# Spatial Politics at Play: Hong Kong Protests and Videogame Activism

## Hugh Davies
RMIT University
hugh.davies@rmit.edu.au

## ABSTRACT
During the 2019 protests in the city of Hong Kong, videogames emerged as more than key themes and sites of protest, but an all-encompassing cultural discourse around which demonstrations crystallised. Drawing extensively on reportage of the 2019 Hong Kong protest movement, this article concerns itself with how digital platforms enact, elaborate and represent activist movements and spatial politics in both virtual and embodied worlds. Surveying videogames developed specifically as objects of protest and the ways in which digital platforms have been tactically deployed by protesters (Twitch streaming, *Pokémon GO*, Airdrop, Uber), this article examines how protests in Hong Kong have been distinctively articulated within, through and in relation to videogame spaces. At stake is the political mobilisation of communities through videogames and play, both in Hong Kong and beyond. With the Arab Spring of 2011 remembered as the 'Facebook revolution', the 2019 anti-extradition protests in Hong Kong might ultimately be recalled as the 'Videogame revolution'.

## Keywords
Politics, Play, Ludification, Hong Kongology, Protest, Videogame Activision

## INTRODUCTION
Beginning in the so-called summer of dissent, through the second half of 2019, Hong Kong's physical streets came at various times to resemble a battlefield landscape redolent of videogames. Simultaneous to the street demonstrations, another domain of battle was occurring behind computer screens, smart phones and across digitally networked spaces. The city's leaderless protester collective relied heavily on social and playful technology platforms to recruit new participants, to plan and enact events, and to advance the activist agenda. Online chat groups surged with agitprop memes and plans were floated for the next demonstration. Proposed locations, timing and tactics for actions were voted up or down on social media, and participants discussed the high stakes at play. Sparked by the governments tabling of a law that would potentially see Hong Kong citizens extradited to Mainland China, the protest movement began with messages relayed through groups chats and social networks on messaging service such as Telegram, Tinder, Whatsapp, Airdrop, Uber, Firechat and Line. Posts filled chat forums like LIHKG—Hong Kong's Reddit equivalent — while activist videos appeared on Douyin, China's version of TikTok. Meanwhile, on the physical networks of Hong Kong subways, commuters received protest invites via Apple airdrop and Bluetooth. Street demonstrations were broadcast via Facebook and the Twitch gaming platform. As violence skirmishes between police and demonstrations escalated, restrictions were imposed on digital platforms and physical spaces. In response, activists became increasingly tenacious in their creative uses of technology to preserve the movement's momentum. These included the detournement and development of videogames as sites and modes of protest.

## THE LUDIFICATION OF SOCIETY

The gamic and playful practices of the Hong Kong protest movement occurred against a larger backdrop of what has been described as a mounting ludification of society, a context in which everyday practices and various life domains are processed through the mechanics of games and logics of play (Dippel & Fizek, 2017; Sicart 2014; Frissen et al. 2016; Raessens 2006). The myriad networked spaces, technologies and playful phenomena that allow individuals track their personal fitness improving their 'health scores'; to consume competitively; to gamify workplaces increasing both worker and customer engagement, have been co-opted by activists to organise protests in Hong Kong in amorphous, organic, and rhizomatic constellations. This recent expansion of games and play into the protest space lends weight to assertions that the twenty-first century will be marked as the 'ludic century' — an era in which games are situated as the dominant cultural and organisational paradigm (Zimmerman 2013). More than previous media types, contemporary videogames are increasingly and intricately woven into vast ecologies of media entertainment, online activity, cultural discourse and political action. Protests in videogames are much more than reflections of events in the physical world, videogames are themselves constitutive of new fields of struggle (Chan, 2009).

Much of the scholarship around games and play in the previous century has explored their transformative and transgressive potential, examining how these activities might be used to reshape the world and understandings of it (McGonigal 2011; Mahnič 2014; Davies 2016). If we accept Salen and Zimmerman's definition of play as "free movement within a more rigid structure," (2004, p. 300) then transformative potential of play is found in its capacity to subvert the very frameworks and hierarchies within which it occurs. Like political protest, play is a subversive act with radical transformative potential. Dynamic interest in the political possibilities of videogame activism is therefore to be expected.

