



REPLAYING JAPAN

CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

AUGUST 18-20, 2023
NAGOYA ZOKEI UNIVERSITY
NAGOYA, JAPAN

Organizers: Ritsumeikan University Center for Game Studies, Nagoya Zokei University
Co-Organizers: the University of Alberta, University of Delaware, Bath Spa University, Liège
Game Lab, Seijoh University, DiGRA Japan
Co-Sponsored by Hayao Nakayama Foundation for Science & Technology and Culture
Prince Takamado Japan Centre for Teaching and Research

Replaying Japan 2023

August 18-20th, 2023

Nagoya Zokei University, Nagoya, Aichi, Japan

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About Replaying Japan 2023

Replaying Japan – The International Conference on Japan Game Research
Replaying Japan is an international conference series on the study of Japanese video games. It originally started as a single symposium hosted by the University of Alberta in 2012 as a result of discussions held between the Ritsumeikan Center for Game Studies and the University of Alberta through its philosophy department as well as its humanities computing program. In 2013, the decision was made to organize a first edition of the Replaying Japan Conference series that would open to the public at Ritsumeikan University. Since then, the conference series saw a global expansion with the organization of the conference's activities at locations.

Replaying Japan is also an important pillar of the research activities of DiGRA Japan.

Conference theme: **Local Communities, Digital Communities and Video Games in Japan**

This conference, hosted by Nagoya Zokei University, is organized in collaboration with the Ritsumeikan Center for Game Studies, the University of Alberta, the University of Delaware, Bath Spa University, Seijoh University, DiGRA Japan, and Liege Game Lab. This conference, the 11th collaboratively organized event, focuses broadly on Japanese game culture, education, and industry. It aims to bring together a wide range of researchers and creators from many different countries to present and exchange their work.

The main theme of the conference this year will be “Local Communities, Digital Communities and Video Games in Japan.” With the recent interest in the Metaverse and the continuing popularity of titles with strong social elements, digital games are seen more and more as social platforms in their own rights — virtual meeting spaces for digital communities. At the same time, from department store rooftop amusement parks and pachinko parlours, to living room and portable consoles, the history of gaming in Japan is inextricably tied with the changing social fabric of local communities.

Nagoya Zokei University relocated from a semi-rural suburb of Nagoya to the city centre in April 2022. The new campus is located at the border between touristic and residential zones, and “Local Communities” was chosen as a core concept for the institution. This is reflected not only in the curriculum but also in the architectural design of the campus. In keeping with Nagoya Zokei University’s mission, we hope to make the 2023 edition of Replaying Japan one in which we can reflect on the social dimensions of gameplay in Japan. Proposals that address notions of community are thus encouraged, but other topics are also welcome. We encourage poster/demonstration proposals of games or interactive projects related to these themes.



The Prince Takamado Japan Centre Essay Contest

The Prince Takamado Japan Centre will be awarding two essay prizes (2000 words) to the best student presentations on Japanese games. These will have a value of \$500 CAD each.



Organizers

Main Organizer

- Ritsumeikan Center for Game Studies

Co-Organizers:

- Nagoya Zokei University
- The University of Alberta, KIAS, AI4Society
- Leipzig University
- Bath Spa University
- Seijoh University
- DiGRA Japan

Conference Co-Chairs

- Akinori NAKAMURA, Ritsumeikan University
- Martin ROTH, Ritsumeikan University
- Mitsuyuki INABA, Ritsumeikan University
- James NEWMAN, Bath Spa University
- Geoffrey ROCKWELL, University of Alberta
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- Fanny Barnabé, University of Liège / Liège Game Lab
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- Koichi HOSOI, Ritsumeikan University
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- Tsugumi (Mimi) OKABE, University of Buffalo
- Akito INOUE, Ritsumeikan University

Supported by

- Prince Takamado Japan Centre
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Conference Information

Conference Schedule

Day 1: August 18th (Friday)	
9:00-10:20	Registration
10:20-10:40	Opening
10:40-11:40	Session 1 Cultural / Global Context (Hall)
11:50-12:15	Session 2 Lightning Talks (online)
12:15-15:00	Lunch break
15:00-16:00	Session 3 Arcade Games in Japan (Hall)
16:20-17:20	Session 4 Close Readings (Hall)

Day 2: August 19th (Saturday)	
9:00-10:00	Session 5 Game History (Hall)
10:20-12:00	Keynote1: Mr. Toru Kawakatsu (Hall)
12:00-14:00	Lunch Break
14:00-15:00	Session 6 Games and Society 1 (Hall)
15:20-16:20	Session 7 Cultural Analysis (Hall)
16:40-17:40	Demo / Poster Session (Art Street)
18:00-20:00	Conference Reception

Day 3: August 20th (Sunday)	
9:00-10:20	Session 9 Games and Society 2(Lecture Room 2)
9:00-10:20	Session 10 Panel Session (Hall)
10:40-12:00	Keynote2: Dr. Masaki Seki (Hall)
12:00-13:20	Lunch Break
13:20-14:20	Session 11 Developing Games (Hall)
14:40-15:20	Session 12 Lightning Talks (Hall)
15:40-17:00	Keynote3: Mr. Hirokazu Hamamura
17:00	Closing

Programme

Day 1 (August 18th)

9:00-10:20	Registration at Art Street, Nagoya Zokei University
10:20-10:40	Opening
10:40-11:40	<p><Session 1> Cultural / Global Context: Hall</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nökkvi Jarl Bjarnason “Japan and the Rise of National Game Studies” ● Marek Mikeš, Zdeněk Záhora “Are Japanese Games Really Special?: A comparison of representation of Japanese and Western games in Czech gaming press” ● Phillip Casey Holbek “Cultural Marking of the JRPG”
11:40-11:50	Break
11:50-12:15	<p><Session 2> Lightning Talks (online): Hall</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kieran Nolan “Fictional Arcade Games from Akira’s Harukiya Bar.” ● Jérémie Pelletier-Gagnon “Revisiting Street Gaming Culture: Community and Urban Space in the mid-1990s Virtua Fighter Cultural Scene”
12:15-15:00	Break
15:00-16:00	<p><Session 3> Arcade Games in Japan: Hall</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yasuo Kawasaki “A Survey and Analysis of the Regionality of Social Recognition of Japanese Game Center: Focusing on Discourse in Prefectural assembly” ● Vincenzo Idone Cassone “This Must Be the Place. the Representation of Game Centers in Japanese Popular Media Fiction.”
16:00-16:20	Break
	<p><Session 4> Close Readings: Hall</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shengyao Li “The Introduction and Development of Tabletop Role-Playing Games in Japan” ● Frank Mondelli ““Sealed Alone in the Dark”: Decoding Braille in the Pokemon Series.” ● Lillian McIntyre “Under the Summer Moon: Community and Queer Longing in the tanka of Splatoon 2.”

Day 2 (August 10th)

9:00-10:00	<p><Session 5> Game History: Hall</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● James Heazlewood-Dale, John MacDonald "Soundtracking Speed: Japanese Rave Culture in Namco's Racing Games." ● Felania Mengfei Liu, Ruijia Li, CC Kang "Institutionalizing Game Preservation: Game Archive and Its Ecology Niche in Chinese Game Industry"
10:00-10:20	Break
10:40-12:00	<p><Keynote 1>: Hall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Toru Kawakatsu (Petit Depotto)
12:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:00	<p><Session 6> Games and Society: Hall</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tsugumi Okabe, Geoffrey Rockwell, Keiji Amano "Japan's Labor Shortage Crisis and the Future of Japanese Game Companies" ● Marc Llovet Ferrer "A consideration of the recent academic literature on the Japanese video game industry through a critical lens: Disentangling current topics, approaches and debates" ● Barbora Šmirinová "Auteurial admiration and the co-constructed, solo-developer cult of personality in the Touhou Project fandom"
15:00-15:20	Break
15:20-16:20	<p><Session 7> Cultural Analysis: Hall</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Homeira Baghbanmashiri "Analyzing the "cultural identity" of the game: through the comparison between The Witcher and Final Fantasy game series" ● Martin Roth "Domestic and Transnational Play Cultures on YouTube. The case of Animal Crossing: New Horizons"
16:20-16:40	Break
16:40-17:40	<p><Session 8> Demo / Poster Sessions: Art Street</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hikaru Kasai, Saki Matsuda, Akito Inoue "Behavioral and Cognitive Changes Due to Gameplay" ● Hideki Kano, Yoshiro Azuma, Iori Yasuda "Poker Rally on Smartphones: A Proposal of Gamification Templates used for Social Issues" ● Taro Shibagaki "Design Evaluation of "Ooimongachi, Congestion Mitigation Game!!" Based on Gameful Design Heuristics" ● Shinya Miyagawa, Mamoru Endo, Mayu Urata, Takami Yasuda "The Practice

	<p>of Local Community Management Beyond the Organization by Utilizing Online Space and Avatar Technology and Examination of Communication Promotion”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Xuan Li, Shuji Watanabe “An Embodied Experience in Game Design -Game Design for Guiding the Trajectory of Bees” ● Koki Kamakura, Shuji Watanabe “Japanese Sumo game with center-of-gravity feedback device” ● Victor Fernandez-Cervantes, Eleni Stroulia, Ruck Thawonmas, You Xiao, Febri Abdullah “Virtual Gym with Juicy Effects: A Study in Engaging Serious Silver Games” ● Martin Roth “Game Music Cultures in Japan and Germany”
18:00-20:00	Conference Reception

Day 3 (August 11th)

9:00-10:20	<p><Session 9> Games and Society 2: Lecture Room 2</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Joji Iwamoto, Shin Juhyung, Mitsuyuki Inaba “An Exploratory Study on the Effectiveness of Extensive Reading with Serious Games for JSL Learners” ● Yuya Dan, Miyu Yokota “Regional Innovation through e-Sports Tournament titled “GEKITAI Cup”” ● Virginia M. Giouli “Expanding our “Metaverse” Apparatus to Encompass Regional Optimisms and Pessimisms in History” ● William Dunkel “Sushi Environmentalism: A Case Study of Dave the Diver” <p><Session 10> Panel Session: Hall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Geoffrey Rockwell, Akinori Nakamura, Ruck Thawonmas, Jeremy White, Eleni Stroulia, Victor Fernandez Cervantes “Acknowledging the Challenges in International Collaboration”
10:20-10:40	Break
10:40-12:00	<p><Keynote 2>: Hall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dr. Masaki Seki (Okute Hospital)
12:00-13:20	Lunch
13:20-14:20	<p><Session 11> Developing Games: Hall</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Haryo Pambuko Jiwandono “Scoreboard Kaizen: Understanding performance grading in Japanese digital games.” ● Michael Hemmingsen “eSports and Movement Compression” ● Victor Fernandez-Cervantes, Eleni Stroulia, Ruck Thawonmas, You Xiao, Febri

	Abdullah , “Virtual Gym with Juicy Effects: A Study in Engaging Serious Silver Games”
14:40-15:20	<Session 12> Lightning Talks (for the future): Hall Moderator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hironori Fukui “Relationship between pachinko and the older adults” ● Shin Matsuda “How to Pass the Game on to Future Generations in Japan” ● Hiroyasu Kato “The Emergence of Professional Gamers in the United States” ● Yang Siyu “Cyber World War 1: A case study about conflict between normal players and cheaters in Battlefield 1” ● Bryan Hikari Hartzheim “Cameo Kojima: Metatextuality in the Metal Gear Solid Series” ● Yoshihiro Hino, Víctor Navarro-Remesal, Beatriz Pérez-Zapata “Is there an academic community around Japanese games in Spanish game studies?”
15:20-15:40	Break
15:40-17:00	<Keynote 3>: Hall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mr. Hirokazu Hamamura (Kadokawa Corporation)
17:00	Closing: Hall

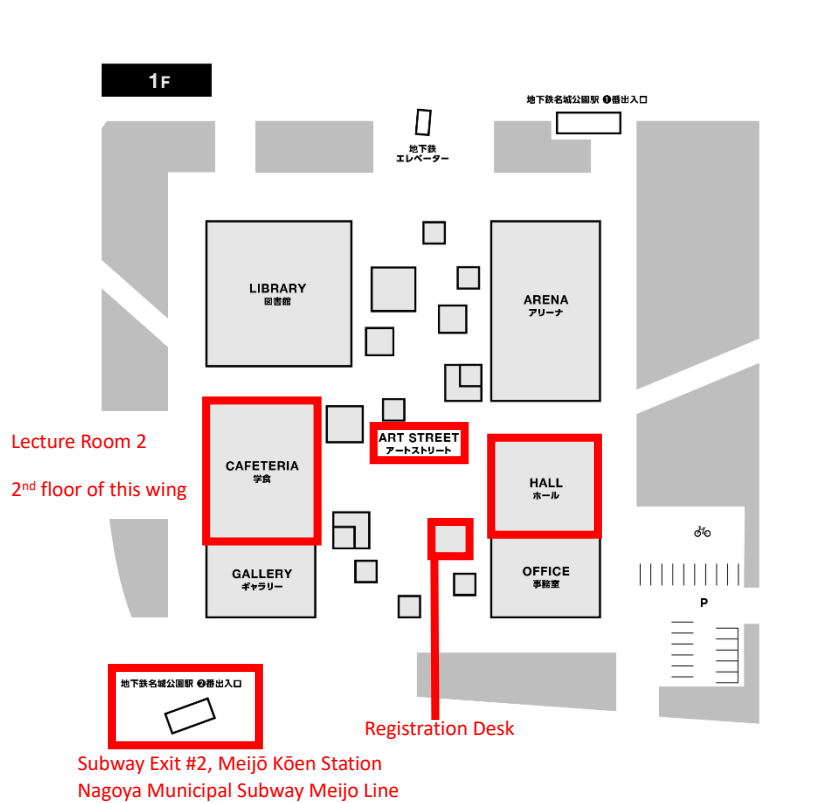
Location: Nagoya Zokei University



Address: 2-4-1 Meijo Kita-ku, Nagoya-shi, Aichi, Japan #462-0846

(Tel: +81-52-908-1630)

Map of NZU



From Nagoya Station:

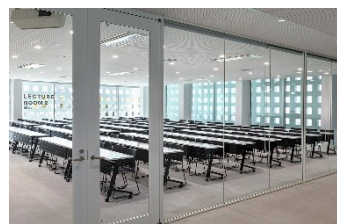
Take the Higashiyama Subway Line bound for Fujigaoka, and transfer to the Meijo Subway Line at Sakae Station. Take the Meijo Subway Line bound for Osone (clockwise) and get off at Meijo Koen Station.



Art Street



Hall



Lecture Room 2

Keynote Speakers

Mr. Toru Kawakatsu (Petit Depotto)

Mr. Kawakatsu, formed the independent game development group “Petit Depotto” with four members and worked in development as a producer and director. Currently, he is teaching at universities and professional training colleges and working as a researcher at a university, practicing his research on innovation in small-scale development in indie game development and sales.



- Representative of Independent Game Development Circle “Petit Depotto”
- 2015 April- Organizing Committee member of Game Academics & Industries Relationship Association (GAIRA)
- 2017 April- Research Fellow, Graduate School of Economics, Nagoya City University
- Master Pieces: “Unholy Heights”, “GNOSIA”.

Dr. Masaki Seki (Okute Hospital)

Dr. Seki Graduated in 2003 from the School of Medical Sciences at Fukui University. After working at Gifu University Hospital and the psychiatry department of Toki Municipal General Hospital, he has been practicing at Okute Hospital, in Mizunami City, Gifu, since 2007. As pediatric psychology practitioner in the Tono area of Gifu prefecture, Dr. Seki has been working on the treatment of developmental disorders and school refusal. In parallel, he is also involved in community-based developmental disorder awareness and family support activities.



- Pediatric Psychiatrist (b. 1977)
- Designated Physician of Mental Health
- Board Certified Psychiatrist
- Board Certified Child Mental Health Medical Specialist
- Board Certified Member of the Japanese Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Mr. Hirokazu Hamamura



- Kadokawa Corporation, Senior Advisor for Digital Entertainment
- Japan Esports Union (JESU), Director
- Association of Media in Digital, Director
- Mr. Hamamura has been involved in the comprehensive game magazine “Weekly Famitsu” since its first issue.
- After serving as editor-in-chief of the magazine, president of Enterbrain Inc. and managing director of KADOKAWA Corporation.
- He is currently working for the popularization and further growth and development of the game industry in Japan.

Session 1

Cultural / Global Context

Hall

10:40-11:40

Japan and the Rise of National Game Studies

Nökkvi Jarl Bjarnason, University of Iceland

Keywords: *NieR: Automata*, Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis, Eastern Philosophy

Abstract

Video games have generally been conceived of as a predominantly global phenomenon, as opposed to being informed by national cultures and practices to a significant degree. As such, the fledgling field of game studies has often operated under the assumption—either by design or omission—that video games may be adequately studied with limited concern for cultural variances. However, regardless of the conditional validity of such global or universal frameworks, there has been a surge in scholarship in recent years seeking to justify alternative approaches by charting the implications of local video game industries and cultures (Wolf 2015, Liboriussen and Martin 2016). Although not exclusively, such studies have mainly adopted a national perspective—presenting the boundaries of the nation as an alternative to the universality of the global paradigm—one prominent area of study being that of Japanese video games and gaming culture (Consalvo 2016, Hutchinson 2019). Hoping to accommodate such scholarship, the present paper proposes “national game studies” as a budding subfield of game studies, all the while examining Japanese game studies as a prime example of this emerging field.

In order to accomplish this, the paper begins by surveying a corpus of scholarship which can be said to present an alternative to the global framework, all the while noting the primacy of studies which have adopted an explicitly national character. It then identifies several categories of national elements for study, such as the notion of national games

(Sedensky 1991), national video game history (Švelch 2018), national gaming cultures (Bax 2015), the mediation of national cultures (Chen 2013), national influence on game development and reception (Navarro-Remesal and Loriguillo-López 2015), and national familiarisation (Shaheer 2021). Such studies provide evidence and justification for a nation-specific approach by articulating the nuances of the disparate national elements that warrant such an inquiry. Having laid out a national framework, the paper then moves on to the case of Japanese game studies in particular, observing its relatively high institutionalisation in comparison to other avenues of national video game study. It makes the case that these developments are partly due to Japan’s favourable standing globally, especially in terms of media presence; the country’s unique historical position

within the game industry (Picard 2013); as well as prominence of Japanese study programs which have helped foster international scholarship on the subject. It then concludes with an analysis of scholarship conducted inside and outside of Japan, considering to what extent work being done domestically in Japan and internationally may differ in terms of focus and methods for studying Japanese games and gaming culture.

Bibliography

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Are Japanese Games Really Special?: A comparison of representation of Japanese and Western games in Czech gaming press

Marek Mikeš, Zdeněk Záhora, Masaryk University

Abstract

Japan has undoubtedly been one of the globally most influential countries on the field of digital games. Together with the study of the Japanese game industry and its products, a discourse exploring the specificity of Japanese games has formed.

Pelletier-Gagnon identifies a tendency to view Japanese games in a binary perspective (Japanese vs. Western games) that leads to “trading titles’ and genres’ individuality with culturally-defined, all-encompassing notions of Japanese and Western gaming practices.” (2011: 93) Consalvo, in a similar vein, says that it is important to look past cultural origins to other factors shaping the production and consumption of games. (2016: 4) Navarro-Remesal and Loriguillo-López on the other hand defend the usefulness of viewing Japanese games as taxonomically different, pointing out their specific character design, game design and animation traits among else. (2015: 4-8)

Rather than to discuss under what circumstances it is or is not beneficial to identify games as Japanese, in our paper we aim to examine the premise of the Japaneseness discourse from the game audience perspective. Namely whether an image of Japanese games was formed that would be distinctively different from the images of other countries’ games in terms of magnitude and/or tone.

In our recent paper, we reconstructed the discourse on Japanese games in Czech gaming press of the 1990’s which showed a shift from ignoring the games’ origins, through othering some Japanese games as weird, to a gradual acceptance of some of their specifics. At the same time, due to different sociocultural backgrounds, the Czech discourse proved to be different from the better known American one and provided a new perspective on the subject matter. While we were able to describe the early image Japanese digital games in Czech gaming press, without comparing it to the images of other countries’ games, it cannot be verified whether Japanese games stand out in any way.

In this paper, we will continue our work with the texts of selected Czech game magazines using discourse and content analysis, but in order to position Japanese games in the context of global game production, we will expand the scope of our inquiry in two ways. Firstly, we will collect data about mentions of games from other major (mostly

Western) game producing countries and identify currents in their presentation in game press. Comparing the data to the data on Japanese games will let us verify if or to what extent Japanese games stand out. Secondly, we will cover a 25-year span from 1995 to 2020 to be able to better identify patterns and changes through time in the images of selected countries' games and to examine the position of Japanese games in a relatively recent discourse.

While the Czech market and its gaming community is relatively small and its impact can be considered local, we believe its research can provide new important perspectives in a discourse otherwise focused mostly on large markets.

References

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Cultural Marking of the JRPG Genre

Phillip Casey Holbek, Brunel University London

Abstract

Japanese Role-Playing Game (JRPG) is a widely known and used term in the English-speaking gaming press to refer to RPGs produced in Japan that share certain traits. Command-based combat, animelike characters, high-fantasy worlds, and long, linear narratives (Schreier, 2012). Titles in the Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest series are often considered to be prototypical examples of JRPGs (Wada, 2017), but these are series that have seen change over time. On the one hand, some scholars argue to move away from national frameworks, highlighting the transnational flows informing the development, publishing, and reception of JRPGs within and outside Japan's borders (Consalvo, 2016). On the other hand, recent efforts to quantify what traits are associated with JRPGs through textual approaches struggle to account for a dynamic market, exemplified by the changes occurred in games such as Final Fantasy XV (Koyama, 2022). Yet, the category of JRPG persists as a discursive market in contemporary press, media, and academic discourses, displaying a resilience deserving of further critical inquiry. This paper interrogates which games are considered JRPGs today, what the traits are that constitute its fabric, and how these have changed over time? This paper addresses the category JRPG through textual and paratextual analysis, reception analysis, and discourse analysis, ultimately contending its status as western-centric conceptualisation of games diversely designed, developed and marketized in Japan from the late 90s until today.

Previous research has shown that JRPG was introduced as a replacement term for console RPG once cross-platform development became more widespread (Mallindine, 2016), while gaming media suggests that JRPG is not a term used in Japan (4Gamer, 2010; Skill Up, 2023). While JRPG is often considered to be RPGs developed in Japan, scholars have explored the market contexts that make them appear uniquely Japanese by linking them with anime/manga/pop-culture media industries of Japan (Schules, 2015). As Japanese media industries increasingly focused on creating products for global consumption (Iwabuchi, 2002), so too did the national game development scene seek to develop products that would sell overseas, but with little success (Archipel, 2015; Parish, 2014; 4Gamer, 2008). This paired with technological changes (Bjarnason, 2022) and the rise of mobile gaming (Archipel, 2015) can be attributed to invoking innovation and mimicry in Japanese games, JRPGs included.

To determine the changes occurred in JRPGs as a genre, I use discourse and reception analysis demonstrating how players, developers, and media in both Japan and the English-speaking world have shaped these categories in the past twenty years. Particularly, the Final Fantasy franchise is used as a case study. Through analysis, I highlight changes that occurred not only in the design and art direction of the games, but also in the framing of their circulation via marketing and press across time. The category of JRPG is ultimately found to be an orientalist marker, used by English-speaking media to make sense of the complexities of Japanese transnational media flows through the lens of national 'othering' that reduces its diversity to a unified cultural artefact.

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Session 2

Lightning Talks (online)

Hall

11:50-12:15

Fictional Arcade Games from Akira's Harukiya Bar.

Kieran Nolan, Creative Arts Research Centre, Dundalk Institute of Technology.

Abstracts

This research is a work in progress exploring the representation of arcade videogames in the Harukiya Bar scene of Katsuhiro Ōtomo's classic anime movie and manga series *Akira*. Data sources consulted include the original anime and manga, as well as their source components to reveal further details and insights into Akira's game machine designs, including concept sketches, storyboards, and animation cels

Akira was first released as a manga series in 1982 (Brown 2010, 1), followed by a feature length anime movie adaptation in 1988 (Napier 2016, 19). It is an internationally renowned Japanese pop culture export, and Ōtomo's vision of post-apocalyptic Neo-Tokyo has influenced the sci-fi genre worldwide during the decades since its original debut (Tatsumi 2019, 63).

The anime was an industry milestone in 2D animation, with exceptional attention to detail and the use of backlighting as part of the traditional cel-based animation process (Odell 2014, 60). Free floating holograms coupled with neon street signage and glowing electronic instrumentation permeate Neo-Tokyo, and this illuminated style extends to the 3D holographic displays of the Harukiya Bar's arcade machines.

In the original 1982 *Akira* manga we see Kanada playing the bar's single arcade game (Ōtomo et al. 2009, 43). This machine closely resembles an upright 1978 Taito *Space Invaders*, from its profile and control panel details, to the image layout on the duotone illustrated monitor. In the colourised version of the manga (Aoki 2023) the screen emits a green glow. If a leap of faith is made to interpret the glyphs on the lower line as Roman letters spelling out the word *war*, then perhaps it's reasonable to read the line above this as an abstract rendering of the word nuclear, as this game title would fit in with Akira's post-WWIII scenario.

The Harukiya Bar's decor is significantly upgraded in the 1988 anime, and includes four distinctly different arcade cabinet designs, alongside a few more non-descript gaming machines. The videogames sketched in the movie's storyboards are non-specific, however in the finished movie they take varying design styles and approaches. These fictitious coin-ops remain in the background, visually communicating across their play styles through their names, control panels, and on-screen attract mode graphics. The dive bar location is featured twice in the movie, during the opening when we are

introduced to the Kaneda and Yamagata from the capsule gang, and midway through the film when Tetsuo escapes from the hospital facility.

There are two distinctly identifiable racing games in the bar: *F1 Racer*, and a second Formula 1 style game simply titled *F1*. Both feature free floating 3D holographic displays, bringing the futuristic answer to neon signage from Neo-Tokyo's streets to game displays. *F1 Racer* is the most intricately rendered game in the scene. It's shown from multiple angles during the movie and features detailed design for its in-game graphics and cabinet artwork. The machine also includes steering yoke and trackball controls. While *F1 Racer* is partially obscured in the movie, background artwork from the collectors' market reveals an unobstructed view of the machine (Erwai 2012).

Space Shooting is nearly totally obscured in the opening bar scene. Its attract mode features a timer on screen, with the straight lines suggesting a vector style tunnel or targeting effect. It has cylinders under the marquee like the F1 coin-ops that are possibly part of a holographic projector.

When the Harukiya Bar location returns in Akira's second half *Space Shooting* is in the background when Tetsuo talks to the barman. The two layers of the display hardware are clearly visible. It's a subdued scene, with no attract mode graphics moving on the game, and no other activity in the room. The action is firmly focused on Tetsuo leading to an ominous turn of events.

ReaderMan's game genre is unclear, but it presents a more abstract take on the arcade interface. The machine features a semi-transparent dome in the control area which may be a control device, a display, or a combination of both. A high score table is shown on screen alongside graphics depicting palm trees and a sea view. When Capsule Gang members Yamagata and Kaisuke visit this space together in the latter half of the movie we can see the *ReaderMan* machine is seen lying on its side, broken. Adjusting the brightness and contrast helps highlight details of this view of *ReaderMan* including power leads, ventilation, and switches.

There's also another racing game visible in this shot. It has a steering yoke, but the control panel and marquee differ from *F1 Racer*. Its top matches the partial glimpse from earlier. We can also see its side panel including a ventilation panel. *Moto-X?* or perhaps a generic cabinet. There's a second 'X' arcade machine. It's possibly another racing game, but we can't see the control panel. It can be seen in the side angle shot where Tetsuo talks with Yamagata and Kaisuke, forming part of the support structure for Tetsuo's makeshift throne. Tetsuo, the king of arcades.

We can see small variations in the room layout and visible arcade games between both visits to the Harukiya bar. In 2023 Heritage Auctions posted details of an

upcoming auction for a beautifully detailed Akira background cell from the Harukiya bar scene on its site (ha.com 2023). This background is cropped in the movie, almost completely obscuring the arcade machine design to the left of the stairs. The nearly completely hidden arcade machine in this background isn't the *ReaderMan* game shown left of the door when the camera angle changes, but does match the profile of a machine shown in a concept sketch for the movie.

This mystery coin-op design has readout gauges to the right of the display and an airplane throttle or automatic gear shift style control. There's no visible text or other obvious visual cues that communicate across a definite genre or game style for this fictional game. Animation cels are a way in which the raw materials of the movie are consumed outside of the linear narrative, providing insights into production processes and in this case a visual concept that was all but completely obscured from the narrative continuity.

Real-life pinball playfields and arcade marquees also harness cel animation materials through their use of illustrations on acetate and backlighting. Indeed, Akira was brought to the medium of pinball in the form of a specially modified 1980 Gottlieb *Buck Rodgers* machine by Mr Ōtomo. Artist Satoshi Takabatake remarked on Twitter that 'it was hard to transfer the design of this pinball table to the tray' (Takabatake 2023), but we can see from a photograph of the machine on the back page of Akira volume 4 that the design was a great success. The machine also briefly features in the documentary Akira Production Report (Shintani 1989). Admittedly this isn't a fictional game, but rather a one-off playable prototype. Like any prototype it's not built for continued play, but functions as a proof of concept and art-experiment.

