Popular History: Historical Awareness of Digital Gaming in Finland from the 1980s to the 2010s

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ABSTRACT
This paper studies the popular historiography of digital gaming. By using the Finnish context as a case example and analyzing hundreds of popular game-history-related articles, mostly from computer and game hobbyist magazines and newspapers, the paper presents a categorization of four different waves of historical awareness. All the waves emphasized different ways of writing and presenting game history, some focusing more on global issues and some on national and local phenomena. Some of the material was more oriented to personal or individual experiences and some merely toward the collective or general characteristics of gaming. The four-wave categorization and presented topics can be applied to other game historiographical studies to create a richer picture of how the academic and popular histories of games and game cultures have been written.

Keywords
historiography of digital games, everyday history, game journalism, timelines, nostalgia

INTRODUCTION

Historical research on digital games and game cultures has become more prevalent during the new millennium. Particularly over the last few years, many extensive studies covering various material and immaterial aspects, as well as the many geographical locations of digital game production and game cultures, have appeared (e.g. Švelch 2018). The rise of this historical research has also been visible in new publication series, such as the MIT Press Game History, and Platform Studies, anthologies, special issues in game studies, and art studies journals (such as in *Feminist Media Histories*, the *American Journal of Play*; *Well Played*, *Game Studies*, *Cogent Arts & Humanities*), in game history special conferences (like History of Games conference) as well as in the establishment of new dedicated journals such as *ROMchip*.

One should note that academic studies are not the only type of game historical presentations. Game history – or merely *histories* – are produced and presented similarly in many journalistic and popular contexts as well as in fan communities (Heineman 2014; Suominen 2016; Wade & Webber 2016). Kalle Pihlainen (2011), a philosopher of history, has written about "the liberation of the past" in reference to the larger societal change in which there are more non-controlled and popular uses of

history and the past than "those who belong to the history's institution." (translation JS)

However, when discussing digital games, one cannot claim that the presentation of history has been liberated from some types of institutional ties. In practice, there has been an inverse condition: the popular production of digital game history has preceded institutional research that follows the methodological rules of historical study (Suominen 2016). The more popular production of history, which political historian Jorma Kalela (2000; 2010) has called *everyday history*, has taken place long before academic research on subject appeared. Furthermore, popular presentations of history have been essential in the creation of players' self-understanding. Popular and various everyday histories also affect academic research, as well as museum exhibitions, as these histories provide topics, starting points, conceptualizations to rethink, and also often inform where sources for academic studies and museum exhibitions are obtained from. Likewise, academic researchers can be gamers themselves, collectors, and fans; popular histories can also affect the game industry's conceptualization of the field and its development. So, in general, the field of game history cannot be dichotomized between academic/professional histories and popular histories. It is more complex and has numerous variations.

In this paper, I will ask how the popular production of history has emerged in the first place and how it has changed over time. Which factors have affected the changes? I use Finland as a case example and introduce four waves of *historical awareness* where the past, present, and future have been linked differently.[1] I have termed these historical waves as: 1) an experience of progressing change, 2) a declaration of a historical turning point, 3) nostalgic personal experience, and 4) the creation and institutionalization of a national historical narrative. With the four waves, I refer to the various forms of historical awareness but also to the specific popular ways of writing and otherwise presenting history. Thus, the paper is *historiographical* in its nature: it is a history of the history of digital games and, therefore, does not cover every aspect of the history of digital games or game cultures in Finland nor its international connections.

By the concept of a historical awareness of digital gaming, I mean a situation where games are understood as the results of a certain development process or a linked set of events but at the same time, also as a phenomenon that has experienced a cultural and technological evolution. The birth of historical awareness is usually the first phase in the process that leads to the systematic *uses of history* in product development and marketing (Suominen 2012).

