

Report from Regio Summit 2009 in Vienna.

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Prof. Jeffrey Wimmer: Games from cultural and economic perspective

At the moment computer games are domesticating to an everyday hobby for anyone. As the amount of user generated content is constantly increasing, the cultural content of computer games is getting more and more important. Therefore the financiers of computer game development should start to acknowledge the cultural aspects of games in addition to technological and economical questions, and think more carefully what kind of games the funding should be directed to.

The idea of playing computer games is not same in international context and in German speaking area, thus computer games should be studied also from local perspective. It should be also noted that compared to other mass media platforms there are many uses and actions under this one word "playing", as it can be associated with gaming, (e)sports, working, information and communication.

At the moment more research is especially needed on those people who create computer games, but currently the academic studies focus mostly on intensive games, as they are more interesting, because the effects of gaming are stronger for players while playing them. Those studies show that conflicts between genders and generations among people playing computer games start to be history. Females and elderly are even in average playing longer than young males, because RPGs are more popular among them. So far social acceptance of senior gaming as a hobby has stayed low, but it will change when younger generations get older, because for them playing computer games is just a hobby among other. Today the major conflicts in computer game industry are mostly between users and industry.

Due to current development, digital games and digital worlds are becoming public sphere, consequently also public broadcast companies should start to work there. If they do not go virtual, nobody will be interested to fund them anymore.

Gilberto Sanchez: Efforts for public funding for games development in Spain

Although Spanish computer game markets are fourth largest in Europe, computer game designers in Spain have survived in competition mostly thanks to multinational companies. The development of Spanish computer game industry itself has been weak so far. At the moment DEV has only 19 members and the largest of them represent about 90 percent of the whole industry sector, which is a problem.

One of the other main problems of the industry in Spain is piracy. Also lack of professionals is driving computer game companies out from Spain. This problem is becoming more and more critical, because the Spanish government is not familiar with computer game industry, its tools, its needs and its way of working. Above all help is needed for marketing. Also more grants would be needed in order to boost job creation in the industry. At the moment the Spanish government directs 505 million euros support for ICT industries, from which 150 is for grants and 355 is for loans. Unfortunately developing computer games is not recognized as R&D.

Kristian Schnack: Public funding for game development in Australia and Victoria

Currently regional funding schemes are globally coming more and more important, thus Melbourne, the capital of game industry in Australia, and the state of Victoria are heavily supporting the infrastructure for computer game developers. The state offers very flexible funding schemes, as amount of funding can be negotiated directly with the ministry of finance. At the moment funding is mainly directed to export oriented projects.

Australia offers even 175 percent tax brakes for R&D companies, thus many global companies have placed their R&D centers there. Tax brakes at that scale would not be possible in the Union due to restrictions by Community Law. To foster investments on the region the government of Australia offers a fast line immigration services for employers ready to make investments. The region gains additional competitive advantage from its geographic location, as companies working there can offer 'follow the sun model' for European and American companies with about twelve hours time difference.

Erik Fackeldey: Support measures for game development in the Region Provence

The region of Provence has a long cosmopolitan history. Only about ten years ago there was no computer game industry in the region, but in one decade the region has been able to bring the computer game industry to one of its most quickly growing industry sectors.

Particularly computer game developers from Paris are interested to move to Provence, because the region offers more attractive environment for raising children. The region also have gained significant amount of EU funding. Alone Euromediterranée project is making about 7 billion euros of EU funding available in Marseille. In addition to that France offers business tax exoneration for three years for innovative startups. One should remember that companies from Europe (with majority of ownership in Europe) should be applied with same rules as those from

France in France.

In near the future region is going to start a computer game school, create a computer game laboratory and offer more regional funds for computer game production. Thus there are currently good markets for independent workers in the region. Furthermore Cannes computer game event is organized annually offering a possibility for publishers and producers to meet.

Barbara Schardt: The new funding scheme for game development in Bavaria

The clear advantage of Bavaria is the fact that most of the big film and tv-companies have their offices there. Currently computer games are a strong regional priority and thus the region is also offering funding for them. In addition it is training media professionals and is offering many other information sharing and non-funding like initiatives to support development of computer games. These other initiatives are among other round table meetings for game developers, a working group overcoming barriers between animation and game development, a working group overcoming barriers between simulation and game development in order to boost serious games, a database of media companies, support for some business travels and Game-playing event at the regional parliament.

Films, television programs and games are funded by same body called Cluster of Audiovisual Media. Half of the money comes from government and half from business. For computer games funding is limited to games with UDK rating UDK16 or under.

It should also be noted that there is currently no national funding for games in Germany. One should also remember that state aid can be accepted as a substitute according to Community regulations, if it is defined as cultural funding.

Stefan Klein: 360 degree funding in Hamburg

Gamecity's Network, that has quickly grown one of the largest regional industry networks in Germany, offers large range of services for companies. For example it offers regional, national and international contacts, it is developing new business opportunities, it offers office space and market trips and booths in fairs etc. The network is supporting qualification by a Gamecity Lab that focuses on know-how transfer between industry and science, by Gamecity Lecture series in a co-operation with local universities that stimulate students interest in this area and by marketing the city as a business location.

When it comes to funding, the network offers industry loans (type of funding was chosen to be loans for political reasons) for prototypes. Although this kind of seed money was wanted from industry, loans have not been popular, only 8 application for 2 million euros of available funding have been submitted. One of the reasons for this unpopularity might the fact that people are afraid of loans, because they have to pay them back, although they would fail.

Elisabeth Mendoza: New development in Baden Württemberg

Baden-Württemberg has no special financial instrument for computer games, although they have many computer game companies working there. Current support for game developers is offered as research, talent development, marketing and fair trips. For example Karl-Steinburch-Stipendium is targeted to students coming from technology application fields and in order to promote innovative media fields there is a Heidelberg Innovation Forum offering researchers' IT ideas for companies. Region is currently also setting up financial funding opportunities.

Thomas Berndt: Funding opportunities for game developers in Austria and Vienna

Vienna offers at the moment only cash grants for innovations (up to 35 percent of the project budget) and for research (between 50 to 75 percent of the project budget). At the moment there is a special focus on games in the innovation funding, but they have been cut out from research funding, as it is directed only for technology development. The main problems of this system are identified as following: the eligible period of a project should be more flexible, subsidies for marketing would be needed, a part of the money comes after a project has been finished, in kind efforts should be counted as money more often and more external and internal support for projects is needed.

From point of view of city of Vienna it is more useful to have one program for all media spheres (including games) than specific programs for classical arts, films, print media etc.