

2P Press Start: Global perspectives on the physically shared spaces of videogame play

Call for Papers: One Day [History of Games](#) Special Event Conference, 17th February 2027

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Arcades are often considered almost mythical spaces (Meades, 2022). In linear narratives of videogame history, arcades are usually associated with a particular time, often dubbed as the coin-op era (Banfi, 2024), when they were pivotal for the consolidation of gaming in the popular imaginary, including here popularising certain genres and establishing industrial transnational networks. Arcades are physically real spaces that still, or used to, exist, which can and do conjure memories of past play and social interaction, whereas myths do not lay such a concrete claim to physical ‘real’ space. Nevertheless, there are indeed mythic narratives overlayed on the nostalgia evoked by such spatially bound, shared experiences (Li, Zhao and Guo, 2026), permitted by the temporal distance between a ‘then’ and now, something well-exploited in contemporaneity through the ‘arcade revival’ and the rise of *barcades*, spaces that trade on this nostalgic relationship (Roundy, 2020). This revival, however, often refers to the mythical arcade of the broader, Western cultural imaginary: a dark room full of cabinets, a lot of neon lights, loud sounds. With this in mind, we ask: does the mythical arcade sufficiently represent the (historical,) physical reality of shared spaces of videogame play outside of the United States (Kocurek, 2015; Banfi, 2024), Japan (Pelletier-Gagnon, 2024), and the UK (Meades, 2022; Litherland, 2021)?

While naming a collective space for social videogame play with dedicated cabinet machines as an ‘arcade’ can evoke the dark room full of teenagers, or the well-worn seaside resort pier, a quick glance through time and around the world can reveal different terms and models, such as *maquinitas* (Penix-Tadsen, 2016), *fliperamas* (Perani and Régis, 2015; Vicente, 2024), *συνάδικα* (Zestanakis, 2025), or 遊戲機中心 [game machine centres] (Wirman and Jones, 2020). In the same way, one could attempt at tracing evolving trajectories on the constitution of other collective videogame play spaces, including cybercafés (Apperley, 2017), LAN houses (Pereira, 2007), LAN parties (Ackermann, 2012), and more informal arrangements around consoles (Penix-Tadsen, 2016) or mobile devices, location-based (de Souza e Silva et al., 2021) or not (Macedo and Kurtz, 2021; Macedo, 2025). After all, as Apperley and Leorke (2013) argue, “Cybercafés and arcades, as well as the everyday locations carved out and appropriated by location-based games, can also be seen as environments from which this kind of unplanned, spontaneous social interaction can emerge”.

We seek to critically explore the kinds of formalised and informal practices that emerge in the physically shared spaces of videogame play. **We therefore seek proposals for papers exploring where and how people played and still play together, outside of the overarching cultural imaginary that stereotypically taken from ‘arcade.’ The focus of this one day, online conference is to explore research on arcades, and other spaces of collective videogame play, especially from outside of the Anglophone world.**

Submissions, are not limited to, but can address the following topics and locations of interest:

- **Locations:** Latin America; Asia; Africa; the same, but different – arcades in non-Anglophone Europe
- **Lineages and types of shared playspace:** Arcades, Informal shared play (for example people gathering with handhelds); LAN houses or LAN parties; Region-specific models, such as *locadoras* or Игровухи.
- **Practises:** Of shared play; Of specific communities; Of bystanders, onlookers, hangers; Of user-defined evolutions of how spaces are accessed; Of specific communities formed around specific games

We especially welcome and encourage submissions from those from or working in Global South contexts. If we receive sufficient interest from speakers of any one language, we are open to having a non-Anglophone panel (for example, Hispanohablante, Mandarin, Polish, etc.)

What to Send?

Fill in our form (linked below) with your details and 500-word abstract by November 30th, 2026.

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Any further queries can be emailed to uclgamestudies@live.ucl.ac.uk.

Submissions will be double reviewed, under anonymous (blind) conditions, by an interdisciplinary, global team.

You will be notified of the panel's decision on or by December 18th 2026.

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