While the Harukiya Bar doesn't feature in the officially licensed Akira games, the location is reproduced in *Akira - Capsule Gang* (Kazedmonks 2020), an impressively presented fan-made game built with PlayStation's *Dreams* platform. This game takes artistic license interpreting the Harukiya Bar arcade games, filling in visual and conceptual gaps through its low polygon immersive environment. Although the game machines are non-interactive, the player as Kaneda can navigate the space and take in their ambience in the bar space. Examples of the adaptations include the addition of joystick controls to *ReaderMan*, while *Space Shooting* is reinterpreted in the diagonal scrolling shooting game style of Sega's *Zaxxon* (1982).

By closely examining Akira's visuals we can see stories within the story told through the environmental design. The fictitious arcade games of the Harukiya Bar are one of many such ambient layers within the story. Although *F1 Racer*, *F1*, *ReaderMan* and *Space Shooter* and the other more non-descript arcade machines are incompletely

rendered, they anchor the Capsule Gang's social hangout space to reality while imbuing the space with sci-fi elements. Each of the games imagine design paths for 1980s video games through future technologies, free from the constraints of present technical limitations, while prompting further questions on their form, function, interactivity, and narrative journeys.

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Further Reading

Please see <https://tinyurl.com/harukiya> for images, videos, and further research notes linked to this paper.

Revisiting Street Gaming Culture: Community and Urban Space in the mid-1990s Virtua Fighter Cultural Scene

Jérémie Pelletier-Gagnon, Université de l'Ontario Français

This paper discusses the *Virtua Fighter* cultural scene between 1993 and 1995, illustrating how the city, in symbolism and structure, was both repurposed and reimagined as an integral part of its gamic practices and codes. Two specific practices are examined: the use of city locations in players 'ring names,' connecting player identities with the urban symbolism, and the practice of 'expeditions,' or the venturing to different arcades around the city in search of opponents, which are both evidence of players engaging in a form of cartographic project performed through circulation. These aspects lead into a reflection of the potential of Japan's network of arcade gaming spaces as an intervention against the normative effect of utilitarian urban structure of the everyday life, a discussion stemming from the concept of *dérive* (drifting) and which the culture of *Virtua Fighter* illustrates best as a case study. These elements congregate to define the player archetype of the *street gamer*,¹ a tripartite individual whose identities and practices are deeply intertwined not only with games and avatars, but also with urban spatiality, involving the urban network of game centers and the city itself.

***Virtua Fighter*: One with the Machine**

The original *Virtua Fighter* (Sega, 1993) was the brain child of SEGA AM2 studio's famous game designer Suzuki Yū. *Virtua Fighter* came at the outset of another lineage of revolutionary game design development based on the transition from sprite-based design to the then-emerging 3D polygon technology. Suzuki tackled the challenge to make use of its potential to implement smoother motions, realistic movements, and an innovative sensation of weight (Suzuki 2002: 107) in the context of the fighting game genre, something far removed from the magical and superhuman techniques employed by spritebased characters in games such as *Street Fighter II*.

Central to the eventual success of the game, however, is the way it reached a different gaming demographic than typical fighting game players by using a simple command scheme. *Virtua Fighter* made use of only three buttons (punch, kick, and guard), as opposed to the six used by *Street Fighter II*. But more importantly, and what would prove to be crucial in the development of its subculture, is the absence of

¹ I am borrowing the term 'street gamer' initially coined by Famitsu critics Shibuya Yōichi and Haneda Takayuki (Shinjuku Jacky) (1994: 52).

instructions regarding higher-level input combinations on the instruction card displayed on the machine, leaving players to experiment and otherwise gather information from peers. This aspect would become essential for players to hone their skills, creating an urge to find stronger opponents beyond the confines of one's familiar game centers to learn new techniques. This is where the city and the network of game centers starts to come into play in the co-generating process of the 'street gamer' ethos.

What's in Your Name?: Aliases and Urban Geography

Perhaps the foundational event of the *Virtua Fighter* community is the emergence of its first famous figure, which occurred almost by happenstance through a combination of performance play and media involvement. Enamoured with the game, the *Shūkan Famitsu* reporter Haneda Toshiyuki played the game extensively and, one day in January 1994, seeking stronger competition, he ventured to the Shinjuku district of Tokyo, specifically the game center Shinjuku Sports Land where he proceeded to defeat 98 opponents in a row in complete anonymity. Quickly, the story of the mysterious genius player became somewhat of an urban legend circulated by word of mouth. The rumour eventually reached the ear of *Shūkan Famitsu* editor Shibuya Yoichi who found a name for the mysterious figure: 'Shinjuku Jacky,' the famous Jacky player operating in Shinjuku. Realizing that his performance had reached the level of urban legend, Haneda adopted the ring name Shinjuku Jacky as his own, setting a precedent for the rest of the player base.

Katō (2011) highlights how handle names constituted an important vector of identity formation and socialization, and in the case of *Virtua Fighter*, this identity was oriented around a standardized form, combining a home ground and one's signature character, blending the game world with that of the city. Indeed, the case of Shinjuku Jacky inspired many others to craft a new *Virtua Fighter*-related identity from the same template, bestowing a sense of coherence to the nascent subculture, but also an implicit area-based competitive drive. Looking at the record of players featured in *Virtua Fighter* tournaments in 1994, we find instances of handle names using one's 'home area' (*jimoto*) such as a Tokyo district (Kasai Lau, Itabashi Akira, Nakameguro Jacky, Nakano Akira, Kashiwa Jeffrey), city and town names from across Japan (Yatsuka Akira, Atsugi Lau), and even specific game centers (Kanisupo Jeffrey), highlighting how identification was expressed through a flexible sense of place, urban geography, and belonging – all connected to, and, to some extent, generated through, the game.²

In defining the martial arts videogame player's persona as a 'playtar,' an

² These player aliases were collected from Otsuka (1995: 184-186).

assemblage of player and avatar, Chris Goto-Jones (2016: 68) argues that martial arts videogame players engage in a 'genuine transformation of the self' from which, in the context of a practice of personal transformation, one's regular identity and playtar identity cannot simply be severed from each other.³ But in the context of the *Virtua Fighter* player community, urban space becomes an integral part of this subjectivation as part of a tripartite identity formation process assembling the player, the character, and spatiality, appropriating it, and granting it new symbolic meaning and cultural capital.

Chasing Rumours: Expeditions and Dérive

While player names served as symbolic melding between urban geography and places, individual game centers found themselves meshed into the network of space and circulation at the heart of the city which the *Virtua Fighter* subculture fully appropriated through the practice of expeditions (*ensei*).

Bun Bun Maru recalls the process by which, in 1994, he and his close-knit group, called the 'Shinjuku force' (*Shinjukuzei*), would engage in expeditions, or field trips, to acquire new techniques uncovered in other locales: 'At the time, the internet existed as a concept, but not everyone could use it. Instead of looking up information of strong players on the internet, I would pick up on rumours that spread around. When I heard that such and such great player were playing somewhere, I set on going to seek them' (Oseko 2015: 3). Knowledge of the game was, to some respect, situated, and one had to face and develop countermeasures to new techniques to maintain dominance over the game. These expeditions eventually led to the establishment of rivalries, and most importantly in one case, the beginning of the Athena Cup (now Beat Tribe Cup) in Machida, now standing as the longest-running *Virtua Fighter* tournament running continuously since 1995, effectively establishing Machida as a significant urban landmark in the *Virtua Fighter* culture.

³ Later, Goto-Jones suggests the idea of the 'ploystar', the assemblage of the player, joystick, and avatar, adding a material element to what is becoming a transhumanist construct (2016: 71).

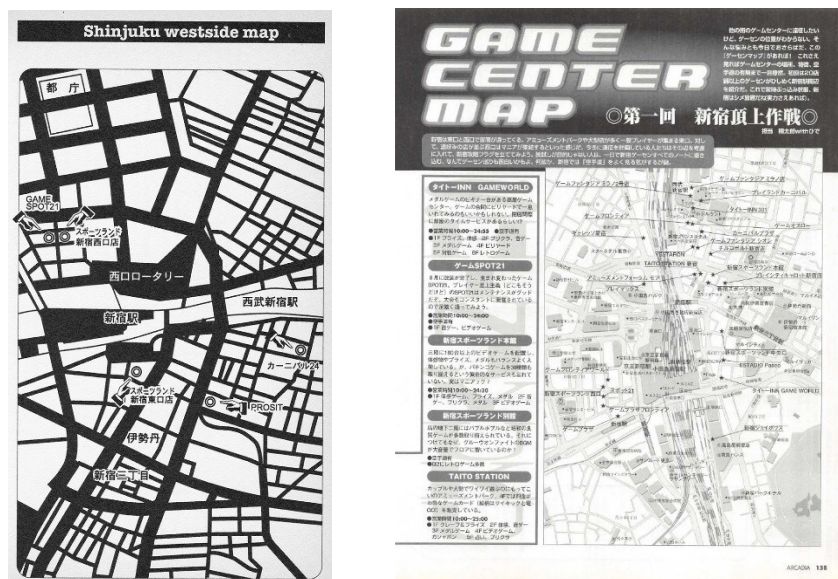


Figure 2: Comparison of Otsuka Gichi's *Virtua Fighter* mapping of Shinjuku (1995: 199) (right) and Arcadia magazine's game center mapping of the same district (1999: 158).

Emphasizing the practice of field trips highlights how *Virtua Fighter* is more than a text, but a human-machine-city assemblage generating its own rhythm through the bodies of its players, the 'street gamers', who, through their circulation, extend it to the cityscape, leaving traces of their passage in non-material ways. It is worth considering the thought that the *Virtua Fighter* cultural scene might have embodied, in their own way, a form of *dérive*. Formulated by the situationist artistic and intellectual movement which advocated direct embodied action as a 'critique of rational urban planning that reinforces a sense of the quotidian associated to capitalist societies' (Vachon 2005, my translation), the concept of *dérive* is a praxis that suggests the critique and reinvention of alienating regimes of urbanity through the creation of ambiances and moments that foster new interpersonal and spatial connections. At the heart of this methodology is the reappropriation of the city through 'ludo-constructive behavior' (Debord 1956, my translation) in relation to the cityscape, that is, the mobilization of passion and play (Vachon 2005) to create new rhythms and associations between places, people, emotions, and desires.

In the pursuit of their passion through the urban landscape and play as their practice, the *Virtua Fighter* community clearly generated new connections and ambiances that, while not radically replacing the capitalistic quotidian, provided sets of alternative practices and values that nevertheless existed in simultaneity to it. *Virtua Fighter* players nourished an alternative imaginary of thinking and mapping the city from

the point of view of its gamic moments and ambiances through its configuration of cabinets and game centers. It also formulated what could be called a situated ludic identity, that of the street gamer, a modern-day *flâneur* who walks and maps the city, reimagining it both from a removed perspective, on the margin of society, and profoundly in-tune with it, sensitive to the calls of potential challengers.

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Session 3

Arcade Games in Japan

Hall

15:00-16:00

A Survey and Analysis of the Regionality of Social Recognition of Japanese Game Center: Focusing on Discourse in Local Assemblies on Japanese Game Centers.

Yasuo Kawasaki, Ritsumeikan University

Introduction

In the relationship between digital game culture and society, one of the most important factors is social control. In particular, laws and regulations have a significant impact on digital game culture because of the restrictions imposed by public authorities¹. As a result, there has been a lot of research on the legal control of digital game culture, including game centers, which are "places" where legal control is likely to occur (e.g., Tristan Donovan, 2010; Hiroyasu Kato, 2020; Carly A. Kocurek, 2015; Yasuo Kawasaki, 2022, etc.). Previous studies have mainly described and analyzed the social control over the game culture and the various regulations that are enacted as a result.

The relationship between game culture and society has already been in existence for decades. If we consider the social positioning of games in this context, we also need to discuss why society continues to try to regulate game culture. Based on the above, this study aims to clarify some aspects of the relationship between game culture and society through research and analysis of social recognition of game culture.

In addition, the main subject of this presentation will be the discourse in the proceedings of prefectural assemblies. There are two reasons for focusing on the prefectural councils.

First, the Prefecture Assembly's discussion is likely to be representative of the social recognition of the community. Japanese game centers are regulated mainly by the "Act on Control and Improvement of Amusement Business. (hereinafter referred to as "Fūtekihō" in accordance with Japanese text). However, the actual operation of the law in the region is mediated by the enforcement ordinances of the "Fūtekihō" enacted by each prefecture. Each prefectural ordinance is enacted as a result of discussions in the prefectural assembly. In light of the above, it is highly likely that the prefectural assembly's discussions are based on the social recognition of the game centers that represent the community, and the resulting regulations.

¹ In China, for example, Yang Siyu (2023) analyzes that various regulations have resulted in a unique gameplay culture that is based on the regulations.

For the second reason, there are already some previous studies that analyze the statements of lawmakers in the Diet and local assemblies to analyze national and local government policies and social recognition of the current state of the country (e.g. Hiroyuki Akutagawa, 2012). In light of the above, it is possible to analyze the realistic social recognition of game centers in each region, based on the lawmakers' statements themselves and the context before and after them. For these reasons, this presentation focuses mainly on prefectural assemblies.

Trend in Regulations of each prefecture

First, this presentation will overview the trend of regulations on game centers within each prefecture. There are various previous studies and descriptions of the history of the enactment of nationwide regulations, such as Masumi Akagi (2005) and Kawasaki (2022). Therefore, this presentation will only present trends and changes in local regulations.

Regulation of game centers in the region began in the late 1970s in some areas². It was not until 1985, when Fūtekihō was enacted, that it began to spread throughout the country. In Fūtekihō, game centers are regulated mainly in terms of "gambling" and "youth protection". Therefore, the main restrictions in this regulation were on machines, areas where they can be built, opening licenses, opening and closing hours, and the hours that youth can enter.

In the debate in the Diet on the regulations, Diet members were discussing the need for more strict regulations from the perspective of "youth protection"³. As a result, prefectural ordinances can now regulate the entry hours of youths more strictly than Fūtekihō. Currently, all prefectures have additional restrictions in place, with many prefectures stating that children under the age of 16 are prohibited from entering game centers after 6:00 p.m.

After The Fūtekihō was modified in 2016, allowing game centers to "enact a separate bylaw that allows admission until 10 p.m. for those under the age of 16 if accompanied by parents and children."⁴ As a result, the majority of prefectures followed

² Okayama and Toyama from 1977.

³ Conversely, the police bureaucracy mainly wanted to regulate the "gambling" perspective. On this, refer to Kawasaki (2022), etc.

⁴ In April 2022, another relaxation is being made, mainly with regard to the "price of prizes" and the "exceptions that do not require a license as a game center." The "price of premiums" is being done incrementally, and this is the subject of my research and analysis by Botos Benoit (2020).

suit and relaxed their entry hours. However, four prefectures (Ibaraki, Tochigi, Tottori, and Okinawa) maintain their regulations as is.

Thus, the regulations for game centers in each prefecture are mainly related to "youth protection," but they are gradually being eased overall. However, some prefectures still see no need to deregulate.

Discourse on "Game Centers" in local councils

Based on the previous section, in this presentation, in order to analyze the transition of social recognition of game center that are regulated, I investigated discourses in minutes of prefectural assemblies⁴.

In this presentation, I have conducted and analyzed the context of the word "game center (ゲームセンター)" before and after the word in the minutes of the assembly meetings published on the official website of each prefecture. Of these, this presentation will analyze an overview of the discourse on "game centers" and present trends in the social recognition of the region⁶.

As far as I could find in April 2023, there were 447 days of meetings where statements were made related to "game centers". The largest number of these days is 250 days in the context of youth protection.

In the discussion on youth protection, questions and answers from assembly members to the police regarding their concerns about the delinquency problem were 95 days, or nearly 40% of the time. Overall, this suggests that game centers were viewed with concern by society as hangouts for juvenile delinquents.

On the other hand, this recognition was mainly during the 1990s and 2000s, with distinct unease and criticism beginning to decrease from the 2010s onward. This shift in social recognition can be seen particularly in the discussion of the relaxation of prefectural ordinances in the 2016 amendment of the law. This discussion was important because it reflected the difference in the current social recognition of game centers in those prefectures that have relaxed regulations through ordinances and those that have maintained the existing regulations.

⁴ This survey was conducted in a research presentation at Digra Japan (Kawasaki 2023), and this presentation uses the results of this research. ⁶ Note that the meeting minutes on the official website differ from prefecture to prefecture in terms of when they began to be recorded. Therefore, the total number of statements may not be accurate. This is an issue to be considered in the future.

Based on the above, this presentation will consider regional differences in social recognition of game centers based on discussions in Chiba and Ibaraki prefectures, which are neighboring prefectures but had clear differences between them.

The Recognition of Maintaining Social Control over Game Centers: A Comparative Analysis of Chiba and Ibaraki

Finally, this presentation will survey the detailed trends and differences in the region. As mentioned earlier, this presentation focuses primarily on Chiba and Ibaraki, two neighboring prefectures that had particular similarities and differences in their discussions during the 2016 legal amendments. In this presentation, I conducted a survey of the context of meetings in which "game center" was mentioned, covering the 44-year period from 1978, when "Space Invaders" went into operation and game centers became the focus of social attention, to 2022, the year for which meeting minutes are available. As a result, they were mentioned for 23 days in Ibaraki and 15 days in Chiba.

Table 1 breaks down the years in which "game centers" were mentioned by

Table 1. Discussion on "game centers"
in Chiba and Ibaraki

Year	Chiba	Ibaraki
1978~1979	2	0
1980's	2	1
1990's	3	1
2000's	5	9
2010's	3	11
2020's	0	1
Total	15	23

decade, and Table 2 breaks down the discussion by category. For Table 2, there were too many youth protection involved, so it is subdivided and listed separately as "(YP)" to be involved separately.

As can be seen in the table, Chiba and Ibaraki prefectures have "many discussions about youth protection" as a similarity, but they are otherwise different in more ways than one.

In particular, in Chiba, statements about game centers are evenly distributed from the 1970s to the 2010s, whereas in Ibaraki, statements are particularly high mainly from the 2000s to the 2010s.

Regarding the content of the discussions,

discussions on youth protection declined in Chiba after the late 2000s.

However, Ibaraki differs in that it appears to have clearly continued to view this as a problem even after the 2010s, as evidenced by statements from 2010 to 2017 that the police invested a budget to patrol game centers as a measure against juvenile delinquents.

On top of this, an even more significant difference can be seen in the discussion in 2015 when the law was amended in 2016.

I will first summarize the discussion in Chiba, where the ordinance has been relaxed. When the Chiba Prefectural Assembly reviewed the regulations upon the

amendment of the law, the police bureaucracy proposed relaxing the ordinance in response to requests from prefectural residents and the belief that the regulations were too strict compared to those for karaoke boxes. During the discussion, one assembly member wanted the regulations to remain in place out of concern that the social environment would worsen, but finally the majority voted in agreement, and the ordinance was relaxed⁵.

On the other hand, in the case of Ibaraki, the people of Prefecture submitted their opinions as public comments when the law was revised. As a result, 123 comments were received, most of which called for relaxing regulations. However, the police then separately conducted a survey of parents and teachers in the prefecture, and the results showed opposition at 67%. Therefore, a draft ordinance was submitted to maintain the regulation, which the assembly members agreed to, and the regulation was maintained as it was⁶.

In light of the above, it is considered that many people in Ibaraki, including the assembly, police, parents and teachers, maintain the social recognition of game centers as 'facilities where juvenile delinquents are still present and where one does not want to take one's child at night with him or her.

While the Ibaraki society recognizes the above, the social recognition of delinquency and delinquent behavior in Japan is currently undergoing significant shifts. Criminologist Koichi Hamai (2019) analyzes this point from previous studies and statistical data. According to Hamai, police in Japan began to actively intervene in juvenile delinquency in the 2000s. In addition, social conditions in Japan are changing in a way that does not allow juvenile delinquents and makes it difficult for new ones to be born. As a result, Hamai analyzes that delinquency itself has become nonsense for youths in society as a whole, and that the previous types of juvenile delinquents are disappearing, including a significant decrease in the number of cases of arrests and confessions, which peaked in 2007⁷.

As a result, the presence of juvenile delinquents was greatly reduced and they were less likely to frequent the establishments where they used to hang out. At the same

⁵ "The 2015 Chiba Prefectural Assembly Standing Committee on Environment, Living and Police", 2015/12/15.

⁶ "The 2015 Ibaraki Prefectural Assembly Permanent Committee on Culture, Education and Police", 2015/12/8.

⁷ Hamai(2018, pp.197-200).

time, the game center industry also continued its efforts to clean up its act⁸. As a result, many prefectures relaxed their ordinances, allowing game centers to be recognized as facilities where children may play until midnight as long as they are accompanied by their parents.

From the above, it is clear that the social perception of game centers in Ibaraki Prefecture is heterogeneous compared to other prefectures. On the other hand, it is difficult to clarify why such a difference has occurred only from this presentation. It will be necessary to conduct more in-depth research and analysis of the situation in the prefecture concerned in the future.

Conclusion

This paper attempts to conduct my research and analysis of the social recognition of Japanese game centers, mainly based on the evolution of regulations and discussions about "game centers" in prefectural assemblies.

As a result, game centers were mainly considered problematic in rural areas only from a "youth protection" perspective. On the other hand, around 2016, due to a decrease in the number of juvenile delinquents themselves and the efforts of the game center industry, in most prefectures, including Chiba Prefecture, the perception had eased to the point where it was "safe to take parents and children to these facilities late at night. However, it became clear that in Ibaraki Prefecture, not only the assembly and police, but also parents and teachers were still concerned about game centers, and this had a significant impact on the discussions in the assembly and the process of legal regulation.

Future research will include field research and analysis to determine why such different situations occur only in certain prefectures in Japan.

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⁸ Refer to Kawasaki (2022: pp. 116-123), etc.

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This Must Be the Place: the Representation of Game Centers in Japanese

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1. Introduction

Japanese game centers can be considered a paradigmatic element of the transnational history of videogames (Ashcraft 2008), connected to the evolution of game systems and the transformation of play contexts taking place since the '70s in Japan (Picard and Pelletier-Gagnon 2015). Game centers have thus represented for decades one of the most significant contexts of play in the Japanese media environment, together with the home space, theme parks and entertainment districts.

While Game Studies, since their inception, have long been investigating the spatial dimensions of games, research initially focused on the nature of simulated interactive spaces (Aarseth 2000, Newman 2004, Nitsche 2008), mostly conforming to the understanding of play as separated, bounded and inconsequential activity, based on the reading of Caillois (1958) and Huizinga (1938).

Over time, however, researchers broadened their scopes, matching the investigation of the in-game space with the study of the spaces where the ludic activity is performed (space of play and for play), focusing on the interaction/integration between ludic activities and their context/environment. This led to a few analyses of contexts of play such as playgrounds and amusement parks (Walz 2010), entertainment districts (Daliot-Bul 2014), theme parks (Notoji 1990, Raz 1999) and recently game centers (Katō 2011, Pelletier-Gagnon 2019, Kawasaki 2022).

Concurrently, games began to be discussed in terms of their pervasive potential, the possibility to invade and coexist with non-ludic space, time and society (Montola, 2005, De Souza and Silva 2008), as well as their ability to merge and interact through persistent and dynamic environments, both digital and not (Taylor 2006, Wirman 2021); or to exist within the interstitial spaces and times of daily activities (Poremba 2007, Thibault 2017). These studies can be considered in light of the concurrent internal debate over the nature of game boundaries, and the reevaluation of the magic circle of play (see Lammes 2008 or Fassone 2013), linked to the general tendency to consider digital games less as a separate, bounded and temporary experience and more as an activity interacting with external space, time and social dynamics (Idone Cassone 2019).

Moving beyond specific game typologies or gameplay dynamics, however, the understanding of the dynamics of the contexts of digital play is still underway, especially in relation to the more 'traditional' forms of digital games (console, pc, portable). There

is still much to discuss in terms of the general relationships that take place between the contexts of digital play (or playces, see Brown and Lam, 2021), the ludic activities inside them, and the cultural discourse surrounding them.

This is especially true once we focus on the media representations of playces in popular media: in spite of their (often) fictional narratives, popular fiction often provides insightful representation of playful activities, including their societal positioning, the individual and collective rhetorics of play, the historical diffusion of games and, last but not least, the interaction between the ludic activity, its space, and its retelling

2. Objectives and method

The proposal investigates the representation of Japanese game centers in the system of popular media, with specific reference to their fictive representation in manga and anime, digital games, tv shows. The research is part of a broader research on the mediatic representations of the Japanese contexts of play (e.g. game centers, home space, entertainment districts, parks ...) in the Japanese media system, funded by the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science.

Popular media production in Japan presents a vast and diversified corpus of representation of contemporary playces and daily life of people who play games; furthermore, these texts are part of historically relevant system of media mix and transmedia practices (Steinberg 2012, 2015), which further improve the significance and comparability of the findings; lastly, these representations are at the interplay between national and global game practices (Roth et al 2021), by being part of dynamics of national self-representation (Hutchinson 2019) and contributed to the international spread of ludic technoorientalist rhetorics (Tosca 2021), as well as belonging to internationally recognised and diffused series, game genres in the globalised game culture.

The analysis is based on the part of the corpus which refers to game centers specifically, which includes:

Table 1. Game Center Corpus

Title	Media type	Year
<i>Game Center Arashi</i>	Manga, Anime	1978-84, 1982
<i>Tokimeki Memorial</i>	Videogame	1994, 1996
<i>Game Tengoku</i>	Videogame	1997
<i>Arcade Gamer Fubuki</i>	Manga, Anime	1999, 2002
<i>Shenmue</i>	Videogame	1999
<i>Game Center CX (Tamage)</i>	Tv Show	2003-now
<i>Yakuza 1</i>	Videogame	2005
<i>Persona 3</i>	Videogame	2006, 2008
<i>Hi Score Girl</i>	Manga, Anime	2010-18, 2019-20
<i>Yakuza 5</i>	Videogame	2012
<i>Umehara: to live is to game</i>	Manga	2013
<i>Umehara Fighting Gamers</i>	Manga	2014-18
<i>Yakuza Zero</i>	Videogame	2015
<i>Yakuza Kiwami</i>	Videogame	2016
<i>Persona 5</i>	Videogame	2017, 2020
<i>Gamers!</i>	Anime	2017-18

The methodology for the analysis is drawn from the author's previous work on the boundaries of play (Idone Cassone 2019); it is based on the integration of the abovementioned research on the spatial properties of game contexts and on semiotic models (e.g. Greimas 1983, Lotman 1990, D'armenio 2014, Thibault 2017b). The model investigates the representation of spatial contexts of play by analysing the following dimensions:

The urban and architectural properties of the space (delimitation, relative position, inside/outside, public/private, architectural features, functions of the space etc);

The ludic activities performed (individual or collective, type and forms of play/games, expected groups participants, side-play activities involved, economy and sociality);

The interaction between the space and the players identity (dynamics of fame and

recognition, societal frames, anonymity, group identity, liminal vs liminoid function (Turner 1982)

The societal and self-rhetorics surrounding the space (safe haven, competitive battlefield, immoral den, temporary distraction, separated world etc)
[for games specifically] The interaction between the simulated space, the gameplay and player agency (space for minigames, non-interactive space, ludic side-content, narrative integration etc).

3. Preliminary Findings

By integrating these dimensions with the abovementioned literature, the research is expected to shed a light on the features of the mediaic representation of Japanese game centers, at the intersection between the spatial affordances of play, the cultural rhetorics of ludus and the development of the medium of digital games.

The preliminary findings tied to the representation of game centres have shown, for instance, how the different affordances and media develop into different *cultural imaginaries* of arcades, shaping it into a paradigmatic place for the construction of the cultural identity of players of digital games between the '80s and the late 2000. These cultural imaginaries are not bounded by time, but spread and develop after their inception as societal and media rhetorics.

3.1 The Novelty of Arcades

During the '80s, game centers are simultaneously praised and looked with concern or fear, concurrently at the center of the gameic world and marginalised. This is linked to the novelty of arcades (considered at the time the paradigmatic future of gaming, Koyama 2023:3) and the ensuing moral panic due to the spread of a dedicated, closed space designed exclusively for leisure activities (which reminded of pachinko parlors or sakariba). For this reason, the mediaic representations of arcades are few and marginal, despite the success of digital games.

For instance, in *Game Center Arashi*, (the first manga focusing on video games) the namesake protagonist almost never plays at the arcades. Game centers are rarely portrayed, and only for brief moments, almost disappearing after the first volume, while the societal concern over the space of arcades is in fact mentioned since the beginning.

In *Arashi* games are positively represented in a way recalling modern Olympics, but this societal recognition always happens in Olympic-like settings, stadiums or famous venues with spectators and broadcasting; on the contrary, arcades are represented through temporary

‘glimpses’, with no noteworthy action taking place inside, with limited focus on the space, people and activities.

