

ON THE REIFICATION OF GAME CULTURE USING THE EXAMPLE OF SHARING

How Multiple Social Practices Have
Turned Into a Single Button

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ABSTRACT

In 2013, Sony introduced a new interface element with the PS4 game controller DualShock 4: its own *share button*. The article uses this button to open up two thematic fields and bring them together. First, the *button* is discussed as a basic interface element. It is shown that technically mediated processes, which are to be triggered by buttons, must always have a strong conciseness and a high degree of enculturation. Second, *sharing* is discussed as a changing social practice. It is shown how practices of sharing have changed and differentiated under the conditions of digital networked media in general and in the context of play and games in particular. Against this background, the successful introduction of the PS4 share button shows that sharing in the context of digital games has achieved a level of conciseness and enculturation that is necessary for a button to function.

Keywords: PlayStation, controller, interface, button, social media

1. INTRODUCTION

Together with the Playstation 4 console (PS4), Sony introduced a new controller to the market in 2013 that featured a control element that was new for game controllers at the time: the "share button" (Fig. 1). The share button is used to share gaming-specific content; this text shows that such a (game-specific) practice of sharing is not without preconditions. This button can be seen as the culmination of a development that goes back to at least the 1980s. It was only through this long lead-in that the sharing of (game) content would reach such a high level of enculturation that it could be integrated into a game controller in the form of a single button.



Fig. 1: The PS4 controller with share button and (top right) typical social buttons.
(Source: PlayStation Europe, with author's screenshot of social buttons.)

2. SWITCHES AND BUTTONS

A (push) button is one of the most basic forms of technology control of all. Buttons allow a simple yes/no or on/off distinction. A button can therefore be used to trigger technical devices or individual technology-based actions. The instruction 'Press button to...' can be completed almost arbitrarily. At first glance, everything that technology is capable of can be named here. On closer inspection, however, there are limits to this apparent arbitrariness (or flexibility). Buttons are only really practical and useful

as triggers for technical activities that have gestalt quality.¹ That which is to be triggered by pushing the button has to be comprehensible in advance as a self-contained entity. In other words, if you see a button whose function you do not immediately recognize, and you dare to experiment with pressing it, you will look attentively for an event that can be described in terms of "the button triggers XY." This says nothing about the actual technical complexity of what can be triggered by the press of a single button. We can use buttons to trigger a doorbell, for example, or to switch on a PC. In the case of the doorbell, there is still a 1:1 ratio between the operating activity (pressing the button) and the triggered technical action (ring tone). In contrast, from a technical perspective, switching on a PC actually triggers a highly complex cascade of many different individual technical actions. This is because nowadays we normally expect a PC not just to turn on, but also to automatically start its operating system and many associated utilities, and much more. We summarize this complex process with the term "boot up." This term describes the entire complex process that can be understood as a self-contained perceptual unit. We can then associate this perceptual unit with a single button as its trigger.

This allows us to draw a reverse conclusion: technical processes for which there are separate (extra) buttons are obviously culturally established as units of high *Prägnanz*² – otherwise these processes would not be associated with a button. The existence of certain buttons thus points to a high degree of enculturation of the associated, technically-based processes.

3. SHARING

The meaning of the term "sharing" has changed in remarkable ways over time. Originally, it denoted an act of dividing something into parts (John 2012, 45). This is directly related to the meaning in which the term also

¹ For the terms "gestalt" and/or "gestalt quality" see e.g. Mulligan/Smith 1988.

² According to the German Gestalt psychologist Max Wertheimer there is, "among several Gestalt laws of a general kind, a law of the tendency toward simple formation (law of the *Prägnanz* of the Gestalt) [...]" (Wertheimer as cited in Ash 1998, 133).

refers to the distribution of the individual parts produced by the previous division among several parties (*ibid.*). This concept of dividing is related to material goods. It is a zero-sum game: the gain of the person with whom I share something is equal to my own loss (*ibid.*).

This form of sharing is of great social importance. Sharing in this sense is a fundamental element of social interaction (Unger 2012, 131) that functions in many ways as a "basal unit of more complex cooperative processes." (*ibid.*, 132)³ It is constitutive for social relations, and it is normatively charged in three ways. Firth, referring to Mauss (1990[1954]), describes (a) "the obligation to give" (Firth 2011, 369), (b) "the obligation to receive" (*ibid.*, 389) and (c) "the obligation to repay" (*ibid.*, 395). This kind of sharing creates a relationship that is geared towards generating reciprocity. For the giving party, however, "an association of positive moral value" (*ibid.*, 374) creates added value. This kind of sharing, in short, creates social relations.

