Manufacturing Consent in Video Games

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Sammendrag
In this article I argue that the structural conditions of global capitalism and postcolonialism encourage game developers to rearticulate hegemonic memory politics and suppress subaltern identities. This claim is corroborated via an application of Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky’s propaganda model to the Japanese-developed video game Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain. This case study highlights that the hegemonic articulations of colonial histories are not exclusive to Western entertainment products where instead modes of production matter in the ‘manufacturing of mnemonic hegemony’. I also propose that the propaganda model, while instructive, can be improved further by acknowledging a technological filter and the role of the subaltern. Thus, the article furthers the understanding of the relation between production and form in contemporary technological phenomena like video games and how this relation motivates hegemonic articulations of the past in contemporary mass culture.

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is a PhD candidate in Game and Memory Studies at the Department of Language and Culture at UiT The Arctic University of Norway under the supervision of Dr. Holger Pötzsch. He holds a cand.it in Games Analysis from the IT University of Copenhagen and a BA in Philosophy from the University of Copenhagen. In 2016 he won first prize with a personal essay on the relation between being a citizen of a former slave nation of Denmark and playing contemporary digital games dealing with the 18th-century Caribbean slave system in the essay contest ‘Digital Lives’ organized by the Norwegian cultural organization Fritt Ord. He currently coordinates the international ENCODE research network at UiT and is part of the WAR/GAME research group. Together with Dr. Souvik Mukherjee, Emil also co-edited a special issue on postcolonial perspectives in game studies for the Open Library of Humanities. His research interests include game studies, memory studies, critical race theory, the political economy of communication, critical and materialist approaches to media, and postcolonialism.

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Referanser


MANUFACTURING CONSENT IN VIDEO GAMES—

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Abstract: In this article I argue that the structural conditions of global capitalism and postcolonialism encourage game developers to rearticulate hegemonic memory politics and suppress subaltern identities. This claim is corroborated via an application of Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky’s propaganda model to the Japanese-developed video game Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain. This case study highlights that the hegemonic articulations of colonial histories are not exclusive to Western entertainment products where instead modes of production matter in the ‘manufacturing of mnemonic hegemony’. I also propose that the propaganda model, while instructive, can be improved further by acknowledging a technological filter and the role of the subaltern. Thus, the article furthers the understanding of the relation between production and form in contemporary technological phenomena like video games and how this relation motivates hegemonic articulations of the past in contemporary mass culture.

Keywords: cultural memory; political economy; video games; postcolonialism.

Introduction—Playing the Cold War

Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain1 is an action-stealth video game that lets consumers play with Cold War colonialism in the Soviet-Afghan war and the Angolan Civil War. As the rogue US soldier ‘Venom Snake’, players do mercenary contracts for either the US or the Soviet Union. As part of this mercenary work, MGSV positions players as neutral between the warring imperialist interests, so that neither the US or the Soviet Union are seen as more legitimate than the other—i.e. both imperial nations in the game are part of the same hegemony with “a common interest in opposing military structures” (Kaldor 1991: 112). Players are tasked with building up Snake’s own private paramilitary army called the ‘Diamond Dogs’ by taking up mercenary contracts in Afghanistan and Angola for either US- or Soviet-backed movements such as the real-historical ‘ União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola’ (UNITA) and ‘Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola—Partido do Trabalho’ (MPLA). Player activities consist of procuring resources from Afghanistan and Angola, killing or capturing enemy soldiers for players’ own gain, and destroying their military installations. The game’s main narrative covers political themes such as the loss of language through cultural imperialism, the interests of colonial powers, and the dynamics of managing a paramilitary mercenary force, something of which I elaborate on later. Yet despite these relatively refreshing political themes in mass cultural entertainment, I claim that the game still ‘manufactures mnemonic hegemony’ in its Cold War depiction of Afghanistan and Angola.

1 Hereafter referred to as MGSV.

Nordlit 42: Manufacturing Monsters, 2019. Digital object identifier: https://doi.org/10.7557/13.5016. © 2019 Emil Lundedal Hammar. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly credited.
The gameplay of Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain is exactly the same as Ground Zeroes except for this time, it has more depth into it. There are literally hundreds of different ways to complete each mission. You can either go loud and unleash hell upon your enemies or you can just stay low and sneak in the shadows. Spotted by an enemy? No need to worry, the game has the same Reflex mode which was previously introduced in Ground Zeroes. I express a voluntary consent to receive commercial information on own and Gamehag partners services by means of electronic communication. I was given the opportunity to opt out of receiving it or to revoke the consent at any time. Wait a moment! You don’t want a chest? Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain is an open world stealth game developed by Kojima Productions and published by Konami. It was released worldwide for Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, Xbox 360, and Xbox One on September 1, 2015. It is the ninth installment in the Metal Gear series that was directed, written, and designed by Hideo Kojima following Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes, a stand-alone prologue released the previous year, as well as his final work at Konami. The Political Economy of Cultural Memory in the Videogames Industry. EL Hammar. Digital Culture & Society 5 (1), 61-84, 2019. Manufacturing Consent in Video Games—The Hegemonic Memory Politics of Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain (2015). EL Hammar. Nordlit, 279–300-279–300, 2019. 1. 2019. Politics of Production: Videogames 10 years after Games of Empire. EL Hammar, L de Wildt, S Mukherjee, C Pelletier. Games and Culture, 1555412020954996, 2020. 2020. Producing & Playing Hegemonic Pasts: Historical Digital Games as Memory-Making Media. E Lundedal Hammar. UiT Norges arktiske universitet, 2020. The first 2017 Metal Gear Solid: The Phantom Pain update lets the players step into the shoes of Revolver Ocelot. In the August 2017 update,... October 28, 2015 18. A Quiet Exit Walkthrough. A Quiet Exit is the 45th mission in Metal Gear Solid 5: The Phantom Pain. November 25, 2015 2. Best FOB Infiltration Tips. FOBs are Mother Base outposts in Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain. They are entirely separate from the main base. The biggest difference between... October 28, 2015 7. Skull Face Walkthrough. Metallic Archaea is a main mission in Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain. It’s the 29th story mission – one of the shorter ones,... October 28, 2015 10. Root Cause. Root Cause is the 27th main mission in Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain. General information. PC Report. GeForce Graphics Guide. Metal Gear Wiki. Steam Community Discussions. All versions require Steam and Denuvo Anti-Tamper DRM. Custom music can be added to \steamapps\common\MGS_TPP\CustomSoundtrack in .mp3 format. Save game data location is shared with Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes. Save data from Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes can be “uploaded” (imported) with associated bonuses.