely local data storage, “the gaming experience was seriously affected by the amount of cheating apparent among many participants” (Smith, 2007). Neither the rampant cheating nor the merely partial porting from single- to multiplayer prevented the game from becoming a top seller, and each subsequent release further emphasised the online aspect of the game. *Diablo 2* and its expansion, *Diablo 2: Lord of Destruction*, added an option to play in “closed” Battle.net “Realms” (with game and profile data stored on server instead of with the client). Unlike the previous games in the series, the computer version of *Diablo 3* requires an internet connection to the Battle.net servers at all times and thus cannot be played offline at all – even in the single player mode.

While *StarCraft* is mostly competitive (although it affords some forms of team play), as an ARPG, the original *Diablo* is oriented towards cooperative, Player(s) vs. Environment play – a tendency fully embraced only recently.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, designers provided players with the option of fighting with or against their friends and strangers on Battle.net or their local network. In both *Diablo* and *Diablo 2*, the winner of a Player vs. Player duel could collect a trophy – an ear of the defeated enemy. This “proto-achievement”, as we may view it, was never part of *Diablo 3*, which did not offer even the most rudimentary PvP prior to Patch 1.0.7. and its “duelling/brawling system”. Aside from individual PvP matches, the main form of competition in the *Diablo* series is ranked play afforded by the “ladders” first introduced in Patch 1.10. for *Diablo 2*, and then reintroduced as “seasons” in *Diablo 3: Reaper of Souls* Patch 2.1. (a few months after the expansion’s release).

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5 Playing in “hardcore” mode meant that a player’s character could not be resurrected after dying, a restriction which did not apply to the “normal” game mode. *Diablo 3* kept that distinction, but in the original *Diablo* all characters risked permanent death (unless the game session ended without saving).

6 Even though early development of *Diablo 3* hyped the competitive features such as an “arena PvP”, the developers ultimately decided that it is impossible to achieve a satisfying PvP experience in a PvE-oriented game. Upon this conclusion, plans of a more sophisticated PvP mode were cancelled in favour of alternative competitive options (Keefer, 2014).



In both *Diablo* and *Diablo 2*, players were free to exchange or even give away their in-game spoils. The same was true in *Diablo 3* as well, but only to a point. Due to the uncertainty inherent in the search for specific items generated randomly, many players resorted to cheats, and a real-money black market rife with online scammers. Blizzard tried to prevent such a scenario in *Diablo 3* with an official, anonymous and highly-automated in-game auction house (based on virtual gold and real money). It was later recognised as causing a huge detriment to the players' experience and the dynamic of item hunting intended by the developers, which ultimately led to both the closure of the auction house and the changes in game rules which removed most other forms of trading in Patch 2.0.

## **Battle.net**

We have discussed the core elements and development of games in the *StarCraft* and *Diablo* series, and in both cases the Battle.net system was cited as a huge factor behind the games' popularity. Its influence does not stop there. In *StarCraft: Brood War*, *Diablo* and *Diablo 2*, the game itself merely enabled access to the Battle.net platform, which in turn allowed game creation with friends and strangers online. Since its introduction in 1996, when all the game data was stored locally, Battle.net has been almost completely redesigned to its current form (the so-called "Battle.net 2.0"). It still provides matchmaking for players of games distributed by Blizzard Entertainment, but it has become much more than that.

As of 2013 it is no longer accessed through a game; rather, the opposite is true. An associated Battle.net Desktop App doubles as a unified game launcher/installer/update manager and a game-independent, rudimentary social network system for players of Blizzard-produced titles. It includes lists of friends, recent and nearby players (sharing the same network), open and private chat channels, and a dedicated web browser featuring Blizzard-related news. Except for this last part, all the listed options are also constantly available in-game. Most of these functionalities were not available prior to the introduction of Battle.net 2.0 circa 2009 and its further revisions in 2013. Older Blizzard Entertainment games (other than *World of Warcraft*) remain independent from the desktop app, while every Blizzard release since 2012 has been online-only.

## Towards gamified games?

Deterding et al. state that to apply “gamification” to a game “would simply be game design, not “gamification””, since by their definition, “gamification” is “the use of game design elements” (2011, p. 4). This tautology does not hold if we consider the possibility that “gamification” relies on very specific solutions, which may or may not be utilised in the design of any given game.

Beyond the essential, “core” rules of the game there are other, more “meta” systems as well, only remotely connected with the basic gameplay and often added only after a time. They do influence the play experience and may change the way the game is played – or remain entirely ignored. The example of one such system, namely an achievements meta game, was discussed at length by Hamari and Eranti (2011). Both *StarCraft 2* and *Diablo 3* utilise in-game achievements (the latter one much more prominently than the former), sharing an autonomous design feature absent from previous releases in the respective game series.

