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**IGDA FINLAND HUBS AND THEIR
EFFECTS ON LOCAL GAME
DEVELOPMENT: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC
STUDY OF TAMPERE AND KAJAANI**

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ABSTRACT

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Game development is thought to be a community-based industry, where social networks and flow of information is crucial to both individual and company development. The International Game Developers Association (IGDA) and its Finnish chapter work to promote and support individual game developer in their careers and skill development by holding local monthly gatherings in areas where there is a game development scene. In Finland, these gatherings are commonly held by locally based IGDA Finland Hubs. In this study, we look at the hubs in Tampere and Kajaani game development areas.

There is research done on the inner functions of game development industry, its structures and challenges. These previous researches have studied the rise and fall of big game development companies and how the business behind the game development functions. There are, however, very little research done about the game development communities, and especially, the IGDA and how its monthly events effect the game development industry on a local level.

This paper aims to investigate the effects of IGDA hubs in Kajaani and Tampere areas by interviewing the attendees to the IGDA events in the respective areas. The goal there is to gain understanding on how the IGDA hub affect the local game industry, and how the attending people find the events. Why do people attend the events? Are the events perceived as useful to the individual and local companies?

The demographics attending the IGDA events are colorful. The average IGDA gathering can have students, veteran game developers, recently graduated looking for jobs and people who are just interested in the game development industry. The results show that the interviewed people have many different reasons for attending the local IGDA hub gatherings. As information flow is seen one of the biggest motivations the attendance of gatherings is crucial. Networking with other people inside the industry plays an important part in this knowledge gathering and flow of information. The overall usefulness and effect to the game development industry is a complex matter to be investigated thoroughly in one thesis and would require even further research.

Keywords: IGDA, IGDA Finland, Game development, communities,

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

Foreword

Writing this thesis has been an interesting journey into the academic field. Especially for someone with a vocational background such as myself. Having knowledge on the actual development side of the game industry has given me some knowledge about the field of game studies, but my master's studies at the Tampere University has given that knowledge more depth.

IGDA hub activities and volunteering in them have served as an important gateway into the Finnish game development scene for me. I am excited to be able to be one of the first to study the effects of IGDA activity and to know how the people in the scene feel about the association.

For you, reader, I hope this thesis inspires you to visit your local IGDA Finland hub's gatherings and talk with the local professionals. Attend a gathering, talk to people, learn, and most importantly; have a good time doing so!

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I would like to thank my family, classmates and friends for their support in making this thesis. I also thank university instructor Kati Alha for her valuable feedback in the most crucial moment in the making of this thesis.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Game development is often considered being a group effort, even if one prefers to work alone. How a game development community forms is commonly dictated by the common interests and hobbies of the individuals within the community. The formation of these communities is often natural in kind, but sometimes there is a need to provide a framework for the community to be built upon and develop further.

This is where the International Game Developers Association (IGDA) comes into play. IGDA has chapters in different countries around the world all working to keep the game development community alive and well. In the case of IGDA Finland, there are several individual hubs operating under the main chapter. The Finnish hubs are located in regions and cities within Finland where the game development scene is active.

There is an apparent lack of research conducted on the communal nature of game development and the different social game development communities. Research by Jørgensen, Sandqvist and Sotamaa (2017) has so far studied the game development industry mostly from a historical perspective. Other studies, like *The North-American Game Industry* by Casey O'Donnell (2012) only mention the IGDA as an active organisation within the industry. No published studies have investigated the effects of the different events that IGDA Finland can have on the local game development scene, even when the organisation is a vital part of the industry's development. There is an apparent niche for this kind of organised game development community research, especially for one conducted on the IGDA.

In this master's thesis I investigate the IGDA Hubs of Kajaani and Tampere, and how they affect the local game development industry with the research question; **“How do IGDA Finland activities affect local game development?”** As one of the founders and previous leader of the IGDA Finland Kajaani hub, I have first-hand experience in the inner workings of IGDA Finland hub activities when hosting gatherings and inviting guest speakers and seeking sponsors. This background of experience has made me interested in knowing whether the local game development community has or has not found the gatherings useful and beneficial.

Total five years of working with IGDA Finland as a volunteer have given me insight about the many different demographic groups we have in our gatherings, ranging from

students of different stages and backgrounds to long-time game development industry veterans. The individual differences in game development experience, current work situation and personal goals make attending the gatherings different for everyone. This thesis studies these differences and their effect on the complete experience of the IGDA gathering.

In this thesis, I study the personal experiences of attending IGDA Finland hub events in the areas of Kajaani and Tampere. This is done by interviewing a total of nine individuals from both locations who have previously attended at least one local IGDA gathering, who are of different backgrounds and in a different stage in their personal career as a game developer. The interviews map, for instance, the personal motivations for attending the event and whether the respondent has gained something from the events.

The thesis is structured as follows;

I investigate the previously conducted research in titular literature chapter, pointing out the research gap this paper aims to fill. Due to the lack of previous researches conducted on the IGDA, the literature section covers the previous studies done on game development as an industry.

In chapter 3, the workings and histories of both the IGDA global and its Finnish chapter IGDA Finland ry are explained and the relations they have with the other organisations working in the same field. The chapter explains the function of IGDA Finland ry and how the association co-operates with Neogames and Suomen Pelinkehittäjät ry, the other game development industry organisations currently active in Finland.

Moving on to chapter 4 I explore the communities as basis for game development industry based on the existing studies on the field. Chapter 5 explains the methodology used in this study and how the material was gathered and analysed. Chapter 6 combines the collected responses from Kajaani and Tampere regions and how the respondents have found their local IGDA hub activities.

Chapter 7 contains the discussion of the results, background theory and my personal auto-ethnographic knowledge. The chapter expands the respondent's experiences and compares them with each other. The findings of attendee demographics, motivations for attendance and experiences of usefulness are discussed here. The chapter 7 ends by answering the research question of this thesis.

Lastly, the conclusions in chapter 8 combines the research done in this thesis and what kind of information it has provided. This chapter also contains the points for future research due to the limitations in this thesis as well as personal reflection of the research process.

2 LITERATURE

The available strictly related literature is rather scarce, so a need arises to form the basis for my study from several other fields of research. Literature explaining the nature of work and hobby communities and societies would best fit the study, as they provide the theoretical background for studying organized societies of the same kind in game development context.

While there is a good amount of research done on games and the philosophies behind certain aspects of their development. The book, “The Video Game Industry. Formation, Present State, and Future” (2012), is a collection of academic articles edited by Peter Zackariasson and Timothy L. Wilson containing studies about how the North American game industry came to be and what kind of challenges it might face in the future. The book gives good information about the North American game industry, skirting around the notion that communities have played a role in the formation and as support for the industry.

A book by Elina Lappalainen, “The Realm of Games” (2016) explores the rise of the Finnish game development scene and the major influencers that the industry has had over the years. The success stories of Rovio and Supercell are credited as the trailblazers of the Finnish game development industry. Lappalainen (2016) marks the Finnish culture of persistence and cooperation as one of the driving forces behind the growth of the industry. IGDA is mentioned here as a functional organisation holding monthly mixers for the game development scene. Quoting Sonja Ängeslevä, Lappalainen (2016, p. 14) notes that IGDA provides the opportunity to meet anyone and ask anything at the gatherings (Lappalainen, 2016). The premise of knowledge sharing and support of rookies by the experienced developers is mentioned here, but not fully explored.

The communal aspects of game development have been studied from the points of Canadian indie developers and the demoscene influences in Finland and Sweden. Felan Parker and Jennifer Jenson (2017) offer a look of the local and global indie network in their article *Canadian Indie Games Between the Global and the Local*. This paper gives

my thesis a good reflecting point for the study of the local industry effects of Tampere and Kajaani as it can be used to ascertain some personal theories about the vital part that communities play. Via the help from an association or by simple organic growth.

The globally coordinated networking communities such as the IGDA is mostly left outside the current research. The association is only mentioned in one of the papers contained in “The Video Game Industry. Formation, Present State, and Future” (Zackariasson and Timothy, 2012), and it is only labelled as an association looking after the rights of game developers. No mention about the hub activities or their networking effects are made. Therefore, a specialised study would be needed to address this research niche and fill the gap.

3 THE INTERNATIONAL GAME DEVELOPERS ASSOCIATION

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, game development is often a very communal and social endeavour. These communities are formed either naturally or are created by an external organisation. In this chapter I describe the International Game Developers Association, more commonly referred to by the acronym IGDA and how it functions in the game development industry in both global and local scope.

In section 2.1, I explore the history of the IGDA as an organisation. How it started out in the United States and how the organisation has then spread across the globe into different countries. I also mention other American and global game development industry organisations that have either similar or conflicting interests with IGDA.

In section 2.2 I explore the Finnish chapter of the IGDA, the IGDA Finland ry and how it works to benefit the Finnish game developers. There are also several other organisations working for the benefit of the Finnish game development industry in relation to IGDA Finland and each other.

The sections 2.3 and 2.4 expand on the section 2.2 by exploring IGDA Finland ry as a facilitator for information sharing and networking. The section 2.4 also investigates the game development education available in both Kajaani and Tampere regions and their relation to the local IGDA Finland hubs.

