



Vol. 13, No. 1 (2022)

<http://www.eludamos.org>

Editorial: Transitions

Holger Pötzsch, Kristine Jørgensen

Eludamos. Journal for Computer Game Culture. 2022; 13 (1), pp. 1–5

Editorial: Transitions

HOLGER PÖTZSCH AND KRISTINE JØRGENSEN

The past years have given us little to be hopeful about. Even a creative and generally joyful discipline such as game studies has not been unaffected by exploding global inequalities, ecological and economic crises, austerity politics, de-democratization, pandemics, and wars. Given this rather bleak backdrop, we have to ask: Can we still play today? Does the present condition still allow for playfulness? We believe not only that it does, but also that difficult times, indeed, *require play*—and more so than eras characterized by peace, prosperity, and general wellbeing. Already in 1938, Huizinga (1938 [1955], Foreword, n.p.) pointed out, at a bleak historical moment of his own that in many chilling aspects seems comparable to ours, that “civilization arises and unfolds in and as play”—to retain our humaneness and to remain civilized despite the challenges we are put to, *we need to be playful*. Thus, we might want to follow Huizinga’s suggestion and look to Homo Ludens—the playful human—for solutions to our self-inflicted problems.

In Huizinga’s terms, a civilized world is not a condition for play. On the contrary, he claims, play is the basis for all civilization. Without a playful mind we run the danger of letting loose the demons of unchecked instrumental rationality and of relentless disruptive acts of making-and-breaking, void of caution, empathy, or remorse. Only a playful mind can help us use our enormous faculties with the necessary thoughtfulness and care. Play, playfulness, and games, it seems, matter more in times of crisis than otherwise, and so do studies of these complex and multifaceted phenomena. In a world of multiple severe challenges, we need to study games and play with an eye on their implications for society, culture, and politics, and with focus on possible alternatives and solutions they might offer. If play and playfulness matter for civilization, so do games and game studies.

This opening frame enables us to make a first transition in this editorial—a shift from global crises in an era of increasing bleakness and general decline to more mundane matters, here represented by game studies and games scholarship. *Eludamos: Journal for Computer Game Culture* is one arena where manuscripts studying play, playfulness, and games can be published and debated. In line with the journal’s overall scope, we conceive of computer games as aesthetic expressions with cultural, political, and societal implications, and see it as an important part of our mission to investigate how games and play both shape and are shaped by the world. In doing this, we are interested in both media-specific and transmedial aspects and put particular emphasis on the embedding of formal aspects of games in complex and multifaceted contexts of use and adaptation. Difficult times such as ours require critical approaches able to question received assumptions, biases, and prejudices, and which can offer new perspectives as well as concrete alternatives. With this journal, we hope that we can make a small contribution toward such goals.

This brings us to a second transition: the changes to the editorial board and organizational structure of the journal. As of January 2022, *Eludamos* has a new editorial board consisting of Kristine Jørgensen (University of Bergen) and Holger Pötzsch (UiT The Arctic University of Norway) in a shared role as new editors-in-chief, and a team consisting of Dom Ford (independent), Joleen Blom (Tampere University), and Martin Lütke (FU Berlin) as board members. Our efforts have been kindly supported by our new publishing platform Septentrio Academic Publishing and staff at the university library at UiT The Arctic University of Norway, in particular Aysa Ekanger and Obiajulu Odu. With their help, the journal is now up and running. All articles have received permanent identifiers (DOI) and we are working toward full indexation in databases such as the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOJA), Web of Science, and Scopus. In this transition process we could also rely upon the kind support of previous editors Andreas Sudmann and Arne Schröder. We are grateful for your tireless assistance in transferring the institutional memory of *Eludamos* to a new team. In particular, Arne Schröder's contribution has been invaluable for the completion of the complicated and time-consuming process of importing all previous *Eludamos* issues and articles into the new system.

Together with old and new partners, we have spent the year 2022 completing these changes and adaptations aimed at building stable structures and institutional connections to secure the long-term prospects of *Eludamos* to serve as a clear and critical voice in the international game studies community. One first result of these endeavors is the issue you currently hold in your virtual hands.

Eludamos publishes original research articles, commentaries, book, and game reviews. In our experience, academic publishing is a trade to be learned and it is therefore our conviction that senior scholars should use their experience and expertise to offer young scholars with emerging careers a helping hand. Because of this, *Eludamos* is planning doctoral consortia once every two years focusing on the preparation of draft papers for submission to *Eludamos* or other game studies journals. To these events, we invite PhD students to submit draft papers to be discussed in plenary sessions and solicit both senior and junior scholars as keynote speakers. With kind support from the University of Bergen, the IT University in Copenhagen, and to a modest degree UiT The Arctic University of Norway, we arranged the consortium *Futures of Game Studies* at the IT University in Copenhagen (April 6–8, 2022). Further events are in the planning stage.

Doctoral consortia arranged by the *Eludamos* board and partners will result in special issues of our journal where young scholars have received a head-start towards peer review and publication through symposium feedback and discussions of their drafts prior to open calls for papers. Other issues of *Eludamos* will be developed in close cooperation with other partners such as the *Games and Literary Theory 2023* conference in Katowice leading to a special issue scheduled for 2024.

Let us now move on from organizational issues and make yet another transition—from the context of *Eludamos* to its content. In the present issue, we bring together four research articles that are summarized below.