More recently, however, there has not been a complete change in the meaning, but rather an expansion of the meaning. This expansion is essentially based on applying the term to immaterial goods or abstract objects that cannot be broken down into individual parts and/or that cannot be owned. Thus, for example, we speak of "sharing a room." In contrast to the previous, narrow concept of sharing, this usage emphasises the fact that the people involved are already in a relationship, a relationship that has to do with this form of sharing. For example, one can be in the same room with several people at the same time, but not speak of "sharing this room." This phrase tends to be chosen to express not only the objective fact of being present at the same time in the same room with someone else, but also the social dimension of this practice – the fact that this simultaneous presence is accompanied by specific relationships. Sharing of this kind is as much a cause as it is an effect of these relationships: When being together in a room, there may come a moment when one experiences oneself as being in community with the others present. From that

³ Orig. in German, translated by TSR; cf. also John 2012, 45.

moment on, one shares the room, and that also means: from that moment on, one is engaged in a social practice.

In this sense, abstract matters such as interests, hopes, faith, fears and more can also be shared. Just as one speaks of sharing an interest, hope, destiny, etc., one also speaks of community of interest, community of hope, community of destiny, and so on. A community of interest does not necessarily exist as soon as two or more people have the same interest(s); it develops when the people involved perceive this same interest as a relationship – and a basis upon which a community can be built: they understand the same interest as a shared interest that functions as a motive for cooperative action (John 2017, 27). This use of the term “sharing” means that social relationships already exist (and that these relationships are further stabilized by this specific practice of sharing).

Since around the middle of the 20th century, an additional use of the term “sharing” can be found that refers to an act of communication in which subjective feelings, especially emotions, are shared with other people (ibid.; John 2012, 46). The sharing of such intimate objects has a similar relationship-building effect as the sharing of material goods: “Similarly to the act of sharing a candy bar, the sharing of emotions also creates and regulates social ties.” (John 2012, 46) Although relatively young, this mode of use has gained astonishing reach. According to John, this practice is “central to the formation and maintenance of intimate relations in contemporary western society.” (ibid.) Looking at these different uses of the term “sharing,” we see that the object of sharing changes over time. It moves from the purely concrete or material (food, things) to the abstract or immaterial (ideational goods) to completely internal subjective emotional states. One could also say: the object of sharing became more and more intimate and less and less objectively tangible. However, the new meanings of “sharing” do not replace the older ones at all, but the term becomes more and more ambiguous. For the purposes of further discussion, a distinction should be made between three different types of sharing:

1. The first type is based on divided property. Its object are material goods, it is based on their division and subsequent distribution of

the parts, and it functions as a zero-sum game. This generates social relationships.

2. The second type is about shared community. Here, ideational goods are shared that function as the basis of a community experience. These goods cannot be divided like those in the first type of sharing. Sharing within a shared community requires pre-existing social relations and stabilizes them.⁴
3. The third type of sharing has (co)shared inner states as its object. This form of sharing is based on communication, it is basically an act of information transmission. Naming such an act of communication as sharing emphasizes and intensifies the special emotional closeness and intimacy evoked by the actions of the people involved. In contrast to the previous type, this sharing does not necessarily require a pre-existing community, but it creates community. What this type of sharing has in common with the first type is that it generates social relationships but differs from it in that the shared good (e.g., feelings) cannot be divided or distributed.

This threefold distinction, however, only has the function of a heuristic instrument because it allows for specific perspectivizations in each case. Indeed, in current practices of sharing, all three modes of sharing can be at work at the same time, which is remarkable because they are partially mutually exclusive in terms of their conditions. These practices can be observed since about the year 2005 under the conditions of Web 2.0. Since then, it is not only the case that the transmission of content of any type (texts, sounds and images) is called “sharing,” but it can also be observed that sharing is related to increasingly vague objects: “If at first the sites asked us to share photos, or Web journals, or thoughts, with time the objects of sharing began to include such vague things as ‘your life,’ ‘your world,’ and ‘your true self.’” (John 2012, 47)

⁴ In the German language, the word “mitteilen” has existed for several centuries; it is composed of the two words “mit” and “teilen.” Literally translated, “mitteilen” actually means “to share with.” However, it means “to tell.” The German language has therefore been expressing a connection between communication and sharing for much longer than the English language.