With the success of the Famicom after 1983 and the diffusion of Famicom-inspired narratives, arcades will be even less portrayed in meaningful ways.

3.2 Daily life at gesen

During the ‘90s game centers have already become ordinary elements of urban environment in Japanese cities, a common entertainment place for the younger generations. This mirrors an increased mediaic representation, at least in the background of the main characters’ daily life; the novelty of arcades fades, replaced by an aura of everydayness. For instance, in the manga *Bishojo Senshi Sailor Moon*, the Crown Game Center is a significant part of Usagi’s daily life.

Furthermore, with the increased technical capabilities many games of the Super Famicom generation pay homage to arcades, putting them in the background of fighting games arenas (*Violent Storm*, 1993) or role-play games (*Live-a-Live*, 1994).

However, this acknowledgement does not mean that arcades are not problematic anymore: on the contrary, this results in a double form of mediation:

- on the one hand, we see a filtered representation of arcades, where most problematic elements are erased or concealed (run-down suburbs, fighting games, delinquents or salaryman) in favour of shining façade made of modern game chains, crane games, bright colours and young people).
- On the other hands, when not filtered, the moral issues are stressed and highlighted, focusing on the rhetorics of arcades as a place of idleness, criminality or masculinity.

For example, in the dating simulator *Tokimeki Memorial*, the arcade is one of the potential venues for a date. However, every invited partner will comment on it being an unusual place for girls to be, with player potentially replying that things are changing. Even more, Yukari, the girl coming from a traditional background will explicitly say that his father believes that she should not frequent this sort of place. In a game such as *Tokimeki*, which focus on re-enacting societal gender norms in order to beat the game, these comments are far from casual.

3.3 Game Center Nostalgia

Between the end of the ‘90s and the following decade, game centers start to be increasingly represented as paradigms of the past of gaming, mostly in relation to new consoles bridging the technological gap and becoming the prominent play platform. This reflects either in titles set in the past which features arcades in the ‘80s (such as

Shenmue), or set in the present, but heavily describing arcades with a nostalgic rhetoric (such as Game Center CX, the tamage segments, or to a certain degree Arcade Gamer Fubuki).

The viewpoint in these titles shift from an internal one: less fleeting and more detailed, showing once again a variety of different shapes of arcades (local run-down game corners, dagashiya with arcades, shopping malls corners etc). Arcades also obtain a more prominent role in the broader narratives, with more focus on the relationships between people and place, and people within that place.

Arcade Gamer Fubuki is particularly interesting: as a spiritual sequel of Game Center Arashi, its perspective is however stuck between the past and future of games, enthusiasm and nostalgia, clearly represented by the DiG arcade episode in the anime.

3.4 Arcade Coolness

During the 2000s, arcades become associated with the global image of Japan as the country of anime and games, which will influence both its international reception and its self-representation (in relation to its cultural soft power and the later initiative of Cool Japan, see Iwabuchi 2002). The diffusion of otaku culture led to the forefront places such as Akihabara, the mecca of gaming, with its game centers, anime merchandise, idols and maids. Similarly, the different entertainment districts of Tokyo become the setting for this ordinary extra-ordinary coolness, in which game centers participate.

On the one hand, this strengthens the idea of arcades as a paradigm of Japaneseness; on the other, arcades are now perceived not as much as an ordinary place, but as a different venue in an extra-ordinary entertainment land (a form of heterotopia, Foucault 1967) represented by entertainment districts. This determines a focus on specific aspects of game centers (big city chains in famous landmarks, arcade and crane games-based media mix), and a shift in the stereotypes of people frequenting arcade; less delinquents and more game otaku. Lastly, this shows a focus on the collective dimension of arcades over the individual one.

For instance, arcades in the first instalments of Ryu Ga Gotoku series (Yakuza) do not only show these places as part of everyday life, but mostly share this imaginary of coolness of heterotopic lands of and life itself as a potential endless entertainment.

3.5 The Lost Arcade Generation

Around the beginning of the following decade a further form of retrospective

gazes appears. It focuses once again on arcades, but this time representing the largely ignored subcultural dimension of the fighting game culture in the '90s, the so called "golden age of fighting games". Titles such as *Hi Score Girl* or *Umehara Fighting Gamers* look back to the past, probably in light of the return of *Street Fighter* and the rise of global fighting game community since the '09, Those titles put game centers at the spotlight of the representation, as the milieu of fighting game culture. Their representation is less stereotypical and brings back the many different shapes and forms of arcades at the time, with focus on details and nostalgia-driven accuracy. Arcades in the '90s become the force of gravity that brings together human activities and actions, a place for personal growth (mastery in a martial arts rhetorics) and group identity, a place represented as separated from and somewhat opposed to the outside world. However, these narratives focus on the necessary relation between the inside and outside world, games and society (school, work) and how the young protagonists develop their identity through those games and in those spaces.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the representation of game centers in Japanese popular media fictions shows the many meaningful ways in which playces represent, mediate and shape the imaginary of gaming and the societal position of play in context.

Game centers partly reflect the broader cultural history of digital gaming, partly represent a specific 'problematic' play context: as a separated and autonomous space, dedicated exclusively to play, arcades trigger all the moral fears and rhetorics that targets the new and the unproductive, in a marginal or liminoid space.

Yet the economic and cultural rise of games, will produce different imaginaries that overlaps and clashes: an heterogeneous and stratified image of arcades, even today: they are simultaneously a space depicted as safe and protected (from the external world), a marginal and criminal place, and a dangerous battlefield (for competitive players); a space for relax and simple distraction, or a ground for self-improvement and mastery; a symbol of the unstoppable rise of games in the 80's, as well as a paradigm of nostalgia-inducing past in the 2000s.

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Session 4

Close Readings

Hall

16:20-17:20

The Introduction and Development of Tabletop Role-Playing Games in Japan

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Keywords: Tabletop Role-Playing Games, TRPG, game history, game introduction

Abstract

Background

Tabletop Role-Playing Games, or Pen-and-paper Role-Playing Games, abbreviated as TRPG or TTRPG, are a type of tabletop game where players engage in role-playing activities driven by a game master. Players use pen, paper, and dice to progress the storyline. In Japan, Tabletop Role-Playing games and Pen-and-paper Role-Playing Games are also referred to as Table-Talk Role-Playing Games or Conversation-Based Role-Playing Games.

The world's first TRPG work, "Dungeons & Dragons", was created and released in 1974 by Tactical Studies Rules (subsequently restructured into TSR, Inc.), an American company. The inception of "Dungeons & Dragons" can be considered as the starting point of RPGs and has had a significant impact on the subsequent development of electronic games.

However, the introduction of TRPGs to Japan took place approximately a decade after their inception in America. In 1984, Hobby Japan released the Japanese version of the American SF(Science Fiction)TRPG "Traveller", which marked Japan's first translated TRPG. From that point onwards Hitoshi Yasuda, who acted as the translator for the Japanese version of "Traveller", began spearheading the promotion of TRPGs in Japan, with a focus on his efforts.

Due to ten-year delay, computer RPGs, which were influenced by TRPGs in America, were introduced to Japan first and became the foundation of the Japanese RPG culture, and caused Japanese TRPGs to develop in a unique manner.

This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the historical introduction and development of Tabletop Role-Playing Games (TRPGs) in Japan. The study specifically focuses on the period from 1984 to the 2000s when foreign-produced TRPGs gradually evolved into domestic productions and became the prevailing trend. It also investigates the dynamics of acceptance of TRPGs within Japan during this timeframe. A particular emphasis is placed on analyzing the interactions between TRPGs and related analog gaming genres, such as Science Fiction (SF) and game books, and how

these subcultures and other forms of media influenced and shaped the growth trajectory of TRPGs in Japan.

Hypothesis

Drawing from previous research, statements, and works by Hitoshi Yasuda, as well as special feature articles on TRPG history in TRPG-related magazines, the introduction and development of TRPGs in Japan from the 1980s to the 2000s can be broadly categorized into the following three period.:

- (1) The period until the release of the Japanese version of "Dungeons & Dragons" in 1985. During this period, information about TRPGs in Japan was primarily disseminated through introductory articles found in science fiction magazines and war simulation game magazines.
- (2) The period from the release of the Japanese version of "Dungeons & Dragons" in 1985 until "Record of Lodoss War" became a hit in the late 1980s. In 1984, the Japanese version of "The Warlock of Firetop Mountain" sparked a boom in game books, and as a result, TRPG information started to appear regularly in magazines dedicated to game books.
- (3) The period after the success of "Record of Lodoss War", which initially appeared as a serial in computer gaming magazines in 1986 and was later published as a novel in 1988. In this period, domestic TRPG titles took the forefront in Japan.

Building up on these three period, we propose the following hypotheses.

- (1) In 1982, the 4th and 5th issues of "Hitoshi Yasuda's American SF Information", serialized in "S-F Magazine", became the first introductory TRPG articles in Japan. Simultaneously, TRPGs were introduced to Japanese SF events, garnering attention from SF fans. From 1983 to 1984, "TACTICS" magazine, specialized in war simulation games, serialized articles by Hitoshi Yasuda, including previews and replays of "Traveller" prior to its release. These activities by Hitoshi Yasuda became the primary factor that piqued the interest of SF fans and war simulation game players became the primary target audience for the introduction of TRPGs into Japan
- (2) In 1984, the Japanese version of the game book "The Warlock of Firetop Mountain" was released, and the gamebook boom began to emerge in Japan. In 1985, the Japanese version of "Dungeons & Dragons" was also released. In 1986, the Japanese version of the British gamebook magazine "Warlock" was launched, but due to the discontinuation of the original British magazine in the same year, it took a unique

approach of featuring TRPG-related articles alongside gamebooks. Through this magazine, the fan base of Japanese gamebooks developed an interest in TRPGs as well. During the period leading up to the hit of "Record of Lodoss War", this magazine became the central driving force behind the popularization of TRPGs in Japan.

- (3) In 1986, "Record of Lodoss War", which was first presented as a replay of "Dungeons & Dragons" in a magazine and later published as a novel in 1988, gained significant popularity and acted as a major motivation of TRPGs. As a result, numerous domestically produced fantasy TRPGs started being released. This shift led to a change in the focus of TRPG publications in Japan, moving from translated works to domestically created content. Additionally, a concurrent trend emerged, where many TRPGs based on media mix titles, such as anime, manga, and novels, also appeared. As a consequence, around the 1990s, anime fans began to enter the player base of TRPGs, complementing the existing player groups, which had main consisted of war simulation game and gamebook fans, as well as SF fans.

Research Method

We will conduct interview surveys targeting individuals who have been involved in the introduction and development of TRPG in Japan, in various contexts and positions distinct from Hitoshi Yasuda, during the period from the early 1980s to the early 2000s, which is the focus of this research. The following four individuals have been selected as the targets.

- (1) Yusuke Tokida (TRPG Designer/Representative of Suzaku Games)
- (2) Toshihiro Takeda (Former chief editor of RPG Magazine)
- (3) Akira Ueda (Hobby Japan, Game Development Division 1)
- (4) Tetsuya Kohama (Editor/Tokyo Sogensha)

In conducting the interview survey, we will conduct a quantitative investigation of TRPG-related articles published in gaming-related magazines to understand the changes in information sources and the quantity of information related to TRPGs in Japan from the early 1980s to the early 2000s. The main domestic gaming-related magazines that have featured information on TRPGs, along with their publication periods, are as follows (Figure. 1).

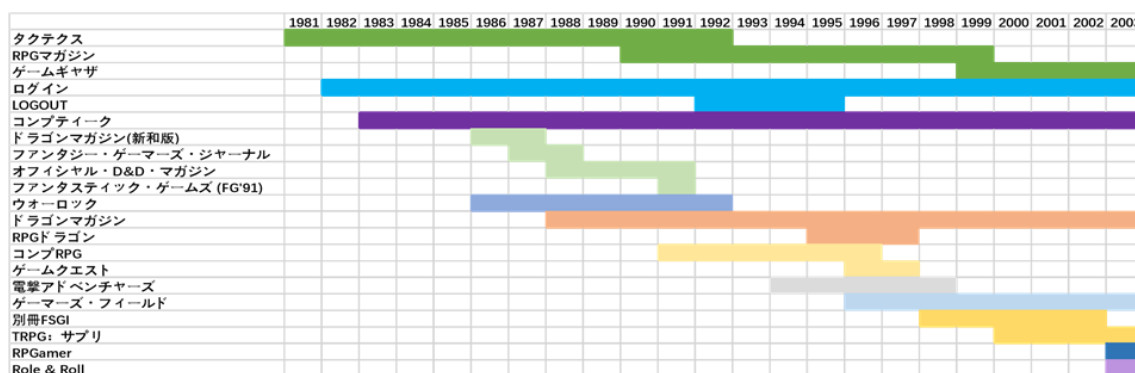


Figure 1. The main domestic gaming-related magazines that have featured information on TRPGs(1981-2003)

Based on their respective founding dates, and their relationship with other genres, we will select the following magazines, "TACTICS", "Warlock", "Dragon Magazine" and "RPG Magazine", as particularly important media for investigation. These magazines played a significant role in the dissemination of TRPG-related information.

Result

The role of Hitoshi Yasuda in bringing TRPG-related information to the readers of "S-F Magazine" (SF information magazine) and "TACTICS" (war simulation game specialist magazine) before the publication of the Japanese version of "Dungeons & Dragons" in 1985 is supported by multiple testimonies. It was evident that Yasuda's introductory articles led some individuals to start playing TRPGs, indicating that his articles played a part in fostering interest in TRPGs during that period.

However, there were also several testimonies that contradicted the hypothesis that "SF fans and war simulation game players became the primary target audience for the introduction of TRPGs into Japan". Some testimonies indicated a lack of interest in TRPGs within the Japanese SF fan community at the time, and it was stated that the Japanese version of "Dungeons & Dragons" had a significantly larger circulation than war simulation games. These testimonies cast doubt on the idea that these two groups were the main recipients of TRPGs' introduction to Japan.

Secondly, based on various perspectives, it can be inferred that the audience for the gamebook boom triggered by the release of the Japanese version of "The Warlock of Firetop Mountain" in 1984 was much broader than that of TRPGs at the time. As a result, it is likely that there were quite a few TRPG players who also had experience with gamebooks.

However, there were no supporting views or testimonies that specifically

indicated a transition in the audience from gamebooks to TRPGs, leading to the hypothesis that this transition supported the growth of Japanese TRPGs until the hit of "Record of Lodoss War". As such, there is insufficient evidence to support this hypothesis.

On the other hand, the Japanese version of "Warlock", which originally started as a gamebook-focused magazine, began featuring the TRPG "Tunnels & Trolls". The release of its Japanese version in a pocket-sized book format served as a pioneering example. Subsequently, the product format of TRPGs in Japan shifted from the traditional box format to book format. Multiple testimonies support the notion that this transition had a significant impact on the pricing, circulation, and overall popularization of Japanese TRPGs.

And then, from 1990, two years after the release of "Record of Lodoss War" as a novel in 1988, there was a significant increase in both the number and proportion of domestically produced TRPGs in Japan. Several perspectives support the idea that the hit of "Record of Lodoss War" and its media mix expansion greatly contributed to the expansion of the TRPG player base. The hypothesis that the popularity of "Record of Lodoss War" acted as a major motivation, leading to a situation where numerous domestically produced fantasy TRPGs were released is generally supported.

However, the reasons for the increase in the proportion of domestic titles were not solely attributed to the success of "Record of Lodoss War". Testimonies pointed out that the burden of handling rights for foreign licensed titles in their development played a significant role. Additionally, the rise in the number of TRPG designers within Japan was another contributing factor.

Moreover, the increase in media mix titles during this period was primarily influenced by the strategies of Kadokawa Shoten and Fujimi Shobo at the time, rather than being followed by other TRPG manufacturers or publishing houses not associated with the Kadokawa group. Testimonies did not firmly support the hypothesis that "anime fans began to enter the player base of TRPGs due to the increase in media mix titles." Instead, it was suggested that media mix expansions were aimed more towards the pre-existing audience of TRPGs, which already included a substantial number of anime and other media fans.

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“Sealed Alone in the Dark”: Decoding Braille in the *Pokémon* Series

Frank Mondelli, University of Delaware

Abstract

Pokémon Ruby and Sapphire (2002) contain a trio of powerful monsters called the “legendary titans” whose stand-out feature is that they each contain seven dots in place of their eyes. To obtain these monsters, players must embark on an elaborate side quest, eventually encountering ancient ruins containing an unfamiliar language that they must decipher. Unlike the previous *Pokémon* games, which also contained an ancient ruins area with a symbolic language, the language in *Ruby and Sapphire* is not a constructed language for the purpose of the game: rather, it is a two-dimensional representation of Braille that appears on the screen. Removed from its original context as a tactile language, this visual Braille gives instructions to the player on how to find the legendary titans, and players may make the connection between the Braille instructions and the titans’ lack of eyes. Other ingame materials hint that the titans may represent residual effects of disability and war; it even became an urban legend among Japanese fans that these titans may represent *hibakusha*, or victims of the atomic bombs.¹

Often considered the “best puzzle in *Pokémon*” by fans, the use of Braille in *Ruby and Sapphire* became a recurring part of *Pokémon* mythology and design, with the tradition of using Braille to decipher ancient messages continuing in *Pokémon FireRed and LeafGreen* (2004) and *Pokémon Omega Ruby and Alpha Sapphire* (2014), as well as appearing in the *Pokémon Adventures* manga.² Paratextual materials to the games like the instruction booklet for *FireRed and LeafGreen* also instruct players that, like the spirit of the *Pokémon* series as a whole, the use of Braille is tied with notions of community and interpersonal communication: “If you look closely and pay attention, you might even see Braille in your home town!”³

1 For a description, see 「ポケモン都市伝説「レジ系」～点字と戦争～（前編）」: <http://xn-rckteqa2es85swxs3o5estk.jp/archives/98>

2 For one example, see “why the hell is the regi sidequest written in braille?”: <https://gamefaqs.gamespot.com/boards/792673-pokemon-omega-ruby/69369491?page=2>

3 The note appears as “Before You Play *Pokémon FireRed and LeafGreen*”: https://archives.bulbagarden.net/media/upload/e/e8/Braille_description.jpg

But why did these games choose to use Braille in the first place? What does it mean to take a tactile writing system and flatten it into a 2D puzzle mechanic for the purpose of telling a story connected to disability? Taking the *Pokémon* Braille puzzles as a case study, this presentation explores how the ludonarrative appropriation of disability-related communication systems simultaneously serves both community-building functions as well as exclusionary functions among players. This ludonarrative appropriation is related to, but distinct from, other academic studies of disability in games, such as representation of disability among characters and games accessibility. Speaking to the theme of this year's Replaying Japan, I argue that this case study represents a broader trend of Japanese games using disability as a *communicative mechanic*, instructing players to engage with games and the world in a particular way that both incorporates and isolates disabled peoples' experiences. I pair this analysis with the history of contemporary Japanese barrier-free movements, proposing a way forward to address the "information gap" (*jōhō kakusa*) that prevents disabled gamers from participating more equitably in broader gaming culture.

Under the Summer Moon: Community and Queer Longing in the tanka of Splatooon 2

Lillian McIntyre the University of Hawaii at Manoa

Abstract

A friction exists between the two ‘worlds’ of *Splatooon 2*. Squid and octopi live in separate societies, above- and underground; *Octo Expansion*, a single player expansion for Nintendo’s 2018 online multiplayer game, follows one octopus, dubbed Agent 8, who longs to migrate to the surface above. Expressing themselves only through facial expression and a collection of Japanese poetry, Agent 8 takes shape as a liminal subject, outside of the fun that happens on the surface and between two cultures, introducing a queer affect to the environment of *Splatooon*.

Through a close reading of a handful of the poems in *Octo Expansion*, this paper explores the way that Japanese poetry is used in the game to shape a fictional community and produce a queer affectual response. I explore a reading of the octopus subject of *Octo Expansion* as queer through their precarity, examining the gap between cultures they reside in and the way that the production of negative forms of affect queers the base game of *Splatooon* itself by altering the player’s perception of the ‘normal’ squid society through the introduction of an additional marginalized perspective.

The interiority of *Octo Expansion*’s protagonist is delivered solely through a form of poem known as *tanka*. *Tanka* follow a structured form with verses written in syllabic 5/7/5/7/7 pattern, implying a community of readers and writers familiar with the form, and many of Agent 8’s poems engage with a tiny community of nonplayer characters.

The literary tone of *Octo Expansion* is set as soon as the player enters the game. Having been asked if they will listen to a story that emerges from the underground, the player’s confirmation triggers a fade to black, and a faint, distorted version of “Calamari Inkantation”, a folk song of the squids, crescendos and cuts off abruptly. A brief, enigmatic snippet of poetry flickers into view.

蛸壺や 儚き夢を 夏の月

Takotsubo ya hakanaki yume wo natsu no tsuki

The English localization of the game renders this as:

Pale summer moonlight shimmers on the seafloor.

An octopus, unaware that dawn will bring capture,
Rests within a trap, dreaming fleeting dreams...

The poetically-inclined player may recognize this as a quotation from Bashō. Shirane (1998) translates:

Octopus traps – Fleeting
dreams beneath A
summer moon (9)

Shirane analyzes the poem as follows.

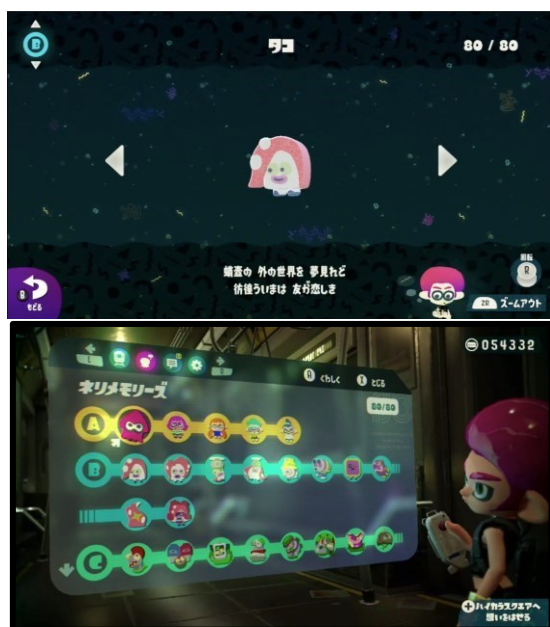
“The octopus traps were lowered in the afternoon and raised the next morning, after the octopus had crawled inside. The octopus in the jars – and implicitly the troops of the Heike clan that were massacred on these shores at the end of the twelfth century [...] – are having “fleeting dreams,” not knowing they are about to be harvested. The reader’s mind jumps between an elegant, classical phrase, the “summer moon,” which the poetic tradition deemed to be as brief as the summer night and which was associated in classical literature with ephemerality, and “octopus traps,” an everyday, vernacular word, representing commoner life. [...] The resulting poem is both humorous and tragic at the same time.” (9)

The “humorous and tragic” tone of Bashō’s meditation sets the tone of the short game that is to come. Knowing this further context gives a sense of the war between the squid and octopi that haunts the narrative of *Octo Expansion* and forms the subjectivity of its protagonist, Agent 8. While a metaphorical object in the poem, two of the settings where octopi hold military activities are referred to as *Takotsubo Valley* (‘Octo Valley’) and *Takotsubo Canyon* (‘Octo Canyon’), and they serve as the locations of the single-player campaigns of *Splatoon 1* and *2* respectively. The octopi living space is thus reconceptualized as a trap, and our sympathies are primed to now play as one.

Prior to *Octo Expansion*, the octopi, known as Octarians, always played the role of the enemy in singleplayer missions. Although previous collectible items in the series hinted at their motives for contesting squid territory as being survival-oriented, and players had clamored to play as an Octoling due to their similarities to player characters, the release of *Octo Expansion* marked the first time players could inhabit their

perspectives through the figure of Agent 8. In an interview for *Famitsu* following the release of *Octo Expansion*, Director Yusuke Amano mentions that due to their background, Agent 8 is their own character, but as *Splatoon* protagonists haven't expressed their feelings through dialogue before, the development team had to come up with a way to navigate Agent 8's subjectivity (Supuratum 2 ichishūnen 2018). They settled on the poetic as a way to draw the player and the octopus closer together, specifically, the *tanka* poetic form, which allows for subjects to become nebulous in gender and voice.

The poems of *Octo Expansion* express longing for a different life, comic meditations on brands and commercialism, and the sadness of transition and farewells. There are eighty in total, with each unlocked after completing one of the game's levels. Just short of the traditional poetic grouping of one hundred poems, the eponymous *hyakunin*, eighty serves as another nod to the octopus's number of limbs, as does the poet's name itself, Agent 8. Each poem corresponds to a level in the game and are sorted by level order as well as topic. Each poem is paired with a small graphic that resembles a toy eraser and represents an object or character in the *Splatoon* world. These items are referred to as '*neri memori*' (paste memories,) or 'mem cakes' in the English version.



Figures 1 and 2: Screenshots of an individual mem cake and the larger menu that they can be viewed in.

The 'memory' part of the naming of these items reflects their status as fragments of Agent 8's lost memories. The language of the poems is primarily modern, but occasionally a classical construction strikes the reader. From a gameplay standpoint, the mem cakes serve as a sort of collectible prize; they provide a completion incentive as well as deeper insight into the game's narrative. However, though the tone of these poems is generally humorous – they are laden with puns and comedic descriptions of in-game characters delivered in verse – there are also a handful that stand out for their portrayal of longing.

The poems that are most evocative of Agent 8's position in their world are the ones on Line B that deal with fellow octopi. Take, for example, Station B01's poem, "Octarian (*tako*)."

蛸壺の 外の世界を 夢見れど
彷徨ういまは 友が恋しき

Takotsubo no soto no sekai o yume miredo samayou ima wa tomo ga koishiki

Though I dream of the world beyond the octopus trap,
As I wander now, I long for friends.¹

The official English localization is presented below.

"The world I knew seems like a trap.
I'm drawn now to the strange and new.
Would my old friends think me a sap?"²

The invocation of '*takotsubo*,' which we saw above as well in Basho's poem, immediately sets up the poetic precedent, and this poem also contains a classical construction in the last verse, *koishiki*, lending a literary bent to the individual *tanka*. *Yume miredo* establishes a tone of longing, while the specification of *samayou ima* indicates the poem's subject's transitory state as not yet outside of the octopus trap. The most obvious interpretation of this poem is that the friends in question are the other Octarians. For the typical Splatoon player, the friendly appearance of the Octarian in the eraser image accompanying this poem is a subversion of their normal role in the game as enemies, and the poem's reference to them as pals creates an affective link. This positive reference establishes the octopi as rather being a warm community rather than enemies.

Another enemy in the game, the Elite Octoling (*takozonesu*), receives a similarly communal poem, awarded for completing Station B10.

¹ The initial translations presented under each poem are my own. My intent is not to diminish the work of the official translators, but rather present an additional version for the reader's comparison.

² The official localizations for these poems render them in verses of 8 syllables in a nod to the original structured patterns. They are typically peppered with rhymes, though, so the original *tanka* form is somewhat obscured.

さよならも 言えずに堕ちた 深海で
我とよく似た キミにふたたび

Sayonara mo iezu ni ochita shinkai de
Ware to yoku nita kimi ni futatabi

In the deep sea I sank into without being able to
exchange our farewells
You who resemble me, once again we meet

The official English version:

“Though parted by the ocean deep,
My oldest friend, we meet again.
I touch your face; you rouse from sleep.”

Agent 8’s subjectivity is again expressed through a rupture with their previous community in the first verse of this *tanka*. Literary language such as the usage of the classical first-person pronoun *ware* and the classical negative auxiliary verb *zu* serve to heighten the melancholic nature of the poem by evoking a serious tone. Though such literary language is not altogether uncommon in games (Hemmann 2021,) here, this literary tone serves to emphasize the thematic of solitude in *Octo Expansion*. The form of *tanka* itself emerges as solitary in the game through its direct juxtaposition with more contemporary forms of cultural expression in the form of rap. The association with memory, and personal composition, becomes a potent statement as it resonates with the format of the expansion, a single-player experience that diverges from the main game’s multiplayer gameplay.

Sara Ahmed (2010) outlines the ways in which notions of ‘happiness’ operate as hegemonic forces that mark lives that divert from societal norms as being ‘unhappy.’³ Her description of the ways that queer subjects are bound by negative affect resonates with Jack Halberstam’s (2011) discourses on the relationship between queerness and failure. Ruberg (2019) suggests that applying this branch of queer theory to the analysis of games allows us to explore ways of examining video games that help us to break with the conception of ‘fun’ as a key value of play, as well as open spaces for the consideration

of places where game narratives rhyme with the negative affects of queer lives. The *tanka* of *Octo Expansion*, with their expression of a hauntingly bittersweet disconnection from society, serve as one of these points.

If the player clears all 80 stages in *Octo Expansion*, completing the set of 80 mem cakes, they can challenge a secret boss battle against Agent 3, the protagonist of the first *Splatoon* game. This battle is framed by an 81st *tanka*, shown only briefly in dialogue.

よみがえる あこがれのキミ その勇姿
シオカラ節の グルーヴに乗せて...

