



PRESERVING GAME HERITAGE WITH VIDEO INTERVIEWS

A Case Study of the Finnish Museum of Games

Att bevara spelens arv med videointervjuer:
En fallstudie om Finlands Spelmuseum

“Digitala spel är i färd att försvinna” är ett uttryck man ofta hör idag. Spelutvecklare, samlare och entusiaster har nu längre än ett årtionde oroat sig över att inte kunna köra och spela gamla spel. Då museer börjar spara spel i sina samlingar, är de intresserade av konserveringsmetoder utöver dem, som behåller spelen spelbara. Eftersom dessa metoder inte ännu analyserats, återstår många obesvarade frågor gällande spelens kulturarv. Denna artikel underlättar definitionen av olika sorters museiobjekt inom spelkonservering. Den är en analys av 14 videointervjuer, som Finlands Spelmuseum utfört med finska spelutvecklare år 2016. Syftet är att analysera spelutvecklarnas presentationer av sina spel, och hur dessa diskussioner motiverar intervjuernas värde för museer. Den avslutande diskussionen beaktar hur dylika intervjuer ter sig som ogripbara museiobjekt. Artikelns slutsatser är värdefulla för alla kulturarvsorganisationer intresserade av spelkultur och dess bevaring.

Keywords: preservation, museum, heritage, game, interview

INTRODUCTION

Digital games¹ have entered a stage surpassing their initial use as *entertainment products*. As the opening of several museums dedicated to games proves, digital games are now widely perceived, not only as products or collectibles, but also as *cultural artefacts* and *museum objects*.² Institutions have begun preserving games and realised the complexity of game preservation and what it entails.³ This article dives into this ocean of questions by examining how game developers talk about making games and what preservation potential their views contain.

“There is no such thing as a videogame”, game scholar James Newman (2012) reminds us, because digital games tend to change over time and across

different platforms.⁴ Digital games have numerous different builds and versions – of which some are modified by players – and it is difficult to decide whether some are more essential from a preservation standpoint. What is more, preserving digital games may mean anything from saving game boxes and discs (in cases they exist), recordings and transcriptions of gameplay; making sure copies of the game remain playable; dealing with problems of understanding the context in which the games have been played.⁵ The question of what should be considered when preserving games remains unanswered.

The aim of this article is to discuss the potential of game developer video interviews for museum work. By analysing 14 interviews with game developers, the article explores how game developers talk about their games and investigates how game preservation may benefit from considering the way game developers contextualize their own productions. The analysed interviews, displayed in the museum exhibition and registered in the museum's collections, were conducted in 2016 by the Finnish Museum of Games, opened in Tampere in January 2017.⁶

The theoretical framework is built upon the issues of cultural heritage, problems associated with game preservation as well as the discussion related to contemporary collecting. By analysing key concepts related to game cultures and cultural heritage, the discussion aims to clarify how the museum preservation object should be understood when preserving digital games.

The preservation of digital games is not by any measure a new field of study, but previous work has concentrated on the preservation of digital games from a technological perspective.⁷ Earlier research into alternative digital game preservation techniques has focused on preserving context and game play: for example, Newman (2012) and Raiford Guins (2014).⁸ The use of video interviews for game preservation has not previously been discussed; instead, previous studies have investigated the play of games or the use of Let's Play - videos in preservation work.⁹ This article aims to define what position video interviews should have in museum collections.

The analysis develops in three chapters. First, a theoretical framework is built by defining the issues of game cultures, cultural heritage and museum objects. Then, the discussion expands into a case study of the views expressed by game developers in the selected videos and how the described work processes and design development accounts may be considered valuable as traces of game heritage. The section follows a thematic approach. The interviews have systematically been classified and organized into four thematic categories. These categories are further analysed and juxtaposed with the theoretical framework of game preservation. The analysis concludes with a

discussion and evaluation of video interviews as museum objects and the suitability of video interviews for preserving digital games.

To summarize, this analysis helps to clarify what kind of museum objects video interviews are. This is done by (1) *examining how game makers talk about their games in a museum context* and (2) *investigating how it makes such video interviews valuable from a museum perspective*.

The focus of the analysis is on the interview content, not on the interview process *per se*. The article provides first steps into looking at how game developers talk about their know-how and how it relates to museums. Game heritage is in this case study understood as a process, which is affected by how game developers talk about their games, how such statements are presented in relation to other exhibits and how museum visitors react to the developers' reminiscence.¹⁰ The analysis being a case study based on specific examples, however, wider conclusions are not yet possible.

