

**GGWP (Good Game, Well Played): How Free Labour and Exploitation is
established within videogames**

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to explore the way in which free labour of and user – generated content are part of the current structure and business model of the e-Sports industry. Specifically the competitive industry of League of Legends helps us to understand the nature and growth of e-Sports as well as the way in which business that are founded by models of the free to play variety have continuously subjected gamers to exploitation. Through the fantasy of professionalisation, the gamer is propelled into a market in which such exploitation is necessary to the potential of becoming a celebrity within the wider gaming community. To make it so that gamers are more willing to participate in such a culture of free labour, professional and competitive league play is had, as well as actual money.

Using an archival method, this thesis will seek to explore the way in which the labour that is given by the gaming community is further exploited by Riot. Through the analysis of build sites, live streaming and the process of the Tribunal, the contributions of the community toward the production and maintenance of the cultural significance of League is significant and worthy of investigation.

With my own experience within the gaming field of League of Legends guided general knowledge on how the game was structured and played as well as how the meta worked, my knowledge allows me to further investigate the ways in which the community interacts with Riot and amongst themselves.

The outcome of such research helps establish and understanding of how such an understanding of the professionalisation of videogames can increase our

understanding of the way in which free labour exists within the current modern era of digital economies.

Certification of authorship/originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text. I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 What is League of Legends?

League of Legends (LoL) is a Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) developed by Riot games and released as a free to play (F2p) game for the PC in 2009. The game's initial presence was due to the first development of the MOBA genre through the modified map of Warcraft III (2002) entitled DOTA (Defence of the Ancients). Since its initial release the game has seen years of monthly patches updates, allowing common bugs and software problems to be fixed alongside a continual update of older usable characters and the release of new ones. Such updates and new content is released according to 'seasons', with the current season being number four. Seasons were first initialized by the company through the tournaments that were firstly held at the DreamHack tournaments, that soon changed to its own independent championships entitled as the LCS (League of Legends Championship Series). Each season exists within the temporality of a year, after which all recorded rankings, stats, and team placings are reset for the next year.

As previously mentioned, the gameplay of League of Legends is a derivative of the many varied forms of MOBA games that are currently circulating the games industry, with Dota 2, Heroes of Newerth, and Smite being other well-known examples. However, League of Legends has a few intrinsic values that set it apart from its competitors. The game itself centres on the battles between two teams of five members, all of whom are assigned roles within the team. Such roles include ADC (Attack Damage Carry, generally ranged), Top (the heavy tank of the team), Mid (generally a champion that has a high base of ability or attack damage), the Support (who is paired with the ADC, due to the weakness of the ranged champion),

and the Jungler (a champion that has the ability to engage and start team fights whilst also helping the opposite laner to lose their own lane). Each role is given their own lane, that has been specified by the community and the play styles that Riot engrave within the character, whilst the Jungler generally is associated with the middle areas in which neutral monster groups exist that give gold to the Jungler, with two specific powerful neutral monsters giving specific temporary advantages, also known as buffs, to the player to allow them to gain an advantage over their opponent. The main objective of any game within League of Legends, ruling out other maps that exist but are not used within a competitive format, is to dominate and control one's own lane and thusly become more powerful than the enemy team. From such domination the players' winning team is able to push objectives around the map as well as push their dominance to the point in which they are able to infiltrate the enemies' base and destroy their nexus, a crystal at the far back of the map. Destroying said objective allows for victory.



Figure 1. Summoners Rift (League of Legends Gamer: League of Legends Map, 2013)

Figure 1 represents the Summoners Rift Map, in which normal and ranked matches of League of Legends are played. Before the beginning of each match, players go through a draft selection period, in which 5 champions are selected via both teams. Also during this period, 6 champions are banned from the match; each team has three bans to place on the other team. In normal matches this is based upon the efficiency of the champion within the meta-game, or in other words a character is banned within the context of how it is viewed and played by the community. After banning and the selection of champions has occurred, the game is then loaded and each team is started on opposite nexus's. Once the game has begun each player is able to purchase items, in particular the player will pick items that will not only help to sustain their existence within whatever lane they occupy but also allow them to counter the entire enemy team. Once items have been purchased, players then arrange themselves in their perspective lanes awaiting an NPC army, also known as minions, to occupy all three lanes. From here each laner's objective is specifically to kill as many of those minions as possible to gain gold, whilst also fighting with their opponent in their lane. This phase of the match lasts for some time until the domination of the other opponent is apparent. Whilst the laners are in combat, the Jungler focuses upon navigating his jungle and gaining buffs from NPCs in it. Once collected, the Jungler is then able to apply pressure on the lanes his allies occupy by initiating a gank (commonly known as an ambush) in which the optimal outcome would be the death of the opposing laner, giving a large amount of gold to whoever killed the player and whomever assisted with the kill.

The laning phase generally lasts around 15 minutes of in-game time, until each member or at least the carry (ADC or Mid) gain their first "big item". After such items are purchased, a new phase begins in which "teamfighting" becomes core.

The phase itself may look identical to the laning phase due to the fact that farming is still consistent and NPC characters still spawn, however during this phase teams must come together to claim map objectives within the river that runs either side of the mid lane, whilst also asserting control over the enemies' jungle. True to the name of the phase, players also participate in large group fights. During a teamfight, the main objective is to firstly eliminate either the ADC or the Mid-laner, because both deal a considerable amount of damage in comparison to the other roles. Hence why the top-laner is the bruiser-type character that is able to lockdown these characters in order to allow their team to efficiently defeat the carry and then eliminate the rest of the team. Occasionally one loss of an important teamfight can be enough to enable victory for the winning team. However generally a chase scenario or "unexpected reversals" happen during these teamfights.

After a teamfight that has resulted in the elimination of a high majority of the enemy team's champions, the winning team is given a significant amount of free time in which they are able to pressure any lane they wish as a group. Generally, depending upon how much health is left on the winning team and the location, the team is then able to remove the remaining enemy turrets that protect the enemy's base and therein destroy the inhibitor. Once the inhibitor is destroyed, super minions are spawned; for instance if the mid lane inhibitor is destroyed then super minions are spawned within that lane. These minions are harder to kill and will help the team to push into the enemy's base and destroy the remaining turrets that guard the nexus. Once these towers are destroyed the nexus is vulnerable and with enough effort the victorious team is able to destroy said nexus and win the match.

Each win that the users have within the game gains them both experience points and influence points (IP), the online currency that Riot has developed for

League of Legends that allows the player to be able to pay for runes, which are small seals and marks that add bonuses to the champion being played, and other assorted paraphernalia to increase their gameplay advantage over whomever they are up against. The experience points are given to the player until they reach level thirty, in which all masteries (three panels of passive abilities that can be tailor-made for whichever character the user wishes to use) are unlocked as well as summoner spells (spells that the user chooses during a match that give specific abilities. For instance Flash and Ignite are two common ones in which flash “teleports your Champion to target nearby location under your mouse cursor.”) The gamer needs to involve herself with the game both to the point in which she gains enough points to both be at a high enough level to have access to all rune allocations as well as mastery points and summoner spells, while also accumulating enough IP for the user to be able to purchase all of the champions that are available in the store (in which there are 121 currently available). However, one can also purchase all in-game characters through the use of RP (Riot Points) in which real money is used to purchase a said varied amount of the virtual currency.

Unlike League of Legends, the other top leading MOBA game, Dota 2, gives its users unlimited access to its champion pool, without the necessity of needing runes and mastery pages or the need to grind and level up one’s own profile in order to play at full capacity. However, monetary expenditure can be used to purchase cosmetics goods for individual characters and the recent inclusion of the Omnibus of Dota 2’s lore. As seen from this comparison one can see that Riot seeks to augment the state of play in MOBA games by adding runes, masteries and summoner spells, all of which did not exist within even earlier attempts at the genre. This augmentation allows the player the ability to customise and tailor make the character they play that

may differ slightly to their opponent. In professional competitive play this is further adopted by understanding and countering the opponent that you are up against whilst also acknowledging the strengths of the team as a whole. Players design the game individually, changing statistics and abilities to their strengths to be able to dominate their opponent.

Similar to other competitive e-sport scenes, League of Legends also incorporates a highly professionalised league. Riot has termed this league as the League of Legends Championship Series (LCS). Higher-ranking players from the game compromise these matches. Whilst there are normal matches that can be played, League has a highly competitive ranked section in which players compete with one another to gain the highest rank possible and gain the possibility to go pro. The ranks that League of Legends offers are Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum, Diamond, Master and Challenger. Within each rank, except for Challenger, there are five divisions. Each division narrates the progress the player has had within the rank, when the player has reached division one in any rank and 100 league points (that are accumulated through ranked wins), the player is then given the ability to go through to an advancement series in which the best of the next five matches allows the player to move up a tier. While the Bronze tier is ranked the lowest, the Challenger tier is the ranked division that each player wishes to attain. Through continuous and strenuous play, the best players in each region (North America, Oceanic, Brazil, EU West, EU Nordic and East, Turkey, Latin America North and South, Russia and the Republic of Korea) will battle their way to the Challenger tier. Once there, the best 5v5 ranked teams from this tier have the potential to go professional. If the team is able to hold a place within the top 32 of the Challenger tier at midseason or at the end of season, the team is then able to participate in a 32-team online tournament and

will need to place within the top 8. From here, a 16-team Promotion Tournament is held in which the top eight teams go against the bottom four pro-teams and the four winners of other partner events. Once this tournament is held, the top four teams from this Promotion Tournament will then join the top four pro-teams, which then form the eight teams that go on to the LCS.

What this essentially establishes is the professional league within the game itself. These players who are able to gain the status of an elite player are then able to professionalise their serious leisure.

1.2 Why Study League of Legends?

This is but only one reason why League has become a big phenomenon as it has in recent years, and has also become one of the most played online games, as they report 27 million users playing daily, with the most playing at one time regularly reaches 7.5 million. Monthly, it is reported that 67 million players are active within the game. In comparison, World of Warcraft (WoW) has approximately hit 7 million subscribers and, as of 2010, was reported to have 12 million monthly players (Tassi, 2014).

League of Legends' increase in popularity has been helped with the adoption of a rigorous competitive scene, alongside an ever-growing emphasis of live streaming. The gamer's identity is paramount to the way in which the industry collects and sells itself, but also it is core to the way in which the gamer develops their own individuality within a networked community. The identity co-exists with the commodity that affects the way in which the player reacts and interacts within his/her wider social network. Given the chance to be able to professionalise the way in which they spend their own avocation, any gamer would jump at the possibility to be

able to be paid for playing the game that they love. Such a relationship has existed within many other leisurely activities, yet none more so than gaming. Such ideas have been heavily prevalent throughout studies of digital economies, for instance the work done by Lehdonvirta et al. (2009) is an example of how digital economies rely upon the 'affective' nature of the participant. In particular for Lehdonvirta et al., Habbo, the online virtual community developed by Sulakeis, is used as a case study to understand the consumption that is undertaken in such a virtual community. Lehdonvirta et al. establishes that such sites become a playground of consumption, in which the worth of a digital avatar depends on the amount of money and in-game items they have bought on the character. The separation between celebrity and amateur does not exist to the same standards that other professionalised forms of labour occur. Rather, the gamer is able to recognise their own identity within professional e-sports players who had lives similar to themselves, in which financial or infrastructural disadvantages were overcome to become the professional they are.

Serious considerations need to be undertaken to understand the phenomena that is the gaming industry, not only for the sake of understanding the phenomena generally, but also to gain a closer and in-depth look into the work that is done by the players themselves and the identities that are created. Riot and League of Legends depend on user-generated content for its business model, like most other contemporary online media. In particular, Riot depends on its users to enforce corporate rules and regulations to maintain community and civility in play. To make it so gamers willingly consent to this, there is a promise of "professionalisation" that comes with professional league play, actual money, and celebrity recognition by a wider gaming community. This relies not only on the celebrity status of specific individuals, but

also on the promise of being watched by others over the live streaming website Twitch.tv.

1.3 Research Aims:

The primary aim of this thesis is to investigate the nature of cultural practices associated with the labour behind play. Whereas many authors have approached the landscape of games through a narrative or representative model (e.g. Taylor 2012, Postigo 2003, Boellstorff 2008) this study will seek to address the nature of play within League of Legends and how it has been utilised as a form of labour. Drawing specifically from the works of autonomist Marxists Lazzarato, Hardt and Negri, I will focus upon the interaction between the gamer community and Riot, and how games such a League of Legends have facilitated a platform for the valorisation of immaterial labour. Specifically, I will examine the forms of external play, such as community interactions and live broadcasted material, and how they have been used by Riot to extract surplus value out of its users. Although the primary focus of this study is centred on League of Legends, I will also highlight ways in which further research can extend the scope of such new forms of user generated content and the ways in which the digital economy has become enveloped within many facets of an individual's life.

This research is guided by my own experiences within the League of Legends community, both within the Oceanic servers and the North American Servers, as well as my own involvement within the live streaming realms. As such, thicker and important cultural insights will be highlighted from a perspective that many traditional methods do not have the ability to approach.

1.4 Contributions and Limitations:

As previously mentioned, whilst research has been conducted on the impacts of the digital economy practices on the gaming scene through the research on the work of playbour (Kücklich 2005) or in De-Peuter and Dyer-Witherfords 'Games of Empire' (2009), such research doesn't dominate game studies. Whilst there has been many studies that have sought to explore the narratives that exist within the gaming scene, not a lot has been discussed on the nature of the work of the community at hand. Whilst authors such as Boellstorff (2008), Lehdonvirta and Wilska (2009) explore the work of the community within the digital realm, these studies primarily focus upon MMO's (Massively Multiplayer Online) realms that facilitate social worlds for the user. This thesis intends to extend such research beyond "virtual worlds" that may not be classified as "games" into research on structured, multiplayer gaming environments. This study will seek to contribute to the way in which the MOBA genre has also found its way in to such a realm, in which the community has become an integral factor into the success of the competitive scene in gaming. Taylor's (2012) recent study into the e-sports competitive scene brings an up-to-date account of the nature of the competitive scene and the beginnings of the rise of live streaming platforms. For Taylor, the videogame scene, in particular the e-sports scene, is transforming itself into a new entity that is pushing the boundaries of how we define work and leisure.