The paper's primary sources consist mainly of history articles that have been published in computer hobbyist and game magazines from the 1980s onwards. I have examined the most popular Finnish magazines like *MikroBitti*, *Pelit,* and *Printti*, and systematically created a research corpus of 800 items. For this paper, I have selected a few key examples for closer examination (for previous studies of these magazines see Saarikoski 2004; Saarikoski & Suominen 2009; Suominen 2011). I have studied *MikroBitti* magazine from 1984 to 2008 to find all references to the history of computing and games. I have studied other publications from the perspectives of presenting gaming nostalgia and retrogaming in particular. Originally, I have used this corpus for different studies (Suominen 2011; Suominen et al. 2015) but have now used it for a more holistic historiographic overview that I have not introduced before. I also

have complemented the corpus with a selection of other popular game historical presentations from newspapers, television, and game industry-related reports.

The paper consists of four sections in which the aforementioned four waves will be introduced and contextualized.

EXPERIENCE OF PROGRESSING CHANGE

The Finnish Slot Machine Association (Raha-automaattiyhdistys, RAY) was already founded in 1938 with the purpose of collecting funds from money games and betting in order to fund Finnish health and social work organizations.[2] Since then, there has been a constant evolution in RAY's activities due to changes in politics, legislation, public discussion, societal relationships with money gaming as well as in game cultures.

Once again, RAY took note of the change in game cultures that occurred at the end of the 1970s and in the early 1980s. After the introduction of new legislation in 1976, RAY extended its national monopoly from slot machines to "leisure machines" that people played only for recreation, not for winning jackpots. Before the change in legislation, there were several small companies operating leisure machines, but after 1976 due to the new law, the firms were given five years of transition time to shut down their operations or to sell their gaming apparatuses to RAY. The main reason for the change in the legislation was most likely the need to more effectively place gaming under public and governmental control. As a result, by the year 1982, thousands of machines were transferred to their new owner, RAY. The catalogue of leisure automats consisted of devices such as pinball machines, coin-operated jukeboxes, darts, and billiard tables as well as arcade videogames. (*Potti* 2/1981, 9; *Potti* 6/1981, 2–3; *Potti* 1/1982, 4, 23; *Potti* 2/1982, 3–5.)

In the early 1980s RAY started to make electronic versions of its former mechanical slot machines and even began to export some of its own products abroad (e.g. *Payazzo* machines to Norway and Iceland). Videogames also started to become more popular in that period, although Finland was not in a leading position in their appropriation. RAY imported videogames and began to assemble its own videogame cabinets based on imported microcircuits.

RAY introduced its own approach to the gaming field and its changes were visible, for example, in its magazines targeted to RAY personnel, stakeholders, and later, its customers. The chief of product development of RAY, Martti Kärkkäinen, who was also responsible for the development of digital gaming novelties, wrote an article for *Potti* (Jackpot) magazine about the history of (arcade) videogames in 1983 (*Potti* 3/1983, 2–4.). The article was one of the earliest of its kind in Finland. *Potti* magazine had earlier published various kinds of historical articles but mostly about the association's own history. The article on video game history confirmed, for in its part, RAY's position as a national actor in the international gaming industry field.

Kärkkäinen described video games as a phenomenon that "has conquered the world" even though the phenomenon was not even yet a "teenager" (as video games were only "born" in the early-1970s). This reference to the recent introduction of video games was a way to popularize them and emphasize the novelty of this branch compared to the other gaming areas operated by RAY. Kärkkäinen also wanted to explain, how "it all started." This search for the beginning or origin is very typical for many historical presentations (Suominen 2017; Suominen & Sivula 2016. See also Reunanen & Pärssinen 2014).

