



FoVi

In the **Footsteps of the **V**ikings**

A VIKING LEARNING GAME AND PORTAL

Project 2011 - 2012

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1. INTRODUCTION

Centuries between 800 and 1100 are a period of time that offers a lot of fascinating stories about the Viking history. Some of them are fictional stories, sagas, which are an oral tradition passed from generation to generation by word of mouth. Large number of them is based on the stories of contemporaries, such as monks, which has been found for example in the monasteries, or in the excavations of the places inhabited by the Vikings. Archaeological finds prove that the Vikings had a high level of culture and also tell us of their livelihood, beliefs, customs and habits. On this basis, we have been able to reconstruct homes and commercial tools used by them. Viking ships discovered as whole are an example of their high level of shipbuilding and wood processing skills.

This project launched now is aimed at in a special way to introduce the Viking period to the people, collect and compile the Viking stories along the routes of their conquered territories and resettlement sites. This is the first time when a new, creative way is adapted in terms of usage of applications of the latest information technology which in this context also allows integration of the data with "cross-disciplinary" actions. The issue is the construction of a learning game – called FoVi game – in which players around the world can adventure in the footsteps of the Vikings.

Many pedagogical experts have found that a functionally inspiring game allows young pupils and students to create good motivation and incentive to learn new things. These good goals in mind, FoVi game is planned to take place in the hearts of all those interested in the fascinating world of the Vikings – for learning and benefit and just for amusement.

2. PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Although the project is run on basis of entrepreneurship - the Finnish IT specialist company Terafox Oy, Ltd. being the project manager - this project involves partners from several countries. They come mainly from countries where the Vikings left their footprints. Participating countries comprise Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, England, Ireland, Spain, and Malta. Partners in the project will contribute to the game first of all by designing of the game contents on the "story-line", like collecting historical information of the Vikings in particular on their territories.

Some of the project participants in different countries will be teaching professionals, whose opinions are important in planning of educational requirements and objectives, and for accuracy of the material. Various participating communities are, therefore, also educational institutions in different countries, such as elementary schools, high schools and universities, government institutions, museums and Viking centres.

3. PROJECT CONTENTS

3.1. Starting point

Different computer games are constantly increasing their popularity. The development of ICT applications has been rapid: the development of different learning games, as a result, has recently emerged as a strong trend. Due to the revolutionary innovations of technology, the Internet enables playing of more sophisticated games worldwide. These factors also have enabled the FoVi learning game project to be content-rich and fascinating by means of construction, implementation – and, distribution to the global public.

Each participating country in the project has its monuments, memory traces or museum records of the Viking period – information that the modern information technology can open up new horizons for us. Even though lots of information on that fascinating history era still remains uncovered.

FoVi game playing may generate thrilling images of the Viking expeditions, conquests, customs, habits, ways of living, culture, and can show how they lived in their places in the past and what those places look like today.

3.2. Contents and tasks

The core of the project is to build a global Internet based learning game, which will follow In the Footsteps of the Vikings and also collect and present information on the history of the Vikings: their culture, livelihoods, living conditions, customs and habits.

The game plot is woven so that these issues give the players a picture of the functional structure of the story (story-line). Stories and their fragments allow the player to form a picture of Viking expeditions, conquests and adventures using the story sets. At the same time we are collecting information - an important situation to reach the perspective of the historical development and to monitor the flow of time - on how the ancient Viking site on the route will appear today.

After watching life of the Vikings in their little world, the player moves back to the present time, from time to time, and learns about functions of today's society, in places – towns, cities and regions - where the Vikings visited long ago. Thus the game offers an interesting opportunity to jump to the present day and wakes up images, how and what kind of world has evolved over the millennium. Player gets, when popping to the current time, important contemporary information, such as about municipal tourism, livelihoods and culture.

Thus both the FoVi portal and the FoVi game also serve as a worldwide channel for presenting of the participating communities, cities and municipalities, and marketing of for instance their tourism and culture supply.

3.2.1. Story-line

The project will focus on telling stories of the Vikings which the player collects from the Vikings sailing routes, those sites and areas which they conquered or looted, or where they settled down.

Thus the Vikings stories, following in the footsteps of them, accumulate quite a lot; in the game the necessary number of stories, however, is restricted to about 100. A player's task is - when proceeding in the game according to the trails of choice - to collect a variety of fragments of these stories.

One of the most challenging sections in the game is that to succeed in game the player must be capable of locating the fragments, so that they were collected on the right routes, and with these fragments to form a true story.