Computer gaming exists within a realm that has always been a complex process, and the growth of the e-sports scene shows how a variety of games have been able to traverse such landscapes of professionalisation and development of leisure. As Taylor notes, conversations about professionalisation of play helps "...conversations on computation and action, on the formation of new

leisure/work/sporting identities and activities, on the institutionalization of gaming, on the governance of play, and on what it means to be not simply players, but audiences for new forms of digital culture.” (Taylor, 2012, pp. 249) In this sense, the research undertaken here will seek to lengthen the study that Taylor has undergone, specifically targeting a factor in which she eludes to herself in her conclusion, the question of how we should understand such games in the competitive scene, as serious leisure or professional play.

The work that the user undergoes in regards to maintaining and refreshing the cultural practices that they participate in is a part of the nature of a leisurely activity taken to a serious context, however the insistence of Riot to promote its competitive scene as a professional sport allows this research to explore the way in which the gamers identity has been commodified within the gaming industry, to a point in which the community themselves actively promote and maintain the professional scene for Riot, under the hope and desire that they themselves will be able to become one of the few celebrities chosen to be paid for partaking in the serious leisure itself.

1.5: Literature Review

The focus of this literature review is on labour in video games. In particular, I examine the difference between work and play and how that has become a major narrative within the competitive scene of the video games industry. In this sense, the literature review will both focus upon arguments surrounding the competitive nature of games and play whilst comparatively analysing research on the difference between leisure and play. In this sense, the research will be heavily based upon not only what has been undertaken by past texts from other disciplines, but also new emerging research that is ongoing within the field of e-Sports. To help establish the theoretical

framework that is necessary to understand the current study, the review will be set out in two distinct sections, competition and free labour. The first section will seek to define the competitive nature within the context of digital games, whilst the second section will seek to analyse discussions of free labour and the “cognitive” work undergone by one’s creative mental abilities.

1.6: Competition and Play

Competition has always been a central paradigm to how games and play studies have been constructed. In his influential *Man, Play and Games* (2001), Caillois helps to define the theoretical structure of competition and play. Caillois establishes his definition of play upon the previous works of Huzinga in *Homo Ludens* (1938). For Caillois, play “...must be defined as free and voluntary activity...” (2001, pp. 6) in which the individual is not obligated to play but is rather allowed to freely participate and seek enjoyment within the activities they are participating in. Caillois specifically constructed four categories of play. These categories include mimicry (role playing), illinx (risk taking or thrill seeking activities) and alea (games of chance). However, most pertinent to the current thesis is Caillois’ category of agôn, or activities that can be considered competitive in nature. In his work, Caillois argues that a game that embodies the sense of agôn “presupposes sustained attention, appropriate training, assiduous application, and the desire to win. It implies discipline and perseverance” (2001, pp. 15). Those who engage with practices of agôn, including League of Legends, are engaging with activities that are games of skill. League of Legends, in particular, derives a lot of its endgame skill and play due to the complexity and the necessity of training in all aspects of the game. In order to completely understand the game to the degree in which one can play on a competitive platform, the player needs to familiarise

themselves and become competent with a wide variety of roles, numerous paths of builds and play styles, and a myriad of button presses and mouse clicks with a recognition of the battlefield they are on. Yet Caillois argues that such play that is consisted within a free form is also unproductive, in which neither “goods, nor wealth, nor new elements of any kind...” are created and end up “...ending in a situation identical to that prevailing at the beginning of the game” (2001, pp. 10).

Further progress into the world of the competitive function of play has been made since Caillois’ research that laid the groundwork to understand the evolution of the nature of games. MOBA games such as League of Legends or Dota diverge from the way in which past understandings of “play” have been constructed. The competitive nature of the game is only one factor in the way in which such games work, especially with presence of emergent gameplay styles that allow for further abstract play to be possible. Gaming has far surpassed its ingrained stereotype in which the gamer purely interacts with a casual hobby that is only used as a past time. Rather, the gamer is a participant within a serious leisure activity that can be propelled into professional play, play that emulates serious nature of events such as the Olympics. Such a transformation is outlined by Stebbins (1982) work on serious leisure, in which he outlines six specific qualities that help us to negotiate hobbies from serious endeavours. Firstly, those who venture into such grounds of leisure at times have to persevere with the activity at hand (1982, pp. 256). Fatigue, injuries and other such strains are accustomed to such activities, in which a positive and enriched feeling is relinquished from challenging such trials. Secondly, serious leisure separates itself from other hobbies by allowing the individuals the ability to form careers within such activities, careers that are developed through the trials and challenges the participant faces. Thirdly, Stebbins asserts that such serious leisure

frequently position themselves on “...significant personal *effort* based on special *knowledge, training, or skill*, and sometimes all three.” (1982, pp. 256) The ability for individuals to develop their prowess in given activity acknowledges the differentiation between the hobbyist and the volunteer, from the professional and the amateur. Fourthly, Stebbins states that such serious leisure activities provide eight “*durable benefits*” for the participants. These include “Self-actualization, self-enrichment, re-creation or renewal of self, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, self-expression, social interaction and belongingness, and lasting physical products of the activity.” (1982, pp. 257) A fifth quality that Stebbins details is that of the ‘unique’ ethos that surround such serious leisure activities. Through the previous qualities that were mentioned, participants within such serious leisure are able to create subcultures that are composed of specific forms of rituals, norms and principles that allow for the development of their own social worlds.

Carey (1992) has also further developed such an idea on rituals and norms in his analysis of the rituals of communication. For Carey, the ritual view of communication are connected to ideas of sharing and participation in which “...communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs.” (Carey, 1992, pp.18). Carey then explains that such rituals of communication are part of a symbolic process “...whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed.” (1992, pp. 23). In this sense similar to how Stebbins sees the way in which serious leisure can produce rituals and normative values, Carey asserts that through the model of ritual communication such norms and understandings of reality are retained and transformed. The last quality that Stebbins states, that differentiates serious leisure from general participation in

leisurely activities, is the way in which participants are able to identify themselves with the activities that they pursue (1982, pp.257). The individual is able to see themselves within the greater community and thus proudly display their involvement in the activity, rather than seeing it as a mundane activity that shouldn't be considered by others.

Vorderer et al. (2003) furthers this analysis of the competitive nature of play, seeking to address the pleasure that is derived through such activities, and how competition is at the core of such enjoyment. The interactive nature of digital games allows for the user to actively engage with playing process whilst also allowing for a strong feedback loop from the user in regards to the actions that they undertake within the virtual world. He also argues that there are four specific factors that involve a player's motivation to participate and enjoy such competitive forms of play. The first two factors work upon a general level in which "(1) the desire to maintain or enhance the own self-esteem and mood as a general motive and (2) the competitiveness of the social value disposition as a general disposition" (Vorderer et al, 2003, pp. 5). The other two factors highlight the nature of the current research, "... (3) the motivation to challenge and surpass other opponents..." as well as "... (4) a computer-game related self-efficacy..." (Voderer et al, 2003, pp.5). Competition within League surround not only the gameplay that exists within each match a player participates within, but also the way in which they rank up to surpass their opponents as well as show their own self-learned skills with the video game that are far superior to others. To contrast, games such as those of the *Final Fantasy* series (1987-present) are based upon the narrative development within the game and the discovery of rich and well-written characters. Instead, for Voderer et al. competitive gaming has a "...clear body of rules and very concisely predefined goal, thus leading to a less

ambivalent competitive structure...” (Vorderer et al. 2003, pp. 4), which in turn allows players to perform in ways that seek to maximise their “...own benefits in relation to the benefits received by others...” (Vorderer et al. 2003, pp. 4).

Many scholars believe that competitive structures of play can destroy the fun that is had within play itself. For Kanga, games that employ a use of competitive structure fundamentally derail the user from the true nature of gaming by “...impos[ing] a value system on our experience” that is “...pre-determined by the game’s design” (Kanga, 2012, para. 4). Whilst Kanga’s research argues for the explorative nature of play, Vorderer et al. assert that such play does not enable the same continuative level of attention and enjoyment that competition inherently has (Vorderer et al. 2003, pp. 2). Vorderer et al. use Quake as an example of how without the influence of competitive factors, the game would not nearly have the same amount of motivational increase and or lead to the player having a rise in a euphoric emotional state. Competition calls for the player to interact with the possibilities of their actions, whilst also dealing with “dissatisfactory outcomes” (Vorderer et al. 2003, pp. 2). Such outcomes are argued to lead to further and stronger motivations to play and to innervate their play. The player wishes to overcome the trials that are ahead of them, failing at times but willing to overcome such challenges to come out successful in the end, to gain the ‘epic loot’. Playing videogames in this sense becomes enjoyable once the user is engaged with it to the extent in which the successful completion of competitive situations is apparent. The competitive nature of gaming allows for rich and meaningful gameplay that is able to construct complex and intuitive experiences for the user, and thusly enjoyed.

Another aspect of the competition within gaming that will be explored within this research will be surrounded by the philosophy Riot has encouraged that is

ascertained by the implementation of both its mechanics and community involvement. As Witowski's (2012) investigation into the competitive scene of *Counter-Strike* highlighted, competitive play within the e-Sports scene:

“...has offered a visceral experience of the field of play that the players contend with; a sense of how timing and team-work sits in the body; an experience of focus, accuracy, and body control; as well as a feel for the technologies in play” (Witkowski, 2012, pp. 352)

Riot dedicates itself around the implementation of spatial and bodily movements of the virtual characters within their own structured digital environment. In this sense the players themselves, with each movement that they make, experience ‘locations’ and react to an ever changing and evolving landscape that surrounds them (Witkowski, 2012, pp. 358-359). It is this intercorporeality of players who work together, and also against rivals, that give further layers upon the virtual environments that they traverse. By intercorporeality, Witkowski (2012) suggests that such activities that the player involves themselves in are embodied experiences that transcend traditional notions of sport and play. The complexity of play from another player gives rise to not only a notion of competitive gameplay, but of strategies and higher level thinking that engages the individual to play. Whilst physicality existed on a very minimal level, the precise motions and movements of the mouse and the co-ordination of specific and timed abilities that are hotkeyed to the keyboard gives rise to the belief that precise movement—and, by extension, physical skill—is essential to success within e-sports and competitive gaming.

Through discussing and analysing the uncertainty of play within competitive gaming as Ferrari's (2013 a & b) work analyses, the work that is undergone by the

community establishes a field of emergent gameplay that is generated by the community itself. The notion of competition within gaming allows us to understand the enjoyment that users gain out of such modes of activities. While Caillois and Vorderer give adequate conceptual frameworks to help us analyse and study games, they also predate many of the varied competitive play that now has manifested itself within the e-sports scene as well as online broadcasting. This study will seek to further this understanding that is presented by these theorists within the competitive nature of League of Legends and Riot.

1.7: Free Labour and the User

In this second section of the literature review, the current research project will seek to develop the history and understandings of free labour within the context of the video game industry. Following Caillois and Vorderer, the competitive nature of video games is necessary to produce an effective video game, or at least a game that is able to capture the community surrounding, that will challenge the user to rise up against the odds that have been put up against them. Yet this current project seeks to investigate how such a competitive scene is transformed into a cultural playground of user-generated content that can be turned into user-generated data, which is able to rationalise the tastes and behaviours of its audience. Thusly the product is able to augment itself for the user to be able to best suit their needs and in turn encourage them to produce more content that can be analysed.

The work of the autonomist Marxist Lazzarato (1996) has helped to increase this field of understanding through his work on the concept of immaterial labour. For Lazzarato, the term immaterial labour "...involves a series of activities that are not normally recognised as 'work'- in other words, the kinds of activities involved in

defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion” (Lazzarato, 1996, pp. 133). Within the post-industrial age, there has been the formation of a different form of work, one that cannot be understood or categorised within the traditional methods that based work upon the physical demands of the worker. According to Protevi immaterial labour is “The new modality of production undertaken by the socialised worker in the period of the real subsumption of labour under capital...” (Protevi, 2006). It creates “commodities that are primarily intellectual, affective or communicational by means of process that are themselves primarily intellectual, affective or communicational” (Protevi, 2006). Lazzarato notes also that the immaterial work force was not created by industry; rather, it has always been around and has been incorporated and adapted to become the new labour power of the digital economy. Lazzarato suggests that one must pay attention to the way in which such a form of work has been commodified in the capitalist society, and in turn seeks to manipulate the use of the social.

For Lazzarato, capitalism itself has reinvented its methods of collection of surplus value to include the creative capabilities of the user. In this sense, the work that is undertaken by the user is founded within his or her intellectual or entrepreneurial skills. This worker is “...polymorphous...” with the ability to be able to be “...inserted within a market that is constantly shifting and within networks that are changeable in time and space.” (Lazzarato, 1996, pp. 139). Arvidsson (2007) draws upon Lazzarato’s work, arguing that the work of the consumer through the use of immaterial skills produces a context in which consumption takes place. For League of Legends, user-generated content produces the context in which the object is consumed. Those who play and labour over the game do so as a compensatory method for being given access to such media in the first place.