Kärkkäinen began his article with the life story of Atari founder Nolan Bushnell and also described the breakthrough of the *Pong* (Atari 1972) machine as well as some of the company's later developments. This shows how the Atari mythos was internationally circulated. Kärkkäinen then introduced (genre-related) historical turning points and noted that the first videogames were "battle games" where two players played against each other until "*Space Invaders* came." He further described the history of games played against a machine, the development of the scrolling screen, as well as the development of colors and games with changing fields after space games, such as *Donkey Kong* (Nintendo 1981) and *Pac-Man* (Namco 1980). Kärkkäinen ended his article by describing future prospects:

> "New videogames will be developed further. More focus will be put on graphics, speed, continuity, and realism. Three dimensional effects and sound will be improved. Longstanding film companies have started to develop home video cassettes. This might bring cinema influences to future video games."(Translation JS)

In the article, videogames were connected to other forms of audiovisual media, and influences were considered to migrate from one media to another. Kärkkäinen's article shows how the historical awareness of digital gaming and conventions for writing about history started to emerge in Finland, at the latest, when the digital game industry and gaming began to achieve visible global importance. Kärkkäinen's narrative, and many other articles from the same time, dealt on one hand with the development of gaming technologies, and on the other, with gaming as measured largely from the economic point of view; about how many games were sold and what business revenue was. The same economic progression-oriented approach can be found in many other publications of that time and even more so in contemporary writings (Newman 2012; Therrien 2012; Therrien and Picard 2016).

In the early 1980s the history of digital games covered only a short period of time, and presentations of history did not only describe the past but also motivated prospects for the future. There were various conceptions of the current situation. For example, Kärkkäinen did not deal with the ongoing market turbulence that has been dubbed, especially in the US context, the Great Video Game Crash. American game companies, such as Atari, had troubles with their home consoles but, the arcade gaming industry was also seeking new directions (see e.g. Wolf 2012). The crash didn't really affect Finland, for example, due to the small number of videogame consoles in Finland in the early 1980s (Saarikoski & Suominen 2009; Suominen 2015).[3] After the crash, home computer games became more popular, mostly because of new consumer friendly devices (Sinclair Spectrum, Commodore 64, etc.) and their potential use for various purposes, not limited to gaming, even though the computer games that these platforms offered might have been their main attraction. This change was noted, however, in another article written a year later by Lauri Martti, RAY's technical chief and production methods specialist, who described the end of novel game ideas and the crisis of the industry (*Potti* 4/1984, 6–7). Digital home gaming really only boomed in Finland after the introduction of new generation home computers (Saarikoski 2004; Saarikoski & Suominen 2009).

Electronics, popular technology, and computer magazines, such as *Tekniikan Maailma* (World of Technology), *Prosessori* (Processor), and *Tietokone* (Computer), started to publish articles and special sections on home computing in the early 1980s. These were shortly followed by small hobbyist magazines, such as *Micropost*, club fanzines, and distributors' publications, especially after 1983. Finland's first prominent home computer-oriented magazines, *MikroBitti* and *Printti*, emerged in 1984 and quite soon after, they began to refer to game history: in special articles and game reviews, and also

when introducing new machines or platforms. For example, in *MikroBitti* magazine in 1988, Markku Alanen introduced the new Nintendo and Sega consoles with the title "The New Arrival of Video Games" by referring to the earlier and, from the Finnish perspective, quite unsuccessful, introduction of home video games. In these instances of history articles and briefer history references, we can see how the journalistic historians wrote about earlier events by dividing times and defining turning points, usually related to revolutionary games, platforms, or technologies. It appears that the most common form of the presentation of history was chronological, starting from the earliest and proceeding to the newest ways of gaming. This type of presentation was already observable in titles such as "From pinball machines to video games" (*Printti* 13/1987) or "From TV-games to computer games."

Special articles presented a general history of gaming. Mostly, however, the articles repeated the almost identical global list of the most important titles (usually the most commercially successful) and copied a similar industry narrative, but sometimes, also at least shortly, reported some national developments (see also *Printti* 13/1987 and its history article series from 13/1987 to 17/1987). Most likely, these articles were based on international predecessors but did not typically include references[4]. Articles helped to construct, for their writers and the audience, an awareness of game history: the idea that there were already games and gaming even earlier and the situation of the new cultural form and branch of industry was developing or at least changing. The articles involved the audience in a certain chain of events, in a way as an active member of a community, may it be computer hobbyists or players, or even the more distant observer. The level of historical awareness increased the conception of the importance of digital gaming and the game industry both as amateur and professional activities that had evolved over time.

