Productive Play: An Oxymoron?

A study on professionalized live-streaming on Twitch.tv in the case of StarCraft II

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Abstract

Alongside with the emergence of the Web 2.0 environment consumers of digital media have been introduced to online live-streaming platforms that enable consumers to produce their own media content. Thus, live-streaming platforms have taken part in reshaping the traditional 'top-down' corporate-driven model of media production towards a more consumer-oriented, on-demand production model. In this sense, especially the live-streaming platform *Twitch.tv* promotes consumer-driven media production to the extent that some game live-streamers can even make a living by producing their own media content. When this phenomenon is explored from the perspective of how playing games is often seen as a waste of time and energy, the question arises if professionalized live-streaming has also shaped the nature of playing games. Thus, in this study it has been questioned why and how live-streaming *StarCraft II* (Blizzard Entertainment, 2010) on *Twitch.tv* has been turned into a professional activity. By exploring how the activity of live-streaming has been professionalized within this context, this study establishes an understanding of how players of *StarCraft II* have not only become professional producers of digital media, but how in the process the boundaries work and play have also been blurred.

1   Introduction

Playing video games is often seen as a waste of time and energy. Most people would rather consider gaming merely as a way of spending one's leisure time as opposed to more seriously taken and productive activities. As Pearce (2006) notes "even for people who regard games as a high cultural form – including those of us who make a living playing, writing, talking about, and making them – the general consensus is that games are not productive (pp. 1-2). Indeed, in some cases people have been able to turn their gaming hobbies into productive and even professional activities. If we think of a more traditional game, such as Chess, the board game is considered to revolve around intensive mental competition between professional players. If we go as far as to think of some conventional sports as games, such as football, countless other examples begin to emerge of how players have become professionals in their own field. But playing video games is somehow different. When video gaming is compared especially to conventional sports, alarm bells often go off (Taylor, 2012, p. 99). How could video gaming ever be somehow productive, not to even speak of the activity as a well-respected profession? To a large extent the competitive video gaming scene, commonly known as electronic or 'eSports', has already contested such notions throughout the past decade (Taylor, 2012). But, whereas in electronic sports gaming has been professionalized by being a skillful player, it appears that in the past few years players have been enabled to turn their gaming into an actual job also by other means.

Thanks to the emergence of online live-streaming platforms, such as *Twitch.tv*, gamers are now enabled to make a living by streaming their gaming activities. Already in 2011 it was reported that successful streamers were making 50$ per hour by streaming gaming content (Gaudiosi, 2011). This income is achieved by through advertisement revenue, the money received from viewer subscriptions, and by receiving donations from the viewers of a given game live-streamer. The streaming scene has exploded in popularity since 2011 and today some streamers are able to make the kind of money that is "well over the average medium American income [by] doing professional live-streaming ('*Winter*', 2014). And, due to the technical easiness for an individual to set up one's own video game live-stream, more and more people have started to stream their own game-play. In this sense, it is no surprise that "with all these potential revenue sources, more streamers are going full-time, quitting their jobs, and attempting to live the dream of being paid to play video games" (Hamilton, Garretson & Kerne, 2014, p. 2). From an

academic standpoint, the idea that players of digital games have been able to professionalize their gaming activities to the point that they can drop their old jobs and start playing games for living, is an intriguing one. From the perspective of Media Studies, the manner in which players combine two separate forms of digital media – video games and live-streaming – appears as a case-example of how new media innovations can have cultural and societal impacts. As it would seem, the emergence of live-streaming platforms has created a new job market by bringing two cultural activities together: playing games and online broadcasting. In the process, also the roles of players as consumers as opposed to producers have been merged (Jenkins, 2006). From the perspective of Game Studies, equally interesting is how the very nature of playing games has been influenced by live-streaming. Even in the field of Game Studies, some have argued playing games to be an inherently unproductive activity (Huizinga, 1950; Caillois, 1961). However, such opinions have been contested by a number of other game scholars. In this case, both Pearce (2006) and Sotamaa (2009) take Huizinga's and Caillois' notions as starting points, but argue against the idea that playing games would be y a waste of time and energy. Instead, both authors argue in favor of the productive practices that emerge from playing games, and point out that player productivity also blurs the boundaries between play and production, between work and leisure, and between production and consumption of digital media (Pearce, 2006, p. 1; Sotamaa, 2009, p. 3).

Following in the footsteps of Pearce (2006) and Sotamaa (2009) this paper focuses on such blurring boundaries that can be witnessed in the case of how *StarCraft II* (Blizzard Entertainment, 2010) is live-streamed on the online streaming platform *Twitch.tv*. Thus, the research was devoted to the question "why and how live-streaming *StarCraft* II on *Twitch.tv* has been turned into a professional activity?" By exploring the manner in which live-streaming has been professionalized, the research aimed to bring light to the blurred boundaries of players as producers of digital media, as well as to the boundaries between work and play. The research draws upon theoretical discussions emerging from the academic fields of Media Studies and Game Studies. Similarly to the studies of Pearce (2006) and Sotamaa (2009) also this paper takes as starting points the ideas of Huizinga and Caillois but at the same time contests the idea that playing games would be inherently an unproductive activity. As it would appear, by consuming two forms of digital media – online live-streaming platforms as digital games – players produce a form of digital media which is consumed by an audience of over 34 million people on *Twitch.tv*

alone (Hamilton, Garretson & Kerne, 2014, p. 2). Furthermore, it is suggested that when professionalized live-streaming is brought into the context of playing games, also the nature of play becomes closer to work as opposed to spending leisure time.

2   Theoretical Background

The overall perspective from which the topic of this paper is approached from is a *cultural* one. In his text-book on Game Studies, Mäyrä (2008) notes that so far the focus in research on games has commonly been divided to a) study of games, b) study of players, or c) study of the contexts of the previous two (pp. 2-3). In other words, whereas other scholars have been interested in analyzing "games as 'themselves', as text and systems", others have emphasized the importance of "understanding the players and the activity of gaming" (Sotamaa, 2009, p. 13). Thus, this paper falls into the third category described by Mäyrä (2008) as the primary focus is on the playing and live-streaming activities of game community members. Yet, attention is also given to the game itself due to the fact that without the existence of the game also the activity of live-streaming any video content related to the game would not be possible. Similarly to the work of Sotamaa (2009) the aim of this paper is to broaden "the understanding between the relation of play and other forms of game cultural productivity" (p. 3). This means that instead of understanding the activity of playing games merely as way of spending one's leisure time, this paper rather considers the activity of "playing digital games to be productive in various visible and concrete ways" (Sotamaa, 2009, p. 18). As such, attention is given to two different, but at the same time interconnected topics. On the one hand, the interest is on the idea of how players of digital games become professional producers of digital media when gaming activities are combined with live-streaming. On the other hand, when playing games is joined with professional live-streaming, the question arises if also playing games becomes closer to being work as opposed to leisure time. Further elaboration will be provided in the following.

From the perspective of Media Studies, the interest in this paper is on how technological (new) media innovations, such as live-streaming platforms, have enabled people to produce their own entertainment media. And, as a consequence, consumers have themselves in the process become professional media workers. As Bird (2011) notes, "the rise of digital media, specifically the Web

2.0 environment, has profoundly changed the everyday interactions people have with media today (p. 502). What Bird (2011) is pointing to, is what also Sotamaa (2009) about the transformation of the digital media consumer: "This development is part of a larger phenomenon, namely the convergence of cultures of media production and consumption" (p. 16). While the idea of *convergence* will be returned shortly, it must be first noted that the general idea of consumers becoming producers has been around before the era of Web 2.0 environments. Already in 1972 McLuhan and Nevitt suggested that with electric technology the roles of consumers and producers would merge (McLuhan & Nevitt, 1972, p. 4). Similar thoughts were put forward by Alvin Toffler in (1981) who coined the portmanteau term *prosumer* when he was discussing the ways how the roles of producers and consumers would begin to blur (pp. 275-299). The general idea behind these notions is that instead of people being passive media consumers as it would be in the case of people who watch television, consumers instead actively participate in producing media content. These participatory engagements are commonly connected to the idea of *participatory culture*, as discussed in detail by the media scholar Henry Jenkins (1992). From a more general perspective, the tern refers "to a form of media consumption in which audiences take an especially active role in the circulation of media texts" (Sotamaa, 2009, p. 87). Furthermore, as Sotamaa (2009) puts it, "the idea of participatory culture contrasts with the notion of having separate roles dedicated for media producers and consumers (p. 16). Later on Jenkins updated his idea by turning the focus to corporation-driven media production, and its relation to active media consumerism. Thus, the discussion moved from the term *participatory culture* to the more focused idea of a c*onverge culture* (Jenkins, 2004; 2006). As Jenkins (2006) explains, "convergence, as we can see, is both a top-down corporate driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driver process" (p. 18). Jenkins (2006) elaborates on this by saying that:

"[…] Media companies are learning how to accelerate the flow of media content across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden markets, and reinforce viewer commitments. Consumers are learning how to use these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other consumers" (p. 18).

The idea of (media) convergence[1] has "been hailed as creating a 'cultural shift', which has realigned the roles of audiences and producers in profoundly new ways (Bird, 2011, p. 503)[2]. This cultural shift is also what is being focused in this paper. As it will be shown, the ideas of *participatory culture* and *convergence culture* are clearly apparent in the games-specific live-streaming scene. In specific, the way how two different forms of digital media (live-streaming platforms and digital games) have been joined together, by actively participating game community members, is a perfect example of how a top-down corporate-driven model is moving towards a more consumer oriented, professional media production.

But what happens when players, as consumers of digital media, become professional producers in the case of live-streaming? If professional live-streaming and playing games are combined, does this also change the very nature of playing games as well? As hinted in the introduction, playing games is often considered as an inherently unproductive activity. In an academic context, such notions of can be dated back to the forefathers of Game Studies: the Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga (1938, 1950), and the French sociologist Roger Caillois (1961). From the perspective of Huizinga, 'play' is a "[…] a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary" life as being "not serious" (Huizinga, 1950, p. 13). Similarly to Huizinga, also Caillois considers play as 'free' activity (Caillois, 1961, p. 9-10). However, whereas "Huizinga in this connection emphasizes how play is carried out for its own sake; Caillois accentuates the voluntary and non-obligatory nature of play (Sotamaa, 2009, p. 40). Also, in Huizinga's eyes, play is "an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it" (Huizinga, 1950, p. 13). Similarly to Huizinga, also Caillois notes that play as an activity is "creating neither goods, nor wealth, nor any new elements of any kind" (Caillois, 1961, p. 10). In other words, for Huizinga "play does not acknowledge any material interest or utilitarian and profit-oriented activities" (Sotamaa, 2009, p. 39), whereas for Caillois "play is primarily 'pure waste' and at the end of the game nothing has been harvested, manufactured or created" (ibid, p. 40). In this sense, it is suggested that both Huizing and Caillois consider *play* having a dichotomous relation to *work* (Sotamaa, 2009, p. 39). Both Huizinga and Caillois also emphasize that play is separate from the ordinary world (see Huizinga, 1938, p. 10; Caillois, 1961, pp. 8-9). The idea behind is that play takes place within a "dedicated playground, a

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[1] See also Deuze (2007) for further elaboration on how media convergence functions within creative industries.
[2] It must be noted that Bird (2011) also presents well-established criticisms on the hype around the idea of media convergence as such

separated space and time reserved for play (Sotamaa, 2009, p. 38). This 'playground' has been discussed under various different terms in other scholarly discussions. For example, terms such as *playworld* (Riezler, 1941), *frame* (Goffman, 1961), and *membrane* (Castronova, 2005) have all been connected to a general idea of a boundary separating play-activities from real life interests. However, arguably the most apparent concept in Game Studies has been the *Magic Circle*. While the *Magic Circle* appears for the first time already in Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* (1938, p. 10) it was only later on adopted by later scholars, especially that of Salen & Zimmerman (2004), in the way how it is understood today. As Stenros (2012) explains "the idea of the magic circle is that as playing begins, a special space is created [and] what happens within is interpreted playfully and has no direct effect on the everyday world" (p. 2). While the actual meaning of the *Magic Circle* has remained somewhat ambiguous, the term is "useful in describing the difference between play and non-play; a handy metaphor that acts as intellectual shorthand for more complex set of social relations (Stenros, 2012, p. 1). The *Magic Circle* can refer to two different kinds of boundaries. On the one hand, it the *Magic Circle* can be considered as a *mental* boundary. This refers to a separation between *serious* and *playful* mindsets when engaging in playing a game (Stenros, 2012, p. 5). On the other hand, the term may also refer to a boundary preventing real life interests from leaking into the domain of play. This latter understanding of the *Magic Circle* directly points back to Caillois' idea of a boundary that separates real life material interests and profits from leaking into the domain of play.

It is no surprise that the idea of play as an inherently unproductive activity has been challenged by many scholars interested in studying games and their players. As Sutton-Smith (2001) points out: "play is obviously very serious to its participants; they strive very earnestly and with great effort at their play and sports, and their efforts produce important personal and social outcomes that cannot be gotten easily in any other way (p. 202). Also Juul (2005) has voiced his opinion on the matter by saying that "the idea of games being unproductive is highly dubious if productivity is not limited to production of physical goods. If games do not produce anything how can we explain that so many people earn their living by designing, playing, studying, and writing of games" (p. 44). Special attention has also been given by Pearce (2002; 2006)[3] and Sotamaa (2009). In her study on player productivity Pearce (2006) argues that: "[…] neither play nor games is inherently unproductive and furthermore, that the boundaries between

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[3] See also Nardi, Pearce & Ellis (2008).

play and production, between work and leisure, and between media consumption and media production are increasingly blurring". She also makes a specific note about the the *Magic* Circle: "[…] in the process, the sacred 'magic circle', which appears in various forms from Turner (1982) to Salen and Zimmerman (2004), is also beginning to blur (p. 2). Similarly to Pearce, also Sotamaa (2009) is interested in the blurring roles of play as opposed to work, but also in the roles of players as consumers when compared to producers of digital media. As Sotamaa (2009) puts it: "player production underlines how digital media products are increasingly also tools that allow media consumers not only to personalize their experience but also to share and circulate their productions" (p. 105). Furthermore, he also notes that "player production can be transformed into a games-specific mode of immaterial labour" (p. 76) and that "player production as a form of immetarial labour also challenges our understanding of the relation between work and leisure (p. 106).

Thus, this paper follows in the footsteps of Pearce (2006) and Sotamaa (2009) by presenting a case-study on the live-streaming scene of *StarCraft II* that takes place on the online live-streaming platform *Twitch.tv*. The research was devoted to the question: *why and how live-streaming StarCraft II on Twitch.tv has been turned into a professionalized activity*? By exploring the manner in which live-streaming *StarCraft II* gaming content on *Twitch.tv* has been professionalized, the research aimed to establish an understanding of how a) how the roles of players as consumers as opposed to producers have changed, and b) how professionalized live-streaming shapes the nature of play into a productive activity, thus also breaching the boundaries between play and non-play.

3   Method

In order to answer the research question described above, the study was conducted in the following manner. First, a literary review was conducted by looking into relevant books, articles, and other academic sources discussing live-streaming and *Twitch.tv*. Next to the literature revolving specifically around live-streaming and *Twitch.tv*, some attention was also given to studies related to professionalization of gaming and in specific electronic sports. Within the context of electronic sports, studies related to the game *StarCraft II* were emphasized due to how the game has a central role in the case-study of the paper. Finally, in some occasions where

information could not be found from academic texts other, non-academic sources were used such as online discussion boards and articles found from the web. The case-study took the form of qualitative, semi-structured interviews (Byrne 2004, Stokes, 20013). In total of three, approximately one hour long interviews were conducted. All three interviewees had personal experiences from live-streaming *StarCraft II* on *Twitch.tv*. All of the interviewees were also male. Two of the interviewees were contacted through *Twitch.tv*'s own messaging system with a written interview invitation, and one of the interviewees was contacted by means of other social networks. The interviews were conducted by with the help of the audio conferencing computer software *Skype*, and all of them were recorded. Each interviewee was also asked beforehand if they agree to being recorded, to which all three agreed on. Using *Skype* was beneficial not only because localization was not an issue, but also because talking to the interviewees through *Skype* resembled the activity of live-streaming itself.[4] Instead of following a set of questions with no room for diversions, a qualitative semi-structured interview allowed for new ideas to be touched upon based on the answers of the interviewees (Byrne, 2004). The interviews were conducted by following a topic guide of questions, which were also organized under three general themes (see Appendix 1). The first set of questions emphasized on the initial motivations of the interviewees to start live-streaming. Hence, the theme connected to both the *why* question by looking for reasons live-streamers' reasons begin live-streaming their gaming content professionally; and *how* they established themselves practically as professional live-streamers The second theme of questions focused on the interviewees' own opinions and thoughts about live-streaming as a profession. Thus, by exploring the general job-description of live-streamers, the theme connected to the theoretical points on how consumers have become producers of digital by means of online live-streaming platforms. The third theme of questions emphasized on the idea if professional live-streaming also shapes the nature of playing games into a more productive activity, as opposed to being mere leisure time. Many of the questions had a direct relation to theoretical issues discussed earlier in this paper, but such questions were presented as open-ended, general questions to the interviewees rather than confusing them with academic theories and concepts. The next step after the interviews was to transcribe the conversations with the interviewees. All of the transcribed interviews can also be found from the appendices of this paper. After the

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[4] Meaning that in the end live-streamers' main occupation is to talk to a web-camera similarly to how *Skype* conversations work

transcriptions were done, the answers of the interviewees were compared to one another while using the three themes as a general guideline. The results are based not only on generalizations derived from the discussion, but also by making these generalizations fruitful by situating them within the paper's theoretical context, described in the previous section.

4   Video Game Live-Streaming

4.1 Live-streams & Twitch.tv

Today live-streaming typically refers to broadcasting high definition video and audio content to the web through an online platform providing free-of-cost live-streaming services. As a phenomenon live-streaming is nothing new, as it has existed on the internet for the last twenty years (Smith, Obrist & Wright, 2013, p. 131). However, until few years ago live-streaming was inaccessible for most end-users, due to "lack of capacities in in the infrastructure and the costs of server and technology for streamers (Scholz, 2012, p. 94). In other words, the cost of internet bandwidth was too expensive for individual streamers to upload live, high definition video content to the internet. But, as these costs have been lowered to a great extent throughout the past decade, streaming has now become available for the majority of people (at least in technologically modernized countries). Due to live-streaming becoming less expensive, online live-streaming platforms began to emerge which allowed anyone to live-stream anything they want (Smith, Obrist & Wright, 2013, p. 131). A good example of this is the streaming platform *Justin.tv* that hosts streaming channels based on categories ranging anywhere from *Sports* to *Animals*, and from *Divas & Dudes* to *News & Tech* (Justin.tv, 2014). Yet, live-stream channels that focused on video gaming activities became extremely popular. As a result of the explosive popularity of video game streams, in 2011 *Justin.tv* launched a subsidiary platform called *Twitch.tv* that specifically focused on hosting stream channels related to video gaming in general, and especially on competitive video gaming commonly known as electronic sports (eSports). Since the launch of *Twitch.tv* in 2011, the platform has attracted approximately 35 million unique visitors on a monthly basis (Hamilton, Garretson & Kerne, 2012, p. 1). Today, *Twitch.tv* is the leading games-specific live-streaming platform.