Yomigaeru akogare no kimi sono yuushi
Shiokarabushi no guruvu ni nosete...

Reawakened, my yearning for you, your gallant form
Flowing in the groove of the Calamari Inkantation...

The English version of the game presents this strictly as prose: “Your memories of that day, two years ago, have returned. Now, prepare to ride those squidtastic grooves once again...”

Notably, this is the only piece of Agent 8’s memory that returns in gameplay form rather than being expressed purely in the poetic. As such, in the poem, *yomigaeru* functions as both a bringing forth of Agent 8’s memory, but also calls forth the resurrection of Agent 3’s figure on the day that they had first met, recreated in the boss fight. The sound of the “Calamari Inkantation,” which plays at both the beginning of the expansion as well as in fragments in the subway as Agent 8’s memory returns, also serves as the backdrop to this segment of gameplay.

The most important phrase in this *tanka*, however, may be *akogare*, the expression of longing, admiration, or adoration, which defines Agent 8’s connection to 3 as a desire. Such a desire, directed towards a different species and transcending a broader social history and narrative, is at the heart of the queerness that I read in the narrative of *Octo Expansion*. Gayatri Gopinath (2005) uses queerness to refer to “an alternative hermeneutic, the particular interpretive strategies that are available to those who are deemed “impossible” within hegemonic nationalist and diasporic discourses.” This “impossibility” of existence within normative spaces speaks to the interstitial quality of Agent 8’s narrative position; Agent 8 is between two worlds and beyond the societal

imagining of both.

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Session 5

Game History

Hall

9:00-10:00

Soundtracking Speed: Japanese Rave Culture in Namco's Racing Games

James Heazlewood-Dale, John MacDonald, Brandeis University

Abstract

The breakbeats of late 1990s club culture have become integral to racing at breakneck speeds through digital landscapes. Breakbeats, sampled and resequenced drum solo breaks from funk records, are the cornerstone of several electronic dance music genres that emerged from club cultures in the 1990s and have made their way into the music of innumerable racing game soundtracks. Existing scholarship highlights how UK rave culture influences racing game soundworlds as a means to extend the experience of rave spaces into the home and enhance the gameplay. What is strikingly absent from these scholarly discussions is how UK club culture influenced Japanese studios. How do racing game soundworlds released in Europe and North America differ from iterations released in the East Asian markets? How have UK dance genres such as Hardcore, Jungle, and Drum and Bass influenced Japanese composers? How might a player perceive this music and influence their ludic experience? We argue that Japanese game studios, Namco and Sega in particular, drew from the contemporary 1990s Japanese rave culture as a means to envelop players in a rhythmic momentum expressing their vehicle's forward momentum. Like their Western counterparts, Japanese composers attempted to extend the rave experience to homes through interactive media. This interdisciplinary research draws from existing ludomusicological scholarship by James Millea and Karen Collins, Japanese popular music scholarship by Carolyn Stevens and Bonnie C Wade, and theories of musical cognition by Vijay Iyer and Neil McAngus Todd. Breakbeats from various dance genres afford a rhythmic vibrancy that participates centrally in how players feel, hear, and play racing games.

Institutionalizing Game Preservation: Game Archive and Its Ecology Niche in Chinese Game Industry

Felania Mengfei LIU, Ruijia LI, CC KANG, Beijing Normal University

Keywords: Chinese Game Industry; Chinese Game History; Game Preservation in China; Game Ecology; Digital Preservation

Abstract

Being the largest game market and most lively emerging game developing entity, China had its unique game industry ecology and challenges that could be described as “high economical + low cultural status”. And after years of exploration in game research and game industry practices, we found game archive could be a way to fix a few infrastructural problems between the industry, academics and social impact.

This paper focuses on game preservation and its status in China, and how its institutionalization fosters a healthier game ecology. Beginning with a meta-analysis on game preservation abroad and in China, our analysis would have an emphasis on the ecology niche of LAM institutions¹ of game preservation, especially on the source of income and infrastructural function that it has for the industry.

An analysis of the interview of the the current practitioners of game archivists and collectors that is mentioned in the first part of the paper will follow to further entail the challenges that emerged during this process, especially cultural, social and other challenges that are more unique to China compared to its counterparts from more developed industries like the ones from Japan, U.S. or E.U..

Then, our paper proceeds with a case study on the 2018 founded, first and only thriving nonprofit game archive in China—Homo Ludens Archive(HLA) —especially on its history, on how it coped with the industry problem and developed its mode of existence as an underlying industry infrastructure that supports game creativity, fosters and protects local game community, records/rescues game history, promotes game literacy, and most importantly, creates a sense of belonging for game creators and developers , while trying to “upgrade” the cultural status of game and game industry in China.

We would discuss how the institutionalization process of HLA built and fostered to maintain sustainable relationship with the industry, government, player community and other stakeholders, and how certain infrastructural problems was entailed and being copped with during its development, what lessons to learn from, and what challenges

1 LAM: short for Library, Archive and Museum.

that it still entails to build a healthier game ecology in China.

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Session 6

Games and Society 1

Hall
14:00-15:00

Japan's Labor Shortage Crisis and the Future of Japanese Game Companies

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Abstract

Japan's decreasing population crisis has drawn international attention and concern with some foreign news outlets going to the extent to claim that one day, "Japan will disappear."

According to Asahi Shimbun "In a 2017 study, the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research estimated that the total number of births in Japan would fall under 800,000 in 2033, while births to Japanese parents would drop below 780,000 that year. The actual decline in births has come 11 years earlier than expected" (February 28, 2023: n.page). As a result of the country's declining birth rates and subsequently aging population, it is predicted that Japan's workforce will shrink by one-fifth in the next 20 years (See Figure 1). How will Japan's rapidly aging society and shrinking workforce impact recruitment practices for Japanese game companies? In a country where women make up 52% of the workforce to date (of which 22% account for irregular, part time and seasonal positions) and foreign workers a mere 2.5% (as of 2020), what is being done at Japanese game companies to offset or counter foreseeable labor shortages?

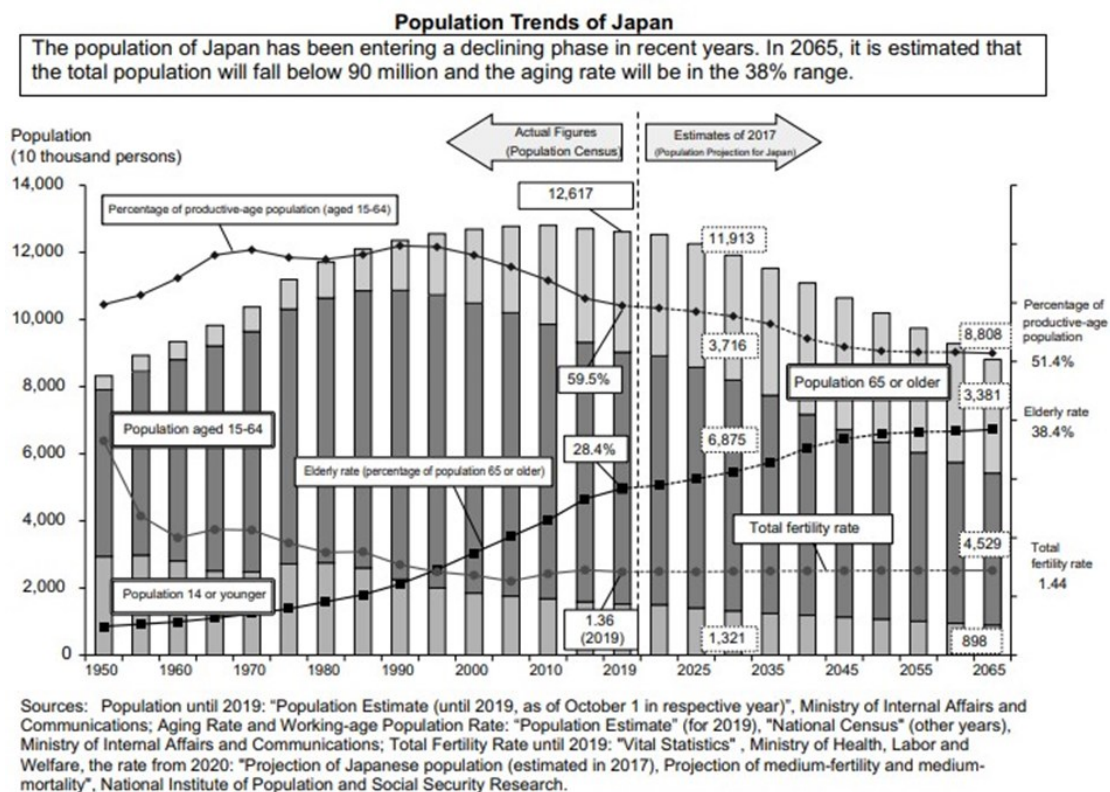


Figure 1: from the *Annual Health, Labour and Welfare Report 2021*, "General Welfare and Labour."

In our on-going research exploring the ethics of Japanese game companies, this presentation will use CSR Reports of major Japanese game companies to analyze trends and patterns in their handling of gender diversity and inclusion of ethnic and other minorities in Japan. It will also draw on CEDEC's "Employment of Game Developers and Career Development" 2022 Report (Computer Entertainment Developers Conference) to investigate the following questions that examine the potentials and limitations of current corporate/workplace practices:

- In what ways do Japanese game companies discuss efforts to create an inclusive workplace by recruiting people who are from under-represented categories, ie. womxn, LGBT, ethnic minorities in Japan?
- How are women and other minorities represented visually in the annual reports?
- Are they represented as players? As developers? As other types of employees?
- Are there programs to encourage diversity in leadership positions?

A study on workforce diversity initiatives in Japanese game companies proves timely in the wake of emerging scholarly trends in Game Studies that critically explore questions

of intersectionality, anti-racism and anti-sexism. More importantly, it will prove useful to understanding future challenges, as well as solutions for Japanese game companies.

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A consideration of the recent academic literature on the Japanese video game industry through a critical lens: Disentangling current topics, approaches and debates

Marc Llovet Ferrer, Aichi Prefectural University

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

In this proposal, the recent academic literature on the Japanese video game¹ industry (JVGI) is reviewed with the aim of providing an abridged, compact update on the state of both the industry and its research. Targeted literature includes peer-reviewed journal articles, books and book chapters of academic character published in approximately the last ten years, although a few earlier works are conveniently taken into account.

Separating game industry studies from the analyses of game content or player behavior is increasingly difficult in the age of operated monetization, playbor and pervasive games, where these dimensions blend. While acknowledging this imperfection, here I make an effort to focus on literature that mainly explores the activity of game companies and developers² in Japan. Although around 50 works are targeted in a project in progress, only one part is referenced in this extended abstract.

2. History of the industry

Historical analyses of the JVGI are common, the work by Koyama (2023)³ being, to my current knowledge, the most comprehensive history so far. A couple of historical key events, such as the "Famicom boom" since 1983 (e.g. Picard 2013) or the irruption of Sony with a console of their own in 1994 (e.g. Koizumi 2016, 28–32; Maruyama et al. 2015, 285–86), continue to be discussed. The former would turn the JVGI into a console game-based, globally leading industry for many years. From the latter, it can be inferred that the lower consignment fees of Sony on studios brought about one of the main characteristics of the console game business: the distribution sector, greatly assumed by console manufacturers, is relatively weak, which is untypical of sibling creative industries

¹Reviewed literature attributes varying scopes to the English term “video game” (or “videogame”). In this work, “video game” refers to any type of digital game: console, handheld, mobile, computer, etc.

²While in some of the reviewed papers in English “game developer” is used to refer to studios, in some others, as well as in this work, it refers to individuals.

³An English translation of the Japanese original, first published in 2016.

such as anime (Hanzawa 2016, 151).

Most of the historical debate, however, circles around what is sometimes called "*gêmu banare*"⁴, a recessive period in the Japanese game market that began in 1998, raising concerns. Although the market spiked again when the Nintendo Wii console was launched in 2006, some authors point out that it shows a falling tendency on the long term and see general stagnation. Many causes of this phenomenon are cited (see Table 1).

Table 1. Cited causes of the recession

Causes	Literature
Insufficient technical capabilities	Wada 2019; Aoyama and Izushi 2013, 166
Cellular phones and diversification of entertainment	Hanzawa and Yamamoto 2017, 65; Ikuine 2012, 38
Complexity of new game development	Hanzawa and Yamamoto 2017, 65
Online games	Koizumi 2021, 187; Ikuine 2012, 38
Lack of innovation	Ikuine 2012; Ernkvist and Ström 2018
Declining birthrate and aging population	Koizumi 2021, 187; Hanzawa and Yamamoto 2017, 65

While the decline narrative seems dominant, a more perceptive analysis is offered by Koizumi, who adds that the ups and downs of this market are greatly affected by console cycles (2021, 177–79). In fact, Nintendo's consoles in particular and their irregular success seem to decide the trend of the console market so far, which is in line with their innovative singularities (Goldberg, Lee, and Pulos 2016; Aoyama and Izushi 2013, 166–67) and opens an interesting line of research. In 2017, the Nintendo Switch was launched and the market reversed to a rising tendency once again, but there are almost no academic analyses on what happened after that year, yet.

The most significant recent event for the JVGI, and a major topic for current scholars, is the rise of smartphone (including most of online) games, which are faring particularly well in Japan. They currently occupy the majority of the Japanese video game market, and there had been expectations that console games would gradually succumb to the new form of playing. However, their characteristics are notably different, and research has claimed that these games do not substitute console games (Koizumi 2016, 53–54; Yamaguchi et al. 2017; Koyama 2023, 245), despite associations with the recession and signs in early reports (Ernkvist 2016, 102). Ernkvist also contributes that

⁴Literally “loss of interest in games” in Japanese.

this industry evolved independently from its console game counterpart and, unlike it, venture capital has had an important role in its establishment. This characteristic makes it look much more like a creative industry.

3. Geography of the industry

Geographic approaches to the JVGI generally draw from economic geography and industrial cluster theories (e.g. Ernkvist and Ström 2018; Aoyama and Izushi 2013). This industry is highly agglomerated in Tokyo, particularly in its center. Hanzawa (2004) conducted a Japan-wide survey in 2002 showing that more than 70% of console game companies were based in the capital. According to him, one of the main location factors was the preference of workers for that city. While he also described proximity to partner companies as a factor (2016, 171), partial outsourcing practices through deep hierarchies were not prominent, which again contradicts characteristics of creative industries such as anime. However, this data is already very old and no solid updates seem to exist. This is currently an important shortcoming that needs to be covered, especially after big happenings such as the enhanced possibility of online communication, the new smartphone game industry, the Covid-19 pandemic, or the takeover of digital distribution. In regard to the last one, Lehtonen, Ainamo, and Harviainen say that it has increased the number of small studios exponentially (2019, 6), which would revert a trend seen during the *gêmu banare*.

4. Game developers

Literature dealing with game developers shows two essences: one that deals with developers as human resources and another that stresses their human lives. Interestingly, in the first case, a general contradiction can be seen between works that characterize the labor market as stable or rigid (e.g. Casper and Storz 2017; Storz, Riboldazzi, and John 2015), and those that characterize it as relatively unstable or fluid (e.g. Hanzawa 2016; Hanzawa and Yamamoto 2017). This seems to arise from the fact that the former think of it in relation to the flexible labor markets of new, innovative or creative industries, whereas the latter do so in relation to the context of Japanese labor markets, in which turnovers, mid-career hiring or temporary contracts have not abounded. In other words, the JVGI labor market seems to stand in a middle ground influenced by both realities. While this relative rigidity would be seen as an obstacle for a creative industry, Storz, Riboldazzi, and John (2015) as well as Casper and Storz (2017) argue that the JVGI breaks the norm, benefiting from integrative capabilities, firm-specific knowledge and intra-firm mobility through different roles.

As for research that inquires the more personal side of developers, their voices can be heard in several works. For instance, Fujihara has interviewed developers struggling to progress in the middle of their careers and facing uncertainty (2019a), as well as women developers (2014), shedding light on how they cope with hardships associated to their condition. Okabe (2018) has done so too with the latter, agreeing in that the lack of role models in the JVGI is a problem, but also delving further into how the presence of women is structurally hampered. Some other problems that employed developers may face are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Common problems for employed game developers

Problems	Literature
Uncertainty regarding the future	Fujihara 2019a
Gender segregation	Fujihara 2014; Okabe 2018
Deterioration of human relationships with workmates	Hanzawa 2016, 166
Lack of autonomy, as well as creative and expressive agency	Hichibe and Tanaka 2016; Hartzheim 2016, 165
Not showing in game credits	Hartzheim 2016, 175
General busyness and associated distress at the workplace	Hartzheim 2016
Overtime work and crunch time	Amano, Okabe, and Rockwell 2021, 17; Okabe 2018; Fujihara 2019a, 111–12; Hartzheim 2016, 172

It is worth noting that deterioration of human relationships often happened with superiors and was a common cause of turnovers, and that extra working time is a reality often mentioned, but which never seems to become a main focus of interest. When it comes to the margins of the industry, Kobayashi (Hichibe before 2020) has written about *doujin* developers prolifically, characterizing them as hobbyists in contrast to indies (Hichibe and Tanaka 2016), and enlightening how they eventually became key to the development of the JVGI (Kobayashi and Koyama 2020). It seems that among Western authors there used to be some confusion regarding *doujin* and indie developers in Japan, but the most recent literature hints at their numerous differences through multiple layers (Fiadotau 2019). The young, growing indie scene of Japan seems to be largely underresearched so far, a matter that calls for attention.

The scarce academic cover of mobile game developers is another important

shortcoming that needs to be addressed from this point forward, one exception being Hartzheim (2016), who throws light on the working lives of game planners, their constant interaction with players, and their operating (game maintenance) tasks. (Ernkvist 2016, 107) also contributes to the understanding that, in these games, data analytics substitute artistic creativity as the principal domain of game designers or planners.

5. Innovation

A main topic that stands out is that of innovation, which seems to almost be the exclusive domain of studies drawing from economic and business-related sciences. There are attempts to quantify it by analyzing its assumed, distant ripples, namely sales patterns (Wada 2011) and critical review rates (Storz, Riboldazzi, and John 2015) of games. Other papers take a more prudent approach, defining its role in the JVGI broadly: Hanzawa and Yamamoto claim that it is "necessarily 'discovered' only after sales" (2017, 61) and link its emergence to a redundancy of simultaneous projects, while Ikuine (2012) ties its lack to economic stagnation. Ernkvist and Ström (2018) prefer to focus on 'IP differentiation', but give that a very similar role than Ikuine does to innovation. A third group of works attempt to uncover the ontology of game innovation through closer looks, be it theoretically (Casper and Storz 2017, 233–36) or by illustrating how it played out historically in the specific (and very relevant) case of Nintendo (Aoyama and Izushi 2013, 166-67).

The last group comes closest to the core of the matter, but all this literature shares two common weak points. The first is that its understanding of game innovation is mostly based on general theories of innovation, neglecting the numerous and singular ways in which this multifaceted medium can evolve. In the best case, one or two game-based theories, grounded on methods such as interviews with developers, are also referenced. The value of these is undeniable, but they are scarcely cited, fairly old, and it seems odd that the growing body of game analysis literature is never taken into account when assessing a phenomenon that is supposed to show clearly in the final (innovative) product. As a result, discussion on innovation feels always shallow or zoomed out. While not choosing to use the concept of innovation, works such as Nakamura and Tosca (2021) should be observed, since they are fundamental to an understanding of how content may evolve in the JVGI.

The second (and perhaps related) shortcoming is that this literature generally seems to align innovation with success quite uncritically. While innovation is obviously indispensable to game industries, these are also known to often rely on risk-averse sequels and repeat commercially-tested game formulae; that is, prevent excessive or unwelcome innovation. This tension between innovation and repetition is acknowledged

by some authors, but while the latter is usually linked to stagnation, the question of how a curb on the former also serves profit is never analyzed in-depth. At the same time, literature dealing with developers shows that these are often prevented from expressing themselves creatively in commercial settings, with Fujihara (2019b) also adding research on similar constraints imposed by regulations regarding ethics. As indicated by Ito (2005), game innovation involves risk, but in the margins, where there are less investment and resources, creative freedom and bold ideas can thrive under singular circumstances. Innovation and creativity are certainly two overlapping words with an intimate and mysterious relationship, both associated with the generation of new ideas. It appears that, in the name of business, innovation is invoked on one side while creativity is curtailed in the other. This points towards the existence of a certain equilibrium, probably with social hierarchies at play, that is optimal for profit, rather than a simple, direct relationship between innovation and profit. Also, what types of game innovation are there, and what ends do they serve? Scholars of the JVGI interested in innovation could benefit from delving into such questions and looking thoroughly at the triangular relationship between innovation, creativity and profit.

6. Other topics

A few secondary topics garner varying degrees of attention using industrial perspectives. However, due to length constraints, they are just enumerated in table 3.

Table 3. Other topics that draw interest

Topics	Literature
Media mix industrial strategies	Aoyama and Izushi 2013; Navarro-Remesal and Loriguillo-López 2015; Ernest dit Alban 2020; Nakamura and Tosca 2021
National policies	Koizumi 2021; Hanzawa and Yamamoto 2017; Lehtonen, Ainamo, and Harviainen 2019; Okabe 2018
Regulations of content and industrial activities	Ernkqvist 2016; Fujihara 2019b; Lauteria 2015; Picard and Pelletier-Gagnon 2015; Amano, Okabe, and Rockwell 2021
E-sports	Nakamura 2021
Game centers	Kawasaki (e.g. 2022)

7. Conclusions

A number of situations can be understood from this literature review. In the first place, the JVGI seems to contradict quite a few tenets about how new or creative

industries are supposed to work. However, this comes with a major caveat. Empirical papers rely on data from around six years prior to publication, on average, which means that in many cases we are reading about situations that existed around ten years ago, or more. On the other hand, this industry is changing at an accelerating pace, in particular with the takeover by mobile games (a different industrial breed) having an enormous impact. In the face of this, academic publications often become quickly outdated and blind as to the concurrent state of the JVGI.

Secondly, when it comes to discussing innovation in the JVGI, literature does not take advantage of the extensive expertise erected around the nature of the game medium and its development during two decades of game studies. This raises questions regarding the function of innovation studies here, and reveals the wide chasm that exists between economic sciences and game studies, two very different groups of academic traditions that now share the field of game industry studies, and that could probably benefit from dialogue.

Lastly, Inoue advised against the idea of game research predominantly representing the interests of the industry (2007, 48). While stances concerned with how competitiveness can be enhanced are common, a large amount of literature preoccupied with various other matters exists as well in current JVGI studies, which is a good sign. At the same time, however, research inspired by critical lines of thought that attempt to unpack existing relationships of power, stress social justice issues or explain the commodification of art are extremely scarce, with Okabe (2018) being a remarkable exception, and some other work raising these issues too, albeit more superficially (e.g. Amano, Okabe, and Rockwell 2021). In stark contrast, such issues have been very visible regarding Western game industries (e.g. Keogh 2021; Woodcock 2019; Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2009), which indicates that they are either much milder or underresearched in the case of Japan. Regardless, I conclude that the lack of such approaches, which constitute a major global tradition in social sciences, calls for attention and enlightens possible gaps to be addressed in future research.

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Auteurial admiration and the co-constructed, solo-developer cult of personality in the Touhou Project fandom

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Abstract

Motivated by the ongoing affective admiration of Touhou Project's sole creator ZUN across the game series' fan communities, this paper investigates the productive impact that ZUN has had on the continued creation of Touhou Project derivative fan music. Through reflexive thematic analysis of qualitative online survey (Braun & Clarke 2021) and drawing upon Weber's concept of charismatic authority (1947), this paper presents a work-in-progress case study on the participatory construction of cult solo-developers in glocal game communities and their potential for incentivizing fan media convergence (Jenkins 2006). By contextualising both the global and local considerations of the Touhou Project series, it explores the interconnected values and contexts of Japanese *doujin* hobbyist cultures from which the series originates (Ideguchi 2013; Hichibe & Tanaka 2016) and global online domains (Jenkins 2006, Belk 2013), wherein its fans create derivative works and negotiate their relationships to the community, the series, and its creator.

1 Theoretical Framework

1.1 Charismatic authority

Sociologist Max Weber frames 'charismatic authority' as one of three approaches to achieving power alongside the traditional and legal forms of authority (Kantola 2009; Weber 1947, 328; Cocker & Cronin 2017, 458). Weber loosely conceptualizes charisma as a "certain (holistic) quality of an individual person by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities" (1947, 359). Importantly, it is the recognition of charisma on the part of those subject to authority, 'the followers,' which is decisive for its validity (Weber 1947). However, charismatic authority, as a dynamic force of originating, is unstable and unsustainable. Through its routinization, it becomes either traditionalised, rationalised, or a combination of both, ultimately diminishing its legitimacy in a given situation (Weber 1947, 328, 359-364).

The concept has been previously discussed regarding traditional celebrity by Turner (2004) and applied by Cocker and Cronin (2017) to examine the quality of the charismatic command of the emerging demotic microcelebrities' charismatic authority

in the domain of a newly 'empowered' online audience (458-459), focusing on United Kingdom's popular YouTube video bloggers.

1.2 Co-construction of self, characterization, and media convergence

This paper frames the proliferation of game developers as demotic micro-celebrities (Turner 2010). These are new 'ordinary' forms of charismatic celebrities that are being characterized and legitimized by their fans, media cultures, and themselves. Indeed, as argued by Belk (2013, 488) in the digital age, the self is extended, a coconstructed aggregate that "belongs as much to the others who have helped form it as it does to oneself." As a result, celebrity personalities become an "item of co-creation" (Cocker & Cronin 2017: 467).

Shunsuke Nozawa's concept of characterization as a semiotic modality is the process of transforming into a character, a "creature of in-betweenness" capable and open to shapeshifting across media formats and narrative contexts (2013, np). Nozawa posits that acts of characterization such as camouflage, costumes, and degrees of anonymity are normative in Japanese virtual communication. By employing this act of layering – "effacementwork" – one creates layers of opacity over oneself. However, the effort is not necessarily to hide one's real identity or embody an avatar. Rather, effacement provides a separation which allows for the enjoyment of interacting with someone, who is simultaneously fantastic and real," irreducible to notions of embodiment and identity" (Nozawa 2013).

Media convergence, as defined by Henry Jenkins (2006), denotes a cultural shift where the powers of media producers and consumers interact and develop across various platforms. Media mix is a form of convergence used in Japan since the 1980's, describing a "synergistic relationship between multiple media formats, particularly animation, comics, videogames, and trading card games (Ito 2010, 86). This relationship is nowadays primarily enabled by fictional characters, which move beyond specific narratives and exist in levels of inconsistency – available to be continuously re-contextualised for consumers in new scenarios (Steinberg 2012; Nozawa 2013).

1.3 Doujin fields of production

Doujin is a Japanese term that defines a group of people with shared hobbies and interests. It is an industry of self-published, hobbyist works spanning manga, video games, music, art, or other (usually) fan-related items (Hichibe & Tanaka, 2016). Distinct from commercial and indie markets, *doujin* production tends to be more strongly motivated by non-economic rewards, such as: autonomy of production, possibility for flexible "undisturbed" activity, and close interaction between producers and users

(Ideguchi 2013; Hichibe & Tanaka 2016). The works produced may be either derivative of other media or original works, however, they are generally distributed through separate channels – specialty stores and events, such as Comiket. Here creators and fans can interact with one another closely and buy and sell *doujin* products (Ideguchi 2013, 89).

2 Methods

The dataset analysed was a pilot qualitative online questionnaire deployed for two weeks in April 2022, as a part of a broader, ongoing, master's thesis project focused on Touhou Project derivative music producers, and receiving 8 responses. Qualitative online surveys (Braun et. al 2020) were selected as the overall project data collection method, due to their accessibility, as the researched community is dispersed globally, yet is presumably simultaneously well-connected to online spaces. Respondents were approached through Touhou Project online communities on Discord and Reddit, advertisement of the survey on the author's personal Twitter account, as well as directly contacting music producers with publicly available e-mail addresses. The responders were issued ID numbers to protect their privacy.

This paper employs reflexive thematic analysis, conceptualised as a flexible, fully qualitative approach, with the aim to provide an “*interpretation* of the data grounded in the data” (Braun et al. 2019, np), where meaning is contextual, realities are varied, and researcher subjectivity is a resource (Braun & Clarke 2021). The reflexive analysis method was used due to personal positioning as a fan of the Touhou Project series, since for a scholar who is “inherently involved with their research topics... the affect cannot be removed from the equation” (Lamerichs 2018, 53). The initial thematic analysis yielded pilot results out of which the arising theme of auteurial admiration across the dataset was used as a basis for this paper and subsequent secondary thematic analysis of the dataset.

3 Findings

Across the dataset, all eight participants named ZUN in relation to their experience with producing Touhou Project fan/ *doujin* music, six of which (75% of participants) explicitly identified ZUN as a personal inspiration. Unanimously, the respondents admired ZUN as the creator of the game series, proving his charismatic authority claim to legitimacy absolute and authentic. Moreover, two initial themes of his characterization began to emerge:

ZUN as a multi-faceted artist, and ZUN as a rousing and aspirational

entrepreneur.

