



**Board Game Studies Colloquium XX:  
Models, Metaphors, Meanings**

**Abstracts & Bios**

**University of Copenhagen**

**17-20 May, 2017**

# Wed 17 May

## Opening Address

### **Princes on the Floor of the Playroom**

*Dr Irving L. Finkel  
Assistant Keeper  
British Museum, London, UK*

Dr Irving L. Finkel is Assistant Keeper of ancient Mesopotamian script, languages and cultures at the British Museum. He is the curator in charge of cuneiform inscriptions on tablets of clay from ancient Mesopotamia, of which the Middle East Department has the largest collection of any modern museum. He organized a seminal symposium on ancient board games at the British Museum in 1990, thereby laying down the foundation for what would later become the Board Game Studies Colloquia. His contributions to the field of board game studies have continued over the years, including the discovery of the rules for the Royal Game of Ur on an ancient cuneiform tablet.

# Session 1a

## Tracing History

### Minor Update about Board Games in Rome: Enigmatic Board Games in Early Catholic Contexts

Marco Tibaldini

*Academic Researcher*

*Italian Association of History Teachers, Bergamo, Italy*

The relation between board games and Christian religion has been considered critical and negative since its very beginning. It was surely influenced by the deep connection between board games and gambling, and finally led the religious authorities to ban them from the Christian community. In fact, in the canon 79 of the Synod of Elvira, a catholic synod held in Spain between 305-306 AD, it is specified that gambling would have been sanctioned against with a year of interdiction from the Eucharist.

Considering the impact that such severe and official declaration would have had on the Christian community of the time, we may think that board games in general had been banned. In fact, the situation was far more complex, at least in Rome and in the early catholic context, since a great number of games and board games have been found in early Christian catacombs and sites, sometimes with religious messages or implications.

The great majority of this archaeological evidence has already been published by A. Ferrua in a volume focusing on the board games found in the catacombs and dated to the late Roman Empire, but some material of a certain interest, and quite enigmatic, is still unpublished or has never been taken into consideration:

A fresco found in a Christian burial site – the Cubiculum L of the hypogeum located in Dino Compagni road – show a gaming scene with a strange tool which seems to be used to throw dice; and an engraving on a marble slab placed in the internal cloister of the Basilica of the Santi Quattro Coronati, which might indicate a board game, is currently considered as such by the Roman archaeological community.

These two pieces of evidence, which are already enigmatic by themselves, seem even more problematic since they are situated in sites with a deep Catholic connotation, a religious context which should generally be hostile to board games.

### **Bio**

I am a researcher in the Italian Association of History Teachers *Clio'92*, and part of the main European Association of History Teachers and Educators *EuroClio*, established by the Council of Europe. I have been interested in ancient board games since 2010, and together with my work team I created a history course for students and teachers based on the use of ancient board games. Thanks to this research I held speeches and lessons at the university of Bergamo, Verona, Brescia, Milan, Greenwich, Rutgers University, and published some articles and courses for history teachers in specialized reviews. In early November, I held a speech in the Italian Ministry of Education.

### **Select Publications**

Tibaldini, M., "Sviluppare competenze storiche attraverso una finzione scenica" in *I quaderni di Clio*, ed. Cenacchi, Bologna 2016.

Tibaldini, M. & M. Scacchi, "I giochi e la scuola" in *Quaderni di vita scolastica*, ed. Giunti Scuola, Firenze 2015.

Tibaldini, M., "Che cos'è la storia? Scopriamolo con un gioco" in *Mundus - rivista di didattica della storia*, ed. Palumbo, Palermo 2015.

Tibaldini, M., "Comuni medievali, un gioco di plancia" in *Quaderni, 7 ed. - il paesaggio agrario italiano e medievale*, ed. Istituto Alcide Cervi, Gattatico 2010.

Tibaldini, M., "Il festival del mondo antico ridisegna il futuro" in *Mundus - rivista di didattica della storia*, ed. Palumbo, Palermo 2010.

Tibaldini, M., "Giochi e civiltà, fare geo-storia attraverso i giochi tradizionali ed antichi" in *Tratti Geografici*, ed. FrancoAngeli, Milano 2017 (forthcoming).

## Glückshaus: The Game of 7

Dr Jonas Richter

*Academic Researcher*

*Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Germany*

The so-called *Glückshaus* is a dice game with two dice and a stake board with fields numbered 2-12, usually with a prominent number 7. Today, it seems to be popular in reenactment and larping. It is usually claimed to have originated in late medieval times – despite lack of evidence. What are the earliest shapes of this game that we know of, and is the name "Glückshaus" simply based on a misunderstanding? In an anthology of old board games, Erwin Glonnegger projects the dice game onto a board for a card game (most likely Turmspiel), which has led to modern rules for the game that assume boards without a field for the number 4. Before Glonnegger, the *Game of Seven* had already seen many changes, its most notorious version being the anti-semitic *Game of the Jew* dating from around 1800. Comparing variations of the game through the centuries, what stories did the game tell in its various incarnations?

### **Bio**

Jonas Richter studied German language and literature and history of religions in Göttingen and Dublin. His PhD thesis (in print) focuses on ancient astronaut mythology in the writings of Erich von Däniken. Richter works for the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities in a research project publishing a new Middle High German dictionary.

### **Select Publications**

"Paläo-SETI" in G. Mayer, M. Schetsche, I. Schmied-Knittel & D. Vaitl (eds.) *An den Grenzen der Erkenntnis. Handbuch der wissenschaftlichen Anomalistik*. Stuttgart: Schattauer 2015.

"Traces of the Gods. Ancient Astronauts as a Vision of Our Future" in *Numen* 59 (2012), pp. 222–248.

"Jenseits des Sachbuchs: Erich von Dänikens Astronautengötter in Romanen, Kurzgeschichten und Multimedia" in A. Lewicki, M. Möller, J. Richter & H. Rösch (eds.) *Religiöse Gegenwartskultur. Zwischen Integration und Abgrenzung*. Münster: LIT-Verlag 2012 (Villigst Profile Bd. 14), pp. 287-305.

With Gerd H. Hövelmann & Gerhard Mayer: "2012 – und kein Ende" (editorial) in Hövelmann, Mayer & Richter (eds.) *2012 – Deutungen und Bedeutungen des Mayakalenders*. Zeitschrift für Anomalistik 12,1 (2012), pp. 5-13.

## The Mystery of the Black 26-Sided Die

Jakob Gloger

*Collector & Games Historian*

*European Society of Game-Collectors & Dice Maniacs' Club, Leipzig, Germany*

Once a very unique die became part of a dice collection, and with it an enormous mystery. This talk is about a polyhedral die with 26 sides. The die is made of a black stone and bears pips and letter pairs. For a long time its meaning was unknown. Does it belong to a special game, and who played with it? Experts interpreted the letter pairs as the first letters of Latin words, and therefore classified the die as belonging to Roman times, but the perspective adopted here seems to prove them wrong. Where did this kind of die come from? It is likely that it was manufactured in Germany.

Feel free to join the journey through several centuries and learn more about present and recent views, the meaning of the letter pairs, the material, the rules, and, in this way, the history of the die.

### **Bio**

Jakob Gloger has been fascinated by dice since primary school. His collection currently includes over 10.000 items, and contains dice, dice machines, and dice games.

### **Select Exhibitions & Publications**

In recent years he has presented parts of his personal collection in several exhibitions in German museums:

- Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig: September 29, 2010 - January 30, 2011
- Turmuhrenmuseum Naunhof: August 12, 2012 - September 23, 2012
- Naturalienkabinett Waldenburg: August 18, 2014 - November 8, 2014
- Schloss Lauenstein: November 26, 2016 - March 26, 2017

Numerous images of objects from his collection are depicted in Ulrich Vogt's book *Der Würfel ist gefallen – 5000 Jahre rund um den Kubus*.

# Session 1b

## Models, Metaphors, Meanings

### The Symbolic Meanings of the Merels Board

Marisa Uberti

*Independent researcher*

*Historical Research Group of Rovato & Centro Studi Triplice Cinta, Bergamo, Italy*

The popular game of merels assumes, in certain contexts, a value that goes beyond the playful aspect. In this presentation, the speaker will show numerous examples of Merels boards on which it is impossible to play a game; therefore, it becomes important to consider the symbolic aspect of the object, which is not always easy to decipher, and often remains enigmatic. The speaker will show examples discovered through 16 years of research, and demonstrate their distribution through the projection of statistical charts. Through personal effort and the Centro Studi Triplice Cinta, the speaker has collected more than 3.000 examples worldwide, some highly curious and mysterious with regard to their real meaning, others accompanied by legends and metaphors. Based on the location, characteristics and contexts of the boards, four major non-game categories of interpretation have been established:

- 1) Esoteric (initiation, magical-religious, apotropaic)
- 2) Professional ( "Signum Tabellionis", brand builders, sign recognition)
- 3) Astronomical
- 4) Artistic / decorative

The presentation will outline the main arguments of the study through text and image.

#### **Bio**

Marisa Uberti is an independent researcher of scientific training belonging to the Historical Research Group of Rovato (province of Brescia, Lombardy, Italy). Since 2000 she has been passionate about the study of table games (merels, little merels, alquerque, fox & geese), in particular the Triplice Cinta (nine men's morris). Much of her research has been undertaken in the field. In 2013 she founded the Centro Studi Triplice Cinta which aims to do a 360° survey of the material in question. The study center is composed of members of various nations, but especially Italians. The primary objectives of the center is

to collect an expanding and updated international database, interact with other scholars and enthusiasts, acquire and provide reference literature, publish articles, and disclose and support initiatives and events.

In 2008 Marisa Uberti published (with Giulio Coluzzi) a book called *I luoghi delle Triplici Cinte in Italia: alla ricerca di un simbolo sacro o di un gioco senza tempo?* (Eremon Editions, 2008). In 2012 she published the book *The Merels Board Enigma. With worldwide census* (self-published, translated by Gianluca Toro). The book was also published in Italian.

## **From India to Europe and Back: Comparing War Mentalities in Chess Variants through the Ages**

**Dr Maria Schetelich**  
*Indologist (retired)*  
*University of Leipzig, Germany*

There seems to be no doubt that the idea of war has been behind the invention of chess, and through the ages, countless variants have been invented to illustrate or adapt it to different forms and notions of the game and its terminologies. The paper deals in a comparative way with five chess variants: two from Europe (Riesenschach and Schoenberg chess) and three from India (*catūrāji*, *hariharacaturaṅga* and the modern *budhibala*) – to get an idea of the different mentalities of the games and the different notions of war behind them that were responsible for their respective characteristic features: the experience of direct participation in real battle (four-handed Schoenberg chess), the memory of an event of national history (two-handed Riesenschach), the aspiration for world-emperors by becoming "Lord of the Four Cardinal Directions" (four-handed *catūrāji*), the staging of an event from Hindu mythology on the chessboard (two-handed great chess *hariharacaturaṅga*), and winning a war through the strategical problem of subduing the enemy king by using only a single type of one's own forces (two-handed traditional *budhibala*).