This change has taken place at an astonishing speed, namely within a few years:

“For instance, in 2002, the front page of the photo-sharing site Fotolog contained the text, “Make it easy for friends/family to see what’s up with you. Put your latest, greatest digital photos on the Web in a log format.” In 2007, though, it introduced the tagline, ‘Share your world with the world.’”

(ibid.)⁵

And finally, one can also increasingly observe that the object of sharing is not exactly specified at all: Catchy instructions like "Join! Connect! Share!" do not cause confusion because of the unclear order, but users obviously understand the (new) meaning of sharing in the new context of digital networked media.

This new context is characterized by the fact that, on the one hand, the content does not function any differently in perception than the corresponding objects did before in the analog world. Texts, sounds and images still appear as just that: texts, sounds and images. In perception, the technical basis is irrelevant. What we see is an image, for example. What we usually do not perceive is its medium. This has always been the functional principle of media, and for this principle it makes no difference whether the medium is a paper or a screen. Texts, sounds and images are objects of perception that as such – according to our perception – have the character of a thing (Lobinger 2012, 69). On the other hand, under the conditions of digitalization, these objects function quite differently from their analog counterparts because they can be copied and transmitted an infinite number of times:

⁵ See also Dijck 2013, 48: “The contextual meanings of ‘connectedness’ and ‘sharing’ thus shifted from interaction inside the social network site to interaction with all virtual life outside Facebook’s territory.”

“Finally, the advent of digital media seems to have really led to the collapse of original and copy. Digital data are, at the basal level, a sequence of zeros and ones. If one simply transcribes this sequence, or if a computer does so, the resulting file is exactly the same as the original file. In contrast to analog processes, here no copy loss signals a distance [...] between the original and the copy.”

(Schröter 2010, 11)⁶

Therefore, under digital conditions, texts, sounds and images no longer necessarily function like material objects, but they can also be treated like information. However, the property that changes as a result (e.g., their altered property in terms of their copyability) is not necessarily immediately apparent: On the surface, they still look like conventional objects, where sharing based on division and aimed at shared ownership has actually been impossible up until now. For example, a photo print on paper cannot be divided between two people like a piece of bread by cutting it in half. This division into two halves would destroy the photo. However, the new digital basis now allows images, as well as texts and sounds, to be shared by treating them as pure information. However, this process produces a copy of the image, which again has the character of a thing. This means that, as a result, both the giving and the receiving party are in possession of the shared good – and each in its entirety. Technically speaking, what has actually happened here is not sharing, but copying. Now, according to common opinion, a reproduction or copy is actually worth less than the original.⁷ Copying is therefore rather negatively associated with loss. However, certain digitally networked media succeed in staging the underlying act in such a way that it is less reminiscent of the value-diminishing act of making a copy than it was reminiscent of the relationship-building act of sharing. This is based on the sophisticated hybridization of the three ways of sharing differentiated above:

1. First, media content with a thing-character is staged as an object that can be shared.

⁶ Orig. in German, translated by TSR.

⁷ See in detail Schröter 2010.

2. Secondly, (at the same time!) there is an emphasis on the community-creating way of sharing ideational goods (which are not divisible in the first sense): Analogous to "sharing a room," we can let others participate in the access to certain images, texts and sounds. In a sense, we thereby include these others in a "community of reception."
3. Third, the communication-based usage of sharing, which is actually based on the communication (in a technical sense: on the transmission) of internal states, is transferred to the transmission of information (e.g., digital images).

