

Patrick Crogan

The Conditions of Production of Video Games: The Nature and Stakes of Creative Freedom in Stiegler's Philosophy of Technicity

In this talk I will offer an account of the evolving conditions of video game production from a perspective informed by philosopher Bernard Stiegler's work on technology. Opportunities for game makers have expanded significantly in recent years. This has coincided not only with their ongoing proliferation across digital platforms but with signs of a growing acceptance and validation of games as a legitimate cultural form of expression, one that, like other major forms of industrial media, can be more than a vehicle for purely commercial strategies of captivating user attention and channelling it along convergent pathways of monetization and serial consumption. Drawing on Stiegler's account of how human cultural development is necessarily technical in character and proceeds through the composition of technical and cultural dynamics, I will propose that the conditions of video game production display some crucial features of the possibilities and challenges of the globalizing technocultural developments of which they are such an important and pervasive vector. These include the expansion of access to the means of making and communicating individual experience alongside a powerful trend toward the capture, channelling and monetizing of that experience by transnational entities pursuing competitive, globalizing commercial logics. It is not perhaps too much to suggest that to analyse the nature and stakes of the future of video games today one must consider the future of creative freedom or autonomy as Stiegler would prefer to say; for creativity is a potentiality inherent to the individual inasmuch as they may pursue a pathway toward autonomy but only in relation to cultural, technical and psychic "automatisms" which are the conditions of their creative potential. Creativity depends upon the composition of autonomy with the automatic, and production is always reproduction. I will argue that the question of the future of creativity is vividly "in play" currently in the future of video games as much as elsewhere in the "creative economy", and this in a way that all the discussions of the creative and cultural industries, the creative class, creative hubs, precincts and zones tends to overlook, missing the very thing they target in their strategic planning, projections, modelling and econometrics.

SHORT BIO:

Patrick Crogan is a member of the Digital Cultures Research Centre at the University of the West of England, Bristol. He is author of *Gameplay Mode: War, Simulation and Technoculture* (2011) and of numerous articles on video games and technoculture in journals and anthologies. In 2013 he worked with Bristol-based game developers Auroch Digital on a game-documentary hybrid form, a project that is ongoing. This year he has been leading a research network examining indie game collaboration models to look at ways of fostering the creative and cultural value of game making for makers and for the communities from which they emerge. This research and these projects are influenced by his engagement with the work of Bernard Stiegler. This has included collaborations, translation work, journal articles and essays in edited collections. He guest edited the Cultural Politics special issue on Stiegler (2010). He is working on a book exploring Stiegler's theories of film and media.