3.1 IGDA global

The International Game Developers Association has emerged as one of the most successful organizations in promoting worldwide networking of game development professionals, hobbyists and other likeminded people. With a presence in 49 countries, the association has spread its influence on all parts of the world. In addition to these

country-spanning professional chapters, IGDA also has academic chapters situated in several universities in the United States. (IGDA, 2018.)

IGDA was founded in the United States in 1994 by Ernest Adams. Back then the association was called Computer Games Developer Association, or CGDA. The primary reasons for founding an association of this type was initially to provide individual game developers a channel for getting their voice through. Adams thought that while large publishers had their own associations, the individual developers had no groups to which belong. (IGDA, 2018.)

From the information found on the official IGDA website, we can clearly see the main philosophies behind the basic principles of the association: to enable accessible networking situations and events where professionals and hobbyist may mingle freely. From its widespread network of chapters and hubs, the communal effects can be seen very effective in improving local development communities.

In his article, *The North American Game Industry*, Casey O'Donnell (2012) states that in North America game companies are represented by several different organisations, including the Entertainment Software Association (ESA). In the article, O'Donnell states that North American game developers are primarily presented by the IGDA. Although some discussion has been had about establishing a union body, this has been usually dismissed as unnecessary as it might complicate things with conflicting values between the different organisational bodies. (O'Donnell, 2012, 99-115.)

Game Workers Unite, or G.W.U, established in 2018 seeks to empower game developers and prevent exploitations of individual game developers by the game development companies. Game Workers Unite is run by workers, but does not classify itself as a union, but aims to educate the industry about labour, mobilizing game workers and builds local chapters. Game Workers Unite has established sister unions in the United Kingdom as well as in France. On the frequently asked questions page, G.W.U states itself being different from the IGDA, claiming that IGDA only represents the interests of the industry and not the workers (gameworkersunite.org, 2019). This goes against what IGDA has stated on their own page about representing the individual developers and not the companies they work for.

3.2 IGDA Finland ry

Like many other countries, Finland has its own chapter in the International Game Developers Association. IGDA Finland ry started out in 2012 to support local game development clubs on a national level. Like the global main association, the Finland chapter exists to promote individual developers. As said on the “about us” page of IGDA Finland’s website, the chapter does not seek to promote companies as that field is being handled by another association, Suomen Pelinkehittäjät ry. On its website, IGDA Finland also makes a point that it is not a labour union, and therefore does not engage in legal disputes concerning work ethics. (igda.fi, 2018.)

Suomen Pelinkehittäjät ry, or “Finnish Game Developers Association”, works to represent the game development companies of Finland. The association promotes cooperation between the Finnish game development companies and acts as the guardian of interests for the game development companies. Suomen Pelinkehittäjät ry intends to offer unbiased information about the Finnish game development industry for investors and different organisations as well as a representative for the industry in Finland and abroad. (pelinkehittajat.fi, 2019.)

The Finnish game development industry organization Neogames works alongside IGDA Finland ry to support the game development industry of the entire country by providing solid ground for growth. This is achieved by hosting events that support the common interests of the industry. In this regard, IGDA Finland ry and Neogames act similarly to benefit the Finnish game development scene. Neogames acts to bring organizations with similar interests closer to each other by being in touch with educational institutions as well as development companies. (Neogames.fi, 2019a.)

Neogames supports the Finnish game industry by establishing communications with the educational and government sectors, seeking to lobby better services for game development. This allows Neogames to guard the nationwide interests of the industry by improving the provided education and establish better ecosystem for game development companies to thrive in. In addition to lobbying, Neogames keeps constant track of the

industry's status and creates annual reports of the situation inside the Finnish game development scene. These reports include the current amount of companies in the industry, approximate amount of people the industry employs and how much revenue has been made during the year. (Neogames.fi, 2019a.)

While IGDA Finland ry aims to support the career development of individual game developer, NeoGames helps the companies to grow by making similar interests meet and by providing events that support these interests. Neogames acts as an agent for Suomen Pelinkehittäjät ry and as such, brings Suomen Pelinkehittäjät ry closer to IGDA. These three individual organizations then act for the benefit of both employers and employees of the game development industry of Finland. Direct cooperation between the organisations happens in the distribution of information and events where the organisations are present.

For IGDA Finland, cooperation with Neogames means getting more visibility to the organization as well as providing interesting speeches to the gatherings usually held by the Helsinki hub. Neogames has been present in many gatherings by hosting panel discussions and having speeches about the recent happenings in the industry. This information is sought after in the industry and gatherings hosted by Neogames are a good place to hear them.

To further improve the community within the Finnish game development scene, IGDA Finland has volunteer established local hubs in most major cities in Finland, the largest being the hubs situated in Helsinki, Turku, Tampere and Jyväskylä. There are also numerous smaller hubs around Finland (igda.fi, 2018). Overall, the Finnish game development industry is very tightly knit together and almost everyone in the industry knows each other. This is apparent from the demoscene history of the Finnish game development industry as stated by Jørgensen et al. (2017), as well as the small size of the national industry.

From earlier research we can deduct that the overall atmosphere in the Gatherings held by IGDA Hubs is relaxed and easy to approach. In their text, "PELISILMÄÄ, SÄVELKORVAA. Tarinoita suomalaisesta peli- ja musiikkiviennistä" Karjalainen, Lehtonen and Niipola (2014) explain that due to the relaxed atmosphere in IGDA Gatherings, it is easy to approach and talk even to big names in the Finnish game development industry. In their words, IGDA Gatherings and events are crucial to the

Finnish game development industry in the way that it brings everyone together in a non-business manner (Karjalainen, Lehtonen, and Niipola, 2014). This article sheds light on the pros and cons of Finnish music and games industry, mostly about the challenges in exporting the product outside Finland. Karjalainen et al. (2014) point out that the small size of the industry is often both a good and a bad thing.

Game development industry events like IGDA are held around Finland. These annual events often have themes more oriented in either game design or business and accommodate thousands of attendees and multiple game development companies as well as investors. One such event, the annual Games First organized by the Finnish developer Supercell in Helsinki, functions like a massive scale IGDA gathering with its informal afterparties. Games First held at Kaapelitehdas in the Helsinki harbour has a more structured program in the beginning with multiple presentations, speeches and panel discussions. As stated by Lappalainen (2016), Games First is where “fledgling studios” go to present their games to the likes of Apple and Google.

By my personal experience as an IGDA Hub leader and founder in Kajaani, I think that the activities provided would have a positive impact on the local scene. Especially when considering the fact, that most of the IGDA Gathering participants in Kajaani are students from the Kajaani University of Applied sciences. Our efforts in bringing quest speakers from successful and larger companies have been met with enthusiasm and interest towards the guest speakers. This would have provided the students and possible industry veterans more information and, more importantly, valuable networks to the national game development industry.

3.3 IGDA Finland hubs as facilitators of networking

Game development and the industry around it usually revolves and lives through groups of similarly minded people. These people have possibly met each other in industry events like large conventions or seminars held around the globe. Game development industry is equally, if not even more so, a personal network-oriented industry. IGDA’s and its

Finnish chapter's main goal is to facilitate networking and therefore increase the probabilities for the local game development community and scene to flourish.

Having personally been in the managing side of IGDA Finland gatherings, it is hard to tell if the attendees have arrived at the gathering simply to drink away the drink tickets provided by the sponsors of the event or have a goal for forming new networks and possibly sharing ideas. The numerous industry professionals, hobbyists and overall interested people are bound to make some new acquaintances.

In comparison to large annually held conventions, IGDA gatherings are usually held once a month depending on the activity of the individual hub. When taking this into consideration the monthly gatherings could enable more locally-based, precise and personal way for keeping up with other companies and individuals working in the scene.

3.4 Game development education in Finland and the IGDA hubs

According to Neogames, currently there are seven universities and 19 universities of applied sciences offering education for students interested in game development and its different aspects (Neogames 2019). Universities of applied sciences often concentrate in the actual game development, while universities such as Tampere University offer either bachelor's or master's degrees in game studies. In addition to academic education institutions, there are also 23 vocational colleges offering education and training in game development (Neogames, 2019).

The game development education in the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences has been active since 2007 when the first game development bachelor's degree program was established. Afterwards, a game engine development program was developed for the engineer students, these two different study programs work closely together to create games as part of their studies. (Kamk.fi, 2019.)

Students at KAMK are encouraged to learn by doing and to establish their own teams that can later be turned into actual, registered game development companies. Students are also able to publish their creations via the student managed Kajak Games Cooperative.

Game development education in Tampere University of Applied Sciences started out as just couple of courses offered of game development training. But has since then evolved

into an actual degree program. The degree program at TAMK has 75 positions for new students and is now part of the combined university fusion of Tampere University.

When compared to the IGDA Finland Tampere hub, the IGDA Finland Kajaani hub has closer ties to the local educational institutions. From personal experience as one of the founders of the Kajaani hub, I can state this being the result of having the hub volunteers as students in the Kajaani University of applied sciences. Tampere has several educational institutions offering game development education so as close cooperation is hard to manage.

4 COMMUNITIES AS A BASIS FOR THE GAME INDUSTRY

In this section I investigate the communal nature of game development industry with its challenges and strengths. This is done by studying the formation of creative IT industries upon already existing creative communities as well as the relations of independent indie developers in section 4.1 Formation and Nature of Game Development Communities. Thinking IGDA hubs and gathering as communities of practice as per Etienne Wenger (1998) and other researchers is explored and compared to auto-ethnographic knowledge in the section 4.2 IGDA Hubs as Communities of practice. Lastly, the locality of communities is explained in section 4.3.