That is (also) why these media are called social media. Digital social media thus manage the feat of integrating the three modes of sharing as explained above: (a) sharing based on decomposition and distribution, which was not at all applicable to analog media content; (b) sharing in the context of a shared community, which is actually related to ideational goods; and (c) sharing based on communication, which is not actually applicable to objects with a thing-character. This integration has the consequence that the sharing practiced in social media is normatively charged in a special way because moments from all three previously mentioned types of sharing are effective at the same time. Such sharing generates social relationships and community, and it stabilizes pre-existing social relationships or communities. That is why sharing in digital networked media has a special dynamic.⁸

4. FORMS OF PRACTICE AND CULTURAL TECHNIQUES OF SHARING: FROM THE CHURCH COLLECTION TO THE LIKE BUTTON

Like exchanging, sharing is an anthropological constant (Lehmann/Ebert 2017, n. pag.). Practices of sharing can therefore be found in pre-modern

⁸ About the great (economic as well as discourse-political) interest that companies such as Facebook have in these shifts in the meaning of sharing, see Dijck 2013, 48: "Changing the meaning of sharing turns out to be vital to altering legal rulings concerning privacy and to accepting new forms of monetization."

as well as in post-industrial societies (ibid.). Sharing is normatively and socially charged, which is why societies create and cultivate sharing-related rules, patterns of action, rituals and possibly even relevant institutions. At the macro level, for example, religious commandments can provide guidance regarding the socially expected amount of sharing (e.g., one-tenth of the harvest). At the meso level, institutions and associated rituals can be created to administer and organize the act of sharing (e.g., churches/parishes and collections). At the micro level, formalized behaviors and signs help to simplify and socially secure the interaction related to sharing (e.g., Katriel already observes the sharing of sweets between children as a “patterned, ritualized, cooperative gesture” (Katriel 1987, 307)).

Practices of sharing thus tend to become formalized at all levels. Actions formalized in this way form the basis of what could be termed *techniques of sharing*. *Techniques of sharing* abstract the act of sharing, therefore providing knowledge about procedures and methods that can then be transferred into tools/media. At this point at the latest, sharing has become a cultural technique in which formalized actions, tools, media and culture interpenetrate each other and jointly inscribe themselves in both individual and social actions.⁹ On the basis of such cultural techniques, sharing can then potentially be practiced without having personally internalized all of the procedures or rules, possibly not even the applicable norms, because:

“Media and things themselves provide rules for their execution. These 'material' instructions for action, in turn, come from a sphere that the person acting does not control. They control processes independently of the individual person performing them, which makes them repeatable - in other places, on other occasions, by different people. These actions are supported by a certain knowledge of action. This can be passed on to others, it can be learned. Repeatability and learnability are among the central characteristics of cultural techniques.” (Vismann 2010, 175)¹⁰

⁹ The term “cultural techniques” (German: “Kulturtechniken”) refers to “chains of operations that link humans, things, media and even animals. To investigate cultural techniques is to shift the analytic gaze from ontological distinctions to the ontic operations that gave rise to the former in the first place.” (Siebert 2013, 48). For more details, see Siebert 2013.

¹⁰ Orig. in German, translated by TSR.

Facebook introduced an extraordinarily successful example of such “material instruction” in 2009 with the Like button. With this, the Facebook makers have succeeded in condensing acts of communicating, sharing, commenting, inviting as well as thanking (and presumably much more) into a single element “almost like an aphorism.” (Jaekel 2017, 175)¹¹ While the Like button is not directly designed to *share*, its functionality has always been oriented towards an excessive culture of sharing that is vigorously pursued by Facebook. Thus, the commentary with which Facebook officially introduced the Like button in 2009 concludes with the sentence:

“Your friends, and their photos, notes, statuses and more are what make Facebook great. When your friends share something great, let them know you like it.”

(Facebook 2009, n. pag.)

5. PLAY AND SHARE

Play is one of the above-mentioned “more complex cooperative processes”¹² that presuppose sharing as a basic operation. Playing together presupposes consensus about the nature of what is happening (“this is play” (Bateson 2000, 179), and in the play community established through play, time and rules as well as concrete game materials are then temporarily shared on an abstract level. The establishment of this consensus can function directly metacommunicatively (ibid.), but it can also come about through culturally established framing techniques. The most literal form of such framing techniques is probably given by standardized pitch markings (e.g., of a football pitch). These mark a space that is shared, on the one hand, but which is also often playfully wrestled over, on the other hand. In relation to this shared space, the players are then “bound by a spirit of hostility and friendship combined.” (Huizinga 1949, 59) Basically, almost every standardized game material fulfils a comparable function. Game materials (cards, dice, boards; cf. Clüver in the same volume) in a sense call for them to be temporarily shared, and play is when this call

¹¹ Orig. in German, translated by TSR.

