



Youth involvement in the game design

Maria Kyriakidou and Maria Patsarika
Educational Association Anatolia



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INGAME

Gaming for Social Inclusion and Civic Participation

Objectives and standards

- promote respect for human rights and active learning and personal fulfillment in the member states; mutual appreciation and acceptance of cultural diversity
- promote awareness of the importance of civic competences within Europe
- make provisions for learners from diverse backgrounds, and in particular by helping to promote social inclusion
- equip young adults with tool, skills and competencies to support and promote ecosystems of tolerance and respect, with the active engagement of young citizens



Theoretical background

Youth involvement and participation

- Value their expertise and engage them in a learning process on what constitutes 'citizenship'
- The learning process is key to both youth stakeholders and the designers of the game



Theoretical background

Perceptions of citizenship

We aimed at overcoming the gap between experts and non-experts, teachers and learners.

We aimed at incorporating the diverse experiences that people bring with them to the design process.



Youth involvement paths

- Already at the “Gaps and needs” analysis stage (at least 35 questionnaires distributed among youth per partner country)
- Focus groups, surveys with open-ended qualitative questions
- Creation of youth advisory groups in Greece and Spain
- Pilot testing and feedback



First level of youth engagement

Gaps and needs analysis data collection

In all partner countries, the responses of the youth stakeholders reached 47 overall through the focus group questionnaires and overall 233 through online questionnaires

Feedback from the first level

The results of the questionnaire analysis

The causes that can motivate young people for civic action are:

Environment

Education

Human Rights (including all issues related to equality, racism and xenophobia, bullying, gender inequality and violence, disadvantaged people and ethnic minorities).

Sample Focus groups results - Greece

Question N°	Common theme	Contrasting findings
What does civic engagement mean to you?	The interviewees share common ideas of what civic engagement mean to them. Generally, they mentioned the importance of civic engagement in the community and politics. More specifically, they agree that civic engagement shapes and benefits the community. What they also have in common that they believe there is an obvious link between the political aspect of societies and civic engagement. They believe that civic engagement makes civil society stronger, democracy healthier, and provide solutions to public matters.	There are no contrasting findings within the responses.



Sample online survey results - Greece

Question N°5	Common theme	Contrasting findings
<p data-bbox="361 317 662 431">What does civic engagement mean to you?</p>	<p data-bbox="708 317 1223 1125">Most of the answers associate civic engagement with democratic mindsets and practices. I.e. on the one hand, young people both raise key ideas and principles of democracy as they perceive them, e.g. a balanced understanding between rights and responsibilities (“<i>you know your obligations in concert with your rights</i>”) or serving the common good and shared goals; on the other hand, they highlight practical activities and the active form of engagement that matches such a mindset, e.g. voluntarism, bringing about change to one’s community (e.g. “addressing issues for public concern”, or “acting to create a change”) and working for better futures—all this with a problem-solving mentality.</p>	<p data-bbox="1243 317 1806 716">Several answers (4) present a picture of engagement as awareness and information, showing that engagement goes hand in hand with reflection (e.g. “consciousness of people to make a better world”, “[...] to have political knowledge, but not necessarily a crystallized opinion. It means to be aware of the government’s decisions that affect you as a citizen.”)</p> <p data-bbox="1243 739 1806 853">3 answers only focus on political forms of engagement, such as elections and petitions.</p> <p data-bbox="1243 876 1806 1153">Only 2 answers conceptualize engagement as an individual, self-referential activity / attitude (e.g. “standing up for my rights, claiming what I think is righteously mine” or “self-discipline, and know how to survive in demanding conditions.”)</p> <p data-bbox="1243 1176 1806 1290">Finally, 1 answer attributes no substantial value to engagement by calling it “Just a title”</p>



Youth advisory groups

- University of Salamanca, Spain (lead partner) & Educational Association Anatolia (EAA)
- In 2021 two groups comprised of 10 students each in the two institutions were formed

The first one eventually provided feedback after the piloting events

- The second one is the one that mostly engaged with the design of the game. Six members of the group were more actively engaged and offered their own examples of themes.