## NEW SITES OF ACTIVISM

Videogame activism is understood as the intentional use of digital game technology to bring about social or political change. In this way, both protest videogames and videogames protests at once transmediate and advance practices of embodied protest from the past and present, while simultaneously drawing from histories of electronic and digital disruption. These include electronic civil disobedience (CAE 1995) internet activism (Kellner & Kahn 2003), culture jamming (Negativland 1995; Meikle, 2008), tactical media (Boler 2008; Garcia and Lovink 1997) and social netwar (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997; De Armond 2001). The provenance of videogame activism is often traced to the in-game performances of Ann-Marie Schleiner, Brody Condon and Joan Leandre whose Counter Strike interventions named *Velvet-Strike* (2002) encouraged anti-war graffiti on the walls of that military game world. Also notable is Eddo Stern's *Runners: Wolfenstein* (2002) a mod that recontextualized the popular WW2 game by allowing Israeli players to invade Nazi Germany. Meanwhile, Joseph DeLappe's performance intervention into *America's Army* (2002) titled *Dead-in-Iraq* (2006-2011) involved typing the names of US soldiers killed in the Iraq war to the games messaging platform visible to other players. As other players killed DeLappe's avatar; he re-spawned and continued to type, maintaining the performance for five years ending only with the announced withdrawal date of U.S. troops in Iraq.

In his book *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture,* Alexander Galloway (2006, 109) deploys the term *countergaming* to connect the activist works of Ann-Marie Schleiner, Brody Condon, Joan Leandre, and Eddo Stern. These artists, according to Galloway, create experiences that disrupt the mainstream expectation of how games should be designed and played. Galloway's countergaming finds parallels with Dyer-

Witheford and de Peuters notion of 'counterplay' (2009, 213) a concept to describe activities that subvert the norms of commercial games through dissonant development, self-organised worlds and software commons, to invite implications both inside and outside of game domains. The concept of counterplay posits that videogames, through their close relationships to military technologies and training, are already vigorous sites of struggle.

In his book *Saving Worlds with Videogame Activism* (2009), Robert Jones recommends videogames as an ideal activist form due to their procedural rhetoric and interactive nature. Drawing on the work of Ian Bogost whose understanding of procedural rhetoric as "the art of persuasion through rule-based representations and interactions" (2007 p. ix) Jones identifies videogames as able to pry open new political spaces. As an inherently spatial medium, videogames are uniquely placed to explore the politics of place. Pertinent examples include the *Escape from Woomera (*2004) that thrusts players into an Australian detention centre from which they must escape, and *Papers, Please,* (2013) a game which through bureaucratic drudge obliges its players to contemplate the purpose of seemingly arbitrary geopolitical borders. Through tactics of detournement, both of these games cast themselves as spaces of political engagement and debate. Each force players to examine issues of governance, borders, the movement and treatment of cultural 'others', as well as questioning notions of 'legitimate' versus 'illegitimate' migration.

Politics of place are deeply infused within the Hong Kong protests, but from markedly different perspectives. Although the protest movement has mobilised up to two million people bringing a vast spectrum of views, uniting concerns are found in the perceived loss of identify, opportunity, language, and independent democratic status beneath the One Country, Two Systems arrangement. Yet more pronounced contours of Mainland Chinese resistance run deeper still. The momentum for contemporary protest in Hong Kong occurs against the historical backdrop of the cities foreshadowed absorption into Mainland China — giving rise to a visual culture of resistance has been eloquently theorised as a politics of disappearance (Abbas). Therefore, the growing emergence of Hong Kong in virtual space must be understood to relation to the disappearance of Hong Kong in actual space.

As networked spaces inviting the free expression of play, it is unsurprising that videogames would attract those wanting to articulate the terms of their discontent. But videogames as products of protest are not new. Sezen and Sezen (2016) discuss the design, development, and perception of videogames produced during Turkey's Taksim Gezi Park Protests (2013) as a form of civic participation in virtual urban space. Koenitz (2014) gives close attention to the *Occupy Istanbul* game (2013) exploring the design approach, player experience and public reactions toward the game that enabled players to test strategies of engagement, from passive by-stander to violent activist. Investigating political activism in digital games, Cermak-Sassenrath (2018) finds that in-game activism often takes its cue from activism in everyday life. But the appearance of videogame activism in relation to circumstances in Hong Kong responds to a different set of conditions. They highlight a slippage between physical reality and videogame fictions that have haunted the city since the 2019 protests began. As the city disappears into virtual representations from video footage to videogames, the very texture of reality in Hong Kong appeared to be shifting.