Hardt (1999) has stressed the ‘affective’ qualities of immaterial labour. For Hardt (1999), the affective function of immaterial labour developed out of the revolution of the informational era, in which the traditional industry has been reformulated “...rejuvenating manufacturing processes—through the integration, for example, of information networks within industrial processes” (Hardt, 1999, pp. 92). Hardt stipulates that the labour of the affective produces the social networks and forms of community that are necessary for today’s immaterial objects of consumption to gain value. Such forms of community for both Hardt and Lazzarato are “produced socialities” (Hardt, 1999, pp. 96) that are now directly applied to capital and seen as a valued factor of the new digital economy.

Digital and web based technologies have progressively expanded their growth, surpassing their need for natural/raw materials and instead have sought to incorporate human intellect. Therein such processes are far more complex and thus are unable to be standardised as easily as previous forms of labour, especially within a mode of production that centres itself on networked communities and too often requires the valorisation of the supposed free time of the connected user. The knowledge, skills and abilities of an individual operate the central paradigm of such a new phase of labour. It also highlights the acceptance of the individuals being trained, educated and re-trained as necessary in order to pertain skills that are essential for the digital environment at hand. This in turns helps to promote a greater sense of worker individualisation as well as fulfilment. In this sense, the individual transcends his generalized label, purely that of the worker into an individual that is both established and fulfilled by the system they engage with, whilst also exuding the complexity of being intertwined within an intricate system of both production and consumption.

Immaterial labour is central to recent literature that examines recent developments in social media networks, such as the rise and fall of Myspace, or the popularity of Facebook. In particular, Cote and Pybus (2007) seek to discuss the nature of such work within social media networks. Both utilising the work of Lazzarato and Hardt and Negri, as well as incorporating Smythe's (1997) theorisation of the 'audience commodity', in which time away from work but not sleep can be transformed into a valuable commodity for the reproduction of labour power, Cote & Pybus (2007) position Myspace within a political economic overview in which the site can be viewed as an increasingly expansive site for immaterial labour. Cote & Pybus (2007) discusses how the user who actively participates on sites such as Myspace initiate activities that "...are not recognized in an orthodox conception of work..." (Cote & Pybus, 2007, pp. 94) but are fundamental to the conception of immaterial labour.

Such an investigation into the way in which immaterial labour can also be applied to our current modernised networked world has also been investigated recently concerning the nature of play and the videogame scene. In particular, the works of Yee (2006), Nakamura (2009), and Kücklich (2005) help this current study to begin rationalising how one might be able to adopt such a structure to games such as League of Legends. In her investigation into the gold mining process within World of Warcraft, Nakamura (2009) helps to show how work similar to that associated to sweatshop factory work is central to the economy of online gaming and virtual worlds. Nakamura insists that this has become an issue in terms of how we should understand the freedom of the virtual player to play without the necessity to labour. Play in this sense has gone through a process of negotiation with the way in which capitalist methods of work have reinvented themselves within a digital format.

In a similar vein, Kücklich (2005) argues that the work of the modders, a group of individuals whom modify existing source videogames to create new content, within gaming community are used to maintain and refresh the cultural mediums that they support. By freely presenting their work to the community, they themselves allow for the context of consumption to continue freely without any effort needed on behalf of the company. Such activities merely have to be analysed to ascertain the growing trends of communities' behaviour and tastes so that the company can reinvent itself in accordance to the community. For Kücklich (2005) this is envisioned by his term 'playbour' in which "The solitary player is the archetype of the individual who upholds the rules simply for the sake of the pleasure she derives from submitting to them, since, paradoxically, her freedom results from her submission to the rules of the game" (Kücklich, 2005).

This is furthered by the studies undergone by Yee (2006) who investigated the work that is undertaken through the game *Star Wars Galaxies*. The game itself fundamentally emulated the work that could be done by individuals within real life. Yee highlights that such MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games) advertise themselves as an escape from the routine involvement of work within the everyday. Yet the player is subjected to a similar form of tedious labour that can stress players out rather than allowing them to enjoy the pleasure of being part of a virtual world. For Yee video games have become "...work platforms that train us to become better workers. And the work being performed in video games is increasingly similar to actual work in business corporations" (Yee, 2006, pp. 5).

This thesis follows the above discussions of games and labour to analyse the work of the community and the professional player in regards to the landscape that Riot has produced for its community. Whilst the works of Hardt and Lazzarato are

fundamental to begin researching such a topic, this research will further develop the framework that is necessary to understand the way in which such labour functions. In particular, the way in which such labour within League of Legends should be viewed as exploitative in nature in the way that it proposes “professionalisation” through the appropriation of user-generated content. In this sense the work that is undertaken by the community is not forced, however but freely given and then appropriated to best suit the needs of the company. “Exploitation” in the Marxist sense insinuates the way in which capitalism is built on the labour of the workers and the ‘surplus value’ that is extracted for the work, for which the worker isn’t paid. Such forms of free labour that is highlighted within League of Legends is ‘exploitative’ in nature and therein deserves our attention.

1.8: Methods

1.9: Introduction:

Due to time constraints, many useful methodologies that could have been implemented were dismissed. Such a dismissal however allows one to see that such research deserves both a lot more time, and careful planning, in order to gain a complete image of the cultural practices that exist within the videogame scene.

In this sense an overall framework was chosen to help discuss and narrate the way in which the cultural practices within the community can be both collected and understood by the researcher. Therein using the archival method allows one to both gain an introspective look into the operation of the apparatus and how that is influenced by the archive that collects the data surrounding it.

1.10 Archival Method:

In order to begin understanding the ways in which such communities work and compete within the video game scene, this thesis relies on the “archival” method for cultural studies of technology developed by Jeremy Packer. Packer (2010) argues that within the current processes of media and communications studies it is necessary for us to examine the elements of apparatuses that exist within the current modern society, drawing on the theorisation of “apparatus” and “archive” in the work of Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault.

The apparatus, according to Packer, is a “...strategically organized network of discursive and non-discursive elements brought together to address problems resulting from specific formations of knowledge” (2010, pp. 89). Therein addressing the archive, one must understand that the use of the apparatus can help researchers identify the mechanisms that exist which link together the communicative

environment that we exist within. The archive acts as glue that incorporates a “...wide-ranging set of discursive and non-discursive utterances, statements, and grammars, of architectures, diagrams, and backup plans that work to hold together sometimes-fragile apparatuses” (pp. 90). The apparatus works to link together many particular concepts of Foucauldian discourse whilst at the same time, as Agamben’s (2009) work discusses, extends the nature of the apparatus to incorporate all forms of activities that can intend to shape or capture human behaviour or thought (Packer, 2010).

For Foucault (1972), Discursive practices exist within systems that are able to establish statements as either “events” or “things”. Collectively, Foucault calls these “...systems of statements (whether events or things)...” (Foucault, 1972, pp. 128) an archive. Thusly the archive is not merely a shelf of texts that help us define a culture, nor is a fixed grouping of institutions that seek to preserve texts. The archive then is a “...law of what can be said...” (pp. 129) and thusly a law that is able to transform and be used. The archive therein is a “...general system of the formulation and transformation of statements.” (pp. 130)

The apparatus for Agamben “...is first of all a machine that produces subjectifications, and only as such is it also a machine of governance” (Agamben, 2009, pp. 20). The archive of the apparatus helps us to identify the way in which knowledge and power encompass all forms of communication, or in other words the apparatus in association with media and communication “...maps the linkages that bind together knowledge claims—their production, circulation, and validation—with their political, juridical, technical, and economic application.” (Packer, 2010, pp. 95) The apparatus and the archive work in tandem to allow us to understand the way in

which statements and knowledge claims are made and understood by individuals within a society.

Packer (2010) then presents a series of practical methodological concerns in using these “archives” in understanding media culture and history to help situate the archive and apparatus within the field of media and technology, and how it can be used within further research. Firstly, one must investigate the organisations and experts that culminate around the field whom have been given power to make “truth claims” and thusly influence the individuals surrounded by them and the institution itself. Secondly, one must investigate the statements that are made to legitimate claims. For instance, in terms of this thesis, how has the claim of the professionalisation of video games been used to justify the actions Riot has undertaken by mobilizing its community and pushing the e-sports scene harder than it has been in previous years? Riot and gaming organizations like the Korean eSports Association (KeSPA) have both made claims that define “professional” and “amateur” gamers. How are these claims legitimated? Thirdly, one must locate the resisting forces toward such knowledge claims so as to gain a clear understanding of how both parties within the archive co-exist. How do gamers challenge these claims of “professionalisation”? Fourthly, one must also look to the use of media and communications that present material to help the apparatus work smoothly. How are the games themselves, along with technologies such as live streaming and other forms of spectatorship, used to legitimate and perpetuate relations of power that determine who is a “professional” gamer and who is not? The use of online broadcasting and community forums help to organise and maintain the truth claims that are presented by Riot. Finally, one must also look to the “...processes of subjectification that are constitutive of the apparatus” (Packer, 2010, pp. 102). In this

sense, one can look to the many guides and other such paratexts that can help us ascertain how such products are becoming important to how the apparatus is implemented within the lived world. Who is a professional gamer? How does one inhabit this subject position? How does one attempt to become a “real” gamer? Who has the power to acknowledge the professionalisation of the video game scene? And what does this power accomplish?

The next step in this current research is to ground such claims within evidence gathered from the wide amount of discourse available from both the community and the developers themselves. Firstly this will be established in the next chapter in which an investigation into how Riot forms its governance through the defined set of rules that help it create and reinforce the image of “professionalisation” through forms of “professional” play. To have such play requires a set amount of civil regulations that are furthered by negotiations made by the community on both player behaviour and technological issues.

Then in the final chapter I will investigate the main strategies that Riot puts into practice in order to maintain such a level of “professionalism”. To maintain strategies of “professionalism,” but also produce affective forms of investment in communities that prevent players from realising their exploitation, several strategies are employed. Firstly, Riot defines a set of corporate rules that are enforced by players, which both relies on unpaid labour but also produces a sense of making and sustaining a community through rituals involved with (a kind of pseudo) self-regulation. Secondly Build sites advise optimal strategies, creating a place of tertiary engagement that allows gamers to creatively produce themselves as “celebrities” of value within the gaming community whilst also contributing to the continual maintenance and refreshment of the cultural content. Finally, streaming presents the

promise of actual celebrity and real incomes, which – while available only to a few of the most elite gamers – negotiates the exploitation to which most players are subject.

Chapter 2: The Competitive Scene

2.1 Introduction:

To firstly consider e-sports as the industry that it purports itself to be, at least in so far as being a competitive video game scene, one must first seek to understand how we justify and are able to label such activities as competitive, let alone professional. The competitive nature of E-sports is core to the way in which it considers itself to being a professionalised industry, far surpassing its origins from the arcade halls. The videogame industry itself has progressed to the point in which it wishes to push past the preconceived notions that have tied gaming to the stereotype of the gamer who lives within his mother's basement whilst not being a productive member of society. This notion itself is what the industry is trying to shape and change through the professionalization of e-sports. The industry is working toward a new understanding of the 'gamer' identity, one in which the gamer is not typified by being engaged with casual leisure activities, rather the gamer wishes to be seen as a professionalised identity, capable of overcoming its past nature. At least in the eyes of the companies, such as Riot, who reverently push their game as the pinnacle of e-sports, an e-sport is defined by the goal to professionalise play and live out the fantasy of the gamer being accepted within greater society. The gamer does not just purely consume the entertainment after paying its fee. Rather the gamer submits himself to the identity that is given by the industry. It is not through player control that play is legitimized, but through corporate engagement and agenda setting that allows such articles of cultural fandom to become professionalised.

As Taylor (2012) states in her opening chapters into the research of e-sports culture, the videogame industry originated in the arcade penny corner stores, often

organised around contests of skill. These were not merely grounds in which “addicted” gamers played within the solace of their own kind, rather the arcade was an environment rich with competition. Before the development of online social networking and gaming, gamers would battle with their neighbours for the highest score. As Taylor (2012) notes, an extension of such arcade competitive play can be seen through the television show *Starcade*, which ran from 1982 to 1984. The television sought to showcase the competitors of the arcade systems of the time, seeking to challenge each other with the highest score possible. The show itself was the first attempt the videogame industry sought to make gaming broadcast-able whilst also trying to make it spectator friendly (Taylor, 2012, pp. 5). While the show was cancelled within a couple of years, the presence of the broadcast of play gives an interesting historical root to understanding how the spectatorship and the competitive nature of play is core to videogames. After which videogames saw a transformation from play within the arcade halls to the family home and then rapidly to the introduction of PC gaming. The atmosphere fostered within this community centred around the determination to conquer ones enemy and to show superiority. This atmosphere has become stronger with added online capabilities. Rather than competing against a local community member, the gamer was competing against the world. The gamer was competing to become known as the number one within the game of his/her choice.

Videogames are more than “merely” play. They have the ability to augment and develop our understanding of the social and cultural norms that exist within reality (Bogost 2007; McGonigal 2011). Play therein manifests itself not within purely the consumption of the product itself, but rather it highlights social and cultural activities and rhetoric’s within a perceived reality. Play, in this sense, is

rooted "... in many social and material practices" (Bogost, 2008, pp. 120). Bogost (2008) also pursues this idea through the understanding that whilst games do have integral rules and structure within them, this does not suffocate play but instead makes play possible in the first place.

The way in which a player interacts with a game is directly reliant upon the negotiations and movements within the games' boundaries. "The rules don't merely create the experience of play- they also construct the meaning of the games" (Bogost, 2008, pp. 121). This in itself can be seen within the e-sports world and culture. The emphasis of the "meta" game as well as the construction of specific rules and play styles gives meaning to the game. Whilst on occasion there are players who actively seek to break such boundaries that are constructed by both the players themselves and the developers, most players actively align themselves within the governing rules. As a player confines to said rule, they are given the opportunity to reflexively experience and garner meaning from the game itself. Collectively this forms the basis of how e-sports and the MOBA genre grew as rapidly as it did. The MOBA genre itself is predicated within a complex system of rules and guidelines that is fostered by professional players and the community combined.