In addition to the achievements, *StarCraft 2* and *Diablo 3* also utilise other comparably non-core features, particularly competitive ranked play and account experience. Some of these are available solely from within the game, while others can be accessed and reviewed from outside – through the Battle.net Desktop App, the Battle.net website, or even third party sites (compare Huotari and Hamari, 2012, p. 20). We shall now review examples of recognised “game service enhancements” in two categories (ranked play and account experience) found in games from both series.

### Ranked play

Seasonal, competitive rankings exist – or existed for a time – in *StarCraft: Brood War*, *Diablo 2* (since Patch 1.10.), *StarCraft 2*, and *Diablo 3: Reaper of Souls* (since Patch 2.1.), but in each case they were implemented differently, the only constant being the requirement of a connection to Battle.net. Other, third party ladders are also available, and in the case of *StarCraft* are the basis of an actual professional gaming scene.

*StarCraft: Brood War* awarded or took away points for every eligible match played between human players over Battle.net based on the outcome (victory, loss, or disconnect) and the relative standings of the opponents. The starting score on the ladder was set to 1000, while the maximum was 9999. The official rankings for *StarCraft: Brood War* were discontinued after 2005, while external ladders – such as the International Cyber Cup – still thrive (<http://iccup.com/en/>).

Rankings featured in *StarCraft 2* are more sophisticated and are closely related to an automated matchmaking system. Before actually participating in the ladder, each player has to first complete a series of initial league placement matches against other players. Afterwards, each match earns or costs the player some ladder points, influencing his or her position within the league and the overall ladder structure. Additional scoring- and evaluation-related subsystems are also in use. Top players on a server are placed in the “Grandmaster” league (introduced in Patch 1.3. for *StarCraft 2: Wings of Liberty*). Regardless of the official Battle.net classifications, other, third party tournament-based, rankings also exist.

*Diablo 2* utilised a more straightforward system, with its “race to the top”-style ladders featuring more challenging, but also more rewarding (compared to other game modes) premium content. From Patch 1.10. onwards, players on closed Battle.net Realms could choose to create a character as a “ladder hero” in order to get a chance at finding some of the ladder-only items and participating in special online events, such as the “Pandemonium Event” (or “Uber Tristram”) from Patch 1.11. The highest-level ladder heroes are placed in the ranking. After a season ended, participating characters were moved back into the “normal” pool together with all their equipment, and in the next season, all players would start afresh. Blizzard continues to support *Diablo 2* ladders even though they are not under any further development.

*Diablo 3: Reaper of Souls* offers a similar “fresh start” experience, even stronger in that many game features are shared by all characters on a given account (although “normal” and “hard-core” heroes are still separated). This pertains especially to collected gold, items in stash, achievements, and artisans (in-game services that can be upgraded for a price in virtual gold). Players participating in a new season are offered a chance to experience the game anew with newly created characters. Achievements obtained in the course of a season are counted toward the non-seasonal “achievements hunt” as well, and some (particularly the so-called “conquests”) cannot be fulfilled at all outside of the ladder. Unlike in *Diablo 2*, the competition is mostly based on constant attempts to gain a higher rank within a “Greater Rift” – an entirely randomised, timed game environment. Non-seasonal players may also participate in a competition, but in exchange for preserved progress they concede their chance at season-specific rewards.

Even before *Reaper of Souls* and Patch 2.1. introduced Greater Rifts and associated rankings, various third party *Diablo 3* ladders sprang up in the design void left by the lack of officially-supported competitive options. They tried to measure characters’ level progression (in the vein of *Diablo 2* ladders) as well as the item hunt by evaluation of equipped items and comparison with other registered players. Two such ladders are available as [DiabloProgress.com](http://DiabloProgress.com) and [Diablo3Ladder.com](http://Diablo3Ladder.com).

## Account experience

Roleplaying games in the vein of *Dungeons & Dragons* (Gygax and Arneson, TSR 1974) introduced the concepts of “experience points” and “experience levels”, which are now commonplace in various games and game-like loyalty programs. As ARPGs, *Diablo* games feature class and level advancement at their very core. However, *StarCraft* never included any kind of experience system except for the rankings, which seem functionally identical. In spite of that, Patch 2.0. for *StarCraft 2* introduced just that – an experience system entirely distinct and independent from the ladder.

