Ludic mutation: the player’s power to change the game
Schleiner, A.-M.

Citation for published version (APA):
Schleiner, A.-M. (2012). Ludic mutation: the player’s power to change the game

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
Summary: Ludic Mutation: The Player's Power to Change the Game

In recent decades we observe a closer relation between games and activism, between games and war, between games and the city, in other words, a gamification of certain regions of the world. What is the power of the game over life? Often the game imposes a kind of subjectification. The game’s rules demand reflexive acts from the player. The player engages with the game’s pre-programmed interactions, losing minutes and hours to the fascination of overcoming the challenge. And yet players also design and play their own games, thereby seizing back some of that which was lost to the game’s digital regime. My underlying research question of this project concerns this power grab from the game. I understand these acts as player-driven transformation of an existing game into another, as a transformative process I will refer to as ludic mutation. The remaker of games sees the world not as a given, fixed place composed of static objects, but as play material, to be tweaked, hacked, altered, and reconfigured. Over the course of this writing, I investigate these player-driven changes to the game at varied scales and points of intervention, across gaming culture, in unique online communities of players, among artists, activists, and situated within the city—both in the digital game city and the augmented city. Players modify and evolve game structures and genres, taking back the authorial reins of game-making from a risk-averse commercial game industry. Artists conduct chaotic aesthetic hacks of the game’s programmatic engine, reducing military-themed shooters and car races to abstract surges of colour and noise. Gamemakers with critical agendas simulate the world’s problems in miniature toy worlds. Activist players carry out campaigns of ludic social resistance on the digital streets and public arenas of online game cities. And children of the future play mobile games of mixed reality within the urban habitat of the Japanimation city. Even in the midst of an informatic tightening of population control, users of technical gadgets hold the power to change the game.