Whilst the genre does not follow the conventions of Bogost's "procedural rhetoric" ,it is still worth mentioning within a field that has been so heavily entrenched in warfare between being understood as work or play. Play itself has been constantly understood as a leisurely activity. Rather than play being a meaningful experience, it is an experience that can foster cultural practices and understanding; in this case the way in which the professionalisation of videogames should be interpreted. By rule guidelines I stipulate that MOBA games themselves have found a new formation in which the essence of the immaterial worker has been fostered and

re-organized for the current gaming phenomena. The players themselves have organised around the genre itself, developing intense and complex gameplay styles, some which have not been seen anywhere else. For instance such gameplay styles can be seen from professional players such as Bjergson, Insect, and even Faker (all of whom are professional League of Legends players at a world status).

All examples above are higher professionals who spend significant amounts of time working around the mechanics of the characters within League of Legends. These mechanics are constantly experimented with, along with long hours of practice and training. But such experiments have only been undertaken through the player's complete allegiance to the rules that have been set for him. In this instance when we talk of League of Legends, there are no inherent rules that must be followed by the player; rather they are rules that are written into the game itself. Galloway (2006) asserts a similar claim in investigating the "diegetic" and "non-diegetic" constructions in games. Specifically, Galloway states that "non-diegetic" forms of game elements are "gamic elements that are inside the total gamic apparatus yet outside the portion of the apparatus that constitutes a pretend world of character and story." (Galloway, 2006, pp.7)

The physics and boundaries that are set up within the games overall layout establish the way in which the game is meant to be played. This set mode of play has even been given a visual representation through players who averaged the users movements over 10,000 games, roughly 100,000 players, to the way in which player negotiated the field around them (Girantikanon, Huang and White, 2014). The interesting part of the collection of data is not purely the way in which players move individually but how gamers collectively are able to predict the safest and most cost-effective route that would minimize the chance of defeat. Whilst such rules are

inherent within the game, specifically the map itself, it is also inherent within the way in which champions are created within the game. This is purely up to the developers and designers for League of Legends to set the specific focus of the character in mind. For instance the character known as Tristana is a ranged attack hero (ADC), however some of her skills do map toward ability power ratios (similar to a Mid-Laner). Whilst this occurs her main focus is upon her attack damage with extra hybridity of other ratios.

2.2: League as a Competitive Game

In this effect, Riot has done an amazing job at both controlling the field of play and the style that will emerge but also give room for players to innovate and customise their gaming experience, far beyond the rules themselves. This has been what has catapulted the game exponentially within the international spotlight. The way in which players develop their experience with the game is heavily dependent upon the interaction they have with the developers, in this case Riot. The relationship between Riot and its community is one that is rather symbiotic. In that game updates, reworks and releases are all done at both the companies' as well as the gamer's behest. This is why the Public Beta Environment (PBE) was set-up in the first place. In the PBE, players are given the ability to test new alpha game modes, characters, items and other exclusive content before it becomes playable on the live servers. The PBE server itself serves as an environment in which focuses on the player communities' ability to discuss and test the nature of gameplay changes and help influence the game that they have spent hours playing. As Riot states on the nature of the PBE:

“The PBE is a small, rapidly-evolving environment where Riot can work with targeted groups of testers to develop our content and feature experiments. It needs to be a positive, constructive ecosystem to ensure high-quality feedback loops between developers and testers. We screen test for a combination of engagement, positivity and fit with the content, which enables us to optimize the effectiveness of each PBE cycle. We invite new testers every few weeks to ensure the PBE remains an active environment.” (Riot, 2014)

Players are willing to spend their free time within the virtual environment to do work for Riot itself whilst also receiving the benefit of being at the cutting edge changes for the game. This specific method applied by Riot will be developed in later chapters as the PBE contributes to the main base of methods in which Riot is able to turn its playerbase into a workforce whom are willing to spend, what they assume, their leisure time on the game, developing it and marketing the game as a product for others to consume. The brand loyalty of the gamer is expressed in this nature and is harnessed without any cost on behalf of Riot. In regards to this content creation within the PBE, Riot asserts:

“The PBE team is collaborating with the Community team to ensure that League of Legends fan content creators have the access they need to produce valuable media for the community. We're still in the process of privately reaching out to these content creators, so if your favourite streamer or Youtuber doesn't have PBE access, that doesn't mean we don't want to help them out!” (Riot, 2014)

Yet at a base level one can see how the genre that League of Legends surrounds itself with is one that shouldn't be considered a hobby or as side activity. Rather it should be considered a hybridisation of both work and play. Play in which

the immaterial worker is at the core of the community, with its powerful selection of communicational and knowledge skills put to work to create the perfect product that can be sold to the potential consumer as a product that effectively communicates with and for the gamer. To this extent it is no wonder why League has become one of the bigger games within the gaming industry, surpassing other popular online games such as Dota 2 and WoW.

By work, which is elaborated in further chapters, I contend that such forms of serious leisure have been taken to point in which gamers can consider playing as a full time job. Whether this employment is through becoming a professional player, specifically an e-sports player whom participates in tournaments like the LCS, or a live streamer whose ability to entertain gamers garner enough attention that allows him/her the ability to be paid for the hobby that he/she takes seriously. The contention this pulls is the use of such work that taken at face value is purely that of entertainment, as a form of free labour, or labour that is "...simultaneously voluntarily given and unwaged, enjoyed and exploited" (Terranova, 2000, pp. 24).

As described by the example of the meta-game that exists throughout League of Legends, games do not just purely subscribe to a set rhythm of rules and boundaries, rather they reflect upon societal and cultural practices and norms. In his study on rules within play, Sniderman makes a similar assertion: "no game or sport is played in a vacuum. All play activities exist in a 'real world' context, so to play the game is to immerse yourself in that context" (Sniderman, 1999, pp. 4). For League of Legends, this context fundamentally exists within the gaming community online. This can be especially seen through the Reddit forum known as */r/leagueoflegendsmeta*. Posters are asked to 'discuss strategy' and to facilitate discussion by presenting their own view as well as allowing for the community to

discuss their ideas about whatever gameplay or build strategy the poster announces. The community regularly debates new champions, champion builds, patches and changes to see how the 'meta' may change and strategies that may need to be involved to accommodate for such changes. Within the forum there is a large disdain for questions that seek purely for advice, in which the poster is recommended to go to a strategy guide or another forum that may facilitate their need to learn essential gameplay styles and methods such as last hitting or map awareness. Rather than posting random or trivial posts, the community actively deliberates over ways in which players should play, as Sniderman asserts, "...knowing only the recorded rules of a game is never enough to allow you to play." (1999, pp. 4) Knowing the map itself in League of Legends, or purely learning one specific champion is not enough to play the game at its fullest capacity; rather a synthesis of unwritten, or emergent, rules that is created by the community is necessary before being able to play at the same level as other players. Essentially this contention is at the core of many issues regarding e-sports and the ability for newcomers to climatise to the correct way to play. However it also raises the issue of the work of the community in creating the scene that has become e-sports. The continual effort made by the player base helps us to see the way in which players are in a continual battle over what one might consider play and work. Should one consider the work that is done within the PBE and other such sites like Reddit as work or purely a leisurely activity?

In a similar light, Ferrari (2013a) deliberates over how we should understand e-sports within the current global climate of the technological era. Accruing other research on digital sports (Hutchins 2008, Rambusch 2011, Harper 2010, Hutchins 2008, Taylor 2011, Witowski 2009) Ferrari gives an adequate discussion of what exactly e-sports has become within the current years, specifically 2010 to present day.

This is because the nature of the sport itself has changed from a game held within a specific “magic circle” to one that has grown into massive amalgamations of players. As Hutchins explains, “e-sports is born in and of media, which alters the parameters of competition...” (Hutchins, 2008, pg. 857). Within a generation that has become heavily dependent on newer forms of media and communication methods, that genre of sporting that has arisen from the medium that has become paramount to our way of living, and also become highly popular, is undeniable.

This mass appeal has been seen specifically through the adoption of live-streaming services that allow both professional and amateur gamers alike, to both be the spectator and the performer on a global stage, to prove who is the greatest, a similar motive that was felt in arcade era (Taylor, 2011). Yet one might ask of what importance this might have, let alone why should one pay attention to e-sports in general. In the recent season four league of legends world championships, a match between teams OMG (China) and Najin White Shield (Korea) saw 1 million concurrent viewers in China alone. Not only has this occurred, but as of recently, League of Legends has also been sponsored by Korean Air, Coca Cola, and American Express, among other sponsorships. The continual growth of the e-sports industry far surpasses even the study done by Taylor (2012), in which she had conducted her research on the WCG (World Cyber Games), who have, as of 2014, disestablish themselves due to “business difficulties”.

The closure of the games themselves did not come as a big surprise to many within the gaming community, some of whom believed that such tournaments that were funded purely by sponsors could not compete with the environment within which tournaments such as the LCS incorporate. Whilst many studies have adequately helped to explain the nature and debates held around the use of e-sport in

current vernacular, it is necessary for us to contend that with its rapid growth, e-sports, especially League of Legends, will become influential not only to how we understand traditional forms of sport, but also the way in which modern forms of communication are impacting and progressing the way in which we understand digital labour as well as previous understandings of free labour. We are currently “...bearing witness to a significant historical moment in the development of media content, sport and networked information and communication technologies (ICTS)...” (Hutchins, 2008, pg. 858) in which spheres of social constructs have seamlessly interlocked with one another. Essentially a game of League, Counter Strike, or even Dota cannot exist without the medium that it has been created around, unlike traditional sports that exist ephemerally. For both Taylor and Hutchins, their analysis held validity through the existence of the WCG, the Olympic version of cyber games. In which a varied amount of games, nationalities and a multi-faceted sponsorship system were incorporated.

Yet as of this year, as previously mentioned, the WCG has released a statement in which they proclaim that due to other business failures they had to shut down any further proceedings of the WCG. Many professional gaming forums saw this coming, as interest in gaming competitions that exist for a variety of gaming circles could not maintain the support from sponsors in competitions. Hence why we have seen a battle between Dota (Valve) and League (Riot) in which community participation as well as prize amounts have seen a rapid increase. Hutchins (2008) was correct in asserting that the e-sports scene itself can only exist within the community that it fosters, for it is with the community that the power and longevity of the game is within their hands. The players themselves exist within both mediums and essentially inscribe the power and significance that e-sports have. Riots business

model exists surrounded by the involvement of the community. The community itself advertises, markets and brands the game for any potential players whom so happens to traverse the domain of live streamed games. Riot has nothing to do except to foster the community that surrounds it and allow the community to do the work for them. Everything from the purchasing of skins with real money and the numerous amounts of hours spent live-streaming content for others to spectate, to the production and growth of the game into the professional competitive scene shows the way in which Riot has grown into the company that it has.

2.2.1 Examples from LCS Games:

In regards to the LCS and the professional scene of the e-Sports player, I wish to highlight two specific incidents in past LCS games that highlight the forms of governance that are embodied by the e-Sports league. These rules help to create and enforce what it means to be a “professional” and to have “professional” forms of play, which necessarily require a set of civil regulations that negotiate both player behaviour as well as technological issues.

The first example comes from finals match held at the Major League Gaming (MLG) Raleigh tournament, August 26th, 2012. The match consisted of team Dignitas and team Curse. Rather than following standard map tradition of lane pushing and splitting the team amongst all lanes, including the jungle, both teams participated in what is known as an ARAM. ARAM stands for All Random, All Mid, and as the name denotes all character selection is randomised, and all players are forced to play down one lane. During an ARAM players are not allowed to leave the lane and go back to purchase items until they have been killed. The first game of the finals match consisted of this mode, whilst on the traditional summoners rift map.

Although none of the characters were randomly generated, both teams picked strange champions that didn't fit with how the community envisioned the meta game at the time. All players during the match went down mid-lane and proceeded to conduct play typical of an ARAM match. Many fans had mixed reactions with what was unfolding live. Though some cheered and appreciated the novelty of the match, being far removed from the routine play that was emulated for every other professional match, some fans however felt that such a performance showed disrespect for the nature of the game at hand, and the privilege of the position that the players themselves held over other gamers who would want to become a part of the scene as well. Even though Curse had won the match against Dignitas, both teams were disqualified for collusion. In response to the disqualification, MLG responded by stating:

“MLG regrets to announce that we will not be awarding 1st or 2nd Place finishes for the Summer Championship League of Legends Event. We have determined that there was collusion between the two final teams, Curse NA and Team Dignitas. This is in clear violation of both the letter and spirit of MLG's Official Pro Circuit Conduct Rules: “competitors may not intentionally Forfeit a Game or conspire to manipulate Rankings or Brackets.” As such, both teams have been disqualified, and no placements or prize money will be awarded.... Both teams have agreed that the disqualification was warranted. While there is some contention over the exact nature of the actions taken by Curse NA and Dignitas which led to the disqualification, both teams, as well as MLG and Riot, agree that any collusion, or anything involving not playing a tournament match to win, warrants disqualification.” (Lish, 2012)

The contention that MLG refers to is the nature of the ARAM game itself. Some community members discussed this by stating:

“ARAM is a specific type of game with specific rules like no leaving middle, no going back to base unless you're dead, etc. These are not the official rules of League of Legends. If you break ARAM rules in an ARAM game, you are considered to be cheating because breaking any of those rules gives you a major advantage (farming in a different lane for example). Since no official League of Legends rules enforce the ARAM rules, Dignitas and Curse were both intentionally avoiding legit MAJOR advantages by going all mid. If just one of them from any team farmed in another lane, the other team that all stayed mid would almost surely lose (because that one person will have massive level and gold advantage) THIS is why they are guilty of collusion. Splitting prize money does not mean you aren't being the most competitive as you can. Limiting yourself to a narrow set of UNOFFICIAL AND IMAGINARY rules that put you at a disadvantage is what makes them guilty of collusion because they are intentionally not being as competitive as they can.” (Mindlapse, 2012)

This disrespectful play style led to some believing that this is the reason why e-Sports was unable to be taken seriously. E-Sports is a beginning sporting franchise that is seeking to legitimatise itself amongst other traditional forms of sport. Therein qualities of sportsmanship and role modelling by the professional players is required to label the e-Sports brand in a positive light. The professional scene of e-Sports is predicated on the notion of professionalising the gaming industry and allowing gamers the ability to craft potential careers out of the serious leisure activities that they participate within. However rules such as those that were dealt in regards to collusion of Curse and Dignitas are necessary to help negotiate the ways in which Riot is seen as being professionalised. To be professionalised, the company must also

enforce professional play, therein players are constantly enforcing rules not only on themselves but also professional players, in the hopes that such an environment will help foster the ability for any gamer to become a professional player as well.

