

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Case Study

University: The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 35

Title of case study: Labor and Policy in Asia's Game Industries

(1) Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Prof. Peichi Chung is the first scholar to examine the sustainable development of the game industries in Asia through player and developer led innovation. Her work has had significant impact on the gaming industry and policy makers in Asia, who have used her ideas and expertise to professionalize competitive gaming and develop gaming policy. She has given expert advice and recommendations for the improvement of the IESF Referee Course, and her ideas have also been adopted by leading Chinese media and game company Top Fun Media. She wrote papers and gave advice to the South Korean government and the United Nations on labor and policy in the Asian gaming industry.

(2) Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Since 2011 at CUHK, Prof. Chung has been researching the political economy of the game sector in Asia through a regional comparative framework. She has interviewed over 300 people in the game industries and policy makers in governments throughout Asia. Her research began in Singapore and expanded to Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, South Korea and China. With the support of major competitive research grants, Prof. Chung has contributed chapters to definitive anthologies in the field and presented at 40 conferences in five continents.

While at CUHK, Prof. Chung was a co-investigator of the 4-year project (2010-2014) "Mapping the Hong Kong Game Industries: Cultural Policy, Creative Cluster, and Asian Markets". In this project, Prof. Chung examined the current state of video-game development in Southeast Asia. Based upon fieldwork observation, Prof. Chung gathered evidence on the growth and development of video game companies and the games they produced. From this research, she produced two peer reviewed book chapters; 'Revisiting the Creative Industry Models for Game Industry Development in Southeast Asia' in *Global Game Industry Policies* and 'The Globalization of Game Art in Southeast Asia' for the *Routledge Handbook of New Media in Asia (1.1, 1.2)* which were the first scholarly surveys on the video games industries in Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia. Prof. Chung's research identified an over-emphasis on economic productivity in creative industries policy in Southeast Asia and advocated a shift towards labour centered governance that preserves a production space for independent game development in order for the Southeast Asian gaming industry to produce true innovation with a global reach.

In 2015-2016, Professor Chung was also a principal investigator for the project "The Online Distribution Strategies of Independent Application Game Developers in Hong Kong, China and South Korea," which looks at issues of market concentration and monopolization in the Chinese games industry regionally and internationally. Prof. Chung presented her findings in a keynote speech 'Mapping Game Studies in Asia: Trajectory toward the Sustainable Chinese

Game Industry’ at the Chinese Digital Games Research Association (DIGRA) conference in 2015 **(1.3)** where she advanced her earlier argument by proposing that only when small-scale independent entrepreneurship is supported by policy, market and industry will globally competitive game design take place.

Since 2016, Prof. Chung’s research has looked at eSports governance in Asia. Esports (electronic sports) is defined as professional competitive gaming and statistics Prof. Chung compiled for a news article state that the relevant revenue has drastically increased from 1.94 billion (USD) in 2014, to 6.96 billion in 2017. **(1.4)** Prof. Chung’s work argues for a stronger labour perspective in policy and the development of a collaborative framework for public and private sectors to better address the welfare of athletes in the ongoing professionalization of eSports. The outputs of this research include a peer reviewed book chapter ‘The Globally Integrated Network of South Korean Online Game Industry’ in *The Global Game Industries and Cultural Policy* in 2016, **(1.5)** and the white paper for the South Korean governments Game Rating and Administration Committee on game censorship in China in 2017. **(1.6)**

(3) References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 1.1. Chung, Peichi. 2017. “Revisiting the Creative Industry Models for Game Industry Development in Southeast Asia.” In *Global Game Industries and Cultural Policy*, edited by Anthony Fung, 125-151. UK: Palgrave McMillan.
- 1.2. Chung, Peichi. 2016. “The Globalization of Game Art in South East Asia.” In *Routledge Handbook of New Media in Asia*, edited by Larissa Hjorth, Olivia Khoo, pp. 402-415, New York: Routledge.
- 1.3. Chung, Peichi. 2015. "Mapping Game Studies in Asia: Trajectory toward the Sustainable Chinese Game Industry." Paper presented at the Chinese Digital Game Research Association (DIGRA), Tsinghua University, Beijing, China.
- 1.4. Chung, Peichi. 2017. “The Globally Integrated Network of South Korean Online Game Industry”. In *Global Game Industries and Cultural Policy*, edited by Anthony Fung, 153-171. UK: Palgrave McMillan.
- 1.5. Chung, Peichi. 2017. “Game Review System in China.” In the 2017 White Paper on Korean Games. pp. 251-264. Government report published by Korean Creative Content Agency.

(4) Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Impact on eSports Governance

Prof. Chung’s research directly impacts the games industry through collaboration with the International eSports Federation (IESF) in South Korea. In 2018, Prof. Chung presented the poster ‘eSports Governance in East Asia’ at the 3rd Global eSports Executive Summit organized by the IEFS **(2.1)** which looked at the rising challenges in the professionalization process of eSports such as gaming addiction, short career paths for athletes and harsh retirement environments. Prof. Chung proposed a collaborative framework between public and private actors to develop an ‘eSports public’ driven by gamer led innovation that ultimately enhances job creation and supports the long term welfare of athletes. The IESF Acting Secretary General Leopold Chung was greatly influenced by these ideas and invited her to become a delegate for the IESF International eSport Referee Workshop to provide expert advice and recommendations for the improvement of the IESF Referee Course based on her research. This work directly impacts the professionalization of the eSports industry by

contributing to:

- a. protecting the rights of all eSports athletes by directly improving the ethical standards of the rules which govern the sport;
- b. ensuring the long-term sustainability of eSports as a fully accredited sporting code which offers a professional path for eSports athletes in their post-retirement careers.

