

ASD. The chapters are merely introductory, however, because of the breadth of content included and the advanced training required to implement many of the approaches. It is important for the potential reader to note that this is not a book about how to improve play for children with ASD. It is a book that describes interventions that are playful or play based and used primarily to improve other areas of functioning such as social interaction, relationships, communication, attachment and bonding. However, for its purpose as an overview of the many current play-based approaches for individuals with ASD, the book provides a sufficient summary of each, an indication of the type of evidence available for each strategy, and excellent case examples that help the reader understand the similarities and differences among the methods.

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Locally Played: Real-World Games for Stronger Places and Communities

Benjamin Stokes

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Locally Played: Real-World Games for Stronger Places and Communities by Benjamin Stokes introduces local community games as a distinct game type that involves real-world involvement and helps strengthen communities. As the author

writes, “This book is about reclaiming the local roots of play and aligning them with the digital practices and channels that are increasingly central to modern life” (p. 5). He aims to use this distinction to separate local games from other kinds of games and also to bridge the gap between practitioners and scholars. Using several case studies and a multidisciplinary lens, Stokes creates a holistic and socially minded method to design, analyze, optimize, and implement local games. He also offers a framework to define local games and differentiate them from other games happening in local spaces.

In the first chapter, “Introduction: A New Opportunity,” Stokes introduces his definition of a local game, discusses the necessity of multidisciplinary design considerations, and outlines the framework of chapters to come. Following the introduction, the book is segmented into two parts: part 1 (chapters 2 and 3), which focuses on a local game case study and an introduction to Stokes’s framework for local games and fit; and part 2 (chapters 4 through 8), which explores further case studies and offers several major design and social impact considerations when crafting local games. Chapter 2, “Social Exchange: *Macon Money*,” introduces readers to the game *Macon Money* (2010), a local game that took place in Macon, Georgia. Stokes uses this chapter to explain *Macon Money*’s structural design and illustrates how and why it was built around existing communities. The game was designed with the hope of bridging the socioeconomic divide in Macon, and Stokes discusses how the game and its mechanics reinforced this goal. In chapter 3, “Local Fit: A Framework for Stronger Communities,” Stokes

delivers a format for evaluating “fit,” a term he uses to describe the connection between existing communities and game play (or mechanics) in local games, and he also offers four paths to foster community strength when designing games: building social ties, connecting to the group, amplifying organizations, and bridging flows of news and information.

The fourth chapter, “Game Mechanics and Social Policy: Fit in Macon,” exemplifies Stokes’s framework for evaluating fit in local games. By using data collected from *Macon Money* and local interviews, Stokes offers a much more in-depth mechanical view of the game and dissects some of the missed opportunities that become visible in his data. Importantly, this chapter covers the idea of making the social dimension of local games more meaningful, and it advocates adding embedded reflection on the feedback loops existing within a game. Chapter 5, “Small Groups and Network Science: *Reality Ends Here*,” offers a case study of *Reality Ends Here* (2011). After describing the game, Stokes offers a deep dive into incorporating more network perspectives for seeing the full power and impact of local games. Furthermore, using a failed *Reality Ends Here* replication attempt, Stokes argues for adaptation over replication when trying to reuse models of local games. The sixth chapter, “Circulation across Platforms: Playful Movement, Stories, and Civic Data,” analyzes the connection between corporeal space and digital space and its ability to reinforce and strengthen existing communities. The penultimate chapter in the book, “Reclaiming Commercial Games: Cities Remix *Pokémon Go*,” uses *Pokémon Go* (2016) as a case

study for how cities can effectively leverage existing commercial games, along with some of the community-enhancing and socioeconomic-minded ideas within the remainder of the book, to advance local goals. In the final chapter, “Sustainable Growth and Design: Embedding with Scale,” Stokes offers principles for expanding local games more broadly and concludes with a view for the potential of local games in years to come.

The strengths of this text lie in Stokes’s interdisciplinary approach, intimately shaped by his unique perspective as a scholar-practitioner and community organizer with Games For Change. His advocacy for the use of network sciences within game design and his mindfulness toward preserving and actively strengthening preexisting communities absolutely set this work apart as a standout text for any designer, organizer, activist, or city official. The recurring mention of—and focus on—the need for socioeconomic and ethical considerations and equity within this text also provide a refreshing and necessary consideration for those looking to make local games.

One novelty of the book is Stokes’s attention to different audiences. He offers a delightfully playful option for readers to choose their own path through the book based on their discipline or focus. Stokes identifies urban innovators, designers, and game scholars as his audience. I believe this text may also inform activists, educators, students, and designers interested in having a more holistic and ethical approach to designing and studying games.

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