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Session ID	44
Session Title	Power Play: Archaeology and Games
Start Time	Mon Dec 16 13:30:00
Room	822

The field of archaeogaming, the study of the intersection between archaeology and video games, has been gaining increased academic recognition. Some of the main research strands have included examinations of the ethics of looting in video games and establishing video games as archaeological sites. This session aims to build on this existing research, whilst also inviting new perspectives, specifically examining how power dynamics are produced or reproduced in games from an archaeological point of view.

Whilst archaeogaming studies have tended to focus on digital games, this session is open to submissions focusing on any kind of game, from prehistoric gaming pieces to 19th century boardgames to upcoming video game releases. We are open to considering a wide range of interpretations of this core theme. Some suggested topics, which are by no means exhaustive, include:

- Colonialism and historical/archaeological games
- Power dynamics in games affected by race/gender/sexuality/age/disability
- Accessibility and games
- Working conditions in games development and archaeology

We particularly encourage submissions from individuals outside of the academy, from other disciplines, individuals who have not presented at a conference before and those at undergraduate level. If you would like to submit but are concerned about conference fees, please do get in touch as we are passionate about making this session as accessible as possible. There will also be a digital stream of the session on Twitter for those who cannot present in person.

As stated in the abstract, we are very keen to have a digital stream for this session running alongside it (e.g. Twitter papers) to allow for greater accessibility. If you have any questions about our proposed session please do not hesitate to get in touch.

13:30	Timon Dawid du Toit, University of Pretoria	A Heritage-Focused Video Game on uKhahlamba Drakensberg Traditions	This research was premised on the use of video games as a sustainable tool for preserving existing archaeological data in an entertaining and interactive manner. The outcomes of such projects are for archaeological/heritage education, outreach, and representing data in a manner that is interactive and encourages critical thinking through play. I used Game Pass Shelter located at Kamberg in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg to create a virtual environment in a video game that accurately represents the traditional rock art and folklore of the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Bushmen. Two phases featured in the development of the video game: (i) getting feedback from gamers through a questionnaire I had designed, (ii) using identified recommendations to design a 2D video game using Unity Game Engine (a free video game development piece of software). This 2D video game, defined by authenticity to the represented folklore, features rock art motifs from Game Pass Shelter used against the backdrop of the Spoiling of the Eland traditional story. This video game begins with the 'Rosetta Stone' of southern African rock art and contextualises it using associated traditional folklore. Through this process, the video game aims to show why hunting was so important to the traditional lifeways of the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Bushmen. It further shows why eland were so valued and some unique beliefs that the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Bushmen had concerning them.
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13:50	Amanda Gomes, Center for Ainu and Indigenous Studies, Hokkaido University	Booms and Bombs- Situating Breath of the Wild within the “Jomon Boom” trend	Within the last several years, there has been a growing public interest in the prehistoric Jomon period in Japan. This “Jomon Boom” has involved the consumption of archaeological information and visitation of archaeological sites, as well as the production of publications and goods inspired by artefacts of the period by non-specialists. Accordingly, Japanese archaeological heritage has been an inspiration for various forms of popular media and games, but The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild (Nintendo 2017) is the marked attempt integrating design elements within a video game to create a digital “pastness” within the game’s narrative and world building.
14:10	Ricardo Shankland, Independent Scholar	How the Archaeology of Amazons helped Women in to War Games	<p>The presentation would be an analysis of how the increasing evidence (and reinterpretation of existing evidence) in favour of the existence of warrior-women in the Classical and Hellenic era has allowed game designers more freedom in adding female units and characters to war games.</p> <p>I will be basing most of the presentation around a comparison of Creative Assembly’s Real Time Strategy games Rome: Total War (2004) and Total War: Rome II (2013). The case I am making is that in 2004 the attitude to warrior women was still one that considered their existence a fantasy. This is reflected in the design of the ‘female’ units, their placement in the game world and the fan reaction to the same.</p> <p>By 2013, views on the possibility of warrior-women had advanced to the point where their design and placement was able to draw on archaeological evidence. However, fan reactions to their inclusion has been mixed and at times resembles some of the most polarized parts of the current popular debate around women’s rights. By comparing the two, it is possible to observe how game design might reflect unconscious or even conscious sub-estimation of women. I also believe it demonstrates how attitudes have changed in game design toward historical accuracy and in turn which narrative this increased understanding might reinforce. I hope the above is an interesting case study for the influence and effect of archaeology on games and their audiences.</p>
14:30	Xavier Rubio-Campillo, University of Edinburgh, School of History, Classics and Archaeology / Murphy’s Toast Games	Education or fun? Creating video games to promote archaeological thinking	<p>Video games are one of the most appealing media at our disposal to communicate knowledge about the past. The unique combination of interaction and storytelling they offer allows the player not only to see the recreated world, but also to experiment in it.</p> <p>The engagement with a game is explained by the fact that the player needs to take an active role inside the recreated world. This world should always be crafted to strengthen game mechanics and this requirement presents a challenge to anyone that wants to use games for archaeological outreach; the most accurate version of the past will be meaningless if the story, characters and dynamics of the game are unable to capture interest. The creation of a video game created to inform about the past should be guided by the basic requirement that the game needs to be fun.</p> <p>The need to accomplish two parallel goals (player engagement and outreach) introduces challenges and constraints while designing the game. Additionally, educational games typically have very low budgets so how can they compete for players’ interest against multi-million-pound commercial games which are not even restricted to these educational requirements?</p> <p>We explore here these questions by discussing the development and release of two video games funded by outreach projects: Evolving Planet (2016) and Ancestors: stories of Atapuerca (2018). Our main aim is to promote debate on the best ways that video games can be used to present archaeological research to audiences not typically engaged by more traditional outreach initiatives.</p>