DECLARATION OF A HISTORICAL TURNING POINT

Kaius Niemi, the editor-in-chief of *Helsingin Sanomat*, Finland's largest newspaper, wrote just recently, on the 130th anniversary publication of the newspaper: "One of the strongest moments of journalistic work is to report such situations that later become part of collective memory. A journalist always writes the first version of history." (Niemi 16.11.2019, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 130 vuotta) The same idea of journalists writing the first version of history, recognizing historical moments, and eye witnessing them, is apparent in digital game cultures as well.

The second wave of digital game historical awareness started to emerge in the mid-1980s when especially game journalists realized the change in domestic game programming as it moved towards more ambitious goals as well as the growing popularity of home computer gaming in general. It is difficult to estimate how many home computers were sold in Finland (with a population of less than 5 million inhabitants) during that time, but there were tens of thousands home computers, perhaps even more, and the Commodore 64 was the most popular machine selling an estimated 150 000 (approximately) units in the 1980s (Saarikoski 2004; Saarikoski & Suominen 2009; Kuorikoski 2017). Home computers gained popular attention over a period of only a few years, especially 1983–1987, even though not everybody personally owned one. Likewise, new kinds of computer and gaming communities began to form, partially based on computer club activities, but also because new computer hobbyist magazines catalyzed a sense of community or communities.

Sanxion, a Finnish-born hit game

Niko Nirvi started as a game reviewer and an assistant editor in *MikroBitti* magazine in the summer of 1986. He rapidly gained special recognition because his reviews were different from the majority, more humorous, more enthusiastic, and based on his extensive knowledge of games and other forms of media and popular culture (Saarikoski 2004; Suominen 2011). In the 12/1986 issue of *MikroBitti*, Nirvi reviewed *Sanxion*, programmed by Stavros Fasoulas and published by the UK company Thalamus. *Sanxion* became the first international computer game hit created by a Finnish programmer, and the review by Nirvi was significant in establishing *Sanxion* as a remembered and recognized turning point in Finnish digital game history.[5] Nirvi was one of the first to declare *Sanxion* a celebrated object of the Finnish digital game history:

> "Now it's time to put the Finlandia hymn [composed by Jean Sibelius] on a record player, because the first Finnish game has conquered the world. It is *Sanxion*, and surely the Finnish flag is already waving on the Thalamus' flagpole, because *Sanxion* was already a hit when it was born. Finland will become now known for something else other than the nuclear waste fallout of Chernobyl. […] Playability is vast, so one might claim that a new classic has been born. Well done, Stavros Fasoulas, the Paavo Nurmi [Finnish 9 times gold medalist in the 1920s Olympics] of computer games!" (translation JS)

It is difficult to know, how much – then a 15-year-old – Nirvi's review was a parody, inspired by the national romantic style of radio and television sports commentators. Nevertheless, Nirvi linked the past and the present when he connected the Finnish game programmer and his product to Finnish cultural celebrities and the way in which sports victories were celebrated in Finland, for example during the Olympics and the world championships of ice hockey, track and field etc. An interesting non-articulated tension came from the fact that Fasoulas' name wasn't common in Finland as his father was Greek, but this Finnish-Greek background was not probably mentioned in any other articles except one interview, published in Sweden's *Datormagazin* (Computer Magazine) in May 1987 and written by another Greek-Nordic author, Leo Kaiserlidis (http://spelpappan.se/2015/02/spelpappan-hittar-guldkorn-stavros-lagger-av/).

In Nirvi's review, the elements of Finnishness were defined in the context of international success. His reference to the Chernobyl nuclear accident reminded the readership about a current topical situation, international debate, and the poor image Finland was experiencing because of the literal fallout. The review made an explicit connection between the past and the present but references to the future were also quite implicit. The reviewer made assumptions that in the following years, computer game production could gain wider public recognition and Finnish game developers could achieve international success more easily.

