



Centre of Excellence in Game Culture Studies / August 30, 2021 / [Blog](#), [Research](#)

Miia Siutila – Gaming at the Workplace: Human Relations Perspectives



Playing digital games has become a hobby like any other, and as younger generations enter the workforce today, gaming becomes increasingly present and visible also in work environments of various kinds. This has spawned numerous worries regarding the possible negative effects of play on work performance (especially in the USA),

fueled by the World Health Organization's new ICD-11 classification of "gaming disorder" as an addictive behavior and the COVID-19 pandemic that has made home offices (and computers) the default workplace for many people. At the same time, research has shown how gaming can be an efficient means of recovery from stressful workdays and a channel for socializing at times when physical meetings are limited by legal restrictions.

As part of our new project funded by the Finnish Work Environment Fund, we have started interviewing human relations (HR) managers and supervisors about *how* digital games are visible in different kinds of Finnish (non-game) companies. The interviewees work in small and medium sized companies operating mostly in IT-related fields. While we are only in the half-way of our data collection, some commonalities and patterns are already beginning to emerge.

"Gaming as such has become one more leisure activity supported by companies."

The interviewees see gaming as part of the workplaces and workers they represent to varying degrees. For instance, many employees play games in their free time and talked about these experiences at work. Three companies so far have had teams participating in competitive leagues for games and in one this was used to promote company spirit and team building by inviting others to watch their teams matches. As such, gaming has become one more leisure activity supported by companies, which they hope will help their employees to relax and feel home.

Along with the COVID-19 pandemic, team building exercises and other gatherings have turned into virtual ones. All our interviews so far have reported pre-COVID team building exercises to have involved sports or other in-person games (e.g., bowling or amusement park) and a sauna and refreshments afterwards. The current online version of the event included food delivered to home, eating together over an online conferencing app, and then playing online games together. Digital games were mentioned as one of their team building and social exercises by other interviewees too, due to being easy to organize and many having played already in their free time.

On the other hand, the interviewees also noted possible negative effects on their companies related to gaming. Many have talked about how a lack of sleep after long gaming sessions could affect the performance of their workers. However, none reported having to intervene with an employee over their gaming habits or having witnessed problems with getting their work done (even though one noted that they

knew some of their workers were playing during working hours through the company Discord channel).



Due to the qualitative nature of this work, we cannot generalize about the work-and-play relationships in Finnish companies, and our IT-oriented interviewees represent merely a small part of the local companies. What our study tells is about *how* gaming perceived from HR perspectives, and what do those perspectives tell about our time and gaming in it. It seems that gaming activities will not replace the traditional fun-and-sauna-recipe of company get-togethers, but they do supplement it especially in conditions and environments where physical meeting is difficult.

If you are a HR-person in a company and would like to participate in this study, please follow the link below and contact Miia Siutila.

Gaming at the Workplace project website (including relevant literature):

<https://www.jyu.fi/hytk/fi/laitokset/mutku/tutkimus/tutkimusprojektit/ongelmapelaaminen-tyoelamassa>

Posted in [Blog](#), [Research](#) and tagged [companies](#), [covid-19](#), [leisure](#), [remote work](#), [virtual meetings](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

i There are no comments [Add yours](#)

+ Leave a Reply

Enter your comment here...

Search

Search

CoE GameCult on Twitter

Tweets from @CoEGameCult

The Centre of Excellence in Game Culture Studies



@CoEGameCult · May 25

In this blog post, Postdoctoral Researcher [@usvaf](#) reflects on her experiences at the ERNC22 and DreamHack Winter 2022 as a game culture researcher studying DEI in esports. The trip was supported by [@liikesivistys](#) [#LSR2022](#)

coe-gamecult.org

Usva Friman: Esports Research Experiences at ERNC22 and DreamHack Winter 2022



The Centre of Excellence in Game Culture Studies



@CoEGameCult · May 24

Tomorrow, Thursday 25 of May, doctoral researcher Henry Korkeila will be defending his doctoral thesis titled: "Resources, capital, and players inside the game worlds: Bourdieusian approach to game cultures". More info and Zoom link:

CoE GameCult on Facebook

CoE GameCult on YouTube

Latest CoE GameCult news and blog posts

Usva Friman: Esports Research Experiences at ERNC22 and DreamHack Winter 2022

Emil Lundedal Hammar: (J)RPGs, Orientalism, and the Usefulness of Theory

Ville Kankainen: One D&D – Participatory culture or a mediatized marketing strategy?

GameCult Talks event #6: Games, philosophy, and utopias

Tanja Välisalo: Developing AI Tools for Studying Livestreaming / Esports

Follow us



RSS - Posts