Workshop proposal:
Live-Streaming Practices for Games & Play

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ABSTRACT
Live-streaming of games and play is on the rise, with new forms of participation emerging across various broadcasting platforms. The ability for players to generate, share and distribute their own creations and gameplay performances is nothing new, however the recent proliferation of live-streaming systems (such as Twitch and Youtube Gaming) alongside improved access to bandwidth and multimedia-ready computers has seen an exponential growth of consumer-created content within the gaming sector. Scholars have acknowledged the impact participatory culture has had upon games and the resultant changing face of the gaming industries, however research explicitly addressing live-streaming practices has so far been limited. The workshop aims to provide fertile ground upon which to discuss live-streaming as both an object of study and as a method of analysis. Workshop participants will explore this burgeoning area through dialogic inquiries and hand-ons practice throughout the full-day event.

Author Keywords
Live-streaming, Twitch, online communities, Let's Play, computer games, participatory culture, open development.

ACM Classification Keywords
H5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous.

BACKGROUND
Earlier this year, YouTube announced the launch of YouTube Gaming for Summer 2015, a new app and website "just for gamers" (YouTube Official Blog). The heavy investment into the live-streaming games market is

a significant one, as big viewership numbers are a regular occurrence in this burgeoning sector and signal developments to come: increased attention towards technical processes and higher frame-rates (Amadeo, 2015) and a focus on increasingly transparent infrastructures (Suchman, 1999) make the usage practices from game to streaming a live-performance faster, simpler and ready to "go live now" upon connection. With games live-streaming services such as Twitch.tv (North America), Azubu.tv (South Korea) and Douyutv (China) all seeing hundreds of millions of viewers on individual popular streams, some basic questions should be asked of the current state of games and live-streaming. In particular, those critical considerations surrounding consumption, production and development practices from players and producers alike, as well research approaches used to capture and study these produced situations.

Recent scholarly work reveals many of the assumptions associated with the co-creative practices of media production (Bruns, 2008; Green and Jenkins, 2009) and, in particular, its impact on game development (Banks and Potts, 2010). In turn, the formation of new modes of game consumption and production are notable: the rise of e-sports phenomenon (Taylor, 2012a); the influence "free-to-play" and alternative monetisation practices have had in shaping game development (Apperley, 2015; Keogh, 2015) consummate with the distribution and normalisation of live-streaming technologies.

Given the increasing economic and cultural significance of consumer-created content (Banks and Potts, 2010; Hamilton, Garretson and Kerne, 2014), combined with normative practices of streaming game content (Taylor, 2012b; Witkowski, 2012), the workshop aims to provide a fertile ground upon which to discuss live-streaming as an object of study, but also as a method of analysis. The workshop presents a timely opportunity to engage with what Kuutti and Bannon outline as a "turn to practice" in HCI (2014) by asking how live-streaming technologies fit into, alongside and disrupt the everyday practices of game design, game play, live-streaming and broadcast while also asking how we best research such complex activity. By focusing on the live event—and participating in a 'lived' experience—the workshop presents a unique opportunity to explore potential benefits and challenges facing cross-, inter- and multi-disciplinary collaborative

practice. Further, the format of the workshop encourages broader debate exploring the tensions between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' forms of knowledge production, challenging the assumed immiscibility of theory and practice, as Kuutti and Bannon suggest.

The goals of the workshop are as follows:

- Question the ways that networked live-streaming technologies are designed and used asking how the various actors make sense of this platform/performance space.
- Reflect on the design of the tools and infrastructures and ask how they enhance, extend, challenge, and disrupt creative participation.
- Establish a new network with scholars/industry/practitioners working on current theoretical, technical, or empirical challenges within the area of live-streaming.
- Engage with the conference theme by organizing an experimental session with participants playing with live-streaming. The potential benefits of collaborative socio-technical experience of live-streaming together are explored, opening a pathway to contemplate other dialogues on practices outside of presentation speaker-audience formats.

This workshop invites scholars currently investigating aspects of broadcasting or live-streaming—from Let's Plays to open or publicly-accessible game development practices (e.g. Mojang's *Minecraft* early access)—to participate in a full-day workshop that focuses on fostering critical dialogues between participants as well as participation in a playful 'hands-on' live-streaming session. This workshop has a particular attention to live-streaming games, but all research and engagement with broadcasting is welcome.

Throughout the workshop, the discursive activity of participants will be documented and curated into a returnable piece. The workshop documentation will aim to capture both the plurality of approaches and critical points and influences involved in researching games-related live-streaming practices (itself captured under the hashtag #livestreaming15), while also exploring the tensions between plans and situated actions (Suchman, 2007) through the practical engagement with live-streaming.

