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HOLLYWOOD AND VIDEOGAMES – *JUMANJI*, *JURASSIC PARK*, *HITMAN* AND THEIR SEQUELS

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Dichiarazione del ricorso a strumenti di Intelligenza Artificiale (IA)

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che tutto il materiale generato dall'IA è stato attentamente verificato, rivisto e rielaborato dall'autore/dall’autrice, che si assume la piena responsabilità per la qualità, l'accuratezza e l'integrità scientifica del lavoro.

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to be a study into how the film industry uses media other than just movies per se to appeal to their audiences, in particular utilizing the increasingly popular medium of videogames, by implementing the studies "Videogames as drivers for film plots: booming intertextuality" and "The gamification of cinema and the cinematization of games" as a starting point for the analysis. The thesis will focus on three different ways of merging videogames and cinema, offering a deeper look into how these two media can be and are being interwoven with increasing frequency. In order to do this, three case studies will be taken into consideration - *Jumanji* (1995) and its sequels *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (2017) and *Jumanji: The Next Level* (2019), to exemplify how a fictional videogame can be used to expand the franchise by becoming the movie plot; the universe of *Jurassic Park* (1993; 1997; 2001) and *Jurassic World* (2015; 2018; 2022), to showcase the potential of adapting a franchise into a series of videogames; and *Hitman* (2007) and its reboot *Hitman: Agent 47* (2015), providing an instance in which the plot of the movies is the adaptation of a videogame. Firstly, the study will begin with an overview of how popularized videogames have become, investigating in particular how significant they have become from a social and cultural point of view in recent years. Secondly, the focus of the research will shift towards discussing the nature of Hollywood and how it utilizes other media outside of movies to appease broader audiences and increase its profit. Thirdly, each case study will be presented individually, with an overview of the movies they comprise and their respective storylines to better highlight how they are structured around the video game medium, either by incorporating it or by adapting to it, or adapting it into a film. Lastly, the thesis will explore how videogames are employed within the case studies, providing an in-depth look into the respective approaches to such media taken by the franchises. In doing so, the study also expands on how utilizing a video ludic component affects the reception of their products by the general public and expands their core audience, while also providing an even more immersing experience for old and new fans of the franchises.

Keywords: cinema; sequel; Hollywood; videogames; media; franchise; audiences; culture; society; storyline; reception; appeal; immersive experience.

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INTRODUCTION

It is an indisputable fact that for a long time now the film industry has been drawing inspiration from media other than movies to reach a broader audience than only film fans. In fact, many Hollywood productions are adaptations of materials that already existed in other forms – books, comics, musicals, theatre productions, etc. The aim of the following thesis is to show specifically how Hollywood has been integrating the ever-more-renowned medium of videogame into their productions. The analysis presented hereafter utilizes a transmedial approach (Bolter and Grusin 2000; Jenkins 2006; Elleström, Pop and Ryan 2020; Jiménez Sámchez, Lavín and Martín García 2023) to demonstrate and support its findings. This work intends to provide proof as to how movies and videogames can be weaved together to form a new product that can engage their respective fanbases –in doing so, cinephiles and gaming enthusiasts are brought together by the embodiment of a shared interest and introduced to their correspondent sphere of interest. The analysis will observe the techniques used to merge these two media into one cohesive product, able to satisfy cinephiles and videogames fans alike. In doing so, this work acknowledges not only that merging videogames and movies has been steadily becoming a staple in the cinema industry – but also that cinema has been applying methods to ensure that the essence and lingo of videogames are preserved in the blend with films rather than being lost.

In order to do this, the thesis investigates three different movie productions resulting from merging videogames and cinema, and in doing so it provides an in-depth examination of how these two media can be blended together to create a new product. This kind of approach was studied by both Jenkins in his *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* and in the book *Remediation: Understanding New Media* by Bolter and Grusin – both of which form part of the theoretical backbone of this work. The case studies featured in this thesis each provide a different example of videogames and cinema interlacing. *Jumanji* (Johnston, 1995) and its sequels *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (Kasdan, 2017) and *Jumanji: The Next Level* (Kasdan, 2019) exemplify a case of a fictional videogame invented specifically to become part of the movie plot and expand the franchise – an endeavour so successful in fact that it resulted in the production of an actual videogame based on the sequels from the 2010s. The universe of *Jurassic Park* (Spielberg, 1993; Spielberg, 1997; Johnston, 2001) and *Jurassic World* (Trevorrow, 2015; Bayona, 2018; Trevorrow, 2022) present an instance of adapting a Hollywood franchise into not just one, but an entire series of videogames. Finally, *Hitman* (Gens, 2007) and its reboot *Hitman: Agent 47* (Bach, 2015) are representative of those movies

where the plot is actually the adaptation of a videogame. By presenting an example for each of these significant categories, the thesis aims to provide a comprehensive and thorough overview of the potential of such an approach – namely, using cinema and videogames within the same project to broaden its fanbase and economic reach.

To be precise, chapters one and two of this thesis will provide the theoretical premises and the baseline on which this analysis is built. The first chapter of this thesis will provide an overview of the increasing popularity videogames have steadily been experiencing in recent years. In order to do this, the analysis will examine in particular how significant they have become from a social and cultural point of view. The first chapter will propose an overview of the history of videogames, and how their reach expanded over time thanks to technological advancements. Then, it will investigate the growth of players' numbers, the impact this community has from a social standpoint and the repercussion this all has – both in shaping entire new communication platforms and on the individuals themselves in terms of physical and mental health. The theoretical premise will continue in the second chapter, where the focus of the research will move to discussing how throughout its history Hollywood has repeatedly utilized media other than movies to appease broader audiences and increase its profit. This chapter will also provide a deeper analysis of the source materials and how this thesis builds on them to achieve its results. The second chapter is also dedicated to reviewing the methodological approach used to analyse each case study, with a brief overview of the steps taken to ensure a proper examination of the chosen materials. A small section of this chapter will also be used to briefly define some of the cinema-related terminology present in the case studies, to better frame the nature of the movies involved.

To continue the discussion, chapters three through five will each discuss a case study individually. Chapter three is entirely dedicated to discussing the *Jumanji* franchise, an example of a newer trend in Hollywood movies – that is, creating a fictive videogame to be the movie plot. This case study will be discussed first by virtue of being a relatively novel approach to the use of videogames in cinema, thus making it particularly interesting for the aim of this thesis. The following chapter is dedicated to the extensive *Jurassic Park/World* franchise, a notable example among the many movie-to-videogame adaptations. This case study proved to be quite relevant to this thesis on account of having been adapted into not just one videogame, but an acclaimed multi-chapter series. Finally, chapter five will provide an examination of the last case study, the *Hitman* franchise. This case analysis was deliberately left for last, as videogames being adapted into movies is arguably the most prolific and long-lived approach of the ones under analysis – though this does not make it any less interesting for the purposes of this study.

Specifically, each of these chapters will first provide an overview of the core material they comprise and their respective storylines. This will help to better highlight how they are structured to incorporate the video game medium – either by adapting it into a film, adapting a movie into a videogame or by inventing a fictive videogame to act as an element of the movie's plot. Lastly, the thesis will explore the respective approaches to such media taken by the franchises, explaining in which capacity they are employed within each case study. In doing so, the study also provides evidence on how merging videogames and movies affects the reception of their productions by the general public. Another observed result of combining these two media is the growth of their core audience, a direct consequence of an experience that is all the more immersing and interactive for old and new fans of the franchises alike.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONSTANTLY GROWING IMPACT OF VIDEOGAMES

1.1. Videogames Popularity

In keeping with the aim of this thesis, it is important to establish first and foremost how popular videogames have become since they first made their appearance. This popularity made them into a cultural and social phenomenon, as they "have a value of their own as a cultural object since, […], they are an interactive media, which means that the players are active contributors to the overall experience" (Mendes, Cunha, Mendes, 2). In fact, games have long been part of humanity's culture. In their book *Understanding Videogames – The Essential Introduction*, Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Heide Smith and Pajares examined how board games have been part of human history since as far back as Egypt's Third Dynasty (2686-2613 BC) with a board game called *Senet* (61 & 62). This game more than likely acquired religious significance overtime, but it was first intended for recreational purposes. This isn't the only example of a historic recreational board game as "the oriental game of *Go* has been played since at least 200 BC" (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Heide Smith & Pajares, 62). In their dissertation, the authors of *Understanding Videogames* also mention dice being played from the 7th century BC, around 1400 years before the first mention of chess (62). In fact, videogames are simply a more technologically-advanced kind of games. A similar kind of evolution can be seen in board games as well, where the materials used changed from bone and ivory to wood and metal and later on plastic. Videogames are the result of a similar process – once a technology that could support them was invented, videogames started being developed. Overtime, as the surrounding technology evolved to a higher quality, videogames changed to match. The opposite is also true, as certain videogames could only be developed with specific systems – in order for that to happen, technology that could support such games had to be pioneered.

Before there could be videogames though, there had to be some kind of way to play them – Berger rightly observes that "the art work/text/video game is transmitted by some medium." (7). Today, videogames can be played on computers, consoles, TV screens, smartphones and tablets – some of which are so compact they can be easily carried around. None of these options would have been possible if not for the Nimrod, the first ever gaming PC presented in 1951 at the Festival of Britain by John Makepeace Bennet. Unlike the gaming PCs of today, the Nimrod

was anything but portable – it occupied a surface of 1800 ft^2 and weighted a whopping 50 tons. Even so, it paved the way for a new form of entertainment to be studied and invested into.

Following this breakthrough, in 1952 A.S. Douglas developed the videogame *OXO* (a virtual game of noughts and crosses) and in 1958 physicist William Higinbotham designed *Tennis for Two* – while both of them were developed strictly for academic purposes, they still are among the first videogames ever created. The first purely recreational videogame ever released is "*Spacewar!*", published exactly ten years after the Nimrod was first presented in 1961. Continuing with the history of videogames, the next fundamental advancement is the addition of videogames in arcades in the mid-1970s. Tsang rightfully pointed out that the American videogame industry began right around this time in Silicon Valley, when Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney founded Atari in 1972 and then launched the table tennis arcade *Pong* (545). The Odyssey, the first gaming console released to the public, was introduced on the market by Magnavox right around this time as well.

In the 1980s, the Japanese videogame industry also consolidated its presence thanks to Nintendo launching the *Game Boy* console. Japanese companies "Nintendo, Sony, Square Enix, Sega, Bandai Namco, Capcom, and Konami have maintained unrivalled positions in their home market" (Tsang, 545) – further solidifying the industry's importance. These and other flourishing industries had to adjust their products to different gaming media, and also new graphics and technology. The next step in videogame industry is dated 1992, when VGA Graphics and OpenGL reshaped the 2D standard and paved the way form never-before-seen 3D graphics. This new technology reached its peak with VR visors and motion capture – the former allows players to step right into the game by wearing a head-mounted display (HDM); the latter allows game characters to be modelled directly on actual people, whose movements are captured by special cameras tracking the suits they are wearing. Another giant of the videogame industry to establish itself in the 1990s was Sony "as their 1994 PlayStation outclassed the Sega Saturn and two years later continued to sell well against the Nintendo 64" (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Heide Smith & Pajares, 94). The turn of the century brought forth new technological developments, thanks to the addition of mobile phones to everyday life. However, that kind of technology was still lesser known and more complex than consoles – as Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Heide Smith and Pajares evidenced how PSP, Nintendo DS and later Nintendo 3DS became hugely popular instead. Their study also shows that the first step in mobile phones games was the release of the iPhone in 2007 (102). Contextually, the first model of App Store was also launched, a place where videogames could be downloaded directly on the mobile phone. This is the precursor of a tendency that became the norm in the 2010s, when cartridges and floppy

disks were gradually replaced by digital stores where you can buy and download video games – such as Steam, to name one. This greatly increased the videogame market and reach, since playing videogames no longer relied only on having access to a cartridge/floppy disk or arcade – most people in the world have a mobile phone or a PC, and anyone who does has access to an almost infinite number of videogames. In the year 2025 alone China, the USA and Japan ranked highest for gaming market revenue – grossing $53.2, $49.8 and $17.6 billion US dollars respectively[1].

Speaking of video games' pervasiveness, it isn't only due to how easy it is to buy or download one. In fact, one characteristic of videogames is that playing them is not the only way of engaging with them. The main goal of developing companies was for people to play their games, but overtime new ways of perusing videogames began to emerge. The Global Gamer Study 2024 carried out by Newzoo shows that 85% of the people they interviewed engages in more than one way with videogames, not only by playing them. The same study also showed that more than half of these people engage with videogames by viewing gaming content and 35% by consulting online gaming communities or following esports tournaments and awards[2]. Additionally, it emerged from the study that out of the total number of people involved in this study 80% actually play videogames. These findings are a clear example of why videogames are so popular – their reach goes beyond simply playing them and extends to a well-rounded form of entertainment. As discussed in the following sections of this chapter, videogames have successfully occupied a lot of areas, from playing them directly to watching someone else play to becoming a sport discipline. They also created new job opportunities and shaped platforms like YouTube and Twitch into what they are today. Considering these ramifications as contributing to the popularity of videogames is fundamental, since without them the videogame industry would lose most of its power. The many applications videogames can have are the driving force behind the development process and the ever-improving quality of videogames.

1.2. Videogames as a Job Opportunity

In their most basic sense, gameplays are nothing more than the experience of playing a videogame. For years, playing videogames was considered to be an isolating practice – many factors are to blame for this perception of videogames. It is true that video gamers usually choose a private space to play, such as a bedroom, while wearing headphones and effectively

[1] For more information see https://newzoo.com/resources/rankings/top-10-countries-by-game-revenues;
[2] For more information see https://newzoo.com/resources/blog/our-new-gamer-research-shows-that-80-of-consumers-play-video-games.

detaching themselves from the real world – even if only temporarily. Another trait that can be seen as isolating is that many videogames do not feature a multi-player option, that is, the possibility of playing that game with other people. As a matter of fact, gaming can take various forms – and as Shaw stated in her article, "Some players' experiences are solitary, others' purely social, and most likely many fit somewhere in-between" (413). Multi-player games are a clear example of just how social videogames can be, since they allow players to chat or speak directly to one another while playing. More recently though, the concept of gameplay has acquired a new meaning – someone playing a videogame and recording themselves to then post it on platforms for the perusal of other people. This introduces a new way of being social, as the platforms used to share this content have comment sections and like and dislike buttons. As a result, gamers can receive feedback and interact directly with the people watching their videos – fostering entire communities and essentially dismantling the idea that videogames are an alienating past-time.

Actually, the popularisation of gameplays posted on streaming platforms garnered so much attention that playing videogames stopped being just a past-time and for many became an actual job. The figure of the gamer became so attractive that many people flocked platforms such as YouTube in an attempt to establish themselves in the world of videogames – with varying degrees of success. Once the appeal of this content was recognised, the role of the gamer quickly became a fully-fledged profession. With the advent of social media, many gamers became actual influencers, expanding their audiences and promoting videogames on other platforms than just streaming ones. In a review YouTube carried out for its 20th anniversary, it was revealed that "60% of YouTube's 1,000 current most-subscribed channels have uploaded at least one gaming related video" (Source: YouTube Data, Global, April 2025)[3]. This new way of interacting with videogames re-shaped the world of videogaming, with the figure of the gamer garnering a huge following and being established as a new job. Consequently, videogames became a communal space where players and audience share an interest in videogames and discuss them – connecting with each other even though they are on two different sides of a screen. In this context, videogames have the ability of fulfilling their natural goal on multiple levels – on the one hand they entertain the gamers, on the other they provide an even deeper experience for the spectators. The appeal of watching gameplays originates in their own nature – the audience watches the game being played and at the same time has access to the gamers' reactions and thoughts on the game they are playing. When

[3] For more information see YouTube Culture & Trends - Culture and Trends Report: 20th Birthday.

playing a game, it is often difficult to form a concrete opinion on it – there are too many stimuli at once for players to also have the time to fully scrutinize the game. This side of gaming usually comes after playing, once the players have had enough time to recollect their thoughts and adopt a position. Watching someone else play a videogame removes the need to respond directly to the game's prompts, giving the audience the chance to focus all their attention on the game and the gamer from a removed standpoint.

As previously stated, a big factor leading to the emergence of gamers and gameplays as a career path is the community within which they operate. In fact, creators reached the success they had – and still have – with their audiences "because they had just been a part of that same audience" (Source: YouTube – Culture and Trends Report)[4]. Recording and uploading gaming videos meant than anyone who was an enthusiast could pursue gaming as a career. The strength of platforms such as YouTube and Twitch[5] is that they allow direct communication between gamers and their spectators – which means receiving feedback, requests to play a specific game, advice and such. Furthermore, gamers themselves also watch videogaming content – as proven by Newzoo's Global Gamer Study in 2024 – thus increasing, among others, the chances of collaboration and maximising the appeal of their content. Scoping other creators' content allows gamers to identify videogames that have a higher chance of matching the audience's interest and capitalize on them. In fact, the influence of gameplay streaming communities is significant enough to affect the popularity of the video games themselves. A clear example of this is the videogame *Minecraft*, a global phenomenon that surpassed one trillion views on YouTube in 2021 – which became two trillion by 2025 (Source: YouTube – Culture and Trends Report)[6]. As incredible as it may sound, this influence does not even necessarily apply to a specific videogame – the audience's preferences are enough to dictate which genres garner more popularity and which ones are not interesting enough.

1.3. YouTube and Twitch

It has been already established that gamers – and content creators at large – needed somewhere to share their videos with the world. By the time YouTube made its appearance in 2005, recording and uploading videos was not a novelty but it certainly was not considered a professional job either. What truly made the difference was the Partner Program introduced by YouTube two years later in 2007, which allowed creators to be paid for the videos they

[4] For more information see YouTube Culture & Trends - Culture and Trends Report: 20th Birthday;
[5] For more information see section 1.4;
[6] See note 4.

uploaded. The possibility of earning money by sharing video content radically changed the approach to what was once a past-time – as proven by YouTube internal data itself, stating that the Partner Program "paid out more than $70 billion from 2021 to 2023 alone" (Source: YouTube data, Global, Jan 2021 - Dec 2023)[7]. Obviously, gaming is not the sole topic of the videos uploaded on YouTube – though there is a sprawling category entirely dedicated to it.

It is indisputable that YouTube revolutionised the videogame industry in many ways, first and foremost by giving content creators a direct line of communication with their fanbase. The like and dislike buttons have become staples of all over the internet, and YouTube is no exception. Over the years, YouTube has improved their engaging capabilities by introducing new functions – community posts are probably the biggest one, allowing creators to post notices, messages and even polls and pictures. Another important addition is that of livestreams, that enable gamers to play videogames live on air with a live chat to match. As a result, they can communicate in real time with whoever is watching, and fans can chat with each other too. One of the newest additions is the possibility to donate to a channel or subscribe to it with a monthly payment, which gives the audience access to limited content and gadgets – not to mention sneak peeks of the content to be released in the future. YouTube also entices their content creators to use the platform by awarding them plaques once they reach a set number of followers or by sending them branded items. As for the audience, YouTube's algorithm is able to identify the people's interests and suggest similar content – which makes it easier for successful gamers and even relatively unknown ones to reach a larger audience.

