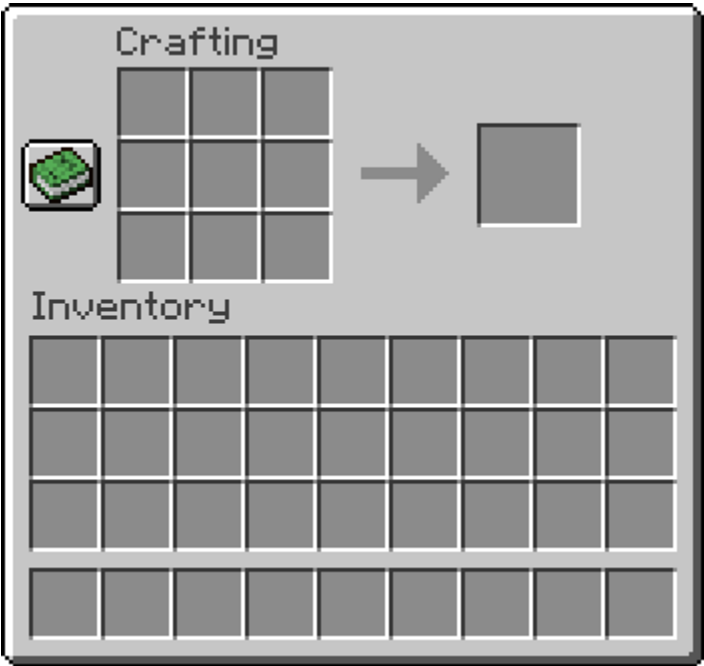


## Community-based design



### Minecraft crafting table

[illegible]

Back before the advent of the internet, it was common for kids to go to the playground and talk to their friends about the games they were playing, and most importantly were they were stuck. This created communities that would share knowledge on how to solve certain parts of games. Hypothesizing solutions for their problems. Allowing them to finally find the dreaded corner bush which players had to burn in the original The Legend of Zelda.



*The dreaded zelda bush*

We can see this more clearly if we look at it from the lens of *Theory of Fun for Game Design*. Players want to find patterns that allow them to solve the game, but when the pattern is nowhere it isn't hard to infer that they will resort to other means to find that solution. Consequently, players join communities, share knowledge, and beat the game.

Another example of this is the Zombies gamemode within the Call of Duty games. In these the player is tossed into a map where they are told to survive as many rounds as they can. But the way to do so is never told to the player. The knowledge to, upgrade weapons, unlock certain parts of the map, and unlock powerful permanent buffs, are all promptly missing. Thus, just like for

Minecraft, Youtubers and others built guides to share this knowledge. However, unlike Mojang, the developers of Zombies never patched any directions to their maps. It is because this type of omission is not a fault of the game, it is not an omission at all, but rather it is an explicit design decision.



*Black Ops III Zombies*

In *Art-of-Failure* Jesper Juul describes his strife trying to beat *Patapan*. He speaks about his inability to beat the desert level. Which later made him look a solution online. He uses *attribution theory* to describe that the entity (the game) is at fault for the players failure. In the case of *Patapan* it is clear that the game is at fault. However, for *Zombies* the fault is that the players do not have the necessary information, creating a whole metagame to discover said information.

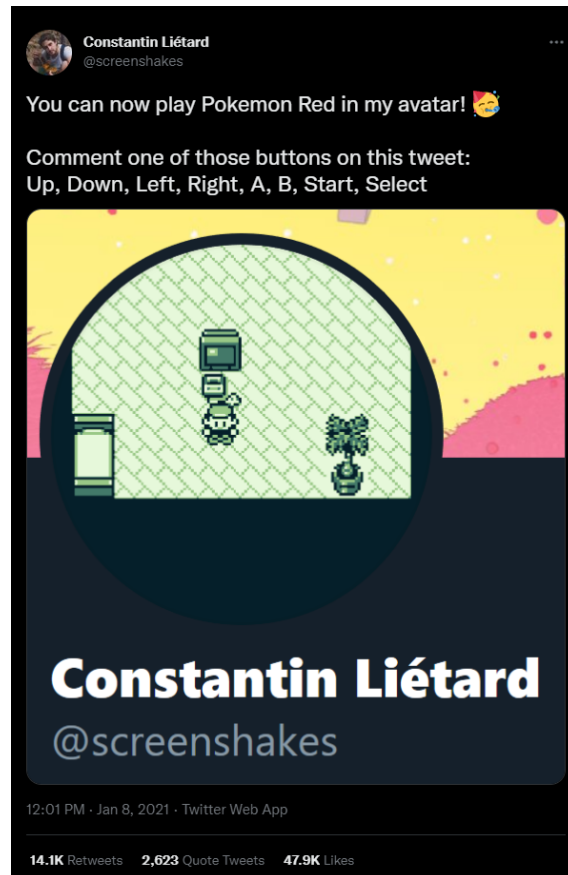
This brings to mind the concept of the ARG (Alternate Reality Game). A game which people play in the real life to solve a mystery, (digging website code, solving cyphers, etc). Furthermore, this is the same type of communal problem solving that zombies creates. Within Zombies there exists the idea of the Easter Egg. Basically each map has a set of hidden objectives and challenges which players must complete to win the map. These are so extremely contrived and arbitrary that they require large communal efforts to be completed. In the weeks following a new map, there are spans of streamers playing the game, shooting at nooks and crannies, doing weird spins, trying to interact with an object they can find, all in attempts to beat the easter egg. People in the chat of streams will spew out theories and ideas for the streamer to try out. And people offline theorize off scraps on how the easter egg will unfold. This creates a very interesting communal type of play were people team up to solve the problem live. Which upon weeks of trail and error leads to players final being able to figure out and beat the easter egg.