Nirvi took the position of a historically aware actor and eyewitness journalist in many ways. On one hand, he marked and declared the publication of the game as an important event and turning point like a chronicling author would do. Secondly, he endowed a classic status on a game that had just been released, not afterwards as is usually the case (on defining a game classic, see Mäyrä 2008; Swalwell 2016; Suominen et al. 2015). Third, he referred to many non-game related symbols and products, a manner that later became quite common in game reviews as a way of explaining the cultural importance of games in a wider context.

Max Payne in the general game industry hype

Another example of a Finnish computer game achieving national and international recognition comes from the beginning of the new millennium. It shows how these historical turning point narratives were occasionally activated, sometimes after a longer silence, but at the same time, the activation needed certain cultural potentialities to take place. The activation was again based on the idea of importance only when ultimate commercial and sales figures success were attained.

Finnish game developer Remedy[6] published its *Max Payne*, a third person story-driven shooter game at the end of July 2001. Remedy had developed the game over several years, and the first news articles about the game were already published in the late autumn of 1997 in game and computer magazines and even in the aforementioned *Helsingin Sanomat* (*HS* 14.11.1997). After that, it took a few years before Remedy again sought public attention for the game.

Valopilkku, a cultural television program from the Finnish broadcasting company (YLE) dealt with the Finnish and global gaming industry in February 2001 and mentioned the forthcoming *Max Payne*. Over the next summer, the hype around the game was already so significant that the main television news program reported on the game. Iconic news anchor Arvi Lind discussed the game release, and YLE interviewed Petri Järvilehto and Sami Järvi from Remedy as well as a game retailer. Likewise, newspapers took note of this phenomenon, which was probably the first ever mainstream publicity afforded to a Finnish computer game on this scale – as well as the growing hype surrounding it (e.g. Miia Savaspuro, *Helsingin Sanomat* 5.8.2001).

Järvilehto and Järvi spoke enthusiastically about their game to the TV news: "Nothing this big has been done in Finland so far. …[in *Max Payne*] there are cinematic techniques that have not been used in games before." (YLE 25.7.2001.) Those sentences show how the historical understanding and awareness of digital games was related to the news media's understanding of the symbiosis between games and cinema that already resembled the earliest journalistic game history articles from the beginning of the 1980s.

In addition to television and mainstream newspapers, obviously computer hobbyist and game magazines also tracked the development of *Max Payne* and its success. *Pelit* (Games) magazine followed Remedy's activities and other game productions, too. It regularly reported prepublications of *Max Payne* and its reception at game fairs. When the release date was approaching, *Pelit* magazine published additional news about different versions and cinema rights, interviewed company employees and studied prerelease material. After its release, *Pelit* published a review of the game and also reported about its international reception.(*Pelit* 4/1997, 18–19; 4/1998, 8; 8/1998, 8; 10/1998, 24–27; 10/1999, 8; 5/2000, 20–21; 5/2001, 22–23; 6-7/2001, 7; 8/2001; 10/2001, 9; 12/2001, 20.) *MikroBitti* computer hobbyist magazine did not follow the game development as actively as *Pelit* but also published a pre-release report, news pieces, and finally positive reviews from three different reviewers (*MB* 6-7/2001; 8/2001; 9/2001).

The media coverage of *Max Payne* in the beginning of the new millennium, created an impression of the historical nature of the moment, partially comparable to the case of the release of *Sanxion* in 1986. The difference between these two games and their respective historical moments was on one hand, related to the scale of the game developer and, on the other hand, associated with the nature of publicity. *Sanxion* was mostly programmed by an individual Finn and published by a UK company and discussed mostly within game and computer press. For its part, *Max Payne* was

developed by a Finnish company, released by an international label, and discussed within both game communities and general media, which also generated a grandeur picture of the Finnish and global game industry and its success. This wider attention helped to launch many new national and local development projects, such as the creation of game design and programming educational programs, public support for the game industry and innovations, and the creation of stake holding associations and organizations such as Neogames.

