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# The game of making an archaeology game : proposing a design framework for historical game design

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# The Game of Making an Archaeology Game

## Proposing a Design Framework for Historical Game Design

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# Designing historical game-based learning experiences



ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SITE / DATA



VIDEOGAME

## Wicked problem

“social problems which are ill-formulated, where the information is confusing, where there are many clients and decision makers with conflicting values, and where the ramifications in the whole system are thoroughly confusing” (Churchman, 1967)

# Designing historical game-based learning experiences

## *Uricchio (2005)*

- **Event games**  
simulation of particular events, attempting to “maximise historical accuracy
- **Process oriented games**  
Abstract replication of historical processes, allowing players to engage speculatively with the past

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SITE / DATA



VIDEOGAME



# Designing historical game-based learning experiences

*Kee (2008) via Seixas (2000)*

- **Collective memory**  
Factual fidelity, coupled with the *action genre*
- **Disciplinary history**  
Play/think as historians/archaeologists, coupled with *strategy games*
- **Postmodern history**  
Creative historical engagement, coupled with *sandbox games*

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SITE / DATA



VIDEOGAME





# Designing historical game-based learning experiences

## *Champion (2008, 2015)*

- **Tourist games**
- **Puzzle games**
- **Resource management games**
- **Historical battle games**
- **Historical combat games**
- **Historical shooter games**
- **Role-playing games**
- **Control games**
- **Social-mashup games**
- **Games that allow classroom role-playing of history through in-game camera capture**



ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SITE / DATA



VIDEOGAME

# What's wrong with the “genre picking” approach?

- Game genre is a problematic way to categorise games
- Games are “promiscuous”; commonly present a combination of gameplay structures, making difficult to associate them with only one particular genre
- Already-made solutions lead to stereotypical gameplay design



# Why building a (gamified) historical game design framework?

- Provides a “conversation starter”; it helps to define a design brief while avoiding stereotypical game forms.
- Acts as a mediator of the conversations between multiple disciplines involved in the design process.
- An environment for the creative engagement through play
- Serves as a medium to develop an analytical model for historical game design





# Design framework for historical game design

## Historical focus

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*What is this game about?*

*(Character, Site, Battle, Event...)*

## Historical perspective

---

*Who is the player?*

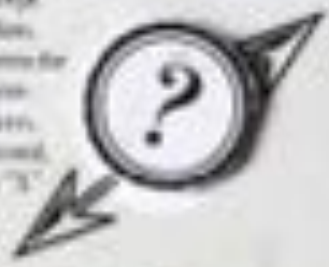
*(Common folk, children, leader,  
God...)*



# CONTEXT AND RELATIONS

THIS GAME IS ALL ABOUT...

- 1. Each player puts a concept card on each side of the disc.
- 2. The connections between the concepts used to be investigated by adding "I" numbers.
- 3. When a conflict is detected, the market changes to an "I" market.





KNOWLEDGE

PERSPECTIVE

MICRO-HISTORY

"the intense historical investigation of a small area"  
(Serjanni, 2002)

Micro-history gives a level of agency and protagonism to characters that are very often dismissed by structuralist historians, for whom people is seen as objects rather than as subjects of history (Brewer, 2000 p. 3)



CHILDREN

SANT

SKIN

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## Conflicts

---

*Primary conflicts : winning / losing conditions*

*Secondary conflicts : impact in other reward/punishment systems*



## CONFLICT CHART

4. Select two conflicting concepts and put them face-to-face.
5. Define the systems and data that players will use to resolve the conflict.



### SYSTEMS

How the conflict is resolved in the game? Add gameplay and narrative systems in this space.

VS

### DATA

Which particular sets of data are needed to solve the conflict?