Video game live-stream channels differ from other live-streams in few ways. Instead of broadcasting the kind of content that appears on *Justin.tv*, for example live video feed from a birds-nest, video game live-streams can be considered rather as a form of social media. As Hamilton, Garretson & Kerne (2012) explain, video game live-streams combine "high-fidelity computer graphics and video with low-fidelity text-based communication channels to create a unique social medium" (p. 1). By utilizing a screen capturing software people can record everything that happens on the screen of a computer (the game-play content). This recorded video material is then broadcasted 'live' through a streaming channel hosted by *Twitch.tv*. Due to how everything that happening on the screen of the streamer's computer is shown on his *Twitch.tv* channel in real time, there are no practical limits of what kind of video content can be streamed. *Twitch.tv* hosts channels for dozens of different digital games, regardless of their genre. Stream channels can be watched by anyone with a personal computer or another comparable media device, and a broadband internet connection. The streamer – be that an individual, a group of people, or an organization – can communicate with the viewers of the channel via a microphone and a web-camera, alongside with *Twitch.tv*'s integrated chatting system. This chatting system also allows the viewers to write back to the streamer. Thanks to such technical functionalities, *Twitch.tv* channels enable social interaction between streamers and their viewers. In fact, Hamilton, Garretson and Kerne (2012) found out, that the "primary activity stream participants engage in is *sociability* [which] takes the form of humorous banter and light-hearted conversation, alongside play" (p. 1). While sociability is the main reason why viewers tune into the live-stream channels and thus form game communities on *Twitch.tv* in general, the platform presents another incentive for individuals to start streaming their own gaming activities. In specific, *Twitch.tv* makes it possible players to earn money by live-streaming self-produced video content.

For the streamers whose channels receive in average of 500 monthly viewers, and who stream at least three times a week, *Twitch.tv* offers a partnership program (Twitch.tv, 2014a). This partnership program allows streamers to display advertisements on their streams. For each advertisement displayed during a live-stream session, the streamer receives revenue of $0.002 per views (Teamliquid.net, 2011). In other words, if the channel of a streamer would be watched by a thousand viewers at the moment when an advertisement is displayed, the streamer would receive a total of two dollars. Even though this sum might not look like much with a first glance, the

revenue can add up to dozens or even hundreds of dollars over a period of one month. In addition to advertisement revenues, streamers can also offer their viewers the possibility to subscribe to their channels. As Hamilton, Garretson & Kerne (2012) elaborate: "*Subscribers*, viewers who purchase stream subscriptions, pay a monthly fee to *Twitch.tv*, half of which goes to the streamer. Subscribers do not have to watch stream ads. They may also use the stream's special emoticons and are denoted by an icon in chat" (p. 2). Third way of receiving money by streaming is through donations. Donations given to a streamer by their viewers usually revolves around few dollars, but donations that reach up to thousands of dollars are not unheard of either. One of the most popular digital games that are being streamed on *Twitch.tv* is the game *StarCraft II*, which is also focused on in the case-study of this paper. In the following this game and the competitive scene revolving around it will be briefly discussed.

4.2 Live-streaming StarCraft II on Twitch.tv

StarCraft II (Blizzard Entertainment, 2010) is a real-time strategy game, and it is as one of the most streamed games on *Twitch.tv*. Real-time strategy (RTS) games can be understood as "war games where each player commands an army and production buildings from a birds-eye (top down) perspective (Cheung & Huang, 2011, p. 3). StarCraft is best known as an electronic sports (eSports) game. In academic terms, Wagner (2006) defines eSports as "an area of sport activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies (p. 3). During the past decade electronic sports has become "one of the hottest trends in video, and is rapidly attracting the core 18-34 male demographic in greater numbers than any other medium or category" (Edge, 2013, p. 3)[5]. Within the context of electronic sports, players of various competitive video games have turned playing digital games into a profession. As Kaytoue et al. (2012) note, "enjoying video games at a professional level is not a young boy dream anymore and the best evidence is the amazing evolution of electronic sports over the last decade" (p. 1). In most cases, professional players, or 'pro-gamers' are hired by a pro-gaming teams, where the team itself is sponsored usually by a company from the field of information technology. Kaytoue et al. (2012) found out that the main reason for professional *StarCraft II* players to stream their game-play is popularity. In specific, the popularity of a

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[5] See Syrota (2011) for a complete historical background of StarCraft II related electronic sports

professional player as an active live-streamer has a direct relation to being invited to tournaments and other events (Kaytoue et al, 2012, p. 5). By being invited to such events, players promote also the status of their team and sponsor.

The ones who take part in live-streaming *StarCraft II* video game content through *Twitch.tv* can be divided into individual streamers, groups of people, or large-scale organizations. Groups of people and large organizations commonly focus on the electronic sports scene revolving around *StarCraft II*. Organizations such as the Europe-based Electronic Sports League (ESL), and the North American Starleague (NASL), have their own respective channels on *Twitch.tv* that attract thousands of viewers on a daily basis. The channels of ESL and NASL can roughly be compared to sports television channels that focus on more traditional sports, such as football for example. Whereas the live-stream channels of large eSports organizations are the most viewed ones on *Twitch.tv*, the attention in this paper is rather on individual *StarCraft* II streamers. Individual streamers can be divided into three respective groups. First, there are players who do not purposely aim to make money with streaming, and can be rather considered as players who are more interested in the social aspects of live-streaming, as described by Hamilton, Garretson and Kerne (2012). The second group of live-streamers, and at the same time generally the most followed ones on *Twitch.tv*, are the professional players of *StarCract II* (Kaytoue et al. 2012). The third group of StarCraft streamers do not play the game professionally in the same sense as actual pro-gamers do, but instead they live-stream *StarCraft II* content in a professionalized manner.

5   Case-study: Interviews from *StarCraft II* live-streamers

At this point it is worthwhile to remind the reader of the research question this study as a whole was devoted to: "why and how live-streaming *StarCraft II* on *Twitch* has been turned into a professional activity?" The case-study of this paper is based on qualitative, one hour long semi-structured interviews with three professional *StarCraft II* live-streamers. While interviewing the streamers, a topic guide with three respective themes of questions was followed. The first theme covered a more general perspective of the initial motivations the streamers had to start live-streaming. Also, some attention was given to their early steps in building a live-stream channel. The second theme was directly connected to the idea of live-streamers as producers of digital

media. The third theme focused on exploring the manner in which live-streaming influences also the nature of playing games. The following results emerging from the interviews are thus also categorized based on these three themes.

Before going into detailed analysis of the interviews, a brief introduction of the interviewees is in order. Most of the people in game communities are better known by their internet aliases, and as such, also in this paper the interviewees will be discussed primarily according to their aliases. One of the people who were interviewed was J-P '*Zoultx*' Heimo, the manager of a Finnish *StarCraft* II pro-gaming team. As he was no longer actively streaming when the interview was had, the discussion with *Zoultx* was based on his previous experience from live-streaming from the times that he was playing *StarCraft II* professionally. Thus, *Zoultx* provided an expert's point of view on how live-streaming has in the past few years affected eSports as an industry and also the careers of pro-gamers. Another interview was had with one of the most well-known *StarCraft II* eSports commentators, Kevin '*RotterdaM*' Van Der Kooi. Before starting to live-stream his own game-play on a regular basis, he worked as for ESL and NASL as the eSports channels' English speaking *StarCraft II* tournament commentator. As such, *Rotterdam* was able to discuss his own experiences as an active live-streamer, but also provided insights on how *Twitch.tv* had shaped the eSports industry and the role of professional commentators. The interview with *RotterdaM* was also done during one of his live-streaming sessions, with an audience of more than thousand viewers, and thus the interview can be found from *RotterdaM*'s *Twitch.tv* channel (*Rotterdam*, 2014). The final interview was had from Evan '*Winter*' Ballnik who, according to the *Top 50 Streamers in May 2014* (Teamliquid, 2014), holds the third place as the most followed *StarCraft* streamers. Thus, *Winter* is arguably one of the best examples of an 'amateur' who has made playing *StarCraft* into a profession solely by the means of live-streaming.

5.1 Initial motivations

As was expected the interviewees' motivations varied based on their personal histories. *Rotterdam* explained that at the beginning live-streaming was for him only about having fun, and that he had no financial interests connected to live-streaming when he was still working NASL. Yet, at some point *Rotterdam* turned his position at NASL into a part-time job, and thus got more

interested in live-streaming from the perspective of financial interests. To this he elaborated on by noting that: "[…] *I saw a lot of streamers be very successful, and I always felt that I could be an entertaining streamer, and always felt that it's something I truly enjoyed.* […] *So I started focusing on trying to build up my stream, and I would say it almost took off immediately*". Also *Winter* explained to have been influenced by other streamers. In specific, the person who stood out to Winter as a person who was able to successfully stream *StarCraft* related content, without being at the same time a professional player, was that of Steven '*Destiny'* Bonnell. As *Winter* put it: "*Back in 2010-2011 he* [Destiny] *was huge in StarCraft 2. Looking at 4000-6000 viewers, which is unheard of... at that time* [sic]." After being influenced by *Destiny*'s success *Winter* created his own streaming channel on *Twitch.tv*, but unlike *Rotterdam* who was able to build up a large viewer-base mostly due to his previous reputation as a *StarCraft* commentator, *Winter* had to start from the bottom. An interesting point that *Winter* raised within this context was that in 2010 live-streaming was primarily the field of professional gamers. But, for him watching someone play at their best "[…] *took away from the production or entertainment value of a stream*". Furthermore, as *Winter* put it:

> *People think that live-streaming is just like… you show a game and you're really good at that game, so you're going to get a lot of people to watch. Well, to be honest, I always knew that people were not as entertained by just watching a game, as by watching someone talk about a game and also having a conversation with them at the same time. It's like going to a sports-bar as opposed to sitting home and watching hockey by yourself.*

In this sense, *Rotterdam* also pointed out his opinion on streamers who have no previous reputation, but who are still able to build up a successful live-streaming channel. As *Rotterdam* put it: *"if you're a 'nobody', if you're not particularly good at the game, if you're not a caster, if you're somewhat unknown – and then building up your channel – I think that's super impressive"*. *Rotterdam* also explained to have a great deal of respect for streamers who are able to start from the bottom "*because I feel it's two to three times harder than what I did* […]". For *Zoultx* the initial motivation to start live-streaming was largely based on promotional and marketing reasons. From the perspective of a professional gamer and a team manager he explained that streaming presented a good opportunity to get both the player's and his team's

name visible to a large audience. He also noted that live-streaming gave way for players to earn money not only by winning tournaments, but also by working at home. Another interesting point *Zoultx* raised was that in some cases professional players are even required in their contracts with their streams to live-stream their games for a set number of hours per week. Thus, this notion would also appear to confirm what Kaytoue et al. (2012) mentioned about live-streamers having to stream their game-play content in order to be invited to tournaments and other gaming-events.

5.2 Live-streamers as producers of digital media

The second theme of questions directly referred to the idea how the boundaries of producers and consumers of digital media have been blurred (Jenkins, 2004; 2006, Pearce 2006; Sotamaa, 2009).

A specific issue that was focused on during the research was the average number of hours streamers spend on live-streaming. The aim was to compare the hours that are being put to streaming, to the numbers of hours people spend in more conventional jobs. As such, *Rotterdam* reported that after turning to full-time streaming, he began to follow a 40 hour weekly streaming schedule. He explained that it was necessary to put in the hours in order to connect to worldwide audience. As he elaborated on this point: "*there's not a lot of eyeballs that will tune into your channel because if I stream 10 hours a week, then I won't even cover every single time-zone. It's going to be impossible*". Also, *Winter* reported to stream similar numbers; approximately 6 to 7 days per week, and anywhere from 6 to 12 hours a day. Whereas *Rotterdam* and *Winter*, *Zoultx* noted that a professional player wanted to stream as much as he could, but not before an upcoming major tournament so that the opposing team's managers could not the learn strategies the streamer was practicing.

The interviewees were also asked about their own personal opinions on the idea that *Twitch.tv* had created a job-market out of live-streaming. *Rotterdam* thought it as an amazing thing, because "[…] *instead of trying to go to tournaments and win money, or getting money from a team, you should just sit behind your PC and play your games, and people watch you and you can make a living off of that.*" If someone would have told him this idea in 2006, he would have laughed at it: "*I would've been like, 'that sounds really silly, like how is that ever going to take off?' But… it did.*" Whereas *Rotterdam* discussed the issue from a more general perspective,

Winter provided specific points on how *Twitch.tv*'s partnership program relates to professionalized live-streaming. At the start of this research it was thought that most of the money comes through the advertisements revenue which is part of the partnership program. However, *Winter* argued against this, and explained that the partnership program functions rather as a starting point for people to get involved with live-streaming. As *Winter* put it: "*blanket ads are not going to support you if you don't have five digits of viewers on a regular occasion. […] I tell you right now that there are less than 25 people that can make a full-time living on Twitch.tv just based solely on Twitch revenue.*" However, he noted that he did not mean that only 25 people could ever make a living based on live-streaming as such, but instead he was talking about those 25 streamers "*who could literally survive if all donations and all third-party revenue were cut off in every way possible.*" Later on *Winter* recognized these third-party sources as independent advertising, subscriptions money, and direct donations provided by viewers. Within this context, it was interesting to realize that, as *Winter* put it, "*the solid majority* [of total income] *comes from donations*".

The interviewees were also questioned how much they collaborate with their viewers while live-streaming. The idea behind was to find out the extent that streamers and their viewers collaborate in producing their own entertainment media without top-down corporate influences (Jenkins). As such, all the interviews appeared to point out that *interactivity* with their viewers was one of the most important aspects of live-streaming As *Rotterdam* put it: "*[…] unless you are truly unique, unless you are very good in something, like you're the absolute best in the world, you're going to have to be very interactive with your viewers*". In this sense, *Zoultx* raised a peculiar point about how interaction with viewers is sometimes handled by some professional players and their teams. While professional players can mostly rely on attracting viewers based on their reputation, sometimes viewers are also drawn to watch their streams in hopes of talking to the professional players. Yet, according to *Zoultx*, "*I know certain types of situations where there is a gamer playing the game, but there's a different person writing the chat*". In other words, interactivity is important also for professional players and their teams, but mostly from a promotional and marketing perspectives. Also, *Winter* considered interactivity as the most important factor when starting up a live-stream. This is because gaining viewers at the beginning is apparently the hardest part in the whole process of becoming an established live-streamer.

Finally, the interviewees were asked if they considered live-streaming as a phenomenon that will fade away, or if they rather felt that as an industry was going to keep on growing into a larger industry. *Winter* raised an intriguing point on how he sees live-streaming as a natural continuation to previous broadcasting innovations: "*Obviously it's not going to fade away. At this point* […] *it's funneled down towards on-demand content. Like, first you have cable, then you have DVR, and then you have Netflix, and then you have live-streams*". *Zoultx* also saw live-streaming as a potential starting point for video gamers to become media personalities. He pointed out that major game companies, such as Blizzard Entertainment, are already "*paying some salaries to people who are really famous celebrities because of their streaming. Because the community knows them, the company picks them up*". Therefore, he saw the potential of live-streaming in creating other jobs outside of live-streaming itself: "*That is a really good chance for people to getting more jobs, and different kinds of jobs. It's like a TV channel of its own without limitations!*"

5.3 On the boundaries between work and play

The third theme focused on the blurring boundaries between work and play (Pearce 2006; Sotamaa 2009). In specific, the idea behind the questions asked from the interviews was to find out to what extent the streamers considered both their playing and streaming activities as work, as opposed to spending just their leisure time. As such, the streamers were specifically asked if they see live-streaming digital games related video content as a professional activity. As *Winter* put it: "*Yes, yes absolutely.* […] *I'm not going to give specifics, but I currently will be making well over the average medium American income doing professional live-streaming*". *Winter* pointed out that live-streaming is just as any other professional industry out there, but "[…] *it's just an industry that is currently developing and expanding exponentially. And, a lot of people don't realize how exponential that expansion is until they're actually well acquainted with it*". Also *Rotterdam* was quite clear on the matter: "*I definitely think it's a professional industry. I mean, there are some people out there who make very serious money, and there are plenty of people who make money that they can live off with*". However, in this sense it was interesting to find out that none of the interviewees considered professional gaming and professional game live-streaming entirely comparable to one another. As *Rotterdam* pointed out, instead of live-

streaming promoting a sense of professionalization of gaming as such, live-streaming has rather shaped the electronic sports industry as a whole into a more professionalized field. As he elaborated on the matter:

"*Twitch has helped a lot, but there would've been competitive gaming without it as well. It just wouldn't be as significant as it is right now. It would be nowhere as professional. The scene would be nowhere near as big, but there would still be computer game tournaments*".

Similar points were raised by also *Zoultx*, but especially from *Winter*'s point of view live-streamers who focus on broadcasting competitive gaming build bridges between people who are still not familiar with the competitive gaming scene. He noted that due to the media coverage streamers broadcast from digital games shape the general understanding of people about digital games more towards the same feelings many have about conventional sports:

"*At this point, almost every single person plays video games in one way or the other. Whether it's like a game on their phone, or StarCraft II competitively. When those people grow up, and they start having the next generation of children after that, that is when games will be just as accepted as conventional sports.*"

Thus, it can be deduced that live-streaming does not directly turn gaming into a professionalized activity, as it was hypothesized at the beginning of the research. Especially not in the same sense as gaming has been professionalized within the context of competitive gaming. Instead, live-streaming rather works as a medium for new people to get first interested and then personally involved in competitive digital gaming, after being introduced to the eSports scene through media coverage seen on live-stream channels.

As mentioned before, one issue that was focused within this theme was the idea of a border between play and work. The interviewees were questioned where they see themselves drawing the line between leisure and work in the context of professional live-streaming. All three interviewees appeared to emphasize on the general idea that, ultimately, play and work are combined within the context of professionalized live-streaming. As *Rotterdam* explained "[…] *every now and then it feels like work, but for me personally when it comes to streaming I would*

say 90% of the time it feels like fun and 10% of the time it feels like work. He also noted that there are indeed days when he feels to tired or stressed to start live-streaming, but on those occasions he reminds himself that:"[…] *at the end of the day you're still going to do something you love, so just get over it and get your ass to playing!".* Also *Zoultx* made similar marks to those of *Rotterdam*'s by noting that "[…] *would say those are quite close to one another -- having fun and work -- and in my opinion that's one luxury in life if you can enjoy what you do work*". Furthermore, *Zoultx* this mixing of fun and work was exactly what makes it so appealing for people to begin live-streaming. Yet, he made another specific point on where he would draw the line between work and play, and returned to the question about the working hours of live-streamers: "*When the time* [being put to gaming] *exceeds the time most people are working in their day jobs, then you can pretty much say you're doing it as a work, and if you have the mindset for it*".

