

Application of Roger Caillois' Typology in the Strategy Game Genre: A Case Study of Sudden Strike 4

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ABSTRACT:

The presented study closely explains R. Caillois' theory of game principles, while attempting to point out its apparent application in the digital dimension. It is our main intention to clarify the significance and topicality of the characteristics of individual game categories within media products – digital games. Thus, confrontation between the fundamental theoretical framework and its consequent practical application within the selected case study occurs in the submitted scientific text. The study's ambition is to identify the indicative characteristics of R. Caillois' game categories in the selected media product – the digital game Sudden Strike 4. The chosen research material can be qualified as a suitable representative of the strategy game genre, which was the direct determinant of our selection. Therefore, the primary objective of the study is to ascertain the possible application of R. Caillois' game theory in the strategy game genre. For the purposes of achieving the defined objective, the author uses methods of logical analysis of text in combination with qualitative content (narrative) analysis. She thus presumes a certain increase and reevaluation of the existing scientific knowledge necessary for both the theory and practice.

KEY WORDS:

digital game, game principles, genres, strategy, Sudden Strike 4, virtual reality.

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Introduction

The extensiveness of game studies, or the issue of play is obvious, as play has been an integral part of human culture since time immemorial, while, due to technical-technological development, it has naturally been transformed into media reality in the form of the so-called *digital game*. The era of technological progress and related digitalization has become an impulse that has led society to implement new trends in various areas, games not excluded.

However, seeing *play* as a historical, cultural-anthropological, sociological or psychological phenomenon evokes a wide spectrum of questions, regardless of the reality (socio-cultural versus media) in which the discussed phenomenon takes place. In this respect, one of the markedly debated topics is the issue of game principles that can be considered the basic fundamental on which this so-called 'pastime' is based. French sociologist R. Caillois established a typology of game categories present in games of sociocultural (everyday) reality. Contemporary digital games theoreticians very often refer to R. Caillois' categorial apparatus, even despite the obviously different nature of digital games. Placing R. Caillois' game principles into contemporary discourse of digital games theory has become a relevant prerequisite for easier orientation in the selected problem and, at the same time, an adequate platform for the realization of a case study. The study consists of the verification of the analysed theory within the digital product classified in the strategy game genre.

It turns out that a lot of current scientific studies based on the theory of digital games in many ways only implement knowledge established in the last century instead of critically developing it. This fact has confirmed our conviction that it is necessary to constantly

practically verify and objectively reassess older game theories, concretely the frequently cited typology of game principles by R. Caillois. The paper directly follows up and expands the study focused on the action game genre in this context.¹ The article thus once more reacts to the questions related to the application of R. Caillois' categorial apparatus in the dimension of modern digital games.

Our fundamental aspiration is to specify the presented theoretical concepts through an example of a strategic digital game *Sudden Strike 4*. The author attempts to reach the aforementioned objective by using qualitative content (narrative) analysis in the form of a case study (specifically an instrumental case study²). However, considering the dynamics of digital environment development, it is necessary to continually analyse the examined issue and to draw conclusions that are as topical as possible.

Definitions of Basic Terms and Significant Theories Related to the Issue of Game Principles Categorization

Reality can be described as an ungraspable present existence of events and phenomena.³ Everyday reality is experienced in an awake state and represents something natural, self-evident, immediate, and objectified.⁴ It does not only consist of physical objects, actions or the actual circumstances brought by life. It is also created by living individuals.⁵ In this case, it is referred to as social, or sociocultural, reality that, according to S. Sandri encompasses the human aspects of the world and is constituted by tenets, principles and opinions that can inspire the behaviour of an individual and a whole community. The author also thinks that the way to define social reality more trivially would be to determine everything that does not belong to its realm, though coming from the natural reality.⁶ According to T. S. Eberle, the logic of the social construction of reality is simple. Society is based on a dual system of an 'objective' and a 'subjective' reality. The objective reality, although often produced by social action, appears to be a construct independent of society. Subjective reality is created through pervasive processes of socialization sustained and modified in daily interactions.⁷ Play itself is a typical representative of correlation between the subjective and objective realities; however, at the moment of its contact with an individual it becomes a stable component of subjective reality, as play represents one of the most common socio-cultural activities that has accompanied an individual's life in society for centuries.

1 For more information, see: BUČKOVÁ, Z.: Typology of Game Principles in Digital Games: A Case Study of Mafia III. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 42-54.

2 HENDL, J.: *Kvalitativní výzkum. Základní metody a aplikace*. Prague : Portál, 2005, p. 107.

3 OBORNÍK, P.: Komunikačný model nových médií. In MERTOŤOVÁ, N. (ed.): *Hľadanie ekvivalentnosti VIII*. Prešov : University of Prešov, 2015, p. 249.

4 BERGER, P., LUCKMANN, T.: *The Social Construction of Reality*. London : Penguin Books Ltd, 2006, p. 27.

5 VÁCLAVÍK, D.: *Sociologie nových náboženských hnutí*. Brno : Masarykova univerzita, 2007, p. 16.

6 SANDRI, S.: *Reflexivity in Economics an Experimental Examination on the Self-Referentiality of Economic Theories*. Heidelberg : Physica-Verlag Heidelberg, 2009, p. 32.