## HONG KONG PROTEST GAMES

In September 2019, in the Hong Kong subreddit, u/anagoge posted a photo of the Hong Kong protests with the caption: "This photo of the Hong Kong protests looks straight out of a video game." (*See figure 1).* The flat lit, clear focused image featuring shotgun wielding riot police storming a darkened Hong Kong street appears

uniquely artificial. Exemplifying the verisimilitude of a high-frame-rate first-person-shooter, other reddit users quickly compared the image to existing and imagined videogames set in Hong Kong including *Cyberpunk 2077* (Projekt Red), *Half-Life 3* (Valve*)*, *Sleeping Dogs 2* (Square Enix), *Battlefield Hardline 2* (Visceral Games), and *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* (Eidos). (Hong Kong, as previously argued, is curiously overrepresented in videogame spaces (Davies 2018a, Davies 2018b). One user remarked "I want to play it" while another asked: "When is the release date? Might pre-order this if it's a PS4 exclusive!" (Hong Kong subreddit 2019).



**Figure 1:** Hong Kong protest photo uploaded by reddit user, u/anagoge.
Photograph: Anthony Wallace/AFP/Getty Images



**Figure 2:** Liberate Hong Kong demo image.

Three weeks later, demo videos of a game titled *Liberate Hong Kong* appeared. Created by an unknown team of developers and bearing an uncanny resemblance to both the reddit photo as well as to Hong Kong protest locations and events, the game, it was suggested, would be complete in 2020 (*see figure 2*). According to the demo description "Players must complete tasks such as collecting and throwing tear gas

canisters, while avoiding being arrested or shot by rubber bullets and beanbag rounds as chants familiar from Hong Kong demonstrations echo in the background" (SCMP reporter 2019).

In the months leading up to *Liberate Hong Kong's* appearance, a media discourse comparing the Hong Kong protest with videogames had developed. Writing in the Hong Kong Free press, Ming Ming Chiu extensively explored resemblances between Hong Kong protesters and players of Massive Multiplayer Online Role Play Games MMORPGs's observing:

> Leaderless MMORPG players and protesters also freely express diverse ideas and build on them to launch more creative initiatives than single leaders do. Confronted with a deadly monster, MMORPG players brainstorm different attack strategies, evaluate them, and apply them to eventually kill it. Likewise, protesters devised many creative tactics: (a) countering police weapons with umbrellas, (b) neutralising tear gas with traffic cones and water, (c) covering Lennon Walls with paper sculptures and protester action figures, and (e) igniting same-day demonstrations against China Extradition in 40 foreign cities on August 18. (Chiu 2019).

Writing in the letter section of the Hong Kong's daily publication, the South China Morning Post, a Hong Kong resident observes what he describes as "The similarities between almost every recent mass rally and the dynamics of video games. The same excitement of finding new comrades to join in battle in a world where parties are either friends or foes might have been at work in real life. Sadly" he continues,

> "the real world does not operate like the virtual world, where a "game over" can be followed quickly by a new game, started afresh with the same original setting. Those playing violent war games in the real world run the risk of irreversibly affecting others, or even themselves, at the individual, family and societal level." (Chu in SCMP 2019)

Certainly, the videogame-like play in the Hong Kong protests recall Geertz's evocation of Bentham's "deep play" — a game with stakes so high that no rational person would engage in it. This caution against causing irreversible offence has been echoed against protestors, game companies, and indeed anyone that expressed sympathy or even acknowledged the protestors demands for an independent city. In seeking to avoid offence, especially with Mainland China and its vast community of game players, many international game companies and tech organisations have in-turn come under fire from pro-Hong Kong activists for the perceived speed and ease at which they have complied with demands from Chinas ruling party. For example, Ubisoft apologised for a *Watch Dogs: Legion* advertisement that featured brief clips that resembled Hong Kong protests while a post on the Ubisoft Facebook page was pulled after it circulated on Weibo that it referenced protests in Hong Kong (Carpenter 2019). Additionally, the gaming firms Riot and ESL warned employees not to discuss politics following Blizzard's decision to suspend Hong Kong gamer for protest remarks (Zheng 2019). Likewise, Apple removed a crowdsourced map service from its App Store that Hong Kong protesters had used to track police activity following China's Communist Party-run People's Daily newspaper lashing out at the company, describing the app as "toxic software" (Mickle, et al. 2019). Predominantly U.S. tech and game corporations have been forced to tread carefully in their dealings with China, not just in terms of appeasing the Chinese market, but also ensuring their company's desire for profit does not clash with popular internal principles of liberty or freedom of expression.

A case in point is the mobile news game *Revolution in our Times* set within the Hong Kong protests. The game was published to Google play on October 5th 2019 then taken down on October 8th 2019, only to return several days later (Tong 2019). In the period between its removal and return to the Google's app store, a fiery in-house debate purportedly occurred among Google's roughly 100,000 employees (Gonzalez S 2019). Many pro-Hong Kong staff demanded Google take an ethical stance by supporting the democratic movement in Hong Kong, while pro-Chinese employees within the tech giant felt such debates were inappropriate discourse for internal listservs. Comparable workplace, familial and friendship conflicts emerged as a prominent concern in the sustained Hong Kong protests (Tam 2019).