¹² See above chapter 3.

is complied with, and sharing correspondingly takes place.¹³ Game materials are thus elements of cultural techniques as they have been described above. Now, the statement that game materials are elements of cultural techniques is in itself commonplace. However, the term applies here not only in a general sense, but also in a very specific sense: This is about material artefacts whose agency consist in the production of a (play) community through sharing. For example, a game material such as a dice is initially (correctly) regarded as a tool for generating chance and is therefore classified as an element of a cultural technique of playing. Beyond that, however, the dice constantly moves from one player to the other during the entire game. It can thus also be understood as an element of a (play-/game-)specific cultural technique of sharing – a sharing that acts as a constitutive moment for the establishment of (social) play.

However, games are typically not only based on community, but cleverly balance community with competition. Furthermore, in the context of competition, sharing can play an important role: At first glance, sharing (like giving) seems to be of a purely altruistic nature because it denotes an act of giving without direct reciprocal compensation. However, Huizinga, for example, derives "the agonistic basis of cultural life in archaic society" from gift-giving customs. Accordingly, receiving a gift obliges the party receiving the gift to give a counter-gift. Here it is also worth mentioning the above-mentioned quote by Firth: "the obligation to repay." (Firth 2011, 395)¹⁴ This counter-gift must be at least of equal value to the preceding one, in the contexts described by Huizinga, they must even be more valuable. Then a dynamic emerges in which everything "hinges on winning, on being superior, on glory, prestige and, last but not least, revenge." (Huizinga 1949, 59) The seemingly altruistic act of giving thus constitutes a dialectical structure of relationships in which both parties are "bound by

¹³ This is not to say that play can only take place in a community. Of course, there are forms of play that take place entirely independent of a community (e.g., everything that Caillois (2001[1961]) refers to with the term *ilinx*), but this text is about the function and cultural transformation of sharing as a potential moment of play. Therefore, only those forms of play are discussed here in which this moment is relevant.

¹⁴ Firth is referring to Mauss 1990[1954].

a spirit of hostility and friendship combined” (ibid.) as already quoted above. This Janus-faced relational momentum is not only inherent in every act of giving, but it also affects sharing – clearly, at any rate, insofar as the sharing of material goods is concerned. However, because the boundaries between material goods and communication become blurred under the conditions of digital networked media (see above), such mechanisms can also become effective in the sharing of (digital media) content. In the context of computer game culture, this happens, for example, when game recordings or even achievements are shared virtually with friends. According to the logics derived above, such an act of sharing not only generates and stabilizes purely harmonious social relations, but in a sense, it also challenges a response, a *quid pro quo*, that appropriately trumps the original material. A competition emerges that is borne by a “spirit of hostility and friendship combined.” (ibid.) This competition is at the core of a “second game” (Jakobsson 2011) or a “metagame” (Salen/Zimmerman 2003, 481), it’s the object of which is the sharing of evidence for ever greater (game) achievements.

6. FROM SHARING AS A COMPLEX ACTION TO BUTTON-PUSHING: SONY’S SHARE BUTTON

There is a history of proving achievements gained in games that goes far beyond the digital age. Since time immemorial, cups, medals, certificates, point systems, high score lists and more have been used for this purpose. The publisher Activision in particular transferred such practices to digital games as early as the beginning of the 1980s: Players were encouraged to take photos of the television screen to capture certain scores and send these photos to the company headquarters. A few weeks later, they then received a patch tailored to the respective game and performance from the publisher by mail (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Patch awarded for 10,000 points in the game CHOPPER COMMANDOS.
(Source: <https://atarinerds.tumblr.com/post/133426951/xplanes-sunday-fantasy-88-activision-atari-2600>, accessed 27 May 2022)

In addition, these deliveries were always accompanied by a letter (Fig. 3). The letter usually begins by referencing the specific feat that the player had accomplished in the game. In the next paragraph, players were informed that they had been added to the so-called “club list.” This meant that in the future they would receive promotional material and a quarterly (paper) newsletter. According the letter, this newsletter was meant to enable participation in the gaming experiences of other computer gamers: “[...] you can read about the experiences of our other video game fans around the country.” Finally, the following paragraph literally led to the topic here, because here the player was explicitly thanked for sharing their achievements with the publisher: “Thank you for writing to share your accomplishment with us.” The paragraph usually ended with an encouragement to strive for further participation in the future (again by letter).