### **Bio**

1957 - 1962: Study of Indology and Ethnology at Humboldt-University Berlin.

1962 - 1993: Research worker (Indian history, economy and culture) at the Institute of Oriental Studies (later: Central Institute of Ancient History and Archaeology), German Academy of Science, Berlin (East).

1993 - 2003: Research assistant, Institute of Indian and Central Asian Studies, University of Leipzig.

Retired since August 2003.

*Fields of Interest:* History and culture (ancient and medieval) of India and Nepal; history of Indian political theory (*artha-* and *nītiśāstra*); intellectual history (universities and science) of Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries; history of chess and related subjects.

## **Dame Fortune and God's Providence: A Conceptual Metaphor Analysis of a Swedish Dice Game Book from the 17th Century**

Dr Iris Ridder

*Associate Professor of Comparative Literature  
University of Dalarna, Sweden*

Cognitive metaphors are perceived as a conceptual phenomenon, where an underlying source domain and an underlying target domain interact and result in new insights. They are regarded as cognitive tools that facilitate, and enables our orientation in, and understanding of, the world. In my paper I will present a conceptual metaphor analysis of a Swedish dice game book from the 17th century, written by Gisle Jacobson, mining clerk employed at Stora Kopparberget. The text was printed in 1613 and titled *A small pastime, wherewith to while away time*. With the starting-point in the so-called "dobblet", a game of dice played by the mine workers at New Year's Eve in order to determine the mining order and the allotment of rock, Gisle Jacobson presents certain rules of life, as well as a series of moral and practical advice. The work of the miners in Falun was hazardous; characterized by great effort and even greater dangers. This paper analyses the game text's semantic fields concerning luck and fate, to elucidate in what way the oracle game affects the reader on an ethical and emotional level.

### **Bio**

Iris Ridder is Associate Professor at the University of Dalarna in Sweden. She is currently working on a monograph on the use of games in the medieval and late medieval Swedish mining society of Falun and its mining enterprise, Great Copper Mountain (Stora Kopparberget in Swedish). Iris Ridder has written several articles about the subject and recently published: "Dicing towards death: An oracle game for miners at the Falun copper mine from the early 17th century" in M. Korpiola & A. Lahtinen (eds.) *Cultures of Death and Dying in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. COLLEGIUM: Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Science. Vol. 18, 2015. Helsinki: Collegium for Advanced Studies, pp. 129-151.

# Session 2

## Ancient Games

### Divining Love Games in Ancient Greece

Jennifer Genovese

*Archaeologist*

*Swiss Museum of Games, La Tour-de-Peilz, Switzerland*

Julius Pollux in his work *Onomasticon* mentioned several games including Kóttabos, Krina or Telephilon. Athenaus of Naucratis, Agathias or Theocritus also refer to certain of these games which have been little documented. What do they all share? They are divining love games. Sure enough, in Ancient Greece, young people often relied on fate in order to acquaint themselves with their future beloved. The games played sometimes held an important role. To date, however there isn't a complete study that analyses the phenomenon.

This presentation will start by looking at the well known Kóttabos, the best described amongst the three. Very popular at banquets during the fifth century BC, this game of dexterity takes on a highly symbolic dimension on Greek vases of the same era. It will then try to understand Krina and Telephilon, two games that involve the use of Poppy flowers.

An analysis of the texts of the Ancients in order to describe and possibly understand these games is also proposed. Greek iconography has been used to reinforce findings.

Lastly, the fact that maybe some of these games or variations of them are still played today will be considered. The objective is not to offer a definitive study, the research accomplished into the subject being in early stages but rather to arouse remarks and comments on the subject.

#### **Bio**

Jennifer Genovese (1984) is an archaeologist (Greek and Roman archaeology – MAS) graduated from the University of Lausanne (Switzerland). She is also completing a diploma in cultural management. She is in charge of the cultural mediation of the Swiss Museum of Games for 5 years.

**Select Publications**

AA. VV., *Mah-Jong, le jeu, sous la direction de Jennifer Genovese*. Arles: Éditions Philippe Piquier, 2015.

Genovese, J., "Jouer avec les chiens dans l'Antiquité" in *Archéothéma* 31 (November-December 2013), p. 26.

**Board Games in Pre-Islamic Indonesia: Finds of Gaming Implements from Shipwreck Sites Considered against Old Javanese and Classical Malay Textual Evidence**

Dr Jiri Jakl

*Gonda Fellow*

*International Institute of Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden, Netherlands*

During the last ten years, Indonesian archaeologists have reported finds of "gaming pieces", fragments of gaming boards, and specimens of other gaming implements from a dozen of shipwreck sites, mostly in the Java Sea, as well as from a number of early urban centres in Java, Sumatra, and Sulawesi. These finds (dated to the 10th to 16th centuries CE), most of them published only in Indonesian-language journals, have never been studied in the proper context of gaming, and there was no effort to contextualise the archaeological artefacts with what we know about board games from the Old Javanese (9-15th centuries CE) literary and epigraphical corpus, and from classical Malay (13-17th centuries CE) textual records. In my contribution I discuss some of these finds in detail, and offer a preliminary overview of how the maritime "Silk Road" helped to promote and disseminate Indian and Chinese gaming cultures in pre-modern maritime Southeast Asia.

**Bio**

Jiri studied Old Javanese at the Leiden University (MA), and holds a PhD from the University of Queensland, Brisbane, for his work on the history of warfare in Java before 1500 CE. Currently, Jiri is a Gonda fellow at the International Institute of Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden. Jiri is interested in the social history of Indonesia, and in Old Javanese and Sanskrit medical literature.

## Phanjika Revisited: Notes On the Early History of Pachisi

Jacob Schmidt-Madsen

*PhD Fellow*

*University of Copenhagen, Denmark*

The Indian predecessor of the modern games Ludo and Parcheesi is known in several variations most commonly referred to as *chaupar*, *chausar*, or *pachisi*. Though often declared as the national game of India, with a hoary history reaching back to the most ancient of times, no incontrovertible evidence of the game prior to the 16th century has emerged so far. Attempts at identifying it with the game played by Shakuni and Yudhisthira in the *Mahabharata* or by Shiva and Parvati in early Indian sculpture have all been convincingly disproved.

In 1892 Edward Falkener noted certain resemblances between the games of *ashta-kasthe* and *pachisi*. Though the former was played on a square and the latter on a cruciform board, the overall concept of the two games as well as several particulars were found to be identical. Today *pachisi* has all but died out, while *ashta-kasthe* boards continue to be scratched into the ground and played under various regional names in towns and villages throughout India and Nepal. This presentation suggests that not only may *ashta-kasthe* have outlived *pachisi*, it may even have preceded and engendered it.

The main argument is based on a 12th-century description of an unidentified game called *phanjika*. The description appears in a compendium on royal life (*Manasollasa*) which has been extensively mined for information regarding chess and backgammon, with little attention paid to other games. While earlier attempts at understanding *phanjika* have pointed in the direction of a strange hybrid between an amorous pastime and a gambling game, a fresh look at the description in question suggests a previously unattested 4-player race game which might help close the gap between *ashta-kasthe* and *pachisi*.

### **Bio**

Jacob Schmidt-Madsen is a PhD Fellow in the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies at the University of Copenhagen. His current research focuses on the religious origins of Snakes & Ladders among the Jain and Vaishnava communities of 18th and 19th century Western India. Other fields of interest include story literature, narrative painting, and meaningful play.

# Session 3

## Games Beyond Play

### Does Senet Still Exist? The Ontology of a Game without Rules

Dr Espen Aarseth  
*Professor of Game Studies*  
*IT University of Copenhagen, Denmark*

The ancient game of Senet, found in Egyptian tombs from about 3000 B.C. (Kendall 1978), presents an interesting ludo-philological challenge: the rules are not known, only the board, pieces, and a few depictions of its use. Several rule-sets have been invented in recent times, but in what sense can the game itself be said to have survived? Or has it been lost? For the game scholar, the question becomes, is it possible to study a game without its rules? The paper investigates methodological and existential aspects of researching a game without rules, using modern game ontology (Aarseth and Calleja 2015) and meta-ontology (Grabarczyk and Aarseth 2015), to answer the question: In which sense is Senet a game that still exists?

#### References

- Aarseth, E. & Calleja, G. (2015). "The Word Game: The ontology of an undefinable object" in *Proceedings of the FDG*. <http://www.academia.edu/download/38701336/thewordgame-final-final.pdf>.
- Grabarczyk, P. & E. Aarseth (2015). "Sustainable game ontologies: How to build an ontology that does not fall apart two days later", paper presented at the 2015 CEEGS conference, Krakow.
- Kendall, T. (1978). *Passing Through the Netherworld: The Meaning and Play of Senet an Ancient Egyptian Funerary Game*. Kirk Game Company.

#### Bio

Espen Aarseth is head of the Center for Computer Games Research and professor of game studies at the IT University of Copenhagen, where he has worked since 2003. He is also the Editor-in-Chief of *Game Studies*, the oldest peer reviewed journal in the field. His current research concerns ideological, narrative, semiotic and ontological aspects of games and game communication, as well as topics such as game addiction, games and meaning, and digital literature, culture and aesthetics. Aarseth is also an ERC Advanced Grant laureate with the project *MSG: Making Sense of Games* (2016-21).

## **Hainhofer at Play: The Games of an Art Cabinet**

Greger Sundin

*PhD Candidate*

*Uppsala University, Sweden*

Games were important to the Augsburg art agent Philipp Hainhofer (1578-1647), and this ludic category was included in most of his art cabinets. It offered amusement (*Kurzweil*) as part of an overall ambition for the cabinets to be of service and use (*nutzen vnd dienst*). Board games, dice, packs of cards, games of both chance and skill represented many of the various game types of its day, while constituting a material taxonomy of games. The encyclopaedic ambition of a *Kunstskammer* is apparent, and games provide an insight to courtly practices of the early modern period. With focus on the collections in the Gustavus Adolphus' *Kunstschränk* (1625-1631) and the *Pommerschen Kunstschränk* (1610-1615), this paper will address the material culture of games in the Hainhofer cabinets. What does a close study of the objects reveal? Were they merely representations of games or, rather, actively played?

### **Bio**

Greger Sundin is a PhD candidate at the Department of Art History at Uppsala University, Sweden, after previously being a curator for old master paintings and applied arts at Uppsala Auktionskammare for fourteen years. His forthcoming doctoral thesis has the title *A matter of amusement – The material culture of games and pastimes in European princely collections 1550-1750*, and while being inspired by the relatively large quantity of games in the Hainhofer art cabinet in Uppsala, the category is represented in most early modern collections in Europe.