7 EBERLE, T. S.: A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Knowledge: "The Social Construction of Reality" After 25 Years. In *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 1992, Vol. 18, No. 2, p. 493-494.

Several theoreticians have attempted to define it, while considering it from different angles, as a cultural, social, psychological, and later media phenomenon. E. Fink describes play as an existential and ontological analogy, its purpose being itself, attached to the present moment and, at the same time, drawing the player's thoughts into the future world. According to him, play becomes a so-called aesthetic experience in a form of five fundamental elements that constitute its inner structure. He presents the elementary aspects as: the pleasure derived from the plot of play, the sense of play, the world of play providing the play with a form of openness and social existence, rules of play that somewhat limit player's free actions, and, finally, the instrument of play that allows the player to conduct it. In general, he describes play as an activity characterized by nonreality, inconspicuousness, while being a source of relaxation for the player, exciting their interest and deepening their imagination.⁸ E. Fink's ideas have been further expanded by sociocultural anthropologist J. Huizinga. He is of an opinion that play is older than culture and had thus existed before individuals even learned its rules, which is proved also by the presence of its forms in the animal kingdom. Therefore, play is, in a way, a fundamental expression of interaction between two living entities. The abovementioned author, however, primarily focuses his attention on a higher form of play that manifests itself in an interplay between several humans and he classifies it as a voluntary activity that proceeds within its own boundaries of time and space, following freely accepted but absolutely binding rules, having its aim in itself, and accompanied by feelings of tension, joy, and the consciousness of being that is different from ordinary life.⁹ Thus, it is a collective social reaction to the main drive of any culture; or it is an extension of social man.¹⁰ In summary, the phenomenon of play can be regarded as an occurrence that mostly causes pleasure, either as a way to acquire new information or in the form of saturation of an entertainment need.¹¹

Essential within the context of our focus of interest is the game theory of French sociologist R. Caillois, which is based on theoretical axioms of J. Huizinga. R. Caillois generalized the term 'play' as free activity that cannot be forced on the player, otherwise play cannot be considered attractive entertainment. According to him, play stands outside ordinary life and proceeds within proper boundaries of time and space. It is an uncertain activity: its course and outcome unpredictable, therefore it is an activity built on the player's initiative. His negative approach to play stems from understanding its unproductiveness, i.e., not creating value or wealth. Play is conducted on the basis of a principle of subordination to certain rules, which, for the duration of the game, replace the laws of ordinary life, the new, game rules being the only ones that apply. Finally, it is fictitious, i.e., representing alternate reality and illusions. The significance of the author's ideas is also confirmed by his description of player behaviour during the game. On the one hand, there are players characterized by an element of exuberance, free improvisation and carefree gaiety. It manifests an 'uncontrolled' fantasy, and he calls it *paidia*.¹² At the opposite extreme are users in who the exuberance disappears, and complementary tendency prevails; the game imposes on the players more conventions they should comply with. Their motivation to play is based on overcoming obstacles and they are characterized by effort, patience, skill, and ingenuity. He calls this disposition *ludus*.¹³ However, in this context, S. M. Grimes,

8 FINK, E.: *Oáza štěstí*. Prague : Mladá fronta, 1992, p. 16-31.

9 HUIZINGA, J.: *Homo ludens, o původu kultury ve hře*. Prague : Mladá fronta, 1971, p. 9-33.

10 McLUHAN, M.: *Understanding media*. Cambridge, MA, London : MIT Press, 1994, p. 255.

11 KREJČÍŘOVÁ, D., LANGMEIER, J.: *Vývojová psychologie 2*. Prague : Grada, 2006, p. 102.

12 Although quoting R. Caillois, G. Frasca uses the term 'paidea'. See: FRASCA, G.: *Ludology: From Representation to Simulation*. In SULLIVAN, K. (ed.): *SIGGRAPH '02: Proceedings of the 29th International Conference on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques. Electronic Art and Animation Catalog*. New York, NY : ACM, 2002, p. 135.

13 CAILLOIS, R.: *Hry a lidé. Maska a závať*. Prague : Nakladatelství studia Ypsilon, 1998, p. 31-34.

A. Feenberg, and J. Juul add that it is necessary to distinguish not only between the phase of *ludus* (game activity allowed by formal procedures) and *paidia* (unstructured playfulness), but also between play (i.e., the act of playing) and game (i.e., the formal rules constituting play).¹⁴ For R. Caillois, the aforementioned formal rules also became the key theory in game research, specifically in the form of classification of game principles, which we consider cardinal also within our research.

