# Playing With Play Moods in Movement-based Design

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Abstract: New design approaches focus on the lived body's capacity for sensing, feeling, and creating (Loke & Robertson, 2011) are emerging in sport, health, game, play, and innovation. These approaches' engagement in physical movement and movement-based learning becomes focal for designing new practices, artifacts, and interaction designs for movement and movement-based learning games. In movement-based design, a playful mindset is a medium for creating movement, which unifies with the understanding of playfulness as a facilitator of creativity (Bateson & Martin 2013). Aspects of play are also recognised to lower performance anxiety, spurring creativity and conceptualising ideas (Segura et al., 2016). The paper takes a starting point in the triad of play (Skovbjerg, 2013) to state that play is more than an instrument for stimulating design insights but a meaningful practice of moods. Operationalising the triad of play, this paper aims to analyse how different play practices and play moods unfold in two movement-based design workshops. Further to discuss how this perspective of play practice and mood can provide recommendations for movement-based design. With a constructive research design approach, two movement-based design workshops are our cases of data generation. We generated data using video observation, interviews, and observation notes. We found different play media, practices, and moods by an analysis of the participants' actions and interactions. The analysis points out that the participant engages physical and playful in the play moods euphoria and devotion conducive to generation, exploration, and meaningfulness. The paper recommends taking the perspective of play moods as an intrinsic motivating value in play to engage the participant in a playful mood conducive to spontaneity, exploration, and generation. The paper also encourages designers to reflect on the play concepts of ludic (Rulebased activities) and paideia (spontaneously and free activities) when designing through movement-based design.

Keywords: Play Moods, Co-Design, Movement-based Design, Design Methods, Game Design, Embodied Interaction.

# 1. Introduction

New design approaches focus on the lived body's capacity for sensing, feeling, and creating (Loke & Robertson, 2011) is emerging in the domain of sport, health, game, play and innovation. These approaches become focal for designing new practices, artifacts, and interaction designs for movement and movement-based learning games. Svanæs & Barkhuus (2020) present different types of design approaches working with a body-centred design like soma-based design, movement-based design, embodied design, and designing with and for the body. Movement-based design is defined as design activities, where physical movement is conceptualized as a design material for generating insights (Loke & Robertson 2013), stating that movement is a medium that stimulates, forms and catalyses insights within a design process (Andersen et al, 2020). However, designing for engaging bodily experiences is challenging and bodily design activities are focusing primarily on a technology sustained approach (Segura et al, 2016).

In movement-based design, a playful mindset is a medium for creating movement, which unifies with the understanding of playfulness as a facilitator of creativity (Bateson & Martin 2013). The French philosopher Roger Caillois used the concepts of ludic and paideia to describe the continuum of play; from spontaneously and free activities called Paideia to rule-based activities of Ludic (Caillois, 1961). A Paideia approach is an open-ended and spontaneous process (Bekker, Schouten & De Valk, 2020), whereas the approach of Ludic, on the other hand, is more game-based, rule-based, and controlled activities. The Gamestorming Design Approach by Gray, Brown & Macanufo (2010) has a ludic approach to design, by using design activities as games. Different aspects of play are exploited in movement-based design, where playful ways of expression and acting are characteristics of design activities (Andersen et al, 2020). Activities like object theatre, embodied storming, and roleplaying give designers access to test proposed solutions by acting, explore, and enact alternative futures (Schleicher, Jones & Kachur, 2010). In the methods of embodied sketching (Segura et al, 2016) play and playfulness are a medium for catalysing a creative mindset, an instrument for eliciting creative physical engagement and a way to lower performance anxiety.

These approaches mostly focus on play as an instrument for the design process, as we advocate for understanding a creative movement-based design process as a practice of play. Helle Skovbjerg (2013) definition of play as a triad of media, practices, and moods, allows not only for observing play as it unfolds but to

understand play as a meaningful practice with different ways of being in the play, characterized as play moods. Along with Skovbjerg (2013), we state that play is more than an instrument for stimulating physical creative design insights, but a way of being, that contain intrinsic value and meaning. Operationalising Skovbjergs triad of play, we analyse the generative part of a movement-based design process as a playful practice of moods. Hereby recognising play and movement as the meaning producer and key driver of the design process. This innovative approach has interesting perspectives on how we design with movement and play in the domain of health, sport, play, and play and game-based learning. The aim of the paper is to analyse how different play practices and play moods unfold in two movement-based design workshops and discuss how this perspective can provide recommendations for movement-based design.