Later Finnish games that achieved global success, such as *Angry Birds* (Rovio 2009) and *Clash of Clans* (Supercell 2012), were introduced to an already more receptive audience. When publishing news on games, gaming, and the game industry, the media outlets no longer had to justify the relevance of the topic. However, the discussion was still mostly linked to economic values. Typically, the narrative presented Finland as a part of a rising global market, and as an active subject and developer, not only as a passive object, or the recipient of products designed elsewhere. This was the key point in the second wave of historical understanding, compared to the first wave in which Finland was largely assigned the role of a cultural production consumer, not producer. As for the third wave, it was more personal than the previous two.

NOSTALGIC PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

As one can observe, the presented waves do not follow each other in an entirely chronological order. The concept of the wave metaphor is, thus, to show how certain emerged phenomena can remain, probably sometimes in a modified form and can be mixed to another phenomena.

Therefore, let's return from the early 2000s and the story of *Max Payne*, to the late 1980s and the origin of the third wave. Even though it consisted of some comparable elements, this wave was based on individual experiences and in many cases, nostalgic emotions towards changes in game culture. As mentioned earlier, computer hobbyist magazines and other magazines had published many articles on general game history, or had introduced the history of specific genres, individual games, game designers, or gaming devices. These articles had an important role in the rise of gaming literacy, as well as acting as the building blocks of game player identities, for example, when discussing playability, as Graeme Kirkpatrick (2012) has emphasized.

Since at least the late 1980s, these articles not only consisted of neutral descriptions of what has taken place but also included personal gaming memories. This took place especially when writers experienced the end of an (gaming) era, or when they started to suspect that one particular platform was becoming less popular and, thus, the writer and the user community started to become concerned with the extinction of a platform.

Especially those writers that had already earned a good reputation as knowledgeable experienced game experts had permission or the possibility for sharing these types of personal public recollections. As a result, they were positioned as some kind of leaders or forebearers of collective reminiscence. Later on, this personally-loaded approach to game history was extended amongst larger hobbyist communities, and nowadays, it is visible for example, amongst internet retrogaming communities and gaming communities more generally.

German historian Jörn Rüsen has written about *narrative competence* as an essential element in the creation of historical awareness or consciousness. People select elements of the past and embed them in their own life stories and meanings. With stories, people structure time and organize past events. (Rüsen 2004. See also Oljemark 2011.) These

narrative competences are evident not only in the above-mentioned game historical recollections but in every described wave of game historical awareness.

Nostalgization, in particular, refers to bittersweet recollections of past. It can be both individual and collective, and this nostalgic recollecting can be shared and transmitted to other persons (e.g. Davies 1979; Boym 2001; Suominen 2008; Suominen et al. 2015). The conception that a platform could become extinct or die started to be more apparent when the Commodore 64 and its 8-bit contemporaries were replaced by new home computers such as the Commodore Amiga, Atari ST, and PC compatibles (see also Saarikoski 2001; 2004; Suominen et al. 2015). Journalists described the change colorfully and anthropomorphized the platforms. This made the stories personal and illuminated how emotionally important these bygone devices were to computer and game hobbyists:

> "The common home computer C-64 is in distress. On one side there is the grand 16-bit neighbor-boy Atari ST and big sister Amiga, and on the other side old grandad PC/XT/AT. Can the all-time home computer do anything anymore? […] Surely C-64 will die but in that event its memory will live on forever. It is very likely that there will not be another C-64." (Nirvi, Niko, *C*-lehti 1/1989, 27: "Is there a future for C-64?) (translation JS)

> "Now the end is near. I am talking about the old faithful C-64. One foot is already in the grave and this column steps on the fingers scratching on the edge of the grave pit." (Teittinen, Petri, *C*-lehti 3/1989, 33-34, Baron Knightlore column of new games: Go retirement, C-64!) (translation JS)

