

underground gaming

establishing a non commercial game art scene.

the question of art – 2

what and why – underground games – 5

connecting factors – page 7

manifesto – 11

practical questions - 12

the question of art

I was once told that there is nothing as boring as a discussion about the question what is art. While I basically agree, I feel that some remarks are needed for my article about underground games to come, and that I would need to explain some of my views regarding the topic to be graspable – so I decided to create a own article for it for those who can stand to read this stuff. For the following post, I will mainly go along the critic of video games as art as cited on the [„Video Games as an art form“ article on the Wikipedia.](#)

A center of the debate are Roger Eberts statements [who vocally declined the idea that games might be art](#) within our lifetime; in his answer to Kellee Santiago (who claimed that football, chess, or mahjong can never be art since they are a collections of rules rather than a expression of thoughts, emotions, or ideas – but more elaborated video games could be art in a early stage of development) he admits that it is impossible to find a bulletproof art definition; he then claims that the important difference would be the possibility to win a game (stating that games that can not be won are in fact movies – he neither justifies the idea further, nor does he acknowledge that there are games that offer neither a score or a possibility to be won or can even finished) and goes on to devalue the games that were used by Santiago as examples for artistic games.

There are several flaws in the reasoning of both sides: Ebert answered on Santiagos argument that compared current games to „rudimentary“ cave paintings that he – and painters – regard those as a high form of art (a point on which I do agree), but he was blind towards the option that the same could be said for video games that use their catalogue of options to express feelings or ideas, or try to use them to capture principles or aspects of the world that their creators perceive.

Ebert also stated that he usually thinks of art as the work of one artist – but this is neither true for most paintings (that were often created by whole workshops – nearly all known masters had assistants, helpers, or trainees who worked on the now famous pictures), music (were the artistic process is often divided between a composer, arrangers, and musicians), movies (where many people with different tasks are involved) and often times not even for literature or poetry, where the connection between the piece and the artists is usually considered the strongest. The overwhelming amount of what we consider art is the result of collective work, but nobody would claim that Ingmar Bergmans Seventh Seal, Caravaggios Paintings, a song performed by a rock band or a symphony performed by an orchestra aren't art for this reason.

Both sides agreed that chess (or other competitive games) is no art; chess is often brought up in the debate, either by the one side who claims that chess isn't art so video games can't be art, or by the other side who claims that chess is not art but video games are somehow different. Given the prominence of the figure, I think it is worth to take a closer look to this – mainly because I believe that chess is indeed art on various layers – the first one being the idea of the game itself, as expressed in the fundamental set of rules. Just like a composer who creates a score or a choreographer who invents a dance needs a core-thought that is rendered into a „piece“, rules are a way to cast abstract thoughts into a game that might later evoke emotions and express ideas to both the players and a possible audience; the central themes of a game are likely to be already present on this layer, but often times they are present in a abstract, opaque form – the rules need the playing of the game as a medium to take effect and to crystallize into a graspable piece, but so does every piece of music, every movie, and every form of literature (a book that isn't read and thus converted

into a story within the mind of a reader is a mere bunch of paper). Thus the rules of chess (or mahjong, or football) are – as any other thought that exceeds the rudimentary – art on an ideal layer.

The second layer is the game as an object (this object might be digital – an object within an abstract room) – even a person with a strictly limited understanding of art would probably agree that the [Charlemagne](#), the [Lewis chessmen](#) or the figures of [Hrdlicka](#) are clearly a work of art. But the same is true for the more minimal, clear forms: Be it the [Bauhaus-Chess](#), the german [Bundesform](#), or the [Staunton set](#) that eventually became the standard for chess sets. All of those are an expression of ideas, and will evoke thoughts and emotions when being seen or used – why should they be judged in a different manner than other sculptures? They are a form of [applied art](#), and so is every other existing game on the material layer.