Discussing the protest game, *Revolution in our Times*, Eddie Lau, author of the blog "Hong Kong in Videogames" draws attention to the game's nuance, noting how it captures the difficult personal conflicts faced by protesters. Single decisions of the player/protester that "could really affect not only themselves (relationship, employment, personal freedom) but also the public opinion and the outcome of the campaign". Lau also notes that future iterations of the game may allow the players to act in different roles such as a policeman or a government official in order to offer a complete picture of the protests (Davies & Lau 2019; Lau in APK 2019).

## POKÉMON AS A CULTURAL LENS

Videogames operate not only as a site of spatial politics and protest in Hong Kong, but also act as a lens through which the tensions behind the protests can be understood. A case in point is the appearance of the *Pokémon* character *Pikachu* at the 2019 protests. *Pikachu* first surfaced as a protest symbol in Hong Kong in 2016, when following the lifting of a 15-year game console ban in mainland China, the Japanese videogame producer Nintendo decided to change the *Pokémon* character transliteration from the Cantonese 比卡超 pronounced (bei-kaa-chiu), to the Mandarin 皮卡丘 pronounced (pei-kaa-yau) in order to appeal to Mainland China's massive player demographic (Wang 2016). Following the end of a fifteen-year console ban in 2014, China's videogame market has flourished to become the largest in the world, with over 600 million users and generating more than $35 billion in revenue in 2018. With the country's game earning is expected to more than double to $75 billion by 2024 (Gonzales O 2019), China has swiftly consolidated as a vital market for game distributors the world over to appease.

But the name-change by Nintendo struck a nerve with Hong Kong locals, who saw it as both an affront to the Cantonese language as well as evidence of a broader fear of the mainland Mandarin Chinese gradually replacing Hong Kong's Cantonese dialect. In response, dozens of protesters gathered outside the Japanese Consulate in Hong Kong demanding Nintendo offer a unique Cantonese translation for game. (Wang, 2016). "This is not only a commercial decision, but relates to cultural exchanges," one protester told the South China Morning Post at the time. "We want to let the Japanese consulate know that a company from their country is disrespecting Hong Kongers" (anonymous protester in Huang, 2019). The politics of the *Pokémon* name-change resurfaced in 2019. It arose not only as a rekindling of anti-mainland sentiment, but in recognition that *Pikachu's* Cantonese pronunciation resembles the actual Chinese name of a prominent extradition bill supporter (Huang 2019). *Pikachu* has appeared in subsequent 2019 protests as an icon of extradition bill defiance.

In an article discussing *Pokémon GO* within the framework of ludification in culture and society, Mäyrä suggests the game highlights the importance of the meaningfully implemented links between technology, gaming content, and culture. *Pokémon* and the activities of public assembly that pervasive games incite have seen the game

politicised in the manner mentioned above and mobilised as a protest tactic as discussed below. Most specifically, protesters have claimed they were game players congregating to play *Pokémon GO* in order to circumvent police denying permission for assembly (Vincent 2019). "If we said that we were going to an unauthorised protest it would have provided good evidence for the police to charge us", said an office worker and protester in his late 20s, who asked for his identity to be protected (Vincent 2019).



**Figure 3:** Left, Maps promoting *Pokémon GO* events serve as a way to flag where protests will be held (Vincent BBC 2019)
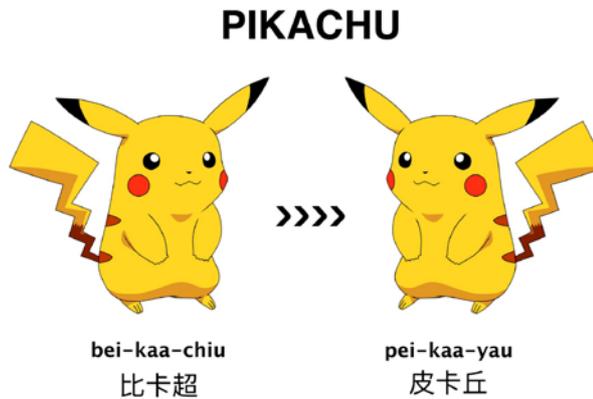**Figure 4:** Right, Outline of *Pikachu's* name change to attract Mainland players.