An even more significant example of a streaming platform is Twitch, launched in 2011 specifically for videogaming content. Specifically, the platform is owned by Amazon and is intended for gamers to stream their gameplays live, with a chat that allows direct communication with those who are watching. The audience can also chat with one another live, or they can watch the contents uploaded on the platform on a time delay. Twitch has become hugely popular, to the point that in 2023 there was an average of 150 million monthly visitors to the website (Twitch internal data, Global, 2023)[8]. Though it is possible to subscribe to the platform, it is not mandatory to do so in order to enjoy the contents uploaded on it. Since its launch, Twitch has diversified its contents in terms of topic, but it still remains a pillar of the videogaming community. In fact, gameplay live streams are not the only videogame-related content available on the platform. First of all, Twitch is designed for both amateur and

[7] For more information see YouTube Culture & Trends - Culture and Trends Report: 20th Birthday;
[8] For more information, see: https://advertising.amazon.com/en-gb/channels/twitch?ref_=a20m_us_fnav_lngsw_en-gb.

professional videogame players. Second, the platform has become a huge hub for videogame discussions and talk-shows. Lastly, as a result of being used by professional gamers, Twitch has also become an institution when it comes to esport tournaments. Not only that; it has become industry leader in the broadcasting of esports events and competitions, consolidating its central role in the videogaming community – as proven by the 11˙000 co-streamers sharing The Game Awards[9] with their audience, a number that went up by 50% the following year[10]. According to TwitchTracker, May 2021 set the record for the maximum number of hours watched at a staggering 2,3 billion, while the record for the all-time peak of viewers was established at around 13,8 billion in July of 2025[11]. This is an unprecedented achievement, demonstrating how Twitch can and is shaping the videogame industry – even more than YouTube and its dedicated section YouTube Gaming.

This data is a clear indication of just how powerful this new way of intending videogames can be, propelling video games into a whole new sphere of influence. Platforms like YouTube and Twitch created a plethora of new possibilities for gamers, and prompted videogames to become an even more powerful form of entertainment. On top of that, they also reshaped the videogame industry to its core by establishing video games as much more than just a pastime for nerds. Twitch in particular paved the way for another fundamental ramification of the videogame industry, that is, videogames as a professional sport with world-wide resonance. The name of this new sporting discipline is Esports, which are videogaming competitions of global scale. In fact, they have the same organization levels of any other major sport event, down to comprehensive websites featuring rankings, news and updates on the annual editions. When videogames first came out, no-one could have predicted that they would grow into such a central part of modern-day culture. As sufficiently proven by these findings, the relevance of videogames in today's world continues to be further crystallized every year.

[9] For more information see section 1.5;
[10] For more information see https://thegameawards.com/news/the-game-awards-breaks-viewership-record;
[11] For more information see https://twitchtracker.com/statistics/watch-time & https://twitchtracker.com/statistics/viewers.

CHAPTER TWO

HOLLYWOOD AND VIDEOGAMES

2.1. An Overview on Hollywood

As it has already been established, videogames have a long history and have evolved many times through it. The cinema industry has undergone a similar process, starting as a breakthrough in the entertainment industry until it became the staple it is today across the world – also thanks to inspiration and technology borrowed from other mediums. Cinema has been part of the entertainment industry – and, by proxy, culture – for over a century, a process spearheaded by the Lumière brothers and Thomas Edison, among others. The first, groundbreaking productions of this industry were short, black-and-white and most notably without speech. Some of the Lumière brothers' productions – such as *La sortie des usines* (1895) – are still considered today as the cornerstone of modern cinema. At the time, films were usually around a minute long and featured everyday scenes that could be easily recorded. The technology surrounding cinema was rudimentary and over a relatively brief period of time it evolved enormously, allowing new experimentation with this medium. In the early 1950s, the American film industry introduced the cinemascope and colour "in an attempt to stem the commercial decline of its cinema due to falling audience numbers" (Heyward, 75). Other important changes came with the advancements in the technology of the cameras themselves, such as longer film reels and new lenses. Another challenge the cinema industry has had to face has been the emergence of new ways of watching films – from the revolutionary introduction of television to the groundbreaking streaming giants, foremost among them Netflix (Cambell 15-17). However, it would be a serious oversight not to recognise that there are other factors driving the significant evolution of the film industry – factors more closely linked to the stories that are brought to the big screen themselves.

Throughout all this process, cinema and Hollywood – the American colossus – did not just rely on the screenwriters' original scripts for their productions. In fact, part of making a successful movie is ensuring that it attracts as large an audience as possible – something that can happen only if the plot is able to pique the masses' interest. In an effort to achieve such a result, the cinema industry has always considered external sources to draw inspiration from. Over the course of time, cinema utilized many sources from other media to garner the public's interest – reference materials that had already been successful in their own right. Some prime examples of this are books and comics, whose film and TV adaptations account for a significant

proportion of the film industry – just think of the many adaptations of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, a tradition that begun in the 1930s with cinematic milestones such as *Dracula* (Browning, 1931) and *Frankenstein* (Whale, 1931), or the global phenomenon that is *Bridgerton*, or the comic-adapting cinematic universes MCU and DCEU. Choosing to adapt already famous source materials ensures the interest of their fanbase – which means that these movies will surely have an audience and there will most likely be higher ticket sales than if they had been an original production. Sometimes, this approach is so successful that after making a movie adaptation of a reference material, the film itself is then used as inspiration for yet another product. A remarkable example of this is the *Spiderman* comics, adapted through the years into three different series of movies which inspired videogames *Marvel's Spider-Man – Remastered, Spider-Man – Miles Morales* and *Spider-Man 2*, developed by Insomniac Games.

As far as external sources go, one that has become increasingly prominent in the cinema industry is videogames. This form of entertainment experienced a meteoric rise to fame and already in 2004 "total revenues in the video games sector superseded movie ticket sales" (Cadin & Guérin, 251). In the same study, Cadin and Guérin observe that as early as 2003 the worldwide videogame market was valued at 30 billion euros and that by January 2004 Sony had sold 70 million PlayStation 2 (PS2) consoles worldwide since they were launched in March 2000 (251)[12]. In 2024, around twenty years later, the global games market revenue was valued at 182.5 billion USD with a total number of 3.42 billion players worldwide and forecast for 2025 of $188.8 dollars in global revenue and 3. 37 billion players worldwide ("NewZoo Global Games", 2024 & "NewZoo Global Games", 2025) – and all these figures are expected to still grow in the future, though at a slower rate than forecasts originally predicted. By comparison, in the same year of 2024 the global cinema box office revenues were valued at around 30.51 billion USD ("The State of Global Cinema", 2025). Given these figures, it is hardly surprising that the film industry has come to regard videogames as a lucrative opportunity for success – and has found a wide range of applications in conjunction with cinema.

Perhaps the longest-standing approach to combining these two media is the adaptation of a videogame into a movie – a trend that started in the '90s with movies such as *Mortal Kombat* (Anderson, 1995) and continued steadily throughout the first two decades of the new millennium until today, as shown by movies such as *Hitman* (Gens, 2007)[13] and its sequel, the extensive *Resident Evil* film series spanning almost two decades from 2002 to 2021 or one of

[12] For more information see https://sonyinteractive.com/en/press-releases/2004/playstation2-achieves-cumulative-worldwide-shipment-of-70-million-units/;
[13] For more information see Chapter 5.

the latest releases of this kind, *A Minecraft Movie* (Hess, 2025). This method has had – and continues to have – such a thriving following precisely because it targets an audience that already knows and loves the videogames used as the inspiration for the movies. In doing so, these movies are able to secure high attendance numbers specifically within the sprawling gaming community – as well as also attracting an audience that has nothing to do with it. It can be argued that repurposing videogames in such a way might be in some cases an implementation of the nostalgia effect – with nostalgia at its most basic being "sentimental longing for an irretrievable past—one that is often idealized or even imagined—and […] sparked by some form of dissatisfaction with the present" (Cooper, 5). When it comes to movie adaptations of videogames, this thesis would like to argue that the yearning triggered by the nostalgia effect is not so much for "the perceived stability and security of the past" (Cooper, 6) as it is for the stability, security and freedom offered by the virtual alternative reality the videogames provide – that is, conditions that might not be achievable in the actual reality of everyday life. For the audience, movie adaptations of videogames allow for a return to a beloved imaginary reality they already know and prefer over their real-life circumstances – this can be considered a form of escapism, which Wolf calls *world-building* in his 2012 study. In his book, Wolf states that imaginary worlds have long been part of the history of humanity, even in a form as simple as daydreaming (1). The main reason people feel compelled to build new imaginary worlds is that they grant the chance for escape from a known reality – and, simultaneously, they allow for access to new stimuli a different reality (2-3). On top of being successful among the spectators, Cooper also argues that nostalgia films have steadily become Hollywood's primary output, which is unsurprising considering that "it is Hollywood we're talking about, what Robert Sklar once described as «a triumph of formula»[14]" (2). If there is one formula that the cinema industry would be interested in pursuing, it would no doubt be one that entails regularly filling multiplexes, topping box office charts and sweeping annual awards ceremonies (Cooper, 3).

Another product of movies and videogames merging that will be discussed hereafter is the opposite of the videogame-to-movie process – that is, adapting a film, or a franchise of films, into a videogame. It stands to reason that, seeing as videogame-to-movie adaptations are so successful, the next step would be for Hollywood to explore the opposite process – something made possible in part by constant technological advances giving these videogames an almost cinematic quality, as if they were a natural extension of the films rather than a separate medium. This approach has been steadily perused by big movie studios in recent years, as proven by the

[14] Sklar, R., 1975. *Move-Made America: A Social History of American Movies*, New York: Random House.

many videogame adaptations of Marvel movies[15] or of the universe of *Star Wars*[16], not to mention that of James Cameron's *Avatar* into a game so successful that as of December 2025 it even gained an all-new expansion[17]. As opposed to the method discussed in the previous paragraph, adapting movies into videogames allows already well-loved cinematographic material to broaden their reach. On top of that, it also provides the opportunity to expand a movie's universe with storylines that had not been previously told or to act as a parallel plot entirely, what's known as a what-if scenario – options that to the target audience of such videogames are likely more interesting than a faithful adaptation of the films' plot. Not unlike a videogame-to-movie adaptation, they also make use of the nostalgia effect to attract an audience – though in a slightly different way. In fact, the nostalgia they evoke is for the reality of the movies they are adapted from – places, characters, stories, even the movie title itself – which is often the figurehead and an iconic element of the franchise – are all details that players long to find in the videogames. Actually, it is exactly the promise of finding such aspects that drives gamers to purchase these videogames and major film studios to invest in them. The possibility of interacting with well-loved characters and exploring iconic locations is the premise of all these videogames, the core motive that developers build on to ensure the success of their products. Truthfully, it comes as no surprise that the film industry has decided to repeatedly invest money and resources in this kind of endeavour, namely adapting movies into videogames – as has already been widely established, Hollywood is "an industry enormously reliant on the recognizability of past forms and experiences" (Cooper, 2).

There is also a third approach to the intersection of cinema and videogames – perhaps the most interesting out of the three that will be discussed in this thesis – which will be the subject of the third chapter to follow. This is a relatively newer technique when compared with the two discussed earlier, in that it has gained a way more significant following in recent years. This method differs from the others in that it uses the concept of the videogame as a plot device for movies. As a matter of fact, in this instance the videogames featured in the films do not exist in real life – they are created expressly to become part of the movies' storyline. There are many movies that embody this mix between videogames and cinema, some examples being *Tron* (Lisberger, 1982) and its sequel *Tron: Legacy* (Kosinski, 2010), or *Ready Player One* (Spielberg, 2018), or again *Free Guy* (Levy, 2021). This approach even has an outstanding representative among animated films in the form of *Wreck-It Ralph* (Moore, 2012). These

[15] For more information see https://www.marvel.com/games;
[16] For more information see https://www.starwars.com/games-apps;
[17] For more information see https://www.ubisoft.com/en-us/game/avatar/frontiers-of-pandora.

movies use fictitious videogames as their main plot, adopting their typical characteristics and slang to mimic specific genres in the most faithful way possible. What's more, these films do not propose just the classic scenario of the movies' protagonists being sucked into a videogame – in some of them, the actual protagonist around which the plot revolves is actually a character from the fictive videogame itself. In doing so, these movies provide an interesting and alternative form of entertainment for gaming enthusiasts – and at the same time serve as an introduction to the world of videogames, appealing to an audience that includes those who are not part of the gaming community. This opens up an even more interesting possibility compared to the other methods discussed so far, since its main target is not only gamers but encompasses even non-experts – in fact, this method invites exactly people extraneous to the videogame community, by providing a visual explanation of what videogames are without implying that they are the exclusive domain of gamers. Using videogames as a plot tool is such a powerful technique that many of the fictional games have in time been adapted into actual videogames as well, in an even more seamless blend of cinema and videogames.

In a sense, all these crossovers between cinema and videogames in a quest for a highly profitable product are not unlike another lucrative ploy of the film industry – that of sequels and reboots of already famous and profit-making movies. This comparison seems apt given that the case studies discussed in the following chapter all consist of sequels or reboots – both in their film and videogame forms. It seems only right to point out in this regard that "sequels present a change from the original film within the comfort of that first film's world […]. Sequels offer the audience the ability to learn more about the characters of a film and the world in which they live." (Bay, 12). As Dalecki states, sequels exploit the narrative potentialities of a pre-established character and storyworld in what is essentially a pre-branded line extension of the successful movies they are preceded by (4) – this is a concept derived from Thompson's explanation sequels seek "to get as much mileage out of any single narrative property as possible" (98). On the other hand, a reboot recycles some aspects of the parent film – such as soundtracks, iconic lines and even sometimes the movie title itself – and might make metareferences to it (Loock, 287), but they operate on a new narration plane – basically, they eliminate the already established narration of the parent film to start a new one. To put it simply, a reboot differs from a sequel in that it is "a complex case of 'industrial intertextuality', where an individual film is linked to an existing film or film series by commercial design, and yet also deviates from those previous texts to some degree in an attempt to generate a new cycle of cinematic productions" (Herbert et al., 2). That of sequels and reboots is a practice that has been part of the film industry for decades, a technique that has proved plenty successful and is still

vastly used today – as a matter of fact, it has become manifestly clear that such methods have been increasingly used "[…] as a mechanism to reduce risk and to help ensure financial success. […] If the initial film demonstrated audience appeal, its loyal fan base likely will want to see more of what they enjoyed initially" (Terry et al., 58). Merging videogames and cinema, in whatever capacity that may be, isn't all that different from producing a sequel or reboot – what changes is that the cinema industry doesn't turn to one of its own products for inspiration, but rather employs a different medium with the same goal in mind. Actually, sequels and reboots are also a product of the nostalgia effect – not in the sense that they look at the actual past, but that they stem from a past parent movie and are aimed at an audience that is already fond of the original.

Although only obliquely pertinent to the subject of this thesis, it is important to mention that the film and videogame industries are so closely intertwined that they have come to share some of the technologies underpinning their products. However tangential to the analysis it may be, it is an indisputable fact that without these technologies, the case studies presented hereafter would be profoundly lacking in terms of aesthetics and realism. Some of the most prominent technologies shared between the two industries are CGI and motion capture, both of which enable a level of realism that it would otherwise be difficult to achieve. Motion capture is a filming technology that, through a series of highly-specialized cameras and suits for the actors to wear, is able to capture movement and even facial expressions on film exactly as they are in real life. It is the key to characters such as *The Lord of the Rings*' Gollum or the entire *Avatar* trilogy – and in the world of videogames, it makes animating characters in an almost real life-like manner possible, as seen in award-worthy masterpieces such as *God of War* or Bandai Namco Entertainment's *Dark Pictures Anthology*. On the other hand, CGI is responsible for the scenery of movies and videogames, allowing for state-of-the art realistic settings and even physical features in every context – from action scenes that defy the laws of physics, the bottom of the ocean or even alien planets to superhero suits, flying capes and even a third eye in the middle of one's forehead.

2.2. Theoretical Backbone and Methodology

This thesis focuses on the mutual collaboration among cinema, videogames and their respective audiences. This kind of process is explored by Henry Jenkins in his book Convergence *Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, in which he illustrates a shift in the way new and old media alike intend their content to be perused – from a product beginning and ending within the confines of one medium to one that flows between an array of different media and can only be

fully appreciated if it is consulted in all the media forms it utilizes. Jenkins calls this phenomenon *media convergence*, that is, "the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want" (2). The ever-growing relationship between cinema and videogames, as investigated in this thesis, is undoubtedly one that falls within the scope of Jenkins' convergence.

Jenkins emphasizes how media convergence is only one of three key concepts that constitutes what he calls *convergence culture*, a cultural shift "where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways" (2). The other two key notions he depicts as central to convergence culture are *participatory culture* and *collective intelligence* – the former is a new take on the relationship between media producers and consumers where "rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules" (3); the latter refers to the desire of fans to discuss the media they consume amongst themselves, since, in Jenkins' own words, "Consumption has become a collective process—and that's what this book means by collective intelligence, […]. None of us can know everything; each of us knows something; and we can put the pieces together if we pool our resources and combine our skills" (4). It is the aim of this thesis, in part, to highlight how a practical application of these notions can be observed throughout the three case studies that follow hereafter – further proof that the interrelation between the cinema and videogame industries is a prime example of the repurposing of media through the lens of convergence culture.

The aforementioned relationship also relates to the phenomenon that Bolter and Grusin refer to as *remediation* in their study *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. At its most basic level, Bolter and Grusin say: "we call the representation of one medium in another *remediation*, and we will argue that remediation is a defining characteristic of the new digital media" (45). The authors go on to argue that remediation operates under two contradictory requisites, *hypermediacy* and *immediacy*. Hypermediacy refers to the tendency to multiply mediation "so as to create a feeling of fullness, a satiety of experience" (53); immediacy – and contextually transparency – references any act of remediation that the authors describe as erasing all traces of mediation "by bravely denying the fact of mediation" (53). Hypermediacy and immediacy are depicted as opposite manifestations of the same desire to get past the limits of representation and to achieve the real (53) and as twin logics (5) – two traits so interconnected in our culture to the point that "ideally, it [our culture] wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying

them" (5). Bolter and Grusin then talk about how remediation can be seen as a way for one medium to reform and improve upon another – generally, this happens when a new medium is used to remediate an older one. The authors also point out that the assumption of remediation to remediate an older one. The authors also point out that the assumption of remediation strictly as reform has been adopted by many and is "so strong that a new medium is now expected to justify itself by improving on a predecessor: […] Each new medium is justified because it fills a lack or repairs a fault in its predecessor, because it fulfils the unkept promise of an older medium" (59-60).

For the nature of this thesis, another point of Bolter and Grusin's study that is important to single out is the concept of mutual refashioning between media. Specifically, while the authors do agree that newer media are usually thought of as remediating older ones and "[…], we may think of something like a historical progression, of newer media remediating older ones and in particular of digital media remediating their predecessors" (55), the opposite is also true – older media do in fact refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media. In fact, the authors speak of an approach to refashioning whereby "our culture conceives of each medium or constellation of media as it responds to, redeploys, competes with, and reforms other media. […] But ours is a genealogy of affiliations, not a linear history, and in this genealogy, older media can also remediate newer ones" (55). This aspect of their study seems particularly fitting for the purpose of the analysis carried out in this thesis, as the case studies presented hereafter reflect this paradigm of reciprocal refashioning and remediation. As a result, this is another aspect that will be investigated during the presentation of the case studies, as it is part of the explanation of the nature of these products, which stem from the relationship between cinema and videogames.