GAME CULTURE AND MUSEUM OBJECTS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Investigating the benefits of video interviews for preservation work requires a deeper understanding of several cultural concepts. These key concepts include game culture(s), cultural heritage, artefacts, tangible and intangible museum objects.

According to recent research, as many as 60 % of Finns play digital games at least once a month, and the average gamer is 40 years old.¹¹ These statistics make it difficult to argue that games are not part of Finnish culture. Digital games are, however, not only played, but are also subjects of very complex social interactions that are included in any game culture, in addition to game play, *per se*. Game development, game collecting, and inter-textual relations between games and other cultural forms could all be argued to be part of game culture. In this article, game culture is understood as existing in the intersection of activities, including the ones mentioned above.¹²

Following game scholar Frans Mäyrä, game culture is seen as consisting of several networks existing side by side, often overlapping each other.¹³ Games are thus talked about and experienced in many different contexts and situations. Following Mäyrä, this article assumes the existence of several game *cultures* instead of a single monolithic *culture*. These game cultures are understood as being in the centre of ongoing negotiations, by which their symbolic meanings are defined.¹⁴ Game cultures are processes, constantly moving and evolving as a result of how people experience and talk about games.

According to the International Council on Monuments and Sites, cultural heritage is “an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation”.¹⁵ It can be understood as a shared bond and a “bond to the past, to our present, and the future”, or as “the past made present”.¹⁶ For the purposes of this article, cultural heritage is understood as a process by which objects, ideas and experiences, ‘things’, become respected and deemed fit for preservation.

Cultural heritage is made up of artefacts. Artefacts can be defined as “(intentional or unintentional) consequences of human actions”, and as such, they need not be physical objects, but can also be intangible.¹⁷ UNESCO defines tangible cultural heritage as including physical objects and material, whereas intangible cultural heritage is made up of “practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills [...] that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage”.¹⁸ Thus, intangible cultural heritage can include anything from values, traditions, cuisine, clothing, religious ceremonies and performing arts, to skills and knowledge.

Relying on the definitions above and following the conventions used in museums and other heritage institutions, a cultural artefact can be understood as something that provides information about the activities of a group and the culture of its user(s). Elevating cultural artefacts to a position of cultural heritage can lead to a process of preservation (in museums and other heritage institutions). Museums can be seen as institutions “with the principal mission of transforming things into objects”.¹⁹ Museums are not only venues where *museum objects* are stored and displayed, but also locations where they are actually *made*. Museums and their curators are thus active participants in the transition of cultural artefacts into museum objects.²⁰

In this article, the term museum object is used for (both tangible and intangible) cultural artefacts that are preserved and exhibited in museums.

Transforming cultural artefacts into museum objects has a long history with varied implementations. The Nordic trend of contemporary collecting was once a novel way of perceiving museum work, and various preservation techniques were used to complement tangible objects.²¹ These preservation techniques could range from ethnographic observation to photography, audio and video to interviews in different media. In contemporary collecting, focus is often placed on intangible phenomena and the context in which cultural artefacts are used. Contemporary collecting produces both tangible and intangible museum objects.

Aspects of game cultures can, as all human activities, be elevated to a position where they become cultural heritage. The analysed interviews clarify the role of games as both developments and end products. Whether game

development may be considered cultural heritage, however, is debatable. As defined, cultural heritage implies some collective mind sets and memories. When the usually hidden game development process is made public, as in the museum exhibition, it simultaneously becomes a more visible part of game heritage. The preservation process *produces* museum objects and a deeper understanding of game cultures.²²

Summing up the theoretical discussion, game heritage may be perceived as a process of looking back into our past and deciding upon what kind of tangible and intangible objects we want to preserve for the future. This can mean anything from game boxes, game magazines and game marketing materials (tangible museum objects) to ideas, anecdotes, tactics, memories, press kits and views on successful game development (intangible museum objects).²³ Game heritage is thus born from the tangible and intangible cultural artefacts that members of game cultures have deemed as important and from the *passing on* of them to future generations. When museum collections make game developers' know-how and ideas about games known to a wider audience, their role as game heritage becomes apparent.

GAME DEVELOPMENT IN VIDEO INTERVIEWS

The interviews analysed in this study are part of the Finnish Museum of Games' first exhibition, which consists of *inter alia* 100 games, game design material, prizes, fan feedback, game making hardware, game boxes and marketing material.²⁴ The museum conducted the interviews to support the narrative of the exhibition and preserve the game making process as part of the Finnish game culture's heritage. Interviews were made against a neutral white or grey background, with head and upper body closely cropped and subtitles provided at the bottom of the screen (Fig. 1).

