Notes

Introduction

1. Throughout the book I use the terms *gamemaker* or *videogame maker* to refer to the broadest category of people who make videogames in any context, and I use *videogame production* to refer to the very broad range of activities that contribute to the creation of videogames. The reasons I have chosen these terms instead of the conventionally used “videogame developer” and “videogame development” are examined in detail in chapter 1.

2. The competing debates and objectives of cultural industries and creative industries approaches will be detailed in chapter 5.

3. The unfortunately very limited number of Southeast Asian interviews is due to the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 preventing my travel to these locations for more dedicated fieldwork. I’m particularly grateful to these two participants for agreeing to be interviewed remotely via teleconferencing software.

Chapter 1

1. I discuss the tensions of “cultural industries” and “creative industries” approaches in more detail in chapter 5.

2. Indeed, noncommercial videogame production at the time was largely dependent on the dominant positions in the field, as the popularity of mods exemplifies (Kücklich 2005). Often celebrated as exemplary of the endless creativity of players, rather than game developers, the rise of modding culture in the early 2000s also, more critically, points to how modifying existing commercial products was the only feasible means through which amateur videogame makers at the time could access the tools to create the three-dimensional videogames most legitimized at the time.

3. You can access my publicly available videogames at brkeogh.itch.io.

4. In calculating this, I have only included interviewees to whom I directly asked these questions. I did not ask these questions of those I interviewed in their capacity

as government officials or representatives of cultural institutions. For a variety of circumstantial reasons, the questions were also not asked of a small number of gamemakers, and they have been excluded from these calculations.

5. *Production* comes with its own problems as the word is already commonly used to refer to a specific project management role within videogame studios and teams. I have chosen to use the word in its general sense nonetheless due to its common use by both Bourdieu and cultural industries researchers to refer to the broad activity of cultural production. Readers can assume that throughout this book I am always using *production* in this more general sense unless I have explicitly stated otherwise.

Chapter 2

1. See http://www.ourdigitalheritage.org/archive/playitagain/ for the full archive produced by the Play It Again project.

2. Not to be confused with the International Game Developers Association (IGDA), which is a global organization compared to the IGEA's Australian (and increasingly New Zealand) focus. Historically, Australian gamemakers have been represented by the Game Developers Association of Australia (GDAA), which represented individuals, and the IGEA, which represented game production companies' interests in Australia. The distinction between the two organizations became increasingly blurred as the Australian videogame field in/formalized until the GDAA was eventually merged into the IGEA in 2020.

3. At the time of writing, a new federal tax offset for videogame production has been announced for Australia. This is discussed briefly in chapter 7.

4. The second stage of Swalwell et al.'s Play it Again project, focusing on the 1990s, is beginning to rectify this. See https://playitagainproject.com/.

5. $100 here refers to a number of related debates among indie game developers in the early 2010s as both the Independent Games Festival (IGF) and the Steam Greenlight program (initially the only way for independent games to access Valve's Steam platform) each introduced a $100 submission fee as a form of quality control. Indie developers were split on these decisions. Some saw it as necessary to filter out spam and trash, while others saw it as elitist and exclusionary to a broader range of truly independent (and poor) gamemakers (see Hernandez 2012; Klepek 2012; Salgado 2012).

Chapter 3

1. At the time of writing, Valve collects 30 percent of each sale through Steam. Apple also collects 30 percent for App Store sales but only 15 percent for companies that make under $1 million a year. Unity's game engine provides a free license for those whose projects generate less than $100,000 a year, after which one must upgrade to a $400 per seat yearly license. Epic is something of an outlier. Its distribution platform,

the Epic Games Store, takes only 12 percent of each sale through the Epic Games Store, and its development platforms, the Unreal Game Engine, has no upfront cost, and takes 5 percent of revenue on projects that have generated more than $1 million.

2. While here Burdak talks about the imminent "completion" of *Paperbark*, it is worth noting how increasingly the release of a videogame is no longer the point at which its creators stop working on it. The online and live nature of digital storefronts means that videogames are increasingly expected to be revised and updated following release with bug fixes and new content. This has led to the servitization of videogame production and to a shift in tone of the grueling work conditions of gamemakers from crunch to grind (Weststar and Dubois 2022).