## THE E-SPORTS INCIDENTS

Just as videogames became a subject around which the protests coalesced in the physical world, likewise the popular videogame domain of e-sports arose as key sites of demonstration. In early August, the Japanese company Capcom cancelled its Pro Tour Street Fighter V esports tournament scheduled to take place in Hong Kong due to the city's growing "civic unrest". (Ye 2019) Later that month, in the lead-up to the *Dota 2* e-sport championships in Shanghai, the event's official twitch stream was flooded with Hong Kong protest material and memes (Grayson 2019).

Yet the most prominent and impactful of the e-sports protests involved the banning of a major e-sports competitor. The inciting incident took place during an interview with Ng Wai-Chung, an esports champion and Hong Kong resident, following his Grandmasters win. In the official interview live stream, Chung (also known as Blitzchung) shouted, "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our age!" while wearing a face mask, referencing the recently enacted anti-mask law. As the outburst had violated Blizzard's competition rules against causing public offence, Ng Wai Chung was removed from the *Hearthstone* Grand Masters tournament, his prize money rescinded, and he was suspended from pro play for one year (Serrels 2019). Chung expressed respect for Blizzards decision, but made it clear he had no regret for his words (Gonzalez, O 2019). Following the ban imposed by Blizzard on Chung, the company suffered a severe backlash. Its community of members, pro players, game casters and industry professionals denounced the company for its perceived pandering to Chinese pressure, despite the company following its own imposed rules. A petition was signed by prominent members of both major political parties in the US calling on Blizzard to review the ban. Posts condemning Blizzard filled the Reddit communities of r/Hearthstone and r/Blizzard for days while a meme titled "Blizzard unveils new logo" placing the Blizzard logo over the Chinese flag, became the subreddit's most-upvoted post of all time (Ye 2019). Perhaps the most effective protest measure was that many players threatened to quit the *Hearthstone* game as well as other popular Blizzard titles: *Diablo*, *Starcraft* and *World of Warcraft* citing Chung's ban as the

reason (Serrels 2019). The sentiment was shared by many across the Internet. In response to the community outcry, Blizzard reduced Chung's ban to six months and restored his prize winnings. Unrepentant, Ng Wai-Chung soon after streamed footage of himself playing the forthcoming *Liberate Hong Kong* game which sees players take on the role of Hong Kong protestors. Supporters flooded the stream with comments such as "five demands not one less", a reference to the demands of the protesters which include universal suffrage and an independent probe of allegations of police brutality (SCMP Reporter 2019). The Blizzard incident also led to the formation of "Gamers for Freedom" a new group orchestrated by the web-focused non-profit Fight for the Future that established in order to pressure publishers in relation to Hong Kong. The organization has committed to ensuring "that the web continues to hold freedom of expression and creativity at its core" and to "demand that gaming companies make a public statement supporting basic rights in their games and on their platforms" (in Stephen 2019).

## VIDEOGAMES AS POLITICAL SPACES

For some, these protests incidents across game spaces evidence the long-theorised power and capacity of games to mobilise communities into political action. In an article surveying gamified politics as the cure for civic apathy, Nika Mahnič (2014) observes that political alienation is a common trait of contemporary society, a symptom primarily associated with youth. In order to tackle this political apathy, she tenuously recommends ludic approaches that appeal to younger generations of future voters and/or policy makers. In a similar line of argumentation, game researcher Jane McGonigal (2011) proclaims that 'reality is broken', and that the intensity of engagement directed into game spaces could be redirected toward real-world problems by shaping such problems in ludic and playful ways. Yet views on the political potential of videogames soured significantly in recognition of toxic cultures of misogyny and xenophobia that pervade many videogame spaces. In an article examining the Blizzard ban and Hong Kong politics in videogames more broadly, Mark Serrels has painted an ugly picture of politics in the gaming realm, stating:

> "women are continually harassed online and racial slurs abound in esports. Almost half of the world's gamers are female yet barely any feature in professional esports teams. A terrifying number of online video game spaces are cesspools, hostile to every kind of minority group you can imagine, to the point where white supremacists are going straight to the source, actively trying to recruit teenagers via video games and the online spaces they occupy using Gamergate as an entry point."

