Exploring Global Game Work Migration
DiGRA 2025 workshop

Call for Participants! 🎉

The workshop is open to all attendees at DiGRA 2025. In this workshop we intend to explore **(i) how people are migrating (i.e., immigration and emigration) between countries or within the video game industry, (ii) how they are perceived and/or portrayed in the host society, game education and industry,** and **(iii) their domestic and international networks (**We also take into consideration their work practices, identity, and community). More information can also be accessed on our OSF registry at
https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/APZUD

Workshop Date: Monday, 30 June, from 9:30 to 12:50 at DiGRA 2025.
Organisers: Solip Park, Jan Houška, Alexandra Maiuga, Elina Koskinen
Confirmed Panellists: Casey O'Donnell, Mark Staun Poulsen, Gabrielle Lavenir, Hélène Sellier, Piotr Siuda, Jakub Majewski, Boyang Liang, Li Zhou, Maria O'Brien, and Brendan Keogh.

If you're interested in joining the workshop as a participant, please sign up for this form: LINK or use the QR code below. There is no deadline for signing up as the audience.

⬇️ **Registration form (for audience only)** ⬇️
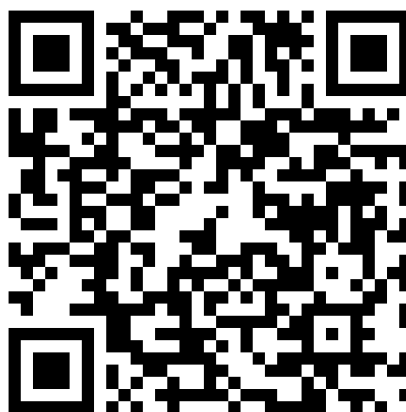
We also invite **panellists** interested in sharing their research and discussing game work migration in their target country. The panellists will be expected to deliver a **max 10-minute presentation**. Those interested in delivering a presentation, please **send a brief description of your project and the country/region you are specialized in. Don't forget to include your contact details.** Please send your slides via email to gameworkmigrants@gmail.com no later than the **23rd of June 2025 AoE**. Please note that there are limited spots available for the panellist sign-up.

Workshop Description

The game industry is becoming more diverse than ever before. Yet, the stories of these international creators remain largely untold. Who are they, what drives them to relocate, and how does migration influence the games they create? This workshop aims to bring game scholars from various parts of the world to share what we know about migrants in the game industry so far and what more could be done — a groundwork for further research into game work migration.

The UN Migration Agency (IOM) defines "immigrants" as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or place of residence. In the game industry, some game developers actively seek a career abroad because there are not enough local game jobs in their home country (Zoraqi and Kafi 2024; Švelch 2021). Others seek immigration to gain international work experience to leverage their game career to the next level (Park 2021; Harvey 2019).

Recent case studies have shown that the growing influence of globally shared game development and publishing platforms encourages game developers to migrate and to pursue their continuous nomadic lifestyle, while local community and practices enhance their sense of belonging and settlement (Park 2024a; Maiuga 2025). On one side, a handful of conventions of game engines and publishing platforms that govern the way of making games (Chia et al. 2020; Nieborg and Poell 2018) enables game corporations to channel the workforce from abroad at lower cost, solidifying mobility and geographical hierarchy within game work (see also Ozimek 2019; Zoraqi and Kafi 2024; Švelch and Švelch 2020; Jin 2015; Kerr 2017). Meanwhile, local factors, such as interpretations of game development practices (e.g., preferred game design and aesthetics, leadership and communication style), affect game developers' work practices, design values, and integration (Park 2023). National immigration policy, societal discourse towards migrant groups (Berry 1997; Topinka et al. 2018; Tharenou and Caulfield 2010), and the industry's hiring practices are also inseparable factors that require further exploration.

Coming from this context, we believe studying game work migration will enable further academic understanding of global game production. It will also provide a groundwork for managerial and policy suggestions that could better represent this newly emerging, highly specialised, and yet precarious workers of games — and to achieve a more diverse and inclusive work environment for future game workers.

Programme

Session #1	**Opening keynotes from the organisers** (50 min) • "Game expats and the industry's logic of immediate productivity in Finland, and South Korea" (Solip Park) • "Game expats in the Czech Republic" (Jan Houška) • "Immigrant video game developer communities in Japan" (Alexandra Maiuga & Elina Koskinen)
Session #2	**Case presentations "Game Work Migration status across different regions"**, each panellist will deliver 10 minute presentations (Estimated total of 50-100 minutes). • USA (Casey O'Donnell, Michigan State University) • Denmark (Mark Staun Poulsen, ITU) • France (Gabrielle Lavenir, CEREGE - Université de Poitiers & Hélène Sellier - CERTOP, Paul Sabatier - Université Toulouse III) • Poland (Piotr Siuda & Jakub Majewski, Kazimierz Wielki University) • China (Boyang Liang, University of Leeds & Li Zhou - Independent programmer) • Ireland (Maria O'Brien, University of Galway) • Australia (Brendan Keogh, Queensland University of Technology) • Canada (Ryan Clement, University of Winnipeg) * There will be a 20-minute coffee break.

Session #3	**Open discussion with the organisers, panellists, and audience:**
	"Methods and taxonomy to research game work migration" (Estimate 30-50 min)
	• Question 1: *Taxonomical framework/consideration* — who are "game expats"? The scope and boundaries. The discussion could include, but not limited to:
	   • Platform workers, freelancers, in-house vs outsource (incl. remote workers - virtual team members)
	   • Travellers, digital nomads, refugees
	   • High-income/Specialists vs Juniors/low-income outsourced
	   • Single migration experience vs Multiple migration experiences
	   • Gender division or gender roles
	• Question 2: *How to research game work migration cases?* — methodological considerations and challenges.
	   • Labour: NDAs, contracts, access to studio
	   • Local: Regulations/Laws/Rules, societal contacts
	   • Beyond-local: geographical labour hierarchy, platforms, global pipeline, capitalistic industry logic
	   • Individual: Nationality/Identity, game design value
	   • Education/Pedagogical: Game education contexts

Closing	Closing remark by the organisers (10 mins)
Estimate 180 minutes (3 hours) in total, plus a coffee break (20 minutes)	

Looking forward to your submissions!

Solip, Jan, Alexandra, Elina

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