The second example I wish to mention is the final matches of North American LCS matches during 2013. In particular, the match between Curse Gaming and Team Vulcun shows yet another way unprofessional play is banned, thusly forcing professional players to abide by the both the rules that Riot sets out for them, as well as the meta game that is consistent with the community. The match itself was relatively inconsequential. Throughout the championship series Curse was able to guarantee themselves 2nd place, however were unable to be able to pass 1st place and also unable to drop to 3rd. Whereas Team Vulcun had been guaranteed a place of 5th /6th place, depending upon whether they beat Curse or not. The match began with both sides picking unconventional champions, or in Vulcun's case switching their main roster so as the players were playing out of position, aka the Jungler was playing in top lane. Whilst out-of-meta picks within the game are not necessarily frowned upon by Riot, what led to a lot of contention within the community was the way in which both teams conducted themselves in the match. Neither team wanted to win due to the fact that they would have to each individually go up against tougher teams than they were capable of. As one community member stated "...Vulcun didn't want to win because they know they are not good enuf to win the playoffs 100%, they just want to stay in the LCS and not get knocked out of LCS @ the relegation." (Arahamian, 2013)

Riot responded to the allegations by maintaining that:

“In the judgment of the LCS, this rule was not violated during the final day of the regular season. Given the evolution of the “meta” within League of Legends, and the constant balancing changes made to champions, the LCS cannot deem an intentionally chosen line-up “unviable” before a team takes the field, which means that competitive integrity cannot be sacrificed based on picks and bans alone.” (RiotNickAllen, 2013)

A similar event was observed by Taylor (2012) at a Starcraft II tournament, in which a possible illegal move was made. What this highlighted for her, was the way in which rules within a game was not just given but also negotiated and mutable due to the nature of play itself, the same way that many traditional sports function within the modern era. Whilst there is a given sense of boundaries and cemented rules, the players themselves create a meta game in which secondary and emergent play styles are developed that give competition and a sense of sport itself. This emergent play itself is consistently worked upon by the players. This does not remove single player games. As Bogost (2008) discusses, games such as *Animal Crossing* allow for player to learn fundamental laws of economy and market value of farmed agricultural products, but also give rise to mutable play styles as players are able to change the way in which they play to gain more profit from the system. A tactic that is used numerous times within games is the way in which players constantly evaluate the profit of their time in correspondence to the actions that they play out. An example of this method of thinking can be seen within League of Legends as well. For instance if one player is playing in the top lane with one of their towers destroyed, the player must play defensively due to their line of sight being impacted upon, in this case a loss, therein the player is in jeopardy of giving gold to

the enemy team due to the potential death that could come about if the player does not weigh up their risk/value of choices. This mentality itself gives rise to entertaining and mutable play in which every player is individual to one another. This entertainment is further discussed in the next chapters in which the nature of the worker is discussed in light of the professional e-sport player.

2.3: The Transformation of the Gaming Industry

In this light one can see that understating the nature of play and sport is necessary in understanding the way in which the e-sports world has established into a professional atmosphere—an atmosphere that is developed and fostered by the free labour of the community. A community that establishes and monitors a brand image as well as actively trying to reap what little benefits it supplies in return. A mixture of commitment and brand loyalty mixed with a fantasy of being able to ‘play’ for work. The official delineation of rules is part of the definition of a ‘professional’ sport. In this case for League of Legends, this means that players and the community are required to negotiate with what the technology is able to do (or not to do) almost more than what they, the players, are allowed to do (or not to do). Whilst Vulcun and Curse were pardoned by Riot, the overall reaction from the community led many to believe that such actions should not be accepted within the professionalised form of the game. The game itself should be taken seriously, just as seriously as the community does, therein the professional players act as role models, not only for the community who are involved with the serious leisure, but also with the wider public who are unaware of the nature of the e-Sport scene. The labour that the players partake in to create the communities that they have as well as the self-identification process that they have gone through means that the game itself becomes a core value to how they identify as a gamer within the professional scene. The ‘value’ of these

activities (which are proprietary) comes from the aspirational abilities of being 'professional'. The brand that Riot establishes roots the way in which the community also sees the game. Once professional players act against such rooted imagery, alleges the feeling that such 'pros' are taking for granted the opportunities they have been given to be able to participate and be paid for the serious leisure they partake in.

Chapter 3: The work of the gamer

3.1 Work and Play

Video games have blurred the line between work and play. They articulate video game communities with a form of creative work that follows larger trends of digital mediated spaces. This is not only performed through the gamers' habits and acts, but in industry adjustments toward the environment that it intervenes and produces. It brands itself as relevant towards defining proper ways gamers must behave, often through marketing mechanisms. The players themselves, their league of legends accounts, are commodified, used as an agent for marketing. The F2P (free to play) genre works, along with MMOs and other genres of games and virtual worlds that depend on free, participatory forms of "play" and "creativity". The fantasy of the professionalisation of the game blurs the true nature of the work that is being done. Far beyond playing the game alone, professionalisation extends to the live-streaming and creation of entertainment to the community governance that players incorporate into their own play. This is similar to Mayer's (2011) chapter on 'professionals'. For Mayer, professionals are only professionals because they say they are. Through the analysis of soft-core professionalism on television, Mayer is able to show the way in which institutions are able to gain control over the identity of the worker through the illusion of professionalism. As she states "Although I never knew how many of the aspiring soft-core workers might eventually work in television industries, it was clear that their definitions of professionalism were only as flexible as television market would allow" (Mayer, 2011, pg. 100). In this sense, whilst some may contest that no actual goods are produced to be given economic value within this system of professionalisation and free labour, I suggest that the player themselves manifest an economic value for the company itself –the number of

the community contributes to the value of the product. It is through the commodification of content, audiences, and the labour itself that produces the current estate of the videogame empire.

Playfulness itself has existed long before the commodification of such leisurely activities rose. And yet, to a steady degree, modern citizens are finding themselves more and more involved with activities that are associated with such materialist values. Games themselves have always pandered to the gamer. Steadily releasing titles that attract customers to consume. House names such as Nintendo, Blizzard, ID Software all exist around an established brand that has a large following.

Yet the industry itself needed to develop the ways in which they sold themselves to the customer. We have seen a boom in the marketing of F2P games, games that essentially co-exist with the gamer until they become sick of the product. It is a harvesting mechanism of a large crop of general gamers who are more than willing to pay small integral amounts rather than placing an investment in a game that lasts for six hours minimum. This elongation of longevity has allowed such games to accrue a community that bolsters a mass fandom, a fandom that is turned into a commodity, or at the very least the potential energy to produce value to the original product.

As Kosnik (2012) adequately predicts, fans will be compensated with the potential to rank up from amateur to paid professional or at least "...as a new form of publicity and advertising, authored by volunteers, that corporations badly need in an era of market fragmentation" (Kosnik, 2012, pg. 99). Both the labour that is produced by the combination of the self-governance of the tribunal, build sites and

live-streaming have given rise to the gamer being the new digitized labourer, whose creative and virtual physical movements are gathered to market and bring profit to the product/company itself. In other words, there is a fantasy of “professional” success that involves the payment of monetary value in exchange for playing videogames; this fantasy is further perpetuated by live-streaming and e-sports league. Through such a fantasy, everyday gamers are exploited by the mechanisms of how F2P games work, but nonetheless do not pay attention to these problems because of their dreams of becoming a paid professional.

3.2 The Work of the community

As previously described, the free labour of the MOBA genre is quite expansive. The pure existence of a meta-game gives the ability for players to subvert the mediated environment that they have consented to be involved within. “Through playfulness....” the player “...reinterprets the rules and laws imposed by the technical system” (Grimes and Feenberg, 2009, pg. 12). The work of modders is a case study that exemplifies the way in which playfulness asserts itself within the gaming industry. The ability for gamers to see weaknesses behind the in-built codes that retains the games structure shows the way in which players subvert their self-imposed “technical system”. The creation of the game *Counter Strike* came out of the modification of the original *Half-Life: Source* engine that has seen a commercial success through its acquisition by Valve the game company, who also hosts Steam—one of the biggest digital distributors of videogames. It is through playfulness, or at least through its illusion, that bigger communities are fostered. Whilst league does not allow hacking or modifications to the games source client itself, through its control over how the meta interacts with the player, it gives rise to a useful form of playfulness. This motive was developed in tandem with the rise of e-sports

themselves. A similar effect has occurred within the way in which the modern citizen incorporates social media into the everyday. This is especially prevalent in Coté & Pybus' analysis of the immaterial labor associated with Myspace (2007). Participatory platforms hand the user a blank slate in which users produce the content that is written and produce. The uploading of photos, videos and other content can be rationalized as form of free labour in which the immaterial capacities of the user is taken and used as a commercial product, amongst friends and at times to the international public (whether it be positive or negative). Essentially users are in a constant process of maintaining the image that they have procured through their interactions.

The Internet, social media networks are all a stage in which the performers take turns to win the attention of the greater masses, to widen one's own social network status is the "... raison d'être" of such platforms, to raise one's own "...cultural capital" (Cote & Pybus, 2007, pg. 94). Whilst we base such understandings within grounded theories, such research must understand that this is a new hybrid of political economy, which is "neither the political economy of capital and work, nor the Marxist economic critique of 'living labour'" (Lazzarato, 2002, pg. 11). Rather it is a unique customisation of recognition of surplus value and power attained from immaterial labour.

To be on the cutting edge of the market, to be socially connected with a community that shares the same values as oneself, to be able to enjoy the countless hours of monotony by spending it in virtual worlds in which a complete economic system is sustained by the community, all of which can be considered motives for the current modern citizen. This ability for such socially networked individuals to so willingly give over their virtual or creative bodies, is then gathered by an industry

that is willing to gain surplus value out of said bodies. Therein it is no wonder why one might be able to assert that the form of play and leisurely activities that surround videogames can be reformulated as a form of work, free labour.

3.2.1 Analysis of Build Sites

An example of this form of playfulness at work can be seen through the plethora of build sites that exist to support the way in which gamers co-operate with the meta game, the play styles that are accepted and generated by the community, that they created themselves. In particular I wish to highlight sites such as Lolking and Mobafire, two of the prominent build sites that situate themselves around League of Legends. The site Lolking, in particular, was developed by Tom “Fishsticks” and Jerod “Igris”; both fans of the many MOBA games that existed within the early 2000’s. With the introduction of League of Legends, both friends found that they needed a way to calculate the opponents that they found themselves up against. Both calculate them in a way in which they were able to understand how their champion was able to overcome the opposing champion through the construction of builds that were made to show how you could use a specific champion to expose the weaknesses of the opposing champion.

The early database that both friends developed consisted of this data as well as a source of data on each player that the user might be opposing. In essence it was a wiki site for gamers who wished to take their game seriously. However, the early construction of the database was only used between the two friends. The site was soon put online so that the whole community could have access to it. Whilst many offer strategy guides for specific champions the player wishes to use, Lolking also gives personal data of specific summoners whom the player is up against. Details

such as specific runes and masteries configurations as well as match histories, win percentages, even proficiencies in specific roles is given to the player. This essentially fuels the meta-game in which players actively create and strategies the ways in which they can overcome their opponent and come out the match triumphantly. All of this content is not only distributed by the founders of the website but also by the gamers themselves, not only through the act of play itself and the creation of runes and masteries configurations, but also through the communities' creation of their own strategies that they can publish online or onto the website. The website also gives the player a recorded percentage of wins that the opponent has had in their entire play time, on which ever server the user has placed themselves on. Along with this, the site also offers free contests for the users, whose requirements to participate is to have a Lolking and League of Legends account and, depending on the context of the contest, may require users to produce content for the site, in particular the construction of strategy guides.