Serrel's reference to Gamergate is crucial and requires bearing out. The 2014 incident that brought a sustained of campaign of harassment against women and minorities in games and the tech sector ostensibly in pursuit of journalism ethics, marked a key intersection of the playful and the political with lasting ramifications. Although Gamergate began as a niche online movement that used online trolling tactics honed in forums like 4chan and 8chan, it merged into the mainstream following its legitimization by the popular Breitbart media outlet in the lead up to the 2016 U.S. election campaign. Many Gamergate views, strategies, tactics and protagonists were co-opted by the Trump campaign under the direction of former White House Chief Strategist and founding member of Breitbart News, Steve Bannon (Nieborg and Foxman 2018). Bannon's political deployment of what became known as the alt-right from the Gamergate controversy through to the Trump campaign has been comprehensively mapped across several domains of academic scholarship (Bezio 2018; Nieborg and Foxman 2018; Mortensen, 2018) popular media (Grayson 2016; Lees 2016) and contemporary literature. (Green 2017; Nagle 2017).

A crucial moment in these accounts is Bannon's work with Internet Gaming Entertainment, a company that profited by employing low-wage videogame players in China earn virtual credits that were then sold to wealthier players in other parts of the world (Green 2017). Although the company flopped, the experience proved invaluable. Bannon claims to have developed an intimate understanding of the political potential of the enormous online gamer community, recognising its capacity to transform the staid conservatism of the Republican Party into a site of political transgression. "These guys, these rootless white males, had monster power" Bannon explained to reporter Joshua Green (2017). "You can activate that army. They come in through Gamergate or whatever and then get turned onto politics and Trump." Bannon's mobilisation of this community to political ends constitutes the central precedent of the political mobilisation of videogame culture.

Recentering on Hong Kong, it is worth noting the titles of the two Hong Kong protest games introduced here: *Liberate Hong Kong* and *Revolution of our Times* make-up, when combined, the election slogan of Edward Leung. (These are also the words shouted by e-sports champion Ng Wai-Chung, earning him the Blizzard ban). Edward Leung represents one of the new generation pro-independence political activists who, following the failure to effect change in Hong Kong's 2014 "Umbrella Revolution" protests is now uncompromising in his far-right localist and nativist leanings. But while the protest movement in Hong Kong is broadly united, its politics are varied and contested. As shown by Tang (2019), the popular echo of Leung's unifying slogans are no guarantee of an outright subscription to his politics. Unlike the ossification of partisan binaries in the US and elsewhere, Hong Kong's political positioning remains, thus far, more diverse, nuanced and unsettled.

## CONCLUSION

In December of 2019, Hong Kong gamers began using virtual private network (VPN) to access the Chinese servers of the open world game: Grand Theft Auto V. Once inside, Hong Kong players customised their avatars to resemble protesters and proceeded to toss petrol bombs, vandalize train stations and attack police in the China's GTA V (Subagja 2019). Mainland players were quick respond, taking to Weibo to enlist assistance to repel the Hong Kong insurgents, reskinning their avatars into riot police in the process. As this example shows, videogames provide ample space for violent conflict, yet what is lacking and required are virtual playgrounds for collective rumination, collaboration, and organization. For games to transcend indictments of being escapist entertainment, they must evolve from the commercial mainstream of annihilating imagined enemies and into open playscapes for the construction of political alternatives. Videogames, in the words of Nika Mahnič (2014) "may be the possible sites of a potential forthcoming revolution", but thus far the vast catalogue of virtual worlds are yet to articulate viable political alternatives.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbas, Ackbar. 1997. *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

APK. *Reviews: The Revolution of Our Times*. Lau. E. https://apk.support/reviews/story.hk.noiab

Arquilla, J., & Ronfeldt, D. 1997. "Cyberwar is coming!" In J. Arquilla & D. Ronfeldt (Eds.), *In Athena's camp: Preparing for conflict in the information age* (pp. 23–60). Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

CAE, Critical Art Ensemble (1995). *Electronic civil disobedience and other unpopular ideas*. New York: Autonomedia.

Bezio, K.M.S. 2018. "Ctrl-Alt-Del: GamerGate as a precursor to the rise of the altright". *Leadership*, Vol. 14(5) 556–566 DOI: 10.1177/1742715018793744

Bogost, I. 2007. *Persuasive games*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA. Boler, M. (Ed.). 2008. *Digital media and democracy: Tactics in hardtimes.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Carpenter, N. 2019. "Ubisoft Apologizes for 'Watch Dogs: Legion' Ad". *Vice*. https://www.vice.com/en_asia/article/evy8bz/ubisoft-apologizes-for-watch-dogslegion-ad-that-appeared-to-reference-hong-kong-protests

Cermak-Sassenrath, D. 2018. "On political activism in digital games". MedieKultur:Journal of media and communication research. Vol 34 No 64 (2018): *Medialudic approaches: Critical reflections on games and research practice.* doi.org/10.7146/mediekultur.v34i64.96924

Chan, D. 2007. "Dead-In-Iraq and the spatial politics of digital game art activism", in J. Tebbutt (eds), *Australian New Zealand Communication Association Annual Conference,* 2007: Communication, Civics, Industry, Australia and New Zealand Communication Association and La Trobe University, Melbourne, Victoria.