Agon, alea, mimicry, andilinx (or vertigo)¹⁵ denote the basic axis of game principles representing the content and meaning of a game, although we should also allow for the possibility of their syncretism. The main pillar of the game category agon is competition, or a contest, ending with either victory or loss for an individual or a group. In agonal games, behind rivalry, it is possible to observe how, in an 'unreal world of play' based on fictitious terms, the player's desire to stand out in an attempt to achieve the social status of a winner manifests itself.¹⁶ At the same time, as stated by J. Dovey and H. Kennedy, a player's victory or loss in a game based on the game principle of agon depends on the individual's qualities, such as sufficient training, adequate concentration of the player or the will and resolve to win while using one's abilities.¹⁷ The game principle agon especially manifests itself in sports contests between two individuals (boxing, tennis) or teams (football, hockey, etc.). There can also be varying number of contestants competing for victory (courses, golf, etc.). Games, in which the contestants divide the game elements into identical parts are also classified as agonal games. Here, the game elements serve as a personification of the players themselves (e.g., chess or checkers pieces). R. Caillois particularly emphasizes the fact that agon is not only evident in contests between individuals but also between trained animals. Despite the aforementioned, the fight of an animal type must also comply with the rules set by humans.¹⁸ Using 'competition' in games can, however, also be seen in so-called educational games originating in the school system. These are usually competitions testing players' speed, accuracy, and knowledge, as well as creative abilities, logical reasoning, or ingenuity. In this context, J. A. Komenský defines game not only as an exercise of body but mainly of soul, while the player is rewarded either by profit or honour,¹⁹ although the French sociologist omits this type of agonal game.

However, he defines the principle of *alea*, which, as opposed to agon, negates endurance and will to win and presents chance, as *alea* is a game that, in comparison to the agile and initiative character of agon, symbolizes a principle of player's passive approach – it is not their interest to refine their abilities to achieve victory. The player in the *alea* game principle believes in luck, relies on chance and perceives their victory or loss as a verdict of fate.²⁰ They simply have no motivation to overcome an opponent; they just passively wait for what the situation brings.²¹ H. Pravdová adds that despite an obvious bipolarity between these two categories (agon versus alea), both game variants have something in common – the same game conditions and player's obligation to rules which influence the

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- 14 GRIMES, S. M., FEENBERG, A.: Rationalizing Play: A Critical Theory of Digital Gaming. In *The Information Society*, 2009, Vol. 25, No. 1, p. 109-110.; JUUL, J.: *Half Real. Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 2005, p. 12-13.
- 15 For more information, see: BUČKOVÁ, Z.: Typology of Game Principles in Digital Games: A Case Study of Mafia III. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 42-54.
- 16 CAILLOIS, R.: *Hry a lidé. Maska a závrať*. Prague : Nakladatelství studia Ypsilon, 1998, p. 33-34.
- 17 DOWEY, J., KENNEDY, J. H.: *Game Cultures : Computer Games as New Media*. Berkshire : Open University Press, 2006, p. 24.
- 18 CAILLOIS, R.: *Hry a lidé. Maska a závrať*. Prague : Nakladatelství studia Ypsilon, 1998, p. 35-36.
- 19 KOMENSKÝ, J. A.: *Nejnovější metoda jazyků*. Prague : Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1892, p. 359.
- 20 PRAVDOVÁ, H.: Sociokultúrne dimenzie hier v kybernetickom priestore. In GÁLIK, S. et al.: *Kyberpriestor ako nová existenciálna dimenzia človeka*. Łódź : KSIĘŻY MŁYN Dom Wydawniczy Michał Koliński, 2014, p. 139-140.
- 21 CAILLOIS, R.: *Hry a lidé. Maska a závrať*. Prague : Nakladatelství studia Ypsilon, 1998, p. 37-38.

game result and the player's performance.²² In this connection, V. I. Cassone provides a noteworthy opinion. According to him, there is no better combination of game variants than the one of *agon* and *alea*.²³ Roman gladiatorial games represent clear evidence of this game combination. On the one hand, the variant of *agon* prevailed in the form of struggle, violence, and competitive value of the contest. On the other hand, the contests between gladiators constituted a game for the people in the form of betting on the winner, which definitely declares the *alea* game principle.²⁴ However, the discussed game principle has similar features, such as game rules and identical game conditions, as the other game variants, for example also the principle of mimicry.

The rule of *mimicry* is based on accepting a fictitious environment, i.e., an illusion expressing a new shape of reality. It is a game variant, where the player as a subject occupies heterogeneous identities. Through these, they pretend to be someone else, hiding their own identity with a mask. The mimicry principle thus lies in the 'reincarnation' of the player as an illusionary character through which they play a specific role and based on which act in a certain way. The basic pillar of the presented game category is representation. Identification of the game subject with a fictitious identity constitutes their escape from common monotonous sociocultural reality.²⁵ The game environment is associated with a release of surplus energy; it is a place of exuberance, promotes sexuality and aggression, is linked with desire for exploration, imitates lives of others, is a means of socialization, and a tool for self-expression.²⁶ V. I. Cassone also takes into consideration the negative side of the analysed game principle, as it represents a whole scale of 'serious' activities (e.g., imitation of war, work, everyday activities, etc.), while applying them as a behaviour model through processes of illusion, analogy and imitation.²⁷ E. Gandolfi adds to the statement by interpreting the game variant in question as an activity directed towards symmetry, as it follows the ideals of scale, proportion, and synergy between individual objects in a game. Basically, it is aimed at a perfect match of the elements that eliminates anomalies.²⁸

