

Mafia series: evolution, depiction and changes of the Italian Mob

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Historical video games can be valid cultural tools (Kapell, Elliott 2013; Chapman 2016; Scarselli 2019). In this sense, many historical game studies are focused on strategic video games and FPS, to deal with historical eras or global events such as WWII. But, what happens in the case of specific issues such as the Italian-American mafia of the twentieth century? The most famous videogame series on this topic is Mafia (2K Games). Prohibition, post WWII, 1968: Mafia's trilogy starts from the classic gangster iconography taken from Hollywood, and then goes, with Mafia II, into the historical representation of the Italian-American mafia. Through a comparative study of mafia historians (Lupo 2008, Patti 2013, Mangiameli 2016), modern historians (Testi 2008, Vezzosi 2005) and cultural historians of the mafia (Anello 2013, Ravveduto 2019), it is possible to identify an historic depiction made up of stereotypes but also of precautions. A real change of course is represented by Mafia III, which puts the Italian-American mafia in the background to deal with still current issues such as racism and gender issues. An almost direct interaction with the past, through the typical interaction of the video game. The analysis of the Mafia's trilogy shows a maturation, including content, of the video game, also in relation to the context of development and release. This is why it is important to find the hidden message behind a historical representation in video games, and to understand how this is expressed, because it also concerns current society. Finally, from a cultural point of view, the predominance of a typically American vision is evident, which demonstrates the predominance of American soft power (Nye 2002) in historical representations of video games (Rao 2019).

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