## **Game Over: The End of Three Decades of Research on the Game of Chaupad**

Ute L. Rettberg

*Diplomat, Gallerist, Indologist (retired)*

*University of Bonn, Germany*

Heinz Westphal suggested already in 1974 to look into children's game for understanding old forms of living in North-West India. The first Mughal Emperor Babur tells us in his diary *Babur Nama* that in India everything is different; not only

the landscape, the climate, the people ... and when we then furthermore read in Harry Falk's habil-thesis that the ancient Indian game is based on the principle of losing the game and not on winning it, then a western researcher of games can be frustrated, if he is not acquainted with the Indian way of thinking, its habits and beliefs.

Leaving written examples of gaming like the *Mahabharata* and others aside, the living traditions have been an exciting field to explore during Indian marriages and their preparations, and also to find the name of a god without who's help nothing is started, nothing is functioning, in India. Ganesha, the god with an elephant's head, initiates all the preparations and festivities of Indian marriages, during which the bridal couple has a godlike status and the game of chaupad is/was played at different stages.

Ganesha has to begin "the playing of the game". And he has to share the importance of playing the game with Krishna, the avatar of Vishnu. In the temple of Shrinathji at Nathadwara, Chaupad is played with the most precious utensils to amuse the god at different times. The most famous and also the last Mahotsva (festival) was held in 1908-09 in Nathadwara, where the three idols of Shrinathji, Dwarkadishji of Kankaroli and Mathureshji of Kota were united in the temple for a one-year-long festival.

Outside the temples, nothing is known about the Chaupad game anymore; nobody plays it, though the Rajputs at least have one in their house – as a kind of charm of good luck. The last use of the game during a royal wedding (7/2010-3/2011) was – strangely enough – in the temple at the end of all the ceremonies.

Chaupad was never invented as a pastime-game, it was never a children's game, it was never played for amusement; one set of the game just had to be in the house. It was never lend to a neighbour or friend and it was never borrowed from them. And there are many other aspects to be observed.

Now the game, once played in palaces and huts alike, is replaced by computer games and can only be found in the temples of Rajasthan and very traditional Rajput families.

### **Bio**

1958: Abitur.

1959-62: Studied (law) and trained for the Foreign Service of the Federal Republic of Germany.

1962-68: Served my country at the Embassy in Tokyo and the Consulate General in Bombay (now Mumbai).

1966: Married Rolf Rettberg.

1973-82: Founder and director of SURYA Gallery for Modern Indian Art at Freinsheim.

1974: Stateguest of the Government of India for six weeks.

1984-92: Studied Indian Art History, Indology and Comparative Religions at the universities of Heidelberg and Bonn.

Until today regular and long travels to India.

### **Select Publications**

*Amulette und apotropäische Zeichen in Rajasthan und angrenzenden Gebieten.* MA thesis. Rheinische-Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 1991.

"Bhavnagar State Historical Cards: New Finds" in *The Playing-Card. Journal of the International Playing-Card Society*, North Walsham, U.K., Vol. 36, No.2, 2007.

"Das Chaupadspiel in Indien" in *Das Schach und seine asiatischen Verwandten: Ausstellungskatalog des Museums für Völkerkunde Dresden.* 2008.

# Thu 18 May

## Special Address

### Playing the Revolution? Social Upheaval and Cultural Inscription in Board Games

Dr Mary Flanagan

*Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Professor in Digital Humanities  
Dartmouth College, US*

In this essay, I focus on a slightly more recent phenomenon in board game history: three exemplar pictorial board games, each from succeeding centuries starting with the 18th, that capture and exemplify revolutions: in history, in culture, and in ideology through reinscribing norms. I will show that increasing complexity on the cultural landscape affected gameplay mechanics, and the pressure to normalize the problematic imperialist practice of colonialism led to new game genres.

#### **Bio**

Mary Flanagan, the Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Professor in Digital Humanities at Dartmouth College, is a leading innovator, artist, educator and designer, whose works have included everything from game-inspired art, to commercial games that shift people's thinking about biases and stereotypes. Her interest in play and culture led to her acclaimed book, *Critical Play*, with MIT Press (2009). Her fifth academic book, *Values at Play in Digital Games* (with philosopher Helen Nissenbaum, MIT 2014), demonstrates that thinking about values is a key to innovation. Flanagan established the internationally recognized game research laboratory Tiltfactor (<http://www.tiltfactor.org>) in 2003 to invent "humanist" games and take on social issues through games. At Tiltfactor, designers create and research catchy games that teach or transform "under the radar" using psychological principles.

# Session 4a

## Modern Times

### Will Technology Set Us Free? The Impact of Digital Systems in Non-Digital Gaming Experiences

Dr Antonio José Planells de la Maza

*Associate Professor*

*Tecnocampus-Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona, Spain*

In recent years modern board table games have innovated in both mechanics and narrative models. Thus, proposals such as "Legacy" titles or games built from a central narrative (*T.I.M.E. Stories*, *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective*) have emerged as great referents for the current ludic experience.

In this exploratory research we investigate the impact of the different technological approaches to contemporary board games. To do this, we analyze the use of digital media in the games *Alchemists*, *XCOM: The Board Game* and *Mansions of Madness* (Second Edition) from the perspective of the MDA model (Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics) established by Matt Leblanc.

Results show how the use of technologies in the game can substantially modify the experience itself, facilitating the management of information or the conversion of the game into a more cinematic and visual experience.

#### **Bio**

Antonio José Planells de la Maza (PhD), researcher and professor at Tecnocampus-Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona, Spain). He has studied Law, Media Studies and the Master of Applied Research to Mass Media at University Carlos III of Madrid and the Master of Advanced Studies in Social Communication at University Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona, Spain). His main research interests are related to fictional and possible worlds, ideology and character design.

#### **Select Publications**

Planells de la Maza, Antonio José (2015). "Video games and the crowdfunding ideology: From the gamer-buyer to the prosumer-investor" in *Journal of Consumer Culture* (OnlineFirst, 18 October 2015).

Planells de la Maza, Antonio José (2015). "The expressive power of the possible worlds theory in video games: when narratives become interactive and fictional spaces" in *Comunicação e Sociedade*, vol. 27, 2015, pp. 289-302.

## **Adaptations in Play: Strategies of Adaptation in Digital and Non-Digital Games**

Ida Kathrine Hammeleff Jørgensen  
*PhD Fellow*  
*IT University of Copenhagen, Denmark*

Since the early days of digital games, tabletop games have served as a source of inspiration for many game designers. Recently we have seen the occurrence of tabletop game adaptations of popular digital games such as *StarCraft* (Blizzard 2010). While tabletop games have evolved and been subject of adaptations throughout time (Parlett 1999), digital media provides an opportunity for a different spatial and temporal logic (Backe 2015), which should be taken into consideration in the study of adaptation of non-digital games to digital games and vice versa.

Adaptations make use of different strategies for capturing the various aspects of their source. *Talisman: Digital Edition* (Nomad Games 2014) largely adopts the same primary mechanics of the board game *Talisman* (Fantasy Flight Games 2008). The board game *Doom* (Fantasy Flight Games 2014) on the other hand, adopts characters and background story along with a fast pace and an asymmetrical gameplay, but nevertheless conveys a different experience of warfare than its source, the first-person shooter *Doom* (id Software 1993-present).

This presentation explores such adaptation strategies. It will study a number of adaptations and answer the question of what are the differences in the representational properties between the source game and its adaptation?

### **Bio**

Ida Kathrine Hammeleff Jørgensen is a PhD fellow at the IT University, Center for Computer Games Research. Her PhD project revolves around games as representational systems. The project is part of the ERC Advanced grant: *MSG – Making Sense of Games*. Other research interests have to do with animal play and games for animal.

## Inductive Settings, Deductive Mechanics, and How Pandemic Legacy Connects Them

Dr Ivan Mosca

*Academic Researcher*

*Department of Philosophy and Educational Sciences, University of Turin, Italy*

Since their origins, Eurogames have focused on mechanics and not on theme, setting, story, or meaning. Many Eurogame designers conceive their art as an abstract matter from which to *induce* a thematic cover, whereas "American" simulation designers *deduce* the mechanics from the theme. But a disruptive innovation is changing the Eurogame panorama and its consequences are surely on the same level as other revolutionary mechanics, such as "deckbuilding", "cooperation", "instant poolbuilding", and "card drafting". We are referring here to the LEGACY system introduced by designer Rob Daviau, the mechanics of which lead to the irruption of storyline-based Eurogames.

The framework of LEGACY games is a campaign mode with a well-designed plot, revealed within a series of matches. The openness of the abstract mechanics to thematic meaning is due to the introduction of a particular *double irreversibility*. Normally, game studies lay the foundation of games on reversibility (Caillois 1958) and non-linearity (Aarseth 1997), to the extent that the fundamentals of gaming have been tied to the possibility of restarting from scratch. But in LEGACY games there is a new kind of permanent death that transforms the gaming experience, structurally connecting mechanics and meaning.

### **Bio**

I am a researcher in the fields of social ontology, game studies and bioethics for the University of Turin, Italy. I have a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and a PhD in philosophy. Recently, I have investigated the notion of permadeath, gaming rules, ontology of games, and the role of gender in gaming. I explore these topics also through the design of gaming apparatuses for exhibitions, gamescons and other events. I am member of *Game Philosophy Network*, *In gioco*, *Labont*, *Philosophy for Children*, *Consulta di Bioetica*, and *Bioethos*.

### **Select Publications**

32. (2017) "Legacy's Legacy: Irreversibility and Permadeath in Legacy Games" in *Analog game Studies*, IV, I.

31. (2016) "The Testing Shift. Game testing as embedded empirical study of user response" in *Versus. Quaderni di studi semiotici*, 1/2016.
30. (2016) "What is it like to be a player? The qualia revolution in game studies" in *Games & Culture*: 1-20. DOI: 10.1177/1555412016666367.
27. (2015). "Why society depends on games ... but is not a game" in *Mustekala* (ISSN 2341-9873), peli 3/15, vol. 60.
26. (2015) "Jeu/Genre" in F. Lignon, (ed.) *Genre et jeux vidéo*. Tolosa: PUM.
23. (2014) "The Social Ontology of Digital Games" in H. Agius and M. Angelides (eds.) *Handbook of digital games*. Wiley-IEEE: 607-644. ISBN: 9781118328033.
20. (2014) "The Ontology of Gender in Computer Games" in *Mise au Point*, 6.
18. (2013) "From Fiction to Reality and Back. Ontology of Ludic Simulations" in *International Journal of Games and Computer-Mediated Simulations*, 5 (1), 13-31, January-March.

# Session 4b

## Education & Psychology

### Board Games in Learning Environments

Dr Kira van Bebbler-Beeg & Katarina Herde  
*Faculty of Educational Science, Bielefeld University, Germany*

In the international field of media education, "gaming" is practically only connected to digital environments; board games are not in focus of recent discourses and in the fields of studies. Germany has a unique, heterogeneous board game culture. Economically speaking, there are several German publishing houses like Ravensberger, Pegasus, Schmidt or Kosmos producing successful Eurogames. Furthermore, the world's leading game fair *SPIEL* is located in Essen. The board game community is constantly growing and showing the important role in current spare time activities. Therefore, board games should be in the focus of media education.