Activision's fabric patches are a particularly ambitious variant of a strategy that was implemented in various ways by many companies in the video game industry in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, in the early 1990s, Nintendo players could use the same principle (sending in a paper photo of a high score on screen by letter post) to get their name published in the high score list in *Nintendo magazine*.

With the spread of the Internet, various high score websites emerged towards the end of the 1990s that fulfilled the same function – albeit under partly easier conditions because it became possible to take a screenshot on a PC and uploads and e-mail replaced traditional mailing.

ACTIVISION

Dear CHOPPER COMMAND Pilot:

Congratulations! Your impressive score of 10,000 or more points on the Cadet level shows courage and determination. Activision is honored to bestow the rank of "COMMANDO" on you and your insignia is enclosed.

We have added your name to our club list and will keep you informed on new Activision game cartridges as they become available. You will also be receiving the quarterly Activision Newsletter so that you can read about the experiences of our other video game fans around the country.

Thank you for writing to share your accomplishments with us. We hope you will try for membership in our other clubs and that you will write and tell us about your experiences with our other video games.

Yours truly,



Jan Marsella
Membership Recruiter

JM
Enclosure

P.S. Please read enclosed Heat Seal Instructions carefully. Children should not attempt to heat seal the patch to clothing. Improper use of an iron (or related appliance) may result in damage to clothing or bodily harm. The patch may also be sewn to fabrics.

Fig. 3: Letter from "Activision" attached to the patch.
(Source: Navigationen 20/1, 2020. Siegen: universi - Universitätsverlag Siegen, p. 105. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.25819/ubsi/3590>.)

In all of these cases, a third party (the publisher, a magazine, a website) acted as an intermediary between the players. The players could not directly enter into a "sharing relationship" with each other, they had to interact with the intermediary, who would subsequently redistribute the good to be shared. The immediacy lacking in this approach could only be countered by emphatic staging. That is why Activision always addressed

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its customers very directly and personally in the above-mentioned letters and tried to evoke a community experience in a discursive way. Magazines such as the aforementioned *Nintendo magazine* also worked with these strategies and typically used rubrics in which self-presentations of players and interaction between editors and players were printed (Fig. 4). In this context, Activision's patches were a clever trick to give players the opportunity to present their special gaming achievements, not only indirectly by being mentioned in a magazine or the like, but also physically and directly among their own friends.

