

Mapping a genre field is much like learning to play a game. Suppose you were to play a game you hadn't before played, what would you do? This activity is beneficial for both novices and experts in the genre field, since it is designed to uncover hidden, strategic elements of the field.

1. Open the Box

- a) Unpack the game and its parts. Based upon the playing field (board) and pieces, **hypothesize** how to play the game.
 - What opportunities for player action do there appear to be? Do these match your intended goals? The answers to these questions will help you with Step 4 below.
 - What values does the game represent?
 - How do you think the game is designed to make you feel? (Competitive, collaborative, excited, etc.)
- b) Ask: Does the game's mission/goals align with those I have for playing the game?
- c) Ask: Is this the game I should be playing? Are there other games that suit my goals/situation better?

2. Identify the Players

- a) Who will be playing the game? What roles will they play? (self, other players, referees, collaborators/team members, etc.)
- b) How are people approaching the game? Are they resistant, excited, bored, or another affective state?
- c) How are these players represented by the game pieces? What are the affordances and constraints on player actions?

3. Read the Rules

- a) What is the objective of the game (Does this match with your hypotheses in Step 1?)
- b) What rules govern play? (These can include the published rules as well as the rules represented by the game design and actual gameplay.)
- c) What are the victory conditions?
- d) What termination conditions exist?
- e) What controls are placed on affective engagement?

4. Identify Transformative Locales

- a) Identify the ways in which players can influence the game. The most obvious will be the actions required by players during their "turns," but in what other strategic ways do players interact with the game (other players, rules, strategic planning, etc.)?
- b) Identify the ways in which the game influences the players. What are the material constraints on players' actions? Do players subject themselves to these limitations, or do they resist them?

5. Strategize Play Scenarios

In each transformative locale, identify all possible play scenarios and map the trajectory for each play scenario. What will the likely result of each action be?

- a) Strategy
- b) Trial and error, experimentation
- c) Hacks, glitches, cheats
- d) Collaboration
- e) Quitting

6. Continually Update your Map

As gameplay progresses, update your map to include new rules, transformative locales, play scenarios, and players who change the playing field. Add to it, as well, emotional reactions, such as investment, resistance, confusion, and so forth.