To make a start, at Bielefeld University (Germany) a course of teacher trainees examined the specific characteristics of gaming situations, including modern board games through participatory observations. The students observed gaming situations with young players aged 5 to 18 years to analyze educational aspects and learning potentials. The results show that quite a few learning areas are addressed while playing board games. The results led to several approaches for using board games in classrooms and other educational contexts. The results show the need for further research on board games in learning environments.

#### **Bios**

*Kira van Bebbler-Beeg* studied Educational Science at Bielefeld University and did her doctoral degree in the field of media pedagogy. As a current lecturer in the Department of Education she qualifies teacher trainees and students in educational science in the field of media pedagogy. Her current key topics are the opportunities and limitations of media participation for deaf students.

*Katharina Herde* studied Interdisciplinary Media Studies as well as Sociology and Text Technology at Bielefeld University. Besides her teaching activities at the Faculty of Educational Science, she does her postgraduate research in media pedagogy and works as a research associate at the project

"BiProfessional" at Bielefeld University. Her current key topics cover media pedagogy, media research and teacher training.

### Select Publications

Bebber-Beeg, Kira van & Katharina Herde [in print]: "Brettspiele – ein aktuelles medienpädagogisches Forschungsfeld?!" in *Merz medien + erziehung* 2017/01. (Title in English: "Board Games – a current field of research in media paedagogy?!")

Bebber-Beeg, Kira van (ed.) [forthcoming]: *Jugend 2016: Mediales Freizeitverhalten*. Universität Bielefeld. (Title in English: *Youth of 2016: media in free time activities*.)

Bebber-Beeg, Kira van (2016): "Inklusives Fernsehen. Die Serie Switched at Birth Ein Exempel für 'selbststärkendes', barrierefreies Fernsehen für Gehörlose?" in *Merz medien + erziehung Zeitschrift für Medienpädagogik* 60(3): 39-45. (Title in English: "Media and deafness: The tv series "Switched at Birth" as an example for empowering?")

Herde, Katharina, Henrike Friedrichs, Friederike von Gross & Uwe Sander (2016): "Habitusformen von Eltern im Kontext der Computerspielnutzung ihrer Kinder" in Sonderegger, Ruth, Thomas Ballhausen, Christian Berger, Katharina Kaiser-Müller, Christian Swertz et al. (eds.) *Medienimpulse 2014-2015*. Wien: New Academic Press. (Title in English: "Parental forms of habitus in the context of the computer game playing of their children.")

## Psychological Dynamics in the Popular Board Game Boom: An Ethnographic Study of Settlers of Catan as a Social Boundary Object

Dr Andreas Lieberoth & Ira Ellefsen (w/ Marlene Nielsen & Dr Charlotte Jonasson)  
*Interacting Minds Centre (IMC), Aarhus University, Denmark*

The 2010s board game boom is characterized by several cultural, technological and societal convergences, including a psychological desire to carve out meaningful spaces for social interaction in an increasingly digital life. But what characterizes the interactions and social qualities of a board game compared to other shared activities? More specifically, how do motifs and demands oriented toward the gameplay itself interact with motifs and demands oriented toward the social sphere? Can this distinction show how the same game can lead to widely different game experiences, depending on the motifs at play in each game group?

In this study, we observed the use of board games as a schematized social activity at a

Danish boarding school for young adults (Højskole). We specifically analysed the differential dynamics in several ad hoc formed groups playing *Settlers of Catan*. Through participant observation and subsequent thematic analysis based in sociocultural psychology, we identified examples of intersections between game and social motifs, including instances where one or both suffered due to imperfect alignment. Misalignment between players' orientation had consequences for the flow, learning opportunities, and social dynamic of the group, and at times led to breakdowns in the gameplay or social conflicts.

The boarding school in question had a large population of disabled students, so inclusion and the negotiation of social relations was an explicit goal for the game activity. Furthermore, several of the non-disabled participants were at the school, or indeed in the course, as personal helpers for other students, and/or in order to build competences related to the care professions. As such, in our particular case, multiple, sometimes conflicting, motifs to participate are clearly on display. A generalizable point emerging from this work is that board games are excellent boundary objects for social interaction. However, these very same boundary objects place great demands on the player, which can both be attractive and problematic at a social psychological level, requiring participants to align not just around the game as artefact, but in terms of their motifs to play.

### **Bios**

*Andreas Lieberoth*, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, Danish School of Education (DPU), & Interacting Minds Centre (IMC), Aarhus University.

*Ira Ellefsen*, Cand. Psych.

*Marlene Nielsen*, Cand. Scient, TrygFonden's Centre for Child Research, School of Business and Social Sciences, Aarhus University.

*Charlotte Jonasson*, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences, Aarhus University.

The research was conducted as a cross-disciplinary team effort at the Interacting Minds Centre (IMC), Aarhus University. The authors have collectively published on topics such as education, failure as a psychological construct, motivation, gamification, and game research methods.

## Games and Mind

Dr Christian Schmidt  
*Professor Emeritus of Economics*  
*Paris Dauphine University, France*

The presentation first surveys the results of brain investigations (neuroimaging: fMRI, PET, etc.) during the process of different games (La Mora and Rock-Paper-Scissors, but also Poker, Go, etc.). The results revealed differential neural activations in the brains of the players according to the nature of their opponents and strategic decisions. The obtained results were then modeled in an extensive game theoretical format in order to provide interesting social interpretations. Several suggestive features of mind abilities are derived from their computation, concerning in particular the impact of game situations on the inter-intentionality and inter-subjectivity between humans. We conclude with a brief analysis of the impact of gaming on individual and social behaviors, including addiction.

### **Bio**

Professor Emeritus at Paris Dauphine University and President of the European Neuroeconomics Association. My researches are mainly devoted to game theory. More recently I have turned my interest to neuroscience with special application to gaming activities and addictive gambling.

### **Select Publications**

*La théorie des jeux.* 2003.

*Neuroéconomie: comment les Neurosciences transforment l'analyse économique.* 2010.

With P. Livet: *Comprendre nos interactions sociales.* 2014.

# Session 5

## Classifying Games

### Murray's Classification of Board Games

Dr Ulrich Schädler  
*Director of the Swiss Museum of Games*  
*La Tour-de-Peilz, Switzerland*

Classification has been and is a continuous concern in the study of games. But it seems to me that classification of board games is more often used in a mere practical way in order to devise a book into chapters or to create an order in a collection or exhibition. Only rarely have attempts been made to approach classification as a scientific method, which is used in different disciplines with the aim to posit a thesis or to answer specific questions. One very influential classification of board games has been proposed by Harold J. R. Murray. In *A History of Chess* (Oxford 1913: 31) Murray defined three groups of board games, namely race games, hunt or siege games and war games. In favour of this classification he argued that it was due "to the universality of the activities which the games symbolize". This view was opposed to Stewart Culin's, who was of the opinion that games were "based upon certain fundamental conceptions of the universe" (*Korean Games*, Philadelphia 1895, xviii). Murray, however, did not add further explanation as to the origin of his classification nor the scientific background of his statement. Nearly four decades later in *A History of Board Games other than Chess* (Oxford 1952: 4-5) Murray altered and improved his system by adding two new classes, i.e. games of configuration and alinement and mancala games. He based his now fivefold classification on the "anthropological" assumption "that games are typical of early activities and occupations of man – the battle, the siege or hunt, the race, alignment, arrangement, and counting" (ibid.: 4). As before, Murray did neither explain nor discuss his new classification.

The paper tries to examine the question of where Murray's ideas came from. Murray himself hinted to 19th century anthropologists such as Alfred C. Haddon, Edward B. Tylor and the German philosopher and psychologist Karl Groos. So we shall examine

their theories and their relationship to Murray's classification in order to criticize the continuous use of it, despite its obvious lack of a scientific basis.

### **Bio**

Ulrich Schädler, PhD, DPhil.; studies in Architecture (Technical University Darmstadt), Greek & Roman Archaeology, Prehistory and Ancient History at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, Germany, and Università "La Sapienza", Rome, Italy. Director of the Swiss Museum of Games at La Tour-de-Peilz and lecturer at the University of Fribourg (Greek & Roman Archaeology). Co-editor (together with Rainer Buland) of *Ludographie – Spiel und Spiele*.

Current research projects:

- *A Survey of the Roman and Byzantine Games in Ancient Ephesus* (conducted with the support of the Austrian Archaeological Institute, Vienna).
- *Veni vidi ludique* ([www.venividiludique.ch](http://www.venividiludique.ch)): toys and games of ancient Greece and Rome (together with Véronique Dasen, University of Fribourg).

### **Select Publications**

"Prekäre Ordnung: «Kriegsspiel» -- Panoramablick auf ein schwieriges Kompositum" in E. Strohal (ed.) *Agon und Ares. Der Krieg und die Spiele*. Campus Verlag Frankfurt 2016, pp. 23-44.

"Une brève histoire du Mahjong" in J. Genovese (ed.) *Mahjong – le jeu*. Ed. Picquier Musée Suisse du Jeu 2015, pp. 9-30.

"Das Spiel der Engländer. Backgammon im Ms Royal 13 A 18" in Matthias Teichert (ed.) *Sport und Spiel bei den Germanen. Nordeuropa von der römischen Kaiserzeit bis zum Mittelalter*. Berlin 2013, pp. 109-162.

*Jeux et Jouets gréco-romains*. *Archéothéma* no. 31, nov-dec. 2013 (ed. with V. Dasen).

"Jouer par terre" in *Art du jeu, jeu dans l'art. Catalogue de l'exposition au Musée de Cluny*. RMN-Grand Palais 2012, pp. 20-23.

"Games Greek and Roman" in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*. First Edition. Edited by Roger S. Bagnall et al. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2012, pp. 2841-2844.

## **Dexterity: Between Choice and Randomness**

Dr David King

*Acting Course Leader for MA Games Design*

*London College of Communication, UK*

In table-top games, players are provided with choices and random events. It is these divergent moments in a game, which allow the game's possibility space to be explored. The game responds to the players and the players to the game. Dexterity, where the physical skill of the player is judged, lies between these two aspects. The player chooses to take certain movements with their bodies but the outcomes are uncertain. Depending on the skill of the player and the difficulty of the task, success can lie anywhere between simple and improbable. Just as a player can get better at making the correct choices, a player can improve their dexterity over time. This improvement in player skill moves them away from randomness and closer to choice.

Where simulation in games seek to represent skill through varying statistics and randomness, something that is most commonly seen in table-top role-playing games (*Dungeons and Dragons*), games of dexterity can either create games where one skill is abstracted for another (*Subbuteo*, *Flick-em Up*, *Catacombs*) or games which purely exist for their own sake (*Jenga*, *Twister*). It is in this first set of abstracted skill games that we can seek some meaning of narrative play.