4.1 Formation and Nature of Game Development Communities

For people working in the video-game industry it is common that game development is a group effort. One should find himself a group of like-minded people with different specializations and set of skills required for the game project to succeed. Often this is not a simple ordeal, especially if one does not have the necessary professional networks from where these individuals might be found.

Creative IT industries have been based on other, already existing industries in many countries. In their article concerning the formation of game development industries, Marcus Toftedahl, Björn Berg Marklund, Henrik Engström and Per Backlund (2016) explain the local differences in what resources were available for the game development companies to be established. Toftedahl et al. (2016) found out that in the Nordic countries such as Finland and Sweden, the already existing information technology industries has allowed the game development industry to grow by providing seasoned programming veterans for the new industry. The availability of skilled people differs from country to country. In China and Japan, there already existed a strong community of animators and graphic artists. This community could then be employed by game development companies to work on their games. (Toftedahl et al, 2016). The so-called industrial heritage of certain areas contributes to the formation of new game companies. These new additions then again contribute to the development community by once again bringing new ideas and methods into the already existing ones.

One important part of Nordic game development history, the demoscene, is often remembered as a subculture of programming hobbyists who made small, graphic demos for many classic home computers like the Commodore Amiga, Atari ST and the Commodore 64 holding events where they displayed, even competed with their creations (Jørgensen, Sandqvist and Sotamaa, 2017). Many old demoscene groups have evolved further into game companies. Such a story can be found relating to the Finnish demo group Future Crew, who made the award-winning demo “Second Reality” and later gave birth to the game development company Remedy Entertainment.

Communities created by other, older industries and widespread hobbies have proven to be fruitful foundations for game development industries as we can see from the articles discussed before. Communities like the Fenno-Scandinavian demoscene are especially essential at this, because demo programming hobbyists often have the necessary set of skills to easily shift their attention into game development (Jørgensen et al. 2017). These studies however, do not point out any other than nationally and regionally specific communities and groups. Networks provided by these communities could be seen vital for the formation of new enterprises. Future Crew grew out of the demoscene and formed into Remedy Entertainment, one of Finland’s most well-known game development companies and one of the few Finnish triple-A developers.

The communities formed within the Finnish and Swedish demo-making hobbyists have served as a base on which many current game development companies have been founded. The phenomenon known as demoscene was a huge part of the development of the Nordic game industry, birthing well known and successful companies such as Remedy Entertainment and Digital Illusions. In their article, Kristine Jørgensen, Ulf Sandqvist, and Olli Sotamaa (2017), found that at least in Remedy Entertainment’s case the company was formed around the CEO’s, at the time Samuli Syvähuoko’s, old demoscene connections from the time when he led the demogroup Future Crew. The demoscene has also functioned as a pool from which companies have drawn developers for their needs (Jørgensen, Sandqvist and Sotamaa, 2017).

The case of the Canadian independent game development has similarities with what has been noted in the Nordic and Asian game development regions. In Canada, the networked community of individual “indie developers” is what defines the development culture and that makes it seem like its own industry. The article *Canadian Indie Games Between the Global and the Local* by Felan Parker and Jennifer Jenson (2017) discusses the challenges faced by the so-called Canadian indies when they compete for global or nationalities spanning spread. It is noted, that in the case of independent developers, the indie community is global and not only restricted in a certain country. (Parker and Jenson, 2017.)

Further research into Canadian game development clusters indicate that the closeness of different industries is beneficial for all industries in the cluster. The study by David Grandadam, Patrick Cohendet and Laurent Simon (2013) states that by meeting their peers inside these communities, there is a chance for new companies and industries to be founded. The article takes in the account of the IGDA, noting that the gatherings have resulted the birth of at least one new company, resulting from the meeting of two game development industry professionals. (Cohendet, Grandadam and Simon, 2013.)

Cohendet et al. (2013) call communities like the IGDA a creative middleground between the two worlds of game development. These communities enable idea-sharing and inspiration via social exchange between the so called “upper ground” and “underground”. The upper ground being actual game development companies, and the underground being the indie developers outside said large companies.

By comparing the findings and discussions of the articles mentioned before, it is apparent that communities can be found both locally based and globally online. The basic functions of these communities seem similar in the end. The indie community studied by Parker and Jenson (2017) acts mostly within the forums and other social media in the Internet instead of the more locally based demoscene of Finland and Sweden studied by Jørgensen, Sandqvist and Sotamaa (2017).

In these both instances the community has either acted as the base for the industry to be built upon, or as a system to keep the industry alive. The communities can be noted to be very important for the game development both locally and even globally. The sharing of ideas and peer-support provided with the social interactions for sharing knowledge

between individual developers can be proven vital for new companies to form and successful games to be made.

The importance of sharing knowledge along with the formation of organisation networks are further explained by Uwe Bußmann (2014) in his article *Organizational Cultures: Networks, Clusters, Alliances*. Bußmann (2014) explains this via the formation of personal networks between professionals within the same field or simply by people with similar interests. These social networks can then be extended to organizational level, where the face-to-face meeting with people working in the same, or adjacent field of industry brings two or several companies together (Bußmann, 2014).

This is further emphasized by Henry William Chesbrough, Wim Vanhaverke and Joel West (2006) in their book *Open Innovation: Researching a New Paradigm*. Interorganizational information networks help individual organizations to fill in the need for knowledge simply by accessing these networks. Chesbrough et al. (2006) talk about formal and informal ties, where formal ties are often planned and a part of the strategy, and informal as something more spontaneous, a chance of exploiting unforeseen knowledge opportunities. Especially the informal setting can be seen common in game development industry, where knowledge is shared in relaxed setting at conferences and their after-parties. Especially when the IGDA Finland is taken into this context, the informal knowledge exchange becomes very apparent.

In game industry, especially within Finland, the competition between companies is often belittled because the target demographics are usually massive, and the market area is the entire world. Therefore, company and organization level networks are often felt being beneficial to both parties due to the possibility of the exchange of information and expertise. Gatherings held by the local IGDA Finland hub can be seen promoting this kind of network formation. Bringing game developers closer to each other in both social and organizational level. Nina Suvinen (2014, 140-156), in her article *Individuals building innovation networks*, has found out that individuals with previous organizational experience are beneficial for the entire network of contacts in a community. In IGDA

gatherings, long-term game developers are often sought out by others for their extensive knowledge in the field.

Casey O'Donnell has conducted a social study within game companies in the United States as well as in India. In his book *Developer's Dilemma* (2014) O'Donnell goes through many different steps in game development and the usual pitfalls and difficulties the companies face, most importantly the friction between the publisher, and the developer. One important note that O'Donnell (2014) makes is the importance of these so called "industry cocktail parties" where social networks are being made and maintained. Individuals who attend these gatherings are often more likely to find themselves a team, employment or maybe even a publishing deal.

The prevalent use of Non-Disclosure Agreements, or NDAs, can however hinder the vital knowledge sharing within the industry. The agreement prevents the developers from sharing code, art and information about their projects to their peers outside the company. This hindrance then of course affects the flow of information between the individual developers (O'Donnell, 2014). Some researchers of the Tampere University and local game developers state the sometimes the information shared can cross the boundary of a possible violation of the NDA.

4.2 IGDA hubs as communities of practice

Emergence of communities of practice as presented by Etienne Wenger in his book "Communities of Practice. Learning, Meaning, and Identity" (1998) come close to how IGDA gatherings appear on the outside. Wenger defines the communities forming around a common practice, in the books case this practice is claims processing. In the IGDA activities the practices are numerous, but often centred around game development and business.

From my experiences as a hub lead and as IGDA Finland volunteer one of the main differences between Wenger's (1998) communities of practice and the community within the IGDA gatherings. In Wenger's book, the communities are a platform for forming identities, learning and finding meaning. Some of these are part of the so-called "reifying" the community's practice. Wenger explains reification as "Giving understanding a form"

(p. 59, 1998). Reification like this hardly happens in the hub gatherings, as games are not usually made during these events.

Learning within the community of practice is explained by Wenger (1998) as something that happens during the time that one spends inside said community. Such as learning important aspects of the culture of the community, the tools of the trade and the methods to use them are learned when working in the community of practice (Wenger, 1998). In my experience, IGDA Finland gatherings also have this aspect of learning in them. But maybe not in such depths as in the communities of practice present in organizations.

People in the gatherings often engage in small-talk about their trade and current projects, sharing tips and suggestions on how to tackle certain issues in any area of game development. Artists may offer peer-support to each other and give feedback on other's portfolios. Programmers can share insight on certain programming methods and sometimes may even share small snippets of their code so that others can learn from their example. This information sharing, and social learning is something that has an affordance to happen during a gathering but is not always guaranteed to happen.

This peer support aspect of the gatherings makes IGDA activities like the “constellations of practice” studied by Wenger (1998). In the constellation, other smaller communities of practice interact with each other despite their practices being very different from their peers. From this the social groups in the constellations can learn from the discourse in between groups.