In 18 of 30 interviews, game developers, professional and hobbyists, express their views on digital games. The rest of the interviews deal with non-digital games, for example role playing games, board games and larps (Table 1). The interviews begin with an 8–45 minute informal portion, where developers discuss the game making process. This is followed by a more structured, 2–5 minute interview.

In the following, 14 of the collected 18 interviews on digital game development are analysed. The analysis follows a thematic approach: the author has systematically gone through all interviews and arranged the views expressed therein into thematic categories. First, all 18 interviews on digital game development were analysed and grouped into eleven thematic categories ac-

ording to their content. Then, the categories were evaluated according to how well they addressed developer know-how and other accounts not otherwise emphasised in game heritage discourse. Finally, four categories were chosen for closer scrutiny: what kind of social and technological limitations might influence game development, the passion for self-improvement, fan influence and the central role of game development in many designers' lives.

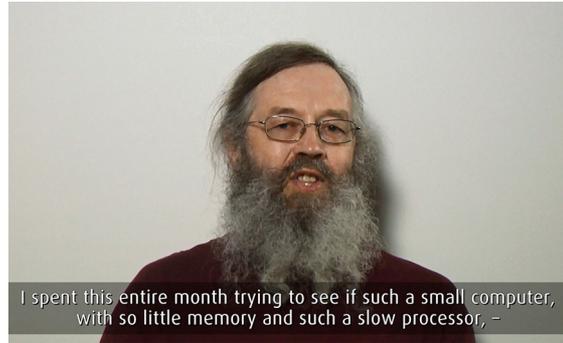


Figure 1. Screen capture of the interview video with Raimo Suonio.

All interviews were originally made in Finnish, but for the purpose of this article, the English translations in use in the museum exhibition will be referenced.²⁵

Technological and legislative limitations in game development

In the examined material, many developers point out that the games they made turned out the way they did because of limitations. This is most apparent in the older games or games developed for new platforms. Taneli Armanto, the designer of *Snake* (1997), a successful mobile game for early Nokia phones, voices this concern: “You had to consider the limitations of the phone: the small screen, the keys – in practice, you could only use the number keys”.²⁶

Snake was first introduced in the Nokia 6110 and found its way onto hundreds of millions of mobile phones, and before long “everyone at school was playing it”.²⁷ Armanto’s reminiscence of the development of *Snake* highlights the technological conditions of the time, and how they affected the game designs. Armanto continues by addressing the limitations in processing power and how “the game could not use a lot of memory, since we had to fit the entire user interface with all of its functions, calendars and phone books into a small amount of memory”. Armanto identifies many different aspects that determined the game design, none of which really touch on innovation, but rather on the circumstances limiting it: “we had very strict limits to work with”, he sums up.²⁸

Table 1: Interviews in the collections of The Finnish Museum of Games. The first length is for the extended version, the second for the one on display in the exhibition.

Taneli Armento: <i>Snake</i> (1997) [length 38:42 / 4:27]	Mariina Hallikainen: <i>Cities: Skylines</i> (2015) [length 18:30 / 2:45]	Mikko Happonen: <i>Propiikki</i> (1999) [length 37:01 / 4:28]	Mikko Hämäläinen: <i>Shadow Cities</i> (2010) [length 33:41 / 3:43]	Sami Järvi: <i>Max Payne</i> (2001) [length 29:10 / 4:03]
Sampo Karjalainen: <i>Habbo</i> (2000) [length 22:55 / 2:49]	Jussi-Pekka Koskiranta: <i>Hugo</i> (1993) [length 37:15 / 4:25]	Sami Maaranen / Erikka Lehmus: <i>UnReal World</i> (1992) [length 25:25 / 3:54]	Tony Manninen: <i>Air Buccaneers</i> (2004) [length 31:35 / 4:06]	Harri Mononen: <i>Nopeustesti</i> (1990) [length 17:08 / 3:24]
Olli Paavola: <i>LORD</i> (1981) [length 22:55 / 2:49]	Antero Pulli: <i>Suunnistussimulaattori</i> (2007) [length 19:50 / 1:54]	Manu Pärsinen: <i>VecSports Boxing</i> (2002) [length 15:41 / 3:49]	Miha Rinne: <i>Furry Dragons</i> (2002) [length 24:46 / 2:30]	Henry Roth: <i>Galilei</i> (1997) [length 15:10 / 3:39]
Raimo Suonio: <i>Chesmac</i> (1979) [length 26:30 / 4:21]	Kai Torstila: <i>Angry Birds</i> (2009) [length 24:19 / 3:23]	Johannes Vuorinen: <i>Badland</i> (2013) [length 8:12 / 3:50]	Venla Aalto / Sami Mäntylä / Janne Vuonnelsalo: <i>Rajakatse</i> (1995) [length 45:55 / 2:53]	Esko Eronen: <i>Afrikan Tähti</i> (1951) [length 19:13 / 2:36]
Risto Hietä: <i>Miekka ja Magia</i> (1987) [length 12:27 / 2:47]	Mikko Koivusalo: <i>Alias</i> (1989) [length 27:10 / 3:43]	Sami Laakso: <i>Dale of Merchants</i> (2015) [length 16:21 / 1:59]	Andy Pilke: <i>Lohikäärmepuu</i> (1990) [length 17:10 / 3:33]	Tuomas Pirinen: <i>Mordheim</i> (1999) [length 26:55 / 2:29]
Pasi Silander: <i>Kuninkaiden aika</i> (1993) [length 21:58 / 3:58]	Touko Tahkokallio: <i>Eclipse</i> (2011) [length 18:23 / 3:14]	Tuomas Hoppu: <i>Punaisten ja valkoisten taistelu Suomessa 1918</i> (1918) [length 20:09 / 2:55]	Petri Paju: <i>Aapeli</i> (1955) [length 3:51]	Mikko Saari: <i>Ristikontra</i> (trad.) [length 24:55 / 3:17]

 Digital games

 Non-digital games

 Researches

The role of technological limitations is discussed in other interviews as well. *Shadow Cities* (2010), developed by Finnish studio Grey Area, is one of the first pervasive mobile games. It is a location-based game similar to *Pokémon GO!* (2016),²⁹ as it is based on GPS location and the player's actual location affects the game. When it was introduced, it attracted positive attention and was seen to represent the future of mobile gaming.

The game's development was delayed until suitable technology appeared on the market, but even when technological limitations yielded, it was difficult to find a sufficient market share for keeping the game profitable. "When it became clear that the iPhone can do some very cool stuff, where you have a large touchscreen and GPS, a few friends and I decided to start a company and start making this game", co-founder and CTO Mikko Hämäläinen reminisces.³⁰ However, the game did not reach enough players and the *Shadow Cities* servers shut down in 2013.

Technology could thus also be perceived as an active factor in game development. Many ideas never gain momentum until technological advancement make them possible. Technological innovation stimulates designers, but sometimes old technology enables features that the latest technology fails to support. Interactive TV game *Hugo* (1993), where viewers could call in and use a tone-dialling phone to control the character on the screen, relied on the analogue technology of its time. The producer responsible for broadcasting *Hugo* on Finnish national TV, Jussi-Pekka Koskiranta, talks about how analogue phone technology made it possible to broadcast *Hugo* live on TV: "[Hugo] was possible since we were on analogue TV, but now in the age of digital broadcasts, the signal arrives in packets and they are unpacked in a different order, so there may be a delay. So this is no longer possible."³¹

The role of technology appeared in many of the interviews, but all limitations need not be of a technological nature. Celebrities playing games on *Speden Spelit*, a game show hosted by Pertti "Spede" Pasanen, caught the attention of Coinline's Harri Mononen. Mononen offered a reaction tester³² called *Nopeustesti* ("Speed test", 1990), which he had built with Seppo Korhonen, for Spede to use on the show. With the help of *Speden Spelit*, *Nopeustesti* became a huge gaming phenomenon in early 1990s Finland.

When reminiscing about the development of *Nopeustesti*, Mononen emphasized how the game was produced because of the legislative situation in Finland regarding operating coin-operated games: "the only devices that private companies could operate were children's swings, bubble gum machines and testers. Testers were legal because the Court of Appeal ruled that a reaction tester is not an amusement game. This allowed us to start the manufacturing, sales and operation of testers in Finland."³³

As the analysed interviews attest, many early digital game developers felt they had little control over the circumstances they produced games in. The circumstances also shaped the types of games the designers were able to produce. These types of circumstances presumably still characterise game development, but the diversity of contemporary platforms makes it doubtful that a lack of designer control defines game development in such a dramatic way. Still, the interviewees repeatedly emphasised that the games they made depended on prevailing technological and socio-economic circumstances and not on the designers' creativity, for example.

A passion for self-improvement

In addition to legislation and technological advancement, personal factors affected game design. The coders' skills, for example, affected their ability to design games, as did their limited spare time and their discernible motivation for making games.

