Remembering with games

Ten key questions on using
game-based digital formats in
remembrance culture

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Dear reader,

The brochure you hold in your hands is the result of a unique project that is close to the heart of the Foundation for Digital Games Culture (Stiftung Digitale Spielekultur). The following pages provide a basic guide as to how digital games can use their social reach and impact to make a sensitive and respectful contribution to remembrance culture. In times when anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia and other forms of group-focused enmity are being more openly lived out, the need for action seems more urgent than ever. We aim to support everyone who wants to keep the memories of victims

of the Nazi regime alive and who wants to tackle the playful exchange of knowledge through gaming, which might seem inappropriate at first.

That's why we have decided to combine a professional historical review of the Nazi era with the educational potential of digital games. We have taken on this task together with players in the games industry and representatives of remembrance culture institutions. They were all open-minded about our approach and were ready to join us on this pioneering assignment.

The handout you are now holding, along with the ten key questions about developing game-based digital formats in remembrance culture, forms the essence of this interdisciplinary collaboration. It represents only an excerpt from the guide "Erinnern mit Games" ("Remem-

bering with Games") which is also available free of charge through the Foundation for Digital Games Culture (german only, for further information see page 32).

We wish you a pleasant read that is designed to inspire your future projects and ideas and provide a creative guide.

Warm regards,

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Managing Director of the Foundation for Digital
Games Culture (Stiftung Digitale Spielekultur)

MONA BRANDT and CHRISTIAN HUBERTS
Foundation for Digital Games Culture

Ten key questions on using game-based digital formats in remembrance culture

How can games serve remembrance culture in the digital age? And how can they better satisfy the great responsibility associated with examining our past? These are the main questions which the *Pitch Jam: Remembrance Culture with Games* project by the Foundation for Digital Games Culture has successfully dealt with as part of the *digital // memory* support programme from the Foundation "Remembrance, Respon-

sibility and Future" (EVZ). After all, digital games have used historical events as their basis and setting since day one. However, broaching the crimes of national socialism in a gaming context is a sensitive topic that requires a considered approach.

For this reason, we invited a top-class jury of representatives from the areas of game development and remembrance culture to develop a guide for a respectful and sensitive approach to historical digital games, particularly during the Nazi period. As part of a jury workshop on 28th February 2020 in Berlin, ten key questions arose which provide a guide to developing ideas on the one hand and enough open-mindedness for creative experiments and innovations relating to remembrance culture on the other.

The jury

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University of Applied Sciences in Berlin

MARINA CHERNIVSKY
Competence Centre for Prevention and Empowerment – ZWST

PROF. DR VIOLA GEORGI
University of Hildesheim, Institute for Applied Educational Sciences

DR. MATTHIAS HEYL
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CLEMENS HOCHREITER
Fresenius University of Applied Sciences

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Studio Fizbin

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NS-Dokumentationszentrum museum in Munich, Department of Mediation

LARS JANSSEN
Koch Media and game – German Games Industry Association

PROF. DR HABBO KNOCH
University of Cologne

THORSTEN LEIMANN
Ubisoft Blue Byte

MANFRED LEVY
Jewish Museum
in Frankfurt

FRANK MATZKE
ZeniMax Europe

DR MERON MENDEL
Anne Frank Educational
Centre

DR EUGEN PFISTER
Bern School of Arts

MAREN RAABE
game – German Games
Industry Association

CHRISTIAN SCHIFFER
Bayerischer Rundfunk /
WASD – Bookazine for
Games Culture

**PROF. DR
ANGELA SCHWARZ**
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**PROF DR
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Technical University
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OLAF ZIMMERMANN
German Cultural Council

The ten key questions presented in this brochure represent a valuable tool for developing game-based digital formats, whether it be a commercial game or interactive exhibition installation. However, they are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the long-term support of digital games as an object of remembrance culture. This is why the Foundation for Digital Games Culture launched a long-term project with the *Remembering with Games* initiative, which picks up and expands on existing results. We will continue to pursue the potential of games for remembrance culture-based work in online articles, podcasts and live events. After all, the need to understand our past and the relevance of digital games will only continue to grow in future.