In addition to the original work of Etienne Wenger (1998), the communities of practice are present in an essay by Joanne Roberts (in *The Social Dynamics of Innovation Networks*, p. 179-200, 2014). Roberts' notion of a ‘community of practice’ involves knowledge management and creation within a community centred on a mutual area of practice. This transferring and creating knowledge are often best achieved in social spaces and in face-to-face interactions (Roberts, 181-182, 2014). Knowledge sharing is apparent in communities within IGDA gatherings but claims of new knowledge being created are yet to appear. IGDA community could indeed be considered as a “community of practice”

where the combining area of activity is game development with its many adjacent fields of practice.

The communities of practice explained Etienne Wenger (1998) are similar to the notion by Uwe Bußmann (2014) mentioned earlier, by which communities form by the social connections with people sharing similar points of interest. Game development and business communities present in the IGDA Finland could therefore be called both a community of practice and a community of interest. The guests arriving at the gatherings are often drawn in by the practices and interests toward game development and the related fields of industry.

Communities of practice can however be difficult for a newcomer to get into and to begin the process of attaining knowledge from others (Wulf, Pipek, and Ackerman, 2003). This effect explained by Wulf et al. (2003) could also be seen in the gatherings and communities in IGDA hubs. For example, a new game development student looking to network with the local companies and experts will find it somewhat difficult to get into the community. However, the communities of practice in the hubs are numerous and usually very easy to access for most of the guests due to the wide diversity in the guests. I believe that the relaxed atmosphere plays a role of bringing the people on to the same level and facilitating network formation between individuals and companies.

4.3 Locality of communities

Individual innovators can also be locally embedded. Some are invested in social networks, others in professional institutions or regional networks. According to Paul Benneworth, Dessy Irawati, Roel Rutten and Frans Boekema (2014), regional institutions attempt to stimulate mutually beneficial innovation activities instead of promoting competition. This leads to better innovation networks in a local setting.

Benneworth et al. (2014) explain individual's networks being both local and global depending on the envelope one is in. Being locally close to each other is seen promoting better knowledge transfer. Especially if the proximity is also present on cognitive and social level. Communities are regarded as environments where individual "knowledge workers" exchange knowledge and ideas. (Benneworth, Irawati, Rutten and Boekema, 2014 p. 10-11.)

In extension, these communities of practice could be seen analogous to the hubs supported by IGDA Finland. The so-called population within the hubs and their activities also correspond to the communities explained by Benneworth et al. (2014), stating that the more diversity the community has, the better the information exchange will be. Gatherings and events held by IGDA hubs often invite and attract people interested in games and game development, therefore bringing in more diverse set of guests and people to the community. The people who are not in the game development industry but are interested in the aspect of games can bring in new, out of the box thinking into the games industry by sharing their ideas in the gatherings with present game development professionals.

5 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I explain the methods in use in the making of this study. First, I re-state the goals of this thesis and shortly summarise the focus of the thesis, the studied ethnographic groups and their features. In 3.1 I explain the methods used in the information gathering and why this method is used. In part 3.2 I explain the usage of my own auto-ethnographic knowledge of IGDA Finland hub activities, and how this personal knowledge relates to the study. Lastly, in 3.3 the methods of analysis are introduced.

In this thesis, the goal is to gather information about the experienced benefits of the events and activities hosted by local IGDA Finland hubs. This is achieved by gathering ethnographic data from the attendees to said events and activities hosted by two separate IGDA Finland hub in Finland. Game development areas of Kajaani and Tampere were selected for this study for their differences in geographical location as well as the differences in the composition of their local game development scene. The differences of the selected areas and their respective IGDA Finland hubs provide good points for comparison in the experiences of the individual attendees.

5.1 Gathering the information

The gathering of the information has been done by interviewing selected individuals from both areas under research. The individuals are selected from a wide pool of people who have visited a local IGDA gathering or other event hosted by the organization. The aim here was to gather comments from a diverse set of people, so the selection includes both industry veterans from both large and small game development companies and students who are looking for their way into the industry through education.

Selecting interviews as the main method for gathering information was selected for the specific type of data it provides. By interviewing the attendees of IGDA gatherings, I could gather wider set of personal experiences from the respondents, which can then be analysed in depth for this thesis. Compared to surveys, where the collected data is completely anonymous and without a personal voice, the interviews used in this thesis provide more insight to the various personalities attending their respective local IGDA gatherings.

The selected respondents are separated by IDs based on the location where the respondent is from. Kajaani respondents have IDs starting with letter K and Tampere respondents are identified with the letter T. Before the actual study, three beta interviews were conducted to test the structure of the questions. The beta responses are also utilised in this study, as the interviews contain valuable information.

The list of selected respondents are as follows:

Kajaani:

- K1: Male, 29 years. Finnish. CEO at Rusto Games. 5 employees.
- K2: Male, 23 years. Finnish. 3rd year game development student at the Kajaani University of Applied sciences
- K3: Male, 34 years. Finnish. Programmer at Team Jolly Roger. 10 employees.
- K4: Male, 56 years. Finnish. CEO at Critical Force Entertainment. 56 employees in two countries.

Tampere:

- T1: Male, 36 years. Finnish. Operations Manager at Traplight Entertainment. 27 employees.
- T2: Female, 29 years. Finnish. Graphical artist. Unemployed, in workshop.
- T3: Male, 35 years. French. Technical Director at Colossal Order. 23 employees.
- T4: Male, 35 years. German. Rigger/Animator Freelancer.
- T5: Female, 22 years. Finnish. 2nd year game development student at the Tampere University of Applied Sciences

Beta Respondents:

- B1: Male, 32 years. Finnish. Student at the Tampere University, Part-time worker.
- B2: Male, 29 years. Finnish. Programmer at 10tons. 11 employees.
- B3: Male, 32 years. Finnish. Artist and part-time teacher.

The interviews were conducted as face-to-face meetings as well as via Skype-calls and by phone. All interviews lasted approximately from 25 to 60 minutes. Face-to-face interviews were recorded with a separate audio recorder with smartphone serving as a backup recorder. Interviews done via phone and Skype calls were recorded with a call recorder application and the call recording functionality built in Microsoft Skype. The recorded interviews were transcribed by a 3rd party company.

The interview questions follow the following structure:

- What is the local game development scene like
- Attendance. Is the respondent a regular and at how many gatherings they have been to?
- What are their personal reasons for attending the local IGDA hub gatherings?
- Has the respondent met any new people or learned something new at the gatherings they have attended?
- Does the respondent find the local IGDA gatherings useful to the individual and the local game development scene?

In the interviews, the respondents were asked about their personal reasons for visiting an IGDA event and how they have experienced the events from the perspective of their individual careers or plans. The interview questions also investigate the benefits that IGDA hub activities give to the individual person interested in the game development. Answers given by the respondents were studied for the experiences of individual attendees and if similarities could be found.

The interviews themselves followed the methods present in the book “Tutkimushaastattelun käsikirja” by Matti Hyvärinen, Pirjo Nikander and Johanna Ruusuvaori (2017). The questions, as seen in Appendix 1, covered the backgrounds of the individual. for example, in how many locally held IGDA events the person had been to and what was their position in the industry. Then the questions moved on to cover the respondent’s personal opinions and experiences in the gatherings, have they learned anything new about game development at the gatherings and what are their personal reasons for attending the local IGDA hub’s events. This allowed me to further see how different groups of people experience the gatherings. The interviews were mostly open discussions with a few semi-structured questions concerning the matter being discussed.

The original research plan had surveys to support the interviews by providing quantitative data. These surveys were to be distributed among the attendees in both Tampere and Kajaani regions. The surveys were ultimately left out of the final study, as conducting interviews was found to be more effective in gathering information about the individual experiences of the attendees.

The interview progress was done in cooperation with the Centre of Game Culture Research of the Tampere University. The questions highlighted in red in the Appendix 1

were proposed by the centre's researchers to collect data for the synergistic research of their own.

5.2 Auto-ethnographic data

In this thesis I also used my personal auto-ethnographic knowledge as an IGDA volunteer as the source for information about IGDA Finland and its inner workings. I have experience as one of the founders and original leader of IGDA Finland Kajaani hub. After moving to Tampere area, I have joined the Tampere hub as a volunteer. This background gives me total of five years of experience in hub activities. The auto-ethnographic knowledge is utilised as explained in the book "Tales of the Field" by John Van Maanen (2011) by studying my own culture, the game developers.

I have experience in hosting the events and know the types of people attending the events by usually being one of the volunteers handling the registration at the gatherings. Knowing the demographic groups present at the gatherings provide me with knowledge I use both in the selection of respondents for the interviews as well as in the design of the set of questions. Being present at the gatherings have also allowed me to observe the common practices of the attendees and how different groups of people interact with each other.

In the areas of both IGDA Finland hubs there are several active game development companies, as well as educational institutions providing education in game development. Due to the differences in area size and the number of game companies, the ratio between students and industry professionals is very different.

5.3 Analysis

For the analysis done on the gathered data, concentrated summaries were made from the transcribed responses from both areas. The area-based analyses were done by summarizing the overall opinions of the respondents and then comparing them to the

minute details brought up by the individual respondents. This method provides good overall view of the perceived effects and offers deeper understanding.