### **Bio**

David King is the Acting Course Leader for MA Games Design at London College of Communication. His research focuses on the methods games use to communicate mechanics and systems to the player, be this a breakdown of rules for board games or systems of state transitions and feedback in digital games. As a designer, David aims for small elegant systems that create an emergent sense of playfulness between objects, people and themselves. As an indie developer, he experiments in a broad range of mediums – looking at board games, digital games, games as installations and pen and paper role-play.

# Fri 19 May

## Special Address

### **The Playful and the Serious: Multiple Perspectives On Games In Ancient Greek Society**

Dr Barbara Carè

*Postdoctoral Researcher*

*Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei & British Academy Research Fellow*

The gaming sphere has constituted a very popular issue from early in the emerging discipline of ancient Greek culture studies, in archaeological scholarships as well as in antiquaries. Considerable attention has been given to the archaeological record and iconographic evidence related to games, generally deciphered as realistic sources of information about ancient amusements and as argument for a heritable continuity until today.

Nonetheless, games and game imagery assumed a strong symbolic connotation in antiquity; hence, evidence related to the ludic dimension can also be read as signifiers of deeper symbolic and ideological values, especially when deposited in archaeological contexts, such as sacred spaces or burial areas strictly conditioned by codified ritual behavior and gestures.

The presentation offers an insight into this rarely explored topic by focusing on the contextualization of archaeological materials. Some case studies will be discussed in an attempt to shed light on the metaphorical meanings game-related evidence has been overlaid with in terms of socio-cultural meanings or eschatological beliefs.

#### **Bio**

Barbara Carè is a postdoctoral researcher specialized in classical archaeology. She earned her PhD from the University of Turin (Italy), where she also received the academic title of "Cultore" of Classical Archaeology. As a field archaeologist, serving as field supervisor and technician within the excavation

team of the same University, she has taken part in excavations on Greek sites in Magna Graecia and Sicily as well as on Roman sites in Northern Italy; she is currently engaged in studying different categories of finds for forthcoming publications.

She did postdoctoral studies in Greece in the framework of XVIII Onassis Fellowship Program for International Scholars and the "Academy of Plato" program of research grants promoted by the Onassis Foundation in collaboration with the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She has been recently awarded a research fellowship from Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei and British Academy; during the course of the fellowship she will spend 5 months as visiting scholar at the University of Nottingham.

Her academic interests include Greek ceramic productions, archaeology of funerary practices (especially with regard to child-related rites and goods), and history of ancient toys and games.

She is currently conducting a research project aiming at shedding light on the symbolic values of astragali and on the ritual behaviours involving these objects in the ancient Greek world.

### **Select Publications**

"A proposito dell'astragalo nel mondo greco: note a margine di uno studio recente" in *Orizzonti. Rassegna di Archeologia* XIV, 2013.

"Le symbolisme des astragales" in V. Dasen & U. Schädler (eds.) *Jeux et jouets gréco-romains. Archéothéma* no. 31, 2013.

"La bambola e l'astragalo nelle tombe greche: testimonianze del mondo ludico infantile?" in C. Lambrugo & C. Torre (eds.) *Il gioco e i giochi nel mondo antico tra cultura materiale e immateriale. Atti della giornata di Studi (Milano, 22 febbraio 2011)*. Documenti e Studi 55. Bari, 2013.

"L'astragalo in tomba nel mondo greco: un indicatore infantile? Vecchi problemi e nuove osservazioni a proposito di un aspetto del costume funerario" in A. Hermary & C. Dubois (eds.) *L'enfant et la mort dans l'antiquité III. Le matériel associé aux tombes d'enfants*. BIAMA, 12, 2012.

# Session 6a

## Tracing History, cont.

### Uneven Forces: Asymmetrical Games

Bruce Whitehill

*Games Historian & Game Developer*

*Eickeloh, Germany*

Most games are endeavors in which all players are given the same materials and have access to the same resources. However, sometimes the competing forces are uneven – but not necessarily unequal. These asymmetrical games – which have existed for centuries – can take on a number of forms:

1. A two-player game in which each player has a different number of playing pieces and a different objective;
2. A two-player game in which players have the same pieces (more rare) but the movement and objectives are different;
3. A multi-player game in which at least one player has different objectives than the others.

This presentation offers an overview of these different types of asymmetrical games, from hnefatafl, the "Viking Game," popular in Scandinavia in the fifth century, to the international game of *Siege*, to games released in the past couple of years, such as the two-player *Raptor* and multi-player *Not Alone*. The research also examines the cultural differences between similar games, or, in fact, games that have identical play but whose themes are slightly different. For example, fox & geese in England is the same as tiger & goats in Nepal and linked to such variations as wolf & sheep and cows & leopards.

#### **Bio**

Bruce Whitehill is the foremost historian of American games; his book, *Games: American Games and Their Makers, 1822-1992*, is considered the most authoritative work on the history of American game

companies ever published. His later book (2004), *Americanopoly – A View of America Through its Games*, looks at the history and culture of the United States as depicted in the themes and images on games from the 1840s into the 21st century. Mr Whitehill's writing has appeared in encyclopedias and in international journals, as well as in cultural and collector magazines in the US and Europe. He was the senior editor of *Games Annual* magazine, the associate editor of the international magazine, *Games Games Games*, published in England, and the senior contributor of *Knucklebones* game magazine. Mr. Whitehill now writes a regular column for the English edition of *Spielbox* (games) magazine.

Having completed his MA coursework (San Francisco State University) in cross-cultural communication, Mr. Whitehill explores the role of games in education, leisure, and family life. He writes about games as a reflection of culture, and examines the similarities and differences between games in different societies.

## **The Royal Pastime of Cupid: Two Early English Association Copies**

Eddie Duggan

*Senior Lecturer*

*Department of Science and Technology, University of Suffolk, UK*

This paper will review several well-known English examples of *The Royal Pastime of Cupid or the Entertaining Game of the Snake* and also present two early and lesser-known association copies, both printed in London by John Garrett.

The R. H. Laurie print, dated c. 1850, is well known. The V&A website notes the transfer of stock between the various owners of the business at 53 Fleet Street, suggesting Laurie's 1850 print uses Robert Sayer's 1750 plate with the imprimatur updated. Whitehouse (1951) includes Sayer's *Royal Pastime of Cupid* in his "list of games known to have been published"; however, it has not been possible to locate Sayer's 1750 print although a Carington Bowles print, dated ca. 1765, was sold by a dealer in Tennessee.

Several 1794 examples are known: the Bodleian has a Laurie & Whittle print, and another "printed and sold by William Dicey at his printing office in Bow Church-Yard London". A third, attributed to Laurie & Whittle, bears the imprint "Printed & sould by John Garrett at his shop next ye stayers of ye Royall Exchange in Cornhill".

John Garrett is also the printer of two earlier and less-well known association copies. One, dated to 1700, belonged to George Clarke (1661-1736) and is in the George Clarke

Print Collection at Worcester College, Oxford. The other, dated 1690, was owned by Narcissus Luttrell (1657-1732) and is part of the Bute Broadside collection in the Houghton Library at Harvard.

### **Bio**

Eddie Duggan is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Science and Technology at the University of Suffolk, where he contributes to undergraduate teaching on the BA (Hons) Computer Games Design course. He organised the XVII Board Game Studies Colloquium in 2014 and recently co-edited the proceedings of the 2014 colloquium, published by Associação Ludus in 2016. His 2015 BGS XVIII presentation on pervasive games has been expanded into a book chapter, published by Springer.

### **Select Publications**

Duggan, E. (2017) "Spintriae: Evidence for Historic Games". Presentation to Heritage Futures Research Seminar, University of Suffolk, Ipswich. 1 March 2017. <<http://bit.ly/2jjMbiB>>.

Duggan, E. (2017) "Squaring the (Magic) Circle: A Brief Definition and History of Pervasive Games" in A. Nijholt (ed.) *Playable Cities: The City as Digital Playground*. Springer. Singapore, pp. 111-135. <<http://bit.ly/2jsywAI>>.

Duggan, E. & D. W. J. Gill (eds.) (2016) *From Cardboard to Keyboard: Proceedings of the XVII Annual Colloquium of the International Board Game Studies Association. UCS Ipswich 21-24 May 2014*. Associação Ludus. Lisbon. <<http://bit.ly/1U57q2h>>.

Duggan, E. (2016) "Strange Games: some Iron Age examples of a four-player board game?" in E. Duggan & D. W. J. Gill (eds.) *From Cardboard to Keyboard: Proceedings of the XVII Annual Colloquium of the International Board Game Studies Association. UCS Ipswich 21-24 May 2014*. Associação Ludus. Lisbon, pp. 77-101. <<http://bit.ly/2kHJNLX>>.

Duggan, E. (2016) "Stranger Games: The Life and Times of the Spintriae". Presentation to XIX Annual International Board Game Studies Colloquium, German Games Archive, Nuremburg. 13–16 April 2016. <<http://bit.ly/2eAvBV0>>.

Duggan, E. (2015) "Strange Games: some Iron Age examples of a four-player board game?" in *Board Game Studies Journal* 9, pp. 17-40. <<http://bit.ly/2jjHeGp>>.

Duggan E. (2015) "Off the Board: A Brief Definition and History of Pervasive Games". Paper presented to XVIII Annual International Board Game Studies Colloquium, Swiss Museum of Games, La Tour-de-Peilz, Switzerland. 15–18 April 2015. <<http://bit.ly/2kIe5RF>>.

## Metropolis: The First Real Sci-Fi Game

Fred Horn

*Game Collector & Inventor*

*Den Haag, Netherlands*

In July 2016 I saw an add on the selling site "Marktplaats" for the game *Metropolis*.

This game has been in my Collection for years, but the interesting part in the add was what was said about the origin of the game: "Very unique boardgame, designed by my father (I can prove this) in the 70s."

At most the "provable authorship" urged me to contact the seller, who turned out to be Mrs Ellis de Jager, a daughter of the author.

After meeting Jaap de Jager, he was willing to tell about the history of the game and what kind of troubles he had experienced in the process of bringing the game on the market.

My friend Rian van Meeteren, founder of the Dutch game association *Ducosim*, pointed to Rob Zielschot as the one who was in fact the driving force behind the development of the game.

The production and the promotion of the game was contracted to the firm Barnett from the Hague. In the process, this firm proved to be not only unreliable but in the end also swindlers.

My talk will tell the complete story of the development and the history of the game *Metropolis*.

### **Bio**

Fred Horn was born in Amsterdam on January 13, 1945. When he was four years old his parents moved to the Hague, and during his lifetime Fred changed places between these two cities. Once more he is now residing in the Hague. He is married since 1969.

During his youth Fred played a lot of games with friends and family. At the age of eight he invented his first game called *Cardo*. In high school he started collecting games, at first mostly focused on abstract strategic games. Later his interest widened into games manufactured, invented or sold in Holland, thus building through the years a large collection. In 2009 he donated the entire collection (about 10.000 items) to the Vlaams Spellenarchief in Bruges, Belgium, where it is now documented and made available for everyone on their web-site.