01

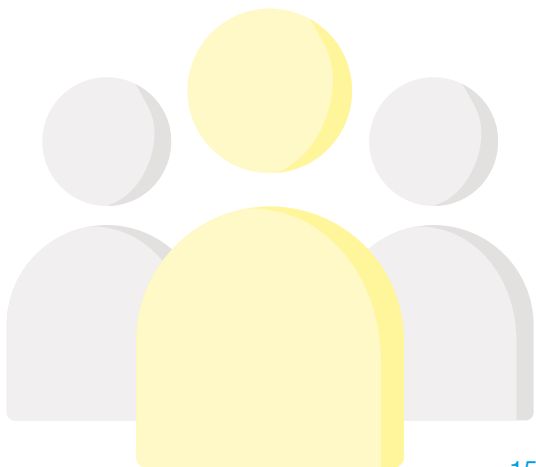**Which remembrance culture-based goal does the format follow?**

In order to make a positive contribution to remembrance culture, the goal of remembrance culture must be followed along with the aspects of involvement and entertainment, such as remembering a specific event or representing the perspectives of those affected.
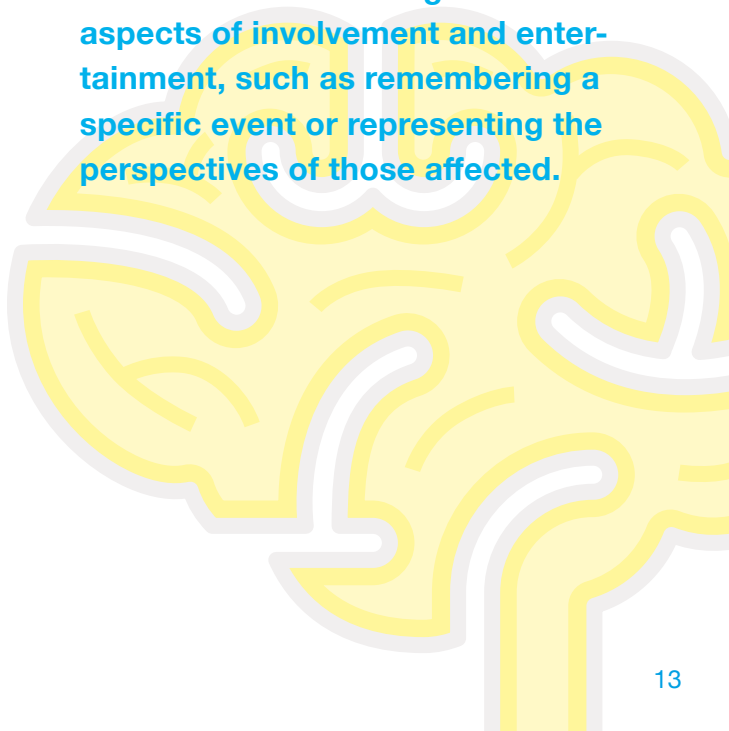
02

**Which target group should the format reach and in which local context?**

Various social groups have different access to digital media. Different people are reached at their home computer than at a museum or memorial site. The target group based on their socio-spatial context must be identified early on.