When chess (or any other game) is played, the player(s) create a synthesis between the ideal, abstract idea and the material world (often by using the material objects needed to play) – when doing so, they „cast“ the idea into reality and are thus involved at the process of realizing the piece – just as a musician who uses an instrument to play a score. While doing so the result will be influenced by the players emotions, thoughts, and ideals but also re-bounce onto these. The combination of rules, material, and execution will also communicate to and affect a possible audience (and cause excitement, hope, boredom...). The central themes of the game as defined by the core thoughts is interpreted into an individual story that unfolds in the act of playing – this is art, just as two jamming musicians or two debating philosophers produce art (who also use a set of rules – language and logic – to set their ideas and thoughts in competition). It might be interesting to note that while the core idea and the material game can be easily reproduced and thus [process no aura as described by Walter Benjamin](#), this synthesized game experience is always a unique one that can not be reproduced in any way. In lack of a better word I would describe this as art on a process-related layer.

Even if you reject one of these „layers“ – if you reject them all, your argumentation is likely to nuke the case for other forms of art that you – and nearly everybody else – naturally considers as „valid“ forms of art.

But the – in my eyes central – mistake done by both Santiago and Ebert (but especially Ebert) is the assumption that there is a certain quality needed for something to be considered as „art“ and that the term „art“ suggests the appreciation of quality in return. Are modern paintings, jazz, comics, erotic texts and pictures, or terrorist attacks art? All of this (and much more) was discussed in the last 100, 150 years – and if one takes a neutral stance towards it, there is nearly no other option but to confirm that all of this is indeed art. The question if a piece of art is good, and what the qualities of it are is an entirely other one.

A argument that I didn't directly read but that was indicated by Roger Ebert is the non definite form of video gaming; as the games usually rely on the input of the player, there is no certainly set story or content. The same is – however – surely true for every improvised art or any play that embeds the audience – both things are commonly regarded as art. And even art that is considered „traditional“ is dependent of the recipients interpretation – two people can read the same book, but – depending on their mindset, attention, and comprehension – they might get fully different stories out of it. There are [concepts of literature](#) and – in some cases ancient – [examples](#) for texts that are – like games – dynamic.

Other arguments that [are brought up](#) include that artistic values are not inherent to the game but are brought from the „truly“ artistic elements that are included within a game; accepting this argumentation would also exclude movies and plays that are usually also a amalgam from different artistic elements (mainly story-writing, set building, music and stage play). Also, I would regard any form of art as an attempt to realize thoughts that are existent in an ideal sphere into reality by using the form of art as an medium – this core-idea can never be inherent to some sort of art, but ultimately makes the difference between art and kitsch – if we wouldn't accept that forms of art need to be fertilized by other forms of art, the only true form of art that could remain would be the abstract idea – but given that nearly no form of art is able to exist in an isolated room, you don't even need to go along with me so far.

Then there is the comparison of video games to a playground, stating that a playground can not be art – but fail to give any reason for this assumption. Why should a playground be less an work of art than an landscape garden, a building or a painting? Because the target audience are children? If so, what are the implications for the works of Astrid Lindgren or Michael Ende? Would anybody doubt that „Peter and the Wolf“ – a piece made for the musical education of children – is art?

One source cited on the Wikipedia states that games serve a physical need; even if one would accept this, the [longing for aesthetic and transcendence was defined by Maslow as inherent to the human condition](#) – if a inherent need would disqualify video games as art, the inherent longing for art/transcendence would according to this logic disqualify art as art. And if Maslow would be wrong and there is no inherent desire for art – why should humans do art at all? Not even talking about the highly subjective distinction between psychology and physics and the rather bolt take to put the need to play on the latter side of the spectrum.

Another point is the market orientation of both big productions and independent games, leading to the production of kitsch. While I agree that market orientation tends to create bad and shallow art, the same is true – again – for music, movies, literature, and visual arts. Also there are countless examples for non commercial games – nearly all of the games reviewed for this blog are. The same is true for the idea that games are mainly programmed to serve the needs of the players that are regarded as customers – this is a problem inherent to capitalism and market orientation, not to video games.