The interviewees were also asked about the kind of mindset that they must adopt when thinking about live-streaming as their profession. All three interviewees shared the same opinion that in most cases live-streaming is about having fun, but at the same time even fun-having must be taken professionally when the need arises. On this idea *Rotterdam* presented a worthwhile comparison on live-streaming to other professions: "[…] *Let's say you studied law, and you look at me, you'll probably see this random dude sitting in his messy room playing some games. And then you'd say like, 'hell no, that ain't professional, that has nothing to do with professional!*'". But to this *Rotterdam* explained pointed out that "[…] *in the end of the day streaming is like, if this all you do, or this is the industry you work in, then you approach it professionally.*" Also *Winter* pointed out that live-streaming for him is mostly 'light-hearted', but he also made a remark about having to follow a certain working schedule. He explained that if he does not follow the same streaming schedule throughout the whole week he will not appear on his viewers' daily schedules either. Thus, less people will look for his stream the next following days. As *Winter* explained: "*And if I don't get as many viewers I won't get as many donations… I won't make enough this month in order to justify what I'm doing*".

6   Discussion

While many of the points emerging from the interviews were already discussed within the case-study itself, in this section these points will be further analyzed and discussed in light of the research question of this study. As the research question – why and how live-streaming *StarCraft II* on *Twitch.tv* has been turned into a professional activity – asks two questions at the same time, the results of the study will be discussed in two different parts as well. Firstly, the research focused on the *why* question by finding out the initial motivations for players to start streaming professionally. It was revealed that whereas people often start live-streaming for entertainment and social reasons at first, later on they are influenced by seeing other live-streamers becoming successful enough to make a living by streaming. Due to the technical simplicity of setting up a Twitch channel, more players begin live-streaming in the hopes of also becoming successful streamers. In the end, the players who seriously start pursuing professional live-streaming careers do so because it presents them a way of having fun while working, and at the same time enjoying a higher income than many other more conventional jobs can establish. Yet, this is the case for players who do not play *StarCraft II* competitively, but for the actual professional players the reason to engage in live-streaming is rather to promote themselves as pro-gamers as well as their team's visibility within the electronic sports industry. Yet, live-streaming still functions as a beneficial addition to competing in tournaments, as professional players can earn extra income by 'working at home'. Secondly, the research focused on the *how* question by looking into the practical means of how players build up their live-stream channels to the point where the individuals can be considered as well-established live-streamers. It was found out that *interactivity* was a key factor in making live-streaming into a professionalized activity. In specific, this means that whereas professional players can mostly rely on attracting viewers to their stream channels solely on the basis of their reputations as pro-gamers, it is vital for non-professional players to be social and interactive with their viewers. Without interactivity from the streamer's part, viewers will not be given a sense of belonging to the web-community that revolves around the live-stream channel. This again leads to viewers not returning to watch the channel in the future. Without large enough of a viewer-base, the live-streamers are unable to establish the kind of a monthly income that they could support themselves with either. In order to promote interactivity with their viewers, streamers often collaborate with their viewers by, for

example, directly asking the audience what kind of content they wish for the streamer to show to the audience. Another point focused in this context was the working hours that need to be put into live-streaming. It was found that it is not uncommon for live-streamers to have above 40 hour long working weeks. One reason for having to engage in live-streaming even up to 12 hours a day was to connect to different global time-zones. This again had a direct relation in connecting to a large enough of a viewer-base, thus resulting in more overall monthly subscriptions. One of the most interesting points that emerged from the interviews was also that rather than relying on advertisement revenue, as was hypothesized at the beginning of the research, most of the income instead comes through donations given to the streamer by his or her viewers.

To put these results into the theoretical context of this paper, it can be said that the *StarCraft II* live-streaming scene appears as a case-example of the 'cultural shift' (Bird, 2009, p. 502) described as *convergence culture* (Jenkins, 2004; 2006). From the perspective of a top-down corporate model of media production, media companies such as *Twitch.tv* have created a profitable business by providing consumers the tools to create their own entertainment media. By combining digital games and online live-streaming platforms, consumers (players) of these two forms of digital media are producing the kind of entertainment that is watched by millions of people through *Twitch.tv* alone. As Twitch.tv functions as an easy-to-access platform, meaning that practically anyone with a PC and an internet connection can start live-streaming, consumers are given means of bringing "the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other consumers" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 18). As was shown, live-streamers not only actively participate with their viewers in producing the kind of entertainment that both parties enjoy. Viewers are also influenced by other streamers and start live-streaming streaming as well, thus producing their own content as a result.

Due to how *Twitch.tv* enables live-streamers to earn money by streaming their gaming activities, it can be argued that the nature of playing games changes in the process as well. Instead of considering the activity of playing games as inherently unproductive, and having no material interests to the outside world (Huizinga, 1950; Caillois, 1961), professionalized live-streaming turns gaming into a productive and beneficial activity. While it can be said that live-streaming and playing games are two different activities, they are at the same time inseparable from one another (no game, no game live-stream). Thus, by playing games and by live-streaming gaming activities players are by definition producing a converged form of digital media on

through *Twitch.tv*. And, due to the financial interests live-streaming can presents to players, also the assertion that no profits could be made by playing games (Caillois, 1961) starts losing grounds. A clear example that speaks against the idea that playing could not be profitable activity can be made of *Winter*, who reported to be making well over the average medium American income by the means of professionalized live-streaming. In addition, while live-streamers generally feel that games-specific live-streaming is ultimately a way of combining work and leisure time; professional live-streamers in some cases must follow a working schedule of over 40 hours per week in order to gain enough of viewers. Thus, it can be suggested that not only due to real life financial interests, but also due to the professional attitude that must be adopted towards live-streaming, the *Magic Circle* is being breached in clear and visible ways (Pearce, 2007; Sotamaa, 2009).

Next the attention will be drawn to the limitations and benefits of this study, but also some suggestions for further studies will be presented. Perhaps the most apparent limitation of this research is the qualitative and interpretive nature of study as a whole. One expected criticism is the number of interviewees this paper bases its results on. Also, all three interviewees provided different perspectives on the same matter, which may indicate to a far too small of a database in order to come to definite, more quantitative conclusions. Yet, the depth of the discussions with the interviewees, and the fact that all three interviewees provided an expert's point of view on the matter at hand, may arguably work in defense of the study. In this sense, full interview transcripts from the streamers have been added as appendices to this paper, so that the data can work as a potential starting point for further similar studies. For example, it would be interesting to see further studies being conducted solely on the basis of one of the three streamer types presented in this paper. Another expected criticism touches upon the theoretical context of this study. As Sotamaa (2009) notes: "linking game studies with more established traditions is not entirely without its risks. Once speaking to two audiences, even though partly overlapping, the speaker runs a risk of ending up in no-man's land (p. 15). Thus, it can be argued that by touching on the theoretical discussions emerging from both Media Studies and Game Studies, this paper may appear at the same time too narrow and too broad. Yet, the interdisciplinary nature of this study can again work as a starting point for more focused future researches on live-streaming strictly from a media or a game studies perspective. All in all, this study should work as a case-example in discussions regarding impacts that new technological innovations can have on media and game

cultures. As such, this paper not only adds further perspectives on the studies regarding live-streaming (Hamilton, Garretson & Kerne, 2012; Smith, Obrist & Wright, 2013; Kaytoue et al. 2012) but also connects to theoretical discussions on the blurring boundaries between consumers and producers (Jenkins, 2006) and between play and work (Pearce, 2007; Sotamaa, 2009).

7   Conclusion

Alongside with the emergence of the Web 2.0 environment consumers of digital media have been introduced to online live-streaming platforms that enable consumers to produce their own media content. Thus, live-streaming platforms have taken part in reshaping the traditional 'top-down' corporate-driven model of media production towards a more consumer-oriented, on-demand production model. Whereas people can live-stream practically anything they want, video game live-streaming has become extremely popular. In this sense, especially the live-streaming platform *Twitch.tv* promotes consumer-driven media production to the extent that some game live-streamers can even make a living by producing their own media content. In other words, the activity of live-streaming gaming activities has become an actual profession, a real job. When this phenomenon is explored from the perspective of how playing games is often seen as a waste of time and energy, the question arises if professionalized live-streaming has also shaped the nature of playing games as a consequence. Thus, in this study it has been questioned why and how live-streaming *StarCraft II* (Blizzard Entertainment, 2010) on *Twitch.tv* has been turned into a professional activity? By exploring how the activity of live-streaming has been professionalized within this context of *StarCraft II*, this study establishes an understanding of how players of *StarCraft II* have not only become professional producers of digital media, but how also in the process the boundaries work and play have been blurred. In specific, the case-study of this paper found out that whereas people engage in live-streaming mostly for entertainment purposes, the influence of other successful streamers functions as a motivation for people to start live-streaming their own gaming activities. As live-streaming is relatively easy for anyone to get into, live-streaming presents players of digital games a way of combining work and leisure time. Yet, while live-streaming gaming activities is primarily about having fun while earning money at the side, live-streamers still have to engage their streaming activities with a professional mindset. It was found that professional live-streamers are required to follow a typical 40 hours weekly

working schedule in order to sustain themselves financially. Without connecting to a large enough of a viewer-base, streamers are unable to receive enough of advertisement revenue, subscription money, and direct donations, in order to justify their streaming activities. As such, this study has shown that the professional live-streaming scene of *StarCraft II* not only works as a case-example of a cultural shift where consumers of digital media have become instead producers, and how playing games has moved leisure time more towards a productive and professionalized activity.

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9   Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Interview topic guide

General Information

- Name / Stream alias
- Location / Nationality
- Age

Questions about interviewee's live-streaming background (to start off the conversation)

- How many hours per day/week do you think you stream / watch streams?
- How did you get into streaming / watching streams in the first place?
- Can you think of a main reason *why* you stream / watch streams? -- (for both) What do you get out of it?

- Tell me a bit about the kind of content you stream / the kind of streaming content you watch (strategic, more show-like)?

Live streamers: players as 'producers' as opposed to 'consumers' of digital media

- What's your opinion on the idea that Twitch.tv has created a job market out of streaming gaming content?
- How easy is it to get involved with the Twitch.tv partnership program in order to start making money out of streaming? -> Is this something that everyone who starts streaming hopes to accomplish?
- How much effort is being put to streaming in the sense of making the streamed video content as good as it can be? What do you even consider as 'good' streaming content? (Emphasis on the technical stuff!)
- Is it 'easy' to produce the kind of streaming content that attracts a lot of viewers, or are there many issues that should be taken into account? (camera, sound, music, etc.)
- How much do streamers co-operate with their viewers in order to produce streaming content? For example, many streamers create polls on what their viewers want to see them doing…
- Do you think that game streamers can be considered as professionals in their own field?
- Can the status of being a known streamer open up new possibilities, such as job offers outside of the streaming scene?
- What do you think about the future of streaming as such, and the role of the streamers?

On the nature of playing games + 'Magic Circle'

- (Addition…) Do you think that gaming is a waste of time and energy?
- What's your opinion on the idea that live streaming has turned the very nature of playing games into a more serious and productive activity -> as opposed to being just a "pure waste of time and energy"
- Where do you draw the line of what can be thought as working as opposed to leisure time when thinking of gaming and its relation to live streaming?

- o –> In other words, when does streaming game content become work as opposed to just having fun while playing games, if at all?
- What's your opinion on the idea that playing games as such has been professionalized in a similar way to how it has happened in the 'pro-gaming' scene? Do you think these two are comparable to one another?
- Which one of these two activities (gaming, live streaming) do you personally find closer to an actual job? Which one of these two is only supporting the other?
- What kind of an attitude do you think is required from a streamer if he wants to become a successful one? Can streaming be engaged with a playful mindset or do streamers take *have* their 'job' seriously
- How does streaming game content influence streamers' personal lives? (Ask this as it is at first, but if the interviewee doesn't know what to answer move on the following list:)

  - ➔ Are there any kinds of social pressures that streamers are being imposed to in real life because of live streaming? For example:
  - o How do streamers deal with the demands from their viewers?
  - o How much effort do streamers have to put into activities outside of streaming itself, such as promoting their streams in social media, etc.
  - o How do streamers cope with their status as being 'internet celebrities'
  - o How scheduled do streamers have to be and how does this affect other 'real life' activities

- If we can indeed consider streaming game content as working, then what do streamers do 'for fun'? How do streamers relax / take distance to their jobs as professional streamers? -> Do you play games also for fun?

9.2 Appendix 2: Interview transcriptions

Interview from J-P '*Zoultx*' Heimo

M: So, could you shortly introduce yourself? Like your name or your internet alias. Also, your nationality and age?

J-P: Sure, my name is Juha-Pekka Heimo and I'm from Finland. The ID I've been using on internet and gaming overall is *Zoultx*

M: Ok, cool. I'll write that down…

J-P: (J-P continues explaining) … and basically I've been playing computer games since '98 or something like that, and later on more seriously. But it was then ['98] when I started playing online with other people.

M: Okay. Great. So, as I explained before, my research is about the relation that live streaming has with video gaming. I'm kind of playing around with the idea of how live-streaming has had an impact on gaming, and if it has become also more professional and productive.

J.P: Yeah, yeah, sure.

M: So I'll start by just asking couple of basic questions from you about live streaming. You told me earlier, before we started this interview, that you have streamed StarCraft before but not anymore. Is this right?

J-P: Yes, this is correct. I'm not currently live streaming anymore but I'm quite familiar with the subject if I may say so myself.

M: Okay, let's think about this in the way that you were still streaming. Can you give me some idea of how many hours per day or week did you stream, back in the days?

J-P: Well, back in the days it was quite hardcore, as was my gaming, 'cause I was professional on it. And I was also a professional manager of that game and gaming teams overall. So basically there was a trend with the streamers, first of all. Before live streaming there was just the option for players to watch and follow their... the people they are fan of by just using the game's interface- But later on when Twitch.tv and so on came, gaming culture had sort of a revolution. It came more popular, and easier, and beneficial even, to use outside influences for streaming. For

example, if you use a platform like Twitch.tv then you don't have to have the game installed in any way. In order to watch it, you can just watch it with your internet browser. And basically it's more simple like that and uhm, with Twitch.tv you also get money. But the thing is that, when we had the revolution, it basically came to that, that whenever you were practicing, that is playing with the ladder which is the competitive system inside StarCraft, you wanted to basically stream as much as possible to have good PR (as in public relations) for yourself and for your team that you were playing Starcraft in. So basically you wanted to stream as much as possible, but not before a large tournament so your enemies wouldn't be able to watch your stream. So it really depended on the person and schedule and so on.

M: So, 'as much as you could' would be the… [laughs] the general nutshell?

J-P: Yeah. Streaming was a really good opportunity to get your name and your organization's name out and get money out of it. And, the - overall streaming experience – it made it possible to earn money by not only winning tournaments but also from their home. Like from online tournaments or offline tournaments, but by other means also.

M: Uh huh, so could you give me the main reason why you streamed? Was it like for promotional reasons or money or… well, just why did you get into it?

J-P: Well, it was promotional because the more you have name in that industry, the more possibilities you can get. As for individual players, they are doing it for the name of course, if they have not established their name yet. But if you are already in an organization, the organization might have streaming hours in your contract you're making with them.

M: Oh, so you have it stated in your actual contract that you must stream, right?

J-P: Yeah, basically, yeah…

M: Oh, I didn't actually know that before [laughs]

J-P: Yeah, there are those things but it's a different situation in different countries. Esports is an area where the law doesn't apply too much. The law does not recognize all the sites and the possibilities and things related to Esports so far. But just like in France, and of course South

Korea, the contracts you make between players in the basis of them being the employee of your company – which is your gaming team – the laws are more strict. And so it is possible to do those contracts where we can say that you have to stream this amount of hours or that amount of hours. Let's say that the competition is getting a lot harder and that, that… [translation begins] the competition itself promotes further competition [translation ends].

M: Ok, cool. So we kind of touched on this topic already earlier, but what's your opinion on that Twitch.tv has created a whole new job market out of streaming gaming content? Since they are making contracts for streaming, and so on, is it a good thing that Twitch created this thing or what's your general opinion on that?

8:30 J-P: I think it is a fantastic thing because usually, as in all businesses, ideas are thought of due to demand. There was a demand for a platform for people to follow their idols and players and teams. So it was really all about the demand of it. Twitch is really easy and great platform so it is a good thing because if you look to the internet Twitch has so much visibility in other areas as well - as gaming. For example, some people are streaming their news. So it's not only a gaming platform anymore. So they are making gaming more popular that way because you could think about it as a private news company in a way.

M: Alright, so how easy do you think it is to get into the Twitch.tv partnership program? And how does the Twitch.t partnership program work with electronic sports?

J-P: It really depends on the team structure or is it individual or not. And there is also… you have to take into consideration the fact that some streamer are just streaming for fun and entertainment. They don't have any goal of being so called electronic sports athletes which means competing on online tournaments. But other people are really more serious about that kind of thing and it's like their job, like their career.

M: [Translated from Finnish] So, do you think that this whole Twitch.tv partnership program is the kind of a thing that most players aim for?

J-P: Oh, I think that nowadays when they are into becoming electronic sports athletes, which is so called pro-gamer, people who are serious are taking it [Twitch] into consideration because the

platform is such huge. It's about having marketing about youself and your team. And it's one of the best platforms for doing that. For example you use social media like facebook or Twitter or IRC to promote to your twitch tv channel. You can use the Valve company's Steam platform to promote your Twitch.tv page. That way you can redirect people to your channel. And if it's entertaining enough they will of course watch it and you try to better yourself.

[00:12:44] M: What's your idea on how much effort do people put into making their streams, or their streaming content as good as it can be. Are there some kind of certain norms or conventions that, for example, eSports people need to take into account on *how* to do the streaming itself in order for it to be the best possible content?

J-P: Well first of all people like personalities. Personalities are important in eSports overall because if you have a personality which stays in peoples' minds people come for more, obviously. Of course most people try to behave as well as possible, but there are some people who are gaining their audience by - how to say - trolling or making fun. There is a code that you shouldn't be swearing or so, but with Twitch there's a setting that warns audiences for mature content. But, in my eyes it's quite limiting because even though the nowadays eSports communities are quite old, around our age [28-29]. It's like around twenties to thirties, quite old so to say. There are of course teenagers because we're living in an age which promotes computers for everything. So, good behavior is one. Then you have good - so to say - if you're entertaining or people want to join your channel for learning you have to have good facts if you want to teach people anything. And you want to have smooth quality so that you can play the game easily and without it being laggy on the stream. I think those are the norms.

[00:15:40] M: What about these more technical issues. For example some streamers use a webcam for their faces and their fingers, and some are using music in the background. How much of effort do streamers put into setting up the technicalities of their streams - like cameras - and how much time do they spend looking for music, and how does that effect their streams?

J-P: That all depends on their goals and personalities and also their contracts with their teams. For example, if you play StarCraft II and you want to stream for hours and hours about your own practicing against other opponents, you might want to listen to music so it makes your job easier. And it can also entertain the people who come there [to the stream channel] and then you just

throw a joke now and then while playing. But it depends on how you want to market yourself because plenty of those Korean gamers, they are quite enthusiastic about showing their mechanisms and showing how their fingers are moving because that's one of the things you can brag about how fast you are in the video game. And, they can also market their effectiveness by showing their fingers and sometimes they just want to market their personalities by showing their audience their faces. That's what plenty of people do. There's this small window in Twitch.tv where you can show your face and be more 'in touch' with your viewers because you have more personality when they know how you react to your own gaming and how you react to your streaming. You're more 'alive' to them in that way.

