

FRIHUMSAM 2014

Panelvurdering UiT

Table of contents

**231057, Holger Pötzsch, Conflict, War, and Enemies in First-Person Computer Games: A
Multidisciplinary Approach to Textual Frames, Player Attitudes, and Game Design 1**
1. Panel evaluation 1

Assessment of grant application submitted to the Research Council of Norway

Grant application

Project number	231057
Project title	Conflict, War, and Enemies in First-Person Computer Games: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Textual Frames, Player Attitudes, and Game Design
Project manager	Pöttsch, Holger
Project Owner	University of Tromsø
Programme/Activity	Fri prosj.st. hum og sam
Case officer	Johannes Waage Løvhaug

Confirmation

By completing and submitting this form, I / we confirm the following (applies for the individual referee or the referee panel):

- I am /We are qualified to assess this application. See Regulations on Impartiality and Confidence in the Research Council of Norway.	Yes
- I/We have read and understood both the criteria I/we have been asked to use for assessing the application and the description of the scale of marks.	Yes
- I/We understand and accept the guidelines for assessing applications for the Research Council of Norway. See Guidelines for referees/panels who assess applications for the Research Council of Norway.	Yes
- I am/We are qualified to conduct this assessment.	Yes

Summary of marks

Criterion	Mark
Scientific merit	5
Boldness and scientific renewal	A
The project manager	6
The project group	A
Implementation plan and resource parameters	B
Dissemination and communication of results	A
Overall assessment of the referee/panel	6

Special points to consider	Answer
International cooperation	Very good
Internationalisation	Significant
National cooperation	Weak
Recruitment of women	Not assessed
Gender balance in the project	Pending
Gender perspectives in the research	Neutral
Environmental impact	Neutral
Ethical perspectives	Yes

Criteria

Scientific merit

How well does the project exhibit scientific merit?

Scientific merit is a comprehensive criterion that gives an indication of essential, fundamental aspects of the research project. The scientific merit of a project will be assessed in relation to the following points:

- * Originality in the form of scientific innovation and/or the development of new knowledge.
- * Whether the research questions, hypotheses and objectives have been clearly and adequately specified.
- * The strength of the theoretical approach, operationalisation and use of scientific methods.
- * Documented knowledge about the research front.
- * The degree to which the scientific basis of the project is realistic.
- * The scientific scope in terms of a multi- and interdisciplinary approach, when relevant.

The scale of marks is to be applied as an absolute scale, i.e. marks are to be determined for each grant application independently and not relative to other applications that the panel/referee is assessing.

The goal of the project is to research the impact of war-themed games on the attitudes of players, and in parallel develop a war-themed game with a critical and persuasive perspective. A core innovation is not only the combined expertise to study the players experiences in such a gaming context, but to extract relevant design elements which are then implemented in the design of a new open source first person computer war games, fostering moral and ethical features in the game narration and play. The approach, procedure, research questions are clear and methods defined.

The proposed study of empirical effects will contribute to the discourse, but is unlikely to provide substantial results taken in isolation. Similar studies have been done many times before and the results are unpredictable.

Selected mark : 5 - Very good

The project's objectives, research questions and hypotheses are quite clearly presented and are based on a well-formulated and original project concept. The project will contribute to scientific innovation as well as generate new knowledge. The project is of very good quality, but has some minor weak points. Publications in recognised scientific journals in the field may be anticipated.

Boldness and scientific renewal

How well does the project exhibit a potential to foster scientific renewal, creative thinking, new theories and methods?

Boldness and scientific renewal will be assessed in relation to the following points:

1. High-risk research, but with a high potential for groundbreaking results and scientific renewal
2. Creativity and unconventional approach
3. Potential for theoretical and methodological renewal

The cross-disciplinary breadth of the project is interesting and uncommon, in particular the combination of academic analysis and creative, critical design. The domain (war-themed AAA games) is under constant discussion in game studies, sociology and psychology. This does not diminish the value of the project, but in particular the proposed empiric study is a close kin to similar studies in the past.

There is one aspect which would need a more critical reflection, namely the fact that even if a new first person game is developed designed for ethical and educational potentials, there is the link missing between people who will play the game, and the typical war gamer, who might or might not pay attention to the game.

Selected mark : A - Very Good

The project has a very high potential for groundbreaking results and scientific renewal. The project is highly creative and unconventional, and/or is likely to result in theoretical or methodological renewal of great significance.

The project manager

How well qualified is the project manager?