3. The survey question asked, "Which of the following types of game developer might you also identify as?" directly following the question "Do you consider yourself a professional game developer?" Respondents were able to tick as many or as few as they wished of the following options: aspirational, student, hobbyist, DIY, indie, independent, artisanal, trash, punk, zinester, and serious. Respondents could also enter their own labels under an "Other" option and provided alternative labels such as "experimental," "arcade," and "consultant."

4. Bitsy is a free, accessible gamemaking tool developed by Adam Le Doux, which, like Twine, has a large community of noncommercial practitioners. See Reed 2020.

Chapter 4

1. Despite my use of *videogame production* throughout the book to refer to the broad group of activities that contribute to videogame making, in this chapter I have decided to use the term *game development* when describing tertiary programs as this is most commonly how they frame themselves.

2. We manually removed six programs from the dataset that mentioned game development as a potential job outcome (and thus technically met the second criteria) but only in a fleeting or secondary manner that suggested no direct focus on game development education within the program.

3. Outrageously, in Australian universities, vice chancellors often earn more in one week than the casualized academics that do the vast bulk of the teaching earn in an entire year (Lyons and Hill 2018).

4. The assumption that game development educators are unqualified or unexperienced is a common yet unfair stereotype among both professional videogame developers and students. As Ashton (2009) notes, the assumptions by both developers and students that game development education exists, first and foremost, to prepare students for a job in industry, means those developers already in industry are seen to have greater authority than the teachers who are themselves constantly questioned and doubted for *not* working in the industry.

5. In Australia, the "sandstone" universities (also known as the Group of Eight) are the more prestigious and older institutions, so named for the prominence of sandstone buildings on their campuses. An American equivalent might be the reputation of Ivy League universities.

6. Of course, and as numerous game studies scholars have shown (Kücklich 2005; Banks 2013; Boluk and LeMieux 2017; Brock and Johnson 2021), gameplaying and gamemaking *are* overlapping practices, and all sorts of complex relationships exist among the identities, skills, and labor of videogame production and those of videogame consumption. This is especially true in the context of a resurgence in popularity of user-generated, content-driven business models such as those of *Dreams*, *Super Mario Maker*, and *Roblox*. For the consideration of this chapter, it is appropriate to talk of a conflation between, or perhaps a reduction of, these two nevertheless overlapping positions.

7. As other scholars have shown, the same sort of masculinist gamer identity is similarly privileged in how videogame companies talk about their internal culture and advertise for open positions (Bulut 2020; de Peuter and Dyer-Witheford 2005).

8. I provide a much more extensive consideration of videogame production as a craft elsewhere (Keogh 2022).

9. The idea that students would start as indie then move into triple-A speaks to how students continue to see triple-A blockbuster production as more central and legitimate in the field. In cities where large studios actually exist, however, the opposite trajectory is much more common: students are recruited en masse by large studios into graduate positions and then, years later, leave to found their own studios with the skills and contacts obtained while working in triple-A.

10. This is not stated explicitly in the report. Rather, the report states that "84% of the respondents were currently employed" (Higher Education Video Game Alliance 2019, 14) and that "Just over 36% of employed respondents with degrees in game-related programs found work outside the games industry" (19). Thus, I have inferred here that the remaining 64 percent of the employed respondents (that is, 54 percent of the total number of respondents) are those who are currently employed within videogame companies.

Chapter 5

1. My personal stance regarding the claims of serious games and gamification advocates is one of extreme cynicism. I have previously argued that the notion that videogame players are "more active" than the audiences of other media relies on concepts of interactivity and immersion that misrepresent the actual embodied engagements required by all forms of media (Keogh 2018). For valuable critiques of serious games and gamification directly, see Abraham (2022, 27–57); Boluk and LeMieux (2017, 202–224); Ruffino (2018, 26–44); Pedercini (2014); D'Anastasio (2015); and Ruberg (2020a).

2. Chaos Theory, "Our Work," https://www.chaostheorygames.com/work/.

3. Opaque Media, https://www.opaque.media/.

4. GOATi Entertainment, https://www.goatientertainment.com/company.html.

5. Bondi Labs, https://www.bondilabs.com/.

6. Secret Lab, https://secretlab.games/.

7. 2pt, https://2pt.com.au/.

Chapter 6

1. Since completing my fieldwork, the GDAA was absorbed into the Interactive Games and Entertainment Association (IGEA), who then took control of The Arcade. In February 2022, after two years of the COVID-19 pandemic and extensive periods of lockdown, The Arcade's lease on its building was ended with no immediate plans to reopen elsewhere. In August 2022, the IGEA announced that this closure would be indefinite. This has no bearing on the period discussed in the following pages, however.

2. See de Peuter, Cohen, and Saraco (2017) for a more detailed discussion of the phenomenon of coworking spaces.

3. Participants interviewed in other parts of Australia often expressed a frustration that The Arcade, especially due to its close affiliation with the GDAA, also diverted attention and resources away from the field elsewhere in the nation. As one Tasmanian gamemaker put it, "They're meant to be the Game Development Association of Australia, not the Game Development Association of The Arcade!"

4. I am indebted to Adelaide gamemaker Kathy Smart for providing me with extensive details of Adelaide's videogame production community. Any mistakes, however, remain solely my own.

5. On the day of my interview with Reece, the South Australian state government had abruptly announced that it would be ending the state's short-lived game funding program.

6. Thorsland's insistence on aggressive economic growth and job development is challenged by Mighty Kingdom's more recent financial challenges. In September 2022, the studio announced a major cost-saving restructure that involved approximately 25 redundancies—in the vicinity of 20 to 25 percent of the entire studio workforce (Williams 2022).

7. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this was of particular importance to the two Southeast Asian gamemakers I interviewed, who felt that connecting with Western gamemaker communities was crucial for their broader visibility to press and potential audiences.

Chapter 7

1. A similarly interesting trajectory to follow, but one which would require its own dedicated study, is how design and aesthetic experimentations by more marginal videogame makers eventually find their way into blockbuster commercial titles. For instance, in the late 2000s and early 2010s, a number of independent videogame makers were experimenting with videogame experiences that focused less on player empowerment and more on embodied audiovisual participation (see, specifically, Twine games and walking simulators). While creators in these spaces (especially women and queer folk) were often abused and harassed for making "nongames," it would seem that such design considerations have, in more recent years, found their way into blockbuster titles such as *Alien: Isolation* and *Red Dead Redemption 2*. The rapid growth and expansion of the genre of "wholesome" games provides another example (Lupetti 2021). Tracking the actual influences and motivations from the fringes of the field to the designers at the central studios would be a fascinating and valuable project.

2. In 2021, game production platform Roblox, in response to a lawsuit between Apple and Epic, removed all reference from their website that Roblox users created "games" at all, instead stressing that they merely create "experiences" (Robertson 2021).

3. Especially in regard to platformization and games-as-a-service business models, Alexander Bernevega and Alex Gekker (2022; see also Joseph 2021) have convincingly argued that the relationship of videogame publishers and consumers is increasingly one of rentier capitalism where players don't buy a videogame commodity at all but instead purchase temporary access to a videogame service that continues to be owned by and generating value for the videogame publisher. In this section, I am effectively saying that a similar landlord-renter dynamic defines the relationship between the dominant and peripheral positions of the field of videogame production.

Conclusion

1. As of the time of writing, Offman now has the title of videogames curator.

2. The Ian Potter Cultural Trust, which funded *Terror Nullius*, withdrew its support of the artwork on the eve of its debut at ACMI (Di Rosso 2018).

3. As this book goes to press, Screen Australia has announced a direct funding program that looks set to address exactly this gap in Australia. Where the refundable tax offset discussed in the previous chapter will support those videogame companies spending more than $500,000 in Australia, Screen Australia's "Expansion Pack" will provide up to $150,000 to projects spending less than $500,000. That both the Australian federal government and local trade associations like the IGEA seemingly understand the importance of supporting gamemakers at both ends of the field is a highly promising development.

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