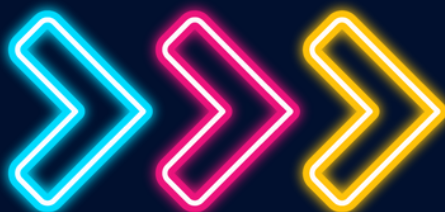




Co-funded by
the European Union



VIDEO GAMES FOR GOOD

Creating Inclusive Narratives in Video Games

<https://www.videogames4good.eu>

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. Project number: 2023-2-CZ1-KA220-YOU-000183158



YuzuPulse



LogoPsyCom.



materahub

VISAS
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Duration:	90– 100 minutes
Age:	20 – 25 years
Group size:	3 – 6 participants in a group
Aim:	To foster creativity, teamwork, problem-solving and creativity through collaborative creation of game
Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce participants to the fundamentals of game design and development. • To provide an overview of key principles in creating engaging and inclusive game narratives. • To enhance problem-solving and critical thinking skills by analysing and addressing challenges in game design.
Material needed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital tools and game design tools • Templates – game design, character representation and testing • Whiteboard or flipcharts for brainstorming • Large sheets of paper, sticky notes, markers, pens, and story templates. • Optional: Digital tools (e.g., Canva, Figma, Google Docs).

Crafting Inclusive Narratives in Video Games is a workshop designed to help participants create stories that support diversity and inclusivity. Working in small groups, participants collaboratively develop and refine a story, focusing on identifying and addressing gaps in representation. Through activities like story creation, group discussions, and character development, they learn to avoid common pitfalls such as tokenism and cultural insensitivity. The workshop fosters empathy and equips participants with practical tools to craft meaningful and inclusive narratives that reflect diverse experiences.



Workshop Structure



1. Preparation (before the workshop):

- Gather materials:
 - Large sheets of paper, sticky notes, markers, pens, and story templates.
 - Optional: Digital tools (e.g., Canva, Figma, Google Docs).
- Prepare examples of video game narratives that illustrate inclusive storytelling, highlighting:
 - Challenges: How characters face meaningful obstacles related to diversity and inclusion.
 - Common pitfalls: Mistakes like tokenism or cultural insensitivity.

2. Icebreaker and energizer game (10 minutes):

- Start with a fun, interactive activity to help participants feel relaxed and ready to collaborate.

3. Build a story together in small groups (25-30 minutes)

Instructions for Facilitators:

- Divide participants into small groups:
 - Form groups of 3-5 participants each.
- Provide a simple prompt:
 - Give each group the same story prompt to start with, such as:
 - "In a faraway land, a hero was born..."
- Alternatively, offer a choice of prompts if you want to encourage creativity, such as:
 - "In a bustling city, a young inventor made a discovery..." or
 - "In a forgotten village, a guardian of ancient secrets awoke..."

- Story creation:
 - Each participant in the group takes turns adding one sentence to the story.
 - Encourage them to build on each other's ideas while keeping the story coherent and connected.
 - A designated group member writes the story down as it develops.
- Group analysis:
 - Once the story is complete, ask the group to read it together and discuss:
 - Does the story include diverse and well-rounded characters?
 - Are there any stereotypes or elements that feel insensitive or uninclusive?
 - Are the conflicts and resolutions meaningful and fair?
- Story refinement:
 - Based on their analysis, ask groups to revise their story to make it more inclusive.
 - Encourage them to:
 - Add more depth to characters and ensure their traits feel authentic.
 - Address any stereotypes or adjust elements that might be unintentionally insensitive.
 - Make the challenges and resolutions more reflective of inclusion and diversity.
 - Be sure you created authentic exchanges between characters.

4. Presentation: Key principles of inclusive storytelling (15 minutes):

Content:

- Discuss the following principles with examples:
 - Challenges: How obstacles faced by characters reflect diversity and inclusion, such as overcoming stereotypes or accessibility barriers.
 - Common pitfalls: Examples of:
 - Tokenism: When a character is added just for show, without depth or purpose.
 - Cultural insensitivity: Misrepresenting or oversimplifying a culture or experience.
- Highlight how thoughtful storytelling can create a positive impact on players and society.

5. Revising stories in small groups (10 minutes):

Instructions:

- Ask teams to revisit the stories they created earlier and refine them using the principles shared in the presentation.
- Encourage them to:
 - Address any potential stereotypes or cultural insensitivities.
 - Deepen their characters' backstories and challenges to make them more meaningful and relatable.

6. Story sharing and Discussion (20 minutes):

Instructions:

- Each team shares their revised story with the group.
- Create a space for constructive feedback, where participants can comment on:
 - How well the story supports diversity and inclusion.
 - Suggestions for improvement or additions.

7. Debriefing and reflection (10 minutes):

Discussion points:

- What did you learn about creating stories that support diversity and inclusion?
- How did your story improve during the workshop?
- What challenges did you face in balancing creativity and inclusivity?
- How can you apply these principles in your own projects or work?



Inclusive storytelling and common pitfalls

Good examples of Inclusive Storytelling

These games highlight how characters face meaningful obstacles related to diversity and inclusion, while avoiding tokenism and cultural insensitivity:

1. The Last of Us Part II

- Challenge: Ellie navigates personal loss, identity, and prejudice as a queer character in a post-apocalyptic world.
- What works: Authentic LGBTQ+ representation with deep emotional storytelling.
- Avoided pitfalls: Ellie's identity is integral to the story, not tokenistic or an afterthought.

2. Celeste

- Challenge: Madeline's journey to climb a mountain reflects her internal struggles with anxiety and self-doubt.
- What works: Mental health is portrayed thoughtfully, with a focus on growth and self-acceptance.
- Avoided pitfalls: Avoids oversimplifying complex issues like anxiety by showing the nuance of her journey.

3. Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice

- Challenge: Senua faces psychosis while embarking on a harrowing journey to rescue her lover's soul.
- What works: Mental health challenges are portrayed sensitively, with input from mental health experts.
- Avoided pitfalls: Senua's character is well-rounded, with her mental health as part of her story but not her sole defining trait.

Bad examples of Storytelling (common pitfalls)

These games highlight mistakes like tokenism and cultural insensitivity, which can undermine inclusivity in narratives:

1. Tokenism

- Example: Some games include diverse characters but fail to give them depth, using them to “tick a box” rather than integrating them meaningfully.
- Pitfall: Shallow, one-dimensional characters feel forced and irrelevant to the story.
- How to avoid: Make the character’s traits and identity central to the story and portray them authentically.

2. Cultural Insensitivity

- Example: Far Cry 3 stereotypes native islanders as "savages" while positioning the white protagonist as the "saviour."
- Pitfall: Reinforces harmful stereotypes and uses cultural elements as mere backdrops.
- How to avoid: Create well-rounded characters and avoid reducing cultures to clichés.

3. Oversimplification

- Example: Mass Effect: Andromeda features shallow LGBTQ+ character arcs that lack depth compared to other storylines.
- Pitfall: Representation feels rushed or secondary, diminishing its impact.
- How to avoid: Invest time in developing all character arcs equally to ensure authenticity and depth.

How to use these examples in preparation

- Highlight challenges: Discuss how characters face meaningful obstacles that reflect real-world diversity and inclusion issues, such as prejudice, mental health, or cultural barriers.
- Illustrate pitfalls: Use the bad examples to show what tokenism or cultural insensitivity looks like and why it’s problematic.
- Inspire solutions: Encourage participants to reflect on these examples when creating their own narratives, aiming to avoid the pitfalls and embrace thoughtful, authentic storytelling.



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