The qualifications of the project manager will be assessed in relation to the following points:

1. Expertise and experience within the field of research.
2. Ability to develop research ideas
3. Capability to act as project manager and supervisor
4. Extent of contact with national and international research environments. Experience with national and international collaboration on projects.

Pötzsch has previous experience of project management as well as international collaboration. Pötzsch has a good publication record. The C.V. does not include documentation of previous supervision experience.

Selected mark : 6 - Excellent

The project leader is very well qualified and demonstrates a high ability to develop research ideas. She/he has experience in national and/or international project collaboration and contacts within renowned national and international research environments. Her/his potential as supervisor and project manager is

high.

The project group

How well qualified is the project group?

The qualifications of the project group will be assessed in relation to the following points:

1. Expertise and experience within the field of research.
2. Extent of contact with national and international research environments. Experience with national and international collaboration on projects.
3. To which extent the project group is connected to research environments that have the competence and resources needed to ensure the success of the project.

Great project team, excellent expertise and wide outreach beyond national borders. The competences demonstrated by Dr. Siobhan Thomas are particularly impressive. The team may lack adequate supervision capacities to ensure that WP3 (the empiric study) is carried out with scientific rigor.

Selected mark : A - Very good

The project group has qualifications at a very high international level in the research area, it is linked through collaboration and contacts to the foremost national and international research environments and will be able to play an important role in ensuring the success of the project.

Implementation plan and resource parameters

How realistic are the implementation plan and resource parameters in relation to the research tasks?

This criterion gives an indication of whether the plan for project implementation is satisfactory, and whether the planned use of resources is reasonable based on assessment of the following elements of the project:

- * Plans for project implementation, including breakdown into work packages/sub-projects, milestones and deliverables.
- * Need for personnel resources, as listed in terms of work time distributed by work packages, sub-projects or milestones
- * Need for other resources (such as equipment, data collection, field work), distributed by work packages/sub-projects or milestones.

The assessment is not to give consideration to any scientific risks involved.

Very well presented project plan. The resource budget and time plan is adequate for WP1, WP2, and WP3. The plans for WP4 raise some issues given the domain of study. As stated in the project proposal, the commercial games in this area have huge budgets (sometimes exceeding 100 MKr). That kind of budget is impossible within a research context. Hence, it is reasonable to expect that the final outcome from WP4 will be a game demonstrator rather than a full-fledged game. This will make it difficult to evaluate the results, as players will compare the game to the million-dollar budget commercial games they play.

Selected mark : B - Good

The implementation plan and resource parameters are satisfactory overall, despite certain deficiencies.

Dissemination and communication of results

How well are the dissemination and communication plans for the project?

Dissemination and communication of results will be assessed in relation to the following points:

- * Plans for scholarly publication, dissemination and other communication activities
- * Plans for popular science dissemination and communication activities vis-à-vis the general public as well as users of the project results, including planned use of channels and measures.
- * Plans for ensuring that important users (in industry, community life and public administration) are incorporated into/take part in dissemination activities for the project.

When assessing dissemination and communication plans, importance should be attached to the level of detail provided and how realistic the plans are.

Dissemination plans are well framed and very ambitious. Target journals and conferences are well identified. The project also caters for dissemination towards the educational context (planning an anthology) and the general public.

Selected mark : A - Very good

The project's dissemination and communication plans provide a thorough level of detail and are of high relevance.

Overall assessment of the referee/panel

What is the overall assessment of this project?

The overall assessment of the referee/panel taking into account the criteria which the referee/panel has been asked to assess.

The scale of marks is to be applied as an absolute scale, i.e. marks are to be determined for each grant application independently and not relative to other applications that the panel/referee is assessing.

The project is interesting and promising and the budget request relevant. The approach is unusual in that it includes a design project. This can be identified as a high risk high gain project, and the proposers show awareness of the risks. Dissemination plans are ambitious in particular in terms of outreach outside academia.

The panel is concerned about the plans for WP3, as the expertise for carrying it out seem to be lacking. The project must be careful in recruiting for this task.

Selected mark : 6 - Excellent

A project at a very high international level and of great national and international interest. Publications in leading journals are expected. The researchers are among the leaders in their field.

Special points to consider

Special points to consider	Answer
International cooperation	Very good
Internationalisation	Significant
National cooperation	Weak
Recruitment of women	Not assessed
Gender balance in the project	Pending
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Environmental impact	Neutral
Ethical perspectives	Yes

Comments to special points to consider