[00:17:57] M: Okay, then I wanted to ask you to what extent do you think the live-streamers of SC2 co-operate with their viewers. For example, some streamers make polls in social media on what kind of content do their viewers want to see. But in a more general sense, how much do you think that eSports people co-operate with the viewers of their stream?

J-P: I think quite much. As we talked about, it's quite efficient way of being in contact with the fans. When the professionals go to LAN parties their fans greet them saying that "I watch your stream a lot and bla bla bla, and you played my favorite music", and so on. So even though the guy who is streaming is mostly likely far superior in the sense of playing the game than the watchers, some of the watchers don't even play the game anymore but instead just watch the game to enjoy it. But they [streamers] just get more in contact and maybe even become friends with the audience. There are certain audience members who are really familiar with the streamers after talking to the streamers, and they appreciate that even though this 'celebrity' is having hundreds or thousands viewers, they're taking the time to write something in the middle of the game. Something like "yeah I love that music too" or give their opinion on certain issues. And , that also has something to do with marketing as well. I know certain type of situations where there is a gamer playing the game but there's a different person writing the chat [laughs].

M: Oh? Okay [laughs]

J-P: Yeah, there are those kinds of things so to say, but I can't really reveal any names. But it's all about the PR basically.

M: Okay, [laughs] that's an interesting example. But, you've been talking about eSports a lot by now, but what I'm pointing with this next questions is more about the streaming itself rather than playing professionally. What I'm wondering is that if game streamers can be considered as professionals in their own field. Like, what's the extent of how much game streaming has been professionalized as opposed to just playing games for fun?

[00:21:02] J-P: I think those people are becoming media personalities in a way. They get more media visibility and it might make their opinions stand out because more people know them. So, that's one way of putting it.

M: Okay, that's a good answer in relation to the next thing that I wanted to ask. Can you think of any examples of new possibilities that open up to streamers due to their statuses as streamers? Such as job offerings and stuff?

J-P: Well, it has opened up few kind of industries. Professional gamers and their teams mostly - because the competition is getting tougher all the time - they have to spend more and more time into playing. There are certain people in gaming clans and eSports companies who are pretty much dedicating to create best possible setting for players to stream so that players don't have to worry about anything. They just click one button and that's it. And the other persons will install the required software and they will have a webcam for you. They will put up a nice setting and tell you how to place everything in your apartment so it looks clean and the point of view is better. There's a lot of psychology in that field as you must know.

M: Yeah, I was personally thinking as new possibilities these game streamers who start by streaming and now you can see those guys nowadays as commentators or so...

J-P: Yeah! That's a good stepping-stone! It's a good stepping-stone from jumping from being a gamer into being a media personality and even though some people are just streaming for entertainment purposes they get more visibility. There are some people who are doing co-operation actually. Blizzard Entertainment is paying some salaries to people who are really famous celebrities because of their streaming. Because the community knows them the company picks them up. That is a really good chance for people to getting more jobs, and different kinds of jobs. It's like a TV channel of its own without limitations!

[00:24:32] How easy do think it is to become a successful streamer in this way? Since people are being hired by Blizzard which is based on their popularity and success as a streamer. But, do you have any personal opinion on how easy it is to become one?

J-P: I cannot say it would be easy, because there would be tons of people.

M: Yeah, there aren't that many?

J-P: Yeah, but the amount is increasing. And the popularity is that... [pauses] there are more and more females -- girls -- doing that job. And there's of course... how to be correct [laughs] ... gaming girls are not that familiar in the gaming scene so their presence might be.... well guys want to see what it is all about, so to say.

M: Would you say in that case that maybe it's easier for girls to become successful streamers more quickly than it is for guys?

J:P: I think that that the trend is going that way, but of course you have to take it into mind that there are really are many definitions of what people want from the stream. Some people just want hardcore facts, they don't care what kind of face there is in the stream. They just want to learn to play better and learn to be better gamers. Some people people *just* care about the face. And there's of course all the lines between those things so I don't know, we shall see...

[00:26:23] Do you have any kind of an opinion on what kind of video content in this sense people actually consume the most? Are people more into the strategical content, or into the personalities?

J-P: Uhm, I think it's something in between for most of the people. It's really the part of the more hardcore people who just want straight cold facts and don't really care about the personality. Usually it's just an entertainment business where you just plug your computer to the television and then watch streams with friends. There are even bars located in the world where there are large screens for this purpose.

M: *Barcrafts* [laughs]?

J-P: Yeah, *Barcrafts.* But if I may come back to the previous point, there was one more thing that came to my mind. I know for a fact few Koreans -- and I think around the world there are more people who are doing this -- that there's actually a guy playing the game but there's a female on the camera.

M: *Really?* [laughs]

J-P: Really... to get more audience. So, these kinds of things happen. But I think most people are legit. But there are always these situations that if people are aiming to be something and to achieve more money, or certain kinds of goods, or fame or anything, people use different kinds of methods, so to say.

[00:28:47] Yeah, okay cool. I think those were my question on live-streaming. I was going to hop into the idea of what playing games is all about. But is there any specific thing you'd like to say about live-streaming right now?

J-P: Well, about streaming. I think it's a fantastic platform -- the Twitch.tv -- because you can use different kinds of other social media to promote your stream. For example, on Facebook you can share automatically the the streams you're streaming on your Facebook page. You can also automatically share them on Twitter so they appear on Twitter... your streams. And that kind of usage of Twitch is enabling to grow it even more. And basically it's like a symbiosis. People want to look for the games and people also get interested to the games because they just see a random video on Twitter or on Facebook or Twitch.tv itself.

M: So different various of social media are working together in promoting the streamer as a person or his stream itself?

J:P Yeah, and people are quite intuitive and genius in finding new ways to promote themselves and market themselves by using those social media tools we are given at the moment. It's fantastic to see what they are coming up next because it's evolving all the time. It's not a stale situation, it's a process...

[00:30:46] How important do you think it is to promote a stream on other social media than Twitch.tv. Is it enough just to stream, or is it really a requirement to promote one's stream on other places as well?

J-P: It would be recommended to do that. If you put a channel down on Twitch you can make keywords on what people type on the search box which would lead them to your own channel. But it certainly helps a lot to use other social media with it. I think that if you want to maximize your experience, and your viewers' experience, you *should* use those. It's not a requirement, but I would say it's useful and helpful nevertheless.

[00:31:59] M: Okay, let's move on to, let's say more theoretical discussions on the idea of playing games. Do you think that the common consensus with people is that playing games is a waste of time and energy?

J-P: There definitely are people who think see it in that way that only children should be playing. But I would call it a cultural revolution that's happening around the world. It's about internet and gaming in general. It's also country-specific. People are more open to the idea in the mid-Europe, and *especially* in Asia. In Korea, it's a heaven for all gaming pros. Usually people are quite on their toes when you tell them what is going on, but if you explain it well enough they usually like it... if you can bring them evidence and bring them correct information and just plain and simple truths. But of course, it's not that much in the mainstream but in Finland there have been some programs to where gamers have been invited to these... talk-shows.

M: Really? I haven't seen one...

J-P: Yeah, it's becoming more popular, a part of popular culture. So I think the situation is alive at the moment. It's not as huge as I would like it and other gamers would like it but it's certainly more popular than it was five years ago. So five years is quite the short time, and it's grown so hugely in five years already. Let's see where we are 'tomorrow'.

M: Cool. Then, in this sense do you think that live-streaming has been somehow promoting this kind of professionalization of gaming, or has it just been kind of a thing that happened and no

one really took so much of notice of it? Has live-streaming played a role making gaming more serious in the context of electronic sports for example?

J-P: It is 'vice versa'. All the platforms are benefiting from each other. Twitch is making it easier, making it more accessible for people who are not familiar with that game because they have not bought that game. So I think they're benefiting from each other quite much.

[00:36:10] Okay. Then, do you have any idea where would you draw the line between working as opposed to leisure time when you think of gaming and live-streaming? When does playing become a job?

J-P: Playing becomes a job when you really -- well it depends how you can manage your life -- the gaming is a big part of your life when the primary goal is to achieve money. When the time [being put to gaming] exceeds the time most people are working in their day jobs, then you can pretty much say you're doing it as a work; and if you have the mindset for it. Those kind of things make it more like work, but the idea why eSports -- professional gaming -- is considered as a 'sport' is that it's physically, mentally, and strategically demanding. That is the same kind of thing that makes for example professional football to be a sport, even though different kind. People want to see other people perform at their best, to have dramatic moments, to have different kinds of feelings, to give their best and always be better and better. It's always about the self-development.

[At this point the interviewer had something stuck in his throat and went to get water. After coming back...]

J-P: I would also like to add that live-streaming enables people to be more professional 'easier' because before there was Twitch.tv, or any other kind of live-streaming, your possibilities were quite limited. You had to work a lot harder. So Twitch.tv has given quite much to eSports and vice versa. It's like the platform *is* the community and the spokesman for nerd life-style [laughs]. That's how I would see it. And nerds are not looked down upon too much. People still do not understand professional gamers because people might mix them with some people playing in the mother's basement instead of people with social skills and who do it as a profession. So the line is

definitely going thinner and thinner all the time and its fantastic what kind of possibilities we get from live-streaming.

[00:40:17] M: Okay, that was already kind of an answer to my next question [laughs], but I was going to ask if you think that professional live-streaming and professional gaming are comparable to one another, or is that too far-fetched?

J-P: There's this thing about a person's own skill-level. If you're good enough you get invited to tournaments and get money by that way. But there is also this kind of "what you want out of it" question there. If you want to entertain you can be like a talk-show host who is playing a game. So I'd see the separation between your goals determining what kind of line there is.

[00:41:18] Could you elaborate on the attitude that streamers might have to take into streaming?

J-P: From my personal experience and from what I've seen and heard, the best is to have a positive attitude towards streaming and to take it as a possibility rather than something that you just 'have' to do. People take it as a possibility and it can really help you out.

M: Do you think that game streamers must take their streaming activities with a professional mentality; that they can't just turn on their streams and start playing games?

J-P: Basically so. You have to do a lot of background work for it, but if you're in an organization those people who are hired to do that, they will do it for you if it's serious enough. Of course there are plenty of people who just do it by themselves but it is a hard work. If you want to succeed, it's like everything in life, it's a really hard work. So even though you're showing the world you're playing games it really requires you to get certain amount of knowledge about your settings and what you want to do. And, it is of course good to have social skills.

[00:43:24] M: Okay, you kind of touched on this issue already, but how does game streaming impose social pressures on streamers? How much does streaming create outside influences on the real life issues of the streamers, such as like how do streamers deal with the demands of the viewers?

J-P: I can give you some insights about how it affects your outside wolrd and also how it affects your profession, which is the gaming. The thing is, people can get death-threats if they're famous enough. There's all kinds of people in internet and the anonymity of internet can make it quite easy to say whatever messed up you have in your head. But social aspects you can also get friends you didn't know before. You can just meet them up on your stream when they come and say they like to watch your stream and you just become friends like that. That's quite cool aspect of it. But in the gaming sense there's a thing called 'sniping'. Sniping is an activity where you check your opponent who you meet in ladder -- the ranking system of the game -- you check him out and try to get him as your opponent. So some people are watching what the other player is doing from another computer screen and.... cheat. There are those kinds of situations related to streaming which can affect you of course positively, like getting friends; and negatively that you might get 'sniped'. In a professional sense, the reason why professionals who are competing for money don't want to stream too much before a tournament, is that the opponent's managers and their staff are writing down your timings and writing down what you're doing in the game. So you don't want to give them too much of information about what you're doing. That kind of thing can also affect your game-play if people are following your every step. It is really easy to get information from people's stream because you can see the streamer's emotions and it's basically making a psychological profile of someone.

M: Yeah I've heard few of these stories myself.

J-P: There's also that kind of people who want to be famous themselves so they try to snipe someone who is streaming, so they can get views for themselves from other players. They're like "hey look I'm playing versus this person". So plenty of disadvantages and of course advantages in that kind of activity.

[00:47:53] How much do you think that players have to organize their whole life based on streaming? You mentioned about contracts that require streamers to stream a certain amount of hours. I'm interested in general how do streamers schedule their normal 'working day"?

 J-P: Well, as you know it's about these hardcore people who take it on a professional level, but usually it goes along with their practice routines. If they're playing hours and hours of ladder they want to take advantage of their time. While you're of course practicing and getting better you can

also get money while doing it, and getting to know people from streaming. Some people have that kind of attitude of doing it.

M: Esports players are of course a bit of a different thing from your 'average-joe' streamers who gets into the Twitch partnership program, but how much money do people get from the partnership program? Can you support yourself with it?

J-P: In some cases quite nice pay from it, but there are some country restrictions. Some countries want to tax you from it.

M: Oh? How's Finland?

J-P. [Laughs] I think the situation has changed in Finland a bit. You know that there's a good synergy between live-streaming and Youtube where you can upload your live-streaming videos. There was a similar kind of a contract in Youtube that you can get money if you can get enough of views and anything like that. It wasn't possible to get in Finland into a partnership with Youtube, but now it's possible. And nowadays it's also more possible to get into a partnership with Twitch. But it is related to how much of viewers you got and I think it's easier and easier all the time. THere are more and more people who play casually, they're not like playing competitively at all. They're playing fun games, they're playing for fun. They want to entertain. They want to talk a lot while playing chill-out games and, I think it's a revolution as we talked about it. It's becoming easier because also more people are being drawn to it. People don't want to play anymore with just you and the computer, but instead people want to socialize and that [streaming] is a good way to socialize.

[00:51:51] M: So do you think the money from Twitch is also promoting socialization between gamers by bringing people them into games, or do you think people watch streams no matter if there would be money involved ...through the partnership program?

J-P: I think there are always people who want to watch streams and watch games, but some streamers are after the money. A lot of them are in this casual business, and therefore for the money. There's plenty of them. But most of the streamers are quite honest and in a way they just like to do what they do and they like the money. But some people are really dependent on that

money and that service. So it depends on the person, but I think that it's quite common for someone to be streaming for fun. He has fun while doing it but also gets paid by doing it.

M: Okay we've arrived to the last point here. The punchline here is that... if we can really consider streaming and gaming as working, then what do streamers do for fun... for relaxing and leisure time?

J-P: [laughs] Well me and my team-members went to gym, we went to movies, some of us had girlfriends. It's just like another job. The thing is that it's an advantage that you can do work from home nowadays. It's quite a luxury. I would say that we're normal people just like everyone else, sometimes even more hard-working than some people who go to work from 9 to 5. Some players are playing 14 hours a day and streaming it so it really depends. There are those high-end and low-end as in every profession. I think it's more and more common to do a job from your home anyways, and this streaming business is one aspect of this kind of distance-job.

M: Do you think that streaming can be a burden for streamers in the sense that people have made it into a work?

J-P: If your goal is to be a professional gamer you have to have fun with what you're doing, otherwise you cannot really perform at your highest level. If you don't have fun with streaming you have to take it into consideration why you don't have fun with streaming.

M: Do you think think that in this sense leisure and labor have been mixed together?

J-P: I think most of the streamers have it mixed together yes. They enjoy it, they have to enjoy it if they have it as a profession. There are of course some problems with gaming, especially with professional gaming. When a person sits in front of a computer fourteen to sixteen hours it's not healthy. But I would say those are quite close to one another, having fun and work, and in my opinion that's one luxury in life if you can enjoy what you do work. So that is one encouraging aspect of why people start to stream; because they want to enjoy what they get their money out of.

M: So what would you say to a hard-working factory guy who is working while getting less money than some fifteen year old StarCraft 2 streamer who just plays games all day long?

J-P: It's a matter of perspective. There are two kinds of 'labors'. There's like office work compared to factory work. If someone's talking down on it, saying that it's not 'real work', the social aspect of streaming... you could compare it to having a TV show of your own on internet. So if you take in that sense you can always say to the person "why don't you try it yourself, it's so easy..."

M: Okie dokie, these were my questions. I wish thee a good day!

Interview from Kevin '*RotterdaM*' Van Der Kooi

[00:01:17] M: Ok, let's get started. So the first question I would like to ask you is that approximately how many hours do you stream per day or week?

R: Alright, that's actually an easy question for me to answer because all the data is out there. There's a guy on Teamliquid [.net] who keeps track of that. From November 2010 until March 2014 I always had a full time job which means that I worked 40 hours a week at an office and those days of course I do stream because streaming was my job. But I didn't stream the same way as I do it right now. Back then I would've said I pushed out content, anything between 16 and 30 hours a week. But that was produced content; that was studio content. You know, you traveled to events and you stayed at an event for three days straight. Three days straight and eight hours a day you're 'on'. 'Cause in the old days we didn't fly in six casters... so you were doing whole days. So whenever I had a full-time job I wasn't - well, let's say - approximately twenty-thirty hours a week of actual live content. Maybe a little less, it could have been closer to fifteen as well. It really depends on whether there is an event or not. But for the last three months I started working less at the office, so that means that I tried to create my own channel and actually get a successful Twitch stream. So instead of being an office guy who sits behind the desk every now and then, who produces a show, I tried to run my own channel. And to do it, to make it into a success, you have to be extremely consistent and you have to put in a lot of hours. Despite still working for the first three months of this year I still worked let's say something around twenty-five hours a week in the office, but I was streaming hundred and fifty hours a month on average. So that's forty

hours a week of streaming from my room. But once again there's a big difference between streaming from your room, or pushing out actual studio content.

[00:03:23] Forty hours a week? That's quite a lot. That's like having a real time job!

R: Yeah, and it was my side-job. But that's just the way it is. If you want to create your own channel and you want to do it right then you're going to have to put in the hours. Of course eventually when everything starts running and everything is good you might be able to slow down a little bit and you might say like, "alright from this point on I'm gonna focus on quality over quantity". But if you're going to come out and you're like, "hey I'm trying to create my own Twitch channel, here I am…" for like ten hours a week, then there are not a whole a lot of people you see or reach. There's not a lot of eyeballs that will tune into your channel because... if I stream 10 hours a week then I won't even cover every single time-zone. It's going to be impossible.

[00:04:23] Ok, cool. Can you give me in a nutshell just the very early steps of how you got into streaming in the first place?

R: Alright, so now you're just talking about me creating my own Twitch channel rather than working for a company and live-streaming. Correct?

M: Yeah, just about yourself...

