

Cultural Representations in Digital Games (Editorial)

Mário Vairinhos
University of Aveiro, Portugal
mariov@ua.pt
[0000-0002-4483-8126](https://doi.org/10.34624/jdmi.v4i11.27235)

Liliana Vale Costa
University of Aveiro, Portugal
lilianavale@ua.pt
[0000-0003-2451-3073](https://doi.org/10.34624/jdmi.v4i11.27235)

Pedro Cardoso
University of Aveiro, Portugal
pedrocardoso@ua.pt
[0000-0001-8546-4194](https://doi.org/10.34624/jdmi.v4i11.27235)

Welcome to this new issue of the Journal of Digital Media & Interaction. As we are heading towards New Year's Eve, it is our pleasure to devote this entire issue to the production of a Dossier dedicated to the exchange of meaning that our language may convey within physically simulated or fictionally recreated worlds in digital games. In fact, shared meanings shape our identity, emotions, and attachment to other beings (Hall, 1997), marking out a certain culture. When representing these meanings, our sensorial perceptions may defy the limits of time and space to migrate from daily practices and consciousness to the depicted or crafted gameplay environments (Castronova, 2005). As such, editing an issue that discusses the role of digital games to facilitate representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation (*i.e.* the circuit of culture [du Gay, et al.,1997]) of signs and symbols is not only very ambitious but also constitutes a noble aim.

Games have been part of our identity from ancient to today's civilizations. These have been playing a key role in connecting people (players and game creators) of multiple universes, providing them with the abilities to explore, expand, subvert, reframe, intervene, restore, and rebuild historical and cultural realities, contexts, or settings. As players strengthen their interconnections with depicted territories, characters, and artifacts, game artists start to incorporate architecture, urban planning, history, and resource management knowledge in their practices. That way, an achiever's experience may no longer be sufficient and other associated pleasures in self-expression, creativity, and storytelling for place regeneration are also put at the forefront.

Hence, this Dossier aims at gathering state-of-the-art, study cases and critical analysis of the usage, (co)creation and assessment of cultural representations in digital games. Specifically, the papers contained in this JDMI issue discuss the representation of culture in some examples of games, methods used to involve the players in game design, and unravel some biases that may be brought to game production, and use of digital games as 'memory-making' texts. We expect the topics discussed in this Dossier to be of interest and readership to the research community in game design, cultural analysis of media, and research of socio-cultural aspects in gaming. It consists of five scientific contributions:

In "***Using Netnography for Studying the Language Transformation Process in the game Valorant***", Felipe Melquiades, Rafaelly Ferreira, and Diogo Araripe lay groundwork on players' language appropriation and transformation with the community of the multiplayer first-person shooter published by Riot Games entitled Valorant. As language understanding and usage tend to affect the adopted gameplay strategies and determine who is valorant or immortal (highest rank) and mercenary

(lowest rank), the authors draw our attention to official terms used in Valorant, terms borrowed from other (shooter) games, and player's appropriation and transformation of terms to their daily spoken language. This is a clear example of how language may reinforce the sense of agency in games, leading to hybridization of terms within game (sub)cultures.

Mónica Aresta, Pedro Beça, Rita Santos, and Ana Isabel Veloso develop a toolkit to assist in the game design process. This toolkit is documented in "***Defining a Conceptual Framework for a Toolkit to Game Design: the Gamers4Nature Project***", involving postgraduate students and professors knowledgeable in game design and using game design and development processes as part of their language. This kit based on Fullerton's perspective on game design attempts to deconstruct the design process for youngsters, who may not be familiar with this language and want to start to build their own game.

In "***Playing Sites of Memory: Framing the Representation of Cultural Memory in Digital Games***," Stefano Caselli presents the use of digital games to convey cultural remembrance drawn upon the work of Pierre Nora. Caselli challenges us to (re)think of the way games may foster collective expression and shared knowledge of the past. A theoretical framework inspired by the work of the philosopher Paul Ricoeur is offered to understand the way digital games can represent and re-configure pre-existent cultural memories interpreting these as 'sites of memory.'

Considering that decoding and producing meanings implies a learning process, this issue also presents a '***Review on Adaptable Serious Games Applied to Professional Training***.' In this paper, Álvaro Pistono, Arnaldo Santos, and Ricardo Baptista highlight the importance of the adaptation of game elements within the professional training context.

Finally, "***Challenging students' perspectives with game design for older adults***" emphasize the importance of a player-centric design approach to fight against aging bias and stereotyping within the game industry. Simone Hausknecht, Fan Zhang, Julija Jeremic, Hollis Owens, and David Kaufman challenged sixty students in game design to involve thirteen older adults in the process and (re)think some of the design options and make games accessible to a broader audience. The authors also discuss the risk of using the 'I-Methodology', in which design decisions rely on the player's mental model, inscribing possible bias.

Together, these papers highlight the added value of cultural representations in digital games, emphasizing the dual role of players and game producers in transmitting and appropriating shared meanings of concepts, ideas, and feelings which may circulate, leave a legacy, and impact on society. These mentioned papers were selected from a total of eleven submissions, which have been the subject of a thorough and meticulous review.

We want to thank to all the authors who submitted their papers for this JDMI issue and the invaluable assistance of the reviewers and editorial members, who improved the quality of each paper. A special thank to Ana Oliveira, Andreia de Sousa, António Coelho, Bruno Giesteira, Catarina Lélis, Cristiano Max, Daniel Brandão, Eugène Loos, Eva Oliveira, Heitor Alvelos, Jeese Nery Filho, Luciana Lima, Maria João Antunes, Miguel Carvalhais, Mirian Tavares, Micael Sousa, Mónica Aresta, Nelson Zagalo, Oksana Tymoshchuk, Patrícia Gouveia, Pedro Amado, Pedro Beça, Pedro Ferreira, Ricardo Melo, Victor Navarro-Remesal, and Rui Raposo.

References

- Castronova, E. (2005). *Synthetic Worlds: The Business and Culture of Online Games*, Chicago, USA: The University of Chicago Press
- Du Gay, P., Hall, S., Janes, L., Mackay, H., Negus, K. (1997). *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*, London, UK: SAGE Publications.
- Hall, S. (1997). Introduction. In S. Hall (Eds). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.