After *Cardo*, Fred kept on inventing games now and then for his friends and for his own fun. After meeting Niek Neuwahl in 1995, he became inspired to do more with his ideas, and at the moment nearly 30 of his games are published. On the shelves are more than 100 ideas waiting for the right moment.

In January 2012 the Dutch game association *Ducosim* renewed their organization of the "Nederlandse Spellen Prijs" (Dutch Game Award), and Fred was elected chairman of the jury for 3 years.

His focus on specifically Dutch games keeps him busy with what he calls "Modern Archaeology": digging in archives and files and getting information from still living people about the history and the inventors of Dutch-related games.

In the last ten years he has published articles of his findings in Dutch and international magazines.

### **Select Publications (Games)**

By Clemens Gerhards: *Citadella & Parallelo*.

By Steffen Spiele: *Kwinty* (part of *Blocks*) & *Da Capo* (part of *Copa*).

By ORIGEM, Brazil: *Agilidade*.

By XIN-DAO: *Cardo & 50-Games-Box*.

By Nova Carta: *Zipher*, *Lange Jan* (*Langer Lulatsch*) & *Memory Moments*.

By Zvezda, Russia: *Elven-Castle*.

# Session 6b

## Models, Metaphors, Meanings, cont.

### The Semiotics of Boardgames

Mattia Thibault

*PhD Fellow*

*University of Turin, Italy*

According to a semiotic perspective, boardgames are modelling systems composed of a matrix of constraints (rules) and a repertory (meaningful objects used for playing). The processes of *semiosis* (or meaning generation) that happen while playing a boardgame are determined by the complex interaction between these two systems. Both systems are equally important in determining the final meaning of a game. It is possible to play chess using Harry Potter-shaped pieces: the matrix of constraints (the rules of chess) is always the same, but the pieces still influence the game experience. Similarly, we could use checkers pieces to play backgammon, exploiting the same repertory to play two very different games. However, the relationship between the two systems can be far more complex. On the one hand, the objects of the repertory can carry enough meaning to actually modify the rules: in some African mancala games the fact that the games are played with seeds contributed to the introduction of a rule about "not starving your opponent". On the other hand, the whole game can be recontextualised and thus resemantised: the Scandinavian game hnefatafl acquire new meaning when transposed as the dwarfish game *Thud!* in Terry Pratchett's novels. In this presentation, we will use the tools of cultural semiotics to delineate a typology of possible interaction between matrix and repertory, and in particular focus on the balance between the two systems and on the different meanings that they bestow on games.

#### **Bio**

Mattia Thibault is a PhD student at the University of Turin, currently about to defend his dissertation *The Meaning of Play – A theory of playfulness, toys and games as cultural semiotic devices*. He participates in SEMKNOW, the first pan-European doctoral program on semiotics, and has been visiting researcher at Tartu University (Estonia), The Strong Museum of Play (Rochester, NY, US) and Helsinki University

(Finland). His research interests revolve around semiotics of play, ranging from toys to digital games and from the ludicisation of culture to the playful practices of the peripheries of the internet. He has presented and organized numerous talks, conferences and activities dedicated to these topics, and he has published several peer-reviewed articles and edited the book *Gamification Urbana, letture e riscritture ludiche degli spazi cittadini*.

## **Stories of Colonialism Retold Somewhat Lovingly**

**Dr Mikael Jakobsson**

*Research Scientist & Coordinator*

*Comparative Media Studies at MIT & MIT Game Lab, Cambridge, US*

Colonialism themed board games like *Puerto Rico* and *Settlers of Catan* have played an important role in popularizing modern board games. As the hobby is growing rapidly in many parts of the world, this theme continues to be frequently represented among new titles. This presentation examines the reasons for this and discusses some related problems.

The presentation identifies a number of significant actors within the board game community of practice (designers, publishers, reviewers, other content providers, and players) and analyzes their roles in the persistence of the colonialism theme. While this by necessity involves a historical look at the emergence of modern board games, the focus of the presentation is on games from the last five years, and the reception of these titles.

Colonialism themed board games have received some critical attention from academia in recent years. Based on examinations of the games' formal and aesthetic properties, issues of representation and simulation have been exposed. This leaves a number of important problems to be addressed.

By bringing in the context of the games: the players and the spatial configuration of play; I offer an additional perspective. Instead of focusing on historical accuracy, I question the choices of which stories are being reenacted, and the casting of the players into colonialist roles. What does it mean to present these historical moments in such a lavish and pleasing form, to then have these artifacts serve as centerpieces to gather around for social interaction at board game cafes, meet-ups, and conventions?

## Bio

Mikael Jakobsson is a Research Scientist at Comparative Media Studies, MIT and the Research Coordinator for MIT Game Lab. He conducts research and teaches classes on game design and game culture. His current research interests focus on different aspects of co-located collaborative games and design exploration of connections between interaction modes and experience outcomes. He also studies physical and mixed media games and other systems for playful and social interaction. Previous work includes studies of social interaction in virtual worlds and reward systems in games. His most recent publication is a chapter on *Achievements in Debugging Game History. A Critical Lexicon* edited by Henry Lowood and Raiford Guins and published by MIT Press, 2016. He is currently working on a book about EverQuest for the *Landmark Video Games* series.

## How Hobbyists Value Boardgames

Melissa J. Rogerson (w/ Martin Gibbs & Wally Smith)

*PhD Candidate*

*Microsoft Research Centre for Social NUI, University of Melbourne, Australia*

This paper reports on an interview-based study of self-identified hobbyist boardgamers, describing the value that they place on boardgames. These people described the important roles that boardgames – and being a boardgame player – play in their lives. Our interviewees described spending large amounts of money on boardgames and associated material, travelling – sometimes internationally – to hobby events, acquiring new skills (e.g. in model-making) to support their boardgaming hobby, and even customizing or selecting their home to accommodate and display their boardgame collection. To these serious leisure practitioners<sup>2</sup>, being a boardgamer means more than simply *playing* or *owning* games; the games have undergone a process of domestication<sup>1</sup> through which they are not merely appropriated and objectified but are incorporated into the hobbyist's life and home, and converted through their presentation to others. Through this process, the games acquire new meaning as a representation of the gamer and of their membership in a culture of boardgaming. Associated activities like travel and model-making strengthen that commitment to and identification with boardgaming, reinforcing the enjoyment that these hobbyists associate with the games.

## References

- 1) Silverstone, R., E. Hirsch, and D. Morley (1992) "Information and communication technologies and the moral economy of the household" in *Consuming Technologies: Media and Information in Domestic Spaces*. Routledge, London. Retrieved from <http://cat.lib.unimelb.edu.au/record=b3516141~S30>.
- 2) Stebbins, R.A. (2012) *The Idea of Leisure: First Principles*. Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

## Bio

Melissa Rogerson is a PhD candidate in the Microsoft Research Centre for Social Natural User Interfaces at the University of Melbourne, Australia. Her doctoral research examines the experience of playing board games in both physical and digital forms, as well as the characteristics and motivations of hobbyist board game players, designers, and developers. It applies techniques from human-computer interaction to the study of games and play.

Melissa is active in local and international boardgaming communities, is co-chair of Boardgames Australia, and is a member of the jury for the International Gamers' Awards. She has translated award-winning boardgames from German to English and has co-designed expansions for the popular game *Agricola*.

## Select Publications

Rogerson, M. J., & M. Gibbs (forthcoming). *Finding Time for Tabletop: Boardgame Play and Parenting. Games and Culture*. DOI: 10.1177/1555412016656324. Available from <http://gac.sagepub.com/content/early/2016/07/06/1555412016656324.abstract>.

Rogerson, M. J., M. Gibbs & W. Smith (2016, May 07-12). "I love all the bits': the materiality of boardgames". Paper presented at CHI 2016, San Jose, CA, USA. Available from <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=2858433>.

Rogerson, M. J., M. Gibbs & W. Smith (2015). "Digitising boardgames: Issues and tensions." Paper presented at the DiGRA 2015; Diversity of Play, Lüneburg, Germany. Available from [http://www.academia.edu/download/38254561/Rogerson\\_Gibbs\\_Smith\\_Tensions\\_in\\_digitizing\\_boardgames\\_-\\_DiGRA2015\\_-\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.academia.edu/download/38254561/Rogerson_Gibbs_Smith_Tensions_in_digitizing_boardgames_-_DiGRA2015_-_FINAL.pdf).

# Session 7

## Draughts Studies

### Checkers Play in Multiple Societies: An Exploration of the Past and Future

Dr Alex de Voogt

*Curator of African Ethnology*

*American Museum of Natural History, New York, US*

*Jeu de dames*, the game that is known in English as checkers or draughts, not only alludes to women or queens; it forms a motif in Renaissance art, in which women are portrayed as playing the game with each other, with husbands, lovers, and suitors. The imagery of *jeu de dames*, specifically from 1400 to 1750, as it pertains to women, reveals two rarely mentioned or observed aspects of the game. First, the images visualize its association with various social groups, ranging from the nobility to commoners. Second, at least in the way the players are portrayed, the game was considered equally appropriate for women and men. This universal aspect of the game is also found outside of Europe where this game, as opposed to chess, is associated with all layers of society. Its distribution may eclipse that of chess and mancala as it is found to be popular in most parts of Africa, Central Asia and South America while it is also making its way through South-East Asia into the Pacific, providing researchers the opportunity to study cross-cultural contact by way of board games.

#### **Bio**

Alex de Voogt is a curator of African Ethnology at the American Museum of Natural History. He has published widely on the history and distribution of mancala games and has a growing interest in graffiti games in the Middle East as well as checkers as it is played outside the Western world. He is one of the co-founders of the *Journal of Board Game Studies* and organized BGS conferences in 1995 and 1997. Alex de Voogt's latest book *Ancient Egyptians at Play* was co-authored with Walter Crist and Anne-Elizabeth Dunn-Vaturi, and published in 2016.

## The Role of Frisian Draughts in the International Development of Draughts

Dr Liuwe Westra  
*Senior Research Fellow*  
*Tilburg University, Netherlands*

The origin of draughts on a 100-square board is still shrouded in mystery. According to the late-eighteenth-century author Manoury, it developed around 1720. However, some earlier images (and alleged written sources) of 100-square boards seem to contradict this. Moreover, the story as Manoury tells it is rather fantastic.

However, it seems possible to make sense of all the sources when one takes the variant of draughts that is nowadays known as Frisian draughts into account. Using a number of new (also Scandinavian) sources, it can be shown that Frisian draughts, international draughts and 64-square draughts co-existed in North-Western Europe from the eighteenth century onwards, with international draughts moving only slowly to the north.

This throws an interesting light on the question of why people played draughts anyway. Draughts developed from a "friendly fight" for the upper classes to a source of income for common people, a leisurely pastime, a children's game, and a dwindling mind sport, respectively. Right now, draughts seems to be rediscovered as a highly abstract (online) game, helping people to develop concentration and abstraction skills. All this is uniquely connected with the interaction between Frisian and international draughts in the past three centuries.

### **Bio**

My name is Liuwe Westra. I was born in 1966. I studied classics and theology in Groningen and have been working as a minister from 1997 until 2016, and as a senior research fellow at the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology from 2011 until 2016. I defended my PhD thesis in 2002 (cum laude) and am presently finishing a monograph on the origin of creeds in the early church. Right now, I am between jobs, trying to raise funds for a second term as a senior research fellow at Tilburg University.

Apart from my professional research, since 2010 I have taken a keen interest in the history of draughts in general and Frisian draughts in particular. This research has been carried out together with Mr Marten Walinga (1967), one of the best players of Frisian draughts. Until now, our findings have mainly been published in the annual programme booklets of the Grandmaster Tournament/Fryslân Open

Tournament in the town of Franeker/Frjentsjer. The most recent of these may be consulted online on the website [www.frisiandraughts.com](http://www.frisiandraughts.com):

- <http://frisandraughts.com/archive/wfd%20tournaments/fo-2015.html>
- <http://frisandraughts.com/archive/wfd%20tournaments/fo-2016.html>

## **Dablot Prejjesne and Tavelspel: A Sámi and North Swedish Game**

**Peter Michaelsen**  
*Theologian & Minister of the Church*  
*Hvidebæk Parish, Denmark*

The Sámit, nomadic reindeer herders of northern Scandinavia and the Kola peninsula, used to play several types of board games, including war games with jump capture.

A game of this type, played in Frostviken, North Sweden, was described in great detail by a Swedish ethnologist, Nils Keyland (1867-1924), in 1921. Since then very little has been published. According to a recent survey, the Sámi tradition of playing board games died out decades ago.

In 1998 an attempt was made in Vilhelmina, North Sweden, to reconstruct and revive a war game with jump capture named *tavelspel*, described in 1935 by Olof Petter Pettersson (1859-1944), a folklorist, born in Vilhelmina. In this manuscript, published in 1999, the author described daily life c. 1850 in a small place named Dåres near Vilhelmina, inhabited by Swedish settlers settling in an area which is still populated by a Sámi minority.

O. P. Pettersson did not mention any connection between this game and the traditional board games played by the Sámi population. His incomplete description, however, makes it possible to identify this *tavelspel* as a variant of the Sámi *dablo* or *dablot prejjesne* game described by N. Keyland.

### **Bio**

I was born in Copenhagen 1957, and studied theology and religious studies at the University of Aarhus. I graduated as cand. phil. et cand. theol. in 1986, worked as a minister/reverend in Randers 1987-2013, and from 2013 in Hvidebæk parish near Kalundborg.

### Select Publications

"Somme trak også tavl - om et gammelt tidsfordriv og dets navne" in *Ord & Sag* 18, 1998, pp. 11-44, Institut for Jysk Sprog- og Kulturforskning, Aarhus University.

"Daldøs og Sakku - to gamle nordiske spil", in *Ord & Sag* 19, 1999, pp. 15-28, Institut for Jysk Sprog- og Kulturforskning, Aarhus University.

"Daldøs - et gådefuldt gammelt brætspil" in *Historisk Årbog for Thy og Vester Hanherred 2001*, pp. 91-106, ed. by Historisk Samfund for Thy og Vesterhanherred, Thisted.

"Daldøs, an almost forgotten old dice board game" in *Board Games Studies* 4, 2001, pp. 19-31, CNWS, Leiden University.

"Ponni, niks, alle-halve - betegnelser for spil med terningepind og -top" in *Ord & Sag* 22, 2002, pp. 47-61, Institut for Jysk Sprog- og Kulturforskning, Aarhus University.

"On some unusual types of stick dice" in *Board Games Studies* 6, 2003, pp. 9-24, CNWS, Leiden University.

"Haretavl - hund efter hare som brætspil" in *Historisk Årbog for Thy og Vester Hanherred 2009*, pp. 149-163, ed. by Historisk Samfund for Thy og Vesterhanherred, Thisted.

"Haretavl - Hare and Hounds as a board game." Paper from *BGS Colloquium XIII*, Paris 2010, and the conference *Spiele und Sport im mittelalterlichen Nordeuropa* at Georg-August University, Göttingen, Germany, Oct. 1-2, 2010. Available in CD-ROM (ed. by Thierry Depaulis) and in Matthias Teichert (ed.) *Sport und Spiel bei den Germanen*. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin & Boston 2014, pp. 197-216.

"Dablo – a Sámi game" in *Variant Chess* 64, British Chess Variant Society, August 2010, pp. 218-221.

"Un jeu médiéval arabe en Scandinavie?" in *Histoire et Images Médiévales* 28, February-April 2012, pp. 25-29, ed. by Frédéric Wittner, Astrolabe 2012.

# Session 8

## Social Aspects

### Prehistoric Cypriot Games: Space, Status, and Social Complexity

Dr Walter Crist  
*Anthropologist*  
*Arizona State University, US*

The meaning of games is notoriously difficult to assess in prehistoric societies. Nevertheless, changes in gaming practices with relation to long-term social processes can give clues about the types of social meaning games held.

Bronze Age Cyprus has produced the largest number of archaeological game boards to date: over 400 in number. During this time period, Cyprus experienced the development of social hierarchies, which resulted in changes to the social fabric of society, most notably because of increasing social boundaries between individuals. In this study, I identified gaming spaces based on the presence of large immobile boards, boards fixed on architectural features, and clusters of boards for the same game in the same context. After tabulating the other artifacts found in those spaces, I performed correspondence analysis on the data to measure statistical difference between the contexts. The results showed that during periods with a lesser degree of social complexity, games were most frequently played in smaller, domestic contexts. During periods with more social complexity, people tended to play in public areas, likely in an attempt to engage with the social aspects of games and to build identities vis-à-vis stronger and more numerous social boundaries.

#### **Bio**

Walter Crist is a recent PhD in anthropology from Arizona State University. His research focuses on games in the Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern world.

#### **Select Publications**

Crist, Walter (2016) "Playing Spaces: Sociality of Games in Bronze Age Cyprus" in Bourogiannis, G. and C.

Mühlenbock (eds.) *Ancient Cyprus Today: Museum Collections and New Research*. Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature PB 184. Åströms Förlag: Uppsala, pp. 261-72.

Crist, W., A. de Voogt & A-E. Dunn-Vaturi (2016a) "Facilitating interaction: Board games as social lubricants in the Ancient Near East" in *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 35(2), pp. 179–96.

Crist, W., A-E. Dunn-Vaturi & A. de Voogt (2016b) *Ancient Egyptians at Play: Board Games across Borders*. London: Bloomsbury.

## Mechanisms of Trust: Board Games as Models of Social Reliability in the Middle Ages

Michael A. Conrad

PhD Candidate

*Institute of Art History, University of Zurich, Switzerland*

*Mundus iste totus est quasi quidam scaccarum.*<sup>1</sup> – "This world is like a chess board" is a notion that also holds true for the world of social relations. Accordingly, the paper will discuss how board games were perceived as practical models of trust and for the establishment of it during the Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup> Trust is an essential precondition for encouraging (anonymous) people to meet at playing tables with the goal of interacting within agonal, and therefore conflictual, ludic frameworks. They can therefore serve as touchstones of trustworthiness, because of which ludic actions can be read as revelations of true identity. This naturally implies the opposite of creating mistrust through games, a property usually assigned to games of chance. The term "model" is applied consciously here, with the intention to stress the importance of pragmatism and materiality instead of concentrating on symbolisms and linguistics only.<sup>3</sup> Board games not only represent trust but create it practically. The analysed historical sources will include the *Libro de los juegos* by king Alfonso X, the *Roman de la rose*, the *Ruodlieb*, the *Codex Manesse* and Cessoli's treatise on chess.

### References

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2) Model theorist Bernd Mahr writes that models usually include a double structure: they are models of something and for something, cf. e.g. Bernd Mahr: "Ein Modell des Modellseins" in Ulrich Dirks & Eberhard Knobloch (eds.) *Modelle*. Frankfurt/Main, 2008, pp. 187–218.

3) Reinhard Wendler stresses the importance of materiality for the function of a model (Reinhard Wendler: *Das Modell zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft*. Munich, 2013).

### **Bio**

Michael A. Conrad worked as a research assistant for the research project *Spielteufel, Ship of Fools, Danse Macabre – Figurations of Risk in the Middle Ages and Early Modernity* (2012-2016) affiliated with the Collaborative Research Centre 980 "Episteme in Motion" at Freie Universität Berlin. His dissertation is associated with this project and focuses on the question of how, at the end of the 13th century, playing was understood as a practice to cope with uncertainty. Before, from 2010-2012, he had worked at the Centre for Media and Interactivity (ZMI) and had been a member of the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC), both affiliated with the Justus Liebig University Giessen. He graduated in theatre studies and philosophy with a thesis on self-photography as part of cultivating the self. Apart from his academic achievements, he also collected professional experience in other fields, such as at the German public television broadcaster ZDF, the publishing house Campus Verlag, as well as a book translator (last publication: Steven Barbone & Michael Bruce (eds.) *Die 100 wichtigsten philosophischen Argumente*, Darmstadt, 2012).

### **Select Publications**

"Papierlose Notizen: Zum Gebrauch von Handyfotografie als Mnemotechnik des Alltags" [Paperless Notes: The use of mobile phone photography as an everyday mnemotechnology] in Henning Lobin, Regine Leitenstern, Katrin Lehnen & Jana Klawitter (eds.) *Lesen, Schreiben, Erzählen. Kommunikative Erzähltechniken im digitalen Zeitalter*. Frankfurt (Main); New York, 2013, pp. 83-106.

"Spiel – Handwerk: Die theatrica des Hugo von St. Viktor als Epistemologisierung ludischer Handlungen im 12. Jahrhundert" [Games and Crafts. Hugh of St Victor as epistemologization of ludic actions in the 12th century] in Milena Cairo, Moritz Hannemann, Ulrike Haß & Judith Schäfer (eds.): *Episteme des Theaters. Aktuelle Kontexte von Wissenschaft, Kunst und Öffentlichkeit*. Bielefeld, 2016 (transcript).

"Entscheidungsspuren: Ludische Interaktion als Quelle interrelationaler Ungewissheit im Spielebuch Alfons' X. (1283)" [Decision traces. Ludic interactions as sourced of interrelational uncertainty in the Book of Games by Alfonso X (1283/84)] (in preparation).

"Campaigning and Teaching. King Alfonso X's cultural program as an instrument of the Reconquista?" (in preparation for the proceedings of the project *Mudejarismo and Moorish Revival in Europe. Transcultural exchanges between Muslims, Christians and Jews in the architecture of the Middle Age and Modern Times*, headed by Prof. Dr. Francine Giese, University of Zurich, Switzerland.)

## **Playing S'Cianco (Tip-cat): A Traditional Street Game Reawakens the City of Verona**

**Francesca Berti**

*PhD Student*

*University of Tübingen, Germany*

In Verona (Italy) at present, there are two tournaments with 20 teams of "S'Cianco", which is the local dialect name for a traditional street game, better known in Italian as "Lippa" and in English as "Tip-cat".