This is done through 1) a theoretical description of Skovbjergs triad of play, 2) a summary of two movement-based design workshops, 3) an analysis of how play-practice and -moods unfold and 4) a discussion of the perspective of play practices of moods in relation to movement-based design. The article is relevant for researchers, designers, or practitioners in the domain of play-, game-, health-, and movement-design.

# 2. The triad of play - media, practice, and mood

In her research on play, Skovbjerg follows Danish and British children for months to investigate how play practices unfold in different settings. She plays with the children and hereby gets a unique first-hand impression of the practices of play and the meaning that is created in this practice. Skovbjerg (2013) defines play as a relation between play media, play practices, and play moods. Where play media (toy) are the objects, children play with, the play practices are the ways of doing with the play media(s), and the play moods are the way of being in these practices – the goal of the play. With this, play becomes a practice of mood, where different ways of doing with play media modulate different ways of being in the play.

Play media is the artifacts being used in play and can both be material and immaterial. The way the play media is used in practice is determined by the situation - e.g., a football will in one situation be a tool for playing football, but in another practice, it can be a bomb that 'kills' if you get hit. The play media offer a space of opportunities - possibly possibilities to be unfolded in multiple ways within the play practice.

#### 2.1.1 From practice to mood

A play practice is the action of a playing activity (Skovbjerg, 2013) and includes ways of doing it. The concept of play practice unfolds in the interplay between repetition and a distance to this repetition. Repeating a practice is not possible, it will always vary, and there will always be a relation between repetition and a distance or change to the repetition. Skovbjerg defines this relationship as the core movement of the play practice, and repetition and distance become a way to create meaning.

Based on the interplay between repetition and distance Skovbjerg determinates two factors that characterizes play practices; 1) if the player in the practice is oriented towards repetition and continuity or towards distance and changes and 2) if the rhythm in the practice is strong and hereby with a long duration, or if it is fleeting. This characterization leads to four distinct play practises: sliding, shifting, displaying, and exceeding.

The last element of Skovbjergs triad is the concept of play moods that unfolds in different play practice. Play moods are a description of the special state of being, which is a precondition for play and a goal when playing. When in play moods people say yes to the most and are open to what can happen. A key point is that rather than being an internal or external state, the mood is a constitutive aspect of our being in the world. A play mood assails us and is happening through our engagement with the doing of play and in our relations towards the people, we are with. The focal point is that the way we are playing (practices) with play media modulates the play moods. Skovbjerg detects the play moods of devotion, intensity, tension, and euphoria.

### 3. The two workshops

Two movement-based design workshops held at our university are the foundation for the data generation of this research. A workshop is a way to approximate a design practice, and the team-based activities in these workshops are like the teamwork that designers are exposed (Mueller et al. 2014). Tradition in Scandinavian design has taken the form of co-design, where the designers work in collaboration with users and other stakeholders (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). A design workshop with different stakeholders is a way to do or

simulate the participatory co-design work. Table 1 gives a structured overview of the two workshops, the participants, the content, and the design goal.

**Table 1:** A structured overview of the two workshops

Workshops	Participants	The Context	Overarching design goal
Playground workshop	16 students, 3 designers from the company, and 2 of the authors	The Lab for play and innovation and the Exploratorium.	Form insights into the playground company 2022 concept of designing outdoor playful fitness equipment
Conference workshop	3 students, 1 programming teacher, 2 engineers and 1 game-based learning designer plus 8 online participants.	A Hybrid workshop – Online participants from Europe and participants physically present at the local university	Based on a STEAM-X philosophy to create technology-based movement- based learning games.

# 3.1 Workshop framing

### 3.1.1 The workshops content and outcome

As a part of the course of Sports Innovation and Entrepreneurship at our local university in the autumn of 2020, a workshop together with a local playground company was enrolled. 16 students and three designers from the playground company participated divided into groups of 3-4 people. The authors of this paper facilitated the workshops and documented the process. The purpose of the workshop was to ideate perspectives on concepts of designing outdoor playful fitness equipment. The outcome of the workshop was 1) two video sketches of each group illustrating a playful physical activity and 2) a rapid prototype of the equipment that supports the activity.

Both workshops were held inside the Innovation Lab and at an outdoor Athletic Exploratorium, a combination of a track and field stadium, obstacle course, parkour installations, and a cross-fit area, and first lasted 6 hours and the second lasted 3 hours.