As opposed to the previous three R. Caillois' game principles, the fourth – *ilinx* (*vertigo*) has a mainly complementary character, which means that it appears in games mostly in conjunction with other game variants. One of the main features of the game principle *ilinx/vertigo* is the freedom to accept or refuse a challenge, strict and fixed limits of the game and separation from reality. Often occurring in games of this type is a feeling of paralysis accompanied by illusion of movement by, e.g., rotation, rocking or dancing²⁹, or by other kinds of risky physical activity. Its purpose is to eliminate the stability of the game subject's perception and to cause confusion and panic in the human mind.³⁰ The essence of games causing vertigo exemplarily lies in confusion of the body and momentary disorientation of senses.³¹ Games based on the principle of *ilinx/vertigo* thus primarily cause

22 PRAVDŮVÁ, H.: Sociokultúrne dimenzie hier v kybernetickom priestore. In GÁLÍK, S. et al.: *Kyberpriestor ako nová existenciálna dimenzia človeka*. Łódź : KSIEŻY MŁYN Dom Wydawniczy Michał Koliński, 2014, p. 139-140.

23 CASSONE, V. I.: Mimicking Gamers: Understanding Gamification Through Roger Caillois. In *Games and Culture*, 2017, Vol. 12, No. 4, p. 355.

24 BROCK, T.: Roger Caillois and E-Sports: On the Problems of Treating Play as work. In *Games and Culture*, 2017, Vol. 12, No. 4, p. 325.

25 CAILLOIS, R.: *Hry a lidé. Maska a závrať*. Prague : Nakladatelství studia Ypsilon, 1998, p. 40-139.

26 SALEN, K., ZIMMERMAN, E.: *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*. London, Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 2004, p. 309.

27 CASSONE, V. I.: Mimicking Gamers: Understanding Gamification Through Roger Caillois. In *Games and Culture*, 2017, Vol. 12, No. 4, p. 349.

28 GANDOLFI, E.: Beyond Diagonal Sciences: Applying Roger Caillois's Concepts of Symmetry and Dissymmetry to Journey. In *Games and Culture*, 2017, Vol. 12, No. 4, p. 365.

29 CAILLOIS, R.: *Hry a lidé. Maska a závrať*. Prague : Nakladatelství studia Ypsilon, 1998, p. 44-48.

30 HENRICKS, T. S.: Caillois's Man, Play, and Games. An Appreciation and Evaluation. In *American Journal of Play*, 2010, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 169, 176.

31 CAILLOIS, R.: *Hry a lidé. Maska a závrať*. Prague : Nakladatelství studia Ypsilon, 1998, p. 48.

feelings of fear and danger and, secondarily, emotions of joy and curiosity or expectation. M. Consalvo explains the essence of expectation in the game approach as game asymmetry.³² The game dissymmetry of the variant in question should be understood in the sense of removal of reference parameters, or distortion of classic game elements between the player and game environment and elimination of interaction (in this game principle, objects are capable of actions that are often impossible in sociocultural reality; surrendering to vertigo rules out the possibility of the player having an impact on the game objects and vice versa).³³

The issue with topicality of R. Caillois' typology of game principles currently strongly resonates in academia, mainly due to the technical-technological development and the related emergence of a new form of reality – media, or virtual, reality, within which a new type of product – a digital game - has been established. R. Caillois has defined the categorial apparatus before virtual reality (as we know it today) existed. Based on the aforementioned, there has also been an emergence of certain assumptions about the possible application of R. Caillois' game principles in the dimension of digital games.

Virtual reality thus represents a kind of an imaginary world parallelly complementing the reality of everyday life. It is a fictitious, artificially created space of a digital shape that seeks the interaction of a human being with elements of virtual reality. It aims to induce in its user a feeling of illusion accompanied by its materialization in a simulated world, or the virtual environment.³⁴ Within it, the individual is simply fully immersed in something unreal, making this abstract world undistinguishable from the 'real' one.³⁵ Virtual reality as a three-dimensional representation of a non-real environment exists mainly due to computer-generated simulation.³⁶ For us to be able to ascribe the qualifier 'virtual' to this type of reality, it must meet certain characteristics, such as, for example, real time in which the display and interaction with the user take place; speed that makes the movement on the screen seem fluent; multidimensional environment with scenes and objects of mainly three-dimensional character or, at least, creating an illusion of it; interactive object that can be directly manipulated by the user; sound effects, etc.³⁷ This unreal reality is a tool that allows a person to do certain sensorimotor and cognitive activities in an artificially created digital world. This world can be imaginary, symbolic or a simulation of the real reality. The ambition of virtual reality is to distinctively achieve an interaction of a human being with the elements of the virtual world for the purposes of gaining knowledge or education³⁸ but mainly entertainment. It is the evident correlation between virtual reality and entertainment that encourages us to look at the analysed issue through the prism of digital games.