Topics include but are not limited to:

- Open-development practices
- Ethical and fair use of broadcast material
- Crowd-playtesting, using user data/metrics, big data
- Methodological explorations within live broadcasting
- Relationships between materiality, performance and spectatorship
- Mobile media practices and live-streaming
- Materiality and embodiment
- Ecologies of live-streaming

- Collaborative work and play
- Performing race, class, gender, and sexuality through live streamed play
- Identity management
- Live-streaming economies
- Labour and the live stream
- Mundane streaming practices
- Appropriation and crafting personal space
- Rules of participation and transgressive play
- Curation and performance
- Learning to play through the screen

Organisers:
(Main contact) Emma Witkowski, RMIT: emma.witkowski@rmit.edu.au

Emma Witkowski is a Lecturer at RMIT University (Melbourne) and program manager of the Bachelor of Design (Games) program. She earned her PhD in Game Studies from the IT University of Copenhagen in 2012, taking a phenomenologically inspired sociological approach to the study of high performance team play in networked computer games. She contributes to the Digital Ethnography Research Centre by running the Media Methods node and her most recent research explores the production of masculinities in e-sports, women and live-streamed game broadcasting, and running with mobile gaming/fitness technologies.

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James Manning is Associate Lecturer, Bachelor of Design (Games) at RMIT University (Melbourne). He is currently studying for his PhD at Bath Spa University, UK researching into the preservation of videogame play.

Website/hashtag:
https://gameslivestreamingnetwork.wordpress.com/

#livestreaming15

Workshop Structure:
Anticipate 12-15 attendees.

The full day workshop will operate as follows:

- Morning session: 10-minute presentations, 3 thematic sections/panels. (1 hour each, 3-4 x 10' + 20-30' discussion). Abstracts will be clustered thematically. Informal panel and round-robin discussion. Short presentations by researchers in a conversation with the discussant (chosen from within the same thematic section).
- Early afternoon session: Q&A session with live-streamers.

- Afternoon session: Run as a technical workshop, with hands-on experience with live-streaming technologies and continued dialogues though performance and play. For this session, a live-streaming event will be conducted in the Games Lab at RMIT. Workshop participants will play/perform/produce live-streams together within a multiplayer space (or be involved with the production itself 'off-screen'). Hand-on practice is involved. Cultural and disciplinary divides are bridged through play, by immersing participants into the scene where the technical, embodied, and performative aspects of live-streaming are felt and negotiated in-situ. Through the actual production of multi-player/multi-feed live-streamed broadcast(s), a live and documented case-study on the complexities of that creation and reflections on plans-actions are produced.

With a strong presence of local scholars exploring aspects of live-streaming, scholars/practitioners are anticipated at workshop. The workshop also anticipates to draw international scholars, industry, and other practitioners to 'live-stream' into the workshop and contribute to the dialogue.

Contributors can come from all disciplines to share their knowledge on the theoretical, technical or empirical aspects of live-streaming. The workshop organizers extend a special invitation to PhD students, researchers, as well as industry/practitioners.

CFP (250 WORDS):
The live-streaming workshop invites scholars currently investigating aspects of broadcasting or live streaming—from Let's Plays to open or publicly-accessed development practices (e.g. Mojang's *Minecraft* early access)—to participate in a full-day workshop. The workshop focuses on practices of live-streamed play and design. Through participant presentations, critical dialogues are nurtured and then extended through playing with live-streaming with a 'hands-on' live-streaming sessions run by the organizers.

While this workshop particularly attends to games live-streaming, all research and engagement with research and practice around broadcasting is welcome.

The goals of the workshop are as follows:

- Question the ways that networked live-streaming technologies are designed and used asking how the various actors make sense of this platform/performance space.
- Reflect on the design of the tools and infrastructures and ask how they enhance, extend, challenge, and disrupt creative participation.
- Establish a new network with scholars/industry/practitioners working on current theoretical, technical, or empirical challenges within the area of live-streaming
- Engage with the conference theme by organizing an experimental session with participants playing with

live-streaming. The potential benefits of collaborative socio-technical experience of live-streaming together are explored, opening a pathway to contemplate other dialogues on practices outside of presentation speaker-audience formats.

Selection Criteria:
Participants must demonstrate they are either practicing live-streamers or are actively studying live-streaming or related phenomena. Early and preliminary work, novel concepts and approaches are encouraged.

Requirements:
500 - 800 word abstracts sent to workshop organizers for acceptance.

Workshop candidates are asked to include the following in their submission:

- A motivation statement for their participation (e.g., how they will contribute to and benefit from the participation),
- A short abstract on their current research within live-streaming and games/play.
- A brief bio (not more than 150 words to be published on the workshop homepage).

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