As a part of a conference, a movement-based hybrid workshop on designing STEAM-X learning games was held at our university together with online participants from Europe. Three sports sciences students, one programming teacher, three engineers and one person from the game-based learning industry participated physically in the workshop and eight people were participating online via the Zoom platform. The aim was to create movement-play learning games through STEM teaching. The outcome of the workshop was 1) video sketches illustrating a physical learning game and 2) a rapid prototype of the technology supporting the activity.

## 3.1.2 The structure of the workshops

The two workshops had different constraints and design goals, but they shared the same structure of a movement-based ideation part at the Exploratorium. The workshops can roughly be divided into three parts:

The first part was located inside the Innovation Lab. The local playground company in the first workshop and the teachers of the conference workshop framed the design challenge, the design process, the context, and the design goals. Part two is the movement-based generative activities located at the Exploratorium. We allocated a specific equipment-based space for each group with artifacts such as rope, balls, boxes, wooden poles, plates, tumbling equipment, hurdle, and sledge. Using movement-based instructions and inspirational methods cards the groups created two video sketches of playful physical activity. In the last part, participants analysed the video sketches together and made a quick mock-up of the equipment. At the conference workshop, the participants made a technology mock-up.

# 3.1.3 A movement-based design approach

The workshops were framed with the goal of using the moving body first approach informed by Segura et al (2016) and Loke & Robertson (2013), who both recognize that movement is a central part of the early stages of a design process. Locating the participants in different limited physical spaces, we supported the participants to use the physical space as a design resource. Participants were divided into small groups to lower performance anxiety and to stimulate social aspects as a design resource for higher engagement, positive emotions, and mutual eye contact (Segura et al, 2016]). By using movement-based inspirational and instructions method cards in the generative part of the workshops, the aim was to give the participants autonomy to facilitate their own process.

# 4. Research design and methods

Our study is based on a Constructive Design Research (CDR) approach (Koskinen et al, 2011), where knowledge is generated in the construction of movement-based design methods cards and the test of the cards in two workshops. The Movement-based design methods cards used in the workshops are part of an Erasmus+ project developing a movement-based method card toolbox.

#### 4.1 Methods to generate data

To document the two workshops, data from video observations, video sketching and later semi-structured interviews were generated.

GoPro and a video camera were used to video observe the participants' embodied experiences and actions (Alaoui et al, 2015) and hereby capture the ephemeral movement. Generating visual material from 5 groups the aim was to gather data to analyse and reflect the participants' bodily actions.

As a part of the design process, the participants did a video sketch recording their best physical design ideas (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The data of the self-recorded video material was a way to provide participants with a sense of agency and an opportunity to speak for themselves by showing their bodies (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). Data from the self-recorded videos were used to find key sequences in the video observations.

Semi-structured online interviews (Smith & Sparke, 2016) using Zoom were conducted to understand the participants' experiences and reflection on the generative part of the workshops. Five participants participated in the interview, one from each video observed group. During the interview we showed identified key video sequences, to make it easier for the informants to describe their bodily actions and experiences (Smith & Sparke, 2016).

#### 4.2 Data treatment and analysis

To identify, analyse and find patterns within the generated data the analytic work is informed by the thematic analysis (TA) (Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2016). The analysis is based on the participants' actions and doings primarily based on the video observation. Transcribing the identified key video sequences the transcription is interpreted as relevant material (Heath, Hindmarsh & Luff 2010).

# 4.2.1 The analytic work

Informed by the flexible approach to the six steps in TA (Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2016), the analytic approach has been reflective and iterative. First step: Becoming familiar with the video material by transcribing and observing the video observations. The second step is to code the transcription. The codes can be characterized as data-driven because the process is guided mostly by the data. Steps 3 to 5 concern the organization of the codes to possible themes, and then revising these themes to form a rich analyse of data, and themes of play practices and play moods emerged. Through a dialectic process including the codes, the video observations, and the theory of Skovbjerg, the themes were qualified and refined. The participants' descriptions of their actions in the process from the interview, were used to ensure the interpreted actions and the generated themes. Step 6 is to write the analysis.

# 5. Play and (play) moods in a creative movement practice

# 5.1 Play media is generative

The space of opportunities, that the play media offers the player is by Skovbjerg (2013) described as the concept of affordance. James J. Gibson states that the world unfolds itself in possibilities for action (Skovbjerg, 2013), and affordance is what the environment offers to the individual. The affordance of the play media is a "for this" and only relevant in relation to the play practices and hereby embedded in the meaning structure of the play practice.

