Play and the Environment: Games Imagining the Future

Chloé Germaine and Paul Wake
2021 - 2022

Games Imagining the Future
1) An interdisciplinary team

Our backgrounds are the Humanities (English), Sociology (Politics), and Youth Studies. Our common research interests are games, climate change and young people's politics.

Chloé Germaine
Principal investigator, co-director of the Manchester Game Studies Network and member of Manchester Centre for Youth Studies

Paul Wake
Co-investigator and co-director of the Manchester Game Studies Network

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Co-investigator and member of the Manchester Centre for Youth Studies

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2) Background and objectives

- We examine how board games can support young people's understanding of, and action on, the climate crisis.
- We investigate board games as a tool for climate education, but also as a means for young people (aged 16-19) to explore and communicate their ideas about climate change, social transformation and the future.
- Young gamers are co-actors in an exchange of knowledge between games, game designers, academics and young people themselves.

1. How can board games support young people's understanding of the climate crisis?
2. How can board games support young people in communicating their ideas about the climate crisis?
3. How can young people's ideas and expertise about climate change help improve board game design on these themes?

Bowman, B., and Germaine Buckley, C. 2021 . 'Sustaining the old world, or imagining a new one? The transformative literacies of the climate strikes.' *Australian Journal of Environmental Education.*
Cammarota, J. and Fine, M. 2010. *Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research in Motion.*
Chang, A. 2011. 'Games as environmental texts. 'Critical Humanities and Social Sciences19(2): 57-84.
Jenkins, H. (2004), 'Game Design as Narrative Architecture', in N. Wardrip-Fruin and P. Harrigan (eds) *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game.*
Menapace, M. and P. Wake (2021), 'Engaging Futures, Games and Play as Critical Method' *FUTURES: Summer Research Festival.*

Project keywords: board games, climate change, youth participatory action research

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3) Methodology

- **YPAR Methods** (Cammarota and Fine 2008)

  - Provides young people with an opportunity to study social problems and determine actions to rectify those problems.
  - Empowers young people as researchers.
  - Recognizes the transformative literacies young people possess (Bowman and Germaine 2021)

- **Hacking** (Menapace 2020; Germaine and Wake 2021)

  - Investigate board games as systems and simulations that are open to being 'hacked'.
  - Hacking as a creative way of (re)making games and investigating the affordances of gameplay.
  - Hacking the 'new out of the old' to explore Climate Change futures

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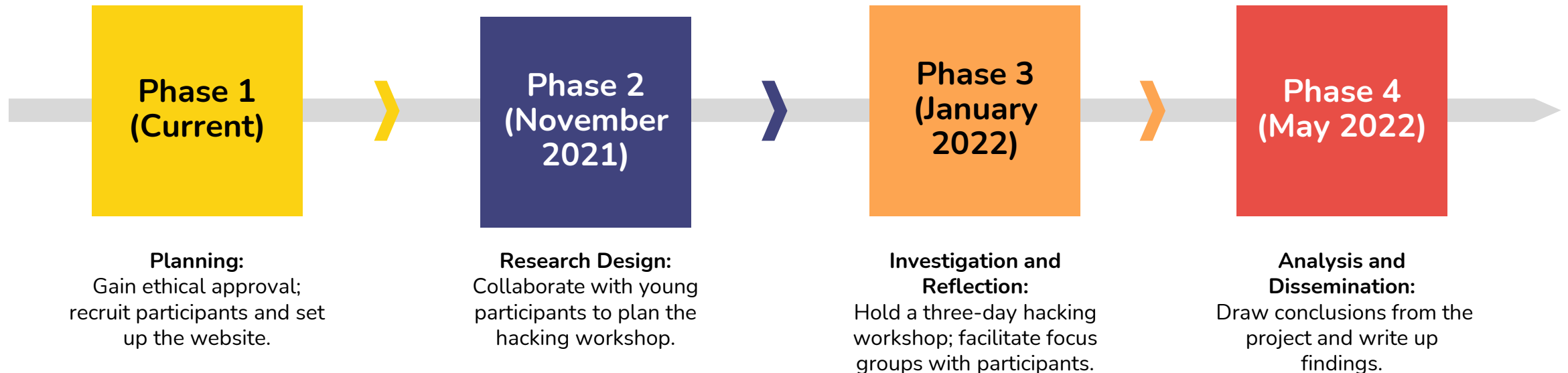## 4) Expected Results

Project Outcomes include:

- A co-authored academic paper analysing the results of the study with young people for the journal *Analog Game Studies.*

- 'Games and the Future of the Climate Crisis: Principles for Game Design', a toolkit for designers co-produced with young participants, to be made available on the project's website in September 2022.

- An annotated ludography of 'Eco Games' that contains comments and reflections written by young participants intended for use by educators and game designers.

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5) Our Timeline

Phase 1 (Current)

Phase 2 (November 2021)

Phase 3 (January 2022)

Phase 4 (May 2022)

Planning:
Gain ethical approval; recruit participants and set up the website.

Research Design:
Collaborate with young participants to plan the hacking workshop.

Investigation and Reflection:
Hold a three-day hacking workshop; facilitate focus groups with participants.

Analysis and Dissemination:
Draw conclusions from the project and write up findings.

Merci !