When the platform trends changed, the nostalgic environment was also extended: more and more platforms, games, and game cultural phenomena were influenced by a potentially nostalgic attitude or approach. First, nostalgization touched the 1970s and the 1980s gaming, then 1990s gaming later on, and the process is constantly moving forward in time. Likewise, the popularization of the internet since the late 1990s has changed game cultures in very many ways. It has affected the production and forms of game journalism as well as provided a new environment for game cultural nostalgia. The internet provided opportunities to create new local and global game nostalgia and retrogaming communities. Retrogaming as a concept was already introduced in the 1990s, first in the gaming press, it then flourished on the internet. However, only in the 2000s did retrogaming start to become a cultural trend with many variations and many commercial applications (Suominen et al. 2015). Gaming nostalgia and retrogaming cannot be explained merely as examples of zeitgeist as they are also a part of the maturation or domestication process of digital gaming where veneration and personal gaming experiences are affecting cultural practices (Suominen 2008. Cf. Hietala 2007).

When digital game cultures became commonplace, people gained more possibilities to express the notion that playing games has been an important part of their identity (on identity work, see e.g. Sivula 2015). In this identity work, game history is connected to personal life-stories, and it is possible to manifest and articulate the personal meanings of gaming practice. Purchasing games and gaming devices, their uses and experiences, and their "deaths" and abandonments are all involved in this narrative of historical awareness. This historically-aware identity work is supported by institutions such as the Finnish Museum of Games (established 2017) and various exhibitions and publications that focus on personal gaming histories. People have been able to remember some particular games, devices, and gaming situations, at least within the community. On the other hand, at least lately, personal gaming history has begun to appear more diverse, partially also due to the work of certain game scholars who have

actively encouraged people to tell their own individual and diverse gaming life-stories (see e.g. Kultima & Stenros 2018).

One can ask, however, if the practices of the abovementioned *recollection leaders* influence – harmonize and canonize – the conceptualization of others' personal gaming histories. Then, popular histories do not necessary refer to "minor histories", unheard voices (from an institutional perspective) but can be merely voices that suppress more quiet ones. Some kind of canonized "official historical storyline" can overshadow personal game histories, at least from two different perspectives: one's own personal activities might be reflected through the dominant narrative and repeated with small variations. On the other hand, dominant and powerful presentations can cause some narrators to go silent about their own, maybe transgressional or unorthodox, histories. One does not dare to express one's own experiences and memories, because exceptions can be interpreted as inaccurate or "false" recollection. This "official dominant history" is not necessary produced by professional historians but can merely be a development and progress story of the game industry, including a clearly defined starting point, an explanation of origin as well as a clearly expressed turning point that is based on economic success or technical development.

CONCLUSION: CREATION AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF NATIONAL HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The construction of game historical awareness as a visible discourse emerged in Finland in the early 1980s, in popular articles that sketched the international history of games and the videogame industry. Game historical elements were also evident in game reviews, and written history was most likely based on unnamed international references. The second wave, emerging in the mid-1980s, meant the creation of a chronicle of historical events in contemporary gaming. Journalists recognized turning points that, in their opinion, should have been documented in history and as historical: the named turning points acted as resources in the production of history. In this phase, more national elements started to be linked to the international storyline. The third wave began with a personal, player-driven approach in which one's own life events and stories were weaved together with the general histories of game and play cultures. Personal recollections mostly included expressions of nostalgia, and recollecting was fueled by notions of platform deaths and other significant changes.

The fourth wave began in the 2000s. Due to the unprecedented rise of the Finnish digital games industry, the whole history of digital gaming has been investigated from a national standpoint, even though the Finnish digital game industry has been perceived in the global context. National game history has been portrayed in academic research, journalistic works as well as in other public situations. It seems that new emergent game-related institutions have had a need for histories, while history-oriented institutions have also been established.

The building of a national narrative around game history has been connected to the establishment of these national institutions that support the field: game developer associations, funding mechanisms, lobbying organizations, interest groups, museums, and others. These institutions and organizations were in need of histories that would legitimatize the field as well as their own work. A good example of such an institution is Neogames, as it has produced a significant amount of historical material.