Fifteen years ago the game had almost disappeared. So why has it become so popular again today? And precisely what is attracting more and more adults, like those who played the game in their childhood, or who only heard about it from the stories told by their parents and grandparents, and even those who have no idea what playing S'Cianco is?

What's more, several players are foreigners, and there is even a team whose players all originally come from Sri Lanka. What makes them so curious about the game, and where does this desire to play in an otherwise very local setting come from?

Currently, I interview players, I collect their passionate voices, I observe them playing enthusiastically in tournaments, and I investigate the elements of this renewed and unusual form of socialization around an old game.

In particular, I try to understand how it all began: what was that original spark that rekindled the flame of a traditional game?

In fact, everything started "without any educational or commercial objectives – and this is still the case", so Paolo, one of the promoters who unintentionally revived the forgotten game.

*On a long winter evening in a tavern in the centre of Verona, six friends, sitting around a table after a game of cards and a glass of wine, shared the idea of playing an old game again, just for the fun of it, but they needed to look for more players ...*

### **Bio**

I am a PhD student (3rd year) at the University of Tübingen, Institute of Education Science, Unit of General Education. I obtained a combined Magister Degree in "Lettere Moderne" at the University of

Verona in 2001 before completing a Master of Science in Development Studies at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies), University of London, in 2004.

I have been cultivating a passion for traditional games and handmade toys for more than fifteen years, leading various projects and workshops aimed at both adults and children. Within the framework of development education, my core interests relate to the use of traditional games and handmade toys as facilitators for understanding global inequalities, migrations and environmental issues. In fact, this forms the basis of my current PhD research.

I have been living in Tübingen since 2009, where I developed and led *Das Interkulturelle Spielmobil* of the Volkshochschule Tübingen (2012-2016). The project was recognized as "Best Practice Model" by the Ministry of Culture of Baden-Württemberg in 2013, and received the Tübingen Integration Award in 2014.

Since 2013, I have been working with the Associazione Giochi Antichi, and I take part in the organisation of the *Tocati – International Festival of Street Games* in Verona.

My PhD research (Current title: *A "Shared Play Culture" – Traditional Games and Toys in Intercultural Education*) intends to draw attention to the objects and artefacts proper of some categories of traditional games and toys from all over the world, such as spinning tops, marbles, bowls and skittles, balls, dice, boards and tokens, etc. I investigate their characteristics, draw comparisons and highlight similarities across geographical and temporal lines.

The possible use of these traditional games and toys as a tool for intercultural education is explored, assuming that – since they are generators of emotions and bearers of suggestions that belong to different sensory levels, such as experience, imagination and memory – they are a precious means for storytelling and cross-cultural communication. The aim of the research is to contribute to fostering an intercultural discourse based on similarities.

# Sat 20 May

## Special Address

### Piet Hein and John Nash: Beautiful Minds

Dr Bjarne Toft

*Professor Emeritus of Mathematics*

*University of Southern Denmark, Denmark*

In 1942 the Danish designer, poet and scientist Piet Hein discovered and introduced the board game *Hex*, at first for students in the club *Parentesen* at the Niels Bohr Institute in Copenhagen, and later during Christmas in the national newspaper *Politiken*. In his talk in *Parentesen* Piet Hein focused on properties of good games, the mathematics of games and games as mathematics. *Hex* was widely played in Denmark during the war.

The game was rediscovered in 1948 by John Nash at Princeton University and played there in the mathematics common room. The interest in *Hex* was revived by Martin Gardner in his column on *Mathematical Games* in *Scientific American* in 1957. It is still played around the world, especially in mathematical circles.

*Hex* is of great interest, both for players and theoreticians, because its rules are so simple, but its strategy so complex. The strategy stealing argument tells us that there is a winning strategy for the first player, but even a first move in such a strategy is not known with mathematical certainty.

The talk will focus on the history of the game, what we know about it and what we do not know about it, mathematical problems related to it, variations, and literature about it. A book titled *HEX Strategy* was published by Cameron Brown (A.K. Peters 2000). A main author and *Hex* expert is computer science professor Ryan Hayward at the University of Alberta in Canada. The speaker recently contributed a chapter on Piet Hein's games (in particular *Soma*, *Hex*, *Nimbi*, *Tac-Tix*) to the book *Piet Hein*

*Verdensdaskeren* (ed. Olaf Harsløf, Gyldendal 2015). The talk is partly based on studies in the archives of Anni and Hugo Piet Hein in Middelfart, Denmark, and the Martin Gardner archives at Stanford University, California.

**Bio**

Bjarne Toft has a master's degree from Aarhus University (1968) and a PhD from the University of London (1970). From 1973 to 2015 he served as associate professor at the University of Southern Denmark in Odense, interrupted by longer stays in Canada (Waterloo and Regina), USA (Vanderbilt and Stanford) and at the London School of Economics.

He has lectured for general audiences at a large variety of occasions, ranging from a Royal Library lecture (on natural science and the "modern breakthrough" in Danish cultural life) to a lecture for long term inmates at Nyborg State Prison (on lotto). Typical topics: the history of mathematics, optimization, games, mathematical economics, nonsense (*Alice in Wonderland*) and mathematics in literature.

# Session 9

## Mathematics

### The Roots of Combinatorial Game Theory: History and Foresights

Dr Lisa Rougetet & Dr Abdallah Saffidine  
Postdoctoral Researchers

*University of Lille, France & University of New South Wales, Sydney*

The mathematical subfield of Combinatorial Game Theory (CGT) studies how to predict the outcome of a game – win, loss, or draw – assuming optimal play from both players. The importance of CGT was firmly established with the publication of *Winning Ways for your Mathematical Plays* in 1982. In this two-volume text, Conway, Berlekamp, and Guy present a complete and deep theory, which can be deployed to analyze countless games. The central idea that enables such a fruitful treatment of games is the formal concept of *disjunctive sum of games*.

Our contribution is threefold. First, we define this "sum of games" and give examples of its use in a way that is accessible to non-mathematicians. Second, we recall the widely acknowledged timeline of CGT, which starts with the development of the Sprague-Grundy theory in the late 1930s. According to this timeline, before 1935, the mathematical study of games consisted largely of separate analyzes of extremely simple cases. Finally, we demonstrate for the first time that this perspective on the history of CGT is only partially accurate. To this end, we examine Emanuel Lasker's 1931 book on boardgames, *Brettspiele der Völker*, displaying the most important insights of the Sprague-Grundy theory.

#### Bio

*Lisa Rougetet* has a postdoctoral position at the University of Lille, France, where she teaches mathematics and works in the history of mathematics. She defended her PhD in 2014 on the history of combinatorial game theory. Her research interests include the history of the first *Nim* and chess playing machines and the history of combinatorial games programming in general and recreational mathematics. She is also concerned with connections between board games, computer algorithms and

history, and their application in mathematics education. Her article "A Prehistory of Nim" was selected for the collection *Best Writing on Mathematics 2015*, Princeton University Press.

*Abdallah Saffidine* is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia where he works in the Artificial Intelligence and Algorithms groups. In 2015, Abdallah Saffidine was the recipient of a "Discovery Early-Career Research Award" by the Australian Research Council for the project *Playing and Solving General Games*. Abdallah's PhD thesis, *Solving Games and All That*, was elected "Best 2013 Dissertation" by the French Artificial Intelligence Association and "Best 2013 Publication" by the International Computer Games Association. Abdallah has a wide range of interests from games, planning, and other areas of decision-making to logic, complexity, and other areas of computer science.

## **Super Farmer: The First Board Game Using Twelve-Sided Dice**

*Michał Stajszczak*  
*Games Historian & Game Developer*  
*Warsaw, Poland*

Dodecahedron was discovered by ancient Greeks but till the first half of the 20th century was known only to mathematicians. From five Platonic solids only a cube was widely used, for example as a random number generator in board games. Super Farmer is probably the first board game using twelve-sided dice. A history of this game and its mathematical model is described in this paper.

The game was first published in 1943 under the name *Hodowla zwierząt* (A Little Animal Farm). The goal of the game is to collect at least one rabbit, one sheep, one pig, one cow and one horse. Players acquire animals throwing the dice. The main challenge during the designing of the game was how to obtain various probabilities for various animals. The six-sided dice did not give such possibility. But Karol Borsuk, the author of the game, was a professor of geometry, so he knew that a solid like the dodecahedron existed, and also knew how to make it of cardboard.

The game was self-made by the author and his wife and was sold in Warsaw till July 1944. Unfortunately, during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 all copies were destroyed. After the war, professor Borsuk returned to scientific work at the University of Warsaw and the game was forgotten. 40 years later, after the death of the author, a

single copy was found outside of Warsaw and was returned to Borsuk's family. Since 1997 the game has been produced under the name *Super Farmer* (with plastic dice, of course) and is now distributed in about 20 countries.

However, as it turned out, some of the ideas from the 1943 edition were criticized by 21st-century players. This paper explains the reasons for these critiques, and shows how the rules of the game were changed to meet the players' expectations.

### **Bio**

Michał Stajszczak was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1956. In 1979 he obtained a Master of Science degree from Warsaw University of Technology (Faculty of Technical Physics and Applied Mathematics). He has been working as a co-owner of a wholesale company since 1990, selling board games, puzzles, cards, etc. He has designed rules for about ten board games and has translated the rules of more than one hundred board games into Polish for various editors, including Hasbro and Ravensburger. Between the years 2007-2013 he cooperated with Polish quarterly magazine *Świat Gier Planszowych* (World of Board Games), publishing texts about the history of games.

## **How dramatic is Snakes & Ladders?**

Dr Jorge Nuno Silva (w/ Dr João Pedro Neto)  
*Assistant Professor of Mathematics*  
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What makes some abstract board games better than others, in the sense of providing a richer ludic experience? Four main parameters have been identified: *depth*, or strategic complexity, is associated with the number of levels of play (games can be shallow as tic-tac-toe or deep as go); *clarity* tries to address the question of how easy it is, for the initiated player, to plan an attack or understand the dangers of a position (rithmomachia is opaque, chess is clear); *decisiveness* is the quality that allows substantial advantages to be turned into final victories in a natural way (in chess, if you are a queen ahead, you will win the game most of the time); finally, a game has *drama* if it is possible to overcome a difficult situation or balance a position by surprising strategic or tactical moves.

The authors tried to identify similar characteristics for some pure luck games. As they have shown in "Measuring Drama in Goose-like Games" (*Board Game Studies Journal*

10, 2016), *drama* can be extended to games of no skill in a natural way. They have now analysed some variants of *Snakes & Ladders* in a similar way and will share their results in this talk.

**Bio**

João Pedro Neto and Jorge Nuno Silva are professors at the University of Lisbon. Besides the joint paper cited in the abstract above, they authored the book *Mathematical Games, Abstract Games* published by Dover in 2013.