British Games Research should not be British

In thinking about what it is to be doing British Games Research, this immigrant-cum-recent-British-citizenship questions whether there should be a distinct thing that *is* British Games Research. The modern games industry is inherently international; modern academia as well, and so a concentration on what distinguishes or should distinguish British Games Research really misses the point of both. Of course as academics in Britain, we are beholden to British funding bodies, but these are not the be-all and end-all of games research in Britain.

Indeed, the very notion that there might be such a thing as *British* games research supposes some sort of exceptionalism (whether good or bad) about the games research done within these isles. This notion is fairly unpalatable to a modern, international, collaborative mindset that seeks to understand and make amends for the wrongs of the past. For this reason alone, the concept of British Games Research should probably be placed on the back burner.

Unlike in my origin field of philosophy, there are no specific understandings of a distinct style of games research present in any continent, nor is it even a coherent field; there are, however, different aspects of games research that build a more holistic view of what it is that games are, how they are made, and what impacts they might have. These are more aligned along classic scientific field boundaries of such disciplines as computer science, psychology, and arts and humanities. This is reflected in the UK Research Excellence Framework Units of Assessment – none are specifically games research, and we find ourselves awkwardly straddling several whose whims may not bend toward something as “frivolous” as games.

So instead of thinking about what makes games research British, perhaps we should be thinking about what position we would like games research to have in Britain. Is there something specific about games research that separates it from these other disciplines? Should we be pushing for a separate Unit of Assessment, or at the very minimum, a subheading on one of the larger ones?

To circle back to the Britishness of our games research, while we are largely beholden to our UKRI funders, we have many opportunities to broaden our funding horizons. The EU research programme is largely available to us despite the impact of Brexit; other international opportunities exist in smaller forms as well. But we also sometimes forget that we are only really nibbling at the corners of a huge, international industry that needs a better understanding of itself in a time of significant economic and socio-technological change. Games researchers are well positioned to do this. But we also need to have a coherent understanding of what it is we do and how it fits into the scientific tradition to carve out both internal and external perspectives of what games research is. This is not an explicitly British thing, nor should it be. Games are international collaborative creations, and so should games research be.