At the first stage of the ideation process, the participants were instructed to individually explore different movement possibilities with self-chosen artifacts at the selected location. At the fitness-stand of the Exploratorium Andreas, one of four participants, picks three rings, a rope, and a stick and starts to explore ways to move with these artifacts:

Andreas looks around and finds some rope and starts to tie it to a small stick. He looks at the hula hoop, that is placed on the fitness-stand, throws the stick through the hula hoop, and afterwards brings the stick back by pulling the rope. He tosses again and hits through two rings and continues to throw the stick from multiple angles and distances. He laughs before he creates a hoisting system with the rope and the fitness-stand and sits on the stick and swings. He repeats this only a few times before he ties the rope to the stand and starts juggling with a ring on the rope. (Condensed part of the transcription)

The affordance of the play media is defined when used, Andreas explores how he can play with these play media in different ways. After he had thrown the stick multiple times, he constructs a hoisting system and uses it as a swing. The exploration of the rope unfolds different ways of playing and creating meaning, from mastering a throw, to swinging from side to side. Later, he ties the rope to the fitness stand and juggles with the hula hoops, which illustrates that the affordance of the play media is changed due to the way Andreas plays with them. His bodily experimentation with the play media drives the process.

By actively engaging in the exploration of the affordance of the play media, Andreas is creating three different ways of playing and thereby three design ideas. Andreas's ways of doing with different play media are generative for the design process and the engagement with the play media can here be seen as a creative practice.

# 5.2 Generating design ideas by adjusting - a mood of devotion

At the conference workshop, one group of three participants started the ideation using the allocated methods cards. The end goal was to video-sketch a learning game. They were instructed to ideate with an artefact exploring the artifacts' different movement possibilities. The group also picked an inspirational card with "Mastery". While Andy holds the camera and talks with the online participants the other start:

Mikkel takes a stick and starts juggling, quickly Jonas picks two cones and starts imitating Mikkel's juggling. Shortly after they both fail, and Mikkel says:" Or, we can master something together", turns to Jonas and they start to joggle together with the stick and the cones. Jonas puts in another stick in the play. They are concentrated and try to cope with the motion of each other to time the throw. In the beginning, the rhythm of the toss is slow, but shortly the frequency of the throw arises. "Sticks go high, and cones low"! They smile and laugh when-ever they hesitate to throw. "Let's try to throw the sticks into the cones" — Mikkel says and keeps the cones, while Jonas starts tossing the sticks into the cones. He misses two times, and they change and continue. (Condensed part of the transcription)

Throughout this practice, Mikkel and Jonas keep the repetition of throwing with the play media, having a strong repetitive rhythm of the play practice. The repetition of throwing is maintained with minor distance and the play evolves through small adjustments. Mikkel and Jonas change the practice from juggling alone to "mastering something together". Soon, Mikkel and Jonas make rules of how and when to throw the sticks and the cones to each other striving to keep the rhythm of the practice, and the small adjustment is oriented to keep the play practice going. This characterizes the play practice of sliding, keeping a strong rhythm aiming for being in the play and Mikkel and Jonas are oriented to sustaining the activity.

The play mood of sliding is characterized as devotion, where players normally play for a long time. This play practice and moods are the archetypes, and in real-life never just one kind of mood. Being in the mood of devotion Mikkel and Jonas are concentrated and focused. Their openness to create new meaning is firstly focused on a wish for being in the play and what is meaningful, made optional through small adjustments.

Through the play practice, Mikkel and Jonas are experiencing and exploring the design idea of juggling together, and by making small adjustments and rule changes, the play practice is meaningful and generative for the design process.

### 5.3 The mood of euphoric – creating ways of doing

At the playground workshop, five participants are located at a bridge made of rope. The quote is from the beginning of the generative part, where the participants just arrived at the place with the allocated artifacts:

The five participants stand in a circle. Jonas picks up a plastic square and starts throwing it around. They start throwing a ring and a bottle of water. The artifacts are in the air, and at one point, Simon managed to catch the bottle in a stretched arm. Everybody laughs and cheers. Then Lasse starts to drag Morten around on a sledge and meanwhile Charles is swinging in the ropes under the bridge. Lasse picks up a ring

and Simon throws the ball over the bridge, and when it falls down Lasse is moving so it falls into the ring. This section is repeated, but this time the ball falls through the ring and back from the ground in between Lasse's legs. This leads to several participants burst out "Uhhh" and start to laugh. (Condensed part of the transcription)

As a part of the design process, the participant is trying to explore how they can move with different play media at the location. They interact by throwing artifacts at each other's, pulling each other's or by leading each other. When the participants are standing in a circle and throwing the square at each other, Jonas takes the square and sits on it, and Simon brings in a bottle. There seems to be an intention to exceed the practice when Jonas sitting on the square. Using play media towards exceeding a practice is characterized by the mood of euphoria. Euphoria is open-minded because the participants must be constantly open to new ideas and expect silliness. The players' production of meaning is formed by constantly seeking new ways of expression to change the former practice

This production of meaning becomes generative because there are constantly new ways of doing it. The practice can be described as: 'it is not what makes sense to do, but what can I do?'

### 5.3.1 A change in play mood to sustain a practice

After three minutes the participants find a rhythm in throwing the ball into the bridge, which changes the practice of exceeding. Keeping the same action of throwing the ball over and into the bridge, but with minor changes in catching the ball, the participant focused on sustaining the activity. This is characterized as a sliding practice with a repetitive rhythm to maintain the play practice. Firstly, the person under the bridge stands on a plate, then a rolling stick, then a hurdle becomes the target, and later the ball must be tossed over the bridge to be bounced by two persons with a giant stick into the hurdle. By making small changes in the activity, the focus for the participants is to keep playing. The mood can be characterized as devotion.

### 6. Discussion

The analysis points towards, that the way the participants move, engage, and interact with play media is generative and can be defined as a play practice of moods. Using play media is not an unfamiliar thing in design and movement-based design e.g., Schleicher, Jones & Kachur (2010) uses acting roles, Segura et al (2016) use the physical space and artifacts as a resource for the design process and Loke and Robertson (2013) use the body as a material within the design process.

The view of design as an interrelationship between artifacts (media) practices (methods) and moods is new and different from other perspectives in movement-based design. By adding a layer of mood, we highlight a focus on letting play moods characterized as open-minded and spontaneous being drive the process. With this play mood philosophy, we advocate for a perspective in which play moods become the driver and value of the process. This aligns with Segura et al (2016) statement, that play may be used as both a method (medium) and as an intrinsically motivated goal. This is illustrated by Andreas' bodily experimentation with the play media, where the practice is changing in relation to his exploration of the affordance of the play media. The playful practice and his physical movement drive the process and as such play turns out to be both the goal and the medium as proposed by Segura.

### 6.1 Ludic and paideia

The workshops have aspects of both paideia and ludic (Caillios, 1961), with few rules like an advocated location, a fuzzy end-goal, and self-facilitated method cards. More rules e.g., social regulation by turn-taking or spatial-social organization (Segura et al, 2016) of the participants represent a ludic approach to the generative aspects of the movement-based design. The ludic approach is mostly present in design activities when e.g., framing the design processes, creating rules and does and don'ts, but also setting an end goal like e.g., Gray, Brown & Macanufo (2010). In Bekker, Schouten & De Valk, (2020) the focus is on an open-ended playful approach to design, representing a more paideia approach, where spontaneity and improvisation drive the process. This echoes our ambition of letting the spontaneity and openness within the practice of play drive the process.

The reflection of the balance between regulating and controlling (Ludic) or letting the participants be free and spontaneous (Paideia) is an important reflection that the designer must consider being in movement-based design practice. This can be a difficult task as Bekker states:

An important challenge of designing for open-ended play is how to find a balance between, on the one hand, provide some triggers for play and some minimal structure and, on the other hand, not to provide too much structure but leave enough room for improvisation.

### 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper takes the point of departure in constructive design research and presents how play-practices and play moods hold the potential to vehicle generative processes in movement-based design, based on empirical insights from two workshops. The analysis points toward participants being in the play moods of devotion and euphoric drives their engagement in the physical play practices conducive to generation, exploration, and meaningfulness. The participants innovate, play, and move together to design for play, fun, and movement. Play and movement become both a goal and a means for the design.

The paper recommends designers, researchers, and practitioners to reflect on the relationship between play media, practice and mood when designing in the domain of play, game, health, and movement-based design. Also, we encourage designers to reflect on the continuum of ludic or paideia when designing through movement-based design. We recognize that further research is relevant to investigate how designers can actively work with play moods when designing for play, game and health.

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