3.1 ZUN as an inspiring skilled artist

Both *doujin* musical arrangements as well as original music and artwork mimicking ZUN's style has been recorded across the data, providing a representative spectrum of *doujin* practices (Ideguchi 2013), and illustrating the influence ZUN has on Touhou Project derivative works as a multi-faceted artist. The participants' affect towards ZUN's artistry was framed in a twofold manner. Firstly, ZUN's artwork, has been considered as "cute" (ID 2), with two of the respondents drawing derivative artworks. At the same time, the reverence for his music was represented overtly within the responses, the participants expressed their affect towards the music itself but also ZUN's skill as a composer:

"That's where Touhou music comes in with its musical complexity way above anything else, while still sounding mainstream-ish... Most inspiration of mine comes from ZUN himself." (ID1)

ZUN's status as an established and self-taught *doujin* artist legitimizes his charismatic authority as an "exemplary individual" (Weber 1947, 328). It then becomes a duty of his audience, those who "have been called to a charismatic mission" to legitimize his authority by responding to his output (Weber 1947, 359). Furthermore, according to Ideguchi, *doujin* music's non-economic nature has a certain influence on the intimacy between *doujin* circles and *doujin* participants (2013, 96). Under these theoretical frameworks, ZUN's charismatic authority holistically calls to creative action simultaneously bolstering the personal (para)social relationship between the fan music producers and himself:

"Because Zun's [sic] composition's style was something totally new back then...The only thing I'm sure is that, at some point, I had to write this music somewhere." (ID8)

3.2 ZUN as an actualising and aspirational solo developer

Despite the distinct commercial motivations and intentions within indie and *doujin* production fields in prior research (Ideguchi 2013; Hichibe & Tanaka 2016, 63), both markets revere autonomy of development, exemplified by successful solo creators. Indeed, Whitson et al. argue that individualization of creative genius and the concept of

entrepreneurship is valorised and framed as empowering in games' cultural production (2021, 620). The individualised role of solo game developer is also idolised by Touhou Project fan producers, due to its perceived exceptionalism:

“I make fan music because I aspired to become a solo game developer like ZUN.”
(ID 7)

In addition to being characterized as an aspirational figure. The developments ZUN makes with each entry to the series, regardless of their critical reception, are perceived as bravery to experiment and innovate, while affording relative creative freedom from copyright limitations to fan/*doujin* works (Touhou Yomoyama News 2020). Described by one respondent as a visionary and empowering leader, ZUN invites the community to take part in the “collective dream” (ID4) that is the Touhou Project series, again echoing the duty of followers to respond to the charismatic authority's call. A sentiment repeated by another producer in their response:

“...Zun [sic] himself tried new things so that allowed me to grow some confidence about the fact I could try anything I want...things that haven't been done in a Touhou music at the moment.” (ID8)

4 Discussion

4.1 Charismatic authority and non-commercial fan/*doujin* priorities

Following the data analysis, it is imperative to address the sustainability of ZUN's charismatic authority, despite its tendency towards the routinization (Weber 1947, 364), ZUN's cult of personality remains revered within the analysed data. Webber posits that charismatic authority is outside the realm of everyday routine, it “repudiates the past,” as a specifically revolutionary, anti-economic force (Weber 1947, 362 - 323).

Today, Touhou Project, as a profitable game series, rests on the boundary between commercial, indie, and hobbyist work (Hichibe & Tanaka 2016, 76). Despite minor commercialization efforts, such as publishing of the original games on Steam (Anime News Network 2017), ZUN's choice to continue creating within *doujin* field of production is perceived as authentic to *doujin* practices (Hichibe & Tanaka 2016; Ideguchi 2013). Thus, also remaining, under Weberian framing of charismatic authority, non-routinized (1947, 362 -363). Expanded into broader fandom culture, ZUN equally resists the trappings of perceived “selling out” (Cocker & Cronin 2017, 466).

The call for self-fulfilment, genuine autonomy, and personal empowerment in Weber's concept of charismatic authority (Kantola 2009, 424) is in-line with the similar principles present in both doujin and broader fan cultures. ZUN, at the time of writing this paper, remains embraced by the fandom as authentic and therefore charismatic, able to creatively actualize members of the Touhou Project community.

4.2 Co-constructed legitimacy, effacement, and characterization of ZUN

Alongside the charismatic characteristics of ZUN emerging from the analysed data set, ZUN is also complicit in his own characterization within the Touhou Project media mix. ZUN legitimizes his artistic output and creates layers of camouflage by using a pseudonym and by publishing Touhou Project series under a *doujin* group named Team Shanghai Alice. Therefore, creating an implied line between ZUN, the prolific game developer, and Junya Ota, the civilian.

Costuming, too, plays a role in ZUN's self-presentation and effacement-work. Rarely photographed without a cap, a patterned shirt, a beer in hand, and introduced with self-composed theme in public appearances, this 'uniform' becomes an expected presentation of the developer in public and online. ZUN becomes a character, replicable and increasingly mobile across the media mix (Steinberg 2012), establishing semiotic layers by which he can be easily organized and referenced (Azuma 2009; Nozawa 2013). ZUN is then not only the game series' solo developer, but also actively a part of the Touhou Project media mix.

Moreover, according to Weber's theory, community recognition is vital to uphold community belief in ZUN's legitimacy as a charismatic leader (1947, 362). This partial succession of creative power and even "selfhood" allows the community to actualise authority and affect its co-construction through endorsement, mimicry, and deconstruction (Cocker & Cronin 2017, 468). ZUN's transformation into a character within the Touhou Project media mix helps partially routinize his charisma, by creating space for fan producers to appropriate control and economic advantage through fan works (Weber 1947, 367), whilst remaining perceived-as-authentic by his followers. Effectively creating a charismatic community (Cocker & Cronin 2017, 468) and stabilising his status without invalidating his claim to legitimate authority, for the time being.

5 Conclusion

Distinct from the findings of Cocker and Cronin (2017), this paper illustrates another case study of culturally situated results utilising Weber's framework; contextualised by subcultural priorities and practices alongside online cultural norms,

which are not globally monolithic. ZUN's continued charismatic authority and his idolised status of a prolific and multi-talented solo-developer inspired the surveyed Touhou Project fans to produce derivative music and keep engaging with the series. This co-constructed cult of personality is further aided by ZUN's effacement-work and affective fandom practices, increasing the mobility and the flexibility of his characterisation across the Touhou Project series and within its fan community.

Although Weber warns that concrete historical reality cannot be wholly defined only by his conceptual framework of authority (1947, 329), the concept of charismatic authority has the capacity to help analyse the trajectories of specific charismatic communities and make visible the organizational power dynamics at play.

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Session 7

Cultural Analysis

Hall

15:20-16:20

Analyzing the “cultural identity” of the game: through the comparison between *The Witcher* and *Final Fantasy* game series

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Keywords: Game Design, Ludo, Play, Difficulty Engineering

Abstract

Introduction

In a role-playing game (hereafter RPG) the gameworld plays a crucial role. Zagal and Deterding (2018) define the game-world for RPGs as “a computational model, generating audiovisual representations on the player’s interface that ground the player’s imagination, updating model and representation in response to player input” (Zagal and Deterding-2018). The game-world defines the logic for the game and abilities of the player character (PC). Therefore, it seems that the identity of the PC follows the identity of the game-world.

RPGs, starting with *Dungeons & Dragons* (Gygax and Arneson, 1974), initially drew inspiration from neomedievalism. Neomedievalism, as Young (2015) explains, references the Middle Ages indirectly since our knowledge of it is secondary and differs from reality. Young suggests that neomedievalism is not a direct portrayal of the Middle Ages, but rather a reflection of someone else's interpretation of medievalism (Young2015). This concept aligns with Baudrillard's notion of "second-order simulacra," where a concept loses its connection to reality and creates its own simulated reality (Baudrillard-1981). In RPGs, a blend of neomedievalism and the fantasy genre forms a new world and reality.

Different approaches exist for incorporating the neomedieval fantasy genre into RPGs. Our engagement with fantasy storytelling has evolved, and our consumption of myths, legends, and fairy tales in the modern world differs from the past. By examining the game-world in RPGs, we can gain understanding of our contemporary connection with the fantasy genre. Analyzing *The Witcher* (CD Projekt) and *Final Fantasy* (Square Enix, hereafter *FF*), two culturally distinct games, can unveil potential variations in this approach based on cultural perspectives.

In this research, when I use the term cultural identity, I am referring to the elements that make *FF* a Japanese game and the elements that make *The Witcher* a Western game.

Later in the discussion, I will demonstrate how the distinct cultural identities

become apparent through the ontological disparity between post-modern media in the Western world and Japan. Although both can be described as second-order simulacra, there are some fundamental differences between them.

Bakhtin's Chronotope and Time and space in videogames

Bakhtin introduces the concept of chronotope to comprehend the narrative structure of an artwork. He defines it as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin-1981). Bakhtin emphasizes the inseparability of space and time, viewing the chronotope as a component within the structure of literature where spatial and temporal indicators merge into a cohesive whole (Bakhtin-1981). This concept serves as a tool for understanding how authors artistically employ time and space to concretely express events in literature. According to Allan (1994), the chronotope can be applied to various texts, including novels, movies, and advertisements, as they all present a narrative structure that organizes a patterned series of causal events within specific time and space relations (Allan-1994).

Bakhtin suggests that novels follow predictable patterns in the relationship between time and space. Bakhtin asserts that the chronotope holds inherent generic significance and defines genre and its distinctive characteristics (Bakhtin-1981). In essence, genres are defined by their unique time and space qualities. Therefore, the concept of chronotope is valuable for analyzing and comprehending specific genres, such as JRPG or WRPG.

Applying Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope as is to game analysis is not feasible, necessitating adjustments to accommodate the unique medium of games. Understanding the concepts of space and time within the context of games is challenging, with various studies approaching the issue from different perspectives¹. However, the

¹ For the concept of space in games please see: Wolf, Mark J. "Inventing Space: Toward a Taxonomy of On-and Off-screen Space in Video Games." *Film Quarterly* 51(1), (1997): 11-23. Accessed June 28, 2023. Wolf, Mark J. "Theorizing Navigable Space in Video Game." *DIGAREC Series*, no. 6 (2011): 18-46. Accessed June 28, 2023. <https://publishup.unipotsdam.de/frontdoor/index/index/docId/5043>. Jenkins, Henry. "Game Design as Narrative Architecture." *First Person: New Media as Story* 44(3), (2004): 118-130. Accessed June 28, 2023. http://www.madwomb.com/tutorials/gamedesign/Theory_HenryJenkins_GameDesignNarrativeArchitecture.pdf. For the concept of time please see: Juul, Jasper. "Introduction to Game Time/Time to Play: An

goal here is not to theorize the relationship between time and space in games, but rather to employ them as tools for comprehending the genre's chronotope. Therefore, this article will concentrate on a definition of time and space that aligns better with its objectives, referred to as the historical chronotope.

Any game that incorporates historical figures, locations, events, and concepts signifies a historical chronotope, such as an FPS game set in WWII. However, the historical chronotope extends beyond this. RPGs often construct a separate parallel world that exists independently of our own, resulting in two distinct historical chronotopes. Firstly, as a separate world, it possesses its own time continuum and history. Secondly, even in an imaginary world, it may draw references from real-world history. Peterson et al. (2013) introduce the notion of historical concepts in gaming, defining them as generalized models of processes found in the real world. For instance, monarchy or feudalism are historical concepts associated with the Middle Ages.

Case studies

3.1 *The Witcher*

The Witcher games, based on Andrzej Sapkowski's book series, gained worldwide popularity with the release of the first video game in 2007 by CD Projekt. This research primarily focuses on *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015). According to Tomasz Z. Majkowski (2018), the books draw inspiration from Slavic folk tales, European fairy tales like *The Beauty and the Beast*, and Tolkien's work (Majkowski-2018). The game's story is set in a world reminiscent of 13th-century Eastern Europe, aiming to stay faithful to its Slavic origins. The architectural design in the game takes cues from historical cities in

Examination of Game Temporality." First Person: New Media as Story, Performance and Game, (2004): 131-142. Accessed June 28, 2023. <https://www.jesperjuul.net/text/timetoplay/>.

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Croatia, Hungary, and Poland. The overall aesthetic of the game is dark and gloomy, aligning with Young's notion of "gritty" and "grimdark" neomedievalism (Young-2015). Players assume the role of Geralt of Rivia, a witcher who hunts monsters for a living. This game serves as an illustrative example of a western RPG with a neomedieval theme. It does not claim to represent WRPGs comprehensively, but it does possess a direct and evident connection to Western culture in terms of its origins.

3.2 Final Fantasy

Dragon Quest (Chunsoft-1986) played a significant role in popularizing RPGs in Japan due to its simplicity. This led to the creation of numerous RPGs inspired by *Dragon Quest*, including *Final Fantasy* (Square, 1987), which helped establish the JRPG genre. Among the popular JRPGs, I have chosen *FF* as my focus because it has evolved away from traditional JRPG elements, such as anime-style design and turn-based gameplay, while still maintaining its classification as a JRPG. This suggests that there is a fundamental essence within the JRPG genre that defines it, and my aim is to uncover this characteristic through an analysis of the *FF* series. Since its debut in 1987, the *FF* series has expanded with multiple distinct universes and storylines, each installment standing independently. However, there are recurring elements that tie them together as part of the series, and examining these patterns is a key objective of this article. Specifically, I will delve into concrete examples from *FFXV* (2016).

Emphasizing realism through historicity and coherent world design

The Witcher's story is set in a 13th-century world resembling Eastern Europe during the Middle Ages. It presents a "gritty" and "grimdark" depiction of the Middle Ages, challenging the romanticized version. Shiloh Carroll (2015) explains that this opposition to romantic escapism is observed in authors like George R. R. Martin, who sought a more realistic portrayal of the Middle Ages in their works. Similarly, *The Witcher*, both in its books and video game adaptation, aims for realism by depicting a darker aspect of the Middle Ages, aligning with this approach.

In *The Witcher 3*, darkness permeates the game through various elements. The war-torn setting showcases scenes of devastation, with corpses scattered across fields, ruined villages, and lives shattered by conflict. This somber atmosphere is further emphasized by the desaturated and muted color palette, lending an aged and decayed appearance to the surroundings. The design of beasts and monsters also contributes to this darkness, with cursed creatures, ghosts, and necrophages as the primary enemies. One example is the basilisk, a mythical creature depicted in the game as a reptilian being. With its dragon-like claws, hunched body covered in scales, dark green skin, red eyes,

and lethal poison breath, the basilisk embodies the essence of death.

Baudrillard suggests that in the modern era, people seek violence in media like cinema due to the monotony of daily life. This nostalgia for a time when history and violence were intertwined drives audiences to search for historical experiences in movies and entertainment (Baudrillard-1981). The gritty neomedievalism replaces the romanticized neomedievalism, claiming to offer a more historically accurate and therefore more real depiction. However, I argue that it fails in its attempt to reference the real because the reality of the Middle Ages has already been replaced by neomedievalism. Baudrillard explains that Disneyland (romanticized neomedievalism) serves the function of presenting an extreme fantasy, making everything else seem real in comparison, even if it is not (Baudrillard-1981).

The Witcher strives to present itself as realistic and distinct from romanticized neomedievalism. It defies its digital nature as a videogame by creating a decaying aesthetic that attempts to encapsulate time. Through its moldy, rusty, and rotten visual style, it aims to convey a sense of historicity and the impression of existing long before players engage with it. In essence, *The Witcher* employs the symbolism of death to mask its artificial identity, using it as a signifier of history, time, and life. Because, death represents the transformative power that time imposes on life.

Emphasizing artificiality through antihistoric approach and uncoherent world design

FF breaks the neomedieval conventions seen in other RPGs right from its first installment. While it starts in a medieval European setting, it introduces sci-fi elements like time travel and robotic enemies. This trend continues throughout the series, becoming more pronounced in *FFXV*. The game features a mix of chronotopes, such as the modern capital city of Insomnia based on Tokyo and the American Southwest/Midwest-inspired region of Leide. The road trip-like journey between locations reflects the road movie genre. *Tenebrae* showcases lush magical environments, while *Niflheim* exhibits futuristic technology. Additionally, the game incorporates elements of horror and post-apocalyptic genres. These diverse elements stand in contrast to *The Witcher*'s cohesive neomedieval chronotope.

Hiroki Azuma (2007) observes similar patterns in other Japanese pop culture media. For instance, he illustrates that it is frequent in light novels to encounter a combination of different genres, such as mystery and fantasy, within a single work (東, 2007: 30-32). Instead of defining light novels based on their genres, Azuma refers to them as a medium for character. He explains that the audience cares more about the character than the story or the genre (東, 2007: 35-41).

FF embraces its inconsistency and artificial nature, deviating from the pursuit of realism. It playfully breaks the fourth wall, as seen in *FFXV* where Prompto sings the Victory Theme, reminding players they are engaged in a *Final Fantasy* game. Monster designs in *FF*, like the catoblepas², defy evolutionary possibilities and exist solely in the realm of fantasy. Unlike *The Witcher*'s focus on historicity, *FF* takes an anti-historical approach. In *FFXV*, Noctis discovers his ancestors' tombs with unchanged modern architecture, seemingly unaffected by the passage of time. In general, the world of *FF* can be described as artificial with strait and orthogonal lines, sharp and mathematical.

Conclusion

The Witcher and *Final Fantasy*, products of the postmodern era, employ different approaches to simulation. *The Witcher* creates a neomedieval simulacrum, while *FF* embraces various genres alongside neomedieval elements. John Clammer (1995) explains that "even when the forms of postmodernity appear to correspond in western and Japanese culture, their epistemological basis is frequently (though not always) so far apart that their comparability let alone identity, must be called into serious question" (Clammer-1995). While the West experiences a shift from premodern to modern to postmodern, Japan has long exhibited postmodern qualities. He explains that Baudrillard describes the postmodernism as all simulation. Clammer believes that there is simulation in Japan as well but it is playful. "The simulation itself is not taken seriously", or in other words "it is known to be simulation, to be played with and then discarded" (Clammer-1995). The contrast between *The Witcher* and *Final Fantasy* reflects this epistemological difference. *The Witcher* strives to appear realistic while concealing its simulated nature, whereas *FF* openly embraces its true nature as a simulation.

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2 Escande points out that there are multiple descriptions of catoblepas in different texts. In general, it appears to be a bull-like creature. He explains that the version depicted in *FFXV* is closest to the description from *D&D Monster Manual*. It is also self-referential, paying homage to the same design in *FFV*. It has an enormous body, an extremely long neck, and one eye (Escande, 2022: 8,9).

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Domestic and Transnational Play Cultures on YouTube. The case of Animal Crossing: New Horizons

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Abstract

With the rise of accessible video editing and sharing technologies, videogaming is no longer confined to the private and semi-public spaces of living rooms, schoolyards and public transportation. Instead, games are being analyzed, performed, discussed and remixed in the more or less public spaces of wikis, social media, and video sharing and streaming platforms. Such platforms have arguably contributed much to the popularity of gaming, both by turning games into ‘viewable’ entertainment, and by helping shape and promote new genres of engagement, such as Let’s Plays, widely understood as recorded gameplay accompanied by the player’s voiceover comments (Radde-Antweiler, Waltmathe and Zeiler 2014: 17; Richardson, Hjorth and Davies 2021: 87) and speedruns, which are aimed at clearing games as quickly as possible. The popularity of e-Sports contributes further to this trend. Due to their popularity and economic impact, video streaming and sharing practices have received increasing attention from the game studies research community (Ackermann 2017, Boluk and Lemieux 2017; Consalvo 2017; Deng et al. 2015; Gandolfi 2016; Harpstead et al. 2019; Sjöblom et al. 2017; Taylor 2018).

Due to their popularity and accessibility, platforms have become an important game cultural space that is not confined to geographical space in the same way in which the living room, the schoolyard, or print magazines and guidebooks are. That said, they are not borderless, either. They are regional phenomena (Steinberg and Li 2017) and part of a digital space that is increasingly fragmented. In this presentation, I ask what kind of game-cultural spatiality emerges from the combination of platform affordances and user practices emerging around the videogame *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* (Nintendo 2020) on the popular platform YouTube in Japanese, Korean and Chinese. The results of this analysis show that YouTube affords interaction across the three language spaces, but also contributes to a differentiation between the language spaces. Concretely, I show that the types of popular content diverge significantly between the three language spaces. The user engagements with the videos reveal a relatively low degree of transregional engagement – the latter, however, is all the more interesting, as it takes place in the context of relatively marginal subfields of YouTube content such as live music or derivative animation, instead of emerging in the space of the most popular entertainment-centered videos. The presentation is concluded by reflecting on

the potentials and limitations of the applied methodology.

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Session 8

Demo / Poster Session

Art Street
16:40-17:40

Behavioral and Cognitive Changes Due to Gameplay

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Keywords: video game, regulation, China

Abstract (日本語)

本研究は、継続的なゲームプレイが人の空間認知能力に与える影響を確認するものである。これはビデオゲームが人に与える影響についての研究の中でも、特にポジティブな効果が確かめられている研究領域の一つであるが、本研究は、既存の研究よりも短期間での影響を調査するものである。

被験者は立命館大学の学生および大学院生とし、下記に示す 3 つのグループについて 1 グループあたり 15 名、計 45 名が参加した。なお年齢差やゲーム経験量の差による交絡効果を排除するため、30 歳以上の者、下記のアンケートの回答からゲームプレイの経験が突出していると分かる者は対象としなかった。

1 週間の実験期間に対して、一切ゲームプレイを課さないグループ A、指定のゲームを毎日プレイするグループ B を設定し、被験者全員に対して実験前後に行われる心的回転テストのデータをもとに、空間認知能力への影響を t 検定、分散分析などの手法を用いて分析した。指定のゲームは、キャラクターの操作を三人称視点で行う『Grand Theft Auto III』と一人称視点で行う『メダル・オブ・オナー 史上最大の作戦』の 2 種類を用意し、プレイするゲームに応じてそれぞれグループ B-1、B-2 とした。また、実験前に被験者全員に対して、6~12 歳、13~15 歳、16~18 歳、19 歳以降の 4 つの年齢区分におけるゲーム経験量を回答するアンケートを実施し、この結果を心的回転テストのデータと合わせて因子分析、傾向スコアマッチングを試みた。心的回転テストは「PsychoPy3」で制御し、画面上に横並びに表示される 2 つの図形が同一かどうかを回答するものである。図形は武藤(2020)を参考に、10 個の立方体をそれぞれ異なる配置で結合した標準図形 4 種とそれぞれの鏡面図形、さらにこれらの図形を水平方向に 0° から 320°まで 40°毎に回転させた計 72 種類を用意し、横並びの図形の左側には常に 4 種の標準図形のいずれかを表示した。

結果は、1 週間のゲームプレイが空間認知能力を向上させることを示す根拠は得られなかった。この研究は先行研究と比較して短期間でのゲームプレイでも心的回転能力を向上させるかを確認するために実験期間を 1 週間としたが、この期間では有意な差が認められるほどの効果量は確認できなかった。一方で、副次的な発見としてアンケートによって得られた過去のゲーム経験量と心的回転テストのデータによる因子分析の結果から、6~15 歳までのゲームプレ

イ経験が豊富なほど心的回転テストの回答時間が早くなるという効果が示唆された。

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Poker Rally on Smartphones: A Proposal of Gamification Templates used for Social Issues

Hideki Kano, Do It Yourselfm General Inc. Association
Yoshihiro Azuma, Do It Yourselfm General Inc. Association
Iori Yasuda, Gifu University

Abstract

Recently, gamification in education has become increasingly popular. Its goal is to change people's mindset in various fields such as health, work, media, and many others. However, the application of gamification to encourage people to care about social issues is not well understood compared to educational gamification (Stéphane, et al. 2021). One of the challenges is the difficulty in developing gamification for addressing social issues. Previous studies (e.g., on active transportation (Teemu, et al. 2020) and disaster prevention (Nayomi, et al. 2020)) have highlighted the need for game strategies and designs, such as the MDA framework (Robin, Marc and Robert 2004), to modify user behavior. However, these requirements can be too burdensome for small organizations. To address this problem, we propose gamification templates for social issues. As the first step, we have developed a "Poker Rally on Smartphones" for the following reasons. Firstly, there is evidence that when a poker rally event was held in America, it attracted 1494 participants (Guinness World Records Limited 2013). Secondly, many people are familiar with the rules of traditional games like poker, making it easy for them to engage in the activity. Finally, there is currently a growing interest in poker among younger individuals (Manabu 2021). Considering these factors, we believe that our game can be transformed into a popular digital game that incorporates location-based elements like Pokémon GO (Niantic 2016). We will explain how to play "Poker Rally on Smartphones". As a preparation step, an organizer can register location's information and photos for players to visit (referred to as "spots") through a form. Players can access a web page using their smartphone's browser. Players have their own map to see spots information, photos, and location. When players reach the designated spots in the real world, they can obtain cards within the game. If a player already has five cards, they can replace one card. Finally, players compete against each other using the five collected cards. Figure 1 illustrates the system overview of "Poker Rally on Smartphones". The core system relies on Apache as the Web/API server and MySQL Database for user and ranking management. While the maintenance of the core system without programmers may present challenges, it is not a major concern given the infrequent nature of changes in

game rules or ranking systems. In contrast, for spot management, we utilize Google Form, Google Drive, and Google Spreadsheets, which enhance maintainability and flexibility. We conducted a demonstration of “Poker Rally on Smartphones” in four different contexts: disaster prevention, rural development, shopping street promotion, and STEAM education. During the demonstrations, we received valuable feedback from participants. One player mentioned that they actively visited more locations to increase their chances of winning the game. Additionally, event organizers highlighted the ease of organizing events using “Poker Rally on Smartphones”. Based on these positive responses, we concluded that a simple game template can effectively serve as a gamification tool. However, it is important to note that our evaluations thus far have been qualitative in nature. To further validate the efficiency of our approach, conducting quantitative evaluations soon is crucial.

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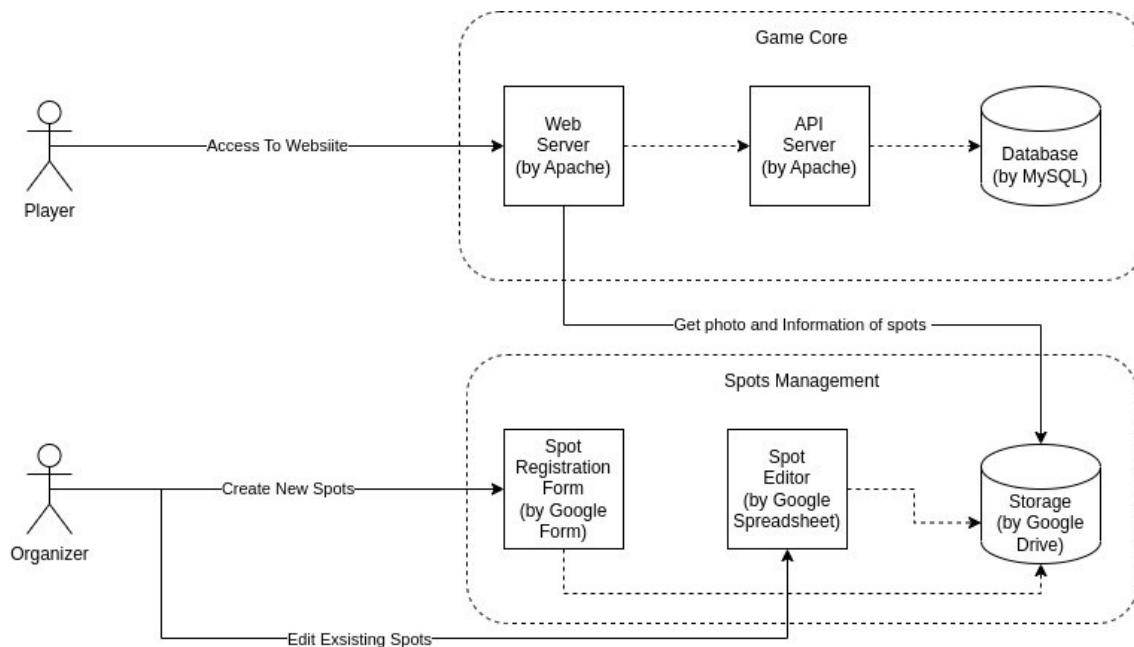


Figure 1. The system overview of "Poker Rally on Smartphones"

Design Evaluation of “Ooimongachi: Congestion Mitigation Game!!” Based on Gameful Design Heuristics

Taro Shibagaki, Fumitaka Kurauchi, Yoshiro Azuma, Gifu University

Abstract

With the spread of game culture, games are increasingly used as an approach to solving social problems. Although gamification methods are used in a wide range of fields, such as education, health, and environmental issues, those who do not have expertise in game design often construct games intuitively. It may therefore be a case that many games focusing on social issues are boring. On the other hand, ‘gameful design heuristics¹⁾’ have been proposed as a design methodology²⁾³⁾⁴⁾ for an effective game design. In this study, we conducted a questionnaire survey of a game we constructed for mitigating social problems based on this methodology to determine whether the elements included in our game provided the values to the players. Through this analysis, we propose a design evaluation method for gamification mitigating social problems.