On the topic of the impact of Prof. Chung's research on the IESF, Leopold Chung, Acting Secretary General of the IESF states:

Ms. Chung is crucial to our organization as she is one of the core members of the academia development members. IESF is currently re-organizing its academic structures to meet Global Standards, and will be relying once more on her expertise and contribution in the upcoming years. (2.2)

Prof. Chung's research on professionalization in the Asian eSports industry has also directly impacted the thinking of senior management in the largest eSports games producer and promoter in China, Tencent eSports. Senior Brand Manager Ran Lingbang comments:

I know that Peichi's research focuses on eSports from an economic and cultural perspective and I appreciate her research on the welfare of eSports athletes. It is a significant problem needed to be faced and solved now we are industrializing eSports...Peichi studies the project from a global perspective with her abundant knowledge of the international and Korean markets which benefits the Chinese eSports industry. (2.3)

Impact on Policy for Creative and Digital Industries

In 2015, Prof. Chung was invited to be a keynote speaker to present her research at the Chinese Digital Games Research Association (DIGRA), (1.3). She raised the issues of major game companies driving out independent works and weakening their competitiveness in the domestic market. She urged for a healthy policy environment to protect independent creative content from the current corporate monopoly in the Chinese games market. The major sponsor of the conference Top Fun Media, one of the leading media and game companies in China, comments on their website that Prof. Chung's presentation:

Included different perspectives such as marketization, gamification, localization, diversity of industries and independent games. She had contributed her expertise and observations in order to find the sustainable path for the Asian game industry. (2.4)

Her work on cultural policy and the games industry also impacted a global audience of policy makers and industry leaders beyond Asia. Her creative economy report on the Asian game industry was circulated amongst UN officials, government ministers, and prominent heads of business in attendance at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD 14) in Kenya in 2016 (2.5).

In 2017, Prof. Chung wrote a white paper for the Korean government Games Rating and Administration Committee (GRAC) on the Chinese video game-review and regulatory system. (2.6) The white paper drew from her research conducted on the mainland Chinese games industry which was outputted as the book chapter 'Internet Development and Commercialization of Online Gaming in China' co-authored with Anthony Fung in 2013. (2.7) It serves as a crucial guide for Korean policy makers given the influence of Chinese games in the Korean market.

Prof. Chung's works also looks at how independent game developers in China can survive in the monopolized Chinese market to produce innovative games with an Asian cultural sensibility. The impact of this work was referred to in a 2018 news report 'Gaming industry has great potential, government should lead its development, urged by the industry' in 2018 where

the statistics for the eSports industry in Asia collected in her research were quoted by a leading Chinese online newspaper to advocate for policy and governance shifts towards the independent gaming industry in China. (2.8).

Impact on Soft Power Policy in Asia

Prof. Chung's research on the creative industry policy and soft power in Asia presented in her book chapters published in 2016 and 2017, 'The Globalization of Game Art in Southeast Asia' and 'Revisiting the Creative Industry Models for Game Industry Development in Southeast Asia' (1,1, 1.2) have also impacted government thinking on soft power and cultural policy in Asia. As Sung Hee Lee, Senior Researcher at the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP), a South Korean government think tank has stated:

We read some of Prof. Chung's research papers regarding soft power and we thought she could help us to broaden our understanding on soft power in general and get some professional opinions on both countries' relevant policies. Since the concept of soft power is originally generated from the U.S. perspective, it is important to know what other countries (in particular Asian countries) evaluate concept of soft power and apply it in their policies. (2.9)

(5) Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 2.1 Chung, Peichi, 2018. "eSports Governance in East Asia" Poster session presented at the 3rd Global eSports Executive Summit, Busan, Korea.
- 2.2 Interview with Leopold Chung, Acting Secretary General, International eSports Federation (IEFS)
- 2.3 Interview with Ran Lingbang, Senior Brand Manager, Tencent eSports.
- 2.4 "Gamification" conference held today at Tsinghua University hosted by Top Fun Media" (2015.7), Top Fun website, website: <http://m.sfw.cn/new/470547.html>, latest date access: 2019.3.15
- 2.5 Chung, Peichi. 2016. "Asian Game Industry". In The 2016 Creative Economy Report. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD 14) in Nairobi, Kenya.
- 2.6 Chung, Peichi. 2017. "Game Review System in China." in South Korean government white paper published by Game Rating Administration Committee (GRAC)
- 2.7 Chung, Peichi. & Fung, Anthony. 2013. 'Internet Development and Commercialization of Online Gaming in China.' In *Gaming Globally: Production, Play and Place*, edited by Nina B. Huntemann and Ben Aslinger, pp. 233-250, New York, Palgrave Macmillan
- 2.8 "Gaming industry has great potential, government should lead its development, urged by the industry" (2018.2), *鏡報*, website: http://www.themirror.com.cn/article_x.asp?id=2074, latest date access: 2019.3.15
- 2.9 Interview with Sung Hee Lee, Senior Researcher, Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP).