

## **TRACK 03. DIGITAL GAME PLAY AS SOCIOTECHNICAL PRACTICE**

The Digital Game industry has become one of the fastest growing, innovative and globalised industries in advanced Western economies and Digital Games have become a key cultural artefact and leisure practice in contemporary societies. Developing out of the American military industrial and academic complex in the 1970s the study of Digital Games design and play is the study of a range of sociotechnical practices and the negotiations between a range of human and non-human actors operating within systems of rules. The complexity of these relationships brings forth a series of questions that can be investigated using Science and Technology Studies approaches. However, to date games studies, with few exceptions, have failed to adopt STS approaches and the STS community has largely ignored this area of study.

This track seeks to develop the relationship between the game studies community and the STS community. Several research questions can be used to guide this: What STS theories can be used to understand Digital Games as sociotechnical phenomenon? Is the concept of practice and the practice-based approach useful to investigate Digital Games? Is there a relationship between power as inscribed and imposed by artefacts and the technical dimensions of Digital Games? What rules are inscribed into Digital Games technologies and what social worlds do these rules describe? What contribution can the study of Digital Games make to the STS discipline at large? And what contribution can an STS approach make to game studies? Can we foresee an after-method approach for Digital Games?

We invite papers that tackle the sociotechnical dimensions of Digital Games and address some of the questions outlined above. Contributions might include (but are not restricted to):

- Digital Games as material semiotic artefacts
- Digital Games as sociotechnical assemblages
- The mess of digital games (Bogost, 2009)
- Innovation in game design as actor-networking and social shaping
- Digital Game design and/or play as performance and practice
- Disruptive sociotechnical users' practices (e.g. hacking, modding)
- The scripting of gendered gaming practices
- Governance and regulation of gaming practices

Abstracts of no more than 500 words should be sent by email (following website instructions) by 2010 March 15<sup>th</sup>. Please include also a preliminary references list (up to 4).

### **Convenors**

**Aphra Kerr** is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the National University of Ireland Maynooth. Her research focuses on the regulation, production and consumption of digital media and in particular of digital games; she established and runs the industry and community website. ([www.gamedevelopers.ie](http://www.gamedevelopers.ie))

**Helen W. Kennedy** is Deputy Head in the Department of Culture, Media and Drama at the University of the West of England (UWE) in the UK. She has been researching and writing about games since 1993 and co-founded and chaired (from 2004 – 2009) the Play Research Group at UWE.

**Jennifer Jenson** is Associate Professor of Pedagogy and Technology in the Faculty of Education at York University. Her research interests include gender and gameplay and the design and development of digital games for education.

**Stefano De Paoli** is postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Sociology at the National University of Ireland Maynooth. Stefano has worked in STS since 2004 and recently his research interest has embraced Massive Multiplayer Online Games ([http://www.nuim.ie/nirsa/people/postdocs/stefano\\_de\\_paoli.shtml](http://www.nuim.ie/nirsa/people/postdocs/stefano_de_paoli.shtml))