In keeping with this topic, a further interpretative approach proposed in this thesis is based on a selection of chapters from the book *Transmediation: Communication Across Media borders*. In its introduction, Lars Elleström introduces the concept of transmediation and situates it within the broader fields of intermediality – that is, the study of relations between different types of media – and transmediality, which refers to the shared traits and abilities of different media to communicate similar things. Specifically, Elleström defines transmediation as the repeated representation of media traits (such as a story or a structure) via a different technical medium, stating that "if equivalent sensory configurations [...] are mediated for a second (or third or fourth) time and by another type of technical medium, they are transmediated" (4). Contextually, he also offers a differentiation between transmediation and media representation, stating that the latter "involves the notion of one medium representing

another medium. Media representation is at hand whenever a medium presents another medium to the mind of a communicatee" (4). He also produces a more thorough explanation as to the differences between transmediation and media representation, elucidating how "whereas transmediation is about 'picking out' elements from a medium and using them in a new way in another medium, media representation is about 'pointing to' a medium from the viewpoint of another medium" (5). As an example of this, he says that a film featuring a theatre performance in its story can be considered media representation, while one whose story closely resemble a theatrical play should be understood in terms of transmediation (5). Elleström then goes on to identify some key forms of transmediation that pose a significant contribution to the analysis of the following case studies. The most easily recognizable of them is adaptation, which is traditionally seen as the transmediation of a single artistic product (like a novel) into another (like a film) – chapters Four and Five of this thesis propose two examples of this transmediation form. Another kind of transmediation that is noteworthy is transmedia storytelling, where a large, overarching story (like *The Matrix* and *Star Wars*) is built from partial narratives distributed across multiple platforms. This is a notion Elleström references from Jenkins' study, which he says "captures the modern phenomenon of building large narratives as the sum of partial narratives distributed by different kinds of media such as films, comics, video games, novels and various forms of Internet-based media" (7).

The same notion is then investigated in more detail in chapter two – another piece of this work's theoretical backbone – by Marie-Laure Ryan, who points out that the industry using transmedia storytelling and the fans who find themselves on the receiving end of it are the driving force behind this particular kind of transmediation. This is yet another aspect that this work intends to remark on within the case studies provided. In fact, Ryan rightfully claims that on the one hand "the purpose of transmedia storytelling is to 'monetize' intellectual property by spreading it across as many media as possible, because each medium has its own devotees and increases the size of the audience" (22). On the other hand, she points out that the role of who designs transmedia storytelling is to create and encourage the fans' craving for more content (22) by doing this, the industry ends up enjoying a fundamental byproduct of transmediation – the contribution of the discourse of fans to the development of transmedia franchises. This contribution takes a creative form (fanfiction, cosplay events, etc.) and a critical one (online discussion forums, blogs, social media comments, etc.) (23). In Ryan's own words, "both of these forms demonstrate the power of stories and their worlds to form communities. If today' s culture is participatory, it is as much in the sense of motivating fans to worship together at the altar of a cult narrative as in the sense of collaborative creation" (23). Both this aspects –

the industry's drive to using transmedia storytelling and the fans' contributions to it – are factors that have actively shaped the case studies under analysis in this work, as the following chapters intend to investigate and further demonstrate.

In chapter four of the same book Doru Pop seeks to demonstrate how, despite "cross-fertilizations" (61) between cinema and videogames being common, the two media themselves actually remain distinct. In his quest to prove this point, Pop proposes the twin concepts of *gamification of cinema* and *cinematization of games* to explain how the two media influence each other – the former is the repurposing of game mechanics such as gaining rewards or passing levels in cinematic settings (*Jumaji: Welcome to the Jungle*[18] and its sequel are two prime examples of this) "as instruments for attracting younger audiences to 'older' practices" (55); the latter refers to the use of cinematic codes (such as epic music or cutscenes) within games to create a filmic experience (56 & 59)[19]. This are two notions that the following analysis will try to find within the case studies as further proof of the intricacies of the mutual influence that the film and video game industries exert on one another. The other implications of Pop's study – mainly the impossibility of cinema and videogame to actually merge into one – will not be investigated further than strictly necessary to expose the notions of gamification and cinematization within the case studies. In order to ascertain in what capacity these phenomena and all the others described in this section occur within the case studies, the elements of which they are composed will be examined and discussed in detail – with a view to highlighting how each case study is the result of the combination of these factors.

Finally, the article "Videogames as Drivers for Film Plots: Booming Intertextuality" by Jiménez Sánchez et al. examines the growing cinematic trend where videogames are not just adapted into films, but actually serve as the primary driver of the plot and narrative structure. Their study centres around how actual game mechanics (health status, spare lives, abilities and weaknesses, etc.) are oftentimes adopted into the movies as narrative devices (9-10). This tendency usually also implies the use of plot devices such as completing a level to get to the next one or having to defeat so-called *mini bosses* in order to confront the final boss (10). The article then introduces the notion of the *avatar* – a virtual counterpart that the protagonists of the movies either control or actually become – as "an identity that not only is related to the construction of the body (appearance and movement), but of the mind as well (personality, moods and emotions), which, for their part, affect the capability for communication (Oyarzun, 2010)" (11). It is interesting to note that sometimes these avatars are used to investigate the

[18] For more information see Chapter 3;
[19] For more information see Chapter 4.

protagonists' habits and morals, in an attempt to foster personal and human growth[20]. Another trait that the authors establish as important within movies utilizing videogame-established mechanics is the way time works – it in fact usually moves differently inside the game and outside of it. The authors conclude that movies utilizing videogame-based features represent a distinct and promising subgenre within science fiction and fantasy, pointing out that "as noticeable in the age range and consumption volumes, video games have been gradually positioning, as of the 1980's, in the lives of millions of people, which enables the cinema industry to reach broader audiences" (16). As a result, the research rightfully considers the implication that, since videogames do not have a niche audience in the slightest, then by all means "neither are these films for video game aficionados any longer" (16). The aim of the present thesis is to both confirm how such assumptions can be backed with factual evidence in the form of *Jumanji* and its sequels[21] and demonstrate how some of these techniques can be applied also in videogame-to-movie adaptations and used to successfully adapt a movie into a videogame[22] – naturally, this involves a careful process of tailoring and refining the aforementioned methods, so that they work effectively and flawlessly in their new context.

[20] For more information see Chapter 3;
[21] See note 12;
[22] For more information see Chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER THREE

CASE STUDY ONE: *JUMANJI* AND ITS SEQUELS

3.1. Case Study Presentation

In order to better appreciate the many outcomes of merging cinema and videogames, this thesis proposes three case studies. This chapter is dedicated to the first one, the franchise of *Jumanji* (1995) and its sequels *Jumanji – Welcome to the Jungle* (2017) and *Jumanji – The Next Level* (2019). This franchise is an example of the use of a fictional videogame (Gualeni & Fassone, 2022) to further the plot of a movie, not to mention aligning with a younger audience that in the 2010s likely knew videogames better than board games. The reason behind choosing such a case study is that – though it represents a relatively more recent approach to the relationship between cinema and videogames compared to the case studies analysed in the following chapters – it entails a fascinating creative process in terms of transmediality. Moreover, including an example of a movie utilizing a fictional videogame as a plot device makes the overarching discussion that is central to this thesis even more comprehensive and complete.

Specifically, the *Jumanji* franchise presents many fascinating techniques to adapt a board game into a videogame – each of which was needed in order for such a merging of cinema and videogames to occur. It is particularly interesting, for the aim of this thesis, to point out that both versions of the game are fictional – even so, the fundamental rules of the board game were kept in its videogame rendition, thus experiencing a process of adaptation rather than a complete change. All of the choices operated within the cinematic medium to make the transition from board game to videogame possible were implemented to reach a very specific goal – they aimed at conserving the traits characterising Jumanji even when it had to exist through a new medium. Even more interesting than this is the fact that the boardgame and the videogame seen in the movies were actually turned into real life products, as discussed later in the chapter. This is arguably a sign of an even more prolific expression of media convergence between cinema and videogame, in a way that deeply resembles how Jenkins intended it – as the result of the flow of content across media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who are willing to interact with a multitude of different media in order to get the entertainment experiences they covet.

The first instalment of the cinematic franchise is the 1995 movie *Jumanji*, directed by Joe Johnston and based on the 1981 children's picture book of the same name by Chris Van Allsburg. Interestingly, the same year the movie came out a literary adaptation of it was

published, written by George Spelvin – a further sign of a deep interconnection between a product of the cinema industry and the book industry, as already entailed by the film's own literary origin. The plot of the movie starts in 1869, when two terrified brothers bury a mysterious wooden crate in the middle of the woods – which, unknowingly to the audience still, contains the board game of Jumanji. The crate remains buried and forgotten until 1969 when it is found by twelve-year-old Alan Parrish (Adam Hann-Byrd), attracted by the sound of drums. Alan takes the board game home and invites his friend Sarah Whittle over to his house, where the two start to play a game of Jumanji. It presents a set of fairly simple and normal rules, but things start to spiral out of control pretty soon – the pawns chosen by the kids move by themselves once the dice have been rolled, and ominous riddles appear on the crystal ball set in the centre of the game board. What is more, the game releases animals from the Amazon and African rainforests into the real world of the movie, and the kids get progressively more terrified the longer they play.

Ultimately, it all culminates with Alan mistakenly rolling the dice twice when he was not supposed to and getting sucked into the game – in that moment, the crystal ball read what is probably one of the most iconic lines of the movie, "In the jungle you must wait, 'till the dice read five or eight"[23]. At that point, Sarah flees the house terrified and in shock and the boy remains trapped inside Jumanji. After that, the game does not resurface until 1995, when Judy and Peter and their aunt Nora move into what once was Alan's family's house. They find Jumanji, attracted by the sound of drums, and discover through the second half of the instructions that the only way to finish the game is for one player to reach the finish line and call out its name. Unknowingly to them, the kids continue the game started by Alan and Sarah twenty-six years before, and even manage to free a now adult Alan (Robin Williams) form the jungle of Jumanji. The three of them convince Sarah to play with them so they can finally put an end to the destruction caused by the game, and together they face stampedes, carnivorous plants, a flood and even a deranged hunter fixated on killing Alan, among other things. After all of this and wreaking havoc on the city, Alan manages to finish the game and call out its name. Everything the game unleashed is sucked back inside it and time goes back to when the game begun, with Alan and Sarah being twelve-year-olds again and getting rid of Jumanji by throwing it into the river. They confess their feelings and eventually get married, and even get to meet Judy and Peter again in this new future. The movie ends with two French girls on a beach hearing the drums and being attracted to Jumanji, that is half-buried in the sand.

[23] For more information see https://www.quotes.net/movies/jumanji_6078.

The first sequel was released in 2017 under the title *Jumanji–Welcome to the Jungle* and was directed by Jake Kasdan. The movie employs a technique already used by its predecessor, that is, introducing the game of Jumanji in a specific moment in time and then skipping to roughly twenty years in the future – that is when the core of the movie takes place. Specifically, Jumanji is retrieved in 1996 by a man who gifts it to his son, Alex, who does not have any interest in it because it is a boardgame. Since the game is very perceptive, it morphs into a videogame and gets Alex' attention, who starts playing it and gets sucked into it. In 2017, four high school kids (Spencer, Martha, Bethany and Anthony "Fridge") get detention and, while carrying out the duties they have been assigned, stumble upon the videogame of Jumanji. Spencer, a videogame enthusiast, is intrigued by Jumanji – a videogame that does not look like any of the ones he knows – and suggests to the others that they play. Though initially not interested, the other kids eventually decide to join Spencer and they each choose an avatar – the video game equivalent of the pawns from the original board game. Out of the five avatars to choose from, only four are available – the movie clarifies later on that the fifth, pilot Jefferson "Seaplane" McDonough (Nick Jonas), was the one chosen by Alex in 1996 and therefore already in use. Spencer and the other kids get sucked into the game as well, only to find that they have taken on the appearance of the avatars they have chosen – Spencer as Dr. Xander "Smolder" Barvestone (Dwayne Johnson), Fridge as zoologist Franklin "Mouse" Finbar (Kevin Hart), Bethany as cartographer and palaeontologist Professor Sheldon "Shelly" Oberon (Jack Black), and Martha as martial arts expert Ruby Roundhouse (Karen Gillian). They meet an NPC (nonplaying character) called Nigel, who tells them what they need to do in order to save Jumanji and end the game. This is another example of how a function of the original board game is adapted to fit the new medium of the videogame – originally, the rules of Jumanji were written in two side-opening compartments on the game board, but the videogame cannot operate through the same medium, hence the need for an NPC to illustrate them.

While dealing with the dangers of Jumanji to end the game and rid it of corrupt archaeologist Professor Russell Van Pelt – yet another nod to the original movie, whose main antagonist was a crazy big-game hunter called Van Pelt, also a product of Jumanji – the protagonists discover that they each have three lives and a series of abilities and weaknesses that are specific to each avatar. Unlike the boardgame, the Jumanji videogame introduces these new characteristics for the first time – a mimic of the danger the protagonists of the first movie were in when the game started unleashing wild animals, venomous plants and other such things into their world. After progressing through a couple levels of the game, the group of high schoolers is reunited with Alex, who has been living in a hut built by Alan – the protagonist of

the first movie, an obvious nod to the original – and has not been able to complete the game by himself, partly because he has only one life left. Eventually, the five of them manage to complete the quest required to end the game and they all call out its name – another trait of the original boardgame that was maintained in the videogame. The protagonists are then sent back to when they started playing the game – Alex back in time to 1996, the four high schoolers to 2017. In the end, they destroy Jumanji and even get to meet a now-adult Alex – in fact, because he had been sent back to 1996, he has had the chance to grow up and live his life normally.

The second sequel – and the last cinematic instalment of the franchise to date – is *Jumanji–The Next Level*, released in 2019 and directed once again by Jake Kasdan. The core cast all reprised their roles, with some additions like Danny DeVito, Danny Glover and Awkwafina. The protagonists are the same group of high schoolers from the previous sequel, now college students, and adult Alex, with the addition of the characters played by DeVito, Glover and Awkwafina. This movie builds on the premises of his immediate predecessor, showing a new and even more dangerous set of levels – all inhabited by minions that must be defeated to reach the final boss. On top of the new, increasingly more difficult levels, there is another significant novelty regarding the avatars. In fact, their abilities have changed compared to those in the previous film – they now have new strengths and weaknesses. This resembles a pattern typical of so-called incremental adventure videogames, where new abilities can be unlocked by investing an amount of in-game currency or experience points (XP) – or by playing long enough to better some of the base abilities of the characters. As is typical in this genre of games, the characters' abilities affect how the game is played, and the gameplay that is *Jumanji-The Next Level* is no exception. In fact, it would be impossible to get through the levels of Jumanji without all the avatars – for example, Shelly Oberon is the only cartographer in the group, and without him, the others wouldn't be able to navigate the various levels. The same goes for all the other avatars – each one has specific characteristics without which it would be impossible to advance through the levels. Cooperation has been a central aspect of the game from the very beginning in the original *Jumanji* – in that movie, it was needed to free Alan from the jungle but also for the game itself to progress towards its end; in the sequels, this aspect of Jumanji is bestowed upon the individual traits of the avatars, who "must collaborate and leverage their unique abilities to surmount these hurdles" (Al-Khamisi, 20) and ultimately finish the game and go back to their real world. The NPC Nigel also returns in *The Next Level*, once again as a guide to the group and to illustrate the rules – for the same reason as before, the videogame needs a counterpart that can carry out the functions of the game board of the original *Jumanji*. The end goal of the game is also the same – restore a jewel that was stolen and call

out Jumanji's name to be released form the game. This is another trait that appears in all three films, surely a link between them but also one of the fundamental rules of Jumanji that had to remain the same even after the game had refashioned itself into a videogame.

3.2. Jumanji from Fictional Boardgame to Fictional Videogame

As already established, the *Jumanji* franchise represents an instance in which cinema uses a videogame as the driving plot for a movie – or in this case a series of two sequels, with a third set to release in December 2026 in the United States. The original game of Jumanji is a fairly straightforward boardgame, with a set of pawns, dice, a game board with a path made of cells and an assortment of relatively normal rules. In fact, if it didn't have any magical properties, the game of Jumanji wouldn't be all that different from the Game of the Goose, for example. It is precisely these magical features that make it different – and far more terrifying – than any other board game. When the movie *Jumanji* first came out in 1995 – and even more so in 1981, when the illustrated book on which it is based was published – it made perfect sense for a board game to be chosen as the central topic of the story. Boardgames had been part of human history for thousands of years by that point, as reconstructed in the study by Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Heide Smith and Pajares Tosca. They stated that the existence of boardgames can be traced as far back as 4600 years ago in Egypt (61). With such a long history behind them, it is easy to see how boardgames could still be so popular even in the 20th century. In fact, even if videogames were already plenty popular in the '80s and '90s, boardgames still held quite a prominent spot among the most popular activities for social gatherings – with games like *Monopoly*, *Cluedo*, *Scrabble* and *Risk!* dominating the scene of game nights. As a result, in its first weekend in theatres *Jumanji* grossed $11.08, opening at number one and overtaking *Toy Story*[24] – another movie with toys as protagonists and the first in a franchise set to become one of Disney's most successful productions. As for worldwide profit, *Jumanji* earned a total of $263 million dollars[25] overall.

When it comes to the timeline of the movie's plot, it also makes a lot of sense that Jumanji would have so much success among the people who find it. Alan and Sarah, in 1969, were most likely avid boardgame players and were very intrigued by Jumanji – a game they had never seen or heard of before. Moreover, Alan was a victim of bullies and had had a terrible argument

[24] For more information see https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-sheboygan-press-toy-story-jumanj/122247607/;
[25] For more information see https://web.archive.org/web/20191217174347/https://www.boxofficemojo.com/release/rl2774369793/weekend/.

with his father, so anything that could serve as an escape form his life was a welcome reprieve. In 1995, Judy and Peter were bored and definitely not interested in getting settled in in their new house – it was too strong a reminder of the life they knew being gone, as were their parents. When they find Jumanji, they are instantly curious as to what it is and decide to play a game – in an otherwise empty house, it is the perfect way to pass the time and pretend at least for a while that their whole existence hasn't been completely uprooted. What separates Jumanji from other boardgames – both within the movie and in the real world of the audience watching it – is the magical properties it possesses. In fact, Jumanji is a game that interacts with and alters the reality around it, unleashing animals and weather phenomena typical of its jungle into the real world. Furthermore, it is able to detect when any of the players attempt to cheat – whether intentionally or not – and punishes them accordingly, either by sucking them in or by transforming them into a jungle animal. In doing so, it addresses one of the defining features of board games – namely, having to imagine their context and setting. Jumanji effectively resolves this conundrum by manifesting pieces of itself into the real world, making it a remarkably interactive and engaging game. The very idea of a board game coming to life and altering the real world was revolutionary when the film was released in 1995 and it was made possible by "blending the book's imaginative elements with cinema's visual and auditory capabilities to create a thrilling experience" (Doğan & Bakşi Yalçın, 424). Speaking of the picture book on which the film is based, the author, Chris Van Allsburg, said of how the game of Jumanji came about that "we have imaginations, but I wondered what it'd be like to play a board game that didn't require any imagination. If you're playing *Monopoly* and you actually got sent to jail, it would be a different kind of game"[26].

