

Tuesday Talks

PRESENTS

Dr. Curt Gervich

Center for Earth and Environmental Science

Speaking on

“Playing Games to Build Community and Advance Social Change.”

This case study research explores the theories, objectives and gaming formats developed by the creators of urban escape games, and considers what these games and their designers can teach urban planners about cities, sustainability and placemaking. The theory of transformative play provides a framework for considering the potential of games to advance social change. Urban planners are social changemakers that strive to create just, livable and sustainable cities. Two innovative gaming companies, Mystery City Games (MCG) and Questo, are experimenting with novel gaming formats that bridge urban planning and transformative play. These companies create real-world exploration games during which players solve mysteries by cracking codes, riddles and puzzles that are situated in the urban landscape. The games produced by MCG and Questo immerse players in the cityscape and require deep observation of the urban form in order to achieve success. MCG creates highly researched outdoor escape games based on historical events. Examples include *The Secret of Cerda*, which features the role of municipal planner Ildefons Cerda (1815-1876) in shaping the urban landscape of Barcelona, and *Outbreak London*, which follows the story of John Snow as he unravels the epidemiology of London's 19th century cholera outbreak. Questo, on the other hand, has developed an open-source app that allows anyone to build a Questo escape game. Consequently, the Questo platform offers games by a diverse community of amateur designers. Many Questo games tell hyperlocal stories and directly confront social problems such as racism, fascism and environmental degradation. Examples include Ludvig Larsendahl's *City of My Dreams: A Working Class Adventure on Södermalm*, which provides a glimpse into the struggles of a 19th century day-laborer in Stockholm, and *Garbatella: Street Art and Resistance in Rome*, by Ciara O'Siorain, which tells the story of Rome's rebellious Garbatella neighborhood. This presentation will feature interviews with MCG and Questo game developers, describe the play experiences of games created by both companies, and synthesize learning from these games within the context of urban sustainability and placemaking.

LIGHT
REFRESHMENTS
TO BE SERVED

Tuesday, November 12, 2024

5pm-6:30pm

**Alumni Conference Room in the
Angell College Center**

OPEN TO ALL

FREE OF
CHARGE

If you wish to be a speaker on this lecturer series, please contact Kristin Short (School of Arts & Sciences), ext. 3150