Technical-technological development, especially modern tendencies and innovations, particularly in the media area, has determined the transition of sociocultural past-time into the digital dimension. Digital (computer or electronic) game can be described as a product of an audiovisual character or a specific software used by an individual or more players. The objective of a digital game is not only to entertain the user but also to expand their cognitive and usually also their manual skills, which is contributed to by the inner variability of a game, or the increasing tendency of the game pace that stimulates

32 CONSALVO, M.: *Cheating: Gaining Advantage in Videogames*. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 2007, p. 176.

33 GANDOLFI, E.: Beyond Diagonal Sciences: Applying Roger Caillois' Concepts of Symmetry and Dissymmetry to Journey. In *Games and Culture*, 2017, Vol. 12, No. 4, p. 370-374.

34 ŽÁRA, J. et al.: *Moderní počítačová grafika*. Brno : Computer Press, 2004, p. 523-524.

35 RONCHI, A. M.: *e-Culture: Cultural Content in the Digital Age*. New York, NY : Springer Science & Business Media, 2009, p. 119.

36 XING TANG, X.: *Virtual reality – Human Computer Interaction*. Rijeka : InTechPress, 2012, p. 3.

37 ŽÁRA, J. et al.: *Moderní počítačová grafika*. Brno : Computer Press, 2004, p. 523-524.

38 FUCHS, P., MOREAU, G., GUITTON, P.: *Virtual reality: concepts and technologies*. Boca Raton, FL : CRC Press, 2011, p. 5-9.

the player and makes them overcome higher and more difficult tasks.³⁹ Ch. Y. Chen also agrees with the aforementioned statement and supports the proposition of an active participation of a player and, therefore, also states that the fulfilment of the purpose of digital games is possible through interaction between a specific user, or several users, and a gaming device, such as a computer or mobile phone, with which the game participant interacts in a form of returned reaction.⁴⁰ However, closer understanding of a digital game is dependent on the specification of basic principles that constitute the basis of videogame functioning. One of these is the audiovisual apparatus that allows a digital game to be played. N. Esposito states that in case of a digital game, a significant role is played by the environment with the background of which the game runs. He also affirms that a digital game is, foremost, a game running thanks to audiovisual apparatus but which is also formed by a concrete story as a possible alternative encouraging player's interactivity.⁴¹ Within this context, J. Juul adds that rules and goals, player's effort, and the actual projection of a player's actions into the game world are vital for a game.⁴² According to J. Jeník, a player's ability to choose in the course of game and the subsequent responsibility for the correct or incorrect decisions is also relevant.⁴³ In this connection, we cannot omit the extensiveness of the contemporary game market, in the sense of the quantity of digital products. It is due to the presence of a vast number of various forms of digital games that an imminent need for their classification has arisen. Nowadays, (digital) games can be segmented on the basis of their functionality, game mechanics or, relevantly for us, genres.

One of the Classic Game Genres: Strategy

Typologies of game genres vary. J. Newman recognizes mainly action and adventure games; driving and racing games; so-called first-person shooter games; platform and puzzle games; roleplaying games; strategy games; simulations, and sports.⁴⁴ By contrast, L. D. Grace reduces classification of game genres into action games, adventure games, puzzle games, role playing games, simulation and strategy games.⁴⁵ In his study, T. H. Apperley recognizes only action games, strategies, simulations, and role playing games.⁴⁶ However, regarded as the geographically closest taxonomy of game genres could be the classification by J. Švelch who states that there are classic game genres, such as action games, adventure, RPG, sports games, strategic games, simulations,

39 ULVER, S.: Virtuální Bůh. In *Film a doba*, 1995, Vol. 41, No. 4, p. 185.

40 CHEN, Ch. Y.: Is the Video Game a Cultural Vehicle?. In *Games and Culture*, 2013, Vol. 8, No. 6, p. 412.

41 See also: ESPOSITO, N.: A Short and Simple Definition of What a Videogame Is. In *DiGRA '05 – Proceedings of the 2005 DiGRA International Conference: Changing Views: Worlds in Play*. Vancouver : DiGRA, 2005, p. 1-6. [online]. [2023-03-29]. Available at: <<http://www.utc.fr/~nesposit/publications/esposito2005definition.pdf>>.

42 JUUL, J.: The Game, the Player, the World : Looking for a Heart of Gameness. In COPIER, M., REASSONS, J. (eds.): *Level Up: Digital Game Research Conference Proceedings*. Utrecht : Utrecht University, 2003. [online]. [2023-03-29]. Available at: <<https://www.jesperjuul.net/text/gameplayerworld/>>.

43 JENÍK, L.: Niektoré perspektívy a výzvy filozofického skúmania fikcie. In *Studia Aloisiana*, 2013, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 15.

44 NEWMAN, J.: *Videogames*. London : Routledge, 2013, p. 11-12.

45 GRACE, L. D.: *Game Type and Game Genre*. 2005. [online]. [2023-03-29]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262250061_Game_Type_and_Game_Genre>.