The resulting comparison between the two areas of game development is done by comparing the responses while keeping the geographical differences in mind. Tampere and Kajaani differ vastly in both location and the size of local game development industry. While both areas have an active IGDA Finland hub, the difference in the attending demographic groups is large. Kajaani has a large game development student population, which then affects the groups of people present in the local IGDA gatherings. Tampere, in comparison, has a long history of local game development, while the game development education offered by the local institutions is rather young when compared to Kajaani.

The answers given by the respondents are analysed in comparison to each other and with the goal of understanding the effects of IGDA Finland hub activities in mind. Reflecting the answers against the research question of “How do IGDA Finland activities affect local game development?”, this is achieved by analysing the individual experiences of the respondents and finding common aspects when comparing the answers to each other.

The analysis was done by coding the answers found in the interview transcripts. Similar experiences and motivations for attending the gatherings are counted in relation to the individual respondents. If several respondents state the same experiences and motivations, that is then noted being one of the major experiences or motivations. The experiences are categorised as follows:

Experiences:

- The respondent has learned something at a gathering
- The respondent has networked with new people at a gathering
- The respondent has found a job or internship from a gathering
- The respondent has given or received feedback at a gathering

Motivations for attending an IGDA gathering

- The respondent wants to network with people
- The respondent wants to learn of open job positions
- The respondent wants to share or receive information
- The respondent wants to see old friends
- The respondent wants to receive or give feedback

Quotes from the respondents were used to further give voice to the individuals that have been interviewed. These quotes are also used to shed light into the individual experiences and reflected to my personal auto-ethnographic knowledge of IGDA gatherings stated in section 5.2.

6 RESULTS

In this section, I analyse the responses gathered from both Kajaani and Tampere areas respectively. The individual analyses are based on the interview transcripts and the differences in the answers given by individual respondents. While the answers to the interview questions were largely the same, the respondents still had a diverse set of experiences which they shared.

The chapter contains the collected results from both Kajaani and Tampere respondents and how they have experienced the local IGDA hub gatherings.

6.1 Responses from the field

The respondents were selected from a wide field including veteran developers from companies of many sizes and students aspiring to become game developers. The set of nine interviews included both Finnish and non-Finnish speaking respondents. In Kajaani's case, all interviewed people were native Finns due to the difficulties in finding a game development exchange student from the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences.

The responses were found to be very insightful about the status of the local game development industry and the local IGDA hub activities. In the following sub-categories, I summarise the findings based on the transcribed interviews from Kajaani and Tampere and how the responses relate to the respective IGDA hubs.

The respondents from both Kajaani and Tampere had a wide range of personal opinions and experiences concerning the local IGDA hub's events. Most common opinion was that the hub's presence in the area is indeed beneficial to the local scene and recommend visiting the gatherings for anyone wishing to know the industry better. Experiences and motivations to attend the gatherings varied a lot amongst the respondents and these will be explored in the two sections below.

6.1.1 Kajaani hub

In Kajaani, the IGDA hub was founded in 2014 and has been active ever since. The attendees to the hub's gatherings consist of both local developers and the game developer students from the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. For this research, total of four

interviewees were gathered. Three of these persons were local game developers from companies of varying sizes and professional positions. One interviewee was a third-year game development student from the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. All interviewees classified themselves as being a regular attendee to the gatherings with number of attendances being ten or more.

Motives for attending the gatherings were mostly uniform amongst the interviewed people. Wanting to see old friends and hearing about the news within the scene were the most common ones, with networking and meeting new people being the third more common. The motive of seeing old friends and hearing their latest endeavours was stated being some of the biggest reasons for the people currently working in game development. As stated in the interview excerpt below:

“The speaks, and then hearing what the others are doing is important. Especially if I know those people. To hear what kind of projects there are currently on-going”

[K4]

The gatherings are felt as a good place to meet because of the nature of the event where everyone is invited. This could indicate that even in a small area as Kajaani, there is not much interaction in between the local game development companies and their employees. One of the interviewees, the CEO of Critical Force Entertainment, has previous connections to the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences and is interested in hearing the stories of previous students of his and how far they have gotten since graduation.

From the student point of view, the motives for attending IGDA Finland Kajaani Hub gatherings has changed during the years and as the studies have proceeded. The student interviewee stated that in the beginning of the studies, the main reason for attending the gathering was to network with people and to hear about the local companies and their work. As the studies progressed, the reason changed into being more about hearing news and building relationships with the companies.

All the interviewees from Kajaani report having had learning experiences in the gatherings. This learning has happened in many different points of the evening. Sometimes the visiting speaker has provided information that has proven valuable and enlightening, on other times the discussions with fellow developers have provided more info on how to do things better. Giving and receiving feedback has played a major part in the learning experiences.

Recruiting, or subcontracting proposals are told to be quite rare in the Kajaani hub gatherings. People working in game development companies did not recall having received any job offerings at the gatherings, mostly due to not needing one or not actively seeking for a new placement in the industry. IGDA however states that direct headhunting and recruiting is not allowed at the gatherings and companies should not use them as such. However, this does not prevent people from establishing communications with a company representative in hopes of hearing of open positions.

People working in a leading position at game development stated that subcontracting often happens via different channels than via IGDA gatherings. Although the CEO of Critical Force Entertainment did state that one possible subcontracting plan did start after a proposal in a gathering, but in the end the contract did not happen. The possibility of subcontracting and job offerings happening in an IGDA gathering is however acknowledged.

The singular student interviewee from Kajaani, however, has managed to get an internship placement via a contact made in an IGDA gathering. Even though the gathering was said to be the first step out of ten, as stated in the excerpt below. This serves to prove that the gatherings can be extremely useful for students looking for internships as the proactivity shown in searching for internships and having face-to-face conversations can go a long way.

“The internship I got was a good example where the IGDA was only one step out of ten. The nine steps after the IGDA event have gotten me to where I am now. I know of people who have introduced themselves to the people from Critical Force and have been recruited.”

[K2]

All four interviewees agreed that having an active IGDA hub is beneficial to the local game development scene. The hub activities bring different groups of people together and provide a relaxed space for new connections to be made and makes the game companies easily approachable. In Kajaani's case, the IGDA hub has evolved from the previous, more spontaneous, game industry beer. The CEO of Rusto Games was the person behind the previous informal gatherings of the Kajaani game development scene. By his words, having an IGDA hub has its benefits when compared to how things were before in Kajaani:

“IGDA has changed things to the better, at least with the addition of speakers to the events. As the industry grows, it is natural for someone to take a full-time position in organising these events. Back then people were just spontaneously invited to join for a beer, it was easy since there were only 20 to 30 people.”

[K1]

The above quote shows that having the industry steadily grow can also cause some issues in staying in touch with the other developers. In Kajaani's case, these gatherings before the arrival of IGDA mostly contained the CEOs of the local game development companies as these people knew each other from studying in the same school. It is doubtful would this kind of activity re-emerge if the IGDA Finland Kajaani hub is for one reason or another, disbanded.

Attendees to the IGDA events have the tendency of gathering into groups as developers from a certain company or as students. This can lead the entire gathering look like small, tight groups of people that can seem hard to get into. In Kajaani hub gatherings, this happens often with the new students from the university, as the student respondent states:

“New students often group up with other new students and do not talk to others unless encouraged to go and socialise with new people. Then again, it is up to the person if one wants to talk to

strangers or not.”

[K2]

The above example leads to the hopes stated by other respondents that there could be a sort of speed dating in the gatherings to help the more socially introverted or shy personalities to network with others. The same type of behaviour is also reported happening amongst people already in the industry, where attendees from the same company often group together.

The hub is also seen beneficial in that it brings in people from outside Kajaani, further improving the possibilities for networking. For students, the hub activities are beneficial in many aspects. Firstly, the gatherings provide easily accessible grounds for making connections with any company representatives while making themselves known to the game development community. Secondly, active attendance in the events possibly strengthens one's image and gives an active impression to others working in the scene.

6.1.2 Tampere hub

The game development scene in Tampere has a long and colourful history, including a long living active development community. The local IGDA Finland hub has been founded on top of an already existing community to support it. The Tampere scene has seen the rise and fall of many large game development companies. When Rovio left Tampere and Universomo fell, from their ashes were founded many of the larger companies in Tampere today. Before the local hub was established in Tampere, students had organized road-trips to visit the IGDA gatherings held in Helsinki out of general interest towards the industry.

The attendees to the IGDA Finland Tampere Hub have diverse set of reasons for visiting the gatherings. The main reason throughout the respondents turned out to be networking. Networking with other attendees was reported being the main reason for attending the events and was felt as one of the most important. Especially for people new to the area who are looking to get into the local scene and for students looking for internship positions. As one senior game developer puts his reasons for attending the gatherings after moving to the area:

“They have changed as time passed. Originally when I moved here, I needed to find a team. I needed to make friends. I wanted to meet like-minded people who were interested in game development in the same way that I am. And through that, find a job.”

[T1]

The above quote states that networking is one of the major parts of IGDA activities as it has been one of the most common reasons for attending the events. Other common reasons were meeting old friends and hearing about their projects and current situation. As a developer might see his colleagues at work, they might not know what their friends and acquaintances in other companies are doing. With that in mind, attending an IGDA gathering sounds logical as the event brings most of the active developers together.