R: Well, even though I didn't stream nearly as much from 2010... well I started in let' say 2012, that's the first time I ever streamed myself. Before that I wasn't really familiar with how setting it up. Twitch was around but it was still, you know, it used to be *Justin.tv* and then it got turned into Twitch.tv. But it seemed a little difficult to me and it kinda felt like the wild wild west. Like, I wasn't exactly sure how to do it on my own. I'm not extremely good with computers as some people on my stream can attest. So I was a little hesitant doing it on my own at first, but as a commentator that I was back then I felt I was putting a lot of hours into the game and I wanted to show to the people that I could actually play the game in a pretty reasonable level. And I'm talking about 2013 right now when - you know - you read the forums where a lot of people were saying like "Rotterdam's pretty shit", or "Rotterdam is not as good as *X* or Rotterdamn is not as

good as *Y"*. And I was like, "hey! I am, I am!" So I was asking my roommates like, "hey guys can you help me set up my stream" because I wanted to stream my practice and stream my ladder games. I didn't even care about income on that moment. The first few days I streamed without an ad-view and everyone's like "hey you should get *partner* [program], you can earn money!". And I was like "who cares" - you know- I was just happy that I could actually stream my game play and people would were tuning in and I was having a good time. So that's when I started, but back then it was more just something I did for fun. I wanted to show the world that "hey, I can play this game". But it wasn't something that I was really thinking that "hey I can really making a living with this" or "I can make a living better by doing this". Throughout 2013 it was at least couple of hours every month that I streamed but it was impossible for me to be consistent because I was too busy with my job and I was very focused on casting and doing all that stuff. And every once 'in a blue moon' when I was bored, I was like "hey I'll turn on my stream, see if some people want to watch me". But from November 2013 this, uhm, this goes back to my personal life where I had to make a choice: either I would start working on a different game called *World of Tanks* and I would still be able to have a full-time job at the office; or I was start working part-time on *StarCraft* because StarCraft had less money in that moment put into it than the money put into World of Tanks. But I could still work on *StarCraft*. I decided to become a part-time employee so I could still focus on StarCraft which means that I was working a whole lot less days at the office and also I started to have a lot less income. Like, if I would have gone the other route my income would have been 40% higher every month. So, that was a big change. I could still live off the money that I was getting from the office but I was like ok, I'm used to making this and I also feel that if I'm living on the other side of the world far away from my family and friends I should be doing more than just barely getting by... you know, just barely paying bills. So I thought maybe I need to find a different way to create some extra income for myself. And I saw a lot of streamers be very successful, and I always felt that I could be an entertaining streamer, and always felt that it's something I truly enjoyed. Like, how can I complain playing video games in front of people enjoying watching me? So on that point I said like, "alright, you know, you have all this free time right now because you work a whole lot less at the office; do something useful with it!" So I started focusing on trying to build up my stream and I would say it almost took off immediately. Of course I got fortunate with people knowing who I am so people were more likely to give my channel a try because it's like "hey I've seen that guy casting this event, let's see if he's any good

or not". And apparently I was able to create an 'ok' atmosphere for people to come back to my channel and I just took it from there and I still enjoy doing it. But, uhm, I'm also doing it because it brings in income, 'cuz otherwise I would have hard time getting by. Especially now that the part-time job is done as well - that disappeared - so now it's basically streaming only and doing casting on the side.

[00:08:45] M: Ok, cool. So basically my next question is... what's your opinion on the idea that Twitch.tv's partnership program has been able to create a new job out of streaming. I guess you're quite happy about it? [laughs]

R: I think it's amazing! I've been in eSports for I would say 11-12 years now. I attended my first international eSports event in 2005. In my days we were just all playing WarCraft 3 and if you would've told me back then like, hey you can actually - you know - instead of trying to go to tournaments and win money, or getting money from a team, you should just sit behind your PC and play your games and people watch you and you can make a living off of that. If you would have told me that in 2006-2007 I would have laughed at you. I would have been like "that sounds really silly, like how is that ever going to take off?" But, it did...

[00:09:33] M: [laughs] Yeah that's basically why I'm doing my thesis right now because obviously there's a lot of people still feeling the same way that... how you describe it was back in 2006-2007 [laughs]

R: Yeah, it's absolutely amazing. Twitch has done... I feel... almost everything right from the moment they separated from Justin.tv and they launched Twitch.tv to focus on eSports and eSports only. I have felt they've done everything right. The site has been getting consistently better over time as well because if we take a look at Twitch in 2000... - I don't know when it started- let's say 2011 or 2014, it's a completely different. The site has changed so many times since in so many ways and, they made it so much more accessible. Not just for fans but also for people who try to create *something* on Twitch, who try to become successful. So, in so many ways it is amazing what has happened and obviously I'm very happy about it. But you know, it has created a whole new form of entertainment. eSports was already an entertainment but since Twitch has arrived it's all-day every-day eSports.

[00:10:38] Yeah, cool, cool. We kind of touched on the next question on my list. I was wondering, how easy was it for you to start earning money through Twitch.tv? Obviously you had the reputation as a *caster* so it might be a bit of a different situation than for some random guy who starts from the bottom. But if you can give some light in general to how easy it is to start making money with Twitch?

R: I think if you are not a pro-gamer or you are not somehow a known community figure... It's hard for me to answer that question properly because I didn't walk that route. I walked a completely different route so it's very hard for me to say - you know - if you're a nobody, if you're not particularly good at the game, if you're not a caster, if you're somewhat unknown; and *then* building up your channel... I think that's super impressive and I have so much of respect because I feel it's two-three times harder than what I did because I already had the following. For me personally, well it was kind of funny because when I started streaming I truly din't care about making money. It was more for me about showing to the world that I was legit, that I could actually play the game, and it was entertainment for me. Then they said that "hey, you can get *partnered",* and I was like "ok, if I can get money from this then why not?" But back then we didn't have the Subscription model yet so it was all about ad-revenue. I had reasonable viewers whenever I streamed; I streamed one-time blue moon, but it wasn't anything amazing. Back then I would maybe stream few times a month and get like hundred-something dollars from Twitch. That's amazing! But if it's ad-revenue and ad-revenue only, I think it's very hard to become successful especially because it's very instable... or unstable. Like, some months the ad-revenue is quite good and with ad-revenue alone you could walk away with reasonable pay-check. But on other months, for instance the other day I streamed for five and a half hours and had a thousand viewers and I got three dollars and sixty-one cents. Like, obviously no one's going to make a living off that. But ever since Twitch implemented the Sub-model where people can buy subscription on your channel, you don't have to do anything for it... all you have to do is talk with Twitch and say you want that button and if - you know - then Twitch inspects your channel a little bit, and make sure that it's legit and it's not some sort of scam, then they'll say like "alright, here's your button". Then two-fifty [dollars] goes to Twitch, two-fifty goes to the streamer, and I feel that it what has really taken off for many people. Because, now it's not just... Okay, it's not only you earning money by sitting down and streaming... streaming, writing... writing, ten hours a day, now actually you can build up that user-base and you can go on a holiday for two weeks

but that income will still be there because people have a subscription on your channel. So, it's guaranteed income. And that is the easiest way to earn money from Twitch, and that is the best thing that has happened to - I think - to a lot of streamers.

[00:13:32] Yeah, yeah, cool. Next I'd like to go more technical stuff, so to speak. I'm wondering how much effort do you put into your streaming outside of your stream, while you're streaming. Basically, how do you make sure that the stream content is as good as it can be? Do you just sit back and start talking and you don't care about it much, or how much effort there is done behind the scenes?

R: Yeah, I understand completely. You can make it as crazy as you want. You can really go over the top and try to make your stream unique in so many ways. Or you can say like, "Hey I go for for simplicity, I feel the content I push out is good and I just want to have a good stable, clean stream". Obviously, you want to make sure that your stream is, uhm, first of all make sure that you have solid internet. Like, that is the most important thing. You don't want to put up a stream and then disconnect three, four, five times in an hour. Because that's horrible... your viewers are going to leave, you're going to have less fun. There is no proper show. So, I feel that internet was the only thing I truly cared about. You also want to have a good PC. As soon as I run to PC issues I already start looking for a way to fix it. Other than that, the programs that are required to stream are very simple, very straight-forward. Even someone like me is able to figure it out - you know - you just press 'ok' [button] a bunch of times and you test it and suddenly it works. So I personally don't put in a whole lot yet, but I've been thinking a lot about it. Like, maybe I should do this, maybe I should do that. But I think it depends a lot. Few people out there always try to come up ways to make their stream to make their stream a little bit more sexy, to make their streams stand out in one way or the other by either having cool graphics or having something - emotion - or you just doing something unique. Other people are more focused on the content they put out. You know, trying to come up with cool ideas that will make people tune into their channels whether or not you have a shiny rainbow on the top of your stream or not. And I would say I fall into the latter category, my stream is quite simple. I like to keep it clean, I don't put too many fancy stuff on it, like I don't even use an in-game overlay for StarCtaft II. But I do think a lot about what I can do to make people enjoy my channel more and what can I do to - you know - do something different other than just streaming and talking.

[00:15:59] M: There's one thing I find interesting in this context and that's the music that streamers play in the background. Have you ever had any problems with the music that you're playing in the background, do you get a lot of requests for some kind of genre of music, and how much effort do have to put into thinking what kind of music you can play on your stream in order to keep viewers watching your stream?

R: This question is really close to home because a lot of my viewers don't like my favorite artists.

M: [Laughs]

R: But you know, it goes many ways. Different strokes for different folks. Everyone has their own taste. It's absolutely impossible to please everybody. There are some genres that in general score better than others. Right now electronic dance music is the flavor of the month so if you put up some DBM, like I would say 70-80% of your viewers will be like "oh yeah sick music man!" And then you can always play a couple of good pop songs, as long as you don't go over the top with Justin Bieber and Backstreet Boys, then in general people are 'ok' with that as well. I think music is important. I often do something where I let people who are subscribed to my channel pick out a song so I will play out that song while I'm playing and just try to make as many people happy. I try to switch it out, for instance, I like RnB and rap a lot, but it's also not something I would listen to 6 hours straight. But I know a lot of people don't like it too much, so often at the start of the stream when there aren't too many people just yet [watching his stream] I like to listen to some of my own music. Then more people come and I like to play it a little more safe, go to mainstream popular, what is popular right now among most people. And I give a close eye on the chat. If more people are like "hey it's enough with this electronic dance music, play some some *this* and play some *that"*. In general, I don't mind too much. The only thing I notice is that a lot of gamers really seem to be into the heavy rock or heavy metal - I don't really know what it is - but to me it just sounds like a bunch of guys screaming really loud and slamming on their equipment. I get a headache if I listen to it, but whenever I do put out requests I often have a lot of people who do like that kind of music. But then you also have to think about the other side - people like me - that it's a polar opposite for people like me. It's the type of music that you either love or you hate. If you put on some soft DBM if you put on some popular charts, some people

might be a fan of it but it's bearable. While if you go with super heavy death metal that might cater to 10% of your audience but the other 90% is ripping their ears out.

M: [Lauhgs]. Outside of music requests, how much in general do you collaborate with your viewers when you're streaming. For example, I know that some streamers make polls out of what kind of video content their viewers would like to see. I guess you're mostly playing ladder games, but do you ever get requests saying something like "hey, just go play some random three versus three games" or whatever? But yeah, how much do you co-operate with your viewers in order to create the best possible video content?

[00:19:13] R: I feel that unless you are truly unique, unless you are like very good in something, like you're the absolute best in the world, you going to have to be very interactive with your viewers. Because, I play the game on an 'ok' level and I have days when I think that I play quite well, and have some mediocre days when I'm not that good. But people don't watch me to see how amazing I am, people don't watch me to blow their minds. Above all it's super important to be interactive. I have days where I indeed sit down and I'll be like "hey guys, today I'm mostly streaming for myself just because I want to get better in *this* and *this*, and I'll just be grinding". But there's no way that I'll do five days in a row only what I want to do; I definitely interact a lot with my viewers and make sure that they enjoy what I'm doing. I often create a straw-poll at strawpoll.me. I give them [viewers] four options, like "hey, do you want me to play 1v1, 2v2, or 3v3, or free for all [the main 'game-modes' in SC2]" Or ,"shall I play a different game" and the answer is always "no". But you know, I give people a choice what they want me to do. And I often split those options as well, I say like, "alright, the first four hours of the broadcast I'll just play some 1v1s because I want to work on my rank and I want to work on some strategies". But after that, I ask the guys to give me some suggestions and I try to listen to what the majority wants and I'll let them vote. Strawpoll.me is a really awesome website, you create poll in five seconds, you post in in chat, you let people vote. Yeah, once again you can't please everybody but you're going to please the majority of your people and that's important.

[00:20:46] Ok, next questions is.... basically going to the idea of live-streaming as an on-growing phenomenon. What's your own guess what's going to happen to live-streaming and live-*streamers* in the next five years? Do you still think that you're going to be a successful caster,

making a lot of money by streaming, or do you think this live-streaming as a phenomenon will fade away at some point?

R: I definitely don't think it's going to fade away. I seriously think this is just the start. I still think we're at the bottom of where it can all go. It is amazing how quickly Twtich has grown, like their numbers are astonishing. Like, their growth is unreal. I think if you show their growth to most companies that have never heard of Twitch they will take it as a scam - you know - "this is like a Nigerian prince that's going to have 10 million on his bank account if you just send him few bucks". I think it's really unreal what Twitch went through, and I think streaming on its own, it's just going be more accessible. Right now it is still - you know - for us gamers more and more people are getting familiar with Twitch, but the 'average joe' probably still doesn't know what Twitch is. I'm still amazed that you can make a living by streaming, but this is just the start. It's going to go further. For me, personally, I really don't know. I will keep doing it until I enjoy it...

[At this point of the interview some technical difficulties appeared]

[00:22:44] R: Anyway, just to finish my train of thought, uhm, so I think Twitch on it's own and whole streaming is definitely not going to go anyway; it's going to keep growing. I don't know where it's going to be in five years. Things take time, but I think more and more major tech-companies are going to be very interested. I don't think it's too strange to think that some of the most popular streamers in Twitch, like five years from now on, will be pretty legit celebrities. Just like some Youtube stars. Youtube took off five years ago, couple of people walking around with a web-cam saying "hey, today I bought some ice-cream and it was fucking amazing", and they got like three hundred thousand on their videos, or like 1.5 million. I think in a couple of years some of the most popular Twitch streamers will also get those kind of numbers. Where it's going to be after that I don't know, might just be the next Hollywood stars. Maybe tabloids are going to follow them and take some pictures when they're hooking up with a different streamer or something, I don't know. For me personally, I will do it as long as I enjoy it. For me it just comes out as very plain and simple, the moment I will stop having fun with it I will be done with it, but right now I really enjoy it. And, I think within five years I'll definitely still be working either in front of the camera or behind the camera. But I really love the industry and I feel like I'm getting a lot of knowledge how things are working as well. And, I'm still really enjoying my current

position, the whole casting thing and the streaming on the side, but in five years I'm obviously... well, maybe spread some of that knowledge across the scene and try to make things grow even quicker and faster.

[00:24:29] OK, cool. Those were basically my questions about live-streaming; about technical things and stuff. The next set of questions is really going deeply into the idea of how live-streaming has affected game culture in general. So uhm, what's your own opinion - there are no right or wrong answers - on the idea that live-streaming has turned the very nature of playing games into a more professional activity?

R: Uhmm...

M: Due to, you know, you have to play a game in order to stream, and streaming is your job, so playing is kind of your job as well next to streaming. Or, do you disagree?

Rotti: No, no. I don't necessarily disagree, but there were... uhm. Being a professional gamer was already something that has been around before Twitch, or before live-streaming. You know, the tournaments were streamed one way or the other, but there are plenty of tournaments that were quite big back in the old days, like 2003, 2004, 2005, that were very hard to reach and the streaming was unstable. But it was still getting done. There were still people making a living off of playing games. And especially if you back to the old days, I think that even if there wouldn't have been Twitch, even if the tournaments wouldn't have been streamed, being competitive is just human nature. And uhm, when we were young and a bunch of guys started bragging about how good they were in *Golden Eye* [a *James Bond* themed first-person shooter game] you wanted to bring your Nintendo to their place and beat them. Those kind of things grew into tournaments... the good old LAN parties, nothing got streamed but there were still tournaments. Obviously Twitch and live-streaming in general has exploded the whole thing and made the industry grow at a rapid speed, and all those sponsors are interested because the numbers are fantastic. Like, it's much more appealing to a sponsor when you know that couple of hundred thousand unique viewers have tuned in over the weekend, than when two hundred nerds have attended some LAN party in a basement in a random city somewhere in the US. So obviously Twitch has helped a lot but there would've been competitive gaming without it as well. It just wouldn't be as significant

as it is right now. It would be nowhere as professional; the scene would be nowhere near as big, but there would still be computer game tournaments.

[00:26:50] M: Ok. Since you're basically working... since streaming is your job, where do you think the line is drawn between leisure time and labor. Since gaming is basically both, but streaming makes a labor... right?

R: Definitely. As I said I truly love what I do, and if I wouldn't enjoy it I would've probably stopped already a long time ago. Not that I'm particularly good in anything else in life so I would have to think well about that. For me it's really important to have fun with it, but there are definitely days when I feel kind of lazy and it's like "ah, I didn't stream yesterday" and then I'm sitting here looking at my screen, and browsing reddit.com, and I find an excuse not to play because one way or the other - like - "ah I can't focus, I feel tired". You know, every excuse that every other guy has as well for whatever they have to get done. And then at some point you have to get yourself over this and be like hey, "you have no right to complain, you're going to play some games, you're going to make maybe some money, maybe some bad money maybe some good money. But at the end of the day you're still going to do something you love, so just get over it and get your ass to playing". And, the way it works as well, sometimes - you know- the moment when you turn the camera on you might not truly 'feel it' yet because you might still feel a little distracted or unfocused. Yeah, then it kind of feels like work, but in the end of the day it's important to just use your mind and tell yourself this very important message, like hey you have no right to complain at all. You're just going to do something productive today because there are a million other people out there that would like to be in your position. So, every now and then it feels like work, but for me personally when it comes to streaming I would say 90% of the time it feels like fun and 10% of the time it feels like work. When it comes to casting - which is also a way of streaming - it's 99% of the time very fun for me and just that 1% out there feels like work.

[00:28:50] Ok. You were talking about streaming as a job already but uhm, well this might be a bit funny question, but if you're forced to think of game live-streaming as a job then which one of these two activities do you find closer to an actual job: the playing of the game, or streaming the playing of the game?

R: Uh, that all comes down to your level. For me it would definitely be the streaming of the game because right now my level is not good enough to be an actual pro-gamer and make money by winning tournaments. So, if I wouldn't stream then playing the game wouldn't be my job because I would just not be good enough at it. Maybe if I would lock myself up in my room for four months straight and grind out games, and I'm dead serious about it and I do nothing else in life, then I'd actually say that playing the game is my job. But it all comes down to your level. There are a bunch of Korean players out there who stream as well, but for them playing the game is much more important than the little stream on the side because the money they earn by playing the tournaments is triple the amount that they would earn from streaming. So it depends on the level of the player you are, and also the type of personality, and where you want to go with your stream. Some people - yes, they might stream a lot - but they still have the ambition to go full-time *pro* if that's what they want. So it's a thin line and it just depends on the individual.

[00:30:19] M: Yeah. You already talked a bit about this, but let's go a bit more specific. I'm interested in the psychological mindset that you have to take into account when starting to play and stream. Since playing is kind of a thing that you might be pursuing with a playful mindset, but do you think you have to be really serious about what you're doing when you're streaming and gaming. Do you think really something it's something that you have to approach with a serious mindset even if the practice itself is very playful?