Players participating in *StarCraft*'s ranked play are constantly faced with challenges. To keep their placement (not to mention advance in the rankings), they have to constantly prove their prowess in matches against other players – their supposed equals as well as an occasional lower-ranked challenger or higher-ranked opponent. This constant pressure, together with very real risk of ladder point losses in the case of defeat, results in what is known as “ladder anxiety”. To prevent the thinning out of the player base, *StarCraft 2* developers introduced the option of non-ranked play (with the same matchmaking algorithms in place and even against ranked opponents) and an alternative meta game: account experience.

Playing either one of the three races in any multiplayer mode will earn experience points for the player, regardless of the results of the match. At certain experience levels (separate for each of the three factions) various cosmetic rewards are unlocked, such as alternative unit skins or faction symbols. These points are awarded during the game, for example for destroying enemy structures and producing units, with a noticeable boost in the case of victory. Unlike the ladder points, they cannot be lost and are never zeroed. Moreover, every match – even a lost one – earns players some experience points, thus rewarding the very effort put into playing, and not specifically winning.

*Diablo 3* also utilises some sort of account experience (at least it has since Patch 2.0.), but in this case the system is more integrated into the base game. Initially, maximum level characters were no longer participating in the experience grind – they were already at their best. However, Patch 1.0.4. introduced “paragon experience”, to be gained as an end-game objective for maxed out characters. Later, in Patch 2.0., paragon levels were redesigned as essentially infinite account levels. Instead of a specific hero, every character in a given mode (seasonal/non-seasonal and normal/hardcore) would benefit from them, thus affording additional customisation and informal competition.

Regardless of the in-game benefits, at certain thresholds (first after every 10, then after every 100 paragon levels), a player advancing through the paragon levels would be rewarded with an increasingly ornate “paragon portrait”. The paragon level is also one of the data displayed on the public “career” Battle.net page and the similar in-game profile of every registered

player, alongside campaign progression, time played by class, and accounts' "lifetime kills". It cannot be lost even in the case of a hardcore "paragon" character's death. Paragon experience is therefore partially character-independent as well as permanent, and designed with "effort promotion" (and not necessarily competition) in mind.

As we can see, despite noticeable differences, the account experience systems in *StarCraft 2* and *Diablo 3* share certain similarities in their design and fulfilled functions, as they promote continuous effort put into play while avoiding penalisation of the player's failures and shortcomings. They are also separate from and complementary to the competition-oriented ranked play discussed earlier, and only loosely tied to the core game. This last point pertains mostly to the *StarCraft 2* experience system, since in *Diablo 3*, the entire system is more integrated with the basic premise of the game, thus making it harder to indisputably isolate as an actual meta game feature.

## Conclusion

In the introductory part of this chapter, we asked two questions: whether "gamification of games" is even possible, and if it is, how we can we distinguish it from the "game proper" to merit such diagnosis. Two academic definitions of gamification were discussed in detail: one formulated by Deterding et al. (2011) and another proposed by Huotari and Hamari (2012). Since the former explicitly proscribes "gamification of games", whereas the latter affirms the possibility, finding the answer to our initial questions would also serve to decide which of the opposing definitions is closer to the truth. Having done that, we engaged in a short discussion on "meta games" exemplified by achievements systems, as described by Huotari and Hamari (2012) as well as Hamari and Eranti (2011).

To answer the initial questions, we briefly described the "core game features", or "core services" in Huotari and Hamari's terms, as well as the post-release development of the *StarCraft* and *Diablo* games series. It enabled us to recognise the general trends that informed the evolution of both series (sport-like competition and spectatorship in the case of *StarCraft* and a series of shifts towards more social and casual cooperative experience in *Diablo*), and to isolate in their ongoing design various non-core innovations, or "service enhancements". These included game match replays (*StarCraft*), ranked ladders/seasons (both series), achievement systems (both series, mostly *Diablo*), social networking tools (both series), and account experience systems (both series, mostly *StarCraft*). Of these, ranked play and account experience systems were discussed in more detail.

Having done that, we arrive at the following conclusions:

1. The practice of gamified game design is not only possible, but very much real and not limited to platform-based achievement meta games.
2. It is entirely feasible to distinguish the “service enhancements” layer, or “gamified design”, by means of post-release game development analysis. Except for borderline cases of strongly integrated mechanisms embedded within the larger system of a given game, as with account experience/paragon levels in *Diablo 3*, such a distinction does not present any obvious difficulties.
3. The definition of gamification provided by Deterding et al. (2011) should be discarded in favour of the more accurate proposition formulated by Huotari and Hamari (2012).

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