Neogames is a member-based non-profit game industry organization, established in 2003, and currently supported by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. Its

"mission is to accelerate, coordinate, and support the development of the Finnish game cluster." (www.neogames.fi) Neogames produces, among other materials, reports following the development of the local game cluster, for example, data such as: the number of companies, revenues, characteristics of the game industry, and number of employees. In 2014, a Neogames report included a short chronological history of the Finnish game industry, including a timeline that mainly referenced its largest commercial successes, starting from *Sanxion* (Thalamus 1986) and also including games and playful online environments such as *Supreme Snowboarding* (Housemarque 1999), *Habbo Hotel* (Sulake 2000), *Angry Birds* (Rovio 2009), *Hayday*, and *Clash of Clans* (SuperCell 2012). Interestingly enough, commercial failures such as the Nokia N-Gage gaming phone were mentioned in the text but not on the historical timeline. Neogames has, in many cases, emphasized that the roots of the Finnish game industry are in the demoscene and do not include the non-digital game industry that has a much longer history (on demoscene, see Reunanen 2017). In the same year that Neogames released its report describing the history of the Finnish game industry, Juho Kuorikoski (2014) published his popular book on the same issue, with the introduction of many Finnish digital games. Most likely, Neogames' historical recognition was based on this publication and the online publications behind it.

One of the most important examples of fourth wave activities was the establishment of the Finnish Museum of Games in Tampere, in 2017. The museum project, museum itself, all of its exhibitions, events, collaborative workshops with different stakeholders, and publications have made various gaming cultures, their histories, and related actors much more visible than before. (Suominen et al. 2018.)

The paper has been an attempt to recognize some popular game historical discourses. The presented four waves classification has been built around the Finnish case study. Hopefully, it could be applied, at least partially, to other (national) contexts as well, or could act as the inspiration for game historical and historiographical research, albeit with some limitations. Certainly, one might find characteristics of more than one wave in a single popular game historical article. Nevertheless, when applying a classification, one has to, in the very least, ask the following questions: Who is writing and presenting game history and how (in popular or other contexts)? How have the histories been institutionalized, not only by professional historians but also by other actors? How have the histories been placed in the national or local framework or if they have been put there at all? How have the turning points, classics, and key actors been recognized? How are the collective and personal recollections by particular authors interconnected in these histories? What sorts of elements have been included and what have been excluded?

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ENDNOTES

[1] Instead of using the term *wave* here, one could call them four popular game historical discourses, and one should remember that this four-wave categorization is not the only possible way to illustrate popular game historical discourses and there might be some others as well.

[2] RAY was a government-supervised and -owned nonprofit gaming (gambling) association (statutory corporation) in Finland. RAY become a public corporation in 1962 (See Wikipedia; "About Ray: History",

https://web.archive.org/web/20140319203539/http://www2.ray.fi/en/ray/aboutray/history).

[3] Obviously, one has to remember that the concept of the Great Video Game Crash has been contested in research literature (see e.g. Kirkpatrick 2015) and it is not, in many cases, generally applicable in places like Finland and in European contexts.

[4] Exceptionally, *Micropost* 2/1985 a hobbyist fanzine type of magazine referred in a history article to Daniel Cohen's book *Video Games* (1982) as the source. Likewise, articles such as "A Decade of Electronic Games" published in the *Electronic Games* March 1982 issue, consisting, for example, of a timeline titled as "Great Moments in Videogame History," might have acted as sources for Finnish writers. Potential confirmation of these alleged transnational influences would require an international comparative study of the issue.

[5] There are some international popular histories on Stavros Fasoulas and Thalamus on the internet, but their claims about, for example, Fasoulas' later life are based merely on rumors, not real facts (see e.g. http://www.c64.com/articles/thalamus_history.html).

[6] Recently, with Remedy and some other Finnish digital game companies, in many cases, the typical origin story has referred to companies' roots in demoscene activities, but drawing a connection between the demoscene and game industry would require more detailed historical studies (see Reunanen 2017).

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