In essence, such an addition is similar to Smythe's (1977) allusion to the "free lunch". The work that is given by the audience is compensated by the addition of non-advertising material. In this scenario we can see this through the addition of contests. Riot does not openly advertise such sites either. Sites such as Lolking or Mobafire are found by curious players forced to conform to the ever-changing nature of the meta-game. The user must communicate and connect with the full community and submit to the unwritten rules of the society in order to participate to maximum capacity. Without doing so the user would be relegated to being considered either a toxic player, or will be disregarded by the community for not meeting the standards to which the 'professionalised' game sets itself out to be. Such sites only function through the use of fandom as labour. Players are invested in the game enough to

produce their own content, to be noticed by other players as to have a unique, different, and successful play style. It is a community that develops and updates the culture they have invested time into. Time that is intermixed with both adoration and frustration. Kosnik's investigation of fandom as free labour (2012) perfectly emulates the way in which sites like Lolking and Mobafire exist and function. Collaborating theories of fan cultures, or subcultures (Hebdige, 1979; Thornton, 1996; Jenkins, 1992; Hills, 2002), Kosnik (2012) effectively describes how such an understanding of subcultures can lead to premise that such leisurely activities can be work in themselves. However it is not only that work takes place in itself but also compliments components of the capitalist system. A system that has been able to transform itself to meet the demands associated with its context. In particular, Kosnik (2012) highlights the way in which affinity groups function, stating that such groups "...congregate on the basis of their shared tastes... their consumption of common media and, most importantly, their preference for people with similar tastes to themselves" (Thornton, 1996, pp. 3-4) and are the fundamental cogs for the "perfect" consumer to construct itself within such a capitalist system. A fan's adoration for material objects, whether it is a safety pin or a videogame, to the extent to which they are willing to labour over and perfect the object purely out of pleasure. The creation of rules, codes of conduct, and even social hierarchies around the object is all set around the pleasure gained from a social community. In the absence of fan labour, the objects themselves would not have the same sense of social pleasure; objects would purely be trinkets seen with little value and potentially not consumed. The objects themselves would lose value and a sense of worth without fandom labour. Fans in particular exhibited a manner of refreshing and updating the fetishised object, in which "objects are made to mean and mean again..." (Hebdige, 1979, pg.

3). Meaning becomes implicit within the demands and work that is done by fans. To return to the example given, build sites, it is easy to relate such contentions in the work that is done by the fans of League of Legends. The symbiotic relationship between the industry and the fan gives economic value to discussions, community theory crafting, and meta-game builds. The community adapts and refreshes the game for the company by continually updating strategies and codes of conduct through discussions and theory crafting. The game itself would not exist to the height and fame as it surrounds itself currently without the efforts of the billions of gamers and professionals, who labour their time and effort in the virtual world. Such a commitment to the in-game world has only previously been researched within MMORPG games that have a heavy emphasis on the emergent play of the user. However we now see that such practices are evident within the free to play models, that rather than infusing players with the hunger for more lore, history or gameplay (as evident in games such World of Warcraft), such free to play games exist around the efforts of the community to support the game by using their creative powers to establish and create the world itself. The pleasure that is derived from such work, as well as the illusion that such activities are leisurely in some manner, lends to the strength of Riot's ability to update and target their patches to the audience, an audience whose insatiable hunger for content drive its value. Players wish to feel that the efforts that they put into the game have a generous feedback in which the choices and labour they put into the object has meaning, whether it be for them personally or communally. In reference to build sites, one can only know the effort that is placed into the build strategy by seeing the work that has been done first hand.

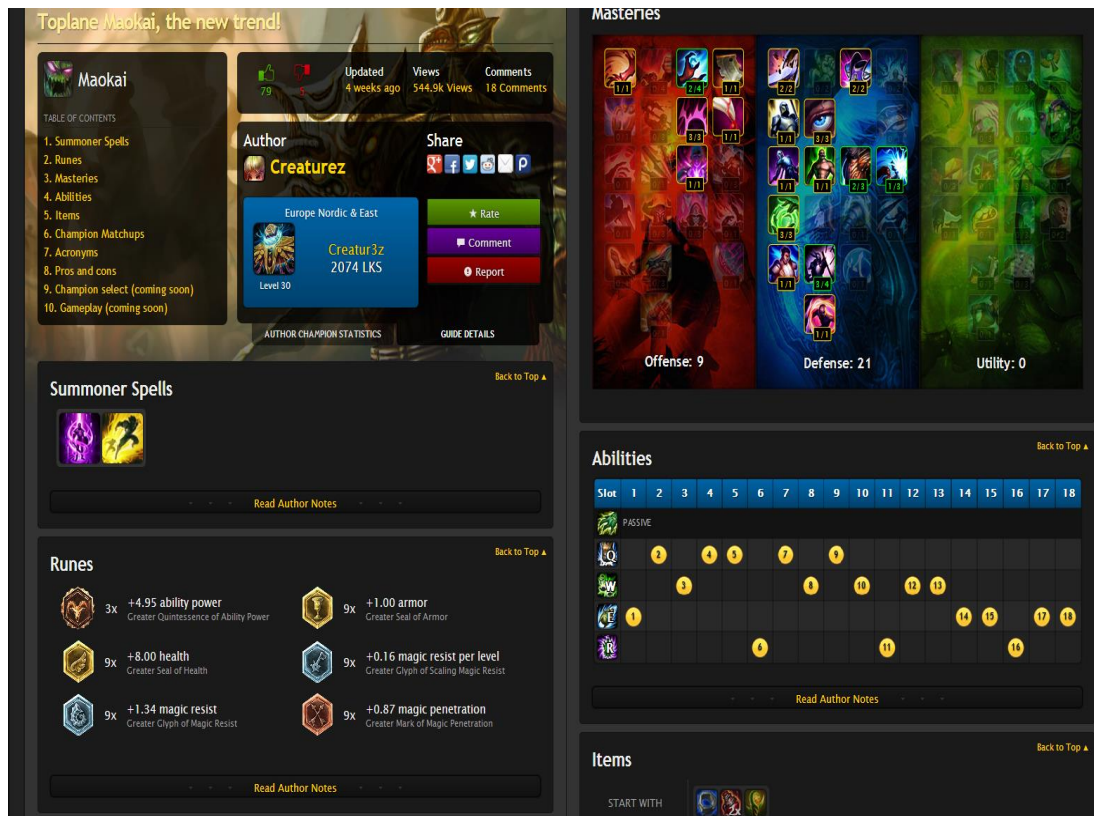


Figure 2: Maokai Build from <http://www.lolking.net/guides/297016>

For instance, the build *Toplane Maokai, the new trend!* (Lolking, 2014) as can be seen in *Figure 2* is a build specifically for the champion Maokai. The build starts off with a helpful table of contents in which the user can select whatever section they wish to browse and learn more about the strategy. The build begins with a listing of summoner spells, rune setup, mastery page setup, as well as the allocation of experience points to different skills and abilities for the champion per level. After which the creator elaborates on different types of items that should be bought during the game so as the champion is optimally built for whatever scenario they may encounter. From the items the build then further elaborates the matchups that the player may face in the top lane as Maokai and indicates the difficulty of the matchup. In regards to Maokai the creator believes the champion would have a harder time facing a Kassadin, another ap champion, than he would if he were to be faced against

an Alistar, another champion within League of Legends that in a match against Maokai would lose due to lack of mobility. The user who is browsing the build can also click ‘Show Notes’ on the side to see the comments made by the creator as to his perspective of the lane up and how the user should combat against the foe. The creator also places at the end a section, similar to a ‘too long; didn’t read’ sign, in which he/she gives bullet points on the pros and cons of the champion. At the end of the build the audience is then encouraged to comment on the build and are asked to discuss its potency and to test it out live to see its validity in play.

3.2.2 Analysis of Tribunal

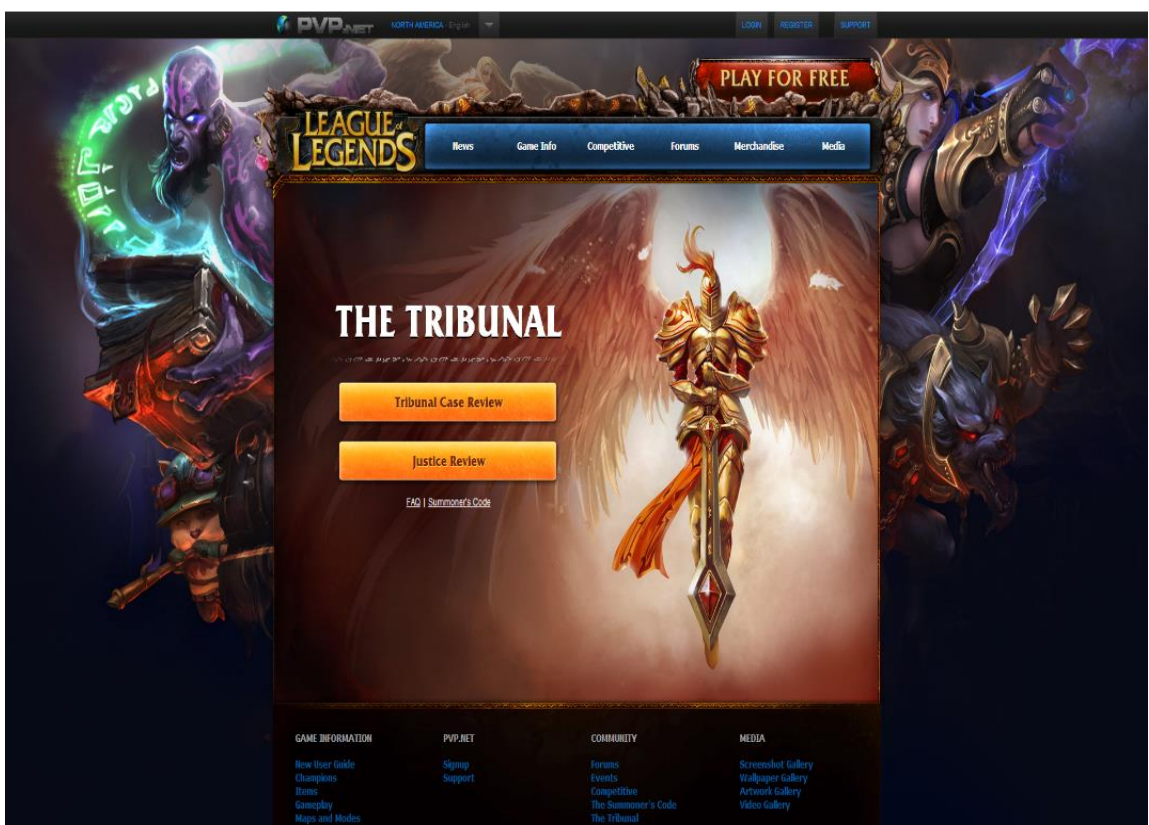


Figure 3: The Tribunal Website. Screenshot taken from na.leagueoflegends.com/tribunal/en/review

The work done by summoners, the title given to all players of League of Legends by Riot, does not end with build sites such as Lolking, but extended further

by the introduction of the tribunal system. As can be seen from *Figure 3*, the tribunal system was introduced by Riot in May 2011 to help cure the toxic nature of the community that was plaguing the gameplay. The community was kept in check through the help of other community members. Summoners are able to log onto the online portal through Riot's website to access the tribunal. Once logged on, the summoner is assigned a case to review. Each case assigned to the summoner involves the data on the behaviour of a player who has been reported by other summoners for a number of reasons including: verbal abuse, harassment, intentional feeding, unskilled player, and intentionally helping the other team. Once several reports have been filed against the accused summoner, the summoner in question is placed in the tribunal to be reviewed by fellow players. From which the summoner who is doing the reviewing is given all the details of the games in which the player has been reported for. Match statistics, build path, kills, deaths and assists as well as the chat log are all given to the player to investigate the true motive behind the reported users' behaviour. The players are told to predict the motive behind the reported players' actions, essentially acting as a jury in a virtual world. The reviewer is also given the ability to punish or pardon the reported player, or skip the case if they are unsure as to the possible verdict of the player. Once a unanimous decision is made, the player in question is either handed down a severe punishment such as the account being permanently removed from the server, or the player can be pardoned for his actions and allowed to continue playing freely.

After the verdict has been made, the reviewer is able to access all the games that they have passed a verdict upon to see the outcome of the review, as well as gain access to the reports that they decided to skip. Such data is then correlated into a Justice Review in which all the above mentioned statistics are then shown as a

percentage of correct and incorrect judgements made by the reviewer, the number of cases they have been involved within, and a justice rating and ranking that is attached to their profile within the tribunal system, yet there is no reward associated with the ranking itself. Ironically, summoners, the gamers that fill up the entirety of the community, decidedly govern one another in accordance to a code of conduct that is both put into place by Riot as well as put into action by the community. Riot does not have to interfere with the community and thusly toxicity itself exists only in the hands of the community and not the company. The mechanism of governance is distributed into a collaborative population to self-govern, when the 'law' is not produced by the 'people'. The community is thusly put to work to remove such abusive elements that besmirch their brand. The community self-regulates itself, adapting codes of conduct and rules, creating a social hierarchy between good players and bad players: the good diligent worker and the bad, lazy worker. Accept the community and adapt or be left behind, essentially. Whilst the fan labour that the community does is external to Riot, the work of the tribunal system is hosted by the company itself. Stricter bans were recently released to deal with the continuous nature of toxicity.