R: Uhm, it again comes down to the individual and where you want to go with it. To me, I take streaming pretty seriously because it's an important part of my life right now. And it's something I plan along as well. It's up to the point when some people might say like, hey, you want to go out and do *this* and *this*" and I'll be like "no I have to work today, I have to stream". I see it as work, so I approach it very seriously, but again some other people might just be like "yeah, I'll stream two nights a week just because I enjoy it for fun". It's like "I have my university" or "I have my real-life job" or "I have my actual pro-gaming activity on the side and streaming is just for fun". So, it also just depends where you want to take it.

[00:31:33] Ok. Just a couple of more questions. Now we're going to talk about your.... how has live-streaming affected your real-life activities? So, basically you can talk about whatever you want, but for example has live-streaming imposed some social pressures on you?

R: I'd say... well, some people might think that. But for me the opposite is true. I like doing outside stuff and I have plenty of fun. I live two and a half hours from Las Vegas, so if I want to have some fun I jump in my car and drive to Vegas and I attend a party. And I can do that whenever I want because I create my own schedules. But the cool thing is, that I actually meet a lot of people via my chat. I'm very interactive and because I've been living online around the internet for so long already, it's actually - you know - I'm very open minded about meeting other people. It doesn't matter to me where you're from or what's your history. If people are cool in chat and they propose something I'm cool with that. Couple of times I had dinner in Los Angeles with some people that watch my stream. They were like "'Hey *Rotti*, we think your stream is awesome, would you be down to eat some Korean food with us?" Some people would be freaked out by that, they'd think like "what the hell, why would you just go randomly meet some people from the internet you've never met before", but for me it's not big deal... I have a lot of faith in general in the StarCraft community. Of course, maybe I'm a bit too faithful because it can always go wrong, but I never think about that. The other week I had someone watch my stream; he heard me talking about hockey and he said: "Hey me and my brother have season tickets to LA Kings, I heard you want to go to an NHL game, shall I invite? Do you want to come?" And, I was like "hell yea!". And they went like "what about this Saturday? It's LA Kings against Carolina Hurricanes". So I just drive to LA, and he's like "ok, I'm in this restaurant having a beer" so I walk in, I see the dude standing there looking, and he walks over to me and he's like "hey Rotti, we met at the channel" and I was just like "hey, awesome!". Actually, in a way my social has been better because of streaming. You know, maybe if I would be at home it wouldn't be like that. In Holland I would be a little bit more hesitant about meeting people and I would rather just stick with my real friends. Uhm, not like my *real* friends but like with people I'm already familiar with. But here in the US, in the end of the day other than the people I work with I don't know too many people, so it's actually it's been an awesome thing for my social life. Of course, there might be some moments like I mentioned before - you know - people say like uh, "we have this and this planned". But I don't be gone for five days, because being just gone for five days means that I can't stream for five days. It has to be something truly special for me to just say like "alright, I'm in a position where I don't want to do anything productive for five days and I'll go with you" because your stream does suffer from not being there. Like I mentioned at the start of the interview, consistency is really important. So you might cancel few other things in the real life,

and that way you could say your social life is on the pressure. But on the other hand, there are so many awesome adventures you get into by streaming and meeting people that it's also very good for you. You develop yourself as a person.

[00:34:52] Yeah. How do you cope with the demands of your viewers? You said you make your own schedules and such, but do you feel responsible, for example, of being too busy to stream today as you were supposed to, or is it more like... [laughs] "...oh well, too bad"?

R: No, no. It doesn't go that far that I feel devastated, or that I can't sleep at night, or that I really let some people down. I'm pretty damn sure that all the people out there watching my stream, uh, that I won't make or break that day - you know - I can give a little sunshine to that day and they might have a good time watching me, but I'm pretty sure they'll survive without me. So no, it doesn't go that far, but of course I do feel that I have a responsibility to the subscribers of my channel that pay me every month because they want to support, me; that I *should* do something for them. If I'm not able to stream for four-five days I do send them a message and be like "hey guys, tomorrow I'm flying here and there I won't have an access to a PC so I won't be able to stream for the upcoming six days, just so you know". So, I do feel that it's important to communicate, especially with your loyal viewers, but I'm pretty sure that you know, that the world is not all about me. It would be a little freaky if it was.

[00:36:31] You were talking a bit about the good sides of being - well I'll just call you an internet celebrity so to say - so can you think of the worst thing that has happened to you in real life due to your status as a well-known streamer?

R: The worst thing?

M: Yeah, like, for example has anyone ever walked to you on the street going like "hey, I know you, but I hate your stream and I hate you and bla bla..." [Rotti laughs], or has the feedback in real life only been positive?

R: Nah, it has really only been positive. I'm sure there are people out there on the internet that would say like "oh I hate you, I can't stand you, go back to Holland, or bla bla". In real life that

has never happened. If you truly want an example then this is more funny than really bad, but then the worst thing is then also the funniest thing that has ever happened to me.

M: Yeah, that's just fine [laughs]

R: We uh, we had a signature signing session at the NASL Season 3 finals. This was in Toronto, Canada, a big hangar near the airport. A lot of people came out, you know two and a half thousand to five thousand friends were in the building so it was a great event. What normally happens that you sit down at a table, people line up, they give to you their mouse or their mouse-pads, or they keyboard or their back-bag, or whatever they have. They let you sign it and they want to take a picture and then you move on to the next person because most of the time these people are just StarCraft fans - you know - so they collect autographs. So I'm sitting there with '*Mr. Bitter'*, and we are like a duo, we always cast together or at least we used to. So it's just us two. Normally if you like me you like *Bitter,* and normally if you like *Bitter* you like me, because we almost didn't do a show without each other for like two years. So all these people come, and they line up, and we all take these pictures and we make some jokes with the fans and it's all good. And then one dude walks up and he's a little stiff, and a little shy, and he unwraps his brand new mouse-pad from his bag. Like it was still in plastic, it was like in the box, and he gives it to *Mr. Bitter* with this beautiful gold marker and he's like "hey can you please sign this for me I've been a fan of you ever since *'Seven Weeks with the Pros'"* [a video series produced by *Mr. Bitter*]. And *Mr. Bitter* is like "sure", so he signs this and moves it on to me because that's what everyone did, you know, you just move it on and that's what all the fans did. So I look at him - I always ask - "so do you want me to sign it or are you just a fan of *Bitter*?" And then he looks at me - and I still have my hand on the mouse-pad 'cuz I'm ready to sign it - and he kind of like grabs the mouse-pad and he said like: "I'm a really big fan of *Mr. Bitter*". And *Bitter* just stops what he's doing and he looks at the dude - and I'm sitting there with his marker in my hand - and then he [the fan] also grabs the marker. And, I'm not sure if I'm being trolled or if this dude is dead serious, and he rolls up his mouse-pad and puts it back into the box, grabs his marker and puts the top on, and looks at me and says like "I just really like *Mr. BItter"* [laughs]. And then he walked away, so *Bitter* just laughed like hell and I'm just sitting there like, "what the hell?". And I still thought to the final moment until he walked away that he was trolling me and he would actually come back. But, no... no. But as I said, other than that I've never had anything truly bad

happened to me or whatever. In general people in eSports are super funny and super nice. And I only like when people come up to me, and sometimes it happens in real life. Like, you walk on the airport and a little kid from Dubai comes up to you and he's like "hey I know you from *WarCraft*, it's cool!" Five minutes later a German guy behind you in the airplane is like, "hey, are you *Rotterdam?* I used to watch your shows". Or, when I went to a club in my own city some Dutch *StarCraft* fans came up to me, and I think that's super cool. There's a local restaurant here we go to sometimes to serve us some food, and he's like "wait, aren't you that *StarCraft* commentator?" So I think it's super awesome when that happens, and people are always nice.

[00:40:33] M: Yeah, so no crazy death-threats on Facebook or anything like that? I guess some Youtube celebrities get those...

R: Yeah well, Youtube is pretty toxic. People complain about Twitch, but if you read the comments on Youtube, that's a whole another level. But nothing, ever like that. Maybe it will happen one day but I don't think I'll be shaking you my boots when that happens [laughs].

M: Ok, last two questions, then we're done here. I'm wondering, uhm, this is about your own opinion. This is again comparing gaming as a 'free', leisure time as opposed to working. Do you consider yourself and other streamers really as professionals on your own field. To what extent do you think that it has become a professionalized activity? If you compare streaming to some physical... like factory work and so on, then how professionalized do you think that streaming has become in the past few years?

[00:41:57] Oh, I definitely think it's a professional industry. I mean, there are some people out there who make very serious money, and there are plenty of people who make money that they can live off with. And, you know, you hear about the current state of the economy, people have hard time finding jobs, even people with good education have hard time find a job. So if you're able to have a successful Twitch channel then you're doing something professional because you're doing it right. Because once again there are million people out there that try to do the same thing as you. So that the people who are successful are definitely professional in a way, especially if you spend that much of time on it. I don't think there's any other way to look at it. I mean, when you say *professional*, of course a lot of people may not have a super professional

approach to it. For me as well, if you would watch my stream and, let's say you studied law, and you look at me and you'll probably see this random dude sitting in his messy room playing some games. And then you'd say like "hell no, that ain't professional, that has nothing to do with professional!" But, there's a big difference only from streaming from your room, and like trying to be casual but still doing it in a professional way, or, always presenting yourself as a true professional. But in the end of the day streaming is... like, if this all you do or this is the industry you work in then you approach it professionally.

[00:43:26] Ok, last question, if we consider streaming and playing games as working, then what do you do for fun? Do you play games for fun, or are you like... after you're done with streaming and playing games you're just like "now I'm going to go watch ice-hockey" or whatever?

R: When I was young... I was ... I would consider myself more of a real gamer than what I am right now. In the last four-five years I haven't really been able to enjoy any game than that one game that I'm playing on that moment. So for a while that was *WarCraft 3*; after that I was obsessed with *Heroes of Newereth* for a while. It was the most addictive and amazing thing ever, and that's the only thing I played. And as soon as StarCraft II came out that was the only thing I played. Sometimes I play, like when I go to Holland and I meet my friends I might play a game of *FIFA*, but I almost never play it so then they beat me and I get stupid comments like "lol lol lol you're professional gamer and you're getting wrecked in *FIFA*" [laughs], and it's like "pffft, what you do you want from me?". But to answer your question in a more proper way. Like the moment I'm done with StarCraft, what I do for fun is still watch *StarCraft.* So like I don't always enjoy *StarCraft* while I'm working or streaming. I also just enjoy putting my feet on the desk and watching pro-league, watching GSL. So... watching other people do what I normally do, or watching other streamers... that is fun for me. But I also enjoy plenty of stuff in real life. I love California, I think it's one of the most beautiful places on earth, so if I feel like it I hop in my car and I drive somewhere, to a nice area. I drive to the mountains, I drive to the beach, I like to sit down and have some cocktails and smoke a cigar with *Mr. Bitter*. I like to go to Vegas, I like to some parties - you know - check out some clubs that I've never been to. I like partying but it's not something I do over the top these days. I'm really big sports fan, I'm not very active myself but I absolutely love watching sports. Maybe in a way because it relates to my industry and I hope my industry will get there one day. But I get goosebumps when I watch an amazing football game

and I see something like 60 thousand football fans scream their lungs out, or I love watching the NBA right now. Like, even the American football started to interest me. Uhm, I love attending real sports games, I love sitting in a bar watching sports, I love talking about sports with my friends. You know, there's plenty of stuff to keep you busy.

[00:46:01] Ok, cool. Well, that was actually all the questions that I wanted to ask you. Now, if you feel like... like now is your time to get your voice heard to the academic audience about streaming or gaming or anything. Do you have anything you would personally like to add to this interview?

R: Not really, but I do think that above all it is super important for anyone who hears about this for the first time to be very open-minded and don't go into it pre-judged, or have your judgment ready and then see it and judge it even more. You know, put your mind on blank; be open-minded and then listen and take a look at the numbers… take a look at what people are achieving because there are plenty of super impressive stories out there. Like, I guarantee you that in ten-fifteen years from now on there will be a couple of books written about some of the people who were very successful in eSports in this day and age. Those will be some amazing stories. Those will be truly beautiful life stories, so it's really important for people to be open-minded about it and not be judgmental. You know, just get ready for the ride because we're not going anywhere!

[After this the discussion continued for a few more minutes, but in such a casual manner that nothing specifically relevant came up anymore. The interviewee was thanked for the interview, and told that he can have a copy of the paper once it is finished]

Interview with Evan 'Winter' Ballnik

[After about a minute of small-talk with the interviewee]

[00:01:08] So, how many hours per day or week do you stream?

[00:01:19] On average, I would say that currently I stream six to seven days a week. Depending on the scheduling of major tournaments or other events like that, that would be in direct competition or conflicting with my content, it would probably be between 4 and 12 hours a day.

It depends on the day or a special event or something like that. But, overall I average between 6 and 12 hours a day, usually more like 8 or 9. And, averaging out to 50 to 70 hours a week.

[00:01:51] M: That's quite a lot. That's more than what usually people do as a so called 'normal' job.

W: Yeah, I don't consider it as a job, that's the thing [laughs].

I heard that you, and for example RotterdaM, have completely different types of histories when it comes to streaming. So in that case, can you give me in a nutshell the early history of how did you get into streaming?

W: In comparison to RotterdaM, for example, or just like basic...?

M: Oh, just tell your own story. No need to start comparing directly to RotterdaM.

W: Ok, just to start out. Like, I started out playing World of Warcraft arena. That was probably five to six years ago, back when it was part of the Major League Gaming [MLG] circuit at the point. Back when MLG was doing live-streaming, it was also trying to do a kind of a TV thing, or something like that. Live-streaming hadn't taken off yet. So I kind of understood what live-streams were, I watched them on an occasion, like whatever it was, uStream or something like that. Never really got interested in it until I started StarCraft 2 in 2010 which was the first real competitive, like long-term eSport because it had been already established with StarCraft 1. I didn't play StarCraft 1 but once I got a little bit into StarCraft 2 I realized the background StarCraft 1 had as a long-term competitive eSport. And, just to watch streams.... I'd watch streams both for educational and entertainment value because I wanted to win, to start out. I like winning, alright. Winning's a lot of fun! [laughs]. But at the same time, watching someone play their best usually meant, especially in StarCraft, that took a way from the production or entertainment value of a stream, or something like that. And when streams were starting out, not a lot of people were really doing it. One of the people who stood out to me was Destiny. Back in 2010-2011 he was huge in StarCraft 2. Looking at four-five-six thousand viewers which is unheard of.... at that time. Especially before League of Legends or Dota came out. So I was like "whoa, that looks like a lot of fun right there. You're sitting there playing StarCraft...", which is something I did all day anyways. Just sitting there, talking about it. And with my team-mates and

stuff, I started talking about it. Then I started streaming and my computer really sucked [laughs]! Like, 120p quality, with a 4:3 aspect ratio. Which... if someone wanted to gouge their eyes out and listen to my commentary, then they might do it.

M: [Laughs]

W: ...but at that point I still had a few people who would do that just because of the commentary. I guess it started out by looking at it and I was like... I talk a lot , and I like talking, and I like when people watch me talk [laughs]. The hypocrisy is strong with this interview!

M: [Laughs]

M: But, it came down to... like from the start of 2011 I thought it was something I could do. I thought it was something I wanted to do. So started doing it and then after like a year I finally got a new computer. I finally got a computer that could tolerate watching, got a like a web-cam and microphone. I started getting like 5 or 10 people watching or something like that. But I was never like a major caster for major tournament. I never won any of those major tournaments either. I was never part of a big team or a part of a big organization. I've never been associated with like a major sponsor, or an organization, or scandals or anything like that... like most people. Honestly, there aren't many people in StarCraft over the last two years that have kind of made a name for themselves, I guess you could say. I know that the eSports scene in general, like there's a lot people up and coming like in League of Legends and Dota. But, StarCraft is a little bit of different. It's not necessarily indicative with the live-streaming scene, but I pretty much knew what I wanted to do with streaming. Like, when I started out, I would talk with -- back when Twitch delay didn't suck, it was like 5 or 10 seconds -- you could have a conversation with someone when they were just typing in the chat. So I started doing that, and would keep coming back because kept talking to them. People think that live-streaming is just like, you show a game and you're really good at that game so you're going to get a lot of people to watch. Well, to be honest I always knew that people were not as entertained by just watching a game, as by watching someone talk about a game and also have a conversation with them at the same time. It's like going to a sports-bar as opposed to sitting home and watching hockey by yourself, I guess. It's a good way to put it.

[00:07:01] Yeah, there's this one academic study where they found that it's actually all about the social aspect of live-streaming rather than just watching some guy doing something and never talking anything.

W: Absolutely! I mean, I always knew what people wanted, I guess you could say. But, if you don't ... I mean, if the door is closed, alright, getting a foot in a closed door is pretty difficult if it's already locked from the other side. So eventually, the thing I did to try to unlock the door... like, this what created a little bit of bitterness. There's a very vocal minority who does not like me as a streamer, or as a personality, or anything like that. I'ts a very vocal minority, but of course it's a huge minority considering I'm the number one streamer in StarCraft. But, it's because I used formats like reddit.com, teamliquid events, I'd just do whatever I could that didn't force me to associate with anything. But I could still do as just like, like anyone could do. Honestly, if you go to my reddit history you'll find a lot of posts about 'Masters Random Streamer with Commanetary' that has like two up-votes and one person saying "your music sucks" as a comment.

M: [Laughs] Alright...

W: And this happened for a like a year or so. And then finally, actually I hate to admit this, but the first time I got over a thousand viewers was when I switched over to League of Legends for a week. I switched to League of Legends and I'm like, "hey, I'm a really good StarCraft player" ... I posted it on League of Legends reddit [part of the discussion board of reddit.com]. I got fifteen hundred viewers the first day I started to play League of Legends. I had never passed a hundred for StarCraft before.

M: Ohhh... [laughs].

w: But after a while I was averaging probably three or four hundred for League of Legends for few weeks. But it was mostly because entertainment value I guess -- me not having any idea of what I was doing -- had a little bit of entertainment. But I never wanted to be that guy who just like, "well, I'm the slap-stick comedy guy", you know, slapping someone over the head like "oh, that's funny". I mean, no, I wanted to be the kind of guy who could teach people.... 'edutainment' I guess? Kind of like Bob Ross, but not quite what I'm exactly looking for a metaphor. But

something more like that, than Three Stooges, I guess you could say. But honestly, that almost kind of got me my start. This was like late 2011, like a little bit over a year after I started streaming, but for reference I've streamed for over 4500 hours in the last two and a half years. Which is about 25% of the time in two and a half years.

M: Oh, that's crazy... [laughs]

W: [Laughs] I like streaming, but yeah, this is a long story [laughs]. At that point, like, I converted some people to StarCraft. And that kind of got me like half of my start on this.

[00:09:57] Oh, alright. So basically you became a well-established StarCraft streamer through League of Legends?

