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aims to address. To do so, it focuses on one game series in particular: *Sid Meier's Civilization* (1991, 1996, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2016). This genre-formative turn-based strategy game series is not only one of the most successful video game series of all time, but also one of the most vividly discussed in scholarly discourse concerning representations of the nation and nationalism, especially in relation to historical processes and developments. Overall, the project is guided by the following research questions:

How do *Civilization* players perceive and negotiate

- a) the concept of the nation in relation to the games and their content?
- b) the representations of individual playable civilizations in terms of nations within the games?
- c) the portrayal of history and historical relations (e.g., expansionism, colonialism, imperialism) these representations are tied into within the games?

In the following, the project *Gaming the Nation* will be briefly outlined in some of its central theoretical and methodological concerns. I will start by providing an overview of some of the theoretical cornerstones of the project, especially concerning its underlying understanding of the concept of the nation on the one hand and of video games and gaming on the other. This is followed by a brief look at previous scholarly discussions of the *Civilization* series in relation to questions of the nation, identity, and history to identify key tendencies therein as well as research gaps the project hence seeks to address. In the next section, I will introduce my research material as well as the methods applied in analyzing it. The report, then, concludes by providing a brief outlook.

everyday nation raises awareness of intersections with other social categories, such as race, class, gender, or religion. After all, as Hobsbawm (2012, 11) explains, national identification “is always combined with identifications of another kind, even when it is felt to be superior to them.”

In times of deep mediatization (Hepp 2020), everyday understandings and negotiations of categories such as *nation* are significantly shaped by and take place in relation to different types of media, such as video games. This brings me to a second theoretical clarification: that of the project’s underlying understanding of video games – or rather, *video gaming*. I make this distinction to emphasize that studying video games implies looking at more than the medial artifacts themselves. As Ensslin (2012, 5-6) explains, “there is more to the meaning of video games than just the game itself and its specific textual make-up. What is equally important is the way in which games draw on and relate to other texts and discourses surrounding them.”

The concept of *gamevironments* is a useful way of approaching this discursive multitude. *Gamevironments* refers to “a theoretical and analytical frame based on the actor-centered approach, which puts the environment into research focus” (Radde-Antweiler 2018b, 209, cf. also Radde-Antweiler, Waltemathe and Zeiler 2014). This does not mean that video games themselves as medial artifacts with their specific multimodality and procedurality are no longer of interest. As Radde-Antweiler (2018b, 210) points out: “The real added value of the concept *gamevironments* is [...] that it propagates more than just a combination of or the addition of two – considered separate – fields. Rather, it opts for a shifting perspective: namely from media-centered to actor-centered research.” In the case of the research project introduced here, taking *gamevironments* as a sensitizing concept means not focusing solely on how the nation is represented within the analyzed games (which has been investigated at length, cf. the next section), but, instead, on how these

of their everyday lives. Video games are a crucial part of our highly mediatized everyday realities and, hence, become one of the many arenas in which ideas and constructions of identity are negotiated. The *Civilization* franchise provides a fruitful example for exploring this intersection. The project *Gaming the Nation* aims at extending the already-large corpus of scholarly literature on the game series through an actor-centered perspective. Thereby, it also seeks to contribute to research on the nation, identity, and video gaming more generally – a field that is still widely under-researched and unsystematized. Another field which would be interesting to include in this area of research is user-created game content in terms of modding. *Civilization* has a very active modding scene and it would be interesting to observe how the nation as an actor is made playable in these gamer-created scenarios and whether its procedural and representational renderings differ from those of the main series or simply reproduce it, for instance. For follow-up projects, furthermore, it would be interesting to go beyond Germany as an area of research on the one hand and *Civilization* as an example on the other and use the insights from *Gaming the Nation* to conduct wider, transnational comparative analyses of how gamers discuss and negotiate the concept of the nation in relation to their gaming experiences.

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