In the first paper titled 'A Game of Twisted Shouting: Ludo-Narrative Dissonance Revisited', Paweł Grabarczyk and Bo Kampmann Walther return to the concept of

ludo-narrative dissonance (LND) introduced in a blog post by Clint Hocking in 2007 and discussed vividly since then. Aligning with earlier works that have argued against received notions of LND as a mere design problem to be fixed, the authors show that a thoughtful implementation of apparent contradictions between narrative elements and game mechanics can have an estranging effect that can invigorate both play and game development. Observing that a huge amount of creativity is involved in fixing assumed LND-related ‘problems’, they offer inspiration to scholars, developers, and players, and show how careful game design and analysis can embrace and bend towards the positive what is generally perceived as bugs or flaws. Their article makes an important intervention as it redeploys and develops further key concepts in the field.

In moves reminiscent of Mieke Bal’s (2002) idea of ‘travelling concepts’ as key ingredients in interdisciplinary research endeavors, the following two contributions by Marco Caracciolo and Fredrik Rusk, Mathilda Ståhl, and Sofia Jusslin creatively combine methods and analytical instruments from apparently unrelated fields of research to enable new insights into the intricacies of games and play. In the process, they attest to the potential of game studies to adapt and utilize theories and methods across disciplinary boundaries thus productively dislodging what often appears as entrenched forms of scholarship.

Marco Caracciolo draws upon key concepts and theories from archaeology and adapts these to the study of games and play. Building upon Andrew Reinhard’s (2018) study on archaeogaming, Caracciolo’s article ‘Materiality, Nonlinearity, and Interpretive Openness in Contemporary Archaeogames’ argues that games make use of archaeological objects both at the level of representation and narrative as well as at the level of mechanics and play. Through illustrative studies of medial and transmedial aspects of *Heaven’s Vault* (Inkle 2019), *Outer Wilds* (Mobius Digital 2019), *The Forgotten City* (Modern Storyteller 2021) and *Elden Ring* (FromSoftware 2022), the author shows how games and play can problematize notions of materiality, chronology as well as the limits of interpretation in archaeological thinking, and advances the idea of archaeological fandom as a specific practice of collaborative storytelling across medial divides.

In their contribution, ‘Understanding CS:GO Teamplay as an Emergent Choreography: An Ethnomethodological Analysis’, Fredrik Rusk, Mathilda Ståhl, and Sofia Jusslin draw upon concepts from the study of dance and performance to better understand how teams of players coordinate their actions in virtual domains. Through analyses of screen-recorded multiplayer matches of *Counter Strike: Global Offensive* (Valve and Hidden Path Entertainment, 2012), the authors sketch out how teams activate interactional resources and collectively adapt these to changing situations and contexts. Through their case study they demonstrate the applicability of theories and concepts from choreography to analyses of interaction and coordination in multiplayer game play.

The last contribution to this issue is titled ‘Categorizations of World War II in Videogames’ and was authored by Estrid Sørensen and Jan Schank. This article was originally submitted to *Eludamos* prior to the transitions described above and has been peer reviewed and prepared by the former editorial board of the journal. In their text, Sørensen and Schank draw upon the method of membership categorization analysis to distinguish different ways through which games invite players to vicariously

participate in the historical events depicted in the respective titles. Delimiting their study from approaches concerned with psychological aspects, questions of authenticity, or issues of ideology, the authors identify a series of categories applicable to enable a better understanding of practices of play and reception of WWII-focused titles.

Besides peer-reviewed research articles, *Eludamos* also invites general scholarly debate and exchange. For this purpose, we solicit commentaries from games scholars and practitioners that take up issues of potential concern to the community. In the present issue of *Eludamos*, Kristian Bjørkelo offers his critical view on, and cautions against, the dominance of *Dungeons & Dragons* (Gygax and Arneson 1974–present) in tabletop roleplaying. He argues that this dominance affects both players, development, and scholarship in a negative way and calls for a widening of analytical and creative scope of our fields.

Academic publishing is a time-consuming and often challenging process that would be impossible without the invaluable support from our anonymous reviewers. So, in this final section we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all these largely invisible and unpaid helpers who contributed to completing this issue of *Eludamos*. During the past months we have read, discussed, re-read, and assessed many fine works, a significant number of which had to be rejected for various reasons. We would like to urge the authors who have not yet found a form suitable for academic publication to continue working on their manuscripts. All of them contained important thoughts and ideas that we believe are worth sharing with the world, eventually, in one way or another. Thank you all for your time and dedication!

Tromsø and Bergen, December 31st, 2022

Holger Pötzsch and Kristine Jørgensen, *Eludamos* editors-in-chief

References

- Bal, M. (2002) *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- FromSoftware (2022) *Elden Ring*. Bandai Namco Entertainment (PC).
- Gygax, G., and Arneson, D. (1974) *Dungeons & Dragons*. TSR (1974–1997) and Wizards of the Coast (1997–present).
- Hocking, C. (2007) Ludonarrative Dissonance in Bioshock: The Problem of What the Game Is About. *Click Nothing*. Available from: http://clicknothing.typepad.com/click_nothing/2007/10/ludonarrative-d.html [Accessed 20 December 2022].
- Huizinga, J. (1955 [1938]) *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Inkle (2019) *Heaven's Vault*. Inkle (PC).

Mobius Digital (2019) *Outer Wilds*. Annapurna Interactive (PC).

Modern Storyteller (2021) *The Forgotten City*. Dear Villagers (PC).

Reinhard, A. (2018) *Archaeogaming: An Introduction to Archaeology in and of Video Games*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Valve and Hidden Path Entertainment (2012) *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive*. Valve (PC).