03

**Are historical sources and historical and cultural expertise sensitively incorporated?**

If remembrance culture-based requirements are enough for the format, expertise and accurate sources are crucial. Which sources are used and why, and how experts can help with selection and organisation should be considered early on.
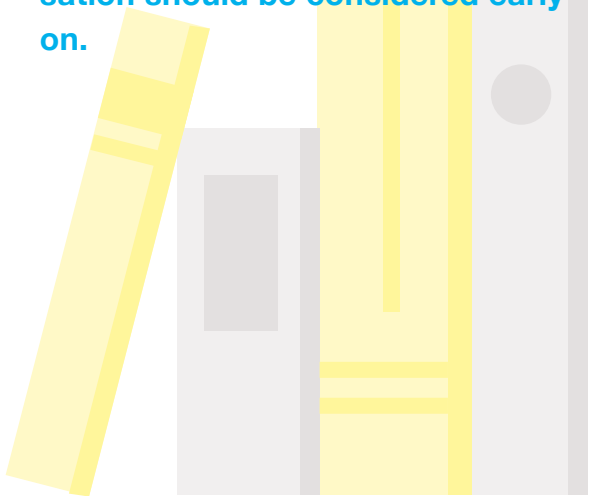
04
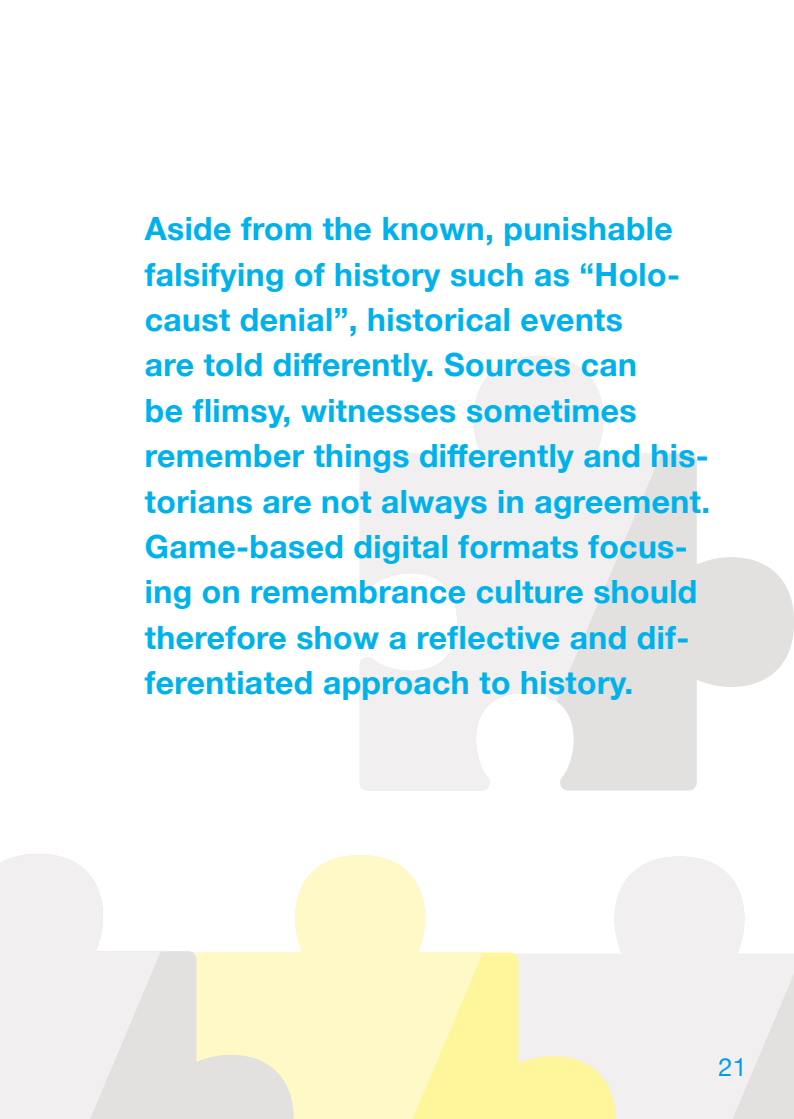
Do the content and game-based aspects of the format create positive synergy effects?

History is an interesting setting for virtually every game. When basing the game on remembrance culture however, it is important that the chosen genre, system of rules and game mechanisms do not counteract the aim of the remembrance culture – they should ideally enhance the content and format.
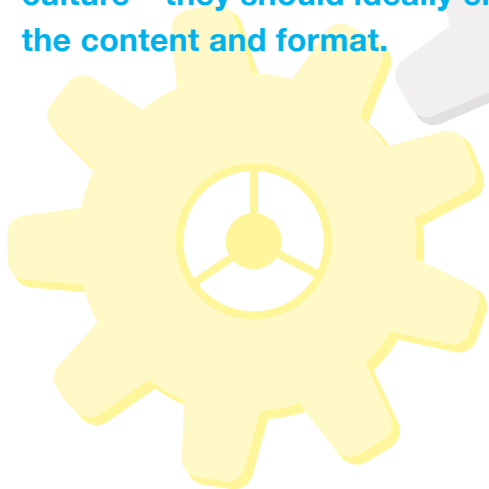
05

How does the format deal with __historical gaps,__ ambiguity and controversy?

Aside from the known, punishable falsifying of history such as "Holocaust denial", historical events are told differently. Sources can be flimsy, witnesses sometimes remember things differently and historians are not always in agreement. Game-based digital formats focusing on remembrance culture should therefore show a reflective and differentiated approach to history.

06

Does the format represent the various and <u>ambivalent perspectives</u> of historical players?

