PLAYING THE FIELD VI: Video Games and Labour
University of Bucharest, 19-21 March 2026

Thursday, 19 March		
Bucharest time: 17:00-19:00	**Formal Opening and Welcome** Room: Martin Luther King Jr. Keynote: **Helen Kennedy**, *University of Nottingham* "Beyond the Game Engine: Virtual Production, AI, and the Expansion of Game Labour into Cultural Infrastructure"	
Friday, 20 March		
Bucharest time: 10:00-11:30	**PANEL 2** **RHETORIC OF LABOUR REPRESENTATION** Room: Martin Luther King Jr. **Aleksandra Mochocka & Radosław Piotr Walczak** *(Kazimierz Wielki University),* "Rhetorics of Labour in Snufkin: Melody of Moominvalley" **Vladimir Rizov** *(University of Sussex), "*The Ludic Unconscious: Towards a Symptomatic Reading of Play and Narrative in This is the Police"	**PANEL 3** **INTERMEDIALITY** Room: Sala de consiliu **David J. Cross** *(University of Stuttgart),* "Hold to Click, Scroll to Death: Voyeurism and The Affective Labor of Doomscrolling" **Ioana Iuna Șerban** *(University of Bucharest)*, "Tropes of Labor and Survival in Romanian Contemporary Art Involving Video Games"

	Fiona Schonberg *(Regensburg University),* "The Dark Soul of Man: A marxist investigation of collective Zeitgeist and cultural semiotics in the Dark Souls franchise"	**Karian Pătrăşcanu** *(University of Bucharest)*, "Outsourcing Imagination in GenAI Video Games: From AI Roguelite to Genie 3, And the Gentrification of Human Creativity"
Bucharest time: 11:50-13:20	**PANEL 4** Room: Martin Luther King Jr. Keynote: **Emil Lundedal Hammar**, *University of Copenhagen* "Present and Future Crises in the Global Games Industry and the Role of Labour Within Them"	
13:20-14:35	**LUNCH BREAK**	
Bucharest time: 14:35-16:05	**PANEL 5** **LIFE, LABOUR, PLAY** Room: Martin Luther King Jr. **Markus Spöhrer & Beate Ochsner** *(University of Konstanz/ University of Tübingen),* "Playing Work / Working Play" **Hannah Puchelt** *(University of Innsbruck),* "Just doing my job – Administrative work in video games" **Paul Mihai Paraschiv** (*Babes-Bolyai University*), "Racing the Sun: Chronocapitalism, Altered Selfhood, and the Labour of Survival in The Alters"	**PANEL 6** **SCHEDULED LABOUR IN PLAY** Room: Sala de consiliu **Evelyn Riemer** *(University of Kassel)*, "Playing the Planner – The Work of Urban Futures in (Video) Games" **Ana-Maria Deliu** *(Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu)*, "Ex-I-stance: Ambient Agency and the Automation of Play in Late-Platform Capitalism" **Denisa Chirteş** *(Babes-Bolyai University)* & **Dragoş Bucur** *(Babes-Bolyai University)*, "From Immaterial Grind to Black-Market Revival: Labour, Hardware Class and Nostalgia surrounding Metin 2"

Bucharest time: 16:25-17:55	**PANEL 7** **THE LUDOLOGY OF THE FARM** Room: Martin Luther King Jr. **Nicole Mellin** *(TU Dortmund University),* "Grinding 'real connections with other people' in Stardew Valley" **Kai Zurkuhl** *(TU Dortmund University*) **& Bianca Robok** *(Ruhr University Bochum),* "Labor, Community and Capitalism in Cozy Farming Sims" **Mariyel Hiyas C. Liwanag** *(University of the Philippines Los Baños),* "Extending Filipinos' Pandemic Reality through Emotional Labor in Animal Crossing: New Horizons Gameplay"	**PANEL 8** **INDIE GAMES** Room: Sala de consiliu **Madara Stade** *(University of Latvia),* "Translocal vs. Global: Two Different Cases of Bringing Latvian Indie Games to the International Audiences" **Ilian Maria Diana** *(Babes-Bolyai University)*, "When capitalism fails: a study of anti-capitalist elements and their use in the video game 'In Stars and Time'" **Matija Barisic** *(Global Labour University Berlin),* "Economic Dichotomy in Indie Game Production and Discourse"
SATURDAY 21 MARCH		
Bucharest time: 09:00-10:30	**PANEL 9** **THE HORROR** Room: Martin Luther King Jr. **Steffen Woll** (*Leipzig University*), "The Graveyard Shift: Labor and the Horrors of Colonial Extraction" **Kseenia Ablakatova** (*Institute of Business and Design*), "Under Control: Exploitative Horror in Horror Games" **Max José Dreysse Passos De Carvalho** *(Goethe University Frankfurt***)**, "Playing Labour: Video Games as Allegories of Production"	**PANEL 10** **AFFECT AND PRODUCTIVITY** Room: Sala de consiliu **Nicole Schneider** *(Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich),* "Knitting Beans, Growing Forests, and the Gamified Space of Productivity Apps" **Frédéric Provost** *(University of Quebec at Montreal),* "The Contingent Commodity as an Ideal Commodity: Platformisation, Commodity Fetishism, and the Political Economy of Video Games" **Zeynep Aras** *(Concordia University),* "The Cozy Affect of Gamified Productivity Apps"
Bucharest time:	**PANEL 11**	**PANEL 12**