Whilst League of Legends rises in popularity around the world, the need to regulate cheating or bad behaviours rises as well. Such regulation would take many dedicated man-hours and teams via the company, costing a lot of money, especially for the large amount of servers that exist around the world. Instead Riot opted to institute an emergent self-governance in which they provided the framework for rulings to take place, and the community was then put into action to make such rulings come to life. The recent upgrade to the tribunal was described as necessary to "...encourage positive behaviour through the tribunal as well as improve the speed of

the system.” (Lyte, 2014). In doing so, Riot’s moderators have instituted faster ban cycles that will occur within hours of the reported behaviour occurring. Ranked play also saw a tuning in which the system “LeaverBuster” would ensure severe and aggressive punishments for toxic players. In doing so Riot wishes that such implementation will “...maintain the competitive, sportsmanlike spirit of the mode.” (Lyte, 2014) Within the article that announced the upgraded changes, heated debates were had over the proposed changes and their effect on the community as a whole. In one such debate one user announced:

IsacF: I heard the tribunal stopped giving IP rewards, is it true? Because if it is, you’re just doing their work for them. For free. No questions asked. (IsacF, 2014)

Many replied to the accusation by defending Riots actions as being humble in nature, and stating that such changes were made so to foster the communities’ responsibility with such behaviours. As one user rebutted:

Redrix: You’re not only working for them. You’re working for your own game as well. If there are too many trolls, not only Riot in the longterm, but also your gaming experience will be suffering. (Redrix, 2014)

The ownership that Riot alludes to is grasped both in the hands of the developer and the gaming community. Some even described the work, reviewing on the tribunal, as pleasurable, having the power to get rid of toxic players and thus construct an environment that users want both individually and collectively. ‘Justice’ is dealt so that the gamer can enjoy their product to its full potential, or at least to its imagined potential. Whilst many defended Riot, some accused the company of being lazy. Whilst recognising that players must promote a healthy environment for play,

in tandem Riot should enforce its judgements to affect the community by itself without the need to use the community as a tool. Of course, however, this runs in the face of the promoted image that Riot has established within the community, an image in which the company developed the game specifically for the community in mind and allow the community to be completely in control of the game world, yet are they? The power that Riot has over influencing a community in a way in which they are able to then allocate them as a workforce for their product insinuates that the community in affect has no control over their own virtual body. Rather, that virtual identity is sourced and given a set value by the company, expendable due to the large number of the community. As the original poster lamented later on in the conversation:

Isacf: Doing an extremely tedious thing outside of the game, that should be done by them [Riot] in the first place, for no rewards in-game is simply senseless. (Isacf, 2014)

Riot's response was given by Jeffrey "Lyte" Lin, lead designer of the social systems in the League of Legends community. The talk was given at the 2013 GDC (Game Developers Conference) (Lin, 2013) in which Lin begins by noting that were the company able to ban all toxic players, issues of sportsmanship and collegiality would nonetheless remain unsolvable. Toxic players could be reformed by many systems they put in place, one of which was the tribunal system. To engage their own community to uphold the positive aspects of the game, the same sportsmanlike qualities that exist within the professionalised format of traditional sports.

These qualities however are not imbued within the game itself, but is created by the fandom that surrounds the game. The celebrity status that is given to highly

ranked players, along with the phenomena of e-sports itself, helps fuel and continually refresh the game for the standards set by the players. The amateur player has the ability to affect the game environment that surrounds them, even if it comes at the price of selling one's own labour to 'tedious man hours', unpaid. It is a form of work that is freely given, and hides behind a veil that such work is part of the process of consuming the product, or at least a necessary condition. Games such as League of Legends are built upon companies that are interested purely on the potential profit that can be gained from the work of the many. However, gaining such can only be gained and maintained by the governance and control of such virtual gaming spaces. Building upon Foucault's (1978) theories of governmentality, as developed by Nikolas Rose (1999), Humphreys (2008) asserts that such companies have found ways of using the labour force of the player, at least their cognisant agency, that can possibly represent real world social factors. Similar to how Bogost earlier proclaimed that games can emulate the world they live in, Humphreys suggests that the governance that exists within virtual worlds emulate our own; a governance that does not outright seek to dominate the population but rather work with them and in some sense recognise their agency. Humphreys does state that such self-governance as online environments bring into development have the ability to change and develop players' interactions with the gaming world; fostering communities together to have fun and share moments with strangers. However, such systems also have the ability to abuse and exploit the communities that they have fostered. In the tribunal's case, and even that of the build sites that was mentioned previously, the work done by the community is not inherently a negative process.

Rather, it is a process that has the potential to increase the enjoyment and satisfaction that is garnered from the product. However, one must question the intent

behind such systems, specifically now within a technological society that has the ability to gain profit off of immaterial labour. To what extent does League of Legends, of which is a F2P game in the first place, go to harness the ability for its community to do much of the heavy lifting for them. Such environments are interesting sites of study, specifically because the traditional relationship between the producer and the consumer does not exist; rather it has shifted and improved around the practices that encourage the user to collaborate, to consume and to produce simultaneously. Practices that hinge upon the control of the users' desires and creativity, in which rather than dominating the community and collecting profit unwillingly, the player is coaxed into believing that the gift economy benefits them as the pleasure of utility overcomes the tedious work involved from continually having to refresh and update the content that the culture feeds upon. In this sense one might contest that Riot's decision to incorporate and foster an e-sports scene, on that has existed since the era of the arcade halls, is not purely on the behest of the love of videogames or fans, but rather is infused with the corporate systems that seek to extract surplus value out of the work that one may not essentially consider work. Yet the complaints made by the community over the recent changes to the tribunal show the way in which players don't necessarily conform to the prescribed systems of governance, even the fact that toxicity itself exists shows the way in which some players actively seek to stop or to haul the continual refreshment and maintenance of the culture.

3.3 The Work of the Professional: Live-streaming: Twitch.tv, Free Labour and Exploitation

Whilst there have been a lot of examples of the community put to work for League of Legends itself, the labour of the gamer exists also within external applications. The videogame industry has seen a massive boom since the introduction of user-generated content sites such as YouTube and Justin.tv. These sites enable gamers to share their gameplay footage with one another. Amusing glitches within the game, “Let’s Play” videos that narrate lengthy sections of gameplay—often for promotional purposes—and videos of professional competition play are highlighted by the community, shared amongst one another, thus performing cultural rituals, similar to Carey’s (1992) ritual uses of communication that perpetuate the limits of inclusion and exclusion from the circle of online “gamers”. Yet as the audience grows larger and more expansive, companies often seek to enforce copyright claims over such user-generated content, at least content made without explicit agreement with game companies. In doing so, many gamers feel that their needs are not being met, that they are unable to express themselves through online media without negotiating practices that seek to extract profit from their content and their community.

Twitch.tv was created in 2011. With it marked a rise within the video game industry, one in which many media analysts could not have predicted. The way in which the community flocked to the site and adopted the methods that were proposed by the sites founders was immeasurable. The site offers the ability for any user to broadcast their play for anybody to see around the world. Essentially working in a way similar to YouTube’s invitation for users to “Broadcast Yourself™”, Twitch allows users to creatively interact with one another and produce their own content,

not only for the site itself but also for direct upload to Youtube or any other preferred site that the user wishes to edit and show off their play.

3.3.1: History of Twitch.tv:

The premise of Twitch.tv originated in 2007 with the founders Justin Kan, Emmett Shear, Michael Seibel and Kyle Vogt. The idea surged from the beginnings of live-streaming content, which at the time suffered from many issues such as lag due to bandwidth issues. Kan strapped a webcam to his hat that would document every moment of his life, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Every time Kan went for a walk, ate, went on a date or even to sleep, every second of his life was live broadcasted for every Internet user to view. During an age in which broadcasting your life was still a novel idea, Kan and cohort pioneered essentially what other major Video on Demand (VOD) sites have been producing of recent years. Not only this but the four friends had no idea that such a crazy initiative would lead them to creating the biggest and most influential videogame live-streaming service that the industry hasn't created yet (Lien, 2014).

Prior to the release of the dedicated videogame streaming service, Kan and his team first developed Justin.Tv. This live-streaming website not only played host to Kans' antics throughout his daily life, but also gave the ability for its community to use their webcams to stream their own daily lives. This effectively meant that users could stream whatever they wanted. From the birthing and continual daily updates of baby animals, to TV shows, Justin.tv saw a wide variety of content continuously uploaded to its page. Most influential of all was its gaming section. Users were connecting their computers to the site, and even their consoles through the use of external capture cards, to stream the games they were playing. Such

streaming was not only limited to purely play, but also hosted the opportunity for tournaments to be streamed globally, for speed runs to be broadcasted and even for some the ability to analyse professional level gameplay. Such a continuous growth continued until late 2011 in which the four founders realised that they may need an external website to host such a massive crowd. The first version of Twitch was released in June 2011. This was furthered not only by the amount of content that was being uploaded by users, but also a request made by the community to have a dedicated website that would help the community to foster its needs without the other categories of streaming content. A website that would focus purely on the content of gamers and would facilitate the fast connection speeds and interface that was needed (Lien, 2014).

Since its release Twitch has seen an exponential growth in viewership and broadcasters. In its 2013 retrospective (Twitch, 2013), Twitch detailed an in depth analysis of how the company has grown since 2011. As of the end of 2013 Twitch saw 45 million unique views per month as well as a total of 6 million total videos broadcasted per month. Out of that 6 million over 900 thousand were unique broadcasters per month, with 5100 plus being partnered, in which the broadcaster is sponsored by specific companies or brands and paid for the content they upload and broadcast. Per month, viewers watched around 12 billion minutes of streaming video. An average of 106 minutes were watched per user per day. From 2012, Twitch saw its viewership and broadcasters double within a year. 2013 also saw Twitch establishing its ability to combine with other companies specifically that of Sony and Microsoft who integrated Twitch streaming capabilities within their latest consoles, the PS4 and the Xbox One (Hitchens, 2014). Within the release of such integration,

243,312 PS4 owners have connected to Twitch streaming capabilities and now produce 20% of uploaded content on the site (Twitch, 2013).

As of August 25th, 2014, Twitch was acquired by Amazon for reportedly 1 billion dollars (Kumparak, 2014). During its acquisition, Twitch shut down its founding website Justin.tv after seven years of online activity. The company sought to focus primarily upon its larger video platform, renaming themselves to Twitch Interactive Inc.

Twitch's exponential growth and acceptance by the gaming community lends a rich example of not only the phenomena of spectatorship and performance online, but also shows the way in which gamers have become an appropriated form of labour for the videogame industry. Similar to the way in which Riot has utilized the ability of its community to actively refresh and maintain its fandom culture, Twitch has utilised the live-streaming format to continually update the videogame industry whilst also gaining the ability to effectively gain profit from its rich user generated content.

In this context I wish to focus primarily on the live-streams associated with League of Legends, which is one of the bigger game categories that is accessible on the site. Through an analysis of professional e-sports players' live-streams, one may be able to gain a thorough understanding of the work that is at play on Twitch.

3.3.2 Pro-Stream Analysis

Twitch offers many possibilities for users to both broadcast and observe play. The site streams many genres of games from the science fiction strategy of *StarCraft II* to the retro-styled open world building of *Minecraft*. Users are able to creatively

express their play in a variety of ways. The variety of streams offers users the ability to spectate purely on their own tastes. Twitch offers the spectator the ability to view entertaining streamers such as MANvsGAME, who seeks to complete every game known, presenting such content in a comedic and interesting manner. It includes videos of “speed runs”, in which the broadcaster plays through the game as fast as possible, portraying their in-depth knowledge of the specific gameplay mechanics of a specific game. And, importantly for us, it broadcasts tournaments and professional live streams that users watch, ostensibly to improve their play, along with their entertainment value. In context with the previously described examples of build sites and the tribunal, the focus around Twitch will be primarily that of professional players who stream content from League of Legends. In particular I wish to highlight the professional player Bjergsen from the team TSM (Team Solo Mid) and the manner in which he live streams content on Twitch in comparison to other amateur broadcasters.

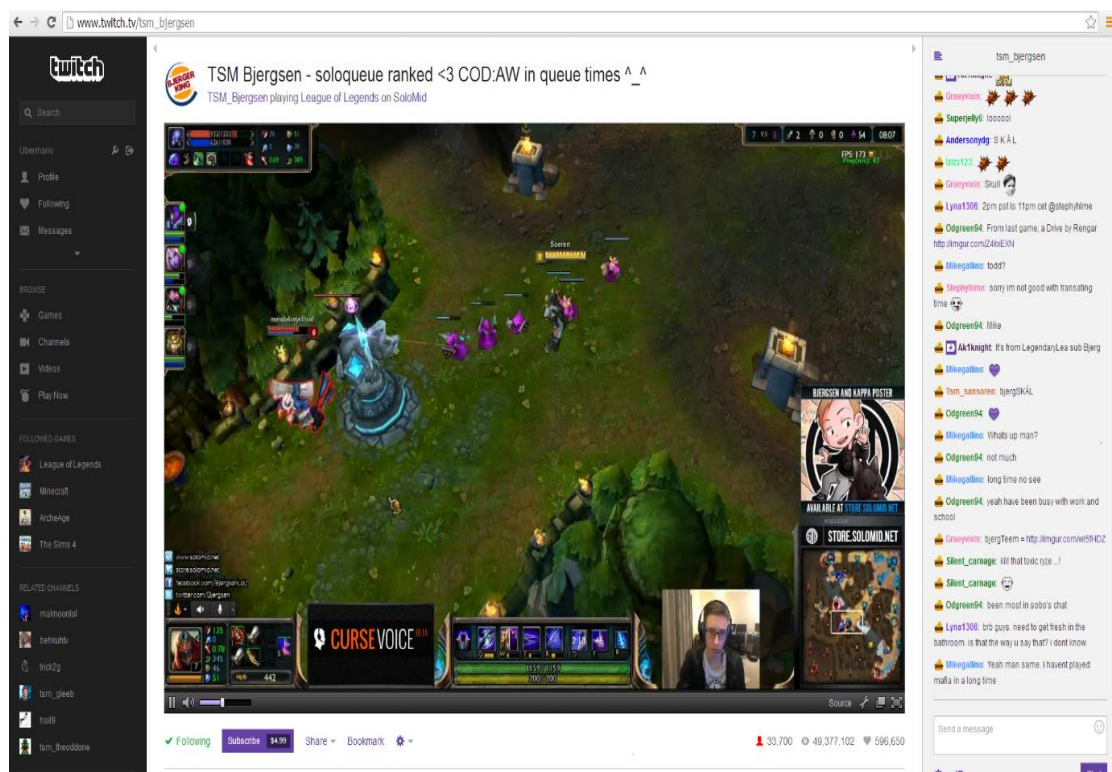


Figure 2: Live-stream of Bjergsen: http://www.twitch.tv/tsm_bjergsen, August 3rd, 2014.