Learning something new about game development at an IGDA Tampere hub gathering was reportedly common. Although none of the respondents were able to name any specific learning experiences or acquired information. The learning experiences were mostly coincidental to receiving feedback to one’s own work and networking with people. The so-called demo evenings were reported as the most effective forums for giving and receiving feedback for one’s work and projects. More experienced game developers happily give constructive critique for student projects and the like.

“Back when visiting the gatherings in Helsinki the main motivation was to get to know people from the industry and to understand what happens there. Then little by little the process has become more natural. At first the visits were more about ‘what is one supposed to do in these events?’ who to talk with and in what table should I sit at.”

[B1]

The above excerpt serves to note how an average student might feel about attending an IGDA gathering. The number of people, often including industry veterans from well-known companies can be baffling. For someone not directly involved in game

development, visiting the local gatherings is a valuable source of knowledge about the industry. This then again requires enough courage to approach the industry veterans in hopes of networking with them and sharing knowledge.

Interestingly, one respondent stated giving advice as one of his reasons for attending the events:

“Now in the last few years I feel that it has changed in a way that I am there to give a lot of feedback to the youngsters, especially students. So, in a way the older generation is there to support the movement of the younger generations.”

[T1]

The help provided by veteran developers can be found valuable for the non-veteran developers and especially for students. The information passed on by the older generation of developers further strengthens the next one, therefore benefiting the local industry as the knowledge is refined.

Hearing about possible job opportunities is relatively common occurrence in the Tampere hub gatherings. This information is often relayed during a conversation, or by a speaker giving a presentation. IGDA Finland does not, however, act as a recruitment service for companies. For students and people new to the area, the possibility of hearing of chances for future employment is extremely important. For one of the respondents, getting a job via a contact made in a gathering was critical for his career:

“I definitely would state that trying to find a proper internship work would have been a much more [longer] process, and when I found my internship, on a personal note, when I found my internship, it was basically like, if I wouldn't have found my internship within the next times, I probably would have moved out from Finland altogether.”

[T4]

Again, it should be noted that the recruitment does not happen in the gathering itself. The job-seekers are often invited for an interview or encouraged to be in touch with a certain person from the company who is responsible for recruitment. As game development

companies do not regularly announce open positions, this kind of low-profile recruiting can be common practice, and IGDA gatherings provide good opportunities to meet possible new employees in person.

Peer support is also seen in job seeking motivations. Respondent from Tampere stated having helped a fellow artist to get a job by recommending the artist for an open position as shown in an excerpt below:

“I was attending one of the IGDA gatherings in Helsinki, and the same friend who was helping me out in the Maya question, she was specifically seeking for entrance position people for a 3D modeller. And I appeared to be knowing some people who are about to graduate from Tampere recently who has been seeking for a position like that. But of course, the [first step] was like, OK, you seek for work, you have work, talk to this person.”

[T4]

This kind of gentle pushing of others towards something is a good way of getting more people to the industry. This network for knowledge of open positions is alive and well in the gatherings and makes job seeking somewhat easier when one can hear about open positions from a friend.

A student respondent stated that she was able to network better when visiting an IGDA gathering held in Helsinki. There she found fellow people from Tampere who had also travelled there to attend the gathering. Finding people from the same area in Helsinki proved to be of greater effect in networking than meeting them in Tampere. These networks can then be stronger and more valuable than others via common factors.

The respondents from Tampere area hoped to see more presentations held by people with years of experience in the games industry. To have someone with long-time experience share their stories of from where they began and how they got where they are now. Other respondent proposed to have more people from outside the industry, someone with perhaps fresh and unheard ideas and knowledge that could be used in game development.

IGDA Finland gatherings can also be hard to get into for people who do not drink alcohol. These people can find the bar environment uncomfortable with its eventually intoxicated population and therefore prefer to not attend a gathering. The situation can be different if the gathering is held elsewhere, or the gathering is more of a seminar in nature where drinking and networking is not the focus. The same difficulties can be felt by people who are reluctant in talking to strangers, or who feel too shy to talk to developers from popular studios.

The presence of an IGDA hub is not seen as essential to the survival of the local industry. Game developers are stated to naturally seek out like-minded people to connect with, therefore arranging a sort of gathering themselves. As one respondent from Tampere states:

“I feel like if there would not be IGDA events in Tampere, then there would be other events. People have the need to share information and IGDA serves as a good hub for this purpose”

[T1]

The above quote indicates that the Tampere game development scene is active enough to regularly arrange its own unofficial gatherings and get-togethers. This is also indicated by the after works beer events organized by the local game developers.

Together, all respondents find the Tampere hub gatherings beneficial both for the developers and local development scene. The local IGDA activities act as a force to keep the community together and to provide stable ground for social interaction between students, game developers and hobbyists. Gatherings are said to boost the chances for landing a job and provide events for companies and teams to present their projects and gather feedback.

7 DISCUSSION

This section combines the interview findings from both Kajaani and Tampere respondents. The results are analysed by comparing the responses and pointing out similarities as well as major differences that correspond to the nature of the local game development scenes respectively. In this chapter I also use my personal observations at the gatherings I have volunteered in as a reference point for certain phenomena that the respondents also describe.

In section 6.1, I discuss the differences in hub activities and their differences regarding the area of industry. Section 6.2 covers the differences in visitor demographics in the gatherings of Tampere and Kajaani hubs. Pointing out the major differences and explaining them with the composure of the local industries. Motivations for attending the gatherings are discussed in section 6.3, finding the similarities and differences as well as pointing out the changes the visitors can have in their motivations. Lastly, in 6.4 I discuss the collected experiences of usefulness the respondents have had in the gatherings.

7.1 The Two Hubs

The differences between Kajaani and Tampere are many, but so are the similarities. Both areas host an active game developer community and scene, supported by the local educational institutions. While Tampere has a longer history in game development with many successful companies over the years, Kajaani has also proven its worth as a location for game development. The main differences can be summarised being in area size and number of active game development companies.

For the local IGDA Finland Hub activity, Kajaani and Tampere are not that different. Geographical location poses challenges for the Kajaani hub in gathering as many speakers and sponsors as the Tampere Hub, due to the challenges present in transportation and possible accommodation of the guests. The Tampere hub can more readily utilize the locally active community and numerous game development companies for their benefit,

as speakers and sponsors can easily be found within the area. Having the capital region nearby with its numerous game development companies helps as well. The Kajaani hub enjoys the benefit of having a small, easily manageable community as well as the possibility of using the local University of Applied Sciences as leverage for getting guest speakers. These same speakers can then be utilized in an academic field by the university, therefore benefiting the local students in both formal and informal manner.

For the volunteers, the hubs are also different. The Kajaani hub's group of volunteers are mainly students from the University of Applied Sciences, who naturally have close ties with the university. This allows the IGDA Finland volunteers at the Kajaani hub to design the events from a student's perspective, resulting possibly in better learning experiences and helping students to connect with the local game development companies.

The volunteers of the Tampere hub are mostly people from inside the industry. This alone sets the events into a different perspective when compared to the events of the Kajaani hub. The Tampere events are designed from the industry standpoint, which includes planning for who would come to the event and what kind of program they should offer. The connections to the local educational institutions are there, but they are not actively utilized when looking for sponsors or speakers.

The layout of the venue used for the gatherings in both Kajaani and Tampere affects the atmosphere of the local IGDA gatherings. Having volunteered in both hubs, I know the strengths and weaknesses of both. The current venue of the Kajaani hub gatherings, Rock House Kulma, is an open space with a sizable stage equipped with a projector and a screen. The stage is visible from almost every corner of the bar and the sound system can be easily utilised. Rock House Kulma is rather small for mass events, so space can become of an issue if there are over 100 attendees at a gathering.

In Tampere the common venue for the IGDA gatherings, Jack the Rooster, is more spacious, accommodating a larger number of people. The drawback of this space is that the main room of the bar does not feature a projector, nor a screen, so they must be brought in and set up by the Tampere hub volunteers. Jack the Rooster is also split into two different rooms instead of being a uniform space. The two separate rooms, of which the other is equipped with a karaoke booth, allows people not interested in the presentation to converse in peace without disturbing the presentation. I have observed some people prefer the room with the karaoke over the so-called main room. Even though during a

gathering, only the bar at the main room serves drinks. The separate, usually less crowded room is used by the Tampere hub for the demo-corner events for the purpose of having a peaceful environment for the companies to represent themselves and their games.

7.2 Attendee demographics

The attendee demographics vary greatly in between the IGDA hubs of Kajaani and Tampere. Due to the large number of game development students present in the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, the IGDA Finland Kajaani Hub gatherings are mostly populated by students specializing in game development and its aspects. While there are many active game development companies in Kajaani, their presence in the gathering is rather small. These companies are utilized to gain speakers for the gatherings very much in the same way as in the Tampere hub.

In the Tampere hub gatherings, the visitors are much more diverse, with most of the visitor mass comprising of different kinds of developers from companies of various sizes. The student attendance, however, has been on the rise in the Tampere hub gatherings. As a volunteer in the Tampere hub, I mostly work at the registration of the gatherings. Taking people's names and marking them down has shown me the steady growth of students from Tampere University of Applied Sciences. There are also students from other local educational institutions offering game development training, such as Ahlmannin opisto.

