

Chapter 4

Game Design Frameworks and Reality Guides

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ABSTRACT

The gamification trend has cultivated a wide variety of game design frameworks. In this chapter, we use the concept of reality guides to analyse the characteristics of a few of these. Reality guides are applications that aim at assisting the user in the real world. As such they are not games, which is why we can use them to investigate the applicability of game design frameworks in a wider context than they are originally introduced for. Although these frameworks are for games, we find them at least partially applicable in the design of any kind of software and services. We also further refine the concept of reality guides as a type of application and consider the apparent usefulness of these frameworks on them.

INTRODUCTION

The term ‘reality guide’ (RG) groups applications that aim at assisting, teaching or supporting the user in the real world. Among other things they are used to illustrate history, to educate students or to provide services to visitors. They include applications such as city guides, virtual museums or location-aware games that are nowadays commonplace. Many cities and institutes employ them, for instance, to provide service for visitors,

to illustrate history or architecture or simply to promote their possibilities. RGs are, therefore, enhanced replacements of the traditional paper printed guides.

RGs can be one-directional guides to, for example, a museum where the visitors are given information about the exhibition as they arrive at different locations, but where they cannot give their own input. Alternatively, RGs can be bi-directional social media applications where people share reviews of locations where they visit and

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can find the reviews of others. There are different approaches to RGs: some of them are games, while others are more like social media applications. Also, they are often applying augmented reality (or augmented virtuality) – in one way or another – to transmit information. Some well-known examples of RGs are *FourSquare*, *Paris3DSaga*, *Ingress*, *Geocaching*, *Google Maps*, and – to some extent – Wikipedia. Our project *Lost Turku* (Mäntylä, Lahti, Ketamo, Luimula, & Smed, 2014), which is currently a virtually reality of a reconstructed real location 200 years from history, is a one-directional guide that uses a student’s story as a narrative (see Figure 1). *Vares* (Mäntylä et al., 2014) is another of our RG applications. It guides people to visit various locations in Turku where the fictitious events of the Vares detective books and filmatisations are placed. The application reminds the user of scenes in the original stories and movies and fuses them into the story of the user traversing from a hotspot to another.

Our motivation in this article is to look into different frameworks for understanding games, RGs and narratives: What they are, what they are not, and what distinguishes them from each other. The field of game research has seen new terms, such as gamification and serious games, which

are basically already established. However, there is still work to be done to make clear distinctions in terminology, as the word “game” itself already has several meanings, ranging from hunted animals to even acting in a live-action roleplaying game. The success of Foursquare has been an elementary part of sparking out several different innovative categories of applications, including RGs and gamification, for example. (Detering, Dixon, Khaled & Nacke, 2011) This new field is very young and we are joining the effort with Detering et al. to help keeping sense and order in the terminology.

For game designers, children and youngsters form a challenging audience. Rogers (2014, pp. 35–36) makes the practical observation that children usually want what is made for an audience older than their own age group. This is often due to the game developers’ tendency to oversimplify and talk down to younger audience. This observation is accompanied by Burgun (2013, p. 57) who emphasizes that although children’s games might not do a lot, what they do they should do with elegance as it is of utmost importance with children. Game designers have found ways use stealth learning, which inspires players to learn without being aware that they are being taught

Figure 1. Augmentation of the current real Turku Cathedral area with an image from the history in the Lost Turku reality guide



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