After all, I see hardly room for any valid argument that disregards games as an form of art without colliding with a common understanding of art, even if you don't share the very broad art definition that I propound. A problem of video gaming that I see is, however, that they are widely presented and perceived as a mere product that serves mainly for simple entertainment – this might be due to their establishment falls mainly into a time were the unrestrained free market was already established as a irrefutable dogma. Video games, and their creation are deeply touched by the neoliberal capitalist utilization logic – even more so than movies, their slightly elder sibling. This might be – beneath conservative bigotry – a reason for some peoples impulse to reject the medium as art. My hope is that – by emphasizing the art aspect – it could be possible to create more awareness for the potentials of the medium, and the problems that are limiting it in the current state. By making ourselves aware that games are not only a simple pastime but a medium that always carries a message and that players are no consumers but participants in an process to create art we

might discover and expand unique paths of expressions rather than reproducing proven, accepted, and thus merchantable concepts over and over.

what and why: underground games

You might (or might not) have noticed that the arcane cache uses the term „underground games“ to describe the games that are reviewed here. When I [began](#) to review games here half a year ago, I wanted to shed light onto some games that caught my attention as they looked interesting, and that were out of sight for basically all the normal audience; most of them I noticed while promoting my own stuff at various places.

„Indie game“ is a broad category. According to who you ask, [it might include hobbyist productions and some of the best selling games of all time alike](#). [Nearly a third of the steam revenues is generated by „indie games“](#). Some of the „successful“ games might have been made by enthusiasts, but it would be naïve to assume that most of these in an economical sense „successful“ operations aren't designed and planned around the requirements of the market from scratch. This orientation on the market feeds back into the production of the games – as pointed out in [this article](#), the „big indie“ shots tend to develop for selected genres and cooperate with external publishers that are in need to invest their money into projects that deliver a reliable return. If more money is involved, the room for experimentation, for weird, raw, or abrasive content, and the space for artistic creativity is reduced. A similar dynamic exists for crowdfunded games where [developers have to align with the demands of the „backers“](#).

This problem is inherent to the capitalist system which tends to turn everything into a [commodity](#). Indie game developers aren't to blame for participating in this structure more than any other group (be it medics, carpenters, or social workers whose work is also commodified and who thus have to follow the rules of the market to survive) and it is understandable that indie developers want to live from something that they have chosen and enjoy to do. I'm sure most of them struggle and invest a lot into their products and most of the commercial games I enjoyed in the last few years were indie games made by (semi-)professionals. But the capitalist system the indie market is a part of has to be overcome (not only because it affects video games in a catastrophic way, but the whole world), [and the image of the „selfmade“ indie game developer is a highly problematic one](#).

I felt that I would need a term that would describe what I was out for: Good games that were primarily made for the sake of creating a good game, implementing ideas that their developers had in mind without giving much remark to the question if this could be sold. I thought the term „underground games“, following the terminology of „underground movies“, „underground music“, and „underground literature“, fitting to create a delimitation from the economically orientated indie market. Note that the borders here are blurry; there are games where I can't tell whether they were produced to be sold or whether they were made because somebody wanted to make them. Additionally, developers sometimes produce for the market, sometimes for the sake of just doing it. Playing, reviewing, or creating such games surely won't put an end to capitalism – but it is a small step to create rooms to enable an existence that isn't subject to capitalist rules (while, of course, realistically still influenced by them).

On the other hand, a frustrating number of games are in prototypical state, not a small amount of them don't run or are basically on the status of „Hello World“-programs. Of those that feature actual

gameplay, many are made sluggishly or suffer from a heavy lack of polish. I'm far from being a perfectionist, a nitpicker or anything like this, but most of these games are bad, not because their creators tried and failed, but because they either never had much motivation or lost it along the way. Maybe they even lost their spirit after they had noticed that the audience couldn't find their game within the big pile of tech demos, unrealized concepts, and asset flips that has buried their game.