10:50-12:20	**ECOCRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON LABOUR IN GAMES** Room: Martin Luther King Jr. **Valerio Greco** *(Independent Scholar)*, "Power and Ecological Collapse: A Metamodern Analysis of Final Fantasy XVI" **Molea Cristian** *(University of Bucharest),* "Playing Through Contradictions: Climate, Economy, and Neoliberal Progress in Civilization VI: Gathering Storm" **Daria Nedelea** *(University of Bucharest)* & **Ana-Maria Sandu** *(University of Bucharest)*, "Fashioning Abjection: Body and Affective Labour in Silent Hill 2 Remake"	**IDENTITY AND LABOUR** Room: Sala de consiliu **Miloš Živković** *(Institute for Literature and Arts, Belgrade)*, "Madness at Work: Sanity, Labor, and Identity in Darkest Dungeon" **Maksim Podvalnyi** (*Russian State University for the Humanities*), "Adventurer's Grindset: why some forms of in-game labour extend the player's Self while others don't" **Iris Ordean** *(Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu)* "'Becoming' Gamer: The Affective dimension of Gaming as 'serious play' and its role in identitarian positionality"
Bucharest time: 12:20-13:35	**LUNCH BREAK**	
Bucharest time: 13:35-15:05	**PANEL 13** **QUEER PLAYERS, WORKING WITH THE QUEER** Room: Martin Luther King Jr. **Kimberly Becker** *(TU Dortmund University)*, "Do Not Threaten the Masculine: The Construction of Feminized Labor in Ubisoft's Imagine Series" **Ana-Maria Cioroianu** *(SNSPA/ National University of Science and Technology)*, "Ghosts in the Code: Immaterial Labour and Cognitive Extraction in Cyberpunk 2077" **Andreea Moise & Irina Vasile** *(University of Bucharest)*, "The Weight of Staying: Negative Affect, Queerness, and Working-Class Futurity in Night in the Woods"	**PANEL 14** **CAPITALIST FUTURES I** Room: Sala de consiliu **Miriam Scuderi** *(Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz),* "Homo-Ludens et Economicus: the Capitalism Economics of Fallout 4's Gameplay Loops" **Jacqueline Blank** *(Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich),* "Representations of Futuristic Fantasies and Capitalism in the Imaginary World of Fallout" **Julien Paret** *(Alliance University Karnataka)*, "Soviet Utopianism, Neoliberal Individualism: Atomic Heart and the Technopolitics of Playbour"

Bucharest time: 15:25-16:55	**PANEL 15** **META GAME STUDIES** Room: Martin Luther King Jr. **Kübra Aksay** *(University of Freiburg)*, "Between Page and Play: Writing as Labor in Video Games" **Tim Lanzendörfer** *(Goethe University Frankfurt)*, "The Labor of Play: Academic Work and Video Games Studies" **Oleksandra Kuzmenko** *(University of Münster)*, "Itch.io: The Rise of Indie Games through YouTube Video Essays on Games"	**PANEL 16** **CAPITALIST FUTURES II** Room: Sala de consiliu **Filip Hauer & Ondřej Trhoň** (*The Academy of Fine Arts in Prague*), "Temporalities of open-world ideology: the case of Elden Ring and Genshin Impact" **Carolin Haša** (*Goethe University Frankfurt*), "A Labour of Love? Hollow Knight: Silksong (2025) between 'production heaven' and a laborious quest for ascension" **Andrei Nae** *(University of Bucharest)*, "Are All Games Metagames Now? On the outmersive cynicism of the player-worker"
Bucharest time: 17:15-18:45	**PANEL 17** Room: Martin Luther King Jr. Keynote: **Maria Mandea**, *National University of Theatre and Film "I.L. Caragiale"* "Play as Expanded Artistic Practice. The Game Designer as Engaged Artist"	
Bucharest time: 18:45-19:15	**CLOSING REMARKS**	