Both the picture book and the movie *Jumanji* are examples of what Elleström defines as media representation, that is "one medium representing another medium. Media representation is at hand whenever a medium presents another medium to the mind of a communicatee. A medium, which is something that represents something in a context of communication, becomes represented itself" (4). In fact, they both illustrate a game of Jumanji in its entire duration – from setting up the game board, the pawns and the dice to finally finishing the game. In the movie, the game is shown multiple times – both before and after the game board is opened and set up. Many clips are used to display the pawns moving on their own and locking in place once they are done and the riddles appearing by themselves in the crystal ball. There are a couple sequences dedicated to the reading of the rules and many instances where the camera is pointed

[26] For more information see https://www.syfy.com/jumanji-author-chris-van-allsburg-shares-white-house-sequel-idea.

directly at the board game or the dice. The movie also clearly depicts the players doing the typical motions of playing a boardgame, like sitting at a table with Jumanji in the middle or hovering above the game board to read the crystal ball (Fig. 1). The picture book does the same, describing each roll of the dice and their consequences, as well as the brainteasers that go with them. The pictures included in it depict the animals and other pieces of the game released into the real world – including the cover of the book itself.



Figure 1 - Footage from *Jumanji*, Joe Johnston, 1995

These are all stratagems needed to make it believable that the core of the plot was a boardgame match. In fact, for the audience to continue believing what they are watching – a film in which a boardgame is being played – it is necessary to show the game in question on several occasions. In fact, the audience needed to be periodically reminded of the match that's taking place during the one hundred and four minute-film, given the multitude of incredible scenes unfolding on screen. The only logical solution to this problem is therefore to include scenes in the film that show Jumanji, so as to periodically remind the audience what the film is about. Incidentally, one side effect of this technique is that it demonstrates to a great extent the supernatural and unnatural properties of the game – a subtle reminder that Jumanji openly defies the laws of reality and actually frightens the protagonists, rather than being a form of enjoyable entertainment.

As for the two sequels, the decision to turn the Jumanji boardgame into a Jumanji videogame serves a dual purpose. The first reason relates to the audience these films are aimed at, and consequently the content with which they have the greatest affinity. In fact, as previously mentioned, the first *Jumanji* film centred on a boardgame – in line with the preferences of cinema-goers at the time. Similarly, the sequels chose to present the same game in a new videogame format – a guise that in the 2010s would have resonated more closely with consumers. By 2017, when *Jumanji-Welcome to the Jungle* first came out, the videogame industry had had at its disposal for several years an even more innovative tool for using its

products in the form of a smartphone[27] – basically, a portable game-playing computer in almost every person's pocket. Furthermore, it has been estimated that, in the same year, there were 2.26 billion active video gamers[28] worldwide out of a total population of nearly 7.6 billion people[29] at the time. To put this into even greater perspective, in 2010 global gaming market revenue stood at 78 billion dollars – by 2017, this figure had risen to 122 billion[30], just over one and a half times the figure at the start of the decade, and was bound to grow even more. Given these numbers, it is reasonable to assume that the decision to turn Jumanji into a video game was the most logical course of action. What is more, boardgames and videogames are by no means two distinct or mutually exclusive entities, but rather two facets of the same evolutionary process – that of recreational entertainment – of which videogames are but "the latest chapter in the fascinating and much lengthier history of games" (Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al., 61). Given the time period in which the two sequels were released, it is far mor likely that, by that point, audiences were more familiar with videogames than with boardgames. For the sake of completeness, it seems worth noting that the trend showcased in these films has also been adopted in the real world – a key example of which is *Monopoly Go!*, the videogame version of the boardgame of the same name.

The second purpose for turning Jumanji into a videogame, much like in the original *Jumanji*, has to do with the protagonists of the movies. As shown in the movies, teenager Alex and the four highschoolers – and later on college students – all exhibited more interest in videogames than in any other games. In the movie, Jumanji itself realizes as much and, since it is a sentient game, transforms itself into a videogame rather than risk being forgotten in favour of something else. For Jumanji, changing to keep up with the times is a matter of survival – in fact, it is necessary to continue to exist, as it has done since at least 1869, as can be seen in the first film. As in the original *Jumanji*, the plot is designed to reflect the preferences of the characters in regard to the time period in which the film is set. In doing so, the movie effectively follows the actual development and the influence of the videogame industry on people's everyday lives, depicting a relatable reality and which is probably similar to that of many others around the world. In an effort to depict such a pervasive presence of videogames in everyday life, the sequels feature opening scenes that once again showcase the notion of media representation – the protagonists playing videogames and Jumanji as a game cartridge. Unlike the original *Jumanji*, though, where the game came to life by unleashing parts of itself into the

[27] For more information see https://www.museumofplay.org/video-game-history-timeline/;
[28] For more information see https://public.flourish.studio/visualisation/17751471/;
[29] For more information see https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3799341?v=pdf;
[30] For more information see https://www.gamingscan.com/gaming-statistics/.

real world, the sequels become the game – in fact, they do not show the videogame of Jumanji being played, but rather the audience is immersed in the gameplay itself. This is an example of what Elleström refers to as transmediation, which he defines as picking out elements from a medium and using them in a new way in another medium (5). In this specific instance, in a manner similar to the original *Jumanji*, the films make use of a number of features typical of videogames to make it believable that what is being shown is gameplay – this technique also serves to reinforce the viewers' belief that they are going through the aforementioned gameplay along with the protagonists. As for the boardgame in the original film in this franchise, the sequels too display some typical features of the videogame Jumanji becomes – which could be likened to an adventure and platform videogame – for example abilities, weaknesses and number of lives (Fig. 2).



Figure 2 - Footage from *Jumanji-Welcome to the Jungle*, Jake Kasdan, 2017

On top of this, the movies also employ the concepts of avatars and cutscenes, which are once again specific to the world of videogames. In order to explain what these notions are – to the other protagonists and to the audience alike – the movies use the characters' own prior knowledge to provide an explanation, usually by Spencer who is an avid videogame player. These are all avenues that further the process of transmediation and contribute to make the shift from boardgame to videogame believable. What is more, they help to put into perspective the sort of videogame Jumanji has become, given that its nature changes radically in terms of its central premise – the game no longer comes to life by unleashing parts of itself into the real world, but instead becomes the protagonists' new reality by drawing them into it until the game is completed. In fact, one of the main differences between boardgames and videogames – and one that makes Chris Van Allsburg's interest into a boardgame coming to life void and null – is that videogames require imagination to be used in a different capacity. In fact, they provide players with a virtual reality within which the game takes place – then, the players have to use their imagination to be able to fully project themselves into it. In doing so, videogames reshape one of the key characteristics of boardgames – that is, having to rely on one's own imagination

to picture the game world and also believe that they are inside it. Videogames have revolutionised the concept of gaming, not because they do not require imagination, but because they ask players to use it in a different way – in short, they invite players to trust the virtual world they present and to use their imagination to immerse themselves in it. However, the most significant aspect of the transmedia process is the approach used to justify the very fact that the film simulates a gameplay. In fact, whilst in the original *Jumanji* the game comes to life by weaving parts of itself into the players' reality, in the sequels the game becomes the players' reality by sucking them into it. In doing so, the real world the movie is set in stops being the main setting, and the protagonists and viewers alike are transported into another dimension – the alternative reality of the videogame. This transmedia narrative is realised in a very graphic manner, with the protagonists being brutally abducted and forcibly transported into the Jumanji videogame, after being dematerialised from their real world (Zagarrio, 116). This approach is also effective in making the audience feel like they have been transported into the videogame right along with the movies' characters.

3.3. Media Representation and Transmediation across the Franchise

As well as providing a plausible basis for the plot, in this franchise media representation and transmediation also serve as a foundation for one another – strictly in relation to the sequels. In fact, many features of the videogame version of Jumanji are nothing more than a virtual reality-tailored representation of their counterparts in the boardgame. In the original *Jumanji*, the characteristics of a fictional boardgame were represented, as already mentioned, to ensure the audience would know they were watching a game being played. In *Welcome to the Jungle* and *The Next Level*, those same traits had to be adapted to function as a videogame and then had to be transmediated to work as the plot of the film. Actually, the most interesting aspect of this process is that this is an example of diegetic transmediation – that is, the object of the transmediation process is the content of the films, while the movie medium itself remains unchanged. Using media representation and transmediation to design the plots of the movies was a successful choice to the point that "Jumanji's seamless blending of virtual and real-world components makes for a […] captivating story for viewers, improving their overall experience" (Al-Khamisi, 18). As already established, diegetic transmediation was the optimal choice for the sequels because it allows the movies to mimic the gameplay and successfully employ the leading quality of videogames – that is, to propose a form of virtual reality centred on interactivity. There is also another reason why diegetic transmediation was a valid option – by

allowing entrance into Jumanji itself, showcasing the gameplay also gives the audience the chance to actually see the infamous jungle from which all the horrors of the first movie hailed.

The processes of media representation and transmediation are simultaneous in relation to one another, representing a clear attempt to preserve the key characteristics of Jumanji even when adapting it for a new medium. This decision was made because the three films in this franchise were conceived as organic sequels, each one a natural continuation of the last. In order for the audience to believe such a thing, there needed to be cohesiveness from a movie timeline standpoint, but also and more importantly in terms of plot. For this to be believable, the premises of the game could not drastically change, nor could any changes go without justification. There is in fact a clear one-on-one relationship between some traits of the boardgame and their respective videogame counterparts. For example, the pawns of the boardgame – shaped like jungle animals – clearly become the avatars of the videogame. The reason for this is that the pawns represented the jungle, an element of the boardgame that has to be at least partially imagined by the players – and by the spectators watching the first movie. When it comes to the avatars of the videogame, they take the aspect of human adventurers because they are the virtual representation of the protagonists and because it fits with the jungle theme of the game – through transmediation, it was already the main setting on screen and for the audience to experience. The sequels still acknowledge the pawns of the first film by making the elephant-shaped one (the one Alan used in the original *Jumanji*) an important part symbol of the new Jumanji videogame. The element of imagination is also acknowledged through another fact – in the first movie, Alan spends twenty-six years in the jungle of Jumanji and when he is finally freed, he does not speak of it at great length. In that instance, the movie's protagonists and the audience as well were required to use their imagination to fill in the blanks and reconstruct what had possibly happened over those long years – media representation was used specifically to portray the boardgame match, what the game did to the real world; no-one was privy to what happened inside Jumanji because that was not the crux of the film. In the sequels, the process of transmediation means the jungle of Jumanji is all everyone sees, movie protagonists and spectators alike. Making a gameplay the setting of the films means that everyone is made aware of what Alex – the teenager who played Jumanji in 1996 and got sucked into it – had to go through for twenty years and the viewership also gets answers as to Alan's time in the game in the form of the hut he lived in.

Similarly, the element of chance represented by the roll of the dice in the first movie is transmediated as the menu from which the characters can select their avatars. Originally, in the boardgame the concept of chance was linked to not knowing what the numbers the dice read

would mean in terms of consequences. In the videogame, the same notion is realized by choosing an avatar that only has a brief and partial description – in fact, the players only get to know what their avatars look like and are capable of once they already are inside the game and by that point it is no longer possible to change avatars. This means they are at the mercy of their avatars' characteristics until they learn how to work with them and each other – the same could be said for the protagonists of the original movie, who had to cooperate to survive whatever the game forced them to face without knowing what it would be until the very last minute. As previously mentioned, one of the biggest changes in the videogame version of Jumanji comes in the form of cutscenes, NPCs and the use of letters or other writings designed to provide clues. From the perspective of transmediating a boardgame into a videogame, these elements help to explain the rules and the plot, and to drive the game forward. In the case at hand, they respond to the way the boardgame of Jumanji was represented in the original. In fact, in *Jumanji* the game had two hinged side panels and crystal ball in the centre of the game board carrying out those functions. In this case, the audience needed to be shown on screen or told by a character what was about to happen, as they were observers of a game they were not participating in. In a videogame, the means of achieving this are much more immediate, making use of the medium's distinctive ability to employ images in an almost cinematic way to explain the game world. In doing so, the spectators are no longer on the outside looking in – they are experiencing the videogame right along the protagonists almost as fellow players. Lastly, another characteristic that separates the boardgame version of Jumanji from its videogame version is the concept of finiteness of the playing experience. In the boardgame, once a game is finished the only option to play again is to start a new one – which features the same events, the only difference being the order in which they occur. When it comes to the videogame, once a level is completed, a new one will be available to play. This means new scenarios, a progressive level of difficulty, brand new challenges and bosses – basically, an all-new gaming experience, capable of challenging players and putting them to the test, as demonstrated in *Jumanji-The Next Level*.

The simultaneous use of media representation and diegetic transmediation – and the resulting final products, *Welcome to the Jungle* and *The Next Level* – proved so successful that two videogames were adapted from the sequels. To put the success of the two films into perspective – and to see why developing videogame adaptations made sense – one need only look at their global box-office takings. Specifically, *Welcome to the Jungle* became the fifth-highest-grossing film of 2017, when it came out, with a worldwide total of $963 million dollars and finished second on its opening weekend at the box office behind only *Star Wars: The Last*

Jedi[31]. The second sequel, *The Next Level*, earned a worldwide total of $800.1 million dollars – becoming the tenth-highest-grossing film of 2019 (its release year) – and then went on to top the box office on its debut weekend[32]. Given such a positive reception, it is hardly surprising that the next step was to turn the fictional video game into a real one – or rather, into two. The first videogame, *Jumanji: The Videogame*, was released in 2019 and is based on both *Jumanji* sequels. It is an action and adventure videogame that gives the players access to the world of Jumanji, where they can take one of the avatars seen in the movies as their playing character – Dr. Bravestone, Mouse Finbar, Ruby Roundhouse or Dr. Shelley Oberon. It also expands on the Jumanji seen in the movies, since it features some new environments that do not appear in any of the sequels[33]. In 2023, a new videogame adaptation was released by the title *Jumanji: Wild Adventures*. As its predecessor, this videogame can be classified as an action and adventure game, featuring once again the avatars from the movies. Additionally, in this game the final goal is to retrieve a jewel called the Jaguar's Eye – the same as in *Welcome to the Jungle*. In this game as well, the world game features plot scenarios that were not present in either sequel[34]. These videogames complete a process begun by the sequels – that of drawing the audience into a fictional gameplay. By developing a real video game, the next step is taken – viewers move from being a silent, non-participating audience to becoming actual players. In fact, this way experiencing Jumanji is no longer a matter of having movies making the viewership believe they are inside a videogame. With actual videogames available, the once-spectators can now actively challenge Jumanji and its perils, control the movie-based avatars and face off against minions and bosses. In a way, the existence of the videogames gives the audience the chance to experience something that as of yet was missing from the franchise, even if a version of the boardgame Jumanji is available for purchase – the chance to play the game as it is actually seen in the films. In fact, the actual Jumanji boardgame cannot replicate exactly the game as seen in the 1995 movie – it is but a traditional boardgame, not a magic-laden one. On the opposite, the Jumanji videogame actually brings to life the gameplay seen in the sequels, even if they feature new levels or settings not seen in the films. This is a highly significant development, as it effectively fills a gap in the franchise that had previously remained unresolved, giving media

[31] For more information see https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt2283362/ and https://deadline.com/2017/12/last-jedi-dwayne-johnson-jumanji-zac-efron-greatest-showman-box-office-1202230784/;
[32] For more information see https://www.boxofficemojo.com/year/world/2019/ and https://www.boxofficemojo.com/weekend/2019W50/?ref_=bo_rl_table_1.
[33] For more information see https://en.bandainamcoent.eu/jumanji/jumanji-the-video-game;
[34] For more information see https://en.bandainamcoent.eu/jumanji/jumanji-wild-adventures.

users the definitive Jumanji experience – playing the game directly, rather than watching events unfold in a film where it is impossible to intervene in any way.

CHAPTER FOUR

CASE STUDY TWO: THE UNIVERSE OF *JURASSIC PARK* AND *JURASSIC WORLD*

4.1. General Introduction

In order to better appreciate the many applications of video games in the world of cinema, it seems appropriate to investigate another facet of this creative process, i.e. how movies can be adapted into a videogame. This chapter will serve as an account of how this method has been and still is applied in the world of cinema, employing the extensive *Jurassic Park* and *Jurassic World* franchise and its videogame adaptation *Jurassic World Evolution* as a case study. As such, the case study will be used as one example of how Hollywood's productions can be repurposed through a different media, while conserving a sizeable audience.

The chapter will first begin with a brief overview of the case study under analysis, by presenting the movies that constitute the franchise, their videogame adaptation and by proxy also the reason behind this choice. The movies will be individually introduced and discussed concisely, providing the necessary information to better frame them and provide points of reference with respect to the nearly three decades along which they developed. Then, their plots will be presented, focusing on the most important storyline elements and the links between the first and second trilogies. Discussing the plot will also serve to better understand the videogame adaptation of the franchise, as its three chapters follow and provide a very detailed iteration of the storylines. This section will provide the premise for the cinematographic aspect of the case study under analysis, by supplying the filmographic context on which the videogame is based.

Then, the chapter will move to presenting the franchise's videogame adaptation, by the title of *Jurassic World Evolution*[35], through a brief explanation of its contents and structure. The analysis will also dwell on how actually managing a dinosaur park as the one seen on screen is appealing to the audience, giving them the chance to participate actively rather than being confined to the role of helpless spectators. The focus then will shift to analysing how the production of the videogame came to be, looking first at why it can be considered a commercial move on the part of its developer Frontier Developments. On a similar note, this section of the chapter will move towards explaining how *Jurassic World Evolution* became overtime the greatest success in the history of Frontier Developments, warranting the development of a second and third chapters of the videogame. The analysis will then elaborate more on this topic,

[35] For more information, see: https://www.frontier.co.uk/.

providing additional information about the second and third instalments of *JWE* (short for *Jurassic World Evolution*) and the many *DLCs* (i.e., downloadable contents) and expansion packs[36] that complement the gaming experience while also bringing in additional revenue.

The next section of the chapter will explore the videogame's characteristics in more detail, by giving a clearer assessment of the genre it belongs to and highlighting the traits typical of such a genre that can be found in *JWE*. The aforementioned characteristics will be divided into categories, so as to make it easier to study each grouping in due detail. Having said that, the first category to be analysed is that of the purely managerial aspects of the game, ranging from managing the animals to establishing a functional staff team to ensuring the satisfaction of the guests. Another category worth analysing to best frame the genre of *JWE* is that of random events – malus, enemies and genetic behavioural traits – that the players might have to face throughout the gameplay, thus making the experience more immersive and at the same time also more challenging. A third category to be considered in this analysis is that of the game's aesthetics - including buildings, management menus and other management tools - that further solidify what genre the video game belongs to and the nature of the gaming experience. In addition to establishing the game's genre, this section will also investigate how it can be declined through different gaming modes – franchise, sandbox, etc. – all of which change the players' experience and test their ability to confront obstacles and overcome any subsequent hinderance. Another topic investigated in this section will be that of a feature known in the game as *contracts* – yet another facet of the managing world – whereby players are asked to complete objectives of their choice from a set number of possibilities, resulting in a profit to further improve their park.

