

Video Game Spaces in France

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Video games have become an important cultural practice in France, concerning broader and broader and more and more diversified publics. Whereas digital tools have taken an essential place in our social and spatial practices, and video games are the subject of a growing investment on behalf of both private and public actors (“serious games” for education, video game industry support funds), we still don’t know well the uses and the issues of video game practices.

The basic research project LUDESPACE proposes a panoramic view and a cartography of the practices of video games in France. It is based on an approach of the video game practice as a spatial system, in order to analyse the multi-scalar interactions between the space inside the video game, the space of the player and the space around the video game. The project is organised on four axes: the publics of players (who is playing?), the habits of players (where and in what space configurations are the players playing?), the activity of playing (how are they playing?), and the micro-interactions between players and players/machines in the time and space of the game. The choice of a spatial framework aims at putting the video game practices in their particular context raising the hypothesis that their multi-level spatiality contributes to the reticularisation of space and to the networking of territories and individuals.

The project is part of the continuous effort of the pluridisciplinary team of the junior lab “Video games: practices, content, discourses”, aiming at developing the research field on video games in France. Since 2008, its works have shown the importance of taking some distance from the Video Game Studies, in order to refocus the analysis on the players and their practices.

The project requires the conduct of a quantitative survey on a representative sample of the French population, in order to circumscribe precisely the population of video game players (age, sex, socio-professional category, place or residence etc.), and their practices. This survey is an indispensable foundation to consolidate the research on video games in France and to go beyond the shallow debates on violence and addiction. In order to analyse further the stakes of the production of territories and the interaction between the spatial representations and practices of players in game, with those of their everyday life, the national quantitative survey will be enhanced by quantitative studies, in-depth interviews, cognitive maps, and multimodal recording of actual game situations.