46 APPERLEY, T. H.: Genre and game studies: Toward a critical approach to video game genres. In *Simulation & Gaming*, 2006, Vol. 37, No. 1, p. 9-19. [online]. [2023-03-29]. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/385966/Genre_and_Game_Studies_Toward_a_Critical_Approach_to_Video_Game_Genres>.

puzzles, but also adaptations of board games, and new game genres stemming from the classics as a result of mutual overlapping.⁴⁷ Even researchers that address games on a long-term basis often find the genre classification of digital games difficult. This is probably due to their newness and the great complexity of game mechanisms and production methods, historical and social reasons, as well as the connectedness to the dynamics of technological development.⁴⁸ The presented digital genre typologies do, however, coincide in many aspects, while all agree on a stable genre type 'strategy' which is the centre of our interest. The primary ambition and effort of the author is to ascertain the possible application of R. Caillois' game theory to the aforementioned game genre, simultaneously attempting its apt description.

Strategy games are one of the basic genres defined by the theory of digital games. These games require players' logical thinking and are characterized by their strategic decisions and interventions. The goal of a strategy game is to eliminate one or several adversaries by using unique tactics – the user works with an 'invisible hand' that they use to influence actions and the overall destiny of the characters appearing on the playing field. We recognize *real-time strategy* (RTS) that is considered more complex in the sense of the free choice of the player; the user implements their decisions almost immediately during the battle. This type of strategy is constituted on a system of there being a certain raw material, building or unit that allows the player to create their own base, train their own units, and thus to become ready for a strategic battle against their 'rival'. Another subgenre of this category of games is the *turn-based strategy* (TBS). Here, the participating players take turns. The user always reacts to actions of their competitor, i.e., they cannot act until their opponent finishes their turn. It could be said that TBS games are largely built on fate and luck. The only hope for the user is favourable chance and risk is definitely an essential element in this subgenre. In games built on turn-based strategy, it is important to balance risk and profit. In TBS games everything matters, the smallest detail, the slightest hint could mean a cue or a warning. In this subcategory of games, the clarity of boundaries depends on distinguishing the set rules. TBS games are often based on a principle of so-called random number generator (RNG), where the player's proceedings are fully dependent on randomness generated by computers. In practice we also encounter *building strategies*. This subgenre, however, often gets confused with RTS games but, unlike these, it is of a less warlike character. At the forefront of building strategies is the principle based on building and growth of the created or assigned game area. The objective of the user is to increase the prosperity and living standards of such construed game environment.⁴⁹ The strategy game genre, based on its stable presence on the media market, could be described as sought-after and continually produced, which justifies its place in the classic game genre classification. This fact has determined the selection of our research material that has become a subject of clarifying the presence of R. Caillois' game principles in the digital games dimension. Despite an obvious generalization of the obtained findings, it is the author's intention to expand the current body of knowledge related to the issue of game principles that has been primarily defined for sociocultural reality.

47 ŠVELCH, J.: Počítačové hry jako nová media. In *Mediální studia*, 2008, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 16.

48 BUČEK, S.: Typologie hier nezaložené na herných mechanikách. In *Mediální studia*, 2013, Vol. 6, No. 3, p. 323.

49 For example, see: BUČKOVÁ, Z., RUSŇÁKOVÁ, L.: The issue of game genre typology in the Slovak online game-magazine Sector. In PETRANOVÁ, D., MATÚŠ, J., MENDELOVÁ, D. (eds.): *Marketing Identity: Brands we love – part 1*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2016, p. 280-294.

Case Study: Sudden Strike 4

Within the case study, it is our aim to identify in the digital dimension the essence of R. Caillois' game variants, while the selected research material is represented by the digital game *Sudden Strike 4*⁵⁰ as one of the relatively current representatives of the strategy game genre. The selection of the aforementioned game is, similarly to our formerly published and thematically related scientific study,⁵¹ intentional. In this case, we have mainly considered the fact that it is one of the most topical representatives of the game subgenre RTS, i.e., real-time strategy game. This fact underlines the possibility of future scientific use of research data in connection with analysing game principles in digital games of this type. Another important indicator that has, to some extent, influenced the subjective selection of the research material, is the production company Kalypso Media, having its creative base in Germany and handling the production and distribution of the selected digital product. The established results are thus related explicitly to digital games that are a result of work of game companies residing in Europe. The newest, fourth version of the strategy wargame *Sudden Strike* is set in the World War II period and simulates the real course of this world conflict (e.g., the Battle of Stalingrad, Operation Barbarossa, etc.). Through game avatars – military generals – the player has a unique ability to tactically control indefinite numbers of combat units, accumulate resources, build bases and 'conquer territories'. However, the research material has not been determined solely for the genre categorization of the digital game, residence of the production company, or relative novelty of the game product. We consider the digital game *Sudden Strike 4* interesting mainly because of the presence of game narrative (images of sociocultural reality or, more exactly, scenes from the Second World War), which is more often an exception, not a rule in the strategy game genre.

Therefore, our research material is the digital game *Sudden Strike 4*, which represents the current form of the strategy game genre. By using qualitative (narrative) analysis, we have again attempted to clarify different ways of applying individual game principles (*agon*, *alea*, *mimicry*, *ilinx/vertigo*) defined by R. Caillois. Through closer description of game narrative of the selected strategy game *Sudden Strike 4*, we have been able to explain the presence of a perceptible number of characteristic features of the discussed game rules.