The closing section of the chapter will investigate how the storyline of the movies was adapted to fit the videogaming medium, thus reprocessing content from one medium to another. Firstly, the analysis will show how the instalments of the videogame actually follow the events of the movies – specifically the *Jurassic World* trilogy – and integrate the original *Jurassic Park* trilogy through a DLC and the gaming mode Chaos Theory, essentially reproposing the movies' plots. Secondly, the study will dwell on the usage of the nostalgia effect to link the movies and videogames by repurposing the aesthetics of buildings from the movies and having the movie characters reprise their roles, among other things. Then, the analysis will move to investigating

[36]For more information, see:
https://www.frontier.co.uk/ &
https://jurassicworld-evolution.fandom.com/wiki/Jurassic_World_Evolution_Wiki:Main_Page.

how Frontier Developments integrated listening to the gamers' requests and feedback into the process of adapting the movies' plots. As shown by the following findings, this process comes in many forms – adding dinosaurs that became staples in the movies, entire species such as flying and sea-living reptiles, etc. – all of which add to the realism of the game as an adaptation of a movie franchise. Finally, this section will explore how Frontier used input from the gamers along with their pre-existing experience to integrate new features, such as a novel building mode allowing those playing the game to fully personalize each building inside their Jurassic parks. In this respect, the analysis will discuss how Frontier used tools from their other core videogames – specifically their other greatest success, *Planet Zoo* – and adapted them to *JWE*, fulfilling the gamers' numerous requests.

4.2. Presenting the *Jurassic* Franchise

Selecting a case study for this chapter was not a straightforward task, with there being many great contestants for videogame adaptations of movies – big names of the calibre of *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Alien* and many Marvel films, to name a few. In order to make the decision-making process easier, some questions were asked about the role of the videogame as a film adaptation. Does the videogame adapt the movie plot directly? Does it add to the universe from which it hails? Is it introducing brand new, previously unknown characters? What kind of playing experience does it provide? Answering these questions was key to reducing the multitude of contenders, making it possible to choose appropriately with respect to this thesis. As a matter of fact, *Jurassic World Evolution* (which will be addressed as *JWE* for short from now on) is a faithful adaptation of an entire franchise, a set of two trilogies that indelibly marked a period almost thirty years long. Not only that, *JWE* pays homage to the original *Jurassic Park* trilogy by featuring many related references[37], though its main focus was always intended to be *Jurassic World* and its sequels. This means the players will be interacting with characters – from both trilogies – they already know and love, all while having the new and exciting chance to run a Jurassic park all of their own. *JWE* effectively repurposes the already renowned plot of the *Jurassic* franchise in a way that enables the players to do rather than observe and act rather than witness. The game offers players the chance to create and build their own personal version of a dinosaur park, while still maintaining that it all happens within the realm of an established universe. In fact, *JWE* does not provide the players with a completely new product plot-wise, but rather allows them to be agent parties rather than spectators. While it may not seem the most

[37] For more information, see:
Section 4.5.

enthusing approach to a videogame adaptation of a movie, it has to be said that the so-called *simulator games*[38] have become increasingly popular in recent years, as shown by their steadily rising number and *Frontier Developments'* own portfolio. All this is to say that *JWE* proves to have all the requirements deemed relevant to the study conducted in this thesis – it works together with the movie franchise it is an adaptation of rather than being a separate product, features the characters fans already know and love, adds what-if scenarios to the plot of the movies and in doing so it gives the audience the chance to take control of the story. These are all reasons that make it a suitable candidate, hence why it was chosen among the many other contenders.

As previously mentioned, the videogame's movie counterparts are a set of two trilogies spanning over a period of roughly thirty years, showcasing "a franchise which has been both highly profitable but often critically maligned" (Melia, 2). The first ever movie of the franchise to be released is *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), a two-hour adaptation of the book of the same name by Michael Crichton. David Koepp, the movie's main screenwriter, had Crichton participating extensively to the characterization of the protagonists in the film as well [(312-14 & 317-19), Ayerbe Irigoyen pp. 10 & 18]. The cast of the movie comprises Hollywood stars such as Sam Neill, Laura Dern, Jeff Goldblum and Richard Attenborough – among others – whose characters accept the chance of a preview visit to John Hammond's (played by Attenborough) dinosaur park as a professional favour. Once there, they are joined by a lawyer from the company funding the theme park and Hammond's own grandchildren, who complete their diverse group. Unexpectedly, the visit becomes a fight for survival when a deliberate hacking of the park's systems releases all of the dinosaurs housed there, leading the characters to multiple close encounters with apex predators such as the T-Rex and Velociraptors. In the end, the group manages to flee the island, though not unscathed, and the dinosaurs are left to roam the lan freely. One of the most famous scenes from the movies happens right in its closing passages, when the T-Rex roars fiercely inside the park's main hall. As shown hereafter, this is an important element, as this exact roar was used in the videogame[39]. The movie was successful enough that it can be considered "a film which re-invented popular cinema and the Hollywood blockbuster in the 1990s" (Melia, 1), so much so it managed to be the highest grossing film in history until *Titanic* (1997) was released and was also awarded three Oscars.

[38] For more information see:
Section 4.4.
[39] For more information, see section 4.5.

In consequence of such a positive reception, in 1997 a sequel was released by the title *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*, directed once more by Steven Spielberg and also an adaption of a book by Michael Crichton. Completing the trilogy, a third sequel by the title *Jurassic Park III* was released in 2001, this time directed by Joe Johnston – with Steven Spielberg as executive producer – and not based on a Michael Crichton novel. Both sequels feature the return of one of the main characters from the first film – Dr. Ian Malcolm (Jeff Goldblum) and Dr. Alan Grant (Sam Neill), respectively – to the archipelago just off of Costa Rica where Jurassic Park was supposed to be established, although "Grant, […] and Malcolm all express disinterest or horror at the idea of going back to the parks, yet […] eventually—inevitably—return" (Pugh 88). As it stands, their return is forced by a series of circumstances that cannot be helped and force them to confront their fears and go back to where it all started. Once again, they are forced to form improbable alliances – with friends and antagonists alike – in an effort to bring their goals to fruition and survive the carnivore dinosaurs roaming the land to ultimately make it back to the continental United States. Moreover, both sequels focus on a detail which was only implied in the first movie – the dinosaurs' ability to subvert the limitations imposed on them genetically to reproduce naturally by laying eggs of their own. This is quite relevant to the videogame adaptation, as in its third instalment one of the goals is to assist in the reproduction of the dinosaurs to promote the conservation of the species. Although the plots of the two sequels are not particularly brilliant and somewhat follow similar patterns, both instalments were successful in their own right – the second more so that the third. Still, it was not enough to see the project of a fourth chapter in the saga completed, as was originally planned.

In fact, there was speculation of a plan to expand the saga as early as 2002, but nothing concrete was made of it until Steven Spielberg's official announcement at the San Diego Comic-Con International in 2011. The first instalment of the second trilogy was released around four years later in the summer of 2015, a two-hour movie by the title *Jurassic World* directed by Colin Trevorrow and with Spielberg still in his role as executive producer. The film is set around twenty years after the debacle of the original Jurassic Park and features a fully-functioning dinosaur theme-park, finally fulfilling John Hammond's (Richard Attenborough) dream. The park is equipped with the most up-to-date technologies, thanks to the founding company InGen and their biggest investor Simon Masrani (Irrfan Khan), and lead by head manager Claire Dearing (Bryce Dallas Howard). Regrettably, Jurassic World meets its demise when a genetically modified dinosaur known as Indominus Rex – synthesized by Dr. Henry Wu (a role reprised by BD Wong), the only character from the original *Jurassic Park* featured in the movie– escapes its enclosure and stars wreaking havoc on the park. In an effort to save her

stranded nephews, Claire forms an alliance with Owen Grady (Chris Pratt) – an ex-Marine who conducts behavioural research on Velociraptors – and together they manage to survive the Indominus Rex and go back to the mainland. In the end, after the T-Rex, Blue the velociraptor and the mosasaurus kill the Indominus Rex, the park is evacuated and permanently closed while the dinosaurs are left to live freely on the island where the park once was. The movie was a great success both among the audience and the critics, to the point that for a while it was the third highest-ever grossing movie in history – today it is ranked tenth[40].

In light of all this a first sequel by the title *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom* was released in 2018, directed by Juan Antonio Bayona and with Steven Speilberg and Colin Trevorrow as co-executive producers. The movie takes place around two and a half years after the events of *Jurassic World*, when a volcanic eruption on Isla Nublar threatens to kill all the dinosaurs living there. Back on the mainland, Dr. Ian Malcolm (Jeff Goldblum, reprising his original role) is called before an official committee to discuss whether to save the dinosaurs or not. In the meantime, Claire Dearing has co-founded the Dinosaur Protection Group – which aims to save the dinosaurs – and receives a call from Benjamin Lockwood, John Hammond's ex-research partner, asking for a meeting to discuss an evacuation plan for the dinosaurs. She accepts and convinces Owen Grady to also participate, then they team with the park's ex-informatic engineer and a paleo-veterinarian – both co-founders of the DPG (Dinosaur Protection Group) alongside Claire – and are escorted on the island to save the animals. The group quickly realizes they have been lied to and the aim of the mission was to secure the dinosaurs for some unspecified purpose. When the volcano erupts suddenly, they are forced to flee the island and hide on one of the cargo ships loaded with dinosaurs, while planning how to actually save them. Upon reaching the Lockwood mansion it is revealed that Mr. Lockwood's financial manager, Eli Mills, planned to kill him and take control of the estate to sell the dinosaurs at auction. Concurrently, it is unveiled that Dr. Wu (BD Wong) had synthesized a new dinosaur called Indoraptor[41] – another product of genetic modification using the Indominus Rex' DNA – that was also being sold at auction, against his explicit directions. Claire and Owen sabotage the auction and unwillingly free the Indoraptor from its cage, which starts a long confrontation between the two protagonists together with Mr. Lockwood's granddaughter and the reptile. Eventually, the Indoraptor is defeated – thanks in part to the help of Blue the Velociraptor – and the protagonists are left to decide the fate of the other dinosaurs housed in the mansion's

[40] For more information, see:
https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt0369610.htm/;
[41] For more information, see section 4.3.

basement. The movie ends on a series of shots of various dinosaurs interacting with the modern world, after it was decided to let them out of their confinement instead of leaving them to asphyxiate because of a toxic gas leak. Tough not as successful as its predecessor – mainly among the critics – this instalment still garnered a lot of recognition and appreciation among the general public. In fact, Universal Studios™ was so thoroughly convinced of its potential that they announced the release of yet another chapter of the franchise four months before the premier of *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom*.

As previously mentioned, the third and last instalment of the second trilogy was announced in 2018 but it was not released until June 2022. The title of the movie is *Jurassic World: Dominion*, directed once again by Colin Trevorrow who also remained as a co-executive producer alongside Steven Speilberg. This chapter of the saga sees the return of Laura Dern, Sam Neill and again Jeff Goldblum and BD Wong, all of whom reprise their roles from the original trilogy. In fact, this instalment was intended not only as the finale of the trilogy that began with the film *Jurassic World*, but also as the conclusion of the story that began in 1993 with the original film *Jurassic Park*[42]. Such a concluding act had been so strongly desired that planning for this film began in 2014, even before the release of its forerunner *Jurassic World* and four years before the release of the second instalment of this trilogy.

The movie is set for years after the events of *Fallen Kingdom*, with dinosaurs now freely roaming the world and consequently causing incidents. Because of illegal poaching of the dinosaurs and the business surrounding it, the U.S. Congress granted exclusive rights to capture dinosaurs to Biosyn Genetics, which under the direction of CEO Lewis Dodgson has established a dinosaur sanctuary near its research centre in a valley in the Dolomites. As it transpires, Biosyn scientists are actually conducting controversial secret experiments under the guise of pharmacological and agronomical advances – and using the dinosaur sanctuary as a cover for their illicit research. In the meantime, Claire (Bryce Dallas Howard) and Owen (Chris Pratt) are each in their own way involved in saving the dinosaurs by relocating them into natural preserves safe from poachers. The two are forced to infiltrate Biosyn's research centre after the company kidnaps Maisie – Mr. Lockwood's granddaughter, who Claire and Owen have been raising – and a velociraptor named Beta, the former for being a clone of her deceased mother and the latter for being Blue's hatchling and living proof of asexual reproduction. Coincidentally, Ellie Sattler and Alan Grant are also at Biosyn's centre after being invited by their old friend Ian Malcolm to investigate the giant locusts that have been destroying every

[42] For more information, see:
https://ew.com/movies/jurassic-world-dominion-imax-teaser-colin-trevorrow-culmination-6-movies/

crop not grown from Biosyn-produced seeds. It is then revealed that Dr. Wu works for Biosyn and genetically designed the aforementioned locusts to target non-Biosyn crops, though he has come to regret it and wants to synthesise a pathogen to eradicate them by using Maisie's and Beta's DNA. The main characters are subjected to a long series of near-death experiences, but manage to survive each one. Once he realizes Ellie, Alan and Ian are about to expose his illicit activities, Biosyn's CEO Lewis Dogson retaliates by setting the research centre on fire to bury any traces of their genetically engineered locusts. The insects escape and cause a large-scale wildfire, forcing all dinosaurs to be evacuated and leading all the main characters to finally unite. Afterwards, Dogson tries to run from the compound but is killed by some dinosaurs, while the protagonists manage to escape alongside Dr. Wu. In the end, Alan confesses his feelings for Ellie – a clear reference to their relationship in the first and third *Jurassic Park* films – and Beta is reunited with Blue. Moreover, Dr. Wu successfully synthesises a pathogen to rid the world of the locusts and the valley where Biosyn's research centre used to be is declared a protected reserve for dinosaurs, that also learn to coexist with modern animals. Although the critics were not fully satisfied with the final product and the movie was considered a "critical failure" (Melia 3), *Jurassic World: Dominion* still grossed over one billion dollars worldwide, becoming "the third highest grossing film of 2022 (after *Avatar: The Way of Water* [Cameron 2022] and *Top Gun: Maverick* [Kosinski 2022])" (Melia 3)[43].

Though technically it is not part of the *Jurassic World* trilogy, it still seemed important for the purpose of this thesis to mention the release of a seventh – and final, as of the present moment – instalment of the franchise. The movie in question was released in the summer of 2025 under the title *Jurassic World: Rebirth*, directed by Gareth Edwards and with Steven Spielberg still in his role as co-executive producer. In fact, this instalment was designed as a stand-alone sequel of *Jurassic World: Dominion* and features an entirely new cast comprising some very renowned actors, such as Scarlett Johansson, Mahershala Ali and Jonathan Bailey. Even though none of the creatures and characters from the movies are currently featured in the videogame, it still felt fitting to mention its presence within the broader universe of the franchise and the possibility that its contents might be added to the game at a later date.

All this to say, it is not surprising for such a successful franchise to want to explore new media and expand its already prolific universe. It is also unsurprising that the media chosen for this project was that of videogames, a vastly famous form of entertainment sporting a large

[43] For more information, see: https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt8041270.htm/.

following. Indeed, choosing to collaborate with a well-known gaming development company at the creation of a videogame adaptation proved to be a highly fruitful endeavour for both parties. No aspect of this project was left to chance, and every step that contributed to the creation of the videogames was the result of a precise series of choices, as shown in the following sections.

4.3. Frontier Developments and *Jurassic World Evolution*

In the summer of 2018, the *Jurassic* franchise was expanded with the addition of its videogame adaptation *Jurassic World Evolution* (Fig. 1). The game is a faithful adaptation of the *Jurassic World* trilogy, but later updates went on to include all six movies. Specifically, it belongs to the category known as simulation games, and most precisely management simulation games[44] – games in which "players must balance the use of limited resources to build or expand some kind of community, institution, or empire, while dealing with internal forces within […], or external forces such as those of nature or chance" (Wolf 123).



Figure 3 - Jurassic World Evolution official logo
https://www.jurassicworldevolution.com/assets/images/jwe1/logos/jwe-core-white.png

Particularly, *Jurassic World Evolution* enables players to build and oversee their own Jurassic Parks, featuring all the elements seen in the movies – dinosaurs, management facilities, amenities for the guests, attractions, etc. The players have to provide the highest possible comfort level to the dinosaurs, while also ensuring the best safety standards and fulfilling all the guests' needs. The ultimate goal of the game is to build a fully functional park, using a

[44] For more information, see section 4.4.

predetermined budget to invest in attractions, animals, and other facilities, and increasing the park's profits to keep the business running. In addition, the players' ability to maintain a functional park is tested through random negative events – from tropical storms and hacker attacks to the film-accurate "preventing dinosaurs from escaping and eating humans" (Mukherjee 2).

The game can be played in three different modes, each with their specific characteristics – Campaign, Challenge and Sandbox. Campaign mode allows players to build their own parks throughout the islands of the Las Cinco Muertes Archipelago, while fulfilling contracts with Hammond Foundation's Science, Security and Entertainment divisions. Additionally, every contract has its own reward, making it so the players' reputation with each division actively changes depending on the number of their specific contracts that is fulfilled. On another note, Challenge mode gives the players full control of the difficulty levels of the game, that each player can adjust to their own liking and with commensurate rewards. A third and last gaming experience is provided by Sandbox mode, in which the players are given infinite resources to build their parks[45]. As such, the game offers the opportunity to take an active role, fostering a complete shift in perspective away from simply being spectators, as is the case with the movies. This allows the players to interact firsthand with animals, people and places that before had only been part of the movie experience – that is, seeing them on screen but not being able to mould them to their own wills. As a result, the addition of *Jurassic World Evolution* provides a new facet to the franchise, supplying an even more immersive experience than simply watching the movie. This is an important fact to consider, as it broadens the overall reach of the movie franchise and its impact as a staple of dinosaur film tradition.

As previously mentioned, *Jurassic World Evolution* was released to the public in June of 2018, though its development started over two years earlier at the beginning of 2016. This was part of a carefully built marketing strategy by NBCUniversal – the movies' production company – that wanted an official videogame based on the franchise to accompany the release in 2018 of *Jurassic World – Fallen Kingdom*. In order to achieve this goal, NBCUniversal licensed the rights to the game to Frontier Developments, a developing company already well-established and renowned in the world of simulation games. In fact, by that point in time Frontier Developments had already developed many management simulation games, *Zoo Tycoon* and *Planet Coaster* being among the most famous ones. As for the case under analysis, *Jurassic*

[45] For more information see:
https://www.jurassicworldevolution.com/1 &
https://jurassicworld-evolution.fandom.com/wiki/Jurassic_World_Evolution#Development.

World Evolution was developed and perfected over the course of a little more than two years, during which NBCUniversal and Frontier worked closely with one another to achieve the highest possible level of accuracy and faithfulness to the franchise. To further help in this endeavour NBCUniversal provided many reference materials, including the audio for the dinosaurs and their models to be added to the game. On top of that, the game's developers used both the franchise's movies and Michael Chricton's novels as the foundation of the game and its lore, which once again helped in strengthening the connection between them and *Jurassic World Evolution*. The videogame also saw some fan-favourite actors returning to do voiceovers for their original roles – such as Jeff Goldblum (Dr. Ian Malcolm), Laura Dern (Dr. Ellie Sattler), Sam Neill (Dr. Alan Grant), BD Wong (Dr. Henry Wu) and Bryce Dallas Howard (Claire Dearing). In addition, Frontier Developments used a studiously devised marketing strategy to advertise *Jurassic World Evolution* (hereafter JWE), which included releasing snippets of the developing process and announcing new additions to the game – from new animals to actors reprising their roles – in an effort to keep peaking the public's interest. This strategy culminated with the release of the game on a number of platforms coinciding with the theatrical release of *Jurassic World – Fallen Kingdom*, further accentuating the importance and resonance of the game within the franchise.

