Engineering emergence: applied theory for game design

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My road to the summit of Mount PhD located in the heart of the Land of Games has been a long and wondrous journey. During its many detours I met many great and inspiring people. Some I met briefly, others accompanied me for a while, none failed to brighten up my journey with valuable advice and unwavering support. Looking back at the curvy route, I now know that all twists and turns were necessary to bring me to the place I am today.

One might say that I am a native of the Land of Games. During my childhood I spend a great many hours playing games of all sorts: board games, pen-and-paper roleplaying games, and video games. And we invented our own from the very start. Countless are the sheets of paper I used to design boards for overly ambitious games, dungeons for endless roleplaying sessions, and plans for games that I never quite finished programming on our Commodore 64.

Growing into adulthood and becoming a student, I left the land of games on what would prove to be the longest detour of all. Years I spent in the fine halls of education on the far side of the Alpha Ocean. During this period I gained knowledge and skills that would prove to be trusty tools on the journey that finally led me here.

Returning to these shores was a joy. I had grown wiser, and my vision had been sharpened. Some things had changed, many others had remained the same. Immediately I knew where I wanted to go. Finding the right road did not always prove easy, but I can now say I succeeded. I must thank many people for the support, advice and company along this journey.

Claartje, my mother, showed me at an early age that through strength of will and firm determination you can shape your destiny and climb any mountain you will find on your path. Mom, no matter what happens, your inner strength will be my guiding light forever.

Marije has been my loving companion since long before I set out on this path and has been with me all the way. Now you stand beside me at this journey’s conclusion as my paranimf. Without your moral support and textual advice I would never have reached this high.

My promotor, Remko fulfilled the role of mentor with excellence. Despite being a relative stranger to the Land of Games, you never failed to ask all the right questions when I needed to reset my course.

My co-promotor, Jacob, provided with me with the right map to successfully navigate the Shores of Engineering. Without that map, I would never have been able to travel as far and wide as I did.

I also thank the other members of the committee: Ben, Ed, Michael, Paul, Peter and Rafael. Some of you I met in distant lands, many of you I met along the way. I am very grateful that you took the time to accompany me during the final ascent.

I could not wish for a merrier band of travel companions than my colleagues at the Hogeschool van Amsterdam. We shared many adventurous days on the winding paths that led me to this mountain. Your trust in the course I set and support in paving the roads so that others might easily follow must not go
unmentioned.

My students never failed to surprise me, especially when they were replicating parts of my journey. They always picked their own route, which for me was a source of inspiration.

I must also thank my family and friends whose interest in my progress was both sincere and supportive. A deep bow to all of you who where once my opponents in so many well-played games.

From all people along my journey I will thank two more persons. Firstly, Carla who introduced me to all the right people which finally allowed me make landfall on these shores after being lost at sea for a while. And finally, last but not least, Jasper my other paranimf whose friendship goes back all the way back to our childhood. The many games we enjoyed kept the memory of these lands alive and paved the way for my return.