



# GAMES INFRASTRUCTURES

## Activity 3: Finding your own path



University students, M.A. level



Advanced



3 hours



3-6 participants



The ability to understand, summarize and synthesize knowledge, close reading of academic literature



Whiteboards (or a digital version of it, e.g., Miro), flipcharts, post-its, notebooks, Internet access

# CONTEXT

The influence of video games and digital media on the environment is unquestionable. However, it is usually the “old” media such as print, television and film that are associated with a negative climate impact caused by material production and consumption practices. As we will find out in this workshop, digital media and video games are as much anchored in the material world as their non-digital predecessors. The ubiquitous cloud computing is one of the most illustrative examples of the problem. The majority of existing data centers are powered by non-green energy sources. Also, the amount

of data humanity currently produces and consumes requires vast infrastructure that would be able to process and store it. Digitality then carries with it a certain paradox – the more virtualized our culture becomes, the more material resources it needs to sustain itself and the bigger its impact on the natural world.

# TASK

This activity will give you the opportunity to formulate your own research question and envision a research project for your team.

You will synthesize the knowledge you have gained so far in the first session (by mapping out the topic of materiality of games) and in the second session (by close reading and analyzing the selected scientific article).

# SUMMARY

The aim of this activity is to simulate team research at an early stage of development. The students are given a task to formulate their own research question and envision their own research project within the thematic field explored in the previous sessions. This activity is part of a larger workshop designed for M.A. students.

# LEARNING OUTCOMES

The aim of this activity is to facilitate the students in their own creative academic endeavors. By the end of this activity, the participants will have come up with their own research project centered around a clear research question or envisioned solution to an existing problem.

# PREPARATION

Whiteboards, flipcharts, post-its, digital collaborative spaces (such as Miro), supporting academic sources (a digital list – see Greening Games Zotero Library, physical copies in the room, alternatively Greening Games Card Deck).

*Instructors are encouraged to use the **Greening Games Zotero Library** or/and **The Greening Games Deck**.*

## Expansion packs:

- Activity 1: Mapping out the field
- Activity 2: Zooming in

## Ready, steady, go!

This is the last quest on your journey to set up your own research project. Your aim is to come up with a research idea that your team could potentially explore – what do you want to find out in relation to the material dimension of gaming? Would you like to be able to develop a video game in a more environmentally friendly way? Is your aim to compare the ecological footprint of cloud gaming services? Or maybe you want to come up with your own research project to change the video games industry? However big or small, this is the right time to think bold and learn how to tame your wild ideas into feasible research projects with a clear research question to explore or a new solution to provide.

### Step 1 Warm-up (15 minutes)

Open all your notes, maps, presentations and annotated texts from the previous two sessions. Summarize what you have learned so far. Take notes (e.g., on a whiteboard).

Discuss within your research team what the most exciting aspects so far were based on all your findings. What would you like to explore or find out?

### Step 2 Sieving through first ideas (30 minutes)

Start collecting ideas.

Pick three strongest ideas and prepare short summaries of those.

Based on the summaries, formulate more focused research questions or solutions to problems.

*In this task, the instructor's role is more active. They are encouraged to support the teams and take part in their discussions, helping them to narrow down their ideas (usually the first research ideas are far too broad).*

## Break Drink, exercise, snack (15 minutes)

## Step 3 Writing-up (60 minutes)

Select one leading idea. Go into more depth. Imagine you are developing a project based on this idea. Your research may be applied (in which case you are envisioning a project or an experiment) or theoretical (in which case you are thinking about the main research argument you want to make).

Narrow down your idea to a research question.

Write a short abstract.

Write a selection of six key words that represent your research angle.

Provide a list of sources that support your idea.

In the end, prepare a slide deck that the entire team will present alongside the abstract that will be distributed to the other peers.

*This is a collaborative writing task. All team members may write this task on their own and then collect all versions and write a common one. They may also work collaboratively from the outset. The method depends on the team's preferences and work dynamics.*

## Step 4 Presenting, discussing, refining (45 minutes)

Present your research ideas (8 minutes per presentation). After each presentation, leave at least 5 minutes to a Q&A session.

## Summary (15 minutes)

The instructor closes the entire workshop, summarizing its aims, structure and outcomes. They also provide final comments and tips on the research process.

*This Media & Game Studies workshop was initially designed to support students in the M.A. Digital Games and M.A. Game Development & Research programs at Cologne Game Lab (TH Köln) in their final year, during which they need to come up with their own research (both theoretical and applied). Due to a collaborative nature of all the programs at CGL (each student designs video games and playful experience in teams), all the activities in this workshop were also conceptualized as collaborative research endeavors.*

# Credits & Acknowledgements

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