Chan, D. 2009. "Beyond the 'Great Firewall': The case of in-game protests in China". In L. Hjorth & D. Chan (Eds.), *Gaming cultures and place in Asia-Pacific* (pp. 141–157). New York, NY: Routledge.

Chiu, M.M. 2019. "Are video games making Hong Kong youths delinquents, loners… or better protesters?" *Hong Kong Free Press.* https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/09/15/video-games-making-hong-kong-youthsdelinquents-loners-better-protesters/

Chu, E. 2019. "Hong Kong's protesters may have gained inspiration from video games, but real life offers no reset". *Letters.* SCMP. https://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/3025534/hong-kongs-protestersmay-have-gained-inspiration-video-games-real

Davies, H. & Lau, E. 2019. "The Many Video Game Versions of Hong Kong" 電玩中的多樣香港 M+ Blog. https://stories.mplus.org.hk/en/blog/the-many-video-game-versions-of-hong-kong/

Davies, H. 2018a. "Why is Hong Kong Such a Popular Video Game Location?" 電玩中的城市：香港魅力何在？M+Blog. https://stories.mplus.org.hk/en/blog/why-is-hong-kong-such-a-popular-video-game-location/

Davies, H. 2018b. "Re: presenting Hong Kong in Videogame Spaces". Chinese Digital Games and Research Association (Chinese DiGRA, Shenzhen)

Davies, H. 2016. "Framing A Critique of Reality Based Games". *Proceedings: International Symposium of Electronic Art,* Hong Kong, SAR, China.

DeLappe, J. 2007. "dead-in-iraq". Video on YouTube. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTnuUMM7frk (Aug 23, 2017).

Dippel, A., & Fizek, S. 2017. "Ludification of culture: the significance of play and games in everyday practices of the digital era". In G. Koch (Ed.), *Digitisation: concepts for the empirical cultural analysis* (pp. 276-292). Abington: Routledge.

Dyer-Witheford, N. and Peuters, G. 2009. *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Garcia, D., & Lovink, G. 1997. "The ABC of tactical media". Posted to the <nettime> list on 16 May 1997. Accessed October 27, 2019, from http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9705/msg00096.html

Gonzalez, S. 2019. "Google employees are fighting over their company's decision to ban a Hong Kong protest video game app". Vox online. https://www.vox.com/2019/10/15/20915729/google-hong-kong-video-game-revolution-of-our-times

Gonzalez, O. "2019. Blizzard, Hearthstone and the Hong Kong protests: What you need to know". CNet. https://www.cnet.com/news/blizzard-hearthstone-and-the-hong-kong-protests-heres-what-you-need-to-know/

Grayson. N. 2019. "Dota 2 Fans' Reactions To Hong Kong Protests Take Over Twitch Chat Of $49 Million Tournament". Kotaku. https://www.kotaku.com.au/2019/08/dota-2-fans-reactions-to-hong-kong-protests-take-over-twitch-chat-of-33-million-tournament/

Grayson. N. 2016. "From Gold Farming To Gamergate, The Gaming Ties Of Donald Trump's White House". *Kotaku*. https://kotaku.com/from-gold-farming-to-gamergate-the-gaming-ties-of-dona-1789494823?IR=T

Green, J. 2017. *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*. Penguin Group.

Hong Kong subreddit. 2019. https://www.reddit.com/r/HongKong/comments/cy59q0/this_photo_of_the_hong_kong_protests_looks/

Huang, G. 2019. "Hong Kong protest: Why Pikachu was at the march". *Gold Thread*. https://www.goldthread2.com/culture/hong-kong-protests-why-pikachu-was-march/article/3014191

Jones, A. 2017. "The Alt-Right Revolution in the Early 21st Century". *Geopolitical Economy Research Group*. https://geopoliticaleconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Jones-Paper.pdf

Jones, R. 2009. "Saving Worlds with Videogame Activism", *Handbook of Research on Effective Electronic Gaming in Education* (New York University, USA)

Kellner, D., Kahn. R. 2003. "New Media and Internet Activism", New Media and Society 6 (1) pp. 87-95.