As for its success, JWE was declared Frontier Developments' biggest launch with two million copies sold within seven months from its release. By March 2020, that number had increased to three million copies and the game had received overall positive reviews across all major gaming review platforms. JWE was also nominated for a series of awards in the months following its release, most notably for the "Excellence in Convergence" at the SXSW Gaming Awards in 2019 for games excelling in crossover to other entertainment mediums such as film, animation, etc. Then, at first Frontier Developments released three DLCs (downloadable contents or expansion packs)[46] for JWE and also some dinosaur packs giving access to new dinosaurs. As a result of such a positive reception, the developing company announced a sequel to be released in November 2021 by the title *Jurassic World Evolution 2*[47]. The game features some mechanics already seen in its predecessor, while some aspects of the gameplay were adjusted or perfected from their first rendition. One such aspect is the addition of the much-anticipated flying and marine reptiles, with specific enclosures – and their accessories – and feeding systems. Furthermore, *Jurassic World Evolution 2* (hereafter JWE2) includes a new

[46] For more information see section 4.5;
[47] For more information, see:
https://www.jurassicworldevolution.com/2 & https://www.frontier.co.uk/games/jurassic-world-evolution-2;

gaming mode, Chaos Theory Mode, which provides the players with what-if scenarios from the first five movies of the franchise. The game itself takes place canonically after the events of *Jurassic World – Fallen Kingdom* and before *Jurassic World – Dominion*, a very precise timeframe that Frontier Developments worked closely with Universal Pictures to achieve. In fact, the developing company and Universal Pictures coordinated their efforts so that there would be perfect continuity between the game and the two movies – but also with the studio's future plans for the movie franchise. As its predecessor, JWE2 saw Jeff Goldblum and Bryce Dallas Howard reprising their roles and the studio giving Frontier Developments full access to their collection of sound effects and theme music from the films. The game also had its own expansion and dinosaur packs to complement and deepen the gaming experience. Upon its release it received positive reviews, although it did not experience such a grand launch as JWE. Still, *Jurassic World Evolution 2* was largely appreciated by the public, to the point that in May 2024 Frontier Developments announced they would be releasing another sequel videogame called *Jurassic World Evolution 3*[48].

The game launched on October 21st 2025 and timeline-wise is set right after the events of *Jurassic World – Dominion*. As both its predecessors, *Jurassic World Evolution 3* (hereafter JWE3) features both a Sandbox and a Challenge Mode – the former provides players infinite resources to build their parks, the latter allows players to set a difficulty level of their choice and then compete to set the best time in completing the challenge scenarios. Unlike JWE and JWE2, Campaign Mode in JWE3 presents some differences – firstly, the players are tasked to complete non-linear scenarios across the globe; secondly, the players work in tandem with a new board of experts, the Dinosaur Integration Network; lastly, the players can choose to fulfil contracts with the Security, Entertainment and Conservation sectors (the last of which takes the place of the Science one)[49]. In fact, conservation is the main goal of the game and the motor that moves Campaign Mode, sending players all around the world to build or re-build secure havens for dinosaurs while also promoting natural breeding. This last aspect of JWE3 is the biggest novelty in terms of plot, as it is the first time the game series acknowledges male and baby dinosaurs – previously, the movies of the first trilogy had only hinted at the dinosaurs managing to breed naturally even though "Hammond and [Dr.] Wu […] control breeding by cloning only females" (Godoy 144). As it is, JWE3 introduces the possibility to synthetize male dinosaurs – distinguishable from females due to sexual dimorphism, as evidenced by

[48] For more information see https://www.jurassicworldevolution.com/3/news/jurassic-world-evolution-3 releasing-21-october.
[49] For more information see https://www.jurassicworldevolution.com/3/game-modes;

archaeological findings – and to promote natural breeding in order to preserve the various species. This results in players being able to raise entire dinosaur dynasties, with families spanning second, third, and subsequent generations[50]. The addition into the game of baby dinosaurs is also the core of an all-new guest attraction that promotes a never-before-seen level of interaction between the two – the petting zoo. The aforementioned attraction, to be placed along an enclosure's fenceline, allows guests to pet and feed baby dinosaurs – and also small-sized adult ones. The other major new feature introduced in JWE3 concerns the construction tools, that have been updated and improved in this latest instalment. Specifically, players can either use fully customizable pre-built designs and blueprints, and even create buildings from scratch – a process aided by the extensive catalogue of building pieces and decorative elements. Moreover, the game presents enhanced terraforming tools – called tectonic terraforming – enabling players to craft realistic landscapes and enclosures. This renovated tools also grant the possibility of creating barrier-less habitats, by using natural alternatives such as steep slopes, scenery pieces and pits to keep the dinosaurs contained and the guests safe[51]. On December 9th Frontier Developments released the first DLC, complementing the gaming experience with three new dinosaurs. The game has enjoyed a lot of success, garnering stellar evaluations from major videogames review platforms and selling more than one million copies as of February 2026. Moreover, JWE3 was nominated for Best UK PC Game at the UK Video Game Awards (UKIE) and for the Best Sim/Strategy category at The Game Awards – the latter being the first ever nomination the company has ever received at these awards[52]. The *Jurassic World Evolution* game series has garnered a lot of appreciation over the years, with a sprawling community of players interacting with each other and acting as ambassadors of the videogame throughout the official Frontier platforms.

4.4. Building a Successful Simulation Game

As anticipated, the discussion held in this section will start with establishing what kind of gaming genre a simulation game is and what that entails. First of all, it is important to preface

[50] For more information see https://www.jurassicworldevolution.com/3/features/generations-of-dinosaurs;
[51] For more information see https://www.jurassicworldevolution.com/3/features/creativity-evolved;
[52] For more information see:
https://www.jurassicworldevolution.com/3/news/month-jurassic-world-evolution-3-february-2026 &
https://www.frontier.co.uk/news/2025-11-18/jurassic-world-evolution-3-secures-game-awards-nomination &
https://thegameawards.com/winners/best-sim-strategy.

any kind of further analysis by saying that multiple videogame genres can and do coexist within the same game, as "in recent years, games have borrowed gameplay from multiple genres […] to the point that those game categories are no longer informative" (Doherty, Keebler, Davidson, Palmer & Frederick 2099). As a result, it is reasonable to assert that the label of simulation game applies to a wide assortment of videogames, which actual gameplays vary greatly from one another. In fact, it is not wrong to state that the JWE series is as much a simulation game as *Call of Duty*™ – or any other first-person shooter game, which happens to be its own kind of simulation. What generally speaking a simulation game does is it "allows interacting virtually with phenomena of the real world" (Qaffas 177). As such, a simulation game allows players to interact with virtual renderings of real-world scenarios and morph them to their own volition, shaping entire universes and writing – or rewriting – the ending. As previously established in section 4.3, the JWE series pertains to a specific kind of simulation, that is, business management games. It is this specific categorization that sets these videogames apart within the broader category of simulation games. Business management games "are also known as tycoon games […] that focus on the management of economic processes most commonly in the form of a business" (Hurme 33). In this type of game, players are tasked with running a business and making it thrive over time – while managing the financial resources at their disposal to ensure the venture's success in a context where "players learn actively, developing problem-solving and real-time decision-making skills" (Bona, 16). Usually, business management games follow a somewhat similar script – the player either inherits or is appointed manager of a rundown or abandoned enterprise and has to restore them to their former glory or even surpass it. In order to qualify as business management, a videogame must have some distinctive characteristics – products for sale, variety of offerings, quality of service, overall guest rating and satisfaction, etc. These factors are deeply interconnected, as the cornerstone of such games is to expand the range of products for sale so as to generate revenue to be reinvested in the business – which in turn attracts more customers, who generate revenue and boost the business's overall rating if they are satisfied. The JWE series is no exception, featuring as it does these characteristics – albeit adapted to work with living beings (that is, dinosaurs rather than shopping items) and the films' plots. The dissertation that follows will provide an in-depth look into such characteristics within the series of videogames under analysis in this chapter.

As previously mentioned, all business management simulation games are based on the same premise – sell something to earn money. Specifically, in the JWE series the main selling point is the dinosaurs. Since in the game they are technically living beings, there are many aspects players must manage to ensure their wellbeing. First of all, each dinosaur species

requires an enclosure of appropriate size – with suitable terrain, plenty of water, open spaces and forests, if needed. These are all aspects that are already present in the movie franchise, and have therefore been adapted to work within the videogames. Secondly, the fences that make up the enclosures must be suitable for the type of dinosaur housed there – for their safety, and most notably that of the guests. Once again, the in-game fences are modelled on the ones shown in the movies (Fig. 2), with traits as distinctive as the blue-and-red lights and the signs signalling they are powered and therefore dangerous.



Figure 4 - Left: footage from Jurassic Park, Steven Spielberg, 1993; Right: in-game footage of a fence line (https://jurassicworld-evolution.fandom.com/wiki/Fence?file=ZR71mtW.png)

Thirdly, the players must provide the dinosaurs with the right food – plants, meat, live pray and fish. Each species has their own specific diet, even the herbivores – something that JWE2 addressed directly by changing the original feeders with different kinds of foliage tailored to the dinosaurs' needs. This might be a nod to a couple scenes from the original Jurassic Park concerning the presence of poisonous plants –because "[…] Even at this early stage, the park's scientists have ignored the delicate ecosystem required to support the health and safety of its dinosaurs" (Chochinov 16). Fourthly, a ranger, maintenance and a vet team must be assigned to each enclosure, so as to ensure the dinosaurs have the highest quality of life possible and everything is in working order. To aid the players, JWE2 and JWE3 added some structures to help with tending to the dinosaurs – such as the med bay and a system to automate welfare checks on animals and facilities. Lastly, the players can further the dinosaurs' comfort levels by housing different compatible species within the same enclosure, which also boosts the guests' interest. This might be a reference to *Jurassic Park* and *Jurassic World*, both of which feature habitats housing herbivore dinosaurs of multiple species. Housing different species of dinosaurs in the same habitat requires players to pay attention to species compatibility, since otherwise coexisting might devolve into fights and a lowered comfort level.

In keeping with the management aspects, the players also have to cooperate with non-playing characters (also known as NPCs). Some of these are the aforementioned teams – the rangers, tasked with periodically checking on the animals and refilling their feeders; the maintenance team, assigned to check and repair structural damages to the enclosures or facilities; the vet team, in charge of routinely checking on the dinosaurs' overall health and administering medication or other kinds of treatment. Another fundamental type of NPCs is the ICU teams, equipped with helicopters and tranquilizer guns. Ther function is to administer sedatives to the dinosaurs to either move them to a new enclosure or relocate them into their cage after they have escaped. This team is showcased for the first time in *Jurassic World* – both with helicopters as in the game and with a land unit – when they are sent to contain the escaped *Indominus Rex*. In the game, their presence is fundamental – along with the other teams – for the park to function, as any sudden drop in the animals' welfare and comfort can result in them escaping and wreaking havoc on the park. These NPCs help the players with early detection of such changes, making it possible to intervene in time and keep the park functioning. Moreover, the players can choose to assign the NPCs to complete a tsk or they can take direct control of a team – a feature that makes the management simulation experience even more immersive. The greatest asset for the players, though, are the scientists. These NPCs can be chosen based on their specific abilities, in order to create the best possible team. A well-balanced group of scientists means the players can explore new dig sites, unlock new dinosaur genome, research high-value projects – new fences, park rides, attractions and so on. Having good scientists is the cornerstone for park advancements and reinvesting revenue into the park itself. The figure of the scientist is one that the movie franchise introduced from the very beginning as the backbone of the Jurassic Park project, personnel without which bringing the dinosaurs back to life would have been impossible. In JWE2, a new structure was introduced that allowed scientists to rest, if they ever became overworked. This added another layer of administration, as players are called to manage how and where to employ their scientists to achieve the most results. Another management aspect of these teams is that they all have costs, so the players must consider to increase their numbers progressively and in connection with the expansion of the pack – and when it comes to the scientists, firing the ones with worse abilities to make room for better candidates.

Beyond animals and staff, there is another central element that those playing the JWE series must consider in their managing efforts – the guests. In fact, fluctuations in the level of guests' satisfaction have direct repercussions on the park itself, first and foremost losing revenue instead of making it. Keeping the guests satisfied requires the players to equip their parks with many facilities, which have a dedicated menu to ensure their presence is sufficient throughout all areas of the park. As previously mentioned, the players have ICU teams to ensure no dinosaurs are left wandering outside their designated enclosures, but they also have emergency shelters for the guests. These structures are essential to the game, as they provide a safe space for guests and personnel to hide in when dinosaurs manage to escape or there are adverse meteorological conditions (these are known as malus, which will be discussed later). Not providing enough shelters has its own repercussions, namely lawyer and lawsuits fees that impact the park's finances and a lower satisfaction level for the guests. Safety is not the only thing guests want though – as seen in *Jurassic World*, they also require a variety of food courts, drink kiosks, souvenir shops, hotels and toilets (Fig. 3). These structures can be upgraded over time (with the exception of toilets), with better ones that offer a more varied menu and, in JWE2 and JWE3, can also be equipped with activities and furniture pieces to better match the interests of different guests – the more adventurous ones, those whose interests are neutral, the ones that lean more towards a specific aspect, etc.



Figure 5 - Left: footage from Jurassic World, Colin Trevorrow, 2015; Right: in-game footage of a park entrance from the Jurassic World Evolution series (https://jurassicworld-evolution.fandom.com/wiki/Innovation_Center?file=JWE_Innovation_Center.jpg)

The toilets in particular hold a special meaning for the fans, old and new alike, thanks to the iconic scene in the original *Jurassic Park* in which the T-Rex tears through a restroom and eats a lawyer alive whilst he is sitting on the toilet. On top of these amenities, guests also want the best visiting experience possible – in fact, even in the JWE series "the major focus has been on the spectacle and this perpetuated in the various remediations of the dinosaur park

- even in videogames" (Mukherjee, 1). One way of achieving that is with viewing galleries and towers, allowing visitors to look directly into the enclosures. A similar result can also be achieved by strategically placing hotels, which can become another viewing point. Moreover, guests also want effective connections to the various enclosures, not only through paths but also with interactive rides, such as the gyro spheres introduced in *Jurassic World* or the original park tour from *Jurassic Park*. These rides satisfy both the need for easier and faster travel between enclosures and that of seeing the dinosaurs from as close as possible. The newest experience available is the petting zoo, introduced by JWE3 and enabling visitors to feed and pet either baby dinosaurs or small-sized adult ones. This is a novelty for the game, but actually a glimpse of such an attraction can be seen at the beginning of the first Jurassic World movie and is intended for the younger members of the audience.

Furthermore, it is important to notice that in the games all the buildings, amenities, rides and such mentioned above are modelled on those found in the films. Actually, they are as close a replica as possible and not only the ones that are inspired by *Jurassic World*, but also all the buildings and amenities of a JWE DLC titled *Return to Jurassic Park* – an expansion that brings the players back to 1993, right after the events of the first Jurassic Park, to try and salvage the project. The DLC features all the classic buildings with a tropical aesthetic and thatched roofs as seen in the movie[53]. The same goes for the main games of the series, in which the buildings look exactly as they do in the movies. To continue with the subject of aesthetics, the management tools and menus are also modelled on the on the control room featured in *Jurassic World* in both looks and colour scheme. In fact, the main colour is a sleek, dark blue interspersed with some other shades and there is an abundance of geometric shapes – specifically hexagons, a shape featured in *Jurassic World* and showcased in a notable example by the aviary. Furthermore, the developers even added Mr. DNA to the main menu of *Return to Jurassic Park*, a clear tribute to the iconic animated tour guide from the original movie. As in many other management games, each edifice has its own role and a dedicated menu to interact with it – making it easier to navigate and utilize their functions. On top of this, the JWE series also has a main management menu that players can use to check on the progress of their parks – detailing guest satisfaction levels, revenue, expenses, an overall park rating among others. The games also have a dedicated building menu, organizing all the elements that can beaded to the park in specific tabs for easier access.

[53] For more information see https://www.jurassicworldevolution.com/1/dlc/return-to-jurassic-park.

Another trait that all management games have in common is that of bonuses and maluses, the former of which have already been discussed. As for maluses, they are events or characters that make the game more difficult by slowing down or blocking players' progress. As far as the JWE series is concerned, maluses come in many forms – meteorological events, actual enemies and also genetic behavioural traits. As for weather events, they are random and vary in nature and intensity – in the movies, the park is established on a tropical island subjected to tornadoes, and later on the dinosaurs are dispersed all around the United States with all the climates that entails. As a result, the consequences for the park also vary and players must be ready to repair damaged facilities, power outages and sometimes even recapture escaped dinosaurs. There are structures that the players can build in order to receive an alert and offer some protection, but they are not always successful. As for the enemies, they can be either hackers or poachers (in JWE2). The former ones are usually the result of a Security contract or a random event, and they sabotage mainly the power plant and enclosures – once again, players must be ready to get dinosaurs back into containment. The latter are the villains of JWE2, trying to steal dinosaurs that have been saved and are contained straight from their enclosures. In this case, players are tasked with intervening before any dinosaurs are stolen and banishing the poachers form the park grounds. Lastly, another possible malus is that of the genetic behavioural traits that the dinosaurs are born with. In JWE and JWE2 such genetic traits could be removed or at least made less dominant during synthesis, but JWE3 introduced the possibility of these traits being passed down from parent to hatchling. These characteristics – such as aggressivity, intolerance or the need to be somewhat removed from the guests – make the dinosaurs more prone to try and escape their enclosures, which becomes particularly dangerous when it comes to carnivores or flying reptiles. Avoiding them is key to having as few issues as possible with the dinosaurs, but if it is not possible then players have the option to rehome problematic dinosaurs to resolve this particular matter.

Lastly, another characteristic which many business management games have in common is that of having different gaming mods. Essentially, such mods change the way the game is played, altering the parameters, resources or difficulty levels to offer a variety of different gaming experiences. Specifically, the JWE series has four different ones – three of which appear across all three videogames, whereas the fourth one only appears in JWE2. The gaming mods shared by all games in the series are Campaign, Sandbox and Challenge. As the core gaming experience, Campaign Mode allows the players to savour the game in its purest form. In this mode, the players are tasked with completing a series of missions to move the story along while also fulfilling contracts with various departments (Science, Security, Entertainment and

Conservation) for rewards. When playing with this gaming mode, players must also reinvest the money they make to research new and improved facilities, structures, knowledge on dinosaurs, etc. to improve and expand the park. By doing this, they eventually complete all the objectives required and complete Campaign Mode. Another experience entirely is Sandbox Mode, where players have access to unlimited resources to create parks as large and magnificent as they want. In fact, this mode does not have any missions to complete or contracts to uphold and players can continue building and expanding their creations indefinitely. Sandbox Mode is particularly appreciated because it allows players to build custom parks without any of the restrictions of the other modes. Challenge Mode offers a third gameplay style where the difficulty level of the game can be chosen by the players themselves. This allows access to different kinds of rewards, each of which is unlocked based on a specific degree of difficulty. This mode was not available when JWE was first released and it was added only later on to become a staple of the game in JWE2 and JWE3[54]. Lastly, JWE2 included a fourth gaming mode called Chaos Theory. This peculiar mode allows players to go back to a series of pivotal moments from the movie franchise and play them in their own personal way. This means that the players can rewrite how these specific moments occurred and give rise to what-if scenarios that branch out from the original plot[55].

