

Exploring Global Game Work Migration

DiGRA 2025 workshop

Call for Participants! 🎉

The workshop is open to all attendees at DiGRA 2025. We would like to invite panellists interested in sharing their research and discussing game work migration in their target country. 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). The panellists will be asked to deliver a **max 10-minute presentation**.

Those interested in participating 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 proposal as a docx or pdf file via email to gameworkmigrants@gmail.com (You can address this to any of the organisers. We all have access to this account.)

More information can also be accessed on our OSF registry at <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/APZUD>

 **Deadline for submissions: April 30th 2025** 

Workshop Date: June 30th 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.

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	<p>Opening keynotes from the organisers (45 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “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)
Break	5 min
Session #2	<p>Case presentations “Game Work Migration status across different regions”, each panellist will deliver 5-10 minute presentations (Estimated total of 50-100 minutes).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● USA (Casey O'Donnell, Michigan State University, USA) ● Denmark (Mark Staun Poulsen, ITU, Denmark) ● France (Gabrielle Lavenir, CEREGE - Université de Poitiers & H�el�ene Sellier - CERTOP, Paul Sabatier - Universit�e Toulouse III) ● Poland (Piotr Siuda & Jakub Majewski, Kazimierz Wielki University, Poland) ● China (Boyang Liang, University of Leeds & Li Zhou - Independent programmer) ● Ireland (Maria O'Brien, University of Galway) ● Australia (Brendan Keogh, Queensland University of Technology) ● The workshop is open to more panellists. Please apply through gameworkmigrants@gmail.com.
Break	15 min
Session #3	<p>Open discussion with the organisers, panellists, and audience:</p> <p>“Methods and taxonomy to research game work migration” (Estimate 30-50 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Question 1: <i>Taxonomical framework/consideration</i> — who are “game expats”? The scope and boundaries. The discussion could include, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Platform workers, freelancers, in-house vs outsource (incl. remote workers - virtual team members)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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: <i>How to research game work migration cases?</i> — methodological considerations and challenges. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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	

Looking forward to your submissions!

Solip, Jan, Alexandra, Elina

References

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