Student activity in the Tampere hub's gatherings is possibly on the rise due to the flow of information amongst students who intend to get into the industry. Older students are said to encourage younger students to attend the gatherings, as described by a game development student from Tampere University of Applied Sciences:

“The school has not directly encouraged us to attend the gatherings, but older students have strongly recommended going to the gatherings. I myself as a tutor have tried to coerce my tutees to come to the gatherings, and at least three have come. I have

tried to spread the word about the usefulness of the gatherings.”

[T5]

This shows that students recognise the importance of attending the gatherings for the apparent benefits. Peer support for actually participating the events is important, as going as a group with more experienced students might open up more chances for networking by second hand connections.

Having worked as a volunteer in IGDA Finland Tampere hub gatherings, I have observed the steady growth of student population in the monthly gatherings. This can be related to the word-of-mouth recommendations given from student to student. Student teams have also been noticed attending the Demo-Corner events held at times. This is a fascinating sign of student activity and serves as a good learning opportunity for the students presenting their work to the visiting industry.

Kajaani gatherings are mostly populated by game development students from the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. By comparison, the number of people working in game development in Kajaani is rather small, hereby explaining the differences in attendee demographics. This shows that students recognise the importance of attending the gatherings for the apparent benefits. Peer support for participating in the events is important, as going as a group with more experienced students might allow for more chances for networking through second hand connections.

Having worked as a volunteer in the IGDA Finland Tampere hub gatherings, I have observed the steady growth of student population in the monthly gatherings. This can be related to the word-of-mouth recommendations given from student to student. Additionally, student teams from the Tampere University of Applied Sciences have been observed attending the Demo-Corner events held at times. This is a fascinating sign of student activity and serves as a good learning opportunity for the students presenting their work to the visiting industry.

7.3 Motivations for attending the gatherings

The reasons for attending the local IGDA gatherings are unsurprisingly rather similar. Respondents from Kajaani and Tampere state networking as their main reason for attending the events. This is understandable because of the nature of the industry. Most

open positions in many companies are filled via promising candidates found in the social networks. Networking and meeting people in the gatherings function well for this purpose. Among the respondents four out of nine have found their jobs and internship positions from the connections they have made in an IGDA gathering.

The job positions are not exactly handed out at the gatherings, however. Often the networking at a gathering is the first step in the progress of landing a job. Being present at the gathering and talking to people is a good way of making oneself known to potential employers. Showing one's work in the gatherings, especially at Demo-corner events, is a solid way for making oneself rememberable.

Other reasons in both areas include hearing news, seeing old friends and giving or receiving feedback. Information flow within the industry is active, but not all company news is spread via their respective websites. Usually the sponsoring company will give a short presentation where they introduce themselves and tell about upcoming projects, therefore spreading the company news to the visitors. Talking with any company representatives can result in hearing the latest news and latest projects of the company. Meeting old friends revolves much around exchanging information and hearing what they have done lately. This is very similar to the knowledge sharing investigated in chapter 4 as well as in the book by Chesbrough et al. (2006). Information sharing of this kind is often beneficial for all parties present, especially if the information is shared between companies or organisations (Chesbrough, Vanhaverbeke, and West 2006).

The wilfulness to help others is not especially uncommon in the game development industry, where information is given openly even to potential competitors. This is related to the "coopetition" (as per Bengtsson and Kock, 2000) that is very common in the Finnish video-game industry. By supporting the people new to the industry, the local industry can then grow stronger via motivation to learn and improve. This support will therefore help both parties and not result in one gaining an advantage over the other providing the information.

The cooperative aspects of game development are also apparent in the book “Realm of Games” by Elina Lappalainen (2016). In the book the Finnish game development company Fingersoft has helped other game companies by acting as a publisher for other game developers in Finland. In the games Fingersoft published, the company also cross-advertised their other products, leading to better exposure. The cooperation aspect is also referred in Fingersoft’s actions in establishing a business incubator in Oulu, hoping to promote company co-operation instead of straight competition in the Oulu region. (Lappalainen, 2016.) This further serves as a reason for game developers to share information quite freely between each other. Information sharing and helping of this kind is very common in IGDA gatherings where developers with different skill levels and sets are present.

An artist from Tampere states that without attending the IGDA gatherings, one would find themselves missing out in information. It can be hard to get a job in the industry if one does not attend the gatherings as many open positions are filled via professional networks. By this artist’s words, “IGDA has become a necessity for establishing connections with a company”.

Giving and receiving feedback about one’s own work seemed to be important for many respondents. The IGDA Finland Tampere hub seemed to be more active in organizing the so-called “demo evenings” or “demo corners” where companies of all sizes and student teams can showcase their products for others to evaluate. Events like this are important in both receiving feedback and getting valuable game testing done. In Kajaani these kinds of demo events are reportedly rare, and respondents from that area would wish there to be more. Even without these kinds of events, many aspiring artists and developers are ready to present their work from their laptops or handheld devices.

7.4 Experiences of usefulness

When asked about the perceived feelings about the usefulness and benefits that the local IGDA gatherings bring to the developer, the respondents in both locations unanimously reported that the gatherings were useful both to the individual developer and the local industry. The monthly gatherings are said to uphold the community by providing recurring opportunities for developers to meet up and share information and news as well as make new connections. The usefulness fluctuates greatly between individual

developers, depending on the current state of their careers. As stated by several respondents in the analyses, the benefits one is looking for evolve and change as experiences are gathered and career advances.

Information sharing, and low-hierarchy atmosphere are noted mostly by the respondents from Tampere. Often these respondents have also visited the gatherings in Helsinki and stated being able to have conversations with game developers from the popular companies such as Supercell, Rovio and Remedy. This goes according to the previous notion by Elina Lappalainen (2016) in her book “The Realm of Games” where she states that in IGDA, one may speak with anyone and ask about anything.

There have been unofficial gatherings before the emergence of the local IGDA Finland hub in both Tampere and Kajaani. The game developers of Kajaani had their own “Industry Beer” and in Tampere the local game developers had their own social groups and small gatherings. However, the IGDA hub acts as a more stable organiser for these kinds of events by normalising the dates of the gatherings as well as the location, taking the burden away from the developers previously responsible for organising the developer gathering events. This indicates that the local game development scene in both Kajaani and Tampere regions is active enough to survive even without the local IGDA Finland hubs.

The overall usefulness of the IGDA events do not widely differ between the respondents. The type of benefit can change in correlation to the motivations for attending the said events. If one goes to the events for the simple purpose of meeting a set amount of new people to develop his or her professional networks and manages to do so, then the event can be perceived beneficial.

Some aspects of the benefits are reliant on personal initiative of the visitor. Some simply require one to be there and listen, as is the case with speeches and presentations. This can make the measurement of usefulness difficult. For a more introverted personality, the active networking can be difficult and the feeling of gaining something from the IGDA events can yield diminishing results.

7.5 How the hubs effect the local game development industry

From the gathered answers it is possible to see that the effects that IGDA hubs have on the local game development industry are rather complex and numerous. All the respondents find the IGDA activities to be uniformly useful to both the individual developer, as well as the local industry in general.

Due to the limitations of this thesis, I was unable to compare the answers from Kajaani and Tampere to an area without an IGDA hub to more effectively pinpoint the effects. One could still argue that the IGDA hub has a major impact on the local game development scene simply by offering the monthly chances for networking and information exchange to the individual developers.

To answer the research question, the effects of IGDA Finland hubs could then be summarised as follows:

- IGDA hubs promote the local game development industry to people who are not in the industry
- Promoting the flow of information within the local industry
- Supporting local game development companies by providing a venue for recruitment and to showcase their work
- Strengthening the social networks inside the local industry
- Allowing people to learn about game development

This is a list of the most apparent effects that IGDA Finland hub activity has on the local game development industry. With further studies and more comparisons, the list could be continued to cover multiple aspects of the effects.

IGDA Finland hubs promote the local industry by keeping the gatherings open to anyone interested in game development. This allows for technically anyone to walk in and hear about the industry as well as to network with the local developers if one wishes to do so. The openness of the events has the effect of wider amount of people learning about the local industry, this then has the chance to result in more people getting involved in game development.

As previously established, the flow of information is important inside the creative industry. IGDA gatherings have the effect of allowing almost limitless information

exchange between both individual developers as well as the local companies. This has the effect of everyone knowing what is currently happening in the local scene. The information flow includes knowledge about open positions inside the industry, as well as people seeking to find people with whom to start a new company with.

The presence of a company in an IGDA gathering is important for the publicity of a game development company. If a company does not actively and visibly attend the events, the knowledge of the company's existence might not be widely known. As one of the beta interview respondent states:

“Sometimes there are companies that are do not usually show up in IGDA. It makes you think that does such company even exist if it is not encountered in an IGDA gathering.”

[B3]

The excerpt above also serves to indicate the benefits for the game development company to be visibly present in an IGDA gathering. Dedicating time to attend a gathering can therefore be an easy way of gaining publicity inside the industry, especially on local level. Greatest possibility for this is of course sponsoring the event, providing a set amount of drink-tickets to the attendees and giving a short presentation.

IGDA gatherings serve as an easy way for a company to gain exposure inside the local game development scene. For the company, this can be as easy as simply wearing the company hoodie or shirt to promote themselves. I have observed this being done by Colossal Order and Random Potion employees at the Tampere hub gatherings. This brings the notion of the company's existence known to the people attending the gatherings.