These findings prove that the JWE series pertains in fact to the business management simulation genre, featuring all the characteristics typical of such games. In doing so, these traits also showcase how the games were made to look cohesive in respect to the movies – from aesthetics, to buildings, to personnel and dinosaur models. All of this is a clear sign of the close collaboration between NBCUniversal and Frontier Developments, which aim was to recreate the contents of the movies as videogames. In fact, staying true to the source material makes the gaming experience all the more immersive – and that in turn has made the JWE series even more successful.

4.5. How a Movie Franchise Became a Videogame

When it comes to adapting a movie franchise into videogames, one of the first choices to be made is what kind of videogame would best fit the franchise itself. As for *Jurassic World Evolution*, the decision to make it a simulation game resides in the fact that control is the thing nobody seems to have in the films. In an interview, *Jurassic World Evolution* creative director

[54] For more information, see: https://jurassicworld-evolution.fandom.com/wiki/Sandbox_Mode & https://jurassicworldevolution.fandom.com/wiki/Challenge_Mode;
[55] For more information see https://www.jurassicworldevolution.com/2/game-modes.

Michael Brookes stated that management is the focus of the game and the goal is to have the players take on the role of director of the park, which means having to create one and also making it work[56] – that, and adding the most iconic dinosaurs to their parks, that the players researched and synthesized themselves through the gameplay. A simulation game gives the audience the illusion of full agency within the Jurassic Park universe, a stark contrast to watching the movies and being as powerless as the protagonists against the rebellion of the animals that they supposedly had under control. Adding a simulation game to the franchise makes it possible to explore a new aspect of this narrative world – that is, actually being in control of what is happening. In fact, the movies are designed to portray the adventure and thriller factors of having to survive dinosaurs – in other words, the topic explored by the films is the loss of control over the animals housed in the park and the resulting consequences. Managing an almost-identical version of the parks to that seen in the films is the ultimate switch in positionality for the media users – as viewership of the movies, they can only watch on and see everything devolving into utter chaos; as players of the videogames, they can intervene when things go sideways and manage the consequences rather than being at their mercy. This changes radically the kind of experience they have, something the movies could never achieve on their own by proxy of their own nature.

Another choice to be made is what the game should look like, and how cohesive-looking it should be with the franchise it is part of. The series of games under analysis was designed to look almost exactly like the movies, and it is a deliberate choice. As Jenkins stated in his study and explained through the example of the universe of *The Matrix*, some franchises consist of products that exists across various media, and the franchise experience itself is not complete unless all of them are enjoyed (20-21). In the case under analysis, the game is a faithful adaptation of the movies, and that entails looking like a virtual rendition of them – the films and the videogames are not two separate pieces of the same franchise, but rather two halves of a whole. The games are supposed to look like the movies because they are a continuation of them, the only thing that changes is the medium through which they operate. In fact, the idea is not that the games are a separate entity from the movies, or in direct contrast with them – they are merely a series of what-if scenarios that would be enormously complicated to display through other movies without creating a lot of confusion for the spectators. Since the aforementioned scenarios exist in the parallel medium of the videogames, they can easily function and expand an already flourishing franchise while still being plausible. The style of

[56] For more information see https://screenrant.com/jurassic-world-evolution-michael-brookes-interview/.

the videogames was designed to closely resemble that of the movies, since they were conceived as an expansion of the *Jurassic World* mythology[57]. They are all part of the same universe, they just operate through two different media in accordance with one another.

The next step of adapting a movie into a videogame is to establish where exactly the game's storyline fits into the film's timeline. In the case under analysis, the first instalment of the videogame series was released at the same time as the second Jurassic World movie. As a result, the videogame had to be cohesive with the first Jurassic World without, however, denying the narrative continuity between it and Fallen Kingdom. In order to do this, the storyline of JWE was intended as a parallel scenario to the second Jurassic World movie – a look into what could have happened if there had been no volcanic eruption threatening the dinosaurs. The game also paid homage to the original Jurassic Park trilogy through a DLC, Return to Jurassic Park, featuring the original 1993 park with its dinosaurs, buildings and attractions. As for the main game, some actors from the *Jurassic Park* cast voiced their in-game characters – fan-favourites Laura Dern (Dr. Ellie Sattler), Sam Neill (Dr. Alan Grant) and Jeff Goldblum (Dr. Ian Malcolm)[58]. With the addition of JWE2 to the series, the timeline once again has to adjust to permit the coexistence of this instalment of the videogame and *Jurassic World – Dominion*'s plot. The game offers the chance to intervene after the events of Fallen Kingdom and help contain and conserve the escaped dinosaurs. In keeping with the movie's storyline, the game is no longer based in the original archipelago of Las Cinco Muertes but in the USA – as that is where the dinosaurs escaped to in the film. JWE2 also acknowledges what happened in Dominion through a dedicated DLC, called *Dominion Biosyn Expansion*. The DLC follows the events of the third Jurassic World movie and utilizes all the elements seen in the film, not to mention the exact same location[59]. Once again, part of the original movie cast voiced their characters in the DLC as well as the main game. JWE2 also includes tributes to the Jurassic Park trilogy, found in the Chaos Theory gaming mode. Specifically, this gaming mode includes three scenarios directly linked to the original trilogy – one for every movie[60]. This further reiterates just how closely the series is linked to the franchise. By referencing the original trilogy, the game developers have employed a tactic called nostalgia effect. To put it simply, nostalgia "at its most basic, […] is a sentimental longing for an irretrievable past—one that is often idealized or even imagined" (Cooper, 5). In this specific context, the nostalgia is directed to the longing for that first encounter with dinosaurs, the first ever spark of fear at being faced

[57] For more information see https://www.frontier.co.uk/press/frontier-announces-jurassic-world-evolution;
[58] For more information see https://www.jurassicworldevolution.com/1/dlc/return-to-jurassic-park;
[59] For more information see https://www.jurassicworldevolution.com/2/dlc/dominion-biosyn-expansion;
[60] For more information see https://jurassicworld-evolution.fandom.com/wiki/Chaos_Theory.

with such imposing creatures. The source of this longing is the original Jurassic Park trilogy, the movies that set this thirty-year journey in motion – hence why including them is pivotal for the games to be truly established as part of the franchise. Lastly, JWE3 introduces a possible future after the events of Dominion – one that is in direct contrast with what is seen in *Jurassic World – Rebirth*, that as of yet is not part of the videogame series. Since at the time this thesis is being written only one additional DLC was released for JWE3, it remains to be seen whether or not there will be any references to the original trilogy or Rebirth in future expansions of the game.

But why make videogames for this franchise in the first place? One reason could be that up until that point, there had been no official Jurassic Park/World videogames released to the public. Exploring and utilizing a new medium to expand an already famous and well-established franchise might have been a way to renew a product that was already tried and true – while also making it more engaging to younger audiences who by 2018 would have grown accustomed to the possibility of experiencing a franchise through multiple different media. In an era where advertising your products right can actually make the difference between gaining worldwide recognition and being completely forgotten as just one piece of entertainment among a sea of them, choosing the right avenues to further establish such a franchise is of the utmost importance. What is more, everyday people are bombarded with new products and the adverts for them – including films and video games – which are a veritable whirlwind of stimuli and distractions. To ensure the franchise remains recognisable and to keep interest in the *Jurassic Park* franchise high, releasing a video game in several instalments to accompany the films as they are made and to serve as an alternative scenario for players to explore is a valid strategy – and one that has been paying off, given the success the games have enjoyed both with the public and with critics. Another reason for choosing to add videogames to the franchise – and one that ties into the last point discussed above – is that the producers probably realised that, after four films and a fifth one already announced to release shortly, it was time to branch out. On the one hand, the sequels from 1997 and 2003 were released close enough to *Jurassic Park* that they manged to inspire a comparable amount of awe and curiosity to the one of the first movie. On the other hand, the sequels from the 2010s probably benefited from a strong enough sense of nostalgia to draw large crowds to the cinemas – it is important to remember that the 1993 original, in its own way, ushered in a new era of blockbusters, but above all brought dinosaurs to the big screen as never before. By 2015, when the new trilogy was launched, more than twenty years had passed since the release of the original film – and dinosaurs had become one of the least outlandish subjects seen on the big screen. It makes sense, therefore, that the

decision was taken to introduce a videogame element into the franchise to breathe new life into a product that, whilst still profitable, also needed to reinvent itself in line with the general public's changing preferences. This is a classic case of the more traditional way of intending remediation, where a new medium comes in to revitalise and renew an older one by operating in ways and in areas that the old medium, by its very nature, cannot reach.

Adding videogames to the franchise isn't the only way the Jurassic Park/World universe has been trying to keep up with the times. In fact, probably emboldened and assured also by the success of the *Jurassic World Evolution* series, the producers added a cartoon TV series to the franchise released on Netflix. This is clearly another avenue that they decided to explore so as to engage with young kids as well, but also because streaming services have reshaped the way cinema and TV are perused. Neither the videogames nor the cartoon TV series – *Jurassic World-Camp Cretaceous* and its sequel *Jurassic World-Chaos Theory* – are intended to supersede the original movie franchise. They are simply complementary to it, offering new experiences, a different kind of engagement level and media that are in step with the times and more in tune with the preferences of the modern world. It goes without saying that the videogames are the most different from the others – movies and TV series alike – in terms of medium and experience they provide. They are as such more relevant because they came first chronologically, but also and more importantly because they are the most diverse product of the entire franchise. In fact, it arguably requires quite a lot of work and effort to produce a game that is an almost identical reconstruction of the movies and operates flawlessly within their established universe – and that works on a totally different medium with its own rules and inner workings. This is not to say that producing an animated TV series does not require a similar amount of dedication – especially when it isn't a stand-alone, but rather one element of a broad and diverse franchise with which it should be consistent.

Lastly, another tactic used by the developers is that of keeping a record of the feedback received by one game to upgrade the following DLCs and instalments. As a matter of fact, the official website of the games has a community section – currently available for JWE3 – where players can report their likes and dislikes directly to the developers, who can then improve the game[61]. One among the many ways players' feedback improved the game was the addition of iconic animals – one example being Blue, the Velociraptor from the Jurassic World trilogy – and skin packs (i.e. the aesthetics of vehicles or dinosaurs as seen in the film). The games also feature some animations and sound effects from the movies, such as the original T-Rex roar or

[61] For more information see https://www.jurassicworldevolution.com/3/community.

the specific way in which the T-Rex eats live goats – yet another example of the developers' effort to cater to fans' wishes. Additionally, it is a renowned fact that flying and sea-dwelling reptiles were added into the game after numerous requests from players – each with a custom set of enclosures and related buildings. The latest instance of fan service (i.e. doing something highly requested by the fans) is the aforementioned new and improved building system featured in JWE3[62]. Frontier Developments has completely redesigned the game's building tools, drawing inspiration from its own other simulation games – notably Planet Zoo – and input from the players themselves.

[62] For more information see https://www.jurassicworldevolution.com/3/features/creativity-evolved.

CHAPTER FIVE

CASE STUDY THREE: *HITMAN* FROM VIDEOGAMES TO MOVIES

5.1. Presenting the Case Study

As per the premises of this thesis, this chapter is dedicated to the last of the three case studies presented as proof of the flourishing relationship between cinema and videogames. Specifically, the following analysis revolves around the *Hitman* franchise and the videogame series' adaptation into the movies *Hitman* and *Hitman-Agent 47*. This case study represents just one of many videogame-to-movie adaptations that have come to the big screen – and more recently to television – thorough the years. As such, it also constitutes a practical example of a third approach to the relationship between cinema and videogames, the mirror of the second case study, which was a movie-to-videogame adaptation. This case study is particularly interesting for the purpose of this thesis because it consists of two movies based on different instalments of the videogame series – and the movies are not direct adaptations, so much as inspired by the games for their storylines and settings. Secondly, the 2015 movie *Agent 47* is also a reboot of the first movie, a theoretical concept briefly described in Chapter Two of this work. These defining characteristics make it stan out among the many other products of this kind of approach that have swelled the ranks of film and TV series releases in recent years.

Before looking into the films more closely, it is important to explore and explain the videogame series that led to them. *Hitman* currently includes eight titles for PC and various consoles. The first game of the series, *Hitman: Codename 47*, was released in 2000 and developed by IO Interactive – in fact, it was the developing company's debut in the gaming industry. The latest game of the series, *Hitman 3*, was released just over twenty years later in January 2021. A remastered version of the first three titles of the series, called *Hitman Classic Trilogy Remastered*, has been announced for 2027. Overall, the *Hitman* series was a huge success, with the second title's sales increasing sevenfold compared to the first's and even manging to sell a staggering 3.6 million copies of *Hitman: Absolution*[63] - which is widely considered the most controversial instalment of the series and was the least appreciated one by the fans. The absolute most successful entry of the entire series is the latest chapter, *Hitman 3*, which is to date the undisputed star product of the entire project. In fact, it alone generated $78 million in earnings against a budget of $22.5 million – that equals to an over 300% increase

[63] For more information see https://www.cheatcc.com/articles/the-complete-list-of-hitman-games-in-chronological-release-order/.

and resulted in an end-of-year profit that was 6.5 times higher than the company's previous record[64].

The games are all structured into a series of levels that can be completed in many different ways, based on the choices the players operate while gaming. The game is technically structured as a third-person action/stealth combo, where the players are tasked with completing each individual level before moving on to the next one. This seems to suggest that the *Hitman* games instil in the players what Sebastian Domsch describes as "teleological attitude", that is, the players are led to approach the games in a certain way because "there is a desired […] outcome, and it is the task of the reader/player to find the right 'path' (series of choices) that leads towards this outcome ('you win!')" (116). However, and this is one of the main reasons for the burgeoning success of this series, the levels can be replayed as many times as one wants after completing them once – this is known as "explorative attitude", which in Domsch's own words "is more playfully fascinated by the fact that there is more than one option" (116) and is more present "in the idea […] that one can 'complete' a game (that is, actualise all of its options)" (117). This is done on purpose, as each level is expressly designed to have more than one way to finish it. This design exploits a core trait of the explorative attitude, namely that "Since different options are seen as equally valid […], there is a joy in actualizing both of them, creating in the mind a much more complex (because non-unilinear) mental image of the narrative than is the single-string actualization that a teleological performance produces" (Domsch, 117). The protagonist of the game is the iconic Agent 47, a genetically enhanced human clone whose name is the last two digits of a barcode tattooed on the back of his completely bald head. He joins the International Contract Agency and becomes a gun-for-hire, which explains why he is an agent and also the choice of the word "hitman" as the recurring title of every element of the franchise. Each level is a mission he is assigned to complete by the Agency, through a series of choices made by the player controlling him.

Another peculiarity of these games is that the levels are designed as open environments, populated with non-playing characters (NPCs) "in order to create believable and narratively immersive worlds" (Domsch, 45). As Domsch states, these characters "do not have any or at least only a restricted gameplay function. But […], these characters are not just […] inanimate objects […], they are moving independently through navigable space and still must be able to react to the player character's movements" (45) – to the point that, in the *Hitman* games, they are sometimes key to the success of the mission. In fact, while firearms are not rare to come

[64] For more information see https://levvvel.com/statistics/hitman/ and https://www.gamedeveloper.com/business/-i-hitman-3-i-drives-io-interactive-s-strongest-year-in-history-.

across throughout the levels, what the game actually encourages most is using a stealthy approach to eliminate the targets. To this end, it may be crucial for the players to choose to have Agent 47 pose as a member of staff or security personnel, so as not to attract attention and gain access to areas that would otherwise be off-limits. In doing so, the players must also hide the bodies of the victims, so as not to raise any alarms that could potentially lead to Agent 47 being discovered. This is partly due to the fact that Agent 47's typical outfit – a black suit, white shirt and red tie – makes him easily recognizable as a suspicious figure, which is most times enough to jeopardise the outcome of the mission.

Another reason for this distinguishing trait is that the games strongly encourage stealth over an overt approach to the missions, sometimes even through penalties. This is not to say that players are not free to engage with the missions at their own discretion, but that doing so comes with consequences – the kind that can even be enough to make players fail out of levels if they are not careful. This is a characteristic that is amongst the most important in this videogame series – in fact, in the *Hitman* games, analysing the situation and choosing each step strategically is a fundamental aspect of completing the missions. Actually, it is the most important one and not being careful and controlled enough in the choices made can sometimes make all the difference between finishing a level or having to redo everything from the beginning. This is another leading characteristic of the teleological attitude that the games seem to initially inspire in their players – as Domsch states, this attitude "strongly expects one of the options to be better than the other, to the point where one option must be the 'right' and the other the 'wrong', implying that there is an 'aim' (telos) to the act of (repeated) choosing" (116). Another characteristic that sets the *Hitman* games apart from others of similar nature is that every mission is introduced by a briefing, containing intelligence on the target, a map of the level and a list of the weapons that can be purchased or which are recommended to complete the mission[65]. This is enough to give players at least a general understanding of what they are going to face in each level without, however, forcing their hand so that they pursue a specific method to complete the mission. As a result, all the choices the players make are based on what Domsch defines as "incomplete information", a situation where the game provides players with "some knowledge about possible outcomes, but no certainty in relation to the probability of the outcomes, and/or the completeness of information about outcomes" (114). The briefings in the *Hitman* games achieve just that, but in Domsch's opinion there is more to this kind of game-issued information – in fact, he points out

[65] For more information see https://ioi.dk/hitman and https://hitman.fandom.com/wiki/Main_Page.

that this kind of information also holds the role of "an important link between gameplay concerns and the fictional immersion by the player" (115).

The two movies that make up the film aspect of this franchise were released respectively in the mid-2000s and halfway through the 2010s. This is a very important notion to keep in mind, as these films are designed to coexist harmoniously with the videogames that preceded them and from which they drew inspiration, but also – and most importantly – with those that would follow them. It is in fact a characteristic of this franchise that the films are not the culmination of the videogame series – that is, the developing company did not decide to expand their franchise into cinema once the videogame series had come to its natural end. Instead, they decided to introduce cinema into their overarching narrative project while they still had many future plans in place for the videogames – and as proven by the past twenty years and counting during which the videogames have emerged, the gaming aspect of the franchise is far from being considered complete. This is one of the approaches that can be applied to the process of adapting a videogame into a movie, as opposed to adapting a game – or a series of them – into a movie when they have already come to completion – rather than when new videogame chapters are looming on the horizon and there is the risk there might be discrepancies between them and the films.