Questionnaire distributed

What was their motivation to join youth advisory group

- “interesting” , “intriguing” project
- interest in both the medium (gaming) and the topic (civic participation)
- wish to both to participate and to learn



Inputs and gains they believe they can have

Inputs

- new, innovative ideas
- experience in gaming
- relevant to target group interests and needs

Gains

- practical skills development
- soft skills
- greater awareness of current affairs

Overall: Key focus on social inclusion and environmental problems (see sample suggestions in the next two slides)



Annex #3: environment
Water pollution

The two main scenarios our team is working on are water pollution around the world and the culture of recycling. Those are two ideas we are going to elaborate in our proposal, suggest the possible game scenario and propose some learning objectives connected with it.

The first idea is to describe the issue of the water pollution, that basically exists all over the world and may affect many areas of human life and well-being. As the beginning we may start with the world map, where two conditional friends would talk on the video call (if possible from the technical side- we may ask volunteers to record the actual video of them talking and put in the smartphone frame, so it will be more interactive) from different sides of the world (here we proposed 2 countries: Russia and Iceland, why will be explained later) and the one from Iceland would start drinking the tap water, while the Russian friend will be surprised and astonished with the fact her/his friend drinks a tap water. Later, the conversation will be structured in a way, that will lead to the next 'slide', that will include some educational information.



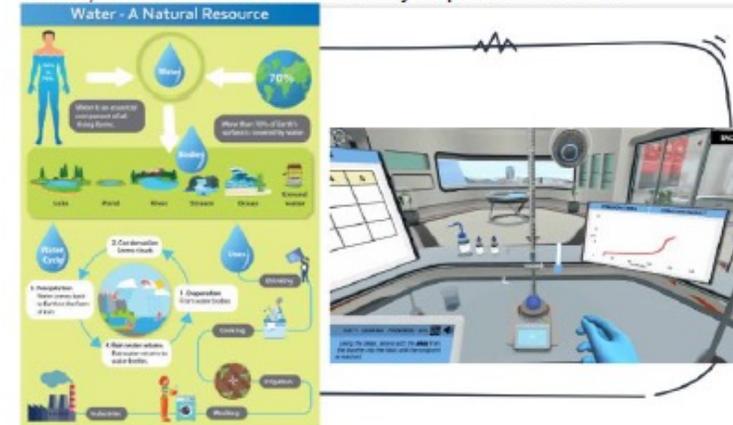
At this point we are going to unwrap the issue and provide some background information, as an example might be the pictures proposed above on the interactive maps, that will unveil the situation about the possibility of a tap water consumption around the world. Moreover, we should also pay attention at the reasons on why statistics in different regions are so different, what policies government implement to fight the water pollution, what external factors exist, that affect the dynamics of the issue and so on. However, the water pollution issue is not only about tap water consumption, but also many other factors such as a mass death of sea animals, threat to public health and so on, therefore, we should cover some other factors connected with water pollution here. Moreover, in the future we should think on how to deliver this information in an engaging and useful manner.



Therefore, we suggest to implement 1) tables with short, easy to understand and process statistics 2) include useful information from credible sources on the topic, that will pop up at the relevant period of the game, include names of people interviewed and maybe even their photos, to add credibility to the information we provide our users with. 3) support our viewpoints with official documents, that we can gather from the websites of GreenPeace or WHO, and if relevant, ask our users to analyze the documents, and implement some sort of quiz, that will help players to better learn and remember the info we provide them with.

Also, we may implement similar schemes as below (that's just an example on how it approximately should look like), so it will be easy to follow the flow and to filter all the details and information we will include in this scenario. OR, it can be the way we will summarize data we have provided on this particular issue, so everything will be clear and stored in our players' heads.