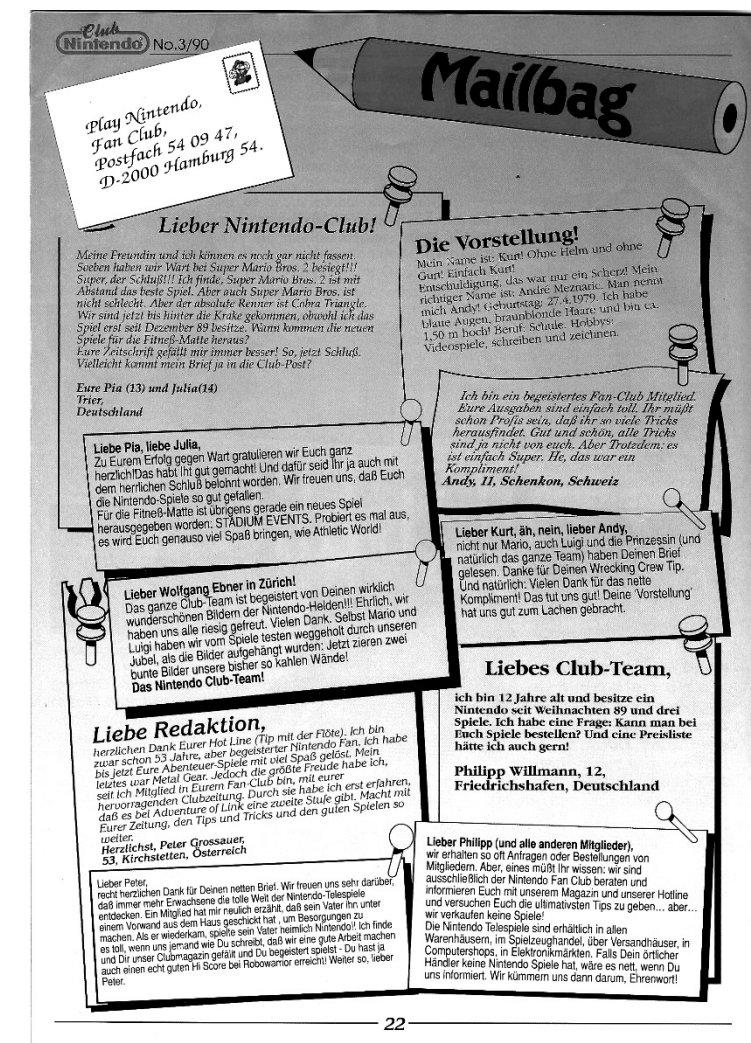


Fig. 4: Excerpt from the Nintendo PR magazine "Club Nintendo" (1990).
(Source: Nintendo Magazine. 1990, H. 3, p. 22.)

On today's gaming platforms, corresponding functions have been integrated in a standardized way. Modern achievement systems automatically detect defined achievements, they then automatically award the corresponding – now only virtual – prizes and they also enable the automatic transmission of these (and other) achievements to players connected via social web functions, such as through a friends list. As a result, the intermediary that was interposed between the different players in the past has faded away in the perception of the users, so that an impression of direct exchange is created. The players no longer communicate with the publishers or a magazine (which may act as distributors in the next step), but the players interact – at least in their experience – directly with other players. In concrete terms, this means that the players no longer share their experiences with abstract entities, but they share directly with their friends.

This automation means that taking screenshots is no longer necessary, at least not to prove the success of a player. Nevertheless, screenshots – and also video recordings – still fulfil useful functions in the sense discussed here. While achievements and similar elements only provide indirect information about the actual actions of the players, screenshots and even more video recordings open up the possibility of letting outsiders participate much more directly in one's own actions in the game. Until recently, this was mainly done via video platforms such as Youtube, which, however, again required intermediate steps that were technically relatively complex. In the latest console generations, these functionalities have also been increasingly integrated.

In the sense of the concept of techniques of sharing as presented in chapter 4, it can thus be summarized that in the field of gaming, sharing has become a specific cultural technique: Procedures, tools and media have been established with which actions associated with sharing can be practiced. The procedures that emerged in the beginning were still highly fragmented in terms of space and time and also had to rely on external tools (camera, letters, patches). Over time, however, these external tools have been increasingly standardized and technically integrated directly

into the gaming devices and interfaces (consoles, controllers, screen design, etc.), so that sharing in gaming contexts is now a relatively clearly defined option for action that has gestalt quality. It can also be summarized that the gaming-specific forms of sharing that derive from this are based on an ambivalent interweaving of competition and participation. The emphatic accentuation of this overall action as sharing has the potential to positively mask the (thus potentially normatively problematic) moment of this action associated with competition and confrontation. This is why the games industry continues to pursue precisely this strategy.

With the DualShock 4 controller, which came onto the market in 2013 together with the PS4, this strategy finally took the next step – which seems logical in light of the considerations outlined at the beginning of this text. The DualShock 4 controller has its own push button, which is labelled "SHARE" (Fig. 1). This button combines all of the variants of meta-game action as mentioned above in a single interface element: the taking of screenshots and video recordings, the proliferation of these screenshots and video recordings, the associated emergence and maintenance of social relationships and the creation of metagame-based competition. Whereas in the past the player had to do the sharing themselves in a series of several steps, it is now (exaggeratedly formulated) only triggered with the push of a button. The share button is a material instruction for action, and the processes triggered by it generally function independently of the individual person performing the action. The fact that this is possible at all is due to a development that began in the 1980s at the latest, and which has since been characterized by a movement towards standardization and integration, and which has also been flanked by equivalent developments in fields that are not directly related to play or games, especially in social networks. The developments in the field of gaming were obviously so specific that it is now immediately clear what can or should be shared with whom – and how – when a corresponding button is available. This contribution has shown that in current gaming contexts, sharing denotes a very specific form and practice that has been standardized and summarized in several steps over the course of three decades, which finally culminated

in one single button. This button is in a sense the (current) endpoint of a long process of reification of game culture.

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