Such personal circumstances determined Olli Paavola's design of the oldest digital game discussed in the interviews, *LORD* (1981). Paavola programmed *LORD* for the DEC-20 mainframe computer while studying at the Helsinki University of Technology in the early 1980s. *LORD* was one of the first games set entirely in Tolkien's Middle-Earth. It offered the player an astonishing 550 locations. *LORD* is a 'text adventure game' and Paavola emphasizes that it, as such, relied heavily on the influence of its predecessors like *Colossal Cave Adventure* (1976) and *Zork* (1977).³⁴

Paavola wanted to make a similar game, but doing so was possible only after he learned the needed skills. An important step was learning a specific coding language, Pascal, which made emulating the exemplar games possible: "Back then in Otaniemi we found a proper programming language, Pascal, after all the BASICs and such, and after playing [*Colossal Cave*] *Adventure* and *Zork* we decided to try to see if we could make something like that in Pascal."³⁵

Self-improvement is in many of the interviews expressed as one reason for making games. The chess game *Chesmac* (1979) was the first commercially published computer game in Finland. It was made for the Finnish Telmac kit computer, and was originally a hobby project for Raimo Suonio, who wanted to demonstrate that the low processing power of the Telmac was sufficient for chess. In the end, 104 copies were sold by the Topdata store in Helsinki.

Suonio articulated his reasons for making the game by stating that "I don't know why I chose chess of all things, but a clear motivator was that I was fired by Kone Osakehtiö at the end of January in 1979 and I became unem-

ployed.” While unemployed, he had ample time to develop the game as a sort of test of his own abilities as a coder. In a way, Suonio’s reasons for making the game were born out of boredom, but the underlying motivation is bound to self-improvement. When not being “forced” to work, one has the time and possibility to best oneself by making games: “[my unemployment] lasted for about a month. I spent this entire month trying to see if such a small computer, with so little memory and such a slow processor, could fit a chess program that would play at least a decent game.”³⁶

Even today, designing games is, for many game designers, still a hobby or a pleasurable way to learn and develop new skills. *VecSports Boxing* (2002) is a hobbyist-created sports game for the Vectrex console that was released in the 1980s. A small group of enthusiastic hobbyists have been keeping the old console alive by releasing games for it long after it disappeared from stores. One of these hobbyists, Manu Pärssinen, talks about why he made a boxing game for the Vectrex: “I asked a friend if our group could make a demo for the Vectrex. He suggested that I should write the code myself. I said I’d try, and started reading about how to write assembler and how to use the different instructions.”³⁷

“The feedback was good, mostly because this sort of game had not been made for the Vectrex before. [...] The most important feedback came when I posted the steps of my progress online. [...] This had inspired other hobbyists to start writing games, and they sent me feedback that it was my website that started it all. To me, keeping the machine alive was the most important feedback”, Pärssinen continues.³⁸ The development of *VecSports Boxing* impacted on Pärssinen’s relationship with the console and the community that has formed around it.

Although game development is tied to prevailing circumstances and the views expressed previously in various game cultures, development is never static or predictable. A central motivator for making games is to emulate earlier types of games, but also to bend the limits of what can be done, both technologically and artistically. Existing game making paradigms can change through the will for self-improvement, a will to aim higher and test one’s limits. In a hobbyist community, prestige is earned by showing one’s love and sharing the skills thus learned with others.

The importance of community

There are other reasons for sharing one’s work. According to the interviews, many of the games would not exist without fans encouraging and rooting for

the making of the game. One of the biggest successes of the Finnish game industry, *Angry Birds* (2009) by Rovio, has also been developed in close cooperation with fans, who according to marketing director Kai Torstila are largely responsible for the series' phenomenal success.³⁹

Over the years, the simple puzzle game has developed into a brand that is known for its extensive product selection. "The fans have always been central for Rovio and *Angry Birds*", Torstila continues, as he explains how the fans have influenced the making of the *Angry Birds* franchise and the *Angry Birds* games. "[W]hen the App Store came on the scene [it was] an enormous distribution mechanism that gave millions of people access to our games. Social media was also on the rise, Facebook and YouTube were growing. We started creating content for them and it was extremely well received. These channels gave us a lot of different ideas and wishes."⁴⁰

Implementing player ideas and feedback is another recurring theme in the analysed game development interviews. Fans can be vocal when demanding features, or commenting on what works and what does not. Mariina Hallikainen, CEO of Colossal Order, the studio behind *Cities: Skylines* (2015), believes game companies need to listen to their fans. "We have many players who give their opinions about what they would like to see in the game and what is and isn't working", she states.⁴¹ An open mind toward player communities and suggestions seems to work, as *Cities: Skylines*' versatile support for player-generated content has received praise.