*Reddit discussing the finding of easter eggs*

Thus reinforcing that the removing of information can be an explicit design decision that can incites both communal learning and cooperation.

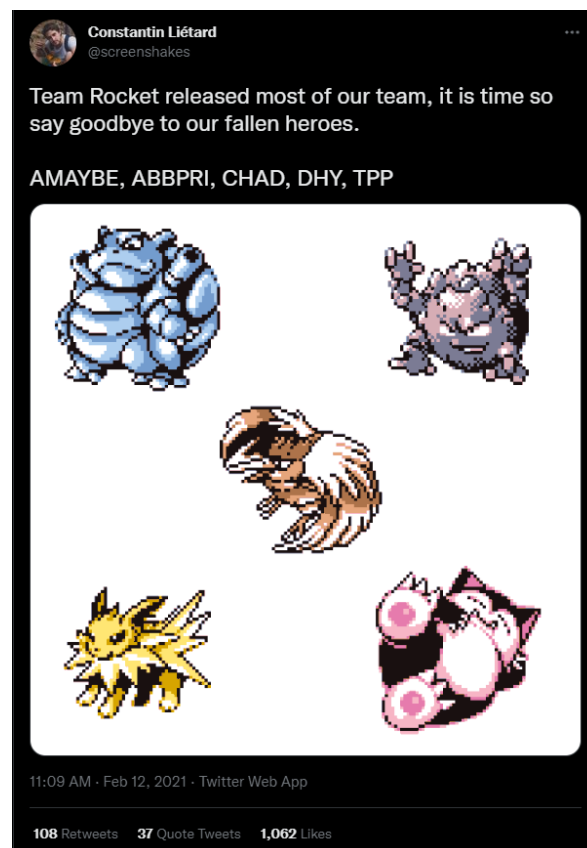
The question then arises of what other experiences could be created for these communities. And furthermore what kind of design must be then applied to enable such experiences. The next logical step seems simple: what if these communities could directly play games together?



### *Birth of Twitter plays pokemon*

During January 2021 twitter user Constantin Liétard (@screenshakes) set up his twitter avatar with a picture of Pokemon Red. The twist was that people could comment commands and every 15 seconds the game would be updated, inputting the most commented command. Showcasing an example on how to reintegrate communities back into the game. By allowing them to interface back to the game by polling decisions. This last part being crucial as any individuality loses the whole point of a community.

This was a very novel idea and it gained large popularity in the internet with several articles written on the topic. However, this quickly showed a crucial problem when a game is designed to be played by a community at large. Chaos will forever unfold.



*Twitter plays pokemon loses its pokemon*

During the night a set of malicious players decided to team up and ruin the pokemon game by releasing the team of pokemon built. Heavily setting the game back, almost destroying the run. We can see that in the internet there will always be those who want to destroy each others fun. Interestingly enough, this brings forth an interesting metagame. Where non-trolling players had

to reinforce their efforts, as a way to fight back the internet trolls which tried to jeopardize the game again. Hence, players did not only have to beat the game, but also have to fight these trolls.