W: I wouldn't say well-established, and also at the same time I'm not going to credit even a minority of success through League of Legends. That was just something I did on the side. Because honestly, I was kind of burned out because I was getting like four-five viewers, maybe ten viewers even after streaming like six or seven ours a day sometimes. I mean, I put as much effort in.... as I do now... then, like a year and a half ago. But I was getting four or five viewers and zero dollars. I didn't get a dollar in donations until well way past that point. I was kind of burnt out, so I'm like "screw it". I had a lot of friends who were going to play League of Legens. Even the ones from StarCraft being like "I play for fun a little bit", and then people really got into it. But I kind of came back to StarCraft knowing that... it gave me the confidence that I could be the person that people would be interested in watching play. And also, when I think about it, it was actually pretty huge... uhm, I actually started going out with my now-extremely long term girlfriend. So when I switched to League of Legends, that exact same month I asked out my girlfriend who I guess gave me a lot of confidence, I guess you could say that. It gave me a lot of confidence, like I was a lot less vulnerable to certain comments or anything like that. She also plays Dota, she's a gamer... but she's also an engineering student and stuff like that so fit along with me. But, I think past that point I just stopped caring so much about people's... like one or two people's opinions, and just thought I know what I'm doing, and just continue doing it. So after like two or three months after that I started building up to a hundred viewers. After two or three months of streaming almost every day, expcet for like one or two. But then WCS came, and WCS was like six days week, like ten to twelve hours a day between all three regions. So there

was no real, I guess you could day, options there. I started getting donations though. That's kind of what kept me going. But honestly, when WCS started in February I had about a hundred average viewers. And when WCS ended in November, and the almost entire time past then.... so did I, like, I streamed like every day. But I had a hundred average viewers in February and I had like 94 in the end of October. So that wasn't really the growth that I was looking for [laughs]. It wasn't really inspiring me. And then WCS ended, and I changed my title. It's kind of an example of good-bait titles I could say. But my title had always been something like Masters Random with Commentary, or something like that. I changed my title to 'Learn to Play StarCraft'. The week after WCS ended, I went from 94 average viewers to over 500... within one week. Which in StarCraft is pretty huge deal, considering most major streamers don't even get 500 nowadays.

 [00:13:54] I guess this implies a bit already on my next question. I get the feeling there's something coming out of this discussion. My next question was actually: what kind of content do you stream? Since you were just talking that you started the title of your stream to more like, "learn how to play starcraft". So could you tell me a bit more what kind of content do you then stream right now. So you're doing a bit more strategical commentary or...?

[00:14:37] I wouldn't say that. Honestly, I didn't really change... it was less that I changed the content that I was doing but more I changed the presentation. It's the same thing, but it's the way people look at it. Like, going in with the title, you don't already have preconceptions of "I should be watching a Masters player, play random, at the top level" or something like that, for example. Right now, what I'm focused on is what the majority of people who both are currently interested, have been interested, or might be interested StarCraft. I'm not interested in what the minority would, which is that top 10% which is like the Grand Masters and the top Masters players. Or, the people who are trying to break into the WCS or something like that. That's also lot of the criticism. Like I'm most of the time playing - I guess - a level lower than myself. You know, the majority of the StarCraft players are not at the top level, so what I like to do is to play against those players who are not at the top level. And then use that as an opportunity to demonstrate how little things you can do - or just basic things - just continuously narrating, commentating and pointing out things you can do yourself that would improve you to a level above players that you're currently playing. At the same time I think I present it in a very positive way. You go anywhere in StarCraft, especially on stream that isn't Random, it's like "oh my god Protoss is just

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literally Hitler!" Or like, "Zerg right now is just ridiculous!", or something like that. Part of it is also uhm - I'm sure that you have questions about the chat and the social aspect - but I have very strict chat rules. If you're spamming emotes or you're talking about... I actually have rules about religion, drugs, politics, or anything like that. Not because I have a problem with religions, drugs or politics, but because I have a problem how Twitch chat gets when they start talking about those things.

[00:16:52] M: Yeah, I actually realized you had put these rules to your stream when I was stalking your streaming channel a bit.

[00:17:03] Yeah. I watch streams all day and also I watch my stream when that goes down. People are like "drugs are legal in Colorado". And I'm like, I don't care, because you're going to argue about the legality now and it's just useless. The idea is to learn to play StarCraft. You can have a conversation, you can talk about things and have fun without talking about it. I mean, I love trolling people in chat and stuff like that but there's streams for it, and I try to keep my stream like... I guess another example would be, like I got black-out drunk on my stream for my 21st birthday. Of course that was as a result of obscene amounts of donations and incentives like that. But I found within a week, like... I probably got tipsy or drunk a little bit on the stream after that and as soon as I do that, that's like an incentive for the chat to be like "nope, I don't care anymore, he doesn't care, I don't care", so on a very rare occasion drink, especially to excess, publicly on the stream just as an attempt to keep the chat to that point. The thing is, the more people you get the harder it is to maintain the community. But I think that's really the biggest draw, and that's why I've continued to grow. It's accessible. Usually when you get into a stream of two-three thousand people it's like "no way I'm going to get a meaningful word in here, at any point, ever". But I think I do a decent job compared to some streams for not letting that happen. I don't know if that answered your question.

M: Oh, as long as we keep to the topic of gaming and your live-streaming there aren't really any right or wrong answers. I a lot of things will overlap anyway. If you don't have anything specific you would like to add about your streaming in general we could jump into a bit more specific questions.

W: Do you want me to be more about general, or StarCraft specific. Because StarCraft-specific is completely different than streaming in general.

M: Oh, I would even suggest that we just continue with the next questions because there's a lot of things going to come out...

[00:20:02] Yeah, alright, I'm sure I'll overlap if I 'll just keep talking, so just go ahead.

M: Ok. Well, the next set of questions.... like I mentioned before I'm kind of trying to contest the idea that gamers would only be consumers of digital media, but through live-streaming they have become producers. So in this context, what I want to emphasize on is this Twitch's partnership program. To my understanding it's the main incentive to people to start streaming for professional purposes due to the financial income that can be established through Twitch.tv. So what's your own opinion on the idea that Twitch.tv's partnership program has basically created a whole new job market out of streaming gaming content?

[00:21:31] It's... once again the the foot in the door metaphor. Getting a partnership is important, like it's a step. But I personally don't put advertisements on my channel because obviously ad-revenue is something that... uhm, blanket ads are not going to support you if you don't have five digits of viewers on a regular occasion. But I think that without having a subscribe button, or having emotes or something that can really define you as a community member or something like that, then you're not going to get anywhere further. I personally have third party advertisements that charge independently for. I probably... if I wasn't getting the viewer count, I didn't have a subscribe button, I wasn't a regular Twitch streamer, I would just not have that opportunity. But I would say that it's definitely a critical component, but as time goes on you're not going to see just blanket advertisements across every channel or anything like that. It's going to become more and more -- I actually did an article about this, well I was a part of an article about this about a week ago -- but because things like AdBlock, because of uhm, customized marketing! Just like in TV channel I guess, you're not going to be showing advertisements for like boxing gloves on Wall-Mart channel or something like that, for example. And I think in the future Twitch.tv partnership might be like a prerequisite, it might be like your four year degree before going into a certain job. Or anything comparable to it if any streaming sites come out like that. But I think more and more people would realize that third-party advertising or independent marketing is going to be the

[???] of being a professional, I guess you could say. Because right now, it's quickly progressing past the point where getting a partnership program is, like that's your angle. If you want to make a living, if you want to make a career out of it instead of just... sure a lot of people can 'scrape by' I guess you could say. I tell you right now that there are less than 25 people that can make a full-time living on Twitch.tv just based solely on Twitch revenue. But yeah, it's definitely going to be a stepping stone. I think it's going to become much more apparent in the future as more and more third-party advertisements become prevalent, I guess you could say, in major streamers.

[00:24:19] M: Actually that was quite a shock to me. I honestly didn't know that there was so few, 25 people only who were able to support themselves. I guess that donations and subscription money is in that case the...

[00:24:26] W: Oh, I'm not counting donations as ad revenue, or subscription revenue. That's independent of Twitch.tv. That's another example of third-party revenue I guess you could say. Subscriptions I was counting in, but subscriptions of course... uhm, a lot of people very severely over-estimate the amount of subscriptions some major streamers have, for example. And that's of course taxable income and stuff like that.

[00:25:01] Yeah. So, do you mean that basically the donations are right at this moment the main source of income for streamers, or how does it work then? You're talking about these third-party revenues, but for example where do you get your income?

[00:25:22] Right now, the solid majority comes from donations. I'm slowly working on subscriptions and every month I get a little bit more ad revenue just through... well, I accidentally I get ad revenue from pre-roll advertisements or something like that, or by adding on third-party advertisements. But honestly, those people who are in those top 25... like sure, there are probably hundred more people behind those top 25 and I might almost be one of them that probably could make it into a career. Like, right now I'm taking a year off of school for streaming. Well, part of also job-experience for my degree, but that's kind of a special case. But there's a blurred line, I guess you could say. When I say 25 people could make a living off of Twitch, that doesn't mean that those 25 people are the only people that could ever go full-time streaming. That's 25 people who could literally survive if all donations and all third-party revenue was cut off in every way possible. There's so many grey areas --one thing I want to point out -- how many streamers use

top 40 songs on their stream? Like they're listening to Rihanna, or Kanye West, or Justin Bieber, or something like that. What do you think happens when the people who came up with like the Youtube licensing realize these people are making hundreds of thousands of dollars by playing their songs on stream for example? There's so many things right now that are kind of grey areas. And honestly myself, I'm making solid portion of income a month from donations. And that's just, I guess you could off of the quality and quantity of content. But there's so many numbers of different reasons of like, people get donations or third-party advertisements or any other source of income off of Twitch that right now is alot less established than let's say advertising on FOX news or something like that.

[00:27:38] Ok, next I would be interested in the kind of technical stuff that relates to creating the streaming content itself. So - if you can figure out a way to explain this - how much effort do you put outside of the streaming - you know - to make streaming content as good as it can possibly be. Do you just stream SC2 without any further preparations, or do you plan ahead really well? You were talking about music for example, do you think about music you're going to use. Just some kind of technical stuff behind the streaming itself...

W: I kind of.... I don't know what I want to call it, but as someone who streams like... It's not a show. When you stream eight hours a day it has no longer become a show. I don't know what to call it, but if I was actually trying to like prepare what I would be doing, like bits of content for eight hours a day, 50-60 hours a week, there's no way I would be able to maintain that. It's weird to think about it because whenever I'm not streaming, I'm just kind of like -- it's one of my things I do just to relax -- I go through bunch of music on Youtube, and I acquire it through various means and... [laughs]. I'm usually not thinking... I mean, I'm like "yeah well , this sure would look good on the stream", or something like that. But personally I'm always watching... I guess you could say I'm doing research on what I want to do, for what I want to do, when I'm watching something like StarCraft tournaments, or something like that. But that's the kind of stuff I would already do in the first place, so I guess it didn't really cut into my free time because it is my free time in the first place. But if I'm going to be honest, like right now over the past month or two especially, it's really ramped up the amount of messages and contact information, and obligations, and graphics and stuff that I'm adding to the stream. Because I like money, and in order to continue doing this I need to have more money. It starts cutting into at least couple of hours a day

on top of the stream, not including like stuff I'd be doing anyways. But if you want to add up all the stuff I'm doing related to it... Let's assume that I'm awake for 16 hours. I'd say maybe three to four hours of those hours are probably things that will be in no way related to the stream. Probably the rest of them are either me streaming, or in some way related... in some form or the other. So, probably 12 hours a day.

[00:31:23] Actually, let me ask you something. You mentioned the graphics at some point. For example, have you found out that putting effort in creating creating fancy graphics, or you know some kind of graphical elements in your stream, has it made some kind of a positive impact on those streaming content's quality?

[00:31:45] It depends how much of a crutch[?] you need. For me, I would get exponentially more benefit from just talking about talking about something because of the way my stream works. Like, people were watching me while I was in like - I don't know - 360p quality when everybody was in HD, because of what I was talking about. So I rely on my commentary, what I'm saying. For someone whose not relying on what they're talking about but, maybe like on the quality of the gamer, or the quality of the stream like graphically, that'd be huge!. But for me it's just a little bit of a reference, a kind of like a visual aid instead of having a Powerpoint. Instead of having like a slide-show with music, it's like like a visual aid when I'm doing a presentation. And it depends on the streamer honestly. It's not like a huge deal for me to have the graphics, they're important to be there. But they're not going to make or break it. Whereas, if someone who never talks and doesn't have any graphics, then how are you going to know about anything, right?

[00:32:49] Is it easy technically to set up this kind of a stream? Like you have to take into account good enough of a camera if you're also the kind of a streamer who shows his or her face. There are also those people who talk without showing their face. But yeah, how easy is it?

W: Hmm... It's weird because it was such a long progression for me. I started without having a web-cam. Technically I didn't even have a microphone when I started, but I got a microphone pretty quickly. And then I eventually got a web-cam. Honestly, my first streaming set-up... uhm, borrowing the computer itself -- which was not especially expensive -- it was probably less than 50 dollars to get all the peripherals. Like, have a headset with a microphone and have a web-cam. It wasn't a big deal to set-up, and I've never been someone who's like huge on production quality.

I've always just kind of done my thing and I've never tried to pretend that it was anything more fancy than what it was. It depends on your style as well. If you're trying to be a casual streamer, and then you're suddenly in front of a green-screen with professional lightning and everything, then it's like... well, this isn't really working with the situation. But yeah, it's not hard. It's not hard to start streaming. But I think that, definitely, having a really high production will get you noticed faster. But I think in the long run the way it looks -- of course looks are superficial and content is what keeps people around -- but, it's not hard to get into streaming but it's hard to get people interested. I guess that's the way to put it.

[00:34:49] Yup. How much do you co-operate with your viewers? You've been talking quite a lot about how much you communicate with your viewers, but just more specifically how much do you co-operate directly with your viewers about the content that you're streaming. Do you, for example, make polls of what your viewers would like to see you doing in the next stream, or so forth?

[00:35:20] W: It depends. When I had a hundred or two hundred people watching, I literally every game I'd just be having conversations with people. If you asked me something, it would get answered if I had a hundred people watching. Like, the chat would not scroll fast enough for me to ignore your question. So I made a habit of answering pretty much every question that wasn't obviously like a total troll question or something like that. Of course, when you have two-three thousand people watching it gets a little bit more difficult. Currently I have a special question graph type of a thing that I can use to answer some of the more productive questions. Depending on the type of stream... like sometimes I do troll streams where it's like "press one for this build, press two for this build" and the chat starts scrolling with a bunch of ones and twos. I do my best to answer questions between games and stuff, or comment or things. Nowadays, I think that at this point people know I'm reading it most of the time. But it's long past the point, I guess -- ah, I keep saying "I guess" -- that was like the hardest part of getting larger I guess.... [sighs] oh my god ... how many times, four? Five?

M: [Laughs] It's fine, it's fine...

W: Anyways, that was the hardest part, growing a kind of viewer-base. It's because I can no longer be like "oh it's this guy who says these things, and asks about this". So it's like "hey, I

know that guy" but now it's just another name in the chat with the other fifteen hundred of them. I still, on a very regular basis, like there are certain builds in StarCraft. And I'm like "oh, you want build one or build two?" And then, just talking in general gets people interested. They"ll be talking what I'm talking about instead of -- if you watch Twitch chat that has either nothing related, or no commentary, or no talking whatsoever -- who knows what's going on in there? [laughs] It'll never be related to what's going on most of the time. So, it's an interesting dynamic you could say...

[00:37:42] Yeah. How much do you put effort into promoting your stream on other social media such as Facebook or Twitter. Do you consider that as a very important thing? You mentioned promoting your stuff on reddit.com, so...

W: Honestly, promoting on social media is kind of a 'catch-22' because by the time you get popular enough in social media like Facebook and Twitter, you don't need to promote as much anymore. Whereas, with reddit, it kind of depends on the community. Once I started getting five to six hundred viewers, I know longer promoted on reddit, both because of the bitterness of the reddit community, and also just because "well, you're getting more viewers that most people who are posting and getting no one interested". But uhm, social media is big, it's good in connecting and building relationships for the future. But to grow yourself from the first place social media -- I don't know -- it took me like a year to get any viewers and I spammed reddit all the time. I didn't know anyone on Twitter. If you had someone with like a million followers... For example if someone like TotalBiscuit tweeted your stream one day then that would get you more viewers than what you probably got in the last month if you were just starting out. So, social media is more important for making connections than promoting yourself.

[00:39:42] Yeah, that's a good bottom line. You don't have to go into detail with this, but what do you think will be the future of game streams and game streamers let's say in the next five years? A lot of people are saying that it's going to keep on growing, but on the other hand some people are saying that this is just a phenomenon which is big right now but it's going to fade away at some point. So, what's your opinion on that?

I think... it's not going to fade away. Obviously it's not going to fade away. At this point, over the last two decades which is about as long as I've been alive [laughs], like everything has focused...

it's funneled down towards on-demand content. Like, first you have cable, then you have DVR, and then you have Netflix, and then you have live-streams. It just keeps funneling down so you get more and more personalized content. Despite the fact that there are smaller and smaller niches - tiny groups of demographics - for each type of streamer, when you think about 20 to 30 thousand people compared to like a million people watching a prime-time show doesn't seem like a lot. But when those 20 to 30 thousand people, maybe 5% of them, will be interested in or purchase a product when... [sound cuts off] those who watch prime-time shows, it's not so insignificant anymore. I think in the future it's going to stabilize a little bit, and I think it's going to become a little bit impersonal, whereas right now it's already extremely difficult for people who are small to ever get noticed. Like, people who started in 2010-2011 already have a huge advantage over those starting, say, today with their stream. In the future I feel that there's going to be even more personalized. guess, the way would be virtual reality type of systems where it's like, you're watching someone play but you're almost physically there. Instead of watching through your computer you're physically, virtually-physically there, or something like that. I think that might be the future of it; the direction it takes in the next five-ten years maybe? Streaming is going to eat up more and more market share. At this point conventional sports have kind of started moving into the live-streaming market so what I would see is, that instead of moving/ into the TV market, I would see streaming as becoming a larger market itself. But games taking up a larger market share compared to conventional sports. Or conventional entertainment like reality television or something like that. But, I don't see it degrading at all or declining. I just see it evolving with the major -- like, streamers with thousands upon thousand of viewers -- honestly in the near future we're looking at a 100k+. One of my middle/high-school classmates... I don't know if you've ever watched Nightblue?

[00:42:57] Uhh, no I don't think so...

W: A League of Legends streamer who has gone from one thousand to fifty thousand viewers in a span of two months.

M: [Laughs]

W: So, streamers like that -- and in the near future there's going to be even more people watching -- streamers who can appeal to those that don't play a certain game, but can make a certain... I'm

trying to think of a metaphor here. Give me like a second. Hmm... have you ever watched the movie Dodgeball?

M: Uhm, I think yeah, like ages ago...

W: Yeah, well it's something like that where you can make something entertaining that conventionally... like, maybe don't know how to play StarCraft but this person makes this game... they take the entertaining aspects of it and they're entertainer themselves. They'll become for a lot of streamers something a little bit more like either stand-up comedy, or like comedy show or something like that, or an educational show. It doesn't really matter. It's going to be personality oriented.

M: Yeah, it think it already is to a great extent...