In this study, we analyzed a game called "Ooimongachi: Congestion Mitigation Game!!" that aims to encourage behavioral change to alleviate traffic congestion on expressways. In this game, players can earn coins by changing their behavior such as avoiding congested expressways either changing their departure time or route, and the coins earned can be used in an "Ooimongachi" majority game to learn people's preferences. Furthermore, the game incorporates elements of competition and display, such as competing in rankings of the number of behavior changes and the number of coins earned, as well as elements of cooperative games in which the more people who change their behavior on the same day, the more additional coins can be collected.

To organize the game design heuristics in relation to the functions included in the constructed game, and to confirm whether each function can change the player's state of mind, we conducted a questionnaire survey asking to view and respond to a video playing the game. The results confirmed that the acquisition of coins and the use of coins in the game motivate the players to play the game as a whole and give them a sense of accomplishment. On the other hand, the respondents were relatively reluctant to change their behavior to acquire coins. In addition, it was confirmed that collecting coins was more attractive as a motivator for behavioral change than playing the game using coins. We also confirmed that obtaining badges, which are the basis of the game, and players working together to achieve the same goal are likely to make players more engaged in the game.

The game design heuristics can be used to objectively evaluate the functionality of a game by conducting a questionnaire survey. In addition, the attractiveness of each game functionality can be evaluated, and differences in perceptions between game creators and players can be understood. In addition, it is very useful in designing gamification to know which features are effective for the target players by checking the differences in motivation according to age and occupation. In the future, we would like to generalize this research process and create a design tool that allows game designers to refine their games even if they do not have expertise in gamification.

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	Survey (Answer:five-point scale)	Heuristics
Narrative	Interesting game story (invitations) and other settings	I15
coin	Change of action (change to a public road or change of departure time) to obtain change of action coins	I8, I10
	Earning coins is going to be an accomplishment.	I6, I7, C1
	Use different routes to earn coins	I5, C5
	Earning coins is a motivating factor in the game.	E2
“Ooimongachi”	Change of action (change to a public road or change of departure time) in order to participate in the vote	I8, I10
	Winning coins by voting is going to be an accomplishment.	I6, I7, C1
	You'll want to bet with more coins.	I5
Badge Ranking	Ranking displays motivate game play	I13
	Change of action (change to a public road or change of departure time) to earn a change of action badge	I8, I10, E2
	Bet more coins at "Ooimongachi" to win a badge	I5, I8, I10
	Good to earn cooperation bonus coins based on the number of people who changed their behavior	I12
	Achievement displays (contributing to comfort driving levels 1-4 in the game world) are motivating	I16
Whole	Traffic jam forecast and nowcast informations are fascinating	I2
	Participation in game creation (expansion of 4 options) is attractive	C6
	It would be attractive if coins could be exchanged for priceless services, etc.	E3, E4
	Getting more people into the game eases the "real" traffic congestion	I1

Figure1: List of Game Evaluation Surveys

The Practice of Local Community Management Beyond the Organization by Utilizing Online Space and Avatar Technology and Examination of Communication Promotion

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Nagoya University

Abstract

In this research, the design, ongoing operation, and policy development of the communication platform are effective means of improving the quality of communication, such as holding regular meetings and events to enhance feedback and reaction functions. On the other hand, the problem is that we need to recognize and improve who we are with just our voice, which can lead to misunderstandings and ambiguities in language. Since it is impossible to see the meaning and facial expressions behind words, it can be challenging to grasp the feelings and intentions of others accurately. Therefore, the standard features of the widely used online conferencing tools Zoom and Teams, FaceRig, were used as a supplemental method of personal identification for part of the management side. Another experiment was to test the iPhone's TrueDepth camera and ARkit available for avatars. We also used typical software such as 3tene, a simple avatar-tracking software using an ordinary webcam, and delivery software to customize and adjust screen delivery.

The core members of the management team, who usually live far away from each other, could stay connected across regions and organizations. As a result, we were able to reaffirm from the actual feedback that it was effective enough to identify and be aware of individuals at the first meeting, reduce communication barriers, and keep core members who usually live far away from each other connected across regions and organizations. We also saw that communication might have been facilitated in two cases: one in which face-to-face meetings were held only a few times a year and the other in which the meetings were entirely online.

In addition to the Live2D model, which has been a major technology for utilizing avatars for a long time, there is something called the VRM model, which has many practical examples. Thanks to this technology, it is easy for online participants interested in using or partially using existing models to customize their avatars, even if they do not have specialized knowledge. Even without technical knowledge of avatars, realizing an online gathering using only standard functions was possible. These practices confirmed

the usefulness of avatars and online spaces in developing future activities.

As a prospect, we want to evaluate the communication promotion effect when gestures and body movements are reflected in the online space. Furthermore, we would like to develop small motion sensors and tracking technology, use homemade and existing avatars, and use the versatility of online space to form digital communities in local communities beyond everyone's region.

Specifically, we would like to focus on the differences in gestures and communication using the body in the online space when using the existing helpful software and the latest small motion sensor. We will also focus on the differences when using the latest small motion sensor. We also want to consider workshops on avatars, focusing on technologies and software officially available in specific languages (e.g., Japanese) to make it easier for beginners to work with avatars.

Tables and Figures

TABLE 1. PARTICIPANT VOICE

Number of community participants (in 2022.10 event)
21 Middle school students
4 High school students
10 Adults
15 Guestes
15 Live streaming participants

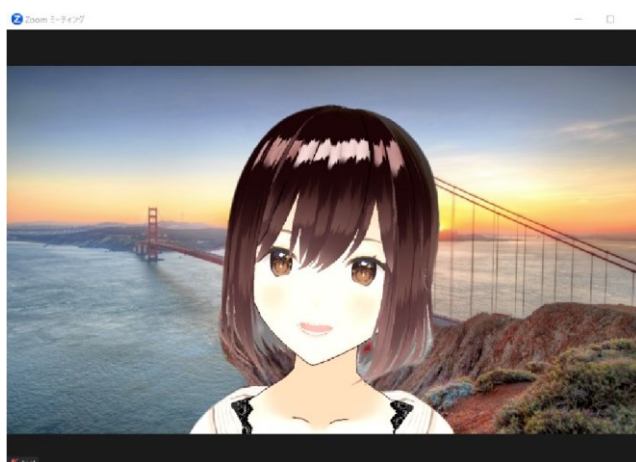


FIG.1. EXAMPLE USING OF AVATARS



FIG.2. DEMO IN WEEKLY CHAT AND MEETING

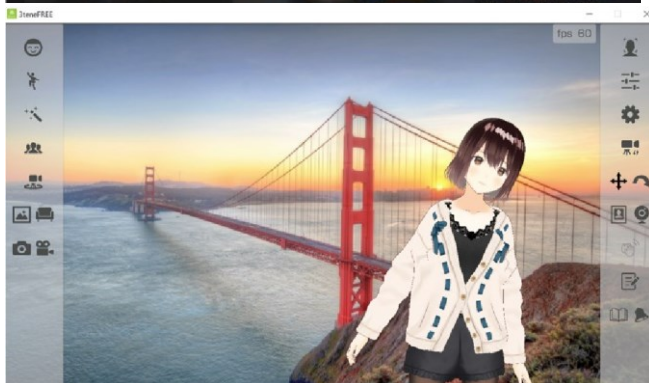


FIG.3. BEHAVIOUR OF AVATAR IN VIRTUAL MEETING



FIG.3. ANNUAL EVENT GROUP PHOTO WITH REMOTE PEOPLE

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An Embodied Experience in Game Design -Game Design for Guiding the Trajectory of Bees

Li Xuan, Shuji Watanabe, Ritsumeikan University

Abstract

本研究は、ゲームデザインにおけるプレイヤーの遊び体験から、身体の拡張体験を研究することを目的としている。インターフェースやインタラクティブ性を考慮しながら、プレイヤーが身体的に操作するコントローラーを使用することで、よりゲームに没頭し、深い遊び体験を得ることができると考えている。

提案するゲームデザインは、ミツバチ同士がコミュニケーションするためのダンスをモデルとした、八の行動奇跡のようなルートを誘導するものである。プレイヤーは、新体操のリボンをコントローラーとして使用し、リズムカルに体を動かすことで、ゲーム内のキャラクターを動かすことができる。さらに、物理的に付けた紐とデジタルモニター上で付けた紐、それぞれの体験差を調査することで、身体の拡張としてのコントローラー（硬いタクト、柔軟なリボン）がプレイヤーに自然に受け入れられる表現方法を研究する。

また、プレイヤーの身体的な反応や感情的な反応などを分析し、より身体的な体験を提供するためのアプローチを検討する。本研究の成果は、ゲームデザインにおける身体的な体験に関する新しい知見を提供することが期待される。

Japanese Sumo game with center-of-gravity feedback device

Koki Kamakura, Shuji Watanabe, Ritsumeikan University

Abstract

本研究は重心フィードバックデバイスを用いた相撲ゲームについての研究である。先行作品では、勝敗の決着に着目する事で、相撲の魅力である重心の移動がゲーム内に感じられず相撲ゲームとしての面白さに欠けるという課題点を分析した。そこで、本研究では重心の移動をゲームに反映するためのデザインに焦点を当てている。

本研究では、相撲のルールや重心の移動の重要性について調査を行いゲームデザインの策定を行った。その上で、本相撲ゲームでは、プレイヤーは相手の重心を移動させ、倒す事を目指す。プレイヤーはデバイスからのフィードバックにより、重心の移動方向をより正確に把握する事ができる。重心フィードバックデバイスにより、より戦略的なプレイが可能となり、相撲の魅力である重心の移動をより感じられるゲームが開発される事が期待される。

本研究により、デバイスが人間の重心移動を検知し、それに応じてフィードバックを与える事で、身体感覚を高める事にも期待できる。また、戦略的思考力やリアルタイムでの反応力の向上にも繋がる可能性があり、今後のこのデバイスを応用した遊びにも期待される。

Virtual Gym with Juicy Effects: A Study in Engaging Serious Silver Games

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Ruck Thawonmas, You Xiao, Febri Abdullah, Ritsumeikan University

Abstract

Serious Games (SG) [1], in addition to entertaining, serve another purpose, typically training. As our societies age, a fact especially challenging for Japan, extended-reality (XR) serious silver games [2] constitute an innovative solution to promoting cognitive and physical health for seniors. A key challenge to developing effective silver games is the design of engaging effects to motivate users to play the games and enjoy their benefits. Virtual Gym (**VG**) with Juicy Effects (**VGJFX^{XR}**) is a software platform that delivers personalized serious XR games. **VGJFX^{XR}** improves user engagement by selecting, on-demand, and in real-time, multimodal juicy effects. In this paper, we describe the platform's architecture and the design of an ongoing study, specific to Japanese culture, on how game juicy effects affect engagement and motivation.

Introduction and Background

Seniors increasingly recognize the importance of physical and cognitive exercise for staying healthy longer. However, as they age, each individual faces a variety of different challenges and may find themselves with fewer exercise options and vulnerable to a vicious circle of waterfall physical and cognitive decline [7]. This is why personalized activities, tailored to each senior's abilities and needs, are essential to healthy aging.

Serious games have the potential to train and change behaviours by prompting players to engage in habits that they are able to execute and feel highly motivated to accomplish. Essential preconditions for their effectiveness are the appropriate choice of (i) challenges, so that the players can accomplish them with some effort, and (ii) mechanics and feedback, so that they are engaged and motivated to stay in the game.

The rapid evolution of game technologies presents several obstacles to their adoption by seniors [6], who find it hard to deal with the fast-paced advances of gaming devices and game interfaces that often ignore their physical and cognitive constraints. A success story is the Wii platform that immersed seniors in intuitive gameplays and uncomplicated controllers with a very gentle null learning curve [5]. Wii games were shown to have positive effects on various aspects of seniors' health, including physical fitness, cognitive function, social interaction, and overall quality of life [4].

VG is a platform for serious silver games, originally relying on the Kinect sensor and later evolving to take advantage of headsets, such as the Oculus, to deliver XR experiences [8, 9, 10, 11]. It is equipped with a domain-specific language for specifying personalizable gameplay prescriptions as compositions of posture-based, coordination, and rhythm-based movements.

In this paper, we describe the newest version of **VG**, called **VGJFX^{XR}**, which we have equipped with a component that adds juicy effects, i.e., multimodal user feedback that is not integral to game completion but is meant to increase the user's engagement and enjoyment, to the **VG** gameplay prescriptions. Furthermore, we discuss the usability guidelines for how to set up this platform to adapt to specific demographics and maximize personalized enjoyment with the available effects and outline the design of a study to validate these guidelines with older adults.

VGJFX^{XR}: Virtual Gym with Juicy Effects

VG was originally developed as a Kinect-based system based on the “Simon Says” metaphor [9], where the user mimics a sequence of postures demonstrated by a coach avatar [10]. The design of this version taught us a lot about the design of game interfaces for seniors, especially as it pertains to instructions and feedback. The next version, VG^{VR}, incorporated a virtual-reality headset to immerse the user's avatar in imaginative yet intuitive gameplay settings [8]. This version gave us important insights into balancing the engagement of undistracted virtual-world immersion with safety in the real-world environment, a challenge that becomes easier to address with the new All-in-One XR devices that permit the use of passthrough to merge real and virtual environments as a comfort and safety feature. The newest version, **VGJFX^{XR}**, relies on this new generation of devices to offer the games described in **Table 1**. In the next subsections, we describe these games and classify them in terms of three distinct gameplay *mechanics*. Then, we explain the configuration of the game challenges to adapt to individual players' capabilities. The challenge setup is directly supported by the configuration of the game targets embedded in the game prescription. Then the player gradually progresses through augmented, mixed, and virtual reality. As the player interacts with the targets, the juicy-effect component triggers visual, sound, haptic and abilities effects to enhance the user experience.

	Mechanics			Challenges			Targets				Haptics		Environment			Effects		
<i>VGJFX^{XR}</i> Games	Posture-Based	Coordination	Rhythm	Resistance	Coordination	Concentration	Position	Orientation	Timing	Morphing	Controllers	Vest	Virtual Reality	Augmented Reality	Mixed Reality	Abilities	Visuals	Sound
Bubbles	☑			☑			☑		☑		☑	☑	☑	☑	☑			
Flying Rings	☑	☑		☑	☑		☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Balloons	☑	☑			☑	☑	☑		☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑		☑	☑
Climbing	☑	☑		☑	☑		☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Archery		☑		☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Slice Saber	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑

Table 1. The *VGJFX^{XR}* gameplay catalogue and their characteristics

Gameplay Mechanics

The *VGJFX^{XR}* catalogue includes six gameplays, classified into three different types of mechanics, conceived to provide a smooth learning curve for seniors who want to experience the platform and the XR technology, starting with the simpler posture-based games, following up with coordination games, and finally reaching the more challenging rhythm-based games. The three types of mechanics can also be combined to prescribe more complex and challenging games.

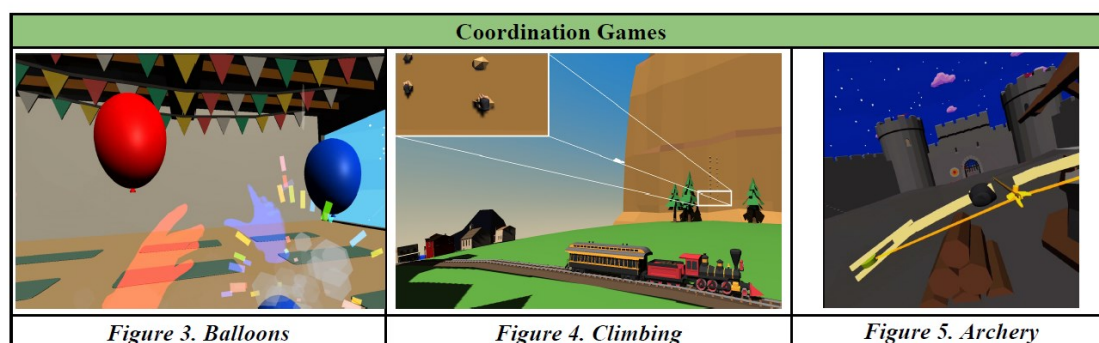
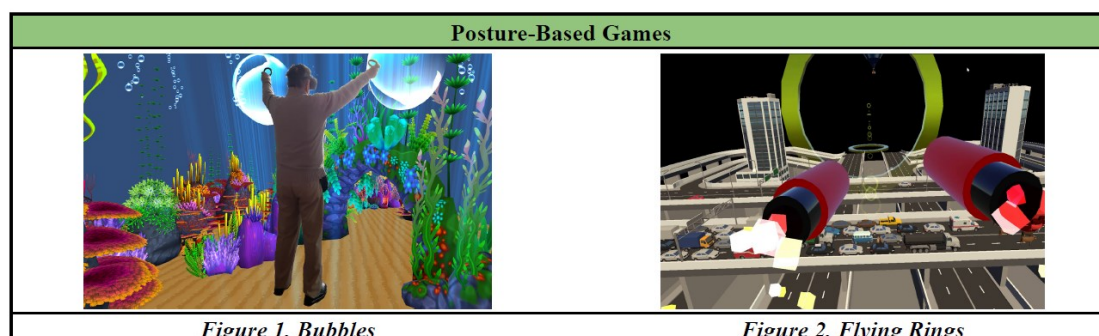
Posture-based games are designed to stimulate the player to reach and hold a series of body postures. In *Bubbles*, the player uses both hands in symmetrical movements to reach pairs of bubbles. The player must stretch up, down, and to the side to reach the bubbles (**Figure 1**). In the *Flying Rings*, the player flies through a sequence of rings by stretching their parallel hands to their front or sides (**Figure 2**).

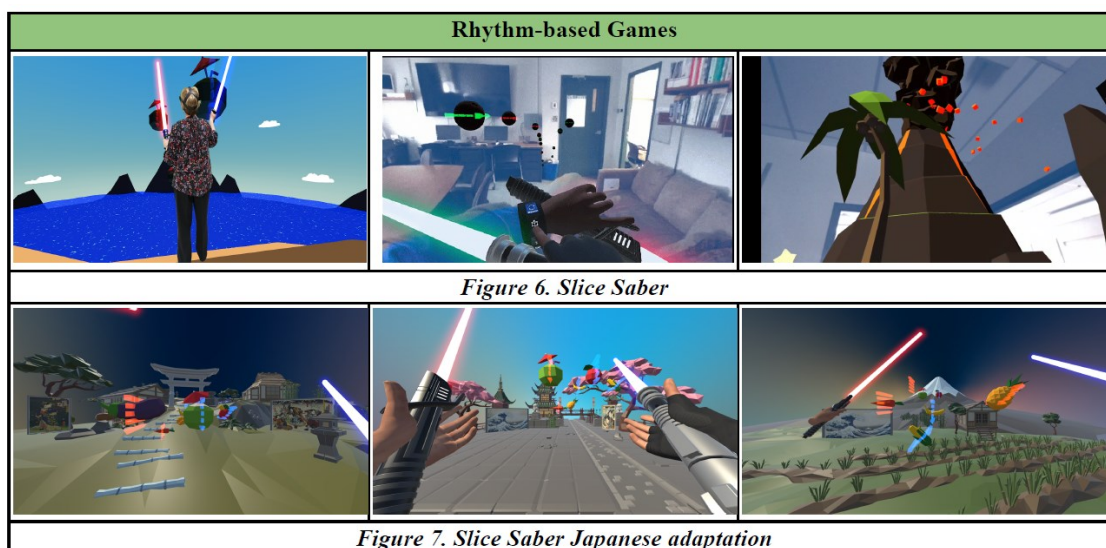
Coordination games require the player to synchronize different movements of their upper limbs to interact with the game targets. In *Balloons*, the player has to use one hand to pop balloons and the other hand to push them around. (**Figure 3**). In the *Climbing* game, the player stretches to reach stones on a climbing wall; users must use one controller to “hold” a rock and use their other hand to grasp the next climbing rock to reach the top (**Figure 4**). The *Archery* game requires one arm to hold the arrow while the other stretches the bow (**Figure 5**).

Rhythm-based games are a composition of the first two mechanics while also requiring continuous movement synchronized with music. In *Slice Saber*, the player has to slice the targets coming at them in the direction indicated by the arrow overlay, while the music beats prompt the player for perfect timing (**Figure 6, 7**).

Gameplay Challenges and Target Behaviours

Let us now examine the physical and cognitive challenges that the **VGJFX^{XR}** games present to the players. The posture-based games require the user to hold a posture for some time, supporting symmetrical stretching and balance training. The coordination games require different movements from the two upper limbs, thus exercising different muscles in each limb and presenting an additional cognitive challenge to the player that has to decide which limb to use for what movement. In *Archery*, the two arms have to hold different postures to handle the bow and arrow and have to switch roles as the location of the target move. In *Balloons* and *Climbing*, the player has to move their hands to perform different movements synchronously and has to consider the color of the balloons and the location of the rocks to decide which movement each hand should perform. Adding rhythmic music to the gameplay encourages continuous flow movement while the beat prompts the user to interact with the game targets. The games' cognitive challenge increases as the target sequence becomes denser (combos) and the color changes become more frequent (targets & hands).





The appearance, placement, and movement of targets are key in enabling the adaptation of in-game activities. The prescription of each gameplay session defines target behaviour according to different algorithms, ranging from static placement (*Bubbles & Balloons*) to dynamic with different degrees of position randomness (*Archery & Climbing*) and different change speed (*Flying Rings*) to fluid sequences of combined target sets (*Slice Saber*). The target position and orientation is designed to drive the player's postures and movements, while the timing affects the player's speed and reflexes.

Leveraging the haptic devices supported by the platform enables haptic feedback triggered by the user interaction with the game targets, resulting in enhanced player engagement and immersion. Targets contain behaviours for the connected haptics, which are requested by the prescription and activated on demand to create a more compelling and immersive experience.

Gameplay Environment

The game environment is displayed in three increasingly immersive modalities. Augmented Reality (AR) displays the player and the targets in the player's real world, as the passthrough permits the player's awareness of the real environment. Mixed Reality (MR) adds the virtual floor and assets layer to provide context to the gameplay. Finally, a completely immersive VR experience is appropriate when the player feels comfortable moving and playing the games. As a safety precaution, all assets (targets and backgrounds) are rendered in a cartoonish style as a reminder that they are not real.

Gameplay Juicy Effects

The key innovation of the **VGJFX^{XR}** version, building on the above features, is its juicy effects component, conceived to improve the enjoyment experience in the platform. We hypothesize that increased enjoyment, and consequently higher motivation to play the games longer, can be achieved by embedding and appropriately configuring the following features in the gameplay.

- **Visual effects** refer to the capability to select and morph targets and environment models, either completely or in a specific section. For example, in *Slice Saber*, instructive arrows may be applied on targets to guide the player on the direction of the slicing movement. Additionally, visual effects can provide feedback on correct and incorrect user actions, such as the target morphing into a broken version after being correctly sliced.
- **Sound effects** can be combined with haptics to prompt user actions and provide feedback. For example, in a watermelon version of the *Slice Saber* game, distinctive watermelon breaking sounds highlight the slicing.
- **Abilities** refer to the manipulation of the target behaviour and player skills, mapping game abilities to the user's actual abilities so that as the player progresses in the game, they also improve their physical and cognitive state. **VGJFX^{XR}** adjusts body posture tolerance for posture-based gameplays; adjusts the complexity of the posture sequences; adjusts the target distances and the player's velocity; and adjusts the target's morphing size, position, and rotation. For example, "superspeed" is an ability for the rhythm activities: the velocity of targets, sounds, and haptics slows down, and while everything is slow-motion, the player continues to move at a normal speed giving the sensation of superspeed skill.

The Study Design

Through each gameplay session, uniquely identified by the (a) user nickname, (b) hardware registration, and (c) session id, the **VGJFX^{XR}** platform collects real-time streaming data about the position, orientation and state of every game asset and the player's joints. At the end of the session, an online Game Engagement Questionnaire is presented to the user.

The study focuses on the *Slice Saber* game in the Japanese Zen Garden and Shamisen sound effects (**Figure 7**). The target sequence is slow and smooth, with no

significant direction switch. Several fruits are used as targets, each with different cutting-in-half behaviours and juicy effects (visuals, sounds and haptics, and abilities).

The performance of the player in each condition is scored by comparing the player's postures (time series of joints position and orientation) against the ideal posture sequence implicit in the placement of the gameplay targets. The score value is between 0 (poor) and 1 (perfect). By comparing the distributions of the session scores and the users' self-reported GEQ results, we will be able to identify which (combination of) juicy effects correlates with higher enjoyment and performance.

Summary

In this paper, we described **VGJFX^{XR}**, a silver serious games platform that, because of its model-based gameplay prescription methodology, supports the systematic deployment of (combinations of) visual, sound and haptic, and abilities juicy effects. Our study focuses on *Slice Saber*, configured with a variety of fruit assets, enhanced with appropriate visual alterations. Our study findings are intended to configure the prescription pipeline to target specific population sectors and focus on personalized XR effects. The personalization of juicy effects will improve enjoyment and engagement with the gameplay catalogue. Thus, we argue that XR games can be an effective tool for promoting the well-being of older adults and that they have the potential to contribute to the development of digital communities that support healthy aging [7].

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Game Music Cultures in Japan and Germany

Svenja Rademacher, Johannes Tunger, Emyd Espinoza, Christoph Hust,
University of Music and Theatre, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy
Kiyone Hirata, Kazuki Takahata, Siyu Yo, Martin Roth,
Ritsumeikan University

Abstract

In this poster, we present a summary of our ongoing research collaboration on game music cultures in Japan and Germany, which involves researchers and graduate students from Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan, and from the University of Music and Theatre »Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy« Leipzig, Germany.

Taking seriously the structural analogies of music and play (Huizinga), as well as the shared expressions (i.e. “to play the piano”, etc.), this project investigates the relation between music and games in Japan and Germany, focusing on analogue games, digital games and enthusiast cultures emerging at the intersection of music and games. The project team considers several cases from Germany and Japan in comparison, asking how the engagement with music in games or game music differs between both countries. Concretely, the subprojects focus on “Board Games and Musical Canon,” “The Role of Music in Super Mario, Zelda and Pokémon,” “Videogame Music as a Means of Building “Gaming Identity,” “Board Game Music in Japan and China,” “Digital Games and the Contemporary Music Scene in Japan,” and “Digital Game Soundtracks in Japan.”

The poster provides a short overview of each project and presents initial connections identified by the participants during the first project phase (Jan. 2023 to July 2023), during which the participants from Leipzig visit Ritsumeikan University for a 3 month research stay.

By presenting our research at Replaying Japan, we hope to connect to other researchers interested in the relation between games and music in Japan and / or Germany.

Session 9

Games and Society 2

Lecture Room 2

9:00-10:20

An Exploratory Study on the Effectiveness of Extensive Reading with Serious Games for JSL Learners

Joji Iwamoto, Juhyung Shin, Mitsuyuki Inaba, Ritsumeikan University

Abstract

This study presents the development of a serious game called *Kinugasa Onmyo-den*, featuring a storyline that is based on legends and folktales taken from Kyoto and enhances the motivation learners of Japanese as a second language to develop for extensive reading. The game's effectiveness was examined in an observational study involving international students studying Japanese at a university. The collaborative approach to learning used in the game, which involved peer-reading and exploration of the university campus, provides an engaging and enjoyable reading experience for participants. Feedback from the participants on the game and its potential to promote autonomous learning was positive.

Introduction

This study developed a serious game to enhance the motivation of learners of Japanese as a second language (JSL) to engage in extensive reading and explored the game's potential for language education.

Several attempts have been made in recent years to encourage extensive reading in JSL classrooms (e.g., Ninomiya and Kawakami, 2012; Takahashi, 2016). A number of graded readers that are designed for learners at different levels of reading proficiency have been created in recent years (Ueda and Watanabe, 2015).

However, because it is not easy to allocate sufficient time for extensive reading during class hours, learners need to make autonomous efforts to choose suitable books and read at their own pace, outside of the classroom (Ninomiya and Kawakami, 2012). It should be noted that reading in Japanese can be overwhelming for learners without the habit of reading in their native language (Ikeda, 2020).

To minimize learner anxiety and encourage autonomous reading, this study focused on the effects of serious games for motivating learning and promoting autonomy through collaborative learning. We developed a collaborative reading comprehension game called *Kinugasa Onmyo-den*, based on stories about Oni, a Japanese demon, and *onmyoji*, a master of yin-yang. This study examined how the gameplay affects learners' motivation and attitudes toward reading in Japanese. We observed the gameplay and conducted a debriefing session with the participants.

2. Purpose and Outline of the Study

This study focuses on international students studying Japanese at the late intermediate to early advanced levels at a university in Kyoto. The game used in the study was constructed to provide students in this range with an enjoyable experience of reading through comprehending the story of the game and accomplishing missions during gameplay. In addition, we expected that the game's collaborative learning experience would enhance learners' autonomy and motivation, encouraging them to connect with other Japanese learners.