Bjergsen is the mid-laner for TSM, one of the top leading teams within the North American servers for League of Legends, alongside Cloud 9. Before he came to TSM, Bjergsen played for the Europe team Copenhagen Wolves (CW), yet at the time he was still 16 years old and therein unable to play for the team. Whilst benched, CW went 0-5 wins/losses in their matchups, however this soon changed when Bjergsen reached the minimum age requirements in which he lead their team for the next season split with a 13-10. This win garnered the attention of another European team Ninjas in Pyjamas (NiP) who acquired the full roster of CW, yet soon fell to relegation. Once Bjergsen left NiP, he had a chance meeting with TSM during the North American Summer play-offs, in which he impressed the owner of the team Andy “Reginald” Dinh. Their meeting led to Bjergsen’s acquisition by TSM and thusly the teams continuous rise within the competitive scene of League of Legends.

Bjergsen, along with all of his other teammates, live-stream daily on Twitch. Their streams occupy mostly that of solo-queue skirmishes with other high level players within the North American region. On average, Bjergsen, like many other professional live-streamers, streams for around 6-10 hours a day. Professional streamers within the e-sports scene, like Bjergsen, generally live with their teammates, practicing every day in order to retain the standards needed for the competitive level of play. During a typical stream, Bjergsen will interact with viewers occasionally, however such interaction is limited to users who have subscribed to his channel which requires a payment of \$4.99 a month. Rather than primarily focus upon entertaining the audience, when professional players such as Bjergsen stream, the focus is primarily upon the play at hand and any tips that he may be able give to the viewers. Such streams facilitate the function of the meta-game surrounding League of Legends whilst also allowing viewers to watch

celebrities that are branded by Riot. Below the main video is a description of the streamers current gaming hardware along with other hyperlinks for sponsors of the streamer and the streamers social media profiles.

The screenshot in Figure 4 shows a typical stream of Bjergsen's, who, at the time, had on average 30 thousand people watching him live-stream. Such a large amount of viewers not only comes with the celebrity status that he has gained from playing within the LCS but also for his in-depth knowledge of the game. Each stream facilitates the ability for viewers to learn and gain understandings from a professional player. Essentially such streams help mediate the meta-game that exists within League of Legends. In a similar fashion to how the community facilitates the competitive nature of the game and work to maintain the cultural fandom that surrounds the game, the live streams of professional sportsman such as Bjergsen allow for the community to garner ways in which certain play styles should be enacted within their own game. Bjergsen becomes branded by not only the gaming community that occupy the League of Legends community, but also by the company themselves. What Bjergsen's stream highlights is the methods put into place by Riot to establish a professionalised videogame scene. With Bjergsen's stream in mind, the view count should not only be noted but also the way in which advertisements, subscriptions and the overall professional atmosphere works. For instance Bjergsen's stream, like many other professional players, allow the user to pay a monthly subscription of \$4.99 a month in order to not see advertisements and also participate within live chat. Without the subscription, any viewer will have to watch the adverts that are presented with the partnered channel. With such a method of professionalised broadcasting, toxicity is not allowed amongst its players, especially during solo queue streams. In one such case, two members of the Ninjas in Pyjama's

team recently were suspended for extremely toxic behaviour during solo queue matches in which they were reported for verbal abuse and other harmful behaviour (LeJacq, 2014). In a similar vein to which the community comes together to take care of such toxic issues, Riot also must maintain the brand image that they have established amongst the community. High professional play means that such behaviour will not be tolerated, to be accepted globally as a potential sport, let alone maintain an image that respects the sponsors that have signed onto Riot's brand name, to besmirch such a name will cause either a heavy fine, suspension, or permanently being banned from both normal matches and competitive play. This is why not only the summoners' code is upheld by the play done by the community who engage with it on a constant basis, but also applies to the streaming rationale.

Whilst this is prevalent in the design of its competitive play as well as how it fosters its community to govern the scene themselves, the maintenance of the e-Sports scene through live-streaming is but another facet of their overall plan to professionalise the field. A field that is constantly worked upon by the live-streamers that Twitch facilitates.

3.3.3 The Work of being watched

With a clear understanding of the history of Twitch.tv and how a professional live-stream functions, one can begin to understand the way in which live-streaming has become part of a system that appropriates the labour of its viewers. In particular, the work that is constituted by those who live-stream League of Legends gameplay, not only professional players, but also the amateur streamers' time and work is appropriated in a similar fashion as the work that is done by the community in regards to the Tribunal and build sites. Twitch is an external platform in which the

work of the community refreshes and maintains the cultural dynamics of the game whilst also reinforcing the branded identity of Riot and League being a professionalised game. In other words, the community does the branding work for Riot through live-streaming platforms such as Twitch. It is a form of labour that is given voluntarily by the community and establishes the way in which the object should be consumed by others who may join the community as a new player. Therein, the promise of not being exploited (i.e being a professional) enables the willing exploitation of many gamers who look to these professionals and dream of making it to the same point in which they have. This exploitation often occurs in very real ways, as the player can be part of a community in which they imagine themselves as shaping governance and making real choices and decisions. Through the passion and enjoyment that they gain from the game and the desire to share experiences with other gamers, in particular to show the way in which the streamer themselves is a better player than others, exemplifying a similar fashion of competitive play that existed within the arcade era of the videogame industry.

Such an understanding of the work undergone by the streamer has also undergone investigation amongst other sites and companies that gain value through the proliferation of user generated content. One can emulate the way in which Youtube particularly goes about putting its users to work to generate creative content and the way in which such content is commercialised within a bigger context. Andrejevic (2009) continues the notion stating that Youtube, a site that once prided itself on abstract, individualistic ‘do-it-yourself’ concept has long since been removed since the many lawsuits that have been filed against them for copyright infringements. Instead, after Google’s purchase of the site in 2006 has led to the site being motivated to monetize its content in order to appease the bigger companies that

may be losing profit from the many assorted user-generated content that appropriates their own content. As an analyst from Forrester Research put it, “YouTube is essentially saying to media companies, ‘we are sorry for our past copyright stance; we weren’t thinking big enough. Let’s see how we can make some money together’” (Barnes and Stone, 2008). The storehouse of YouTube’s user-generated content also offers a large supply of user-generated data, that can help such companies adjust their methods of approaching the consumer, based upon the analysis of their tastes and general opinions. In a similar fashion this is how Twitch’s platform is used by Riot to develop the fascination around the e-Sports scene. This continual adjustment is not only associated by the work undergone by the community in regards to the tribunal and build sites, but also the way in which they view and broadcast their content upon sites like Twitch.

Such interactive media asserts to the user that they have complete control over the methods in which they are able to broadcast themselves and consume the objects that they wish. The access to such media states that the “...means of media production” will promise “...to empower the people.” (Andrejevic, 2004, pg. 62). The worker is given the ability to customise their own place of work, or at least told they are able to, and essentially become individualised within the wider mass society. The user is individualised, respected and loved for his loyalty to the object, or brand in this case. They are willing to freely give their labour to said authority in order to gain the ability to produce the content that they want. Yet such a lifestyle is not available to all, rather only a select few. As Banet-Weiser (2012) discusses, such a view of the entrepreneur is “romanticised” in the sense that not all individuals that participate within such a culture are inherently creative, especially one that has a profit attached to it. Rather the “...mobilising ideology behind this idea becomes a

normative mechanism, thus validating the practice of self-branding and glorifying the position of the entrepreneur. At the same time, this ideology obscures the class assumptions and requirements of being an entrepreneur.” (pg. 119)

In their own analysis of the interactive economy that exists currently, Robins and Webster (2000) highlight an important concept within the work that is undergone. Specifically that work that is stimulated by such networks are facilitated by:

“...the restructuring of patterns of time use on a more flexible and individual basis; they provide the technological means to break the times of working, consumption and recreation into ‘pellets’ of any duration, which can then be arranged in complex, individualized configurations and shifted to any part of the day or night.” (Robins and Webster, 2000, pg. 117)

There is no time basis for the work that is done by the users who is a part of such an information network. Rather it is given out in smaller pellet forms that can be of any length and produced at no fixed time. This is why Andrejevic (2009) disagrees with the current knowledge base of the ‘immaterial movement’. Such work is not associated with normative forms of wage labour that is ascertained by Marx’s writings; rather it should be associated with the essence of estranged labour and the way in which the worker essentially labours for an object that encapsulates his entire life.

Yet such a romanticised form of labour is still enamoured by the community, in particular the League of Legends community. While many play purely out of the utility of pleasure derived from competition, a large majority of those who follow the e-Sports scene seek to attain the same career level as the celebrities of the scene. In

this sense Marx's discussion of estranged labour alludes to such a nature within the current interactive digital economy. Marx states that:

The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object. Hence, the greater this activity, the more the worker lacks objects. Whatever the product of his labour is, he is not. Therefore, the greater this product, the less is he himself. (Marx, 2000)

However, Riot's own object, their game League of Legends as well as the e-Sports scene that surrounds it, has become a greater product than the worker who puts his life into producing content for the object. However such estrangement that Andrejevic highlights does not occur, rather the promise of professionalisation and the fantasy of attaining such celebrity status, makes so that estrangement never occurs. Thusly, the interactive economy that Riot is a part of asserts that they are able to:

"...return to producers control over their creative activity (to overcome the estrangement of the product), to build community (to overcome the estrangement of others), and to facilitate our own self-understanding (to overcome the estrangement of ourselves)." (Andrejevic, 2009, pg. 419)

The streamer upon Twitch is completely consumed by the game that they are broadcasting to the public, in a way that seeks to overcome many of the concepts of estrangement that Marx details. The streamer, even professionals such as Bjergsen, are funnelled within a system that analyses the content they produce within the games that they play, whether it be League of Legends specifically or other games that are played. From such an analysis, data is generated that allows the company to reconfigure the way in which they deliver the object to other perspective workers.

Enticing the audience to commit to such a romanticised form of labour. The individual submits their cognitive creativity in order to attain the grandeur illusion that they are able to live a life that is promoted to them by a company that gains a surplus value out of their work.

Conclusion

This study has identified and elaborated on the process of exploitation that occurs within the e-Sports gaming community, League of Legends. As demonstrated in the thesis, League of Legends depends upon user-generated content in order for its business model to work. Without it League of Legends would not exist to the same degree of fame that it has acclaimed currently. This content however is generated freely by the community, purely due to the utility that is gained from playing the game.

Through the use of Packer's (2010) archival method, a clear understanding of the way in which the truth claims that are made about the professionalisation of e-Sports profession, in particular League of Legends, can be seen. Through the analysis of assorted paratexts that allowed for a deeper and richer engagement with the culture, one can see that League of Legends not only facilitates the same types of power and knowledge discourses that Foucault (1972) detailed, but it also showed the way in which digital economies are currently encompassing every facet of the day to day lives of individuals.

Through the analysis of build sites, the tribunal system and live streaming, one can gain a bigger picture into the work of community. Work that is stipulated on the hope that one day, the individual will be able to professionalise their own play. This promise of professionalism conceals the exploitation from the gamer, whom instead focuses upon the possibility of himself becoming the next big star within the e-sports scene. The professionalisation of serious leisure enacts upon the desire and self-identification the individual has with the activity. In this sense, the amount of hours individuals spend on league harvesting points for better in-game matches,

participating in the tribunal so as to be recognised by the community and Riot as being an upstanding citizen, creating builds and facilitating play through the maintenance and refreshment of the meta-game and the rules and governance of the game, and creating user-generated content via live-streaming, all works toward an image of the gamer that has become a vested interest in the gaming scene. Games now focus upon the community and social interaction of play. To successfully foster a community, whom are willing to work without a qualm, is the true motivation of such modern gaming industries. The gamer has surpassed the identity of that of the kid within the arcade hall, rather now he has become a vehicle of advertisement. Every taste and behaviour analysed so that the content can be better crafted.

What does this mean for the future of e-Sports however, and how might we continue to contest such issues within the nearing generation of legitimated professional gamers? As of this typing, KeSPA have announced the possible introduction of wage payments for all professional e-sports athletes, emphasising that this will be the next step toward legitimising the game as a professional career rather than a sometime avid vocation (Gafford and Kulasinham, 2014). In the press release sent by KeSPA, a message on how the organisation is seeking to improve the welfare of its Korean pro-players shows the way in which Riot may seek to influence western cultures to follow the same paradigm. From supporting costs for teams who participate in championships as well as helping teams who do not have sponsors to find said sponsor as well as financially support the team and to introduce a minimum salary policy in which players will be paid for their work. Such policies are lacking within the North American region. To overcome such forms of exploitation that occurs within the everyday functioning of the game, Riot may be able to foster such policy changes, directly supporting the player base, rather than constantly relying

upon them to do their work for them. A mutual relationship, or a professional relationship, is required to foster a supportive and successful e-sports scene that will see the improvement of both qualities of games and the brand image of Riot overall. Not only is KeSpa giving this to the players but also regulation of the game may come sooner than some expected (Adriane, 2014). What this means is essentially that a standardized rule-set will be created for all matches and competitions, in order to sustain a professionalised image.

As computer games continuously focus upon the competitive core of gaming, driven with the need to overcome challenges and succeed over obstacles, it is fundamental that we seek to understand the way in which such games become ingrained within practices in society. Such an analysis could be applied to other gaming communities across other e-sports arenas as well as games that may not be included in the competitive scene, but may exhibit a similar community structure.

Whilst this thesis has centred itself on the analysis of League of Legends, it has also aimed to frame the nature of free labour and the current digital economy that exists. Through the examination and close analysis of the work done by the community and the production of professionalism, this research has contributed towards a greater understanding as to the professionalisation of gaming and the nature in which we should understand it.

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