

Boundary-crossing in online games (Gränsöverskridande onlinespel – GRO)

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Project summary

The project GRO is a cooperative project between *LinCS at University of Gothenburg* and *The Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR Utbildning)*. GRO is funded by the Knowledge Foundation's research theme: "Young net cultures". The project intends to identify the mechanisms by which online games are boundary crossing, i.e. if and how these games open up for up for new social structures where age, gender and nationality is subordinate in the encounter. The project aims to examine whether and if these mechanisms have the potential to be used in educational contexts. To illustrate the process we use the concept of the carnival by the literary scholar and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin. The medieval carnival was for Bakhtin a zone delimited in time and space where the power structures of everyday life was dissolved for a moment and the carnival mask offered the participants' protection while challenging established structures. A state of mind that Bakhtin believed was the very basis for the emergence of the Renaissance. The project raises the question whether it is possible to see parallels between today's online gaming and the medieval carnival. Has online games, thanks to it's boundary crossing nature, a potential, like the carnival, to be an arena for innovation and creativity? How can we then implement these mechanisms in an educational context? Against this background the project aims to explore under what conditions games are boundary crossing. What is it in game design and online cultures that give games boundary crossing qualities? The purpose of identifying these elements is to see if the formal educational system can learn something from game culture.