



**De Angeli, D. and Scott, L. (2018) 'Museum games as a vehicle for sociocultural reflection',
Heritage Matters, The Guildhall, Bath, UK, 23 August 2018.**

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Museum Games as a Vehicle for Sociocultural Reflection

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@HORIZON2020_UNREST

Who are we?



Daniela is postdoctoral researcher in human computer interaction, cultural heritage, games and memory studies at the University of Bath. She is investigating game play and game making as a research method and as a tool to stimulate social reflection in museums and heritage sites.

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Lee is the subject leader of Creative Computing at Bath Spa University and a creative technologist specialising in web experiences. His current research investigates games as a tool for learning and reflection on social and cultural issues.

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Game with a purpose

Games with a purpose move beyond entertainment *per se*

[Holm Sørensen and Meyer, 2007;
Stone, 2008]

How can games can benefit players and inform other contexts?

E.g. Persuasive games, games for change, educational games, meaningful play, knowledge games



Games for a socio-cultural purpose

- Encourage players to **engage** with content beyond media consumption
- Stimulate **reflection** on socio-cultural topics
- Define their own **personal** relationship with the **narrative**. Narrative is what gives games 'meaning' [Holm Sørensen and Meyer, 2007]

PLAI (Play, Learn, Act, Impact)

A collaborative project between University of Bath and Bath Spa University

Community impact: to develop games for a socio-cultural impact, i.e. to educate players but also to stimulate reflection and action

Talent development: to provide professional creative project delivery experience to undergraduate students from both institutions. We involve students in the entire design process, from concept to development and installation.

Krieg. Macht. Sinn.

We are developing **games** for a temporary exhibition at the **Ruhr Museum** in Essen, Germany.

A history museum housed at the site of a former coal-mine and UNESCO world heritage site.

The exhibition wishes to present different perspectives, compare past and present wars and ultimately reinforce social cohesion.

Part of EU funded UNREST project

<http://www.unrest.eu/>



Agonism

- Introducing broader **historical, socio-political context** (ideology, conflict of real social/ political interests)
- **Multi-perspectivist** (victims-perpetrators, different national/political groups, different historical experiences)
- **Reflexive** towards own national/European history
- **Open-ended dialogue** not aiming at definite conclusions – acknowledging the irreconcilability of different historical perspectives
- Contrasts antagonistic and cosmopolitan views

Agonistic Games

The tenets of agonistic games:

- T1 Frame narratives as decisions and consequences that are **unsettling** for the player
- T2 **Stimulate reflection** by presenting **multiple perspectives** on a scenario. This should be achieved through gameplay that encourages the player to engage with multiple socio-political perspectives
- T3 Establish a **resonating context**. The games need to be relevant for the people playing them to help them connect with the memories and experiences on an empathetic level

Two games for the Ruhr Museum in Germany: *Endless Blitz* and *Umschlag '43*.

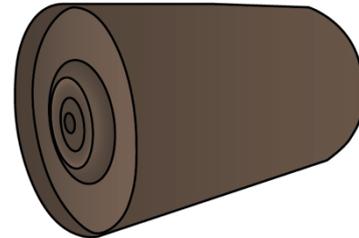
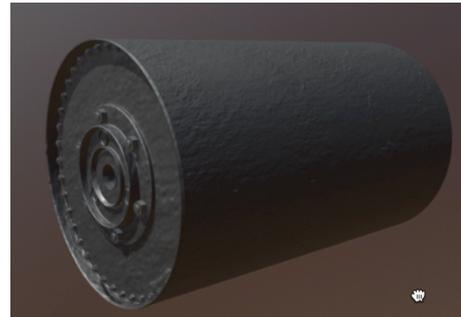
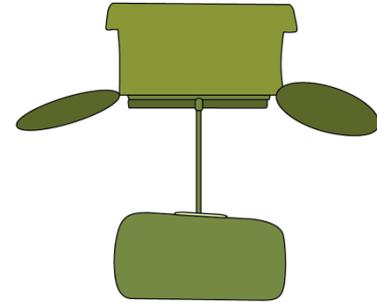
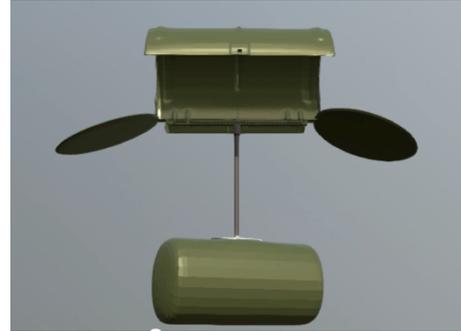
Endless Blitz

Blitz over a rural region. Fictional but inspired by a 5 month campaign led by the allied forces to bomb the Ruhr Area.

2 players against one another: a **bomber** and an **evacuation** officer. Mechanical, less narrative driven.

Gameplay takes place across 4 phases:

- (1) Learn bombs, civilians;
- (2) Understand targets and location shelters;
- (3) Select payload and civilians to save
- (4) Drop bombs and evacuate civilians



Umschlag '43

A narrative driven game.