Lastly, the IGDA hub activities promote learning about game development. The demo-corner events offer a good chance to learn via receiving feedback about work being done. The seminars sometimes held by the hubs further strengthen this effect by having a more structured program and multiple speeches. Learning also happens simply by talking to people willing to give advice and share information about their trade.

8 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I explain my findings and how they relate to the theory background of my thesis. Due to the lack of previous studies explained in the beginning of this thesis, the theoretical background was based on the research of game development industries and their characteristic development.

The chapter is structured as follows; Firstly, I reflect on my findings and results on both my expectations and personal auto-ethnographic knowledge in 8.1. In 8.2, I state that there is still much to learn from IGDA activities as a global organization, and even in Finland. The section 8.3 contains personal reflections of the thesis progress and how certain pitfalls could have been avoided.

8.1 Thoughts

The original research question of “How do IGDA Finland activities affect local game development?” was not so simple question to answer. During this study, the effects were numerous and profoundly positive, so naming singular effects is difficult.

Gathering information about the perceived effects of IGDA Finland hub activities was mostly an enlightening process for me. Having been both a hub lead and a volunteer for five years have given me one viewpoint from which I look at the IGDA gatherings and other activities, often forming my own conclusions about the reasons why people arrive at the gathering and the events overall usefulness to the attendees attending the events. Seeing familiar faces attending the gatherings have shown that we, the volunteers, are doing something right.

The recent Finnish Game Industry report (2019b) by Neogames shows a steady increase in people working in the game development industry. The amount of non-Finnish people working in the game development industry in Finland has grown to 27% by year 2018 (Neogames, 2019b). The increasing percentage of non-Finnish people working in the Finnish game development industry should be considered in IGDA Finland and its activities. As shown in this thesis, the local IGDA gatherings are found important in finding jobs, like-minded people and overall in getting into the scene.

The report also states that regional hubs and incubators are highly valued by the Finnish game development companies. The communities and organisations that exist in cities provide support for their members and continue to support and nurture the Finnish industry in game development. (Neogames, 2019b.)

Previously comparing IGDA Finland hubs' communities to Etienne Wenger's (1998) communities of practice was difficult due to the existing definition where a community of practice forms inside a certain company. The community or communities within existing inside the IGDA events exist between individual game development companies. The social networks formed in the gatherings do not limit themselves into the sphere of a certain company, but often act as a link in between companies. Learning and information sharing then also happens in between people working in different game development companies. This is additionally supported by the low-hierarchy and closely networked nature of Finnish game development industry.

The benefits of having a local IGDA Finland hub offers for local game development is indisputable based on this research. The usefulness and perceived benefits vary slightly between individuals, but the basis remains the same. For individuals, the IGDA activities provide good grounds for networking, job hunting and information sharing. For game development companies the benefits are largely the same, but instead of job hunting the gatherings are an effective way for finding new recruits for the company. Both parties benefit from the community supporting effects that the hub activities have. As explained in the previous chapters, information about open positions is often conveyed via personal networks.

Particularly interesting information gathered from the field are the various motives one can have for attending an IGDA event. These motives are found to be in a constant flux for the same individual person; At the beginning of one's local game development career, be it by studying the trade or by moving into a new area, the greatest motivation is networking and finding like-minded people to mingle with in hopes of gathering a team or getting a job in game development.

These motivations to attend IGDA events are different depending on the current situation the individual is in. Game developers already working in the industry do not go to the events with job hunting in mind, but rather go there to meet new people and exchange information. Networking is the main motivation across different stages of game development career. It could be deducted that the motivations change as one's career advances. First the main purpose is to network and to know people, but as the individual gets a job and advances in their career, the motivations change into more information related.

This kind of "motivational evolution" was apparent in the interviews of two respondents, both currently working in major game development companies. Both started by attending IGDA gatherings as means of meeting people to find job opportunities and build a team. As their careers advanced and job seeking was no longer the main issue, the motivations changed for information sharing in form of helping others and hearing news. It is hard to say if the motivations to attend the gatherings would go back to networking if these respondents would lose their jobs for any reason.

As is common in any events where there are a lot of people, attendees to an IGDA gathering often form their own small groups in which they usually stay for the duration of the event. I have seen this phenomenon happen in many gatherings I have helped to host. This group behaviour is found to have negative effect for people new to the scene and to IGDA gatherings due to the difficulties of joining the conversation. Of course, this highly depends on the personality of the new attendee.

As the IGDA gatherings are often situated in a bar, there can be some discomfort felt by attendees who do not use alcohol or feel uncomfortable by the presence of drunken people. Some respondents note that at times the gatherings seem to revolve too much around the consumption of alcohol. Usually the drinking of alcoholic beverages is increased if there are sponsored drink tickets available, providing the attendees one or two free drinks. In my experience, there usually are some people at the gatherings who get visibly drunk, but instances of overly drunken behaviour are still rare. IGDA Finland hubs could design more events to be alcohol free or choose to have their events somewhere else than in a bar.

The felt benefits are seemingly different for people representing different roles in game development. Artists can readily showcase their work to their peers and potential

employers, but the same cannot be said about producers or game designers. Programmers can indeed show snippets of their code, or some small application of their own design. For producers, the peer-support is said to revolve around different project management tools and their applications to various projects. Game designers can brainstorm and comment on new game designs when sitting in a group.

The flow of information within the IGDA events is also crucial to the success for the local industry. Speeches and presentations have an important role in relaying information about the presenting company's recent endeavours as well as possible hints of job positions opening in the future. Here, once again, the company has to keep in mind the policy that no headhunting and straight recruiting is to be done at an IGDA gathering.

The results found in this study can be used to reason the establishment of similar communities in other areas. Perhaps even inside industries other than just game development. The findings here also prove the importance of communal events in creative industries where sharing information and peer-support play a large role in individual and organisational development.

Other uses for this study include the grounds for researching other informal industry communities and how the communal activities benefit the industry in question. For example, do film industry professionals meet up regularly to share information and to network? The information found in this thesis would argue that this kind of informal and relaxed meetings would benefit almost any industry that relies on personal and organisational networks.

I would think that bringing academia closer to the industry via IGDA gatherings would benefit both parties. Especially in Tampere, the university's centre of game culture research would be interesting to have as a host for one gathering. The centres research could be beneficial to the local game industry and the researchers working there could gather data from the industry.

8.2 For future research

Due to the time constraints present in the making of this thesis, there are several points that require further studies.

In this thesis, only people who actively participate in IGDA events were interviewed even though there are many individuals and entire game development companies that do not actively participate or choose to not participate in the gatherings. This results in a heavy user-bias being apparent in the results. The reasons why some people do not like to participate in the gatherings would require proper investigation. These results would also be useful to IGDA Finland itself.

Inclusion of several hubs, or an additional IGDA chapter could widen the scope of the research to be more global. For instance, including the Swedish chapter of IGDA can give better comparisons for the events and activities between countries. Including more hubs in Finland would then again provide a wider base for interviews and therefore result in better understanding of regional differences. It would also be fascinating to conduct a similar research in the United States, where there are several chapters in the same nation.

Prior to this thesis the investigated subject was widely left outside the academic view. This thesis, however does not provide an adequate base for a solid theory to be found but may act as a foundation or inspiration for further investigation. Future researches should also look at game development communities in areas without their own IGDA hub for comparisons and to further see the benefits of having an active community.

8.3 Reflection

At the beginning of this thesis, I hoped to create something new to the field, to fill in the obvious gap left behind by not including IGDA in the research studying the game industry. I was surprised by how little existing research there was to build a theory upon, therefore leading to rather fragile theoretical background for this thesis.

The challenge of compiling a theory on researches from many different academic fields was an interesting journey of combining ideas, theories and findings. I think that by combining studies made about innovations, corporate cultures and industry backgrounds proved valuable for this thesis' value as a research.

This thesis may not be exactly ground-breaking research, but I hope it serves to prove the value of studying game development communities. Whether they are globally local like the IGDA with its many chapters, or just a small community thriving in a single town creating their own events and gatherings. The results found here will hopefully inspire further research on the matter and also help IGDA Finland to improve and grow as a chapter of IGDA.

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APPENDIX 1: Interview Questions

1. What is the game development scene like here in Tampere/Kajaani?
 - a. How many companies etc.
2. Are you a regular in the local IGDA gatherings?
 - a. Are you from around this area?
 - b. In how many gatherings have you been? More than five? More than ten?
3. What are your personal reasons for attending the gatherings?
4. Have you met interesting people at the gatherings?
 - a. Who would you like to meet at the gatherings?
 - b. youtubers, publishers, investors, service providers...? Someone not strictly coder, programme
5. Have you learned anything game development related in the gatherings?
 - a. QA, HR Management, other services or tools?
6. Have you received any job propositions or gotten a job from contacts you have made in IGDA gatherings?
7. Have you learned something new, or received helpful feedback from others?
 - a. Anything particular?
8. Overall, how useful do you find the local IGDA activities?
 - a. Would you see the activities being beneficial for the local game development?
 - b. Should IGDA Finland do something differently, would you like to see something else at the events?

Differentiating questions:

- Age
- Gender
- Status
 - o Student
 - o Unemployed
 - o Entrepreneur
 - o Working in game development
 - Size of company
 - Role/position
 - For how long?
- Nationality
 - o Native finn or from somewhere else?