Fans are demanding, but they can also be a positive force in the development of various game genres. *Suunnistussimulaattori* ("Orienteering Simulator", 2007) is developed by Antero Pulli in his free time. The aim of the freeware game is to develop a true-to-life simulation of orienteering, but also a training platform for orienteers. The game carefully models terrain based on real-life orienteering tracks and Pulli has confirmed the running speeds in the game by running across the scenery several hundred times in real life. The game's weekly virtual contests support the training of Finnish orienteers, and Pulli highlights that "feedback from the community has been the largest motivator [for making the game]. There have been a few individual encouraging messages and the overall feedback has been very positive."⁴²

Habbo (2000), a virtual online community for young people, was not primarily developed as a game but rather as a virtual gathering place. It gained immense popularity in the early 2000s. *Habbo* became a place where players were expected to invent their own content, almost as a form of child's play, or an extension of play into the teenage years. "[W]e did not consider *Habbo* a virtual world or a game, but more like a meeting spot that the players give life to by participating", says Sampo Karjalainen.⁴³ He also states that "the most

interesting part is the play. It may not be a popular word among teenagers, but the most interesting content in *Habbo* is created through play. The game shows, stables, gangs, quizzes and contests created by the visitors are what make *Habbo* interesting each day.”

In this way, designers can intentionally try not to limit what players (or users) can do in the game, but rather opt for making a sandbox in which the community can develop and prosper. Although *Habbo* is more of a virtual world than an actual game, it includes several games and game-like features that appeal to teenagers all over the world. In this way, players are more likely to make the game their own. “When you create something of your own in the world, your relationship with it becomes very personal and important”, Karjalainen continues.⁴⁴

All in all, games are not developed in a vacuum. Development is influenced by many factors, including the communities that form around games. The wishes and ideas of players can shape games, since many developers try to accommodate their views. If players are understood as co-creators, it suggests that games are never really finished, but rather continuing cultural processes on which gamers have lasting impact.

Game development as a way of life

The relationship between game makers and fans can, especially in smaller productions, become intimate. Sami Maaranen is the main game developer of the Kalevala inspired survival roguelike *UnReal World* (1992). *UnReal World* has been in constant development since 1992, gaining a reference in the Guinness Book of Records. The sounds, graphics and coding of *UnReal World* are all made by a two-man development team, Maaranen and his long-time friend Erkkä Lehmus. “The first version came out when I was 15, so I have been working on the game for most of my life”, Maaranen recounts.⁴⁵

UnReal World is placed in a very lifelike fantasy world that is reminiscent of ancient Finland. The game is an excellent example of how games have the potential of becoming the centre point of game designers’ existence; many designers commit to developing their games and even to learning the skills enacted in them. “The real world and game world sometimes become so intertwined that it is difficult to tell which is which; all the real-life experiences, trekking and adventures link with the game and add to its content”, Maaranen states.⁴⁶

Maaranen and Lehmus discuss the game’s realistic simulation of real life skills and the way of life of ancient Finns. They find it important that they

have real life expertise in the various survival and trekking skills used in the game. The game's detailed hunting simulation is based on experience and on the study of the secrets of ancient hunters to a point where "the game world [...] influences real-life trekking [and] experiments with ancient technology".⁴⁷

The close-knit community of people playing *UnReal World* has had a profound impact on Maaranen's and Lehmus' personal life. Maaranen and Lehmus have, "over the years, [...] met with [...] players, when people from France or Canada, for example, have ended up on holiday in Finland and we have spent several days together, either trekking or doing something in the spirit of *UnReal World*, or at least talking about it. Over the course of this long history, we have formed new friendships with some players; the feeling of community is a large and pleasant part of this entire story." In this manner, communities around games can become very tight.⁴⁸

Finnish ice-fishing classic *Propilkki* (1999) is another game in which it is difficult to discern the boundaries between game and real life. It has been developed for the PC since 1999 by two friends, Mikko Happonen and Janne Olkkonen, originally from Kajaani in the north of Finland. It is currently available also for mobile platforms. The game is an institution in fishing games, and it is especially noted for its high level of accuracy and realism. The realism is made possible by the developers' lifelong interest in ice fishing and Happonen's studies in biology.⁴⁹

"The history of *Propilkki* goes quite far back. As small children, we would play ice fishing by placing quilts on different pieces of furniture", Happonen reminisces about how the game is rooted in his pre-school years. The shift from play to games and game making seems to have been very natural in *Propilkki's* case and ice fishing continued to be a focus when Happonen and Olkkonen learned coding. "By the time we got our Commodore 64s and started playing with them, we started thinking about moving this game to the computer, and we did make one, but it was a text-only game since we did not know how to do graphics." As the coding skills of Happonen and Olkkonen improved, they were able to make "a PC game about this very same subject and taking it several steps further."⁵⁰

As we have seen, games are not isolated from life in general. They have the potential to become central parts of the lives of their developers, but also for the people who play them. Game cultures are not separate from other cultural activities, either, and more care needs to be taken to ascertain that game cultures are seen in as broad a light as possible. This applies to game preservation efforts, since games and gaming should be understood as complex social phenomena instead of merely technological challenges.