Koenitz, H. 2014. "Reflecting civic protest - the Occupy Istanbul game". Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games, {FDG} http://www.fdg2014.org/papers/fdg2014\_poster\_06.pdf

Lees, M. 2016. "What Gamergate should have taught us about the 'alt-right'". Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/dec/01/gamergate-alt- right-hate-trump

Mahnič, N. 2014. "Gamification of politics". *Teorija in praksa* 51 (1), 143-161. Mäyrä, F. 2017. "Pokémon GO: Entering the Ludic Society". *Mobile Media & Communication*, *5*(1), 47–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157916678270 McGonigal, J. 2011. *Reality is Broken*. New York: The Penguin Press.

Meikle, G. 2008. "Whacking bush: Tactical media as play". In M. Boler (Ed.), *Digital media and democracy.* (pp. 367–82). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Mickle, T., Horwitz, J., Kubota,. Y. 2019. "Apple, Google Pull Hong Kong Protest Apps Amid China Uproar" in Wall Street Journal online. https://www.wsj.com/articles/apple-pulls-hong-kong-cop-tracking-map-app-after-china-uproar-11570681464

Mortensen. T.E. 2018. "Anger, Fear, and Games: The Long Event of #GamerGate". Games and Culture, 13(8) 787-806. https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412016640408

Nagle, A. 2017. *Kill all normies: Online culture wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the alt-right.* Zero Books: Winchester.

Nieborg, D and Foxman, M. 2018. "Mainstreaming Misogyny: The Beginning of the End and the End of the Beginning in Gamergate Coverage". 10.1007/978-3-319-729176_6

Negativland. 1995. *Fair use: The story of the letter u and the numeral 2*. Concord, CA: Seeland.

Vincent, D. 2019 "Hong Kong protesters turn to Uber and Pokemon". BBC News, Hong Kong. https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-49280726

Raessens, J. 2006. "Playful Identities, or, The Ludification of Culture." *Games and Culture* 1 (1): 52–57

Salen, K and Zimmerman, E. 2004. *Rules of Play*. MIT Press.

SCMP Reporter. 2019. "Gamer Blitzchung streams footage of controversial video game 'Liberate Hong Kong'". SCMP. https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/entertainment/article/3035176/gamer-blitzchung-streams-footage-controversial-video-game

Serrels, M. 2019. "Blizzard's Hong Kong censorship is a symptom of gaming's deep-rooted fear of politics". CNET. https://www.cnet.com/features/blizzards-hong-kong-censorship-is-a-symptom-of-gamings-decades-long-fear-of-politics/

Sezen T.I., Sezen D. 2016. "Designing and Playing to Protest: Looking Back to Gezi Games". In: Bostan B. (eds) *Gamer Psychology and Behavior*. International Series on Computer Entertainment and Media Technology. Springer, Cham.

Sicart, M. 2014. *Play Matters*. MIT Press.

Sirani, J. 2019. "The Blizzard China Controversy, and Why #BoycottBlizzard Is Trending", Explained. IGN. https://au.ign.com/articles/2019/10/09/activision-blizzard-hong-kong-china-boycott-blizzard-response

Stephen, B. 2019. "Gamers for Freedom is a new group pressuring Blizzard and other publishers about Hong Kong". The Verge. https://www.theverge.com/2019/10/24/20931034/gamers-for-freedom-hong-kong-china-blizzard

Tam, L. 2019. "Why Hong Kong protests are driving families apart and how to discuss the issues without anger". SCMP. https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/family-relationships/article/3032514/why-hong-kong-protests-are-driving-families-apart

Tang. N. 2019. "Make or break: a progressive assessment of Hong Kong's movement". Lausan. https://lausan.hk/2019/make-or-break-a-progressive-assessment-of-hong-kongs-movement/

Tong, E. 2019. "'Revolution of Our Times': Hong Kong protester role-playing game suspended from Google Play Store". Hong Kong Free Press. https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/10/10/revolution-times-hong-kong-protester- role-playing-game-suspended-google-play-store/

Wang, Y. 2016. "In Hong Kong, protest over 'Pokémon' name change reflects fears of Chinese encroachment". https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/05/31/in-hong-kong-protest-over-pokemon-name-change-reflects-fear-of-chinese-encroachment/

Ye, Josh. 2019. "Hong Kong protests lead to cancellation of Street Fighter V esports tournament". Abacus News. https://www.abacusnews.com/esports/hong-kong-protests-lead-cancellation-street-fighter-v-esports-tournament/article/3021979

Zheng, Sarah. 2019. "Gaming firms Riot and ESL warn employees not to discuss politics". SCMP. https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3032892/gaming-firms-riot-and-esl-warn-employees-not-discuss-politics

Zimmerman, E. 2013. "Manifesto for a Ludic Century". Kotaku. http://kotaku.com/manifesto-the-21st-century-will-be-defined-by-games-1275355204