Moreover, we would like to emphasize the importance of the availability of the learning panel in our game, where all the documents and important information, that was shown during the game, will be stored, so our players can come back to it at any point, if they forgot something or need to access the info once again for the purpose of taking a test, etc. Such idea was brought from the interactive game platform Labster, that was used by us at our university during the online studies, and we found it as an extremely helpful and useful tool.



Net-Zero Proposal for INGAME Project

Net-Zero

Over 190 governments promised to undertake policies that limit global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius beyond which scientists believe devastating climate impacts could spiral out of control, in the 2015 Paris agreement. To reach this goal, annual global greenhouse gas emissions such as carbon dioxide must fall by half from today by 2030, a decrease of 7.6% every single year. To put this goal into perspective, in 2020 greenhouse global greenhouse gas emissions fell roughly 7% due to the pandemic shock.

The term net-zero means achieving a balance between the carbon emitted into the atmosphere, and the carbon removed from it. This balance – or net-zero – will happen when the amount of carbon we add to the atmosphere is no more than the amount removed.

To reach net-zero, emissions from homes, transport, agriculture, and industry will need to be cut. In other words, these sectors will have to reduce the amount of carbon they put into the atmosphere. But in some areas, like aviation, it will be too complex or expensive to cut emissions altogether.

Actions

Net-Zero could be implemented in many ways. The player could make net-zero decisions choose a company based on that etc. This topic goes together with the energy sector in the part of the environmental problems of the game.

Examples of implementation could be decisions such as choose an electric car over one with an internal combustion engine. The player will have to think critically both from an economic point of view but from an environmental as well.

Another implementation could be having the player investing. A net-zero investment would not be cheap but the return would be higher since net-zero is the future of energy.

Engagement and Learning

Net-Zero is a very popular term lately, this means young people should be educated about that. Young people know about environmental problems such as global warming however, a topic unknown to them would raise some curiosity, some engagement. People that will eventually play this game are young, but they are adults, which means that we need to raise the level of

Suggestions: Social Inclusion

Regarding the INGAME research project, after much thought and consideration, our group has decided to focus on providing suggestions about the topic of social inclusion. We believe that the most effective way of creating a game that wants to achieve an educational goal is by making it revolve around the player's decision-making ability. Games, such as "Detroit: Become Human" and "Heavy Rain", are similar to this, as they allow the gamer's choices to affect the outcome of the game. This style of a videogame is more suitable for the purpose we're trying to serve because it appeals to all demographics. While it is easy to understand and children under 12 years old can play it, its unique nature can make it entertaining for any audience, including adults. Moreover, by following this approach, the majority of the videogame would be like a movie, as only certain actions and decisions are made by players in this genre. This will allow the developers to have more room to promote the ideas that they want to get across to their audience, as much of the game's duration will be fully controlled by them. Thus, the idea to make this project a decision-making game is a sound one.

Furthermore, we believe that the game should have the following structure. A main protagonist should exist, which would be controlled by the player. This character would act according to the choices of the gamer. Besides that, the game should be divided into chapters. As we have chosen the first annex, social inclusion will be the focal point of the videogame. As a result, each chapter would include a storyline that will focus on the protagonist's interactions with a different individual. The first one will revolve around a disabled person, the second around

Most important question: what is civic participation

The opportunity to offer their inputs into the design of a serious game is considered 'civic participation'

The actual playing of an educational game is also considered a form of civic participation (because it can lead towards change).



Critical assessment of digital engagement

The participants are acknowledging both the strengths and the dangers of modern technologies, including social media. Gaming is seen as a tool that can provide alternative, more casual contexts for engagement, and advance learning.

Participants stressed the importance of embodied participation in the real world



Conclusions

Importance of youth engagement in the design of the game

It offers alternative understandings of participation

it provides fluid boundaries between learning and participation through gaming

it provides a clear distinction between “real-life situations” and “gaming simulations”

It provides a reflexive discussion on peer civic engagement



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- markyria@act.edu

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