Based on the obtained data, we can unequivocally state that the chosen research material contains the lowest variability of representations of the analysed game variants. However, similarly to the analysis of the game *Mafia III*⁵²⁵³, the most visibly employed *game principle* here is *agon* and its heterogeneous forms. As it is a game rule requiring a contest of at least two entities, in the analysed digital game it demonstrates itself mainly as a fight of the leading protagonist (soldier) against one human being (enemy) or a group of human beings (enemies), using weapons (e.g., grenades, handguns), or as a struggle between the main characters (soldiers) and one human being (enemy) or a group of humans (enemies) using weapons (e.g., guns, armoured vehicles, military aircraft, etc.). It is mostly a contest between individuals, enemy collectives or some combination thereof. Although the mentioned digital game lacks any verbal dispute between the protagonists, the significant

50 KITE GAMES: *Sudden Strike 4 (PlayStation version)*. [digital game]. Worms : Kalypso Media, 2017.

51 For more information, see: BUČKOVÁ, Z.: Typology of Game Principles in Digital Games: A Case Study of *Mafia III*. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 42-54.

52 HANGAR 13: *Mafia III. (PlayStation version)*. [digital game]. Brno : 2K Games, 2016.

53 See: BUČKOVÁ, Z.: Typology of Game Principles in Digital Games: A Case Study of *Mafia III*. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 42-54.

factor (in comparison to the analysis of Mafia III) is the space where individual fights take place (vehicle, industrial plant, airport, riverbank, railway station, bridge, radar station, military station, supply base, training centre, castle, etc.). It is the place of the struggle that is the essential determinant creating the narrative of the digital game Sudden Strike 4, where the main protagonists' goal is to seize parts of the territories and conquer a certain military area. The depiction of the agonal principle in the game is also expressed in a form of 'comparing the strength' of the main protagonist or main protagonists with inanimate objects (bunkers, buildings, vehicles, weapons, forts, etc.) by using weapons (gun, grenade, cannon, armoured vehicle, etc.). However, one of the most significant aspects of the agonal game principle is victory. In the story of the selected strategy game, it occurs in moments when the main characters obtain physical items (vehicles, weapons, buildings, etc.) by beating their opponent in physical combat. Furthermore, application of the game variant *agon* is not key only for the main story line of the game, but also for its meta-level. The agonal character of the meta-narrative framework of the game occurs in situations in which the player gains a person or an object needed to proceed in the game story or to complete individual missions, i.e., when 'the player beats the game'.

The game variant *alea* is the least significantly represented principle in the strategy game genre, or its digital representative, and its occurrences are not notably any different than in the previous case.⁵⁴ Not only are the main protagonists in no contact with any game of chance, but they also gain no financial reward from partial contests. The principle of an *alea* game with a typical feature of risk thus appears only in cases when the main character or characters achieve material advantage (mostly objects such as vehicles, weapons, etc.) as a consequence of risking their lives in a physical battle; the main character/characters gain nonmaterial advantage (usually new soldiers – allies) following a risk – most often when gambling their lives or in moments when the main protagonist/protagonists complete a task assigned by another person (commander) for material reward (a person, object, etc.).

However, a unique discovery is the multiple appearance of the various manifestations of the *game principle of mimicry* based mostly on a representation of a different, in this case virtual, identity. It also occurs as a new understanding of the unreal 'self' in the form of so-called collective identity. Within the physical part of collective identity of an army which the player stands for, the main protagonists are capable of walking, running, crawling, and climbing different places (e.g., observation towers); drive several different types of vehicles (armoured vehicles, military vehicles, etc.); ride a ship; fuel and repair vehicles and replenish ammunition for the army; treat injured soldiers; take available objects (e.g. ammunition, cannons, their own or enemy's vehicles, etc.), and manipulate them; fight in a standing and lying position and shoot from a bunker, trench or a building; build a pontoon bridge; search areas and find needed objects or soldiers; fire a warning flare; place and detonate explosives and anti-tank mines in an area or operate transmitting equipment used for communication. Contrary to the considerably sophisticated physical identity of the characters, the psychological identity of the game avatars is only elementary. There are specific cases where the mimicry principle is presented in the form of dialogues, where the main character (commander) conducts a conversation with their friends (soldiers) or the main character (soldier) conducts a conversation with their friend (commander), or the main protagonists (soldiers) communicate with each other. In none of these cases is the player able to influence statements of the character. A unique expression of the mimicry variant is the depiction of monologue speeches occurring when

54 See: BUČKOVÁ, Z.: Typology of Game Principles in Digital Games: A Case Study of Mafia III. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 42-54.

the main character (commander) explains the detailed battle tactics to their army (which does not reply). A specific attribute of the mimicry game principle in the selected digital game is the use of help (reinforcements) from the main characters of the story or taking over conquered sites by the main protagonists entering surrounding buildings. We also cannot omit the most typical feature of the game rule of mimicry characteristic for almost all digital games, that is the player's representation of the game avatar or avatars.

For us to be able to analyse and closely observe the narrative structure of a strategy digital game, it must possess the character of a strategy wargame. From the name of the subgenre, we are already able to predict a certain occurrence of the *game variant ilinx/vertigo* encompassing feelings of fear, tension or adrenaline experience that often manifest themselves alongside physical battle. In this specific game, such emotions are aroused mainly in situations when the main protagonist or main protagonists risk their lives in combat with one human enemy or a group of human enemies, eventually when they conduct other life-threatening acts (e.g., climb observation towers, sprint in different terrain – in the moment of shooting, etc.). Similarly, we speak of the presence of the principle *ilinx/vertigo* in situations when the main characters hide from the enemy (when they know that they have lost the battle). The growing immersion of the player in the game story is also enhanced by circumstances when the main characters drive vehicles dangerously (slam into objects, drive at high speed, etc.), watch the enemy from observation towers or surrounding buildings, or conduct an escape from the enemy to a safe area (driving or running). The *ilinx/vertigo* game principle can in some digital games manifest itself as a combination of feelings of fear and happiness stemming from certain game situations. In the analysed material, these are specifically instances when the main characters attempt to save the lives of an imprisoned group of allied soldiers; want to prevent material damage (save convoys passing dangerous territory, etc.); are about to protect their own territory from attacking enemies or shoot a warning flare and wait for reinforcements from their own army. At first glance, the described eventualities represent only feelings of fear; however, after overcoming them or successfully protecting territory or saving lives, etc., the player experiences feelings of happiness. In the discussed digital game, there are also two situations when the player experiences feelings of fear and happiness simultaneously. These are moments when the main characters are destroying objects/eliminating people around them (shooting up vehicles, buildings, weapons; setting a vehicle/building with a garrison inside on fire, etc.) with their weapons or when they are walking in dark places – woods, factories, etc., often being attacked by various enemies.

To conclude the interpretation of obtained data stemming from qualitative content (narrative) analysis, we state that R. Caillois' categorization of game principles is of a timeless character, as it is possible in yet another research material (in this particular case belonging to the strategy game genre) to identify all forms and manifestations of Caillois' game variants. Although the obtained results are fairly generalized, they are applicable to the selected genre type that has its stable place on the mainstream game market.

Conclusion

Play represents one of the most important aspects of life in society since ancient history. However, significant theoreticians representing heterogeneous fields of regard consider play activities as a vital part of, for example, cultural and social events or daily life. This phenomenon has transformed itself almost in an unchanged way to an extremely different reality – virtual reality (and any kind of game activity that takes place there).

This novel game activity is defined by the term “digital game”, which allows individuals to operate in a fictitious world and is, similarly to a game taking place in sociocultural reality, based on certain principles, while its player is led to respect predefined rules. The apparent extensiveness of the game topic has led us to reduce the research problem, namely, to ascertain the topicality of categorial apparatus of R. Caillois, specifically its validity for the dimension of digital games.

Currently, an existence of a considerable number of digital products on the media game market can be observed. These are distinguished not only by the usage of game mechanics or their functionality, but mainly, and most significantly to us, their genre classification. From the point of view of realizing new trends in the game industry, their overlap or hybridization frequently occur, thus leading to an emergence of digital works that cannot be precisely classified among the already existing genre types. These are so-called new genres. Despite this, we consider it necessary to add that these would not have been created if the classic genre typology was not present. This typology comprises several basic game genres, besides action games, RPG, simulations and others, undoubtedly including strategy games.

Following the abovementioned statements, or the stable place of the strategy game genre, the author has purposefully selected her research material – the digital game *Sudden Strike 4*, in order to ascertain the presence of R. Caillois' game principles (agon, alea, mimicry,ilinx/vertigo) in its narrative structure. Thanks to knowledge obtained from previously published theoretical postulates and the consequent implementation of qualitative content (narrative) analysis, we have come to a conclusion regarding the evident use of the categorial apparatus of R. Caillois' game principles within current digital dimension.

As the core of the aforementioned genre type is not primarily the development of a story-line, but mainly the building of tactical thinking in the player, this has caused the low diversity of representations of the analysed game principles in the selected research material. The most represented game variants, similarly to the analysis of the digital game *Mafia III*,⁵⁵ were agon and mimicry and their various manifestations. The unique game rule – alea – appeared in the digital game *Sudden Strike 4* only in three forms and thus could be given a status of the least occurring game variant. The usage of the complementary game principle ilinx/vertigo in the analysed digital product is evident and more frequent than the alea game rule, but still not to the same extent as the game variants of agon and mimicry.

It was the author's ambition to not only present already existing academic knowledge, i.e., to provide the theoretical framework of the discussed issue but, predominantly, to ascertain the usage and apparent timelessness of the categorial apparatus of game principles by R. Caillois. Specifically, it was a survey of the defined phenomenon in the strategy game genre. Despite meeting the primary objective – to specify the presented theoretical concepts using the example of the strategy digital game *Sudden Strike 4* – we consider it necessary to continually analyse the issue of game principles application with an aim to acquire new or verify the previously ascertained findings.

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55 For example, see: BUČKOVÁ, Z.: Typology of Game Principles in Digital Games: A Case Study of *Mafia III*. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2019, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 42-54.

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