Digital Games - Virtual Worlds - Real Impact

Sabine Thürmel
Munich Center of Technology in Society, Technische Universität München, Munich, Germany

Digital games do not only constitute the realm of the art of agency as stated by Nguyen in his book "Games: Agency as an Art" (2020), but lay the foundation for the art of interagency. This article argues for actively engaging with current visions for the real world as the Smart City by gamification of corresponding sociotechnical imaginaries.

Current visions of the Smart City are driven by efficiency and economic considerations. As many of imaginaries of any number of smart systems these visions are techno-deterministic, abstracting from human needs or just taking a certain perspective as the only one possible. The ethical challenge in these cases is to integrate relevant stakeholders in the process of defining sociotechnical imaginaries in order to replace technocratic visions with alternative visions integrating local and regional values of the civil society.

The aim of anticipatory processes is "preparing for the unexpected in the world as we know it" (Nordmann 2014). Social anticipation and imagination may give some indication what cities will look like in the future depending on the core values of different societies and their economic possibilities. Support may be found in the perspectives and techniques provided by the humanities and the arts. The focus should be less on nudging urbanites to accept the current visions of Smart Cities but on experimenting with new ideas already on the radar, utopias and dystopias. Ludic interactions, e.g. in serious games, could be used to explore such sociotechnical imaginaries and start a discussion among the stakeholders in times when people have to be socially distanced. Thus, visions for the real world for future urban environments could be linked with their digital realizations in order to let the users explore them and give their verdict based on actual experiences of and in their virtual counterparts. These insights could inform the city planners and have a real impact.