Working Group
Media Anthropology

Call for Participation

Playful Encounters: Digital Games as research and representation

3-4 April 2025 | Online Workshop | AG Medien | GASCA/DGSKA

Part 3 of the Workshop Series "Multimodal Digital Engagements"

Link to Website: https://agmedien.de/events/playful-encounters/

In recent years, the potential of digital games as forms of knowledge production and representation of research has found increased interest in the field of (media) anthropology. Anthropologists and ethnographers developed (digital) games as part of their ethnographic work and designed digital playful encounters as research tools and means to produce and present their research in multimodal digital formats and to a broader audience. Game design can offer a fresh perspective for rethinking research in its evocative and narrative dimensions.

Digital gaming not only encompasses a broad variety of technologies such as audio-visual media, VR components, design-based web-applications, social media platforms or the critical use of AI technology but also addresses hybrid formats and offline spaces. Digital gaming is inherently multimodal as it often reflects diverse modes of fieldwork, production, and representation and goes beyond the often implied online/offline divide.

Digital gaming ideally involves collaborative processes with research partners, but also with designers, programmers, and other institutional actors. As such, digital gaming not only transgresses the diverse modalities of production of what is played but is in itself a mode of knowledge production and social practice.

Multimodal forms of digital games allow for more experimental use of audio-visual media – (moving) images, drawings, designs, and sounds can be (re)combined and presented in novel ways to foster different kinds of experiences. They also relate, reflect, and expand analogue forms of gaming, not least due to their reach beyond geographic locations. During the workshop, we want to focus on practical and hands-on perspectives and, at the same time, critically engage in the challenges of digital gaming, such as economic constraints, bias in digital technologies, sustainability and archiving of digital environments, as well as asymmetries and power dynamics in collaborations between diverse actors and professional spheres.

The workshop *Playful Encounters* is part of a series of workshops and lectures focusing on different multimodal digital formats such as publishing, curating, archiving, designing, etc. This series is aimed to serve as a platform for scholars and practitioners working on multimodal digital experimentations to share practical experiences and theoretical insights. It brings together researchers and game designers from anthropology and related fields to share their experiences with multimodal and experimental forms of digital games in formats that relate to the digital. In a final roundtable, we aim to discuss the projects in the context of evaluation and acknowledgement of multimodal work within academic contexts.

We invite contributions presenting ethnographically informed gaming projects with a digital component. During the workshop, we will give extensive time for discussion. Please send an abstract of max. five hundred words to the organizers and include a brief description/links to the game you intend to present by 31 January 2025.

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