In the result, the productions that I call Underground Games are suffocated from two sides. Countless of barely fleshed out games create a incomprehensible maze, but the places that should give orientation are largely occupied by enterprises (or by people who are, to make their living of their work, forced to behave like enterprises) that often utilize means unavailable to or rejected by Underground Developers, leaving them nearly no room to engross attention. After I checked and partly reviewed my initial findings, searching for games became fast the most time devouring (and sometimes frustrating) part of running this blog.

Eventually I always found great games (they exist!), and I'm planning to go on with this blog. But even the players that are interested in these kind of video game (those exist as well!) do have a hard time finding them even when they actively search for them. And we, who create this kind of game have trouble to find each another. Mutual aid, giving feedback, inspiring and learning from each other – all of this is limited or impossible since the now relevant hubs that replaced the existing spaces for Underground Gaming are either a) overcrowded by low effort products and marketeers or b) usually not designed around the idea that users spread content they created, but to turn users into content.

If we – the game developers who are not commercially orientated – want to change this, we need to emancipate from „indie gaming“ and create or revive own communal structures; I believe that the first step towards this direction is to create a definition of what that can be used as an anchor-point for developers and interested players alike. „Underground games“ – the term that came to my mind – might not be the best, but it is the best I came up with while still being free to take. If you have a better idea, step into the exchange and let us know. I plan to attempt a definition that is clear enough to be limited to the kind of games that I review here. The term must be resilient against attempts to subordinate it to the logic of the market, but also still open enough to be attractive for both developers and players who long for a kind of gaming that offers space for creativity and eludes the rules of the markets.

connecting factors

In the [last post](#) I wrote about the entanglement of the indie game market with capitalist logic, and about games that try to escape this logic, which I suggest to call „Underground Games“. Before I go on by trying to create a positive & fitting definition I would like to point out some connecting factors to existing scenes and communities. What infrastructure already exists, and what its needs and resources might be. How can they possibly help us, and how can „we“, the Underground Scene to come, help them?

The Indie Scene:

In the last post I mainly talked about the problems of the indie scene to illustrate the need of Underground Games to emancipate from the term. At the same time, the indie game scene is heterogeneous, and most of the people who likely care about Underground Games are gathered or linked with indie games (while being almost invisible). Easy-to-use engines such as Unity, Unreal, or Godot attracted many who try to realize their dream of making a game. These people might be interested in joining the Underground Game scene. The indie scene also includes some lost hobbyist movements: Some of the roots go back to the 90s Finnish Suomipelit-scene, and many who worked with flash, the Game- or RPG-maker tools, or that were active in the various modding/mapping scenes are likely to have gone there. They might notice that there is a space for DIY and hobbyist developers in the Underground Games scene.

The indie-scene offers an extensive infrastructure. Despite the problems of indie communities described in the last post especially [Itch.io](#) is a noteworthy platform: Its possibility to host games for free is great for hobbyists without their own infrastructure. Also, there are countless tutorials, tools and assets available.

Underground gaming should stay present within the indie scene but at the same time attempt to distinguish itself as a special semi-autonomous sub-category. A first step to do so is by using the tag „UndergroundGame“ within the indie infrastructure. If you are an Underground Game developer, you should be aware that there isn't much in to win for you when participating in the indie-community: The pie there is already divided between the big shots.

Linux-Gaming

For a long time, Linux was treated stepmotherly by the big producers – creating compatibility for Linux was a thankful way of increasing your audience – even more so if the game was [FLOSS](#), as these could be included into the distributions repository systems and thus made available easily to all users.

This changed a bit as Valve pushed more and more onto Linux. Parts of the community were just waiting to get access to AAA-Productions, others were new users that came in because they felt that the drawbacks of Linux-gaming were now sufficiently reduced. Most of the sites that write about Linux gaming do not differ much from common video gaming pages nowadays, but there are still echoes left of the systems once intense connection to non-commercial gaming. Showcasing your games in Linux boards will usually produce more positive feedback than elsewhere, and a few Linux gaming pages and streamers still have a soft spot for Underground Games. Also, there are at least some Linux users (especially those who are close to the free software/open source movement)

who see Valves involvement or DRM in general very critical. This part of the Linux community might be interested to play (or develop) Underground Games.

FLOSS-Gaming

The free/libre-open source gaming scene is naturally close to Underground Gaming; their practical rejection of intellectual property when it comes to source codes makes the FLOSS-Gaming-Scene inherently unattractive for capitalist operations, as the waiving of patent utilization is in itself an act of revolution against the logic of the market (at least if there is no point of return in sight for doing so, and – other than with software that might require your service as a developer – this isn't usually the case for games).

The main difference to Underground Gaming is the view on what makes a good game. The FLOSS community often concentrates on technical questions, while art and authenticity aren't that much of a focus for many of its members. Many of the most successful FLOSS games are pure engine rewrites (projects that try to replace the original source code of a game, but still need the original assets to run and usually do change nothing or little when it comes to gameplay) or close remakes of commercial titles. Original titles do exist, but are mainly a niche within the scene.

The FLOSS gaming scene lost a part of its traction as a good part of the audience was a direct result of the situation of Linux-gaming in general; the scene never cared overly for marketing, advertising, or other things to make their games known on a broader basis. When talking with FLOSS devs, I noticed that most of them have nearly no experience in this field. Only few projects reached wider popularity, but FLOSS-devs have a wide variety of tools, engines, resources and even complete games that are fully playable but largely unknown. The scene is fragmented. There are several smaller communities, and also lone wolfs. For the most part, it is a welcoming and very supportive place for developers who create FLOSS games; the people there are also usually ambitious about what they do.

I see many points that might enable cooperation. The mindset of Underground Gaming and FLOSS-Gaming are related, and „hobbyist indie devs“ often see their strength rather in designing gameplay than in the technical aspects of development, while many FLOSS-Engines suffer from a lack of content. Indie devs are also seemingly more firm when it comes to presentation or the use of social media. „Hobbyist“ Indie devs could be more independent from the big tech companies by adapting FLOSS techniques or could benefit from the supply of [free license assets](#). Underground Gaming could also be a entry point for those who don't know or are skeptical about adapting FLOSS models for their software. If you are a hobbyist dev: Consider it. The doubts you might have will usually be unfounded.

Decentralized Social Media / Fediverse

There are a few decentralized community efforts to break the power of corporate owned social media; prominent examples include [mastodon](#), [lemmy](#), [diaspora](#), or [peertube](#). While it could be criticized that most of these projects tend to imitate the problematic aspects of their models (especially the tendency to turn the users into content instead of supporting their communication), the general idea of decentralization is good. But these projects often suffer from a lack of content. Many content creators within the „Fediverse“ tend to copy the things that work on the big social

media; but on the big social media pages, you'll find the same content produced with much more budget, making the „Fediverse“-variants unattractive for the related audience. This is a problem that a part of the „Fediverse“-community seems to be aware of. They try to amend it by underlining the authenticity of non-commercial projects, resulting in projects like [RadioFreeFedi](#).

There are some content creators active on the Fediverse who are dedicated to gaming. We can try to embrace them by building up contact, ask them to review our games (or Underground Productions in general), and by offering them information about us and our games, and support with our range as individual developers and as a scene. If this works, it is a win-win-situation: They get a interested, interacting audience while the Underground Gaming scene gains affirmation and visibility by establishing dedicated media channels. The same strategy could work for blogs and smaller gaming sites.

Modding

Years ago many games used to have great modding capabilities. It was possible to flip fundamental game mechanics, turning shooters into strategy games – or strategy games into shooters. Nowadays, modding is still a thing – but for many big productions, modding abilities were reduced or removed either directly or by (partly commercially induced) shifts within the communities. „Pro Gaming“ gained influence, increasing the relevance of standardization at the expense of custom content (i.e.: Matchmaking as „default mode“ at CS:GO works only with a pool of standard maps – while the options of map making and modding still exist, many players are not aware of the possibility or won't use it). Another form of pressure for modders is that it is increasingly difficult to be attractive in the context of the high-value-productions that they are dependent of. Older games still have active and thriving modding communities, but these are bound to thin out and vanish as their playerbase grows older. Also, there are attempts to monetize modding: A prime example of this is [Roblox](#), infamous not only for their strategy to rip off children that wish to create games.

Therefore, the engines and moddable games provided by the FLOSS-Community could be highly attractive for modders who want to become independent of the industry. Providing tutorials, assets, and – especially a audience for this games – by accepting and interacting with them – would make the Underground scene attractive for them. However, reaching out to modders is difficult. They are – if at all – mostly organized within specific communities, sometimes controlled by the producers of their „host“-games.

Art-game-scene

Some people who make art in general experiment with video gaming as a medium. Some of them might make a living from cultural grants, but most of them are probably active in this field because they want to explore the possibilities and use it as a mean of expression; maybe it is possible to create connections?

Political left

As said elsewhere: Doing something for anything but its market value is – within a capitalist society – a revolutionary act. We don't want to get swallowed by the logic of the market, and people who have an interest in non-capitalist interaction are logical allies. But there is more: Even if you

wouldn't agree that [fascism is a consequence of capitalism](#), you don't want to have fascists around in your scene – they have a tendency to undercut and erode digital communities, turning them into piles of shit that no sane being can stand to remain in. Keeping the scene open and welcoming for minorities is another important point – not only because this is the right thing to do, but also because the scene will benefit from the various experiences and views that will condensate into more diverse and interesting games; offering safe spaces for nazis, nationalists, chauvinists, sexists, racists, trans- and homophobes and their apologists will, on the other hand, damn every community to replicate the current structures of power.

That doesn't mean that every Underground Game needs to have a clear political message. But connecting to anarchists, socialists, anti-authoritarians, and people who care for various human right- and environmental questions, collaborating with them, and granting them space within the community while shunning reactionist is the way to go. We keep out the scum, reduce the risk of becoming a Schrebergarten-colony, and help to get rid of a system that will destroy us all if we fail to overcome it.

Other underground scenes

Creating connections to underground poets, musicians, graphic artists and so on is another way to get fresh ideas, produce interesting art, and to increase our range and visibility. These people have the same struggles that we have, but – especially when it comes to music – are a bit further in realizing and reacting to it. We can learn from these scenes and help them to increase both their leeway to act (many of them might be interested in the possibilities of gaming as a medium) and their range.

Fading Communities

Some of the Underground Game developer communities from before the rise of the „indiegames“ are still there; often thinned out, mostly based on outdated or broken software, but some are partly active. Contacting them and trying to aggregate might be a possible start to form a stable and interesting community.

So what?

In my next text, I will attempt to create a definition of Underground Games that could serve as a common factor for the communities mentioned in this post. Most of them have a common interest, most of them have become weak in the last few years and would benefit from bundling up. If you think that I missed something, and especially if you are aware of non-commercial/hobbyist/Underground Game scenes not mentioned here: Contact me. You can reach me in the comments, at [Mastodon](#), or via `contact[dontspamme>thunderperfectwitchcraft.org` (replace `[dontspamme>` with an `@`).

