

## **Research project objectives/Research hypothesis**

The project will analyze the ways in which meta games, that is digital games that utilize metafictional and metareferential devices and strategies, challenge and influence the relationship between the player and the in-game characters. The focus of the project is thus twofold. First, it will offer a comprehensive discussion of which meta devices are the most commonly used in digital games, and how the interactivity of the medium changes them in comparison with their literary or film equivalents. Secondly, the typologies and an analysis conducted in the first part will be used for a close reading of selected games in order to analyze the ways in which these experimental forms can be used to shape player-character relationship. Hence, the project will result in a new definition of a meta genre within digital games as well as a model of analysis of player-character relationships within them.

## **Research project methodology**

In the process of defining meta as a digital game genre and investigating the ways in which its most commonly used devices can be used to construct the player-character relationship, I will draw from the analytical frameworks basing on the literary and film postmodern theories as well as the digital game scholarship, particularly within the area of player immersion and emotional investment. Moreover, the project will feature close reading of the selected digital game titles through the lenses of an autoethnographic analysis. I recognize that this method in particular is well suited for the discussion of the single-player experimental games that comprise of a large part of the selected case studies, since they rely on the intimate relationship with the individual player.

## **Expected impact of the research project on the development of science**

The project and the resulting publications will offer a crucial addition to the discussion of meta digital games. The project will systematize terminology and concepts used within game studies regarding the various meta devices, and offering a precise definition of meta games understood as a distinct, separate genre within an already metareferential medium. What is more, it will fill the gap in the research devoted to player-character relationships in regards to how meta devices, from fourth-wall breaking to narrative and ludic unreliability, create intimacy with in-game characters, thus allowing for creation of meaningful narratives.

## **Outcomes**

The intended outcome of the project is two journal articles and a book manuscript submitted to an international publisher from the Ministry of Higher Education's academic press list from "Poziom II," with the most likely candidates being MIT Press, Routledge, De Gruyter, University of Minnesota Press, and Duke University Press.