

**I.**  
**EDITORIAL**  
**RESEARCHING HISTORICAL**  
**CONSULTANCY IN THE CEE**  
**REGION AND IN GLOBAL CONTEXT**

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**Michał Mochocki**

## **Editorial: Researching Historical Consultancy in the CEE Region and in Global Context**

It is my utmost pleasure to welcome the reader to the special issue of *Homo Ludens*, the official journal of the Games Research Association of Poland. This issue is the output of research project 937/24 in the programme titled *Development of Creative Sectors*, carried out by GRAP with grant funding from the Center for the Development of Creative Industries. The aim of the project was two-fold. Firstly, to examine the formats and practices of historical consultancy in games, with primary focus on Central and Eastern European video game industries. Secondly, to identify the key professional competences of histgameconsultants and to offer solutions for the inclusion of relevant training in formal education at faculties of history in Poland. Overall, the research was divided into four tasks, which informed the six (plus one) papers in this collection.

The first paper (Mochocki, Kot, 2024a) provides a general overview of historical game consultancy, starting with a review of available research (surprisingly scarce, as it appears), supported with popular online sources such as interviews and blog posts. This contextual research leads us to a preliminary survey conducted as part of this project (Task 1.1), in which we ask national gamedev organisations in Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Belarus, Lithuania, Estonia, and Serbia for general information on the state of histgameconsultancy in their countries.

The second and third papers (Mochocki, Kot, 2024b, 2024c) are based on the core survey (Task 1.2) in the form of an online questionnaire addressed to professionals who worked on games either 'as' or 'with' historical consultants. The first of those two papers examines the good and bad practices in histgameconsulting, as reported by our interviewees, who have worked on video games in Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Serbia. The latter focuses on the professional skill set of game consultants: what competences are needed and how they could be trained.

The fourth paper (Szeja, Mochocki, 2024), written in Polish, examines information on historical consulting in analog games developed in Poland, collected in interviews with game developers (Task 2). Dominated by respondents from the board games industry, it also includes comments from

authors of tabletop RPG and larp. The results of the Poland-centred survey are contextualised in the global English-speaking tabletop game market.

The fifth paper (Pigulak, Gdaniec, Wasiak, 2024), also in Polish, draws conclusions from the above-mentioned research and offers a detailed list of learning outcomes for a prospective higher-ed curriculum for historians-consultants (Task 3), combining the traditional skills of a historian with industry-specific competences in game development.

The last paper (Janicki, Gdaniec, Możejko, Odorowicz, Świątosławski, Wasiak, 2024), available in Polish and English versions (effectively, papers sixth and seventh), builds directly on those curricular guidelines, proposing a syllabus for a semester-long course in game consultancy for historians (Task 4). It is a modular syllabus, composed of multiple autonomous blocks of about five weeks each, which may be assembled in different configurations. The syllabus is followed by a set of teaching guidelines and institutional considerations. Approached from the Polish perspective, it is likely to be relevant to some degree also to other higher-ed environments.

The project was capped with a conference held in Poznań, Poland, on 18–19 October 2024, and with the publication of this special thematic issue of *Homo Ludens*. The dissemination of research outputs constituted Task 5.

Summing up the completed project, I have no doubt we have made a substantial contribution to a surprisingly underresearched area. While the field of historical game studies is thriving (Mochocki, 2022), rarely has it focused specifically on historical consulting. The only large-scale study on histgameconsultancy we have found is Collewijn's (2015) Master's thesis from the University of Amsterdam, available in English translation. We can also point to two book-length French studies on *Assassin's Creed*, which include discussion of the involvement of academic historians (Bazile, 2021; Éthier, Lefrançois, 2020). The *Assassin's Creed* series — it must be noted — is an absolute exception in the popular and academic attention it has attracted to its historical consulting, as can be seen in the bibliographies of sources we cite in this collection (Mochocki, Kot, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c). In general, whether it is *Assassin's Creed* or other games — historical consultancy seldom receives more than a marginal comment in historical game studies.

Nonetheless, we can see a rising interest in this topic in the agendas of conferences that specialise in history and games, examples being ‘Archaeology, history, and the videogame industry’ in November 2022 (Birmingham Research Institute for History and Cultures, UK) or ‘Digital games through muddled pasts and modded history’ in April 2024. Whenever historical consultancy is discussed among career options for researchers, consultancy for games is likely to be included, as in the case of ‘The Consulting Historian’ seminar for early-career scholars in March 2024 (Institute of Historical Research at the University of London, UK), which featured Chris Kempshall among the speakers. Kempshall is an academic and public historian specialising in World War I and World War II video games (see e.g. Kempshall, 2019). When we take into account recent higher-ed initiatives to launch degree programmes on historical consultancy (‘History and Heritage Consultancy’ at University of Groningen, Netherlands) or historical games (‘Wargaming and Resilience Planning’ at Brunel University, UK; ‘Historical Game Design’ at University of Gdańsk, Poland), we can conclude that this publication comes at a timely moment. It is bound to make an impact.

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