14:50 Angus Mol, VALUE Foundation	A Game of Stones: Playing with Tim Ingold's Materials against Materiality	<p>In academia, play, together with other agents and actions of change, is actively suppressed in favor of 'more serious' modes of production. Yet play is powerful, it is experiential, explorative, and irreverent of the designs of scholars. Play pops up even, or especially, when things are to be taken seriously.</p> <p>In 2007, Archaeological Dialogues published Tim Ingold's Materials against Materiality. In its opening paragraph Ingold asks its reader to "please go outside and find a largish stone", "[b]ring it in, and immerse it in a pail of water", and "[t]ake a good look at it", and "even look at it again from time to time" while the stone was drying. It was a practical experiment to start off an anti-materiality exposé based on the perceived need "to take materials seriously". In this call, all ingredients for play were there (players, playgrounds, rules, and mechanics), but my intuition is that few readers actually ended up playing.</p> <p>Yet during my first serious reading of Materials against Materiality, I was played by a 'stone', which turned out to be a piece of coral. This unexpectedly playful encounter led me to later re-play the original experiment. First through David O'Reilly's Mountain, then through In Gold: A playful materiality simulator. These games of stones show us that, if we seriously would like to have the power to understand things, we should play with them, as we are often powerless to stop things playing with us.</p>
15:10 BREAK	BREAK	BREAK
15:40 Benjamin Hanussek, University of Warsaw	(Digital) Game Archaeologies: Going Digital to understand Material/Going Material to understand Digital	<p>Archaeological discourse has always been influenced by socio-cultural changes in our society. As aspects like gender, post-colonialism or inclusion have become common entities of archaeological research questions, so have digital games been already part of an ever-growing sub discipline of (digital) game archaeologies. Ideas to study games as contemporary artefacts or virtual sites are a beneficial contribution to the stretching theoretical framework of archaeology and could help the archaeological discipline to find a future perspective in the digital era. Nevertheless, it seems puzzling that the idea to combine the study of ancient (board) games and the study of contemporary (digital) games from an archaeological perspective has been not exploited so far.</p> <p>This paper shall therefore serve as an attempt to synchronize the archaeological study of ancient board games and (digital) game archaeologies in order to give a perspective on how games have changed in terms of: meaning, perception and game design. The case of the disappearance of the Egyptian mehen board game in the late third millennium BC shall serve as an example on why games are abandoned and in how far this can reflect changes in our society. This case will be carefully analogised with the abandonment of digital single player games from the last two decades. This comparative study tries also to use game studies-related approaches as a kind of digital anthropology to complement the study of ancient material remains of games.</p>
16:00 Hanna Marie Pageau, University of Cardiff	A Tale of Careers : Archaeogaming and Accessibility	<p>Archaeogaming has become a stable within digital archaeology over the last several years, having seen successful sessions at the SHAs, EAA's and SAAs alike. Archaeogaming represents a section of archaeology that becomes instantly accessible to those who, other wise, may not or would not have access to research opportunities. It not only provides economic efficiency and relief for disabled students and practitioners unable to do traditional field work, but it provides a research platform that allows for an expansion of the field on a low cost or sometimes even free level. This talk will include data from two separate surveys, the presenter's own experiences, and other published academic works.</p>
16:20 Aris Politopoulos, Leiden University; Angus Mol, VALUE Foundation	Dangerously Fun: Politics, play, past, and the phenomenon of archaeogaming	<p>Archaeology is a science deeply associated with power and politics. The grassroots of archaeology, however, belong to a time when the study of the past was based on curiosity and prestige and seen as a 'fun' pastime, without the (overt) recognition of its politics. In many ways, this is exactly where video games, the currently highest grossing entertainment medium, are now: a "fun" activity, rarely concerned with or actively disavowing its, potentially dangerous, political implications. In the first section of our paper, we will be assessing this tension between politics, play, fun, and the past through three case studies of games concerned with the past: Civilization, Kingdom Come: Deliverance, and Battlefield V. In the second part of our paper we will do a self-reflective critical review of archaeogaming studies and its dangers of being a "fun" research. As a field of study, archaeogaming, following the developments of (post-)post-processual archaeology, has been actively engaged with the political aspects of play and games set in the past, focusing on issues of colonialism, gender, ethics and more. But what are the power dynamics of the field itself? Has it had an impact on archaeology and game design, or is it viewed from the outside (e.g. gaming websites, academic institutions, blogs, gamers) as a quirky "fun" research, much like archaeology was at its grassroots? We will be assessing both the impact of the emerging field at large, as well as our own output, and suggest ways archaeogaming can move forward.</p>

16:40 Florence Smith Nicholls, Independent Scholar

Working is Broken: Labour Conditions in Commercial Archaeology and Video Game Development

Whilst the commercial archaeology and video game development industries are obviously integrally different in terms of their focus and output, there are many striking similarities between the labour conditions in both sectors. In particular, both fields are characterised by exploitation of worker passion, precarity, and different forms of 'crunch' culture. Commercial archaeology is notoriously badly paid, but video game development salary averages can be misleading- the industry also relies on poorly paid contract workers.

This presentation will investigate how and why these two sectors have become adept at exploiting employees within the wider context of contemporary capitalist society. It will include an intersectional discussion of how different factors affect a commercial archaeologist or video game developer's work life, whether that be age, gender, race, sexual orientation, or disability. The recent growth of the commercial archaeology Prospect Union branch will be compared to the nascent push for unionisation in the video game industry with Game Workers Unite.

A final question will then be asked-if working is broken, how do we fix it?

17:00 END

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