People during the Nazi era cannot be broken down into stereotypes. Perpetrators are implicated in ideological concepts, victims are not passive objects and the large number of followers have representable opportunities for action. Game-based digital formats should therefore open up a variety of perspectives.

07

Does the format follow original ideas and innovative strategies of communication?

It doesn't always need to be a first-person shooter on the beaches of Normandy. Dealing with the diversity of topics and events relating to Nazism can be done in a playful manner. Innovative game-based digital formats need to be developed for this purpose, however.
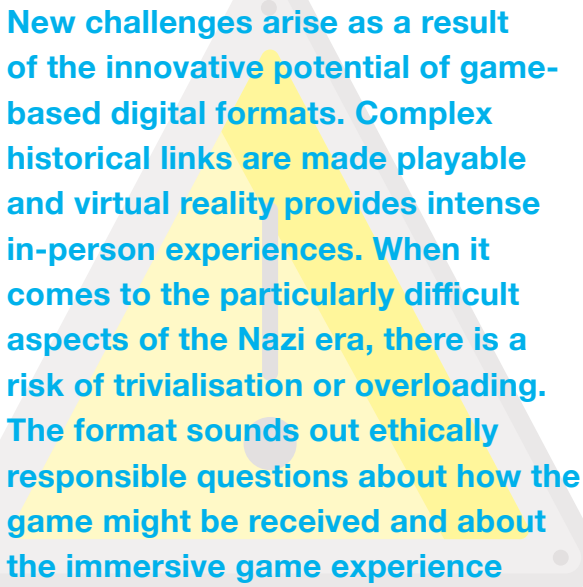
08

Does the format deal with the significance and effect of <u>Nazi language and aesthetics?</u>

The terms, images and symbols developed and used during the Nazi era form part of the Nazi ideology. They should therefore not be uncritically reproduced, but instead must be applied in a contextualised and critical manner.
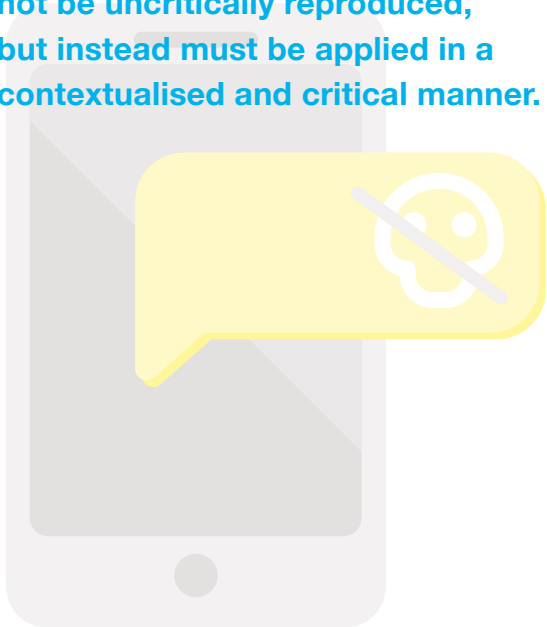
09

Does the format take potential representational limits and accompanying ethical questions into account?

New challenges arise as a result of the innovative potential of game-based digital formats. Complex historical links are made playable and virtual reality provides intense in-person experiences. When it comes to the particularly difficult aspects of the Nazi era, there is a risk of trivialisation or overloading. The format sounds out ethically responsible questions about how the game might be received and about the immersive game experience beforehand.

10

Does the format fulfil basic legal requirements?

Particular care is required when confronting the Nazi era, especially matters regarding youth protection, the portrayal of violence and use of unconstitutional symbols.

Further information

Together with the ten key questions on the development of game-based digital formats in remembrance culture, this handout forms an excerpt from the extensive guide *Remembering with games*, which was published by the Foundation for Digital Games Culture as part of the initiative of the same name. Among other things, a supporting podcast was published as part of this, in which experts from the games and remembrance culture came together to discuss questions about game-based remembrance.

You can find a link to the podcast, regular guest contributions and further information about the initiative at
https://www.stiftung-digitale-spielekultur.de/erinnern-mit-games
(german only).

The *Pitch Jam: Remembrance Culture with Games* project was managed and run by the Foundation for Digital Games Culture. It was funded by the EVZ Foundation as part of the support programme *digital//memory*.

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