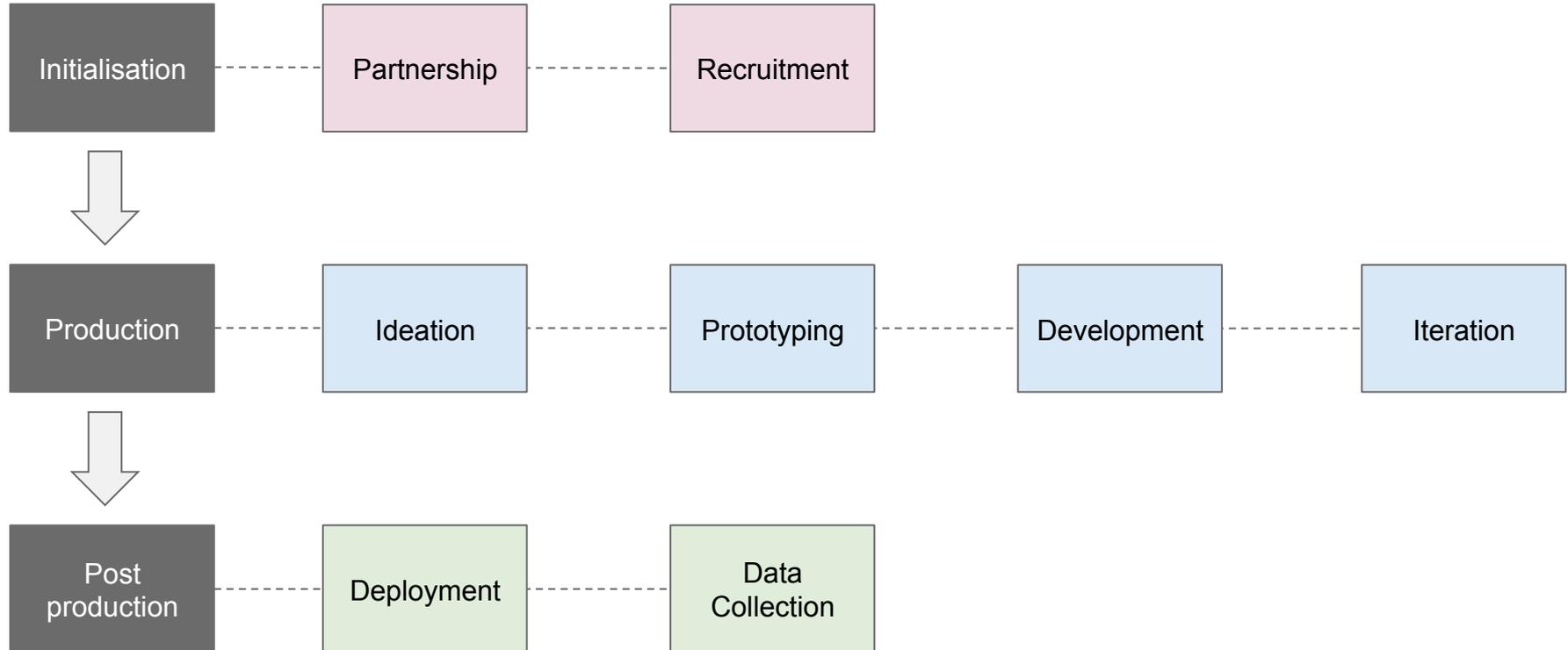
4 characters are waiting in line at Umschlagplatz. Each player assumes the role of one character. Mission: save yourself/your dependant.

An NPC (Non-Player Character) named Marek tells characters that he can **save** one person only. Players exchange information (TRUE, FALSE or DIRT on others) to maximise their chances of survival.

Each piece of information has 2 attributes: trustworthiness and personal value.



Collaboration in PLAI



Students' perspective

“Taking part in the PLAI project helped me develop my design skills and gain industry experience”

Michał Fluder (3D artist)

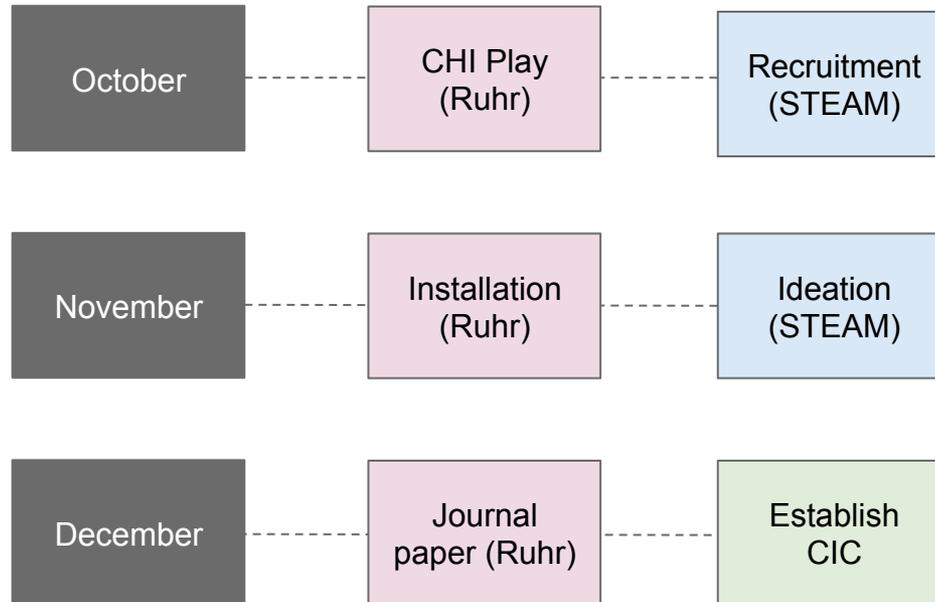
“It's been a rewarding experience to speak with people who went through times of war and regime and be able to share their stories with next generations through our game”

Karolina Latka (2D Artist and narrative designer)

“The experience of working in PLAI has given me tremendous insight into industry standard production levels and the overall process, as well as learning git, a quintessential version control system”

Adam Clark (Programmer)

PLAI moving forward



Contact us

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