The first movie was released in 2007 under the title *Hitman* and was directed by Xavier Gens and written by Skip Woods. The movie is based on the videogame series as it was by that point in time, with a nod to the origins of Agent 47 – which are shown in the first videogame *Hitman: Codename 47* – though the movie didn't necessarily treat the protagonist as a clone but rather as a child brought up to be a ruthless assassin. The movie is considered an action-thriller and is not an exact adaptation of any level of the games as much as another scenario that isn't included but which is set within the same videogame universe. In fact, Agent 47 is assigned a mission to complete and the actions he takes to do so are exactly the same as what would happen in any of the videogames. The movie features adrenaline-fuelled sequences, action scenes, gunfights, daring escapes – all carried out with the coolness and calculated precision typical of Agent 47 and all elements borrowed from the videogames to be used in the film. Another aspect that remains faithful to the original in the videogames is Agent 47's appearance – which, as already mentioned, is one of the most iconic elements of the entire franchise. Although the movie received mostly negative reviews from official critics, it was still a box office success grossing around $100 million worldwide, not counting DVD sales and television

airing rights[66]. This is a clear indication that, while the critics were disappointed by certain shortcomings of the movie, cinema-goers were drawn to the cinemas by the prospect of seeing such a prominent figure from the world of videogames brought to the big screen for the first time.

The second movie was released in 2015 under the title *Hitman: Agent 47* and the screenwriter was once again Skip Woods. As for its director, the role was assigned to Aleksander Bach, who made his directorial debut in this occasion. This film is not a sequel to its predecessor, but a reboot – that is, in this instance, a movie that is linked to its predecessor by commercial design and yet at the same time deviates from it to a degree, enough to operate on a new narrative plane (Loock, 287 & Herbert et al., 2). Technically, since this film eliminated the already established narration of the parent film to start a new one, it could generate a series of its own sequels. A practical example of this process is the many *Spider-Man* movies – the main character remains the same throughout them all, but the narration starts anew with every movie cycle, starting by depicting how spider-Man came to be. In fact, *Hitman: Agent 47* does just that – the movie shows the origin story of Agent 47, this time a genetically-enhanced super soldier created by a doctor. As in the games and the first movie, Agent 47 does once again join an agency that uses him as a hitman to eliminate high-profile targets. This movie is also classified as an action-thriller and follows Agent 47 while he is carrying out the latest mission he has been assigned. The movie was even more laden with action scenes than its predecessor, something that the critics appreciated. Less appreciated by the critics was a perceived lack of faithfulness to the original material, which could probably be explained as an attempt to lay down the foundation for at least a sequel – as supported by the plan for one that was put in place and then scrapped in 2019, following 21st Century Fox's acquisition by Disney. There are of course things that were kept exactly the same, for example Agent 47's emblematic aspect and demeanour. However bad the critics got, the movie was still somewhat successful, with a global grossing of $82.3 million against a budget of $35 million[67].

5.2. Creating Cohesiveness across the Franchise

As previously stated, the movies featured in this franchise are not an adaptation of one of the games, or even of a level from any of them – they are, in fact, taking inspiration from the games in terms of content and then showing Agent 47 through two original plots. This in and of itself

[66] For more information see https://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Hitman#international;
[67] For more information see https://www.boxofficemojo.com/release/rl2472117761/.

is indicative of an approach that differs from the more common one-to-one adaptation, which is sometimes also the easiest one – at least in terms of finding an appealing storyline, considering they use an already existing one. A stark example of the adaptation process is one quite recent release, the TV series *The Last of Us*. In this series, the plot is the story depicted in the videogame, which means that the story shown on screen already exists in its entirety and therefore the effort required to create it is less than what it would be if an entirely new storyline was needed. Whilst the process of developing the plot in these films may, in some respects, be more difficult, it is nevertheless true that it also allows for greater creative freedom.

This is not to say that the videogame's material can be arbitrarily discarded or changed beyond recognition. Doing that would, in fact, risk alienating the fans of the videogames from this new instalment of the franchise – which, in terms of further establishing this project, would be counterproductive. Having more creative freedom allows for the new storylines in these movies to present two hypothetical missions Agent 47 has been assigned, but none of it would work within the franchise if the movies did not still acknowledge the videogames in many ways. The choice of titles for these films is the result of a similar process, intended to cement the link between videogames and movies. In fact, the titles of both movies feature the word "hitman", which is a staple of this franchise just as much as its protagonist's appearance. They are also brief and straight to the point, also thanks to the fact that they contain at most three words – something that also applies to the games' titles and creates a strong sense of continuity between the elements of the franchise. Using the word "hitman" in the titles of the movies was helpful in conveying the nature of their protagonist immediately and unequivocally just as the videogames' titles do – by doing so, the audience would have at least some context as to what kind of protagonist they should expect before ever getting to the cinema. It would probably also be enough to hint at some of the contents that could be expected in the movies – the action and thriller components of them at least, which are also a defining trait of the videogames. Choosing titles that fit in perfectly with those of the games also has the added bonus of ensuring that there is no doubt as to the universe these films belong to – that of Agent 47, the protagonist of the videogame series that was already beloved and well-established amongst the general public.

On top of this, another tactic was used to ensure that the movies would fit well with the games – even visually. In fact, movies and videogames – at least when it comes to physical copies – employ more than just their titles or synopses to attract the attention of consumers, *Hitman* videogames' fans and non-fans alike. In the case at hand, the marketing campaign for the movies found another viable link between movies and videogames they could use – movie posters. Specifically, some of the posters for the theatrical release of the movies featured the

protagonist in poses that replicate the same style as the covers of the physical copies of the videogames – but replicating the typical style of game covers was not the only approach used to design those for the films. As a matter of fact, some of the movie posters were made to look exactly like their videogame counterpart – for example, in one remarkable instance, the poster released in some countries for *Hitman* (2007) replicates almost exactly the cover the game *Hitman: Contracts* (Fig. 1).



Figure 6 - Left: Movie poster for Hitman, Gens, 2007 (https://www.themoviedb.org/movie/1620-hitman/images/posters?image_language=en); Right: Front cover for Hitman: Contracts on PS2 (https://www.mobygames.com/game/12998/hitman-contracts/cover/group-36099/cover-98451/)

This was done in an effort to cement the idea that the movies are an integral part of the franchise, not just a mere addition to it. Aesthetically matching the posters to the covers if the game, as much as designing the movies' titles to fit the same style as the games' ones, helps to identify the films as another version of the same franchise. For the videogames' fans this would also signal that the movies would provide an experience as similar to that of the games as possible – while keeping in mind that the movies would necessarily have limitations that the videogames don't have. All of these aspects of the movies were designed keeping in mind a specific target audience, that of the fans of the videogame series. But non all spectators of the movie have played the videogames, and technically the movies are self-explanatory enough that playing the games to understand them is not actually a requirement.

In a way, and partly because of this level of cohesiveness and simultaneously autonomy, the *Hitman* franchise might qualify as what Jenkins defined as transmedia storytelling. For

Jenkins, transmedia storytelling happens whenever a story unfolds across multiple media platforms and each new text makes a distinct and valuable contribution to the overarching narrative (95-96). In the case at hand, the movies are as much of a contribution as the videogame series, since they provide new content about the franchise's main character that is original to the films. On top of that, they also abide by another rule Jenkins mentions when he describes the ideal form of transmedia storytelling – that is, the idea that every element of the franchise has to be self-contained, so the audience does not necessarily have to play the videogames to understand the movies and vice versa. Additionally, Jenkins also observes that every branch of the franchise should be a valid point of entry into it for those seeking to explore that universe (96). This concept applies perfectly to the *Hitman* movies, since they both provide background information on Agent 47's origins – just as the first game of the franchise does – and in doing so offer the spectators enough knowledge on the title character that there is virtually no need to play the games to follow the story. At the same time, the most hardcore videogame enthusiasts can choose not to watch the movies, since they are self-sufficient and not watching them does not technically hinder the playing experience. Even so, watching the movies can be an interesting experiment for super fans of the videogame series, who can test their skill at noticing nods to the games scattered throughout the films – something known as "easter eggs", a videogame-based practice where references to other materials are hidden in a videogame for the players to find.

The developing company, IO Interactive, might have chosen to engage in transmedia storytelling as a way to keep the franchise alive and at the same revive it through the addition of two cinematic chapters. In fact, *Hitman: Absolution* – the fifth instalment of the videogame series – was released in 2012, six years after its predecessor *Hitman: Blood Money* and five after the first movie. In a similar fashion, the sixth game *HITMAN*™ was released in 2017, five years after *Absolution* and two after the second movie. It was fundamental for the developing company to keep interest in their flagship videogame series alive, rather than letting so many years pass between one instalment and the next without any new content. In terms of engaging with their audience, allowing so much time to pass whilst leaving *Hitman* in oblivion would have risked significantly undermining the results achieved. On the other hand, offering a new medium through which the universe of the games could be experienced would keep their already established audience intrigued, while also hopefully bringing in new fans – spectators who might even want to go explore the videogames after perusing the films. This is another point that Jenkins strongly suggests as pivotal for efficacious transmedia storytelling – that is, providing new levels of insight and ways to experience the franchise is sure to refresh it and

sustain consumer loyalty, while redundancy will burn up fan interest and ultimately lead to the franchise's failure (96). Introducing cinema into the franchise, a form of entertainment that is historically among the most perused ones, surely managed to maintain their already established fanbase engaged and lure in new fans as well.

5.3. Videogame to Movie Adaptation

A successful adaptation of a videogame into a movie does not only depend on how well the two branches of the franchise work with each other. It is in fact undoubtedly important that, within the overarching narrative, the *Hitman* videogames and films are consistent in terms of their aesthetic presentation – but not at the expense of the actual content. Specifically, the movies had to be a faithful adaptation of what the games entail – action, suspense, plot twists and high-tension situations, not to mention breathtaking armed clashes and daring escapes. Too obvious discrepancies in the films' style and setting would, in fact, have risked distancing the movies from the videogames – and that, in turn, could have led viewers to doubt that the relationship between the two branches of the franchise is actually all that close.

As far as the content goes, the filmmakers worked to link the videogames and movies through a series of techniques. First of all, the choice of setting was done in a manner that reflects the videogames rather fully – most of the scenes in the movie are set in public places, targeting high-profile members of society and with a multitude of people who are not necessarily related to what is happening, but who Agent 47 can use to cover his tracks. This is a scenario that is typical of the videogames where, as already mentioned, blending in with the NPCs (non-playing characters) is almost always key to the success of the mission. It goes without saying that this has a huge impact for the viewership – for those who have played the videogames, such visual clues would evoke the videogames' setting clearly but without being overly intrusive; for those new to the franchise, it would be plausible for an agent from a secret service agency to work on high-profile cases and use every means possible to avoid attracting attention and escape undetected. Another aspect that would garner the same reception by the viewership is the use Agent 47 does of the buildings he finds himself in – actually, the places themselves become part of his plans and are used organically to help complete missions. The same is also true for the videogames, which have clearly served as inspiration for this use of the buildings and their interiors. Things like wearing the uniform of the local police force or hiding downed enemies in a wooden crate are entirely in keeping with what happens in the videogames – actually, they are among the most iconic elements of theirs, and characterize the kind of playing experience the games are designed to provide. To see them replicated so

accurately in the movies would definitely be appreciated by those among the audience who are also avid *Hitman* players. On a similar matter, there are also details in the movies which are clearly catered towards the proportion of spectators who started out as players and who would be understandably curious about the movies. Only those who had played the games before could have spotted in the movies things such as Agent 47 wielding his staple firearms, or that some scenes are similar to specific missions of specific levels of the games[68]. The same can be said of the mission briefings, a clear reference to their in-game counterparts – which, however, do not seem out of place even to those who have never played the videogames, since mission briefings are a typical trait of spy and hitman movies such as the *Mission Impossible* and *James Bond* sagas.

On top of that, in a scene from *Hitman* (2007) the filmmakers surprisingly featured one of the videogames themselves – *Hitman: Blood Money* – that two kids are playing in their hotel room[69]. In doing so, the movie showcases a brief moment of media representation (Elleström, 5), which is particularly interesting since the movie itself is not presented at any point as a gameplay. In fact, unlike the *Jumanji* franchise and other such examples, in this case the game depicts the story of Agent 47 as if they were events taking place in the real world. Including one of the games the movie is based on, even if just for a few seconds, is an example of a process known as metanarrative (Roche) – that is, featuring one of the videogames into a movie talking about those videogames – and it speaks volumes to the level of interaction the movie was designed to have with its public. In fact, the proportion of the viewership who had already played the games would have recognized this addition as further proof of the interconnectedness of movies and videogames. Unlike them, those who were introduced to the franchise by watching the movies would see it as a clear indication of the origin of the movie – and contextually also as an open invitation to peruse the videogames as well, if they were interested. This could be seen as an example of what Jenkins refers to as participatory culture, targeted to the videogames' fandom – that is, media producers and consumers no longer occupying separate roles but rather interacting with one another according to new rules that are yet to be defined (3). In this case, the media producers auto reference the original material – the videogames – in the newest material available to the franchise – the movie – and in doing so, they confront newly-acquired media consumers with the notion that there are other sources where they can consult the movie's content in a different way. The end result the media producers are hoping to achieve is to steer at least some of the new spectatorship of the movie towards the videogames

[68] For more information see https://hitman.fandom.com/wiki/Hitman_(2007_movie)#Trivia;
[69] For more information see note 6.

– which means growing their fanbase and potentially retaining these new fans until the release of the next videogame and perhaps even beyond.

However, what is probably the most significant change brought about by the transition from video game to film – and which is attributable to the process of transmedia storytelling – is the fundamental shift in the role of consumers. In fact, the videogames are designed in a way that makes the players' decision-making process the core of the gameplay[70]. As previously mentioned, each mission begins with a briefing illustrating the location, targets, sometimes the weapons that can be used and even what kind of armed forces or security detail are present on scene. All of this information is intended to guide the player and shape what their response to the parameters will be, but ultimately it is the players who decide how to complete the mission and what approach to use. In the *Hitman* games, each level is designed to have multiple courses of action to choose from, hence they are intended to be played time and again to have the most comprehensive experience possible. The range of ways to eliminate targets varies from total stealth to studying said targets and using their own habits against them to hand-to-hand combat or violent gunfights. Essentially, the players are given almost complete freedom in how they tackle the missions, and most importantly they have full control over their gameplay – obviously, this is the result of a specific design choice made by the developers, so the games themselves are still a product of a very controlled process. Part of this process is achieved through the way instructions are presented – as mentioned earlier, the Hitman games favour a style of presenting incomplete information. In his study, Domsch points out that this style facilitates the feeling of agency, since it is "experienced as pleasurable especially when we are able to make meaningful decisions within the story/game universe" (115) – and he also goes on to say that this fosters agency on top of interactivity, while being given no information at all leads to there being "only interactivity, but no (or a very low) sense of agency" (115). Acknowledging that the videogames require the players to make decisions that affect and mould the gameplay is of the utmost importance, because it portrays a very specific role that the consumers play in regard to them. As a matter of fact, technically the players manage every one of Agent 47's actions – in a 2025 interview, Principal Level Designer Jacob Mikkelsen stated that this is a carefully planned design choice, since the strength of their game series "lies in the empty vessel, because that means there's room for the player to put themselves into the role of Agent 47 and make him do what you want him to. He has no opinion of what you do for good or bad" [71].

[70] For more information see https://hitman.fandom.com/wiki/Category:Games and https://ioi.dk/;
[71] For more information see https://www.inverse.com/gaming/hitman-turns-25-retrospective-interview.

On the contrary, the positionality of the consumers when it comes to the movies is diametrically opposed to that of the videogames. When watching the films, the consumers are tasked with believing that what is happening on screen is another one of Agent 47's missions, but their interaction with them is significantly reduced. In fact, the movies propose a version of the title character that is designed to show what a real-life version of Agent 47 would be like. In this instance, the audience are merely onlookers who are immersed in the events taking place on screen by virtue of being spectators. Since the movies are not gameplays but a rendition of what Hitman would be like in the real world, the role of the viewership is drastically different to that of the videogames' players. By presenting the movies in such a way, the audience is asked to relinquish the notions of control and decision-making they were used to apply to the videogames in favour of their ability to believe that what is happening on screen is a faithful representation of what would happen if the premises of the *Hitman* videogame were actually part of the consumers' reality. In the movies, Agent 47 has free will and utilizes it the way he sees fit to accomplish his goals – though, it goes without saying that said free will is the result of a series of precise choices in screenwriting, just like the videogames' backbone is the outcome of the developers' thoroughly designed plans – a process that , in her book, Bettina Bódi describes as videogame developers designing the rules and systems that indirectly shape the actions players can take, since they cannot control player behavior directly, and creating a structured space for meaningful choice (28-29).

The change in the audience's positionality within this franchise is truly fascinating, above all because one of the key features of videogames is the degree of control that players can exercise – in Bódi's own words "player agency can be conceptualised as the possibility space for meaningful choice expressed via player action that translates into avatar action, afforded by a game's design" (30). In keeping with this approach to the notion of agency, Bódi explains that she refers to a tradition that considers the videogame artifact as a container of possible, yet unrealized, player actions (30). By describing which characteristics are specific to videogames, the author also provides a description of the media that act as a counterpoint to them – including cinema. In particular, she says that traditional media require little more than mere eye movement compared to videogames (15) – and that avatar-based games afford players the possibility to act upon the game world (26), while other media typically require the audience to watch the character from an external point of view. Lastly, as a result of her conceptualization of videogames as containers of possible player actions (30), Bódi formalizes another opinion on traditional media – that is, they rely on fixed and predetermined narratives (14). All the points listed above can be applied to the *Hitman* franchise, and offer significant contributions

to the topic of the significant change in audience positionality observable throughout it – and it explains why it is so fascinating to see how transmedia storytelling has helped to change the role of consumers so significantly.

CONCLUSION

The analysis carried out in this thesis provides clear evidence of how worthwhile the relationship between cinema and videogames can be and has already been for quite some time. On top of that, this thesis shows that the fusion of cinema and videogames can achieve a considerable degree of success, not least because of the wide range of approaches that can be used to blend the two media. In fact, the featured case studies are all unequivocal examples of just how powerful the interaction between these two media can be. Contextually, they also suggest how the results of such a relationship can attract new audiences and direct already-existing ones to and from cinema and videogames. The case studies analysed are also proof that the convergence of different media can and does result in products capable of harnessing the strengths of each medium to exceed its boundaries.

More specifically, the analysis revealed that the inner workings of this interaction can be traced back to a series of theoretical concepts, namely convergence culture, transmediation and remediation. These findings suggest that the interconnection between cinema and videogames is governed by principles that have been studied and are applicable to a multitude of processes of intermedia relations. The core of this thesis demonstrates in practice just how effectively these theoretical aspects can be applied to the subject under study – particularly given that the relationship between the two media under analysis is one of the most fruitful in the entertainment industry. The aforementioned theoretical concepts have been applied to each case study, bringing to light the intricacies of such a relationship and how the industries and consumers influence each other throughout it. The level of exhaustiveness deemed necessary for this type of analysis was achieved by selecting one case study for each of the approaches to this interaction that have proved to be the most widely used. This led to inspecting the concrete outcomes of such theories in relation to the context of the individual casework – and how each of them is characterized.

The very fact that these theoretical principles can be seen applied in cases with such different outcomes demonstrates just how multifaceted and rich the relationship between cinema and video games is. The analysis shed light on the specific methods necessary to adapt a movie into a videogame and vice versa, and on how the videogame as a concept can be used to further the story of a parent movie by becoming the plot of its sequels. Studying these examples of the relationship between cinema and videogames through the lens of such a theoretical backbone also allowed the chance to examine the role of the consumers in choosing one approach over another – and also how the audience's role changes in regard to the nature

of the media they peruse. This study served as an investigation into the dynamics that underpin this fruitful relationship and how it is actually made possible.

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