W: I mean yeah, it already is, but it's going to become more and more segmented. Like, there's a lot players, there's a lot of people -- oh, in StarCraft a lot of the major streamers are top Koreans who just stream them playing their game -- but, right now almost a quarter of my subscribers on Twitch don't even own StarCraft, for reference. So, in the future more and more people who don't even play games, but instead are just entertained by people who play them themselves -- like a lot of people watch football even though they don't play football because it's entertaining -- I think in the future people who can make something entertaining, or educational, or some combination of the two is going to be the way streaming goes. At the least it's the way it goes right now.

[00:44:59] M: Ok, cool. I actually have a whole another list of questions but we have fifteen minutes left for my intended schedule. I don't know how busy you are, this might take 20 minutes instead of 15 minutes...

W: Not especially... I have about forty minutes before I have to go anywhere, and I can probably post-pone that for ... whenever.

M: Ok, well max. 20 minutes.

W: Fair enough, I talk a lot...

M: Ok, my next set of questions, uhm... we went through these more technical issues with live-streaming and I tried to explore a bit the production value of streaming. But these next questions

are really going into the idea of how much the activity of live-streaming has shaped another activity, that being playing games. So, what's your opinion on the idea that live-streaming has shaped or turned the very nature of playing games into a more serious and productive activity, if you will. For example, you can think of how playing games has been professionalized in the case of electronic sports, but in this case, how much is live-streaming shaping the nature of playing games into a more professional way of doing it?

[00:46:18] I think that anything that can be proven that people are interested in...well, in the longest-case-scenario I guess you could say... I know that there's some ridiculous statistic but it's a very high percentage of people in the developed world playing video games between like, under the age of thirty, right. At this point, almost every single person plays video games in one way or the other. Whether it's like a game on their phone, or StarCraft II competitively. When those people grow up and they start having the next generation of children after that, that is when games will be just as accepted as conventional sports.

W: Because once those people who currently accept games pretty much on par with conventional sports... I myself do ... obviously they're different, but it's almost at the same level of competitiveness and organization and stuff like that. Or it has the potential to be. So on the outside twenty-thirty years and we'll see... like, this question won't even exist at that point. BUt as for now, I think it's still hard for a lot of people, especially for people in conventional professions, to say like... Uhm, right now I'm currently majoring in digital marketing on top of being a professional live streamer. A lot of people have issues kind of understanding -- I guess you could say -- it's not a lack of interest, it's not a negative viewpoint. It's literally a lack of comprehension. It's just... "I don't understand how you can do this and make it into a profession". And I think that live-streamers -- not to sound narcissistic about myself, for Nightblue or other streamers like that -- that can take a game and simplify it, and make it look entertaining and make it look something that people want to play, even if they're not playing. Those are the people, also, of course, that can highlight the professional aspects or the competitive aspects, or like how it takes like a certain ridiculously high level of coordination, or reflexes, or skill... just like any sport, or any sort of, I guess professional activity. Uh, people who can do that, which, aka live-streamers, who are broadcasting to a massive audience... those are the people who kind of break down a lot of the bridges... not break down the bridges... BUILD the bridges... not breaking the bridges.... build the

bridges between those who really can't comprehed uhm, games as a profession. And conventional professions, as they're kind of, I guess, seen today, or at least seen by a lot of people today.

M: [00:49:14] Yeah, I completely agree on this idea of a bridge as you just said

W: Yeah, building the bridges, not burning them, just to make it clear! [laughs]

M: Well, if we can consider... well, it's actually a question in itself. Do you consider live-streaming game content as a professionalized activity?

W: Yes, yes absolutely. I could make right now -- well I could but I'm not going to give specifics -- but I currently will be making well over the average medium American income doing professional live-streaming. And also of course it's part of job experience, the networking I'm doing with organizations, companies, individuals, and stuff like that. Just like any career where you have to network, you have to talk with the right people, you have to know what you're getting into, you have to have experience in the industry. You can get that through live-streaming just like in any other industry, it's just an industry that is currently developing and expanding exponentially. And, a lot of people don't realize how exponential that expansion is until they're actually either well acquainted with it. Once again I'm going to use that age gap, but a lot of people over 40 just don't understand how huge both eSports, and internet, and digital marketing and advertising is at the moment.

[00:50:44] So if we can consider live-streaming gaming content as work, then where do you personally draw the line of what can be considered as working as opposed to leisure time in this whole thing? Because both of these activities, streaming and gaming, can be seen as leisure time. So where would you personally draw the line of like, "hey, understand that this is work and this is leisure, and there's a kind of a line in between".

W: It's pretty difficult. I guess the line would be... A lot of times I have obligations or responsibilities that I've pretty much created for myself that ... I might not want to do at a certain time, or I have to be awake, or active, or talking with certain people at certain times that usually I wouldn't be interested in doing. Sometimes it's a little bit outside of what I would usually be comfortable with, or because I'm kind of lazy what I would want to do, and then sometimes it's... I have to talk with certain people that I just done like, in general. But you know it's going to

benefit you in the long run. It's hard to tell because I don't think -- there are very few streamers, or very few professional live-stream content producers that also acts as like their own producers, I guess you could say. You can't really succeed to the fullest potential without actually enjoying what you're doing. At risk of sounding like I'm taking shots here -- which I kind of am -- but Destiny is kind of an example of that. For example four years ago you could tell he was enjoying StarCraft, he was playing it all the time. He's getting 5-6 thousand viewers, he was yelling all the time about random stuff. Now when he's playing StarCraft he sits there like 6 hours barely saying a word and like reading reddit on his stream to 1200 people sometimes. Once you stop enjoying it, once it's becoming too much of a job... it's a tough balance when you're trying to stream for entertainment and for people to enjoy watching you. Because if you're not enjoying it, it becomes very apparent. But, if it becomes your job to enjoy it, then it suddenly you're failing at your job. It's a very fine line. I can usually stream 28 to 30 days a month, but sometimes I just get burnt and I'm like "nope my sleep schedule's too screwed up, if I stream tonight it's just going to be terrible, I just say no and come back tomorrow, I'll do whatever tonight, I'll just chill or talk to my girlfriend or whatever, but I'm not doing it tonight". And that's actually work, like knowing when to stop working. And that's kind of hard sometimes because you get in such a habit. It's not 9-to-5, you have to know when you're going to be productive and when you're not, otherwise you're going to fail.

[00:53:50] Ok, I actually had a question about schedules coming up you provided a pretty good answer for that already, so... Another question. If we think about electronic sports, right, where gaming is the actual profession.... What I'm pointing at is that if we consider either streaming or gaming as the professional activity, then which one of these two do you consider more closely as your 'work'?

[00:54:41] Streaming, absolutely, no question about that.

Ok, great... Well, if you could still go shortly into that more.

W: Uhm, usually professional gaming, or gaming itself, or and eSports is focused on winning competitions. And, through competition drawing attention to your sponsors or brand or whatever. I'm focused on bringing entertaining content and through that entertaining content getting more people to watch... Independent of winning tournaments.

Yeah, I was going to the idea here that there are these people who are dreaming of being professional gamers, and most of their time goes to practicing their skills, winning tournaments, preparing for tournaments; but in streaming it's a little bit of a different thing. But yeah, I got the feeling that in most cases the non-progamer streamers would consider the streaming as their main...

[00:56:01] That's a common... Well, at least in eSports that's a common issue with people that they're like "I wanna be the best, but I also want to stream and be entertaining, but I don't get viewers". And if they're trying to be the best, well it's kind of contrast. Last November when I kind of blew up I took a step back and I'm like "well, I'm not going to win any tournaments, I just want to focus on being really entertaining" so, that paid off. But, if you try to force yourself to be something that's not going to work out, or that you're not really demonstrating them, ... Not going to be successful.

[00:56:53] Uhm, the next question. I think I personally find this one of the most interesting ones in the case of my own research, but this is going to be a bit about the psychological mindset that you have to get into while streaming. So if you want to be come a well-established and successful streamer, then what kind of a mindset do you have to have while pursuing this kind of a game streaming. Can you have a more 'playful' mindset, or do you have to have to adopt really a serious attitude in order to get your stream going on to the point that you're satisfied with it?

[00:57:30] Personally, everything's light-hearted. Like, no one's ever going to say anything in the chat that's ever going to affect me to the extent that I'd actually care, like it's going to change the stream or it's going to make me sad. Well, maybe happy, but it's never going to get me all angry, or to use a particular wording 'rustled up' [laughs]. It depends on the streamer to be honest. If you're like a competitive streamer then obviously you don't want to be playful whenever you're losing games or something like that. But I think if you're streaming for entertainment, if you're streaming for hours a day, maybe by doing some specific content, then you really got to get focused on maximizing that piece of content. When there's streaming for indefinite amount of time almost, you have to have thick skin, you have to understand that some people are just out there to both degrade you and distract you. And some people actually, they want to help you but they don't know how to do it, and not every piece of criticism is equal either. Even if you're starting out, like, if you don't have at least a bit of an idea of what you want to do, then maybe

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you should think a little bit more what you want to do. Because if you're just flip-flopping everyone that says anything in the chat, or in comments or in messages, or something like that, then you're never going to have any interaction. If you're going to every direction at once, then you're never going to get anywhere. So, you have to understand what you want to do first in order to be successful. Personally for me, what I do, usually before streaming I make sure that at least I take a shower. Like before a major stream -- I guess I could say -- like before 6 to 8 hours. I always eat, I always take a shower, if I have the opportunity I talk to my girlfiend for an hour or two, just chill out or something like that. I don't go into it like "I just woke up, and I haven't eaten yet, and my hair's all greasy, and I've been wearing this T-shirt for two and a half days" [laughs].

[00:59:28] But if you compare this to some kind of a conventional job, like some factory work something. Do you have to approach live-streaming in a similar way that when it comes to a normal job. Like, "I'm going to wake up 9, have a morning coffee, then sit down and start working for the next 8 hours", or is it more like "I'm going to sit down and start streaming and playing games and have fun while working"?

[01:00:22] Hmm, I mean, both of those answers are correct, I guess you could say. The thing about streaming -- which fits me perfectly, and which is also the worst and the best part -- is the absolute both total control and instant gratification you get from it. The best part is, that you can be really entertaining one night, and you can get hundreds of dollars of donations, you can get hundreds of followers, and you can get bunch of people subscribing, and people are quoting you in the chat, and it's all exciting, and it's great! Because at that point you're just like "well I'm going to do my stream, I'll be entertained and have fun with it", and then sometimes you realize that well, if I don't stream tonight people will be "where is he", and I won't be on their schedule anymore and I won't get any more viewers the next night. And if I don't get as many viewers I won't get as many donations, I won't make enough this month in order to justify what I'm doing. I guess as soon as I announced I was going as a full-time streamer it kind of... There was that little bit of a shift, I was able to ease into it enough that it wasn't like, "ok now it's full-time so I have to treat it super seriously". But there's always some nights like that that I'm tired and I'm not feeling it, but let me just down this monster and see how I'll do. There are definitely nights like that. Thankfully, it's less than the majority, but it's not a small amount either, so it's definitely in between. There's ups and downs, but it's usually ups, so that's nice.

[01:02:14] Ok, that's nice. How has live-streaming influenced your real life activities? For example, do you have some real social pressures about streaming. You were talking about these evenings where you're just like "oh, I can't be arsed to do this tonight. But if you called it just stress, then how much stress does live-streaming impose into your real life activities?

W: I'm going to be honest. The people I associate in real life are also very interested in games and stuff like that. Even my girlfriend, she just sits at home playing games. That's her idea of a day-off, she's not going to go out or anything like that and just plays Dota at home or something. And I also have a big group of friends that I play with online, like assorted games or stuff. So a day off isn't like going out or something like that, but I consider a day-off just not streaming. But as for streaming, it was almost a natural progression, because if was already spending so much time playing computer games and talking about them with people. So I just kind of eased into it. People who don't automatically dismiss it, for example like a lot of people over 50 would, they're like "oh you're committing that much time to this thing, isn't that like a huge burden?". Or something like that. I never kind of dwell on the amount of time - I mean - whenever the streaming becomes like a chore during the night, then it's like "ok we're coming up on the end here". And sometimes what I'll try to do to alleviate that is just to take like a 30 minute dinner break or put up a Youtube video. But sometimes it's just like "nope, I'm done here" and then I just finish my game and I'm done. I'm lucky that I just get to that point after 7 or 8 hours I guess.

[01:04:50] Yeah I guess it's kind of nice since streamers can more or less make their own schedules. You make working hours for yourself...

W: That's... That's your, uhm... I'm not going to say a 'misconception', but the first time I grew like a major amount of viewers, I had like 30 or 40 viewers average and I was kind of like streaming in the morning, sometimes at night, sometimes I streamed the whole day, like 12 hours straight... I streamed 25 days straight from 6pm to 3am. Nine hours a night, 25 days straight, I got from 40 average viewers to a 100, and that was a big deal for me. So, it might seem that you can just set your own shcedules, but once you set your schedule you better stick to that damn schedule right there. Because, just like any TV show people are going to start looking for you at a certain time. If they're not going to find it, then they're not going to be expecting it on a different time. That's pretty important.

[01:06:00] Alright, that's a good point. Umh, how do you come with your status as an internet celebrity of sorts? I asked this question from RotterdaM in the sense of... [laughs] Like, If he ever got any death-threats or something. You were talking about this minority that doesn't like your stream, but could you go a bit more in detail in how you cope with that in real life, of being an internet celebrity of sorts?

[01:06:34] I'm nearly not big enough to be recognized on a regular basis in real life. At my university, there are obviously few people that kind of know about that. Because we're at a university, so obviously the demographic is perfect for that. Whenever I got to events and stuff -- well, I never actually went to an event since I kind of blew up I guess you could say -- I always get recognized a little bit, like by a few people. But mostly at this point since I'm almost entirely online -- like, Rotterdam is a different case, he's casting events, he's in person, he always see him at things -- whereas pretty much people interact with me almost entirely online. I actually do get, well not like legitimate death-threats, but on a regular basis I get people telling me that I'm literally killing StarCraft. Or that they really think that I should just go cut myself in the bathroom or something like that. You always get one or two of those people. Like every couple of days, I'm talking in chat or something like that, and it's like "why don't you take your Gold League opinions elsewhere, and go be toxic to some other game" or something like that. And like, in any reddit.com post that I'm mentioned in at this point, it just becomes a controversy over "I hate smurfing, or "I like Winter". And, it's pretty hilarious because usually the people who comment on reddit-threads are the people who are trying to be negative in the first place. But I think it's a little bit more controversial just because of the methods, and the content, and the type of road I took to get where I am right now. But if I hadn't taken that road I wouldn't be here in the first place. So, I have no issues with what I did, or what can continue to do, or anything like that. It's not like I did anything that's going to permanently harm anyone. People just have different opinions and I definitely took a more controversial path to being an internet celebrity in StarCraft I guess. It gets to a point, like I'm featured on Teamliquid, I'm getting few thousand viewers a night which is more than most people are getting, so everyone has an opinion. And they usually formulate those opinions pretty quickly, so at this point I just do my thing.

[01:09:27] Ok, last two questions. Can you think of the best and the worst thing that has ever happened to you in real life that is somehow related to live-streaming?

W: Hmm. Oh, the best thing that has ever happened to me was when I was doing -- well I was already a pretty big streamer -- and I kind of made the connection with someone -- I'm not going to name names for the anonymity's sake at this point -- but I was doing a lot of streaming and I really excited for WCS America. "Cuz my favorite player of all players is Polt, on team CM Storm, and then pretty much I was just getting really excited for Polt playing in WCS at some point. And then, on this subscriber only chat this guy messages me, "hey I heard you're going to WCS, how would you like to interview Polt?" So, I ended up just through, like, both connections that I'd make through streaming and just by being a fan-boy pretty much, I was able to have a personal interview with Polt. Of course, at that WCS Toronto I stayed with two people that actually watched my stream for over a year, from Toronto. So I stayed with them and in their apartment. That was pretty cool. And then I interviewed poll and everything! Just everything revolving around WCS Toronto last year I think was my best real-life moment associated with streaming.

M: Yeah...

[01:11:21] Worst moment? With streaming? Just something negative with streaming... There's a lot of like mediocre things ... So I'm just going to say the 8 months between... Because I committed so much time and effort between February 2013 and November, when I would put 40-60 hours -- this was between school and everything -- I put so much time into streaming and I really wanted it to work. Like, I really wanted to be streamer, but I was not getting anywhere. I was getting less and less viewers, some months I'd get like 200 dollars in donations, considering that I was doing it 50 hours a week. I didn't have a Twitch partnership either. I couldn't get featured on Teamliquid obviously. I was like, "argh, this is terrible!".

[01:12:36] So the amount of effort you put into streaming didn't really meet your...

W: Just the combined amount of effort in return didn't balance out being... I was literally -- when the end of WCS rolled around -- I was weeks away from giving up on the whole idea. I was like, okay... [sighs]

[01:12:58] Ok, then the final question. You kind of already answered this question but I'll ask it anyway. If we can indeed consider streaming StarCraft 2 as your 'work', then what do you do fun? You kind of told that you take a day-off from not streaming, but do you still like play games

to relax or do you go out and be like "ok I'm done with streaming and gaming and I need something completely else to do for a while"?

W: Without going too much into detail, pretty much most days I take off coincide with -- well, this summer I will be living with her, but since we're both staying at my parents and stuff -- it's usually days that me and my girlfriend work out that we have time to stay together. So, that's kind of my... Whenever we both have a day off, then that's usually... I try to coincide that with days like, maybe I go on extra couple of days of streaming because I know that I have a day off with her. And that just comes down to playing games and hanging out, and PG rated things. And just in general... [[laughs]

M: Yeah, yeah...

W: Honestly, I don't go out clubbing or anything like that, for the vast majority of occasions. Sometimes I go to a party that a friend is having, but as much as I like to talk I'm not a huge, like a social person, I guess you could say. So, just hanging out. Instead of doing something completely different I'd just rather wind down, just kind of chilled out is what I would consider doing for fun.

[01:14:43] But you do still play games for the fun factor, so it's not like the spirit is...

[01:14:53] Yeah it's not like "I'll never play games ever again once I close StarCraft"

M: [laughs] yeah, cool.

W: I play Dota; I play Civilization; I play GTA sometimes; Guild Wars; Kerbal Space Program is a lot of fun. I play Dota competitively as well, just on the side. It's fun to play something competitive without actually caring how good you're doing, or showing off to two thousand people, so... [laughs]

[This is where the actual interview ended, but the overall discussion continued for a few more minutes. While we were talking about my research from a more general point of view, pointing to gaming as a waste of time as opposed to a professionalized activity, WInter came up with some further points]

[01:18:42] Video games, just like computers, like digital media and the complexity of digital media, has been progressing at exponential rate since it was created. And just like that, games have been progressing complexity since they've been created. And they've reached the point, just like computers, that allows them to be compared or even exceed the intellectual and even sometimes the physical requirements of conventional competitions, or intellectual, I guess you could say, challenges. Games today are not games anymore, but instead demonstrations of intellectual and physical skill.

M: Ok, if you have nothing else to add anymore then I simply thank you for having the interview with you [laughs].