DISCUSSION

In this article, 14 video interviews preserved in the collections of The Finnish Museum of Games have been scrutinised. The intent has been to analyse the views on digital games, game development and game cultures that are expressed in them. Some developers talk about reasons for making games and others cover why the games turned out the way they did, how circumstances affected the shaping and execution of design ideas, or how they were able to visualise and realise new game designs. The analysis provides diverse accounts on game development and the contexts surrounding both the development and playing of games. The following investigates how game developer interviews are suited for preservation work in museums.

As the interviews attest, games turn out the way they do because of various, often counter-intuitive reasons. Game cultures are impossible to preserve only by concentrating on preserving playable games and gameplay. If museums preserve only game boxes or playable games, they are going to miss this dimension entirely.⁵¹ If we want to remember what “is no longer possible” or that “we had very strict limits to work with”, or that “keeping the machine alive was the most important feedback”, we need to listen to game developers and preserve their accounts.⁵²

We need to keep in mind that game developer interviews do not preserve the skills, know-how and work processes *per se*, but rather the interviewees’ opinions and reminiscences on those. Even if we listen, read, and talk about skills we do not really acquire them. Acquiring and executing skills is difficult, and it cannot satisfyingly be captured into an interview. Still, as skills, ideas and work processes are vocalised in interviews and preserved in museum collections, game cultures become more aware of their existence. The heightened awareness makes them part of the game heritage process.

Games are made by and for people, and for many game developers “feedback from the community [is] the largest motivator” or “a large and pleasant part of this entire story”.⁵³ Similarly, understanding the links between game developers and players is difficult without preservation methods that reveal the complex interplay between communities and game cultures. When saving game cultures, we need a broader preservation agenda than one just interested in the playing of digital games. This kind of phenomena centred preservation work is something that various contemporary collecting methods (ethnographic observation, audio and video to interviews) have been aspiring to deal with since the 70s.⁵⁴

The preservation of memories has long been part of the work done in museums. A similar trend concerning museums *as a media* is an increasing

movement away from (tangible) object centred displays towards interactive experiences. This trend has been labelled a “crisis of the object”, and is one that is, by some accounts, threatening the monumental “aura” of objects in museums.⁵⁵ On a similar note, museums can be thought of as places where, over time, objects gain new meanings in an ongoing dialogue between a) the museum object, b) the way it is displayed and preserved and c) the reception of the audience in reaction to it.⁵⁶

Thus, museum exhibitions and collections can change over time. Like all museum objects, video interviews are constantly re-contextualized and re-evaluated, and they acquire new meanings in the dialogue between objects, exhibition style and audience reception. The dialogue leads to constant re-contextualization, which shapes our understanding of game heritage.⁵⁷ The values and themes expressed in the analysed interviews expand the exhibition content, but also our understanding of game cultures and heritage. Game developers’ memories of their work, their reminiscence on the creative processes and skills and know-how diversify our understanding of game cultures. In the end, game heritage is the end result of what we value in game cultures. The interviews provide a more nuanced historical account of game development in Finland.

Moreover, the making of video interviews can be seen as part of the trend away from tangible museum objects towards interactive experiences in museums. Video interviews might at first be shown in exhibitions, but changes in exhibitions can make way for including them in collections, as well. In this way, video interviews become far more than context information, and can instead be thought of as museum objects. In the case of The Finnish Museum of Games, video interviews should be understood less as context information that provides a deeper understanding of (tangible) museum objects, and more as (intangible) museum objects in their own right.

