Poster Proposal:
Digital (hi)storytelling – counterfactuals and fiction in digital culture

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Complex and heterogeneous storyworlds are mediated through various media by means of several aesthetic expressions, and digital storytelling is a relevant aspect of mediation. This abstract gives an overview of two research projects on digital storytelling that are closely related and focus on the same category of questions, using different methods and materials. The purpose is to highlight one of many current international research alliances on the topics of social memory, adaptation, movie and game studies within the context of digital storytelling.

Counterfactuals in game design and models of historical change

As part of her ongoing PhD project, Ylva Grufstedt has taken an interest in game design and models of causality and historical change in strategy games like *Europa Universalis* and *Civilization*. In this type of simulatory games, players may change history by manipulating various factors based on the rule set and framework created by the developers. Her research focuses on the way these games engineer and facilitate models of historical change by enabling alternative, i.e. counterfactual, (hi)storytelling through gameplay, by way of mapping the specificities of video games as an interactive form of historical modelling, world building and storytelling. The expressed aim is to better understand the interplay of agency, counterfactuals and historical consciousness by analyzing gameplay videos of counterfactual play.

Gameplay and social memory

In Cecilia Trenter´s part of the project *Medeltidens form- och tankevärld i Dragon Age: Origins* (Medievalism in Dragon Age: Origins), she examined the use of fictitious history by studying Dragon Age: Origins and Dragon Age II (2009-2011 BioWare) within the fantasy-medieval context. By reflecting the present in the past, people are not only creating images of who we are but also what it takes to reach our goals. Since the identity-process mobilizes action, it is of interest to investigate how gameplay employs social memory in the creation of an epical action-plot. The project is based on the assumption that understanding the projective identity through a PC as a part of a flow of time with a past, a present and a future in the game, is a crucial part of the gameplay. [1]

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[1] Gameplay and historical consciousness in Dragon Age: Origins and Dragon Age II (Bioware) (published at Meaningful Play 2012 at State University of East Lansing http://meaningfulplay.msu.edu/proceedings2012/).