*Conflict is an intrinsic element of every game. Conflict, a game as a contest of powers, is a core component of our very definition of the term "game".* Salas & Zimmerman, 2002, p. 1276

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## Game mechanics (agon)

*Challenges - Actions*

*(Combat, Survival,  
Exploration...)*



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## Fiction (mimicry)

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*Game narratives connected  
with challenges and actions*

*(Dialogues, Events...)*

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## Historical data

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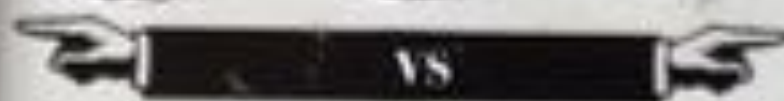
*What data is needed to solve  
the conflict?*

*(GIS, Factual...)*



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*"Conflict is an intrinsic element of every game. Conflict, a game as a contest of powers, is a core component of our very definition of the term 'game'." Salvo & Zimmerman, 2012, p. 431b*



# References

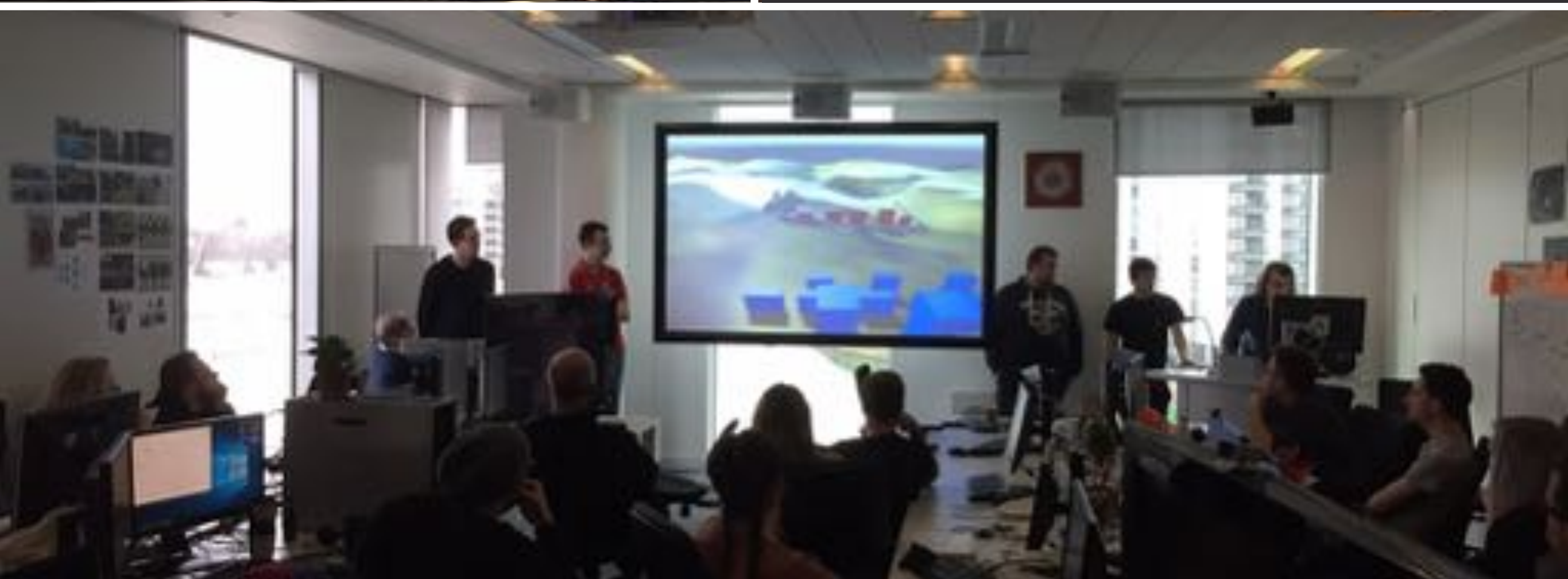
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*The Heritage Jam. 2015. University of York*



*Waterloo Digital History Jam. 2018. University of Salford*