From this example there are two things from this type of play that we can conclude. Firstly, the goal of Twitter Plays Pokemon is not about playing pokemon, but the metagame that is built around it. Alike poker players bluffing and scoffing at each other becomes the larger gameplay experience. Secondly, we can see that the intermediary between the audience and the game drastically changes this metagame. It has been shown that crowds cheering at live sports have an impact in the performance of the game. If the crowds were able to get in the pitch or shoot pellets at the ball, the game will change drastically. In essence there is an even bigger phenomenon going on. As this communal audience has gained control, transitioning from learning to directly playing the game, a whole metagame has been forming around the community. The game is about them voting, chattering, and how they overall interact with the game and moreover the middleman who dictates it. This is communal play.

In essence we have created communal Dungeons and Dragons. Were instead of there only being several players, there is one who speaks for thousands. Moreover, in this case the dungeon master can not only dictate play, but also become an additional player within the field. Lastly, alike D&D, given a proper Dungeon master, the players not only play the game, but they can create new play experiences; co-ocreating play.

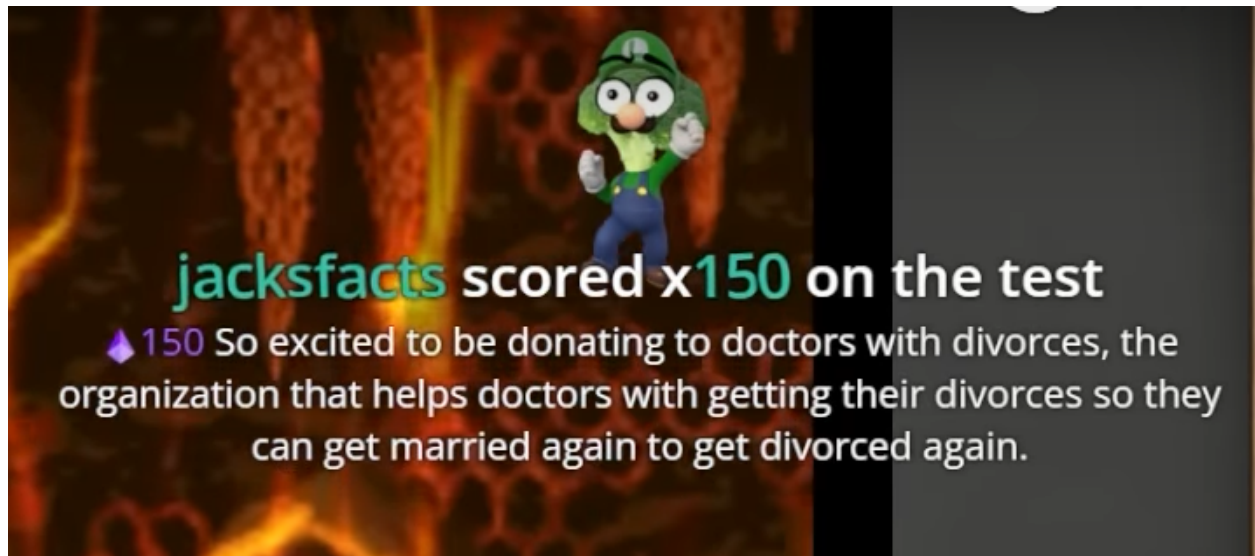
An example of this type of play, were this kind of Dungeon Master takes greater authorship is Twitch streamer and Youtuber: DougDoug.





*DougDoug*

In his videos he shows the breadth that this communal play can take. And what alterations he does to do so. He has made chat play Super Mario Bros, which would normally be a terrible idea given the delay of inputs and the overall clumsiness of controlling mario as a group through single commands. However, he helps by stepping in, helping chat ideate strategies and overall cheering them on, creating spectacle when there should only be chaos. An important thing to rescue is that he normally uses the chaos inherent in the internet people to his own advantage. For example, in some of his videos he is playing GTA V and he must get from one part of the map to another. All whilst chat has control to his mod menu and is actively trying to stop him. Using the chaos deliberately to try stop him.



*Twitch chats comments on a stream raising money for doctors without borders.*

In terms of creating new kind of play experiences the biggest facilitator of this is Twitches paid messages. In which viewers can spend money to get their messages read. These can on occasion completely derail the stream. One time DougDoug was pressured for months to play a bloatware game called Barn Finders. On another occasions, Twitch chat and him created a whole aristocracy based on channel reward points were chat could spend their points to play fart sounds on stream. This is very nonsensical content, but perfect for the kind of internet community which would try meddling on a live stream.

To conclude, we can see that the relationship between a game and its community can take multiple forms. Explicit design can incentivize the forming of communities for the sake of exchanging knowledge. But also a larger level of play can be created when a middleman interfaces communities back into games. Creating unique experiences that only these communities can foster.

-Vittorio Corbo