the manifesto

0. Underground Gaming perceives games as a form of art.
1. Underground Games are non-commercial. They shun the logic of the markets and question the capitalist system. They attempt to create and use spaces for free creativity.
2. The Underground Gaming scene considers everybody as equal. Developers and players are both participants in the process of turning an abstract piece into a played game. Every form of group-focused enmity (including, but not limited, to ableism, classism, racism, sexism, homo- and transphobia) is ousted from its communities.
3. The Underground Gaming scene lives and dies by the exchange and interaction from its participants. It can only prevail through mutual support, acknowledgment, and feedback.
4. A Underground Game is a game that its creators consider to be complete. A work in progress or a demo is not considered an Underground Game until it is finished. The possibility to extend a completed Underground Game is explicitly supported.
5. Underground Gaming tries to empower people. It supports the sharing of knowledge and tries to reduce barriers. The scene helps people interested in Underground Game development to reduce dependencies from capitalist corporations, but does not reject creative work if dependencies exist.
6. Underground Gaming supports other non-commercial communities and movements. It seeks exchange and collaboration, as long as they share the fundamental values of the scene.
7. The Underground scene isn't carried or lead by individuals. Whenever possible, a democratic self-organization for communities is established.
8. The Underground scene is open to editing and modification.

practical questions

Now that „Underground Gaming“ has both reason and definition, one question remains: How do we *do* Underground Gaming? Some ideas are easy to implement for players and devs alike; others are easy to implement for developers. Finally, others will need some community effort. Let's see how far we can get.

For everybody:

- Search for Underground Games. Play them. Give feedback to the people who made them. They will be glad.
- Perceive games as art, not as a product. What makes a game good *art* as opposed to a good product?
- We should discuss how a community to talk about Underground Gaming could look like. Would you like a BurningBoard? Do you regard Lemmy, Matrix, or Mastodon as the best place? There is no need to arrive at one common solution, but reducing the fragmentation of the Underground Gaming scene is a fundamental step to allow to find each other, exchange ideas, and to grant mutual support. I'll create threads on the various platforms for hobbyist/Underground Gaming I'm aware of; if you aren't active there, you might also comment here or contact me via E-Mail: contact<DontSpam]><thunderperfectwitchcraft.org (replace <DontSpam]>< with an @).
- Spread the word to communities concerned with hobbyist game making, modding, or playing that you know of.
- Bring your own ideas and try to realize them – if things work out, you'll receive help in doing so. Everybody is creative – lets try to create a scene were the border between creator and consumer is dissolved.

For developers:

- Make non commercial games. This doesn't mean, however, that you can't take money for your games. Non-commercial gaming shouldn't mean self-exploitation. Using the option to make payments voluntarily, offering a way to compile the game from source while offering a paid binary, offer to exchange it for other games or media done by other underground artists, or – as a minimal definition – by not using any money as a budget that isn't your own while not trying to make a noteworthy revenue from your own investment of time or money could be good boundaries to set. This should be discussed in detail within the community.
- Shun every predatory tactic: Ingame shops, freemium stuff, microtransactions or data sniffing are obvious no-gos.
- Communicate with your players and other developers, share your knowledge and exchange feedback; if possible, open up your games for modding and edits.
- Consider to use #UndergroundGame as a tag for your games. This way, you make yourself detectable for other who identify as part of the scene. You can also use #UndergroundGame additionally to the #IndieGame tag. In my opinion, work in progress projects, betas and demos shouldn't be tagged as Underground Game before you regard them to be finished. What do you think?
- Consider making your games [free software](#); this goes especially for the [code](#).

- Consider to prefer community driven, independent social media over the big players when communicating about your games.
- Consider to interact and to collaborate with others – be it other developers from the Underground Scene, people active in other underground art scenes (music, poetry, graphics, and so on), people who engage in progressive politics, or content creators on decentralized media.
- If you are on Itch, consider joining the [Underground Games Collection](#). It is not a jam as it isn't intend to produce a result (no voting or anything) and doesn't end but a place to gather Underground Games on Itch.