We incorporated peer-reading in the game. The participants walked around the university campus in pairs with a campus map in their hands. They scanned QR codes placed on university buildings using their smartphones to access the game's story and its missions.

The story of the game relates to Kyoto; this was chosen to deepen learners' interest in and understanding of the city where they were currently living. The stories are based on legends and folktales from Kyoto, such as that of Watanabe no Tsuna's demon extermination at Ichijo–Modori Bridge, the life stories of Sugawara no Michizane and Abe no Seimei, and the story of a monkey that protects the Kyoto Imperial Palace from demons. The story that the participants encounter in the game is linked to the buildings on the university campus. As participants progress through the story, they collect items, such as purification salt, the demon-slaying sword, and the peaches to become an *onmyoji* (the master of yin-yang), and the monkey comes to accompany them. Eventually, they defeat the demons and seal them in a pond using the *onmyoji*'s superpower. The entire game is set in Kinugasa, Kyoto.

The difficulty of the Japanese language in the story was set to late intermediate to early advanced learners (CEFR B1–B2), using grammar and vocabulary that participants would have already encountered. However, as some vocabulary in the game is related to *onmyoji*, weapons, characters, and so on and might not have been previously learned, we added the necessary annotations and links to articles (written in easy Japanese or English) on the web as resources. The story contains approximately 4,600 characters, and the gameplay was designed to last about one hour.

3. Test Play

A test playthrough of the game took place on July 9, 2023 with eight international students studying Japanese at a private university in Kyoto participated in the game. We initially invited international students at the late intermediate or early advanced level to participate, but one student from the late beginner class and one

student who had completed the advanced class also participated voluntarily. Six of the participants were from author Iwamoto's own Japanese classes.

The playthrough participants were individuals from the following countries: Italy (two participants), Norway (two participants), the U.S. (one participant), Australia (one participant), Korea (one participant), and Spain (one participant).

Before the test, the participants completed a survey describing their reading habits in Japanese and in their native language. Following the test, we conducted an hourlong debriefing session with the participants to gather their impressions of the game and assess any changes that might have occurred in their attitudes toward reading Japanese.

For test, the participants were grouped into four pairs. All participants successfully completed the game within the scheduled one hour timeframe. Some groups encountered difficulties with the meaning of certain texts or clues but managed to overcome these, occasionally seeking assistance from others.

The pair-based format encouraged cooperation and discussion among participants, and it facilitated peerreading (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Participants in test play through



4. Debriefing

The participants were asked to answer the following debriefing questions after the test play, choosing either English or Japanese, according to their preference.

The feedback was generally positive, with several participants expressing enjoyment from and interest in the game story. Most participants expressed satisfaction with the game, as it provided them with the opportunity

to collaborate with their partners and assign roles to each other. This enabled them to teach each other and enhanced the benefits of peer-reading. While the late beginner found the difficulty level a little challenging, most of the other participants deemed it appropriate.

The participants found the elements in the game intriguing, such as gaining yin-

yang abilities, casting spells, and sealing demons off through drawing a pentagram in the air. The theme was generally considered interesting and matched the participants' own personal interests.

However, some participants found it hard to understand the relationship between the gods and the content. When they encountered vocabulary related to the *onmyoji* and demons for the first time, they found it confusing. On the other hand, those who were familiar with Japanese anime based on demon folklore and witchcraft, such as *Kimetsu no Yaiba (Demon Slayer)* and *Jujutsu Kaisen (Sorcery Fight)*, found it easier to understand.

In the pre-survey, two participants answered "not much" or "not at all" to the question "Do you have the habit of reading books in Japanese?" When asked if they would like to read books in Japanese, both participants answered "not particularly."

One participant suggested improvements, such as beginning each group in different starting points to prevent having to follow other groups in the beginning. Other suggestions included adding illustrations and distributing QR codes evenly on the east and west sides of the campus. Participants recommended themes related to the *yokai* (a Japanese monster) and *ninja* in future gameplays.

5. Discussion

The game's stories and gameplay received positive reviews. While the theme of the story was significantly different from the topics that learners normally encounter in class, it was notable that the learners, who may struggle to read a text of about 1,000 words, were able to read the entire text, with approximately 4,600 words, in just one hour.

Many of the participants indicated that they were genuinely interested in the theme and the story, even though they were initially unfamiliar. This suggests that the mystical story used, based on legends and folktales, could be used to promote learners' engagement in the game.

The collaborative learning aspect of the game dictated that the students needed to work together and read autonomously. It also provided an excellent opportunity for students to find peers able to support each other in their study of Japanese.

However, it did not seem to be effective to encourage learners without the habit of reading in Japanese to read Japanese books. While the game appeared to enhance students' motivations during game play, further efforts are required to connect this experience to autonomous learning in the long run.

6. Future Plans

We intend to conduct a follow-up survey for participants to take place about a month after the test play to assess any changes in their motivation and attitudes toward reading in Japanese, as well as their interest in Japanese history, culture, and related aspects.

From the data obtained from the debriefing, we will analyze the participants' responses using the ARCS motivation model (Keller, 1984), consisting of four indicators: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. Taking into consideration which indicators are more strongly expressed and which ones fall below the desirable level, we intend redesign the game. The redesigned version of the game is planned to be implemented in October or November 2023.

To further connect the game's experience to autonomous reading outside of the classroom, we are considering incorporating some pre-existing reading materials into the redesigned version of the game, as well as introducing books and other reading materials on the internet related to topics such as the *onmyoji* and demons.

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Regional Innovation through Esports Tournament titled “GEKITAI-Cup”

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Abstract

We present the outcomes of the “GEKITAI Cup”, an esports tournament hosted in Ainan town, Ehime, Japan, centered around the game “Identity V”. As part of a regional innovation project, we oversaw the tournament's second iteration and contributed to its planning and execution. This paper discusses the potential of esports as a tool for regional innovation, illuminated through our experiences in project management and marketing.

1. Introduction

The “GEKITAI-Cup” is an esports tournament held with the cooperation of NetEase Games, aiming to promote the town of Ainan in Ehime Prefecture's Minami-uwa District. Despite its history as a leading fisheries town, Ainan has been hit hard, mainly by restrictions on restaurant operations due to COVID-19, affecting the shipment of farmed sea bream. Coupled with a declining population, the phenomenon of young people distancing themselves from seafood has led to a slump in seafood consumption. Thus, we chose to host an esports tournament, which is considered to be the most effective approach to the younger generation. The planning and operation of the “GEKITAI-Cup” is primarily led by students from Matsuyama University. In this paper, based on leading domestic examples and practical initiatives from the second “GEKITAI-Cup” held in 2021, we will discuss regional revitalization centered on esports.

2. Background

Esports is a promising tool that can solve a variety of social issues. According to Kakei (2021), it is stated that "Even in terms of capital investment, this approach is particularly recommended for rural towns." Moreover, Haruhiro Tsujimoto, CEO of Capcom Co., Ltd., noted that

eSports has a characteristic where regardless of gender or age, everyone can stand on the same stage and compete. Also, unlike physical sports real events, it doesn't necessarily require substantial infrastructures such as large stadiums. With this in

mind, eSports could become a sport of the future that anyone can enjoy. (CAPCOM eSports, 2019)

Since its inception in November 2018, the Street Fighter League (SFL), an esports tournament hosted by Capcom Co., Ltd., has had regional revitalization as one of its major themes.

Mr. Tsujimoto and Masaaki Nishikawa, CEO of Saishunkan System Co., Ltd., have pointed out also in CAPCOM eSports (2019) that if proactive local companies take the initiative to host esports events and expand esports into their surrounding areas, it could lead to the formation of communities that include everyone from the elderly to the young, regardless of gender.

In Japan, there are some precedents for local revitalization projects using esports. Here, we will look at examples from Katsu-ura City in Chiba Prefecture and Toyama Prefecture.

2.1 A CaseStudy from Katsu-uraCity

In July 2018, the Katsu-ura Central Shopping District took the lead in hosting the “Katsu-ura Winning Eleven Championship” (Mainichi Newspaper, 2018). The main title was Winning Eleven 2018 (Konami Digital Entertainment Co., Ltd, 2018). This tournament was organized when an official department of the Katsu-ura City Office recognized the potential of esports as part of local revitalization efforts, focusing on the following three advantages:

- (1) It can be held without requiring extensive preparation.
- (2) It fosters community building among participants.
- (3) By associating it with services such as providing meals, it has the potential to lead to new local revitalization initiatives, including utilizing vacant shops.

A closed supermarket was used as the venue, with the Katsu-ura City Office setting up a large TV to project the matches. The prizes were products offered by local butcher shops and greengrocers in the shopping district, making for a lineup characteristic of a local shopping district.

The participants were small in number, with 12 people aged 12 to 42, and around 40 people including spectators and participants. However, 7 out of the 12 participants were students from the International Budo University, showing that the local location was utilized to create interaction among the younger generation of kids

and university students.

This event was held as the first edition of the “Katsu-ura esports CHALLENGE”, and it has been held up to the fourth time with different game titles (Katsu-ura Central Shopping District Association, 2018 and Katsu-ura city, 2018).

2.2 A Case Study from Toyama Prefecture

In Toyama Prefecture, the contribution of Yohei Sakai, the representative of Toyama Prefecture Esports Federation, has been particularly significant. The Toyama Gamers Day (TGD), which he organizes, was first held in December 2016 at a community center in Uozu City. (ZORGE Corporation, 2018) To date, nine tournaments have been held. With a maximum attendance of 3,200 people at the 8th tournament, it is a major event that has attracted attention nationwide.

TGD is also characterized by its event creation that takes advantage of the attractions of Toyama. At “Toyama Gamers Day 2017 SPRING”, in cooperation with Wakatsuru Saburomaru Sake Brewery in Tonami City, Toyama Prefecture, they held an event where people could enjoy esports while tasting local sake in the “Taisho-gura”, a sake brewery (Gamer, 2017).

The consumption of sake in Japan has been declining annually from a peak of 1.77 million kiloliters in fiscal 1973, to less than a third of that peak at 530,000 kiloliters in fiscal 2017 (National Tax Agency, Alcohol Tax Division, Export Promotion Room, 2021). In response to the trend of young people moving away from sake, Sakai created a synergistic effect by connecting sake breweries, which are suffering from the departure of younger customers, with the gamer demographic, which is largely composed of men in their 20s and 30s. As a result, participants purchased local sake as souvenirs, and the breweries were able to sell their products to a younger demographic.

Sakai commented on a newspaper, “In regions where there is a drastic outflow of younger generations, the existence of places where young people can have fun is valuable. Companies and organizations that recognize this are willing to help.” (Nikkei Cross Trend, 2019)

2.3 The Importance of Community

In the above examples, not only the individual efforts promoting esports, but also the collaboration of local governments and local companies formed a community to organize esports tournaments. One of the most prominent examples of community building through games is fighting games. It should be remarked “They were among the first to anticipate a unique form of gaming community, as they could become a platform

for expanding interaction through direct gaming” (Yoshimasa Kijima. 2014, p.416). While online battles have become commonplace today, fans of fighting games have been interacting directly with each other since before the widespread adoption of such communication technology.

As esports tournaments are based on player-versus-player battles, interaction between people is essential. In the example from Toyama Prefecture mentioned above, Mr. Sakai wanted to gather his local gaming friends and initiated a bar called “JOYN”, where he held events twice a month to foster interaction among gamers. Mr. Sakai stated, “What's extremely important in hosting such events is the game-related community rooted in the local area. We have been working with these communities at the core.” (Nikkei Cross Trend, 2019)

Based on such direct interactions, expanding the community among participants may allow for the creation of sustainable tournaments. By strengthening the ties within the community, we can look forward to the excitement of local events not limited to esports and communication across generations.

3. The Second GEKITAI Cup

The second “GEKITAI-Cup” was held on November 21, 2021, co-hosted by Ainan Town and NIC's Identity V division, with “Identity V” as the main title (NetEaseGames, 2018). “Identity V” is a 4v1 asymmetric competitive multiplayer game released by NetEase in 2018. The game system is based on a game of tag where four “survivors” and one “hunter” are divided, with the hunter pursuing the survivors and the survivors escaping from the hunter. The main title was changed from “Knives Out” (NetEaseGames, 2017) to “Identity V” (NetEaseGames, 2018). because it was a title that NetEase was particularly focused on at the time, and there were many female fans of Identity V. To solve the problem of the population decline in rural areas, efforts aimed at young women are essential. “Identity V” was a title that benefited both Ainan Town and NetEase.

The participants of the tournament were 12 streamers well-known for their live commentary on Identity V. Two of them became commentators, and it was a 4v4 streamer tournament. The main stream was conducted by NIC, and each streamer streamed from their own perspective on their YouTube channels.

In addition, three companies from Ehime Prefecture, eSPORTSSpace Please, Nankai Broadcasting Co., Ltd., and Ainan Sun Fish Co., Ltd., participated as sponsors. The students of Matsuyama University formed a student management team and mainly advanced the project in cooperation with eSPORTSSpace Please.

The establishment of the student management team was triggered by the “GEKITAI-Cup”, which was known from the special lecture on “Esports Business Management” taught by one of the authors, Dan. This lecture is in cooperation with the Ehime Prefecture e-Sports Federation, and is held in a format that invites people involved in e-sports as lecturers. The aim is to understand the current situation and challenges of e-sports through the lectures, and to acquire the ability to manage e-sports business.

In July 2021, five students, including the author Yokota, joined the management team. In October, three more students joined, bringing the final number to eight.

The projects carried out through this event can be broadly divided into the following three:

- (1) Holding of the e-Sports tournament “GEKITAI-Cup”
- (2) Operation of a dedicated SNS
- (3) Sale of Ainan Snapper Curry and limited-edition goods

The aim of (2) was to use SNS to raise awareness of the tournament and the project and to increase the number of viewers of the tournament. Projects (2) and (3) were planned as approaches to women. In addition, these projects were proposed by the student management. With the help of stakeholders, the students took the initiative in activities from planning to implementation. Below, these projects will be briefly described.

3.1 Tournament Rules and Regulations

The rules for the GEKITAI-Cup are as follows:

· Round 1: Tai-Tsuri Operation

The map is “Lakeside Village”, and the character “Fisherman” is fixed. A normal mode game of 1vs4 is played with a single match.

· Round 2: Cooperative Tsuri Operation

The maps are “Lakeside Village”, “Ever Sleeping Town”, and “Moon River Park”, with no specific characters designated. A cooperative hunting mode game of 2vs8 is played with best of three matches.

The members of the winning team were each given the right to spin the “Mysterious Tai Gacha”, and prizes such as JTB travel vouchers, Ainan snapper, and snapper curry were awarded in the form of winning prizes.

In order to reflect the image of Ainan Town, a fishing town, they specified the “Fisherman” character and the “Lakeside Village” map, which is characterized by a wide lake and abandoned ships.

3.2 SNS Operation

The first project executed by the student management team was the establishment of dedicated social networking sites (Twitter and Instagram) aiming to improve the recognition of the “GEKITAI-Cup” and the town of Ainan.

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Policy Research Institute, 2021, LINE and YouTube have high usage rates in all age groups. Facebook has a high usage rate among people in their 30s to 40s, while the usage rate among teenagers is less than half that of people in their 30s to 40s. About 58% of teenagers use TikTok, but its usage rate drops drastically as age increases. About 40% of all ages use Twitter and Instagram, and the usage rates for those in their teens to 30s and 50s are next to LINE and YouTube. Based on these findings, the operation of Twitter and Instagram was selected considering the high usage rate among young people, the ability to spread information to an unspecified number of users, and the low threshold for posting.

3.3 Sales of Ainan Madai Curry Set

Ainan Madai Curry is a product developed in collaboration with the Ainan Fisheries Cooperative and Sun Fish Co., Ltd., focusing on the "added value" as the beach price of red seabream (Madai) has dropped. Red seabream is used as an ingredient, and the broth is made using the parts of the fish that would normally be discarded. The curry was developed with the aim of letting many people easily experience the taste of Ainan Madai.

The “Ainan Madai Curry Set” is a product sold as a gift plan, which includes limited goods using characters from Identity V along with the curry product.

This product was launched for sale on October 15, 2021, through the official online shop of the Ainan Fisheries Cooperative. The idea of set sales was proposed by Mr. Minami Mitsu of the student management team. He came up with the idea as an approach to fans, as he often buys goods himself.

The student management team, who are the initiators of the project, were responsible for the production of the character goods from the planning stage. The flow of the sale is as follows:

- (1) Presentation of set sales to Ainan Fisheries Cooperative
- (2) Meeting with eSPORTSspace Please, deciding the details of the goods to be produced
- (3) Request to illustrators and submission to goods production company
- (4) Packaging of goods and shipment to Ainan Fisheries Cooperative

Two types of character goods, “Acrylic Stand” and “Coaster,” were produced. The illustration for the first round was done by Mr. Rurufu (Twitter: @olugho), and the second round by Mr. JauneLarmes (Twitter: @JauneLarmes).

The first round of the acrylic stand set, which initially prepared 20 sets, sold out on the day of release. In response to the positive feedback, an additional 50 sets were put on sale for reorders on November 11. In the second round sold on November 21, the packaging method of the curry changed from frozen to retort, making it easier for people to enjoy the taste of Ainan Madai. The second round was changed to a set of two packs each of sweet and spicy. Based on feedback on Twitter, improvements were made for consumers who could only eat either sweet or spicy.

Notable points of this project include the contrasting opinions received: a comment from the town of Ainan that “I never thought goods worth a few thousand yen would sell this much,” and a remark from the person in charge at eSPORTSspace Please that “it would have sold enough even if the price was a bit higher.”

Understanding not only the title itself but also the e-sports market, the purchasing behavior of the target group, and the current situation of the region are important for operating e-sports tournaments.



Figure *. Promotional Image for Ainan Sea Bream Curry Set (First and Second Edition)

4. Results

4.1 Tournament

As each streamer streamed from their own channel, the viewership was spread out. Still, even the main stream, “NIC x Ainan Town Jointly Sponsored Identity V Getai Cup: Let's Fish for Tai in the Game!!,” recorded about 30,000 views, significantly exceeding the viewership of the 2020 GEKITAI-Cup. The total viewership of all streams recorded over 150,000 views. The following is a list of the number of channel subscribers and playback times for each streamer. See (NetEaseGames in Campus, 2021) in detail.

Table 2. Viewing numbers for GEKITAI-Cup on YouTube (104 in unit for YT Channel Subscribers)

Streamer	YT Ch. sub.	21/Nov/2021	22/July/2022
NIC(Main)	0.137	32,060	33,799
MoshiUsa	5.62	-	-
MaruMaru	4.75	-	--
Puriko	10.7	23,338	28,920
Kati	9.67	9,844	11,657
Ruto *1	2.2	2,491	2,537
Kenmatsu	0.749	1,336	1,516
Jay	3.57	3,512	3,753
Numa	5.24	18,231	21,362
LegendD	12.2	33,857	37,889
mmoAU	0.772	-	-
Pankun *2	8.63	10,470	11,157
Nopi	0.771	3,425	4,235
Total	65.01	138,564	169,590

*1. Streamed with limited access.

*2. Due to data issues in the performance measurement on the day, data as of the 25th is provided.

4.2 SNSs

These accounts were established for the purpose of announcing tournaments and projects, but in order to increase followers and improve the diffusion power in advance, they showed active engagement even when there were no announcements for the project, such as featuring topics about Ainan town.

The operation period was 164 days from July 20, 2021, to December 31, 2021.

As of November 2022, the number of Twitter followers was 429, and the number of Instagram followers was 136.

Information on announcements related to the “GEKITAI-Cup” and the projects mentioned in the following chapters is disseminated through these SNS accounts.

4.3 Sales of Ainan Madai Curry Set

The announcement tweet had won 730 retweets and 1,326 likes as of October 2022. The number of impressions exceeded approximately 200,000 (Twitter, 2021). The following is the sales performance of the Ainan Madai Curry Set.

Table 3. Sales Performance of Ainan Madai Curry Set

	ASet	BSet	CSet
1st Edition	62/67	32/48	36/48
2nd Edition	88/88	23/44	12/44
Total	150/155	55/92	48/92
(Sales Number / Stock Number)			

5. Discussion

Through organizing the “GEKITAI-Cup” we found that in order to successfully achieve regional innovation through esports, it is necessary to consider the following three elements: (1) An understanding of the mutual appeal of the local area and the game title, and the strategic blending of the two; (2) Approaching Generation Z fans; and (3) Planning that involves spectators and supporters.

5.1 Strategically Blending the Appeal of the Local Area and the Game Title

In the “GEKITAI-Cup” we chose “Fisherman” and “Lake Scenery Village” as the main characters and maps, respectively, with the theme of Ainan town. In other initiatives, we created character merchandise for the game “Identity V” that reflected the image of the sea bream and the sea of Ainan. As previously mentioned, we were able to achieve results in terms of both the number of views of the tournament and sales of sea bream curry.

From this point, it can be inferred that in order to blend the appeal of two different elements, it is not sufficient to simply hold an esports tournament. Instead, it's crucial that the local representatives and tournament organizers deepen their mutual understanding and adopt an attitude of cooperation.

5.2 Approaching Generation Z Fans

As previously mentioned, when it comes to regional revitalization, approaching younger generations is essential. In particular, effective digital marketing is required for Generation Z, also known as the “Digital Native” generation.

We deployed social media marketing using Twitter and Instagram. On Instagram, we used innovative designs, such as “grid posts” (a technique of splitting one image into nine and posting them separately to make the image appear larger). The total number of impressions on Twitter from the account's creation until the end was 1,071,521. The use of social media is considered to have been highly effective.

5.3 Spectator and Supporter Involvement in Planning

We conducted initiatives such as selling sea bream curry sets and hosting an illustration contest, which allowed supporters of the game "Identity V" to also enjoy the event.

It should be remarked that the core of the “GEKITAI-Cup” model is (1) understanding the characteristics of the region, (2) creating a framework for resolution, (3) cooperating in each area of expertise, and (4) based on trust, responding in the medium to long term. Furthermore, having a common goal of solving local problems and deepening exchanges through games can lead to the formation of a community within the region. This could be one approach in regions where the outflow of young people is significant.

6. Concluding Remarks

We have showcased the results of the “GEKITAI-Cup”, an esports tournament hosted in Ainan town, Ehime, Japan, focused on the game “Identity V.”

Each region has its unique charm. Similarly, each game title has different appeals, unique cultures, and markets. Understanding each characteristic and holding a tournament that could only be held in this particular region or with this particular title is key to the success of regional innovation projects using esports.

Local issues are rooted in the region. Solutions are also rooted in the region. While it is possible to address local issues using esports, it is not possible to apply the “GEKITAI-Cup” model as it is.

Unfortunately, GEKITAI-Cup was over when COVID-19 converged in 2023. The next challenge will be open!

Acknowledgements

The authors would thank Ainan town, who hosted the GEKITAI-Cup from 2020 to 2022, and to everyone from various sectors who supported us until the realization of the GEKITAI-Cup.

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Expanding our “Metaverse” Apparatus to Encompass Regional Optimisms and Pessimisms in History

Virginia M. Giouli, The University of Reading, U.K.

Abstract

The public character of reality as a language in itself expresses networks and links into a planetary scale computation context. This concerns virtual reality formed within the cyberspatial. Nowadays, the local has become the transnational with “social imaginary” tools. To see the transnational (cosmopolitan) as becoming the local, is also a possibility realised with our “metaverse” apparatus. Digital games (videogames) give us further opportunities to participate in wider and wider cultural levels of oecumenism each time. This need grows greater each time, calling, though in vain, for improvements in digital worlds beyond our known, regional one, as what determines such postulates of social participation is both political and economic, thus affecting labour processes. Marx’s vision of freedom to fulfill the aim of history is another possibility in an open-access “metaverse” cosmos. With Steyerl, we see that video-gaming foreshadows material incarnations and selling private property as a possibility: thus sharing not only a restaurant dish JPEG on Facebook, but also the real meal. Claiming open access to JSTOR and MIT, say, —or to open-source water, energy, and Dom Pérignon champagne— will also become a valuable possibility, discharging stormclouds of data. Images can be shared and circulated; hence, data moving across screens suggests such open-access ideas with video-gaming. After all, to follow Wittgenstein’s idea of the historical proof game does not dismiss our pursuit for the logically impossible.

Sushi Environmentalism: A Case Study of Dave the Diver

William Dunkel, University of California, Irvine

Abstract

Dave the Diver, developed by Seoul game studio MintRocket, and published by Nexon Korea, examines the larger political and environmental concerns of the sushi industry. This paper will focus on a closeplaying of the game as well as examining the developer interactions with its player community to understand how environmental consciousness is utilized through both the development and play. *Dave the Diver's* mixtures of restaurant-building and ocean exploration mechanics set up gameplay, where the titular character, Dave, is recruited by friends to run and support a local sushi shop. Through the course of gameplay, players are confronted with the realities of the global fishing industry, its benefactors and detractors. By examining game mechanics, narrative, and art, I argue that *Dave the Diver* promotes environmental consciousness through the consumption and labor of a sushi restaurant. Embedding gameplay in the Japanese cuisine, and drawing upon tropes of Japanese anime, otaku fandom, *Dave the Diver* strives to create a connection between players and the ocean environment, and the traditional practice of sushi preparation. Balancing ocean exploration with restaurant labor, players are forced to reckon with sustainability and environmental concerns of one of the most popular worldwide cuisines. These ecocritical perspectives challenge players to reconsider how sushi, its culture and consumption, fit into a world fraught with ecological anxiety.

Session 10

Panel Session

Hall

9:00-10:20

Acknowledging the Challenges in International Collaboration

Geoffrey Rockwell, Eleni Stroulia, Victor Fernandez Cervantes,
University of Alberta
Akinori Nakamura, Ruck Thawonmas, Jeremy White,
Ritsumeikan University

Abstract

Research collaborations across languages, time zones, cultures and oceans are always challenging. With the signing of a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) between Ritsumeikan University and the University of Alberta on March 1st, 2023 the two universities are committed to extending research collaboration around game culture, language instruction, games for seniors, and artificial intelligence. The MOU recognizes a collaboration that goes back to 2011 when Professor Geoffrey Rockwell was awarded a Japan Foundation grant to visit Ritsumeikan for three months. From that visit an annual conference, Replaying Japan, and the Journal of Replaying Japan (replaying.jp) emerged. Both were championed by the Ritsumeikan Center for Game Studies (RCGS) that has anchored the collaboration and now has secured a Ritsumeikan International CO-OP Research grant to further it for this coming year.

In this panel we will talk about the challenges of international collaboration and discuss various solutions. Some of the issues that will be addressed include:

- The **Challenge of Language**. The language of the collaboration has been mostly English, but this taxes the Japanese collaborators who must correspond and work in a second language. It effectively makes it hard for Japanese collaborators who are not comfortable in English. We will discuss some of our successes and failures in bridging the language divide.
- The need for **Supporting Centres and Institutes**. For collaborations to be more than isolated interactions there needs to be infrastructure at both ends. In our case the RCGS, the Kule Institute for Advanced Study, the Prince Takamado Japan Centre and the AI 4 Society signature area all played a role in facilitating ongoing collaboration. We will discuss role of different types of centres can play.
- Funding** is a major issue given the cost of travel between Canada and Japan. We will discuss different funding strategies.

●**New Scholars** are also important. A healthy collaboration is one that can renew itself and involve new scholars including graduate students. We will discuss some of the ways new scholars and students have been included in collaborations.

●**Need for Industry Collaboration.** Since research collaborations address social issues like aging, it is necessary to engage communities and industry that face such issues to verify whether our solutions are effective. However, this creates further complications in organizational relationships. The challenge is how to overcome this problem as a joint research project.

The participants in this panel include colleagues with connections at both universities involved in the ongoing collaboration.

Session 11

Developing Games

Hall

13:20-14:20

Scoreboard Kaizen: Understanding performance grading in Japanese digital games

Haryo Pambuko Jiwandono,
RMIT University,
the Digital Ethnography Research Centre in Melbourne

Abstract

A common feature in Japanese digital games is the evaluation of players' performance grading in form of ranking. They often assign alphabetical grades from 'S' to 'F' which reflect players' competency in interacting with Japanese digital games' ludic rules. This feature is significant as it can be found across genres from fighting game such as the *Street Fighter* series, the action-stealth *Metal Gear* series, and even interactive anime in *Asura's Wrath*.

From game ontology perspective, the phenomenon of performance grading is a significant rethinking of game's goal. Roger Caillois (2001) argues that goal is the final outcome of a game's structure. Japanese games' performance grading redefine goal as the playing process itself, specifically how well gamers play the game in manners which are intended by developers. This deterministic game design creates a ludic hierarchy between developers and gamers which, at a glance, seems to be antithetical to Western epistemology of playing digital games as contingent and autonomous (Huizinga, 1980; Rigby & Ryan, 2011).

It also opens an opportunity to observe digital games from Japanese perspective to understand the cultural background of the implementation of performance assessment in digital games. *Kaizen* is an important concept to be explored as an observational lens. Semantically, *Kaizen* is translated into English as improvement. It refers to the process of honing one's craft through repeated efforts in clear frameworks (Masaaki, 1986). Within *Kaizen*, goal achievement is twofold process which includes the gradual excellence of executing the goal beside the achievement of desirable outcome itself (Suzuki, 1959; Saha, 1992).