A broad understanding of game cultures demands listening to how game developers talk about skills, knowledge and the meanings important for their games.⁵⁸ The game developer interviews include information which is impossible to discern from the playable games; thereby, game developer interviews seem to support Guins’ notion that games are best preserved by looking at the contexts where they have existed – the websites, forums and screenshots of them, or in the voices of their players and developers.⁵⁹

As demonstrated in the introduction, digital games may be preserved in numerous ways. The views expressed in the analysed interviews give rise to a need to re-define museum objects and to include intangible ideas, skills and thoughts as museum objects. Video interviews with game developers are included in the museum collection because they preserve game making history

and the intangible experience-based part of cultural history and heritage. As "the feeling of community is a large and pleasant part" of game cultures, we need to see game preservation from a wider angle.⁶⁰ When game development can become a life-long passion (instead of a career), preserving these kinds of views requires an understanding of the values and ideas expressed in various game cultures.

To conclude, video interviews with game developers can be understood as intangible museum objects in museum collections. Not all 100 Finnish games on display at the Finnish Museum of Games have tangible museum objects associated with them. In some cases, the only thing left of a game is the development team. In these cases, a video interview with the game developer(s) might be the only preservation option available. Video interviews with game developers become a means to collect and preserve self-reflections on skills needed in game development and the know-how associated with them. The interviews are duly dealt with as museum objects, and awarded their own museum numbers and metadata.

NOTES

- 1 The term *digital game* is used instead of terms with a more narrow (or vague) definition, like *video game* and *computer game*. Digital games include all games played on digital devices, eg. mobile games, computer games, console games and online games.
- 2 The term "museum object" is used when dealing with the tangible and intangible cultural artefacts museums preserve.
- 3 cf. Guins 2014; Newman 2012.
- 4 Newman 2012, p. 123.
- 5 Nylund 2015.
- 6 Korkeamäki, Nylund, Ojanen & Wiik 2017. The author is currently employed by the museum and collected the investigated interviews together with two other museum researchers.
- 7 eg. Delve, Pinchbeck & Bergmeyer 2014.
- 8 Newman 2012, Guins 2014.
- 9 Sjöblom 2011, Hale 2013.
- 10 cf. Badenoch 2014.
- 11 Mäyrä, Karvinen & Ermi 2016.
- 12 Mäyrä 2014.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Shaw 2010, p. 405.

- 15 ICOMOS, 2002.
- 16 Franchi 2015, cf. Desvallées & Mairesse 2009, pp. 39–42.
- 17 Siefkes 2012, p. 3
- 18 UNESCO 2003.
- 19 Desvallées & Mairesse 2009, p. 62.
- 20 Carman 2010.
- 21 Axelsson 2014; Nyström & Cedrenius 1981.
- 22 cf. Desvallées & Mairesse 2009.
- 23 cf. Vowell 2009.
- 24 Suominen 2017; Saarikoski 2017.
- 25 The translations are made by authorised Finnish to English translator Mikko Heinonen.
- 26 Armanto 2016, 1:52.
- 27 Ibid., 2:43.
- 28 Ibid., 2:25.
- 29 *Pokémon GO!* is a location-based augmented reality game developed by Niantic for iOS and Android devices and released in July 2016. The game utilises the player's mobile device's GPS ability to locate, capture, battle, and train virtual creatures, called Pokémon.
- 30 Hämäläinen 2016; 0:15.
- 31 Koskiranta 2016, 2:36.
- 32 A reaction tester is a type of game used to test the player's reaction time with very simplified gameplay, eg. pushing buttons in the order they light up.
- 33 Mononen 2016, 2:04.
- 34 Paavola 2016, 0:25.
- 35 Ibid.; 0:14.
- 36 Suonio 2016, 1:10.
- 37 Pärssinen 2016, 0:21.
- 38 Ibid., 2:42.
- 39 Torstila 2016, 1:26.
- 40 Ibid., 1:49.
- 41 Hallikainen 2016, 1:06.
- 42 Pulli 2016, 1:28.
- 43 Karjalainen 2016, 1:06 & 2:00.
- 44 Ibid., 2:23.
- 45 GWR Gamer's Edition 2017, p. 139.
- 46 Maaranen 2016, 0:29.
- 47 Ibid., 0:37.
- 48 Ibid., 3:09.

- 49 Happo 2016, 2:07.
 50 Ibid., 0:04.
 51 cf. Guins 2014.
 52 Quotations: Koskiranta 2016, 2:23; Armanto 2016, 2:25; Pärssinen 2016, 2:42.
 53 Quotations: Pulli 2016, 1:28; Maaranen 2016, 3:09.
 54 cf. Axelsson 2014.
 55 Smith 2006, pp. 546–547; Henning 2006, p. 71.
 56 Akker & Legêne 2016, p. 7.
 57 cf. Badenoch 2014; Vahtikari 2013.
 58 cf. UNESCO 2003.
 59 Guins 2014, p. 88.
 60 Quotation: Maaranen 2016, 3:09.

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