My presentation will identify frameworks of *Kaizen* in *Street Fighter III 3rd Strike*, *Metal Gear Solid V: Phantom Pain*, and *Asura's Wrath*. I choose those three games as they represent the genre diversity of Japanese games, and the ubiquitous presence of performance grading. Those frameworks consist of play components such as offense, defense, and technique in fighting games. Play style such as stealth or confrontational in action-adventure games. And the quality of gamers' inputs including

how fast they react to a quick time event command which is a key ludic feature of interactive storytelling game. I will experiment with those frameworks to obtain top, median, and low rank in order to understand developers' assessment of my performance as a player. In addition, identification of those games' *Kaizen* frameworks will help me to implement the Shewhart cycle of plan-do-check-adjust (Deming, 1982; Masaaki, 1986) which is vital to the epistemology of *kaizen*. I envision Japanese games developers invite gamers to achieve harmonious relationship with their games' texts, and I will elaborate on it during the panel.

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eSports and Movement Compression

Michael Hemmingsen, Tunghai University

Abstract

Sports and Movement

Sport is often understood as a sub-category of games. But ‘sports’ and ‘games’ are not coextensive; sports are often understood to be games with ‘the additional characteristic of requiring physical skill and prowess to be demonstrated by the participants in the pursuit of its goal’ (Meier 1981, 94). But if sports require physical skill, how should we understand eSports?

While the physicality of eSports has been a matter of debate, Felix Lebed notes, for instance, that, “the majority of contemporary digital games are too hard to play successfully without fast psychomotor reactions and action-focused decision making,” and that “performance of very fast movements over extended periods of time demands a high level of psycho-physical endurance (2021, 117). And Jason Holt suggests that ‘just as the essential physicality of sport is *the* crucial feature that distinguishes it from other games, so too are such videogames... games of physical skill whose outcome is determined largely by physical prowess’ (2016, 2).

But though ‘there might be plenty of physical action and effort in computer gaming,’ some question whether it’s of the right kind to count as ‘sport;’ ‘whether the physical exertion involved is adequately physical in the required sense’ (Parry 2019, 12). The ‘required sense’ here usually refers to a distinction between two kinds of physical activity: gross physical activity and fine physical activity (Loy 1968). Activities such as basketball rely on gross physical movements – and are therefore sports – whereas activities such as *League of Legends* utilise only fine-motor movements and are therefore not.

This distinction between gross and fine movement, however, is not uncontested. Klaus V. Meier, for instance, argues that this distinction is ‘arbitrary and counterproductive’ (1981, 84-5). Others disagree, arguing that there are ‘sufficiently precise ways to distinguish gross motor skills’ (Holt 2016, 3), such as whether the movement involves major muscle groups, or, as Jim Parry suggests, involve ‘whole-body skills’ (2018, 11).

The problem with this recasting of ‘gross movement’ in terms of ‘whole-body skills,’ however, is that there’s very little difference between a competitive shooter and a professional *Counter Strike* player in this respect. If a shooter’s breath control, etc.,

qualifies it as a ‘whole-body’ activity, then surely professional eSports players should be considered athletes as well. Additionally, while no current professional eSports (to my knowledge) utilise the technology, game systems increasingly incorporate motion controls into their games (Holt 2016, 4). I don’t there’s any question that *Ring Fit Adventure*, for example, involves more gross physical movement than shooting. So, if there is a distinction between eSports and sports, it’s not clear that the gross vs. fine movement distinction is it.

Virtuality

One option to distinguish eSports from sports is to emphasise the virtuality of eSports. Unlike traditional sports, eSports occur in ‘uniquely structured, virtual worlds within which the eSports practitioners must comport themselves perceptually and practically’ (Ek Dahl & Ravn 2019, 132).

However, why should virtuality matter as to whether an activity is or is not a sport? Phenomenologically, eSports players become perceptually embedded in these virtual worlds, and the player often ‘incorporates the machine as one would the body in a “lived body” experience’ (Hemphill 2005, 200). Given the phenomenological similarities – and putting aside the gross vs. fine movement distinction – it’s unclear why it should matter as to whether an activity takes place in a virtual or a non-virtual space, when it comes to whether or not it’s a sport.

Domains of Execution/Application

Another possibility is Holt’s distinction between the domain of execution and the domain of application. As he puts it, ‘The domain of execution is subject specific, a matter of *where* the agent’s skilled movement occurs; by contrast, the domain of application is object specific, *where* the action’s outcome is meant to obtain’ (2016, 4). The difference between the eSports and sports then lies in the fact that in traditional sports, the domain of execution and the domain of application are identical, whereas in eSports they’re not.

But first, as with virtuality it’s unclear why this difference should matter in terms of whether an activity is or is not a sport. Second, there are activities in which the domain of application and execution are the same, but are like video games in other ways, and which seem intuitively to be no more a sport than games that work in a similar way. For instance, Parry discusses the BBC TV show *Robot Wars*. In this show, contestants build a robot which they use to ‘fight a remotecontrolled battle to the “death”’ (Parry 2019, 8). *Robot Wars* doesn’t seem any *more* of a sport than *Counter Strike* or *Fortnite*. However,

in *Robot Wars* the domain of execution and the domain of application are the same.

Perhaps the key difference is that in sports the player are direct competitors, whether in eSports/*Robot Wars* the contest is mediated. But imagine an activity, 'Robo-Football.' In RoboFootball, players put on a full sensor suit, including detailed haptic feedback. This suit controls a humanoid robot, with 1-1 movement control. These robots are then used to replicate exactly a professional football game, on a real field. Given the haptic feedback of the suits, the players feel (within limits) what the robots are experiencing, such as the force of tackles, or physical resistance when trying to drive forward against another player. As a result, they experience the same physical fatigue as they would if they were playing an ordinary game of football. And due to the highly immersive nature of the suit, phenomenologically they feel as if they are embodied in the robot.

My own view (as well as a casual, highly unscientific survey of the opinions of friends and colleagues) is that there is very little daylight between an activity like Robo-Football and 'real' football. However, Robo-Football is entirely mediated. If the presence of mediation is the central issue, we would be forced to say that Robo-Football is not a sport either. Yet this simply doesn't seem plausible.

Movement Compression

The distinctions discussed so far – gross vs. fine, virtual vs. real, and mediated vs. unmediated – seem to me to be circling the core issue. The gross vs. fine distinction rightly emphasises that the quality of a movement relates in some way to an activity's sport-likeness, but incorrectly identifies the issue as being the *kind* of movement.

The virtual vs. real and mediated vs. unmediated distinctions usefully draw attention to the fact that in eSports the actions of the players undergo a translation between what the player does and what happens, but the first mistakes the key issue as being one of *where* the outcome takes place (in a real world vs. a virtual one), and the second places undue importance on the fact *that* the player's actions are mediated.

In my view, what truly distinguishes eSports from sports is the issue of what I call 'movement compression.' By 'movement compression,' I mean the degree to which the quality of the initial action translates to a difference in outcome in the activity.

In all 'analogue' sports, every action the player performs immediately and inevitably expresses itself fully in what happens in the game itself. Digital activities, by contrast, currently can't guarantee this kind of fidelity between action and outcome; not every detail of the player's action has an effect on the game. Instead, various slightly different actions all lead to the same result.

When we consider current eSports, we can see a lot of this kind of movement compression. For example, when you fire your weapon in *Counter Strike*, while the timing of the click and where the cursor is pointing matters to the outcome, it doesn't matter at all *how* you click the button; it doesn't matter if you press it softly or with force, what finger you use – you could even lift the mouse up and click the button with your nose and, while inefficient, this will lead to exactly the same outcome as if you'd used your finger. Hence, the quality of your finger (or nose) movement here is *compressed* into a single outcome.

A Continuum of Movement Compression

We can therefore identify a continuum of activities in terms of their degree of movement compression, corresponding to the extent to which they would be considered sports. To illustrate, let's take the case of golf games, which have a long history.

In *Pro Golf 1* (1979), players manually select their club and the angle and force of their shot, then click the button to activate the shot. In *3-D Golf Simulation* players also control the strength of the stroke by the timing of their key press. In *PGA Tour 2K21* (2020), players make the shot by moving a directional stick on the controller, both timing and the quality of movement does matter to the outcome. But the quality of the directional stick movement has obvious limits in sensitivity. *Mario Golf: Super Rush* (2021) involves full motion controls that have the player mimic real golf swings with the Nintendo Switch controller. However, there are also limits: the player's swing determines only a) how hard the ball is struck, and b) the degree of spin, which affects how the ball moves through the air. In systems like Smart Golf, nearly every aspect of the player's swing is translated into a difference in the outcome. However, there are still limitations to the sensitivity of the sensors leading to slightly different actions being 'compressed' into singular outcomes, since every digital system 'quantises' input data. Finally, in real-world golf, absolutely everything in the player's stroke – thanks to the laws of physics – has at least *some* effect on what happens.

It seems to me obvious that the examples given here – from *Pro Golf 1* up to real-world golf – progressively increase in the degree to which we might want to consider them a sport. The concept of movement compression explains this progression.

Arguments for Movement Compression

In many respects, movement compression is not a new idea, and is more or less continuous with an established way of distinguishing sports from non-sports. So, what *new* insight is uncovered by framing the basic idea of the essentiality of movement in

terms of ‘movement compression’? I argue that there are at least three things to be said in favour of putting the issue in this way.

First, doing so specifies the requirement that movement contribute to the outcome in a clear way. In previous discussions, this requirement was taken as obvious, but the concept of movement compression provides a precise specification of what this entails.

Second, movement compression – partly through the act of specifying the necessity of movement more clearly and explicitly – allows us to see the necessity of movement as a matter of degree, rather than as an either/or proposition.

Third, movement compression gives us a tool to think about virtual activities such as eSports, and also captures common-sense intuitions on the matter. For instance, it explains why proponents of eSports consider them sports (they are activities that genuinely do involve skilled movement as a necessary feature); but also explains why many people see them as falling short in some way (because they are compressed, the movements in eSports are not *as* necessary as in traditional sports).

Conclusion

eSports are undoubtedly highly skilled activities, especially at the higher levels of competitive play. Arguably the skill involved is just as great as the skill of athletes or sportspeople in traditional sports, both intellectually and physically. However, eSports – as currently practiced – are not as sport-like as traditional sports. This is not a disparagement of eSports in any respect, but rather points out the necessity of movement for sports. As they involve movement compression, movements in eSports do not bear on outcomes to the same degree that traditional sports do, and these activities are therefore less sport-like.

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Virtual Gym with Juicy Effects: A Study in Engaging Serious Silver Games

Victor Fernandez-Cervantes, Eleni Stroulia, University of Alberta
Ruck Thawonmas, You Xiao, Febri Abdullah, Ritsumeikan University

See Page 116-123.

Session 12

Lightning Talks (for the future)

Hall
14:20-15:20

Relationship between pachinko and the older adults

Hironori Fukui, Yokohama National University

Abstract

The purpose

Although pachinko parlor sales are declining, it is still an industry worth about 15 trillion yen and has many strong fans, especially among the older adults. The purpose is to qualitatively clarify the relationship between pachinko and the older adults by setting a research question, "What do the older adults want to participate in the game of pachinko, and what are the related behaviors?"

Method

After taking ethical considerations, I conducted behavioral observations of the older adults at pachinko parlors in Tokyo. Pachinko is a gambling behavior that requires consideration of "addiction", but in this study, gambling behavior in leisure behavior excluding addiction was targeted (Fig. 1), and surveys were conducted on elderly men and women.

After recording the gambling behavior of the older adults at pachinko parlors using the behavioral observation method (Fukuda 2019), we will grasp the actual state of behavioral patterns. When observing behavior, record and analyze conversations. This is because it is considered difficult to objectively analyze behavior alone. In the analysis, categories and storylines are generated based on the Modified Grounded Theory Approach (M-GTA) and the KJ method. Labels are generated from the actions and conversation content confirmed by the observer, and a label group that is considered to have a common concept from the subject's point of view is generated as a category. Then, a group of categories that are thought to have underlying concepts are generated as core categories. The new research method is based on the concept of action and conversation at the stage of label generation.

Result

In older men, 17 categories and 50 labels were generated. In older women, 9 categories and 28 labels were generated. The core categories were the same for both males and females in the three cases, and the results of (1) visit/visit to the store, (2) gambling behavior and incidental behavior, and (3) gambling behavior were extracted (Fig. 2).

Considerations and Perspectives

The number of pachinko customers seems to be on the decline, but there are a certain number of men and women of all ages. Pachinko was mainly played by the older adults, and there were more women than men. In gambling in general, it is impossible to objectively visualize the investment amount, but in pachinko it is possible to visualize to a certain extent, and high investment was the mainstream. In terms of the number of customers, there are clearly more females than males, but the number of behavioral observation subjects does not affect the number of generated categories and labels. In other words, it can be said that women are more focused on pachinko. It is thought that there is a high probability that other knowledge will be created by studying the details in the future.

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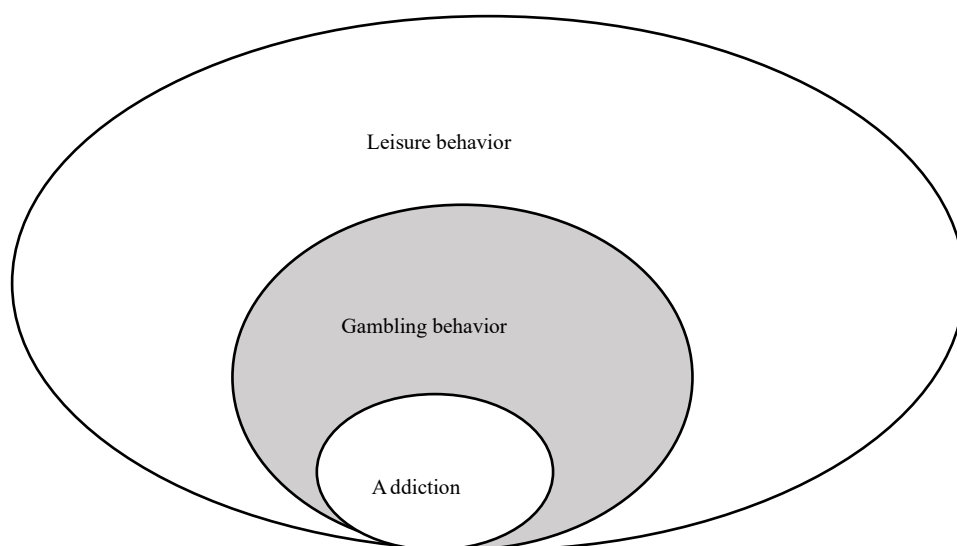


Figure 1. Gambling behavior targeted in this study (colored part) Source: Created by the author

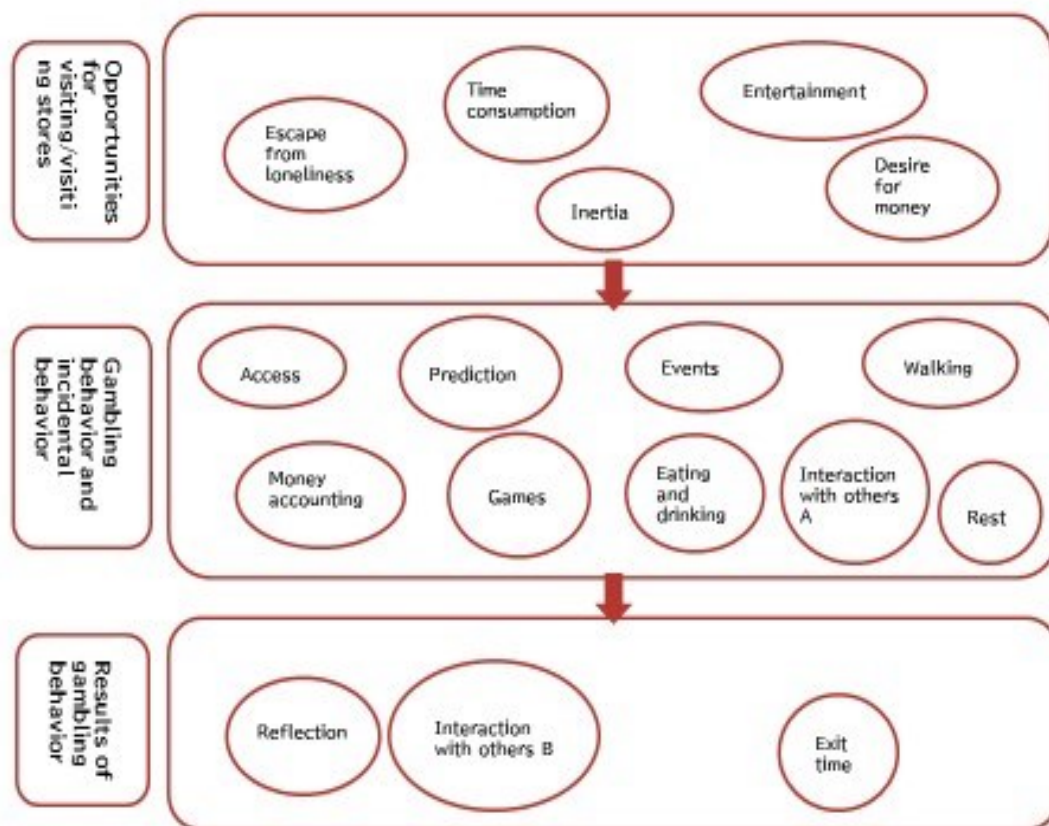


Figure 2. Generated storylines (core categories and categories created from older men and women) Source: Created by the author

How to Pass the Game on to Future Generations in Japan

Shin Matsuda, Game Gift Society

Abstract

The author is creating a game library to pass down games to future generations. The games in our library are playable. However, after 150 years, they will not be playable due to deterioration.

Preservation and migration of games are main solutions. Since these solutions do not guarantee that the game will be playable for 150 years, the author is exploring another "revival" route.

Various materials concerning a game are collected and stored securely. Materials include the actual game and design documents etc. 150 years later descendants will use the materials to revive the game.

The Emergence of Professional Gamers in the United States

Hiroyasu Kato, Kanto Gakuin University

Abstract

2018, dubbed the first year of eSports, drew attention to video game competitions. Many cash-based tournaments have been held since then, and it can be said that the existence of professional gamers, who make a living from gaming, is now known to many people in Japan.

Japan has long been known as a gaming superpower. However, Japan's eSports scene lags far behind that of other countries. In the U.S., for example, by the 2000s, large leagues had already been established, and professional gamers had emerged. Japan is not comparable to the U.S. in terms of the cash prize pool and the amount of money that players are able to win.

There is a growing body of research on the history of eSports and professional leagues. In this report, I will share my finding from an interview I conducted with an American professional gamer and share some of his gaming experiences and how he became a professional gamer. The life story of this professional gamer will be examined in relation to Japanese gaming culture.

Cyber World War 1: A case study about conflict between normal players and cheaters in Battlefield 1

Siyu Yang, Ritsumeikan University

Abstract

This study focuses on analyzing “Cyber World War 1”, a conflict between cheaters and normal players in video game Battlefield 1 (Electronic Arts, 2016) in January 2023. After several years of the game’s launch, there are many cheaters in the game due to lack of effective anti-cheating. To deal with cheating problem, some Chinese players founded “BFEAC” (Battlefield Easy Anti-Cheat), a player organization dedicated to deploying their own anti-cheat methods to the game’s custom servers, which are being set up by players. In January 2023, a glitch, which could allow “BFEAC” to deploy their anti-cheating programs into official servers (normally they could only be deployed into custom servers), was discovered. “BFEAC” began to utilize the glitch in order to drive cheaters away from official servers, and the cheaters also formed into a group and threatened “BFEAC” to cease their action immediately, or they would launch server attacks. On January 25th, the conflict between the two groups became so fierce that almost all the Asian servers were taken down, the next day the game company fixed the glitch, as well as recovered servers back online. To analyze this event being called “Cyber World War 1” among Chinese players, this study starts from reviewing cheating studies and basic game theories like *Homo Ludens*, then attempts to collect and analyze discourses both within and out of the game. By analyzing the case and discourses, this study suggests that, because of the absence of anti-cheating, the game’s official servers are dominated by cheaters. By the “unfair advantages” gained by cheating, they have already denied several basic rules of the game and established a new kind of “game” in the game, in which “cheating is the right way to play”. In the meantime, by deploying their anti-cheating methods, “BFEAC” and their custom servers maintains the rule “cheating is fairness/rule violation”, and these two “games” exist simultaneously in one game, Battlefield 1. These two “games” can only exist separately since their rules are contradictory, and the glitch triggers the “Cyber World War 1” by destroying the boundaries between these two “games”. As a result, this study claims that, because of the absence of cheating regulation, cheating behavior could step into the field of Huizinga’s “Spoil Sports” and is capable to establish “new game” within the game. On the other hand, organization like “BFEAC” also shows new characteristics different from ordinary player clans, it’s a player organization above normal players, working as the

absenting judge in the game. In conclusion, by analyzing “Cyber World War 1” from the aspects from both cheaters and normal players, this study could show new capabilities of cheating behavior, as well as new form of player organization and conflicts within the game.

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Cameo Kojima: Metatextuality in the Metal Gear Solid Series

Bryan Hikari Hartzheim, Waseda University

Abstract

Hideo Kojima's cameos in the *Metal Gear Solid* series are an authorial signature and source of pleasure for audiences, though simultaneously demonstrate the potential for cameos to encode more directed meanings that instigate action outside of the game. In this lightning talk, I propose a critical analysis of the form and function of the ludic representations of Kojima within the MGS franchise, drawing on approaches to textual representation of labor from film and political economy studies. On a basic level, such cameos reflect Kojima and his development team's continued desire to assert "authorship" over their games dating back to their first titles for the MSX home computer. On another level, Kojima's cameos reflect the progressive acknowledgment of game designers within the general public, mirroring the intensified promotional efforts by developer Konami to celebrate him as a visionary director while giving the MGS franchise (and the studio) distinction within an intensifying games industry. Finally, as Kojima became known for blurring ludic and real-world boundaries, players became trained to find meaning in his cameos. In his final MGS games, Kojima represented himself "auto-graphically" in order to bring attention to his own compromised position within his games and appeal to a discerning playing audience. In these ways, the Kojima cameos evince the multiple uses and potential of game cameos, as well as the ways in which developers display agency within the production process. Beyond simple fan service or ego-stroking, then, the form and function of Kojima's game cameo reflects a core tenet of the director's game design: to encourage players to extend the boundaries of play into real life and, while there, work to solve its (and his) problems.

Is there an academic community around Japanese games in Spanish game studies?

Yoshihiro Hino, independent scholar

Víctor Navarro-Remesal, Beatriz Pérez-Zapata, Tecnocampus, Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Abstract

Academia, and in particular the game studies field, is used to studying communities, but not so much to studying itself as a community. There are a few examples (Weng, 2019) that study academia as communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) or as a field with its own habitus and capital (Bourdieu, 2011), but game studies are still lacking in low level self-reflexivity, beyond questioning the discipline itself (Planells de la Maza, 2014; Deterding, 2016; Gekker, 2021). In this work in progress, we analyse the research around Japanese video games carried out in Spanish academia and its overlap with game studies in the country.

Before studying the field and its habitus and capital, we must know if that field actually exists. For this presentation we look at five fronts: 1) the two conferences of DiGRA Spain (2021 and 2023), 2) the last two conferences of the Association of Japanese Studies in Spain (AEJE), 3) the research group GREGAL: Cultural Circulation Japan-Korea-Catalonia/Spain (Autonomous University of Barcelona), 4) the talk series “Gêmu, perspectivas del videojuego japonés” organised by Fundación Japón, Madrid in collaboration with DiGRA Spain, and 5) the book *Estudios sobre cultura visual japonesa: videojuegos, manga y anime* (Antonio Loriguillo, Edicions Bellaterra, 2022).

DiGRA Spain, so far, has no special interest group for Japanese games. There was one presentation in the 2021 conference dedicated to Japanese games (Grau de Pablos). The 2023 conference is dedicated to Spanish games and games in Spain; its programme features presentations on Japanese games such as *Final Fantasy VII* and creators such as Yoko Taro, although their Japanese nature is not central to the presentations. The XIV conference of AEJE was dedicated to Japan in the international sphere and had a session dedicated to video games, with talks about Nintendo (Tarodo-Cortés), Yoji Shinkawa (Ruiz Cañero), and *Taiko no Tatsujin* (Navarro-Remesal & Pérez-Zapata). The XV conference had just one talk about games, though, by Grau de Pablos. Grau de Pablos is a member of GREGAL and has published on Japanese games several times. Loriguillo-López is also a member of the group, and he has published repeatedly on Japanese games and media mix. He is the editor of the aforementioned *Estudios sobre cultura visual japonesa: videojuegos, manga y anime*, a book that includes 3 chapters (out of 9)

on Japanese games (Navarro-Remesal, Bonillo, Grau de Pablos). Finally, the talk series “Gêmu” (Fundación Japón and DiGRA Spain) is curated by Navarro-Remesal and has so far included talks by LoriguilloLópez, Pérez-Zapata, and Tosca, a Spanish author based in Denmark who has published several works on Japanese games.

Although there are no formal stable structures in the country, we can see that both game studies and Japanese studies in Spain show an interest in Japanese games, with a group of authors that collaborate frequently, in different venues, and with different goals. This shows the potential for the establishment of a community of scholars interested in Japanese games, whose nature as a community could be further explored in the future.

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Expression of Gratitude and Collaboration with HAYAO NAKAYAMA Foundation for Science & Technology and Culture

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the generous support of the HAYAO NAKAYAMA Foundation for Science & Technology and Culture for sponsoring the wonderful venue and facilities at Nagoya University of Arts for our upcoming international conference.

As seen in our recent presentations, research on digital games in Japan and Japanese-made games has been steadily advancing, thanks to the outstanding contributions of researchers from around the world. Nevertheless, obtaining funding for research in the field of "games" still presents challenges.

In this context, the Nakayama Foundation stands out as one of the few organizations that actively promotes research grants in various fields with a central focus on "games" and "play." Our research center's members have previously received valuable support from experienced researchers at the Foundation across a wide range of projects, catering to both seasoned experts and young talents.

Therefore, it brings me great joy to announce that our international conference has also received support from the Nakayama Foundation. This opportunity is of paramount importance, as we enter an era where we are significantly accelerating our progress towards "Web3" or "Society5.0." Digital games, which provide an accessible gateway to cutting-edge technologies, play a pivotal role in this journey. Consequently, studies on the mechanisms and human behavior influenced by "games" have become more critical than ever.

We, at our research center, view this funding as the first step in fostering a collaborative relationship with the Nakayama Foundation and strive to build on this partnership further.

Together, let us continue our efforts to accelerate the implementation of "digital games" into society.

WARMEST REGARDS


Aki Nakamura Ph.D

Director/Ritsumeikan Center for Game Studies

公益財団法人中山隼雄科学技術文化財団への感謝表明

この度は、当国際カンファレンスの開催にあたり、名古屋造形大学における素晴らしい会場や施設に係る費用の提供をいただいた、公益財団法人中山隼雄科学技術文化財団様（以下、中山財団様とさせていただきます）よりご支援を賜りましたことに対し、心から感謝申し上げます。

当発表によって、日本におけるデジタルゲーム研究や日本製ゲームに対する研究が、世界各国の優れた研究者の協力もあり、着実に進展していることを確認することができました。それにもかかわらず、「ゲーム」を対象とする研究に助成を得ることは今なお挑戦的な側面があります。

そのような状況にありながら、中山財団様は「ゲーム」や「遊び」を中心テーマとしたあらゆる分野の研究に対する助成を推進している数少ない財団です。当研究センターの研究者も、ベテランから若手まで様々な研究で中山財団様からの助成を受けてきました。また、このような形で国際カンファレンスに対し助成を得られたことに対し、私たちは大変喜びを感じています。

現在、「Web3」または「Society5.0」に向けた我々の歩みが加速しているときです。そして、その入り口となるのが、手軽に先進技術と触れ合うことができるデジタルゲームです。つまり、「ゲーム」の仕組みや「ゲーム」が引き起こす人間的な行動に対する研究が、これまで以上に重要になっているともいえます。

当センターとしては、今回の助成を、中山財団様との協力関係を築く第一歩と捉え、さらなる関係構築に努めたいと考えています。

共に「デジタルゲーム」の社会実装に向けた取り組みを加速していけることを願っています。

あたたかなご挨拶を添えて、

中村彰憲

立命館ゲーム研究センターセンター長



社会を変えるゲームと遊びの研究

募 研 集 究 者 者

募集
期間

2023年
9月1日~10月15日

調査研究者募集

研究期間 2024年4月1日~2025年3月末日

研究費 1件につき100万円

募集テーマ

文部科学省推進科学技術週間参加イベントとして当財団が開催している「社会を変える『夢のゲーム』研究アイデア大募集」において過去3年間の入賞作を、実現する、もしくは実装にむけた提案をすること。(選択する入賞作品はひとつとせず、複数コンバインすることは可。)

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