Estimated number of routes in the game is about 10 - 15 (average 12,5 routes). From each route, we estimate to expect five stories on average. When the total length of the stories varies from a couple of A4 pages to about ten (average of six pages), the aggregate number of pages will easily be 300 - 400 pages.

3.2.2. Excavations

In the beginning of the game, the player takes over the role of an archaeologist. When travelling in the footsteps of the Vikings the player stops intermittently to carry out archaeological excavations on historical sites, recruits an appropriate amount of manpower for the work and ensures that his budget is also sufficient to the appropriate purpose.

As the journey progresses, the player gets from the "excavation gang" boss a screen notification of the findings/artefacts that the workmen have made.

Archaeologist's hardworking assistants make a number of different findings in places rich of Viking history as discoveries (jewellery, swords, coins, dishes, etc.); which the player orders the foreman to keep in the rented warehouse, waiting for the moment when he would form a show for a Viking exhibition.

3.2.3. Exhibition

Archaeologist-player selects a location for an exhibition about those cities around the world which he/she thinks is the most suitable (eg. London). He/she might end up to rent the British Museum for a showroom.

The player will organize an exhibition budget: marketing, hiring, renting of premises and the revenue side of the box office - when he/she has set first preliminary visitor reviews and ticket prices.

3.2.4. Game "economy"

Different, money-intensive activities are available for the player using savings in his/her bank account. He/she shall prepare the excavations, exhibits, labour hiring, marketing, planning, etc. For the purposes of the realization, he/she follows the budget and the bank account with money transactions, deposits, loans and withdrawals.

The program has been prepared in this regard so that it fits FoVi game audiences. However, it is such that it challenges thinking, and if needed a teacher can instruct students in the use of money, in planning and budgeting.

3.2.5. Evaluation of validity of the information

One further finesse of the game is that it can be played in history lessons where the teacher works as a commentator for stories collected. A class creates discussion between students and teachers during the game about stories in the spirit of the constructivist learning ideology.

Also player evaluations as for his/her success in economics and skills in organizing excavations and exhibitions are carried out in the context of playing situations in the class.

This happens even if - and this is the game's second pedagogy grants - when a player in the learning situation does not trust the teacher's conviction, but turns towards a higher level of an evaluator outside the classroom, ie. a "virtual professor" to ask him for advice.

3.2.6. Game site, charges, game duration and language

FoVi game can be played where there is access to the Internet and playing is free of charge. To the player is a username and password given, which he/she registers as a player with. Internet service provider Terafox Oy, Ltd. maintains security and the players' privacy in all circumstances. The game length has no time limit; it can be interrupted at any time and resumed to the situation in which it was suspended. The service provider stores all game situations. Only re-login with given access codes - and the game continues.

For practical reasons, FoVi game is built initially in English language with all the stories and instructions, etc. Later texts are translated into some other languages, such as Swedish, German, French, Spanish, Italian.

3.2.7. FoVi portal

The project will build a graphically and functionally high-quality Internet portal, which not only acts as the game registration page, but also as a presentation page for the cities and municipalities located in the "footsteps of the Vikings". Also, tourism and cultural sectors as well as sponsors of the commercial sector will get space for advertising of their products and services on the portal.

The actual game, which can be accessed through this portal, has its own platform, or user interface (GUI - Graphic Users Interface), in which - as noted above - the player jumps from time to time to the present, to localities and regions, in which he/she is seeking additional funding for various purposes and tasks which he/she needs to implement.

4. TARGET GROUPS

FoVi, due to the nature of the game, is intended primarily for young people 12 to 18 year old. Schoolchildren and students in their home districts, regardless of their geographical location (at least in most of the "Viking countries", have normally access to the Internet either at home or at school). Age limits are not very strict, but in particular when determining the minimum age requirement is the notion that 12 years old manage the English language quite well already so that they can play the game. Teachers of today are capable of English, and parents can help too – if needed .

Another target group consist of all those interested in the Vikings, for instance families where FoVi-game playing can lead a whole family to the Viking world which comprises one of the most interesting stages of the world history.

A third target group are teachers who for their job need more accurate information on the Vikings' routes, what places they looted and conquered, where they settled down, how they lived, how were their living conditions etc.

5. PROJECT GOALS

5.1. General objectives

Around the world there are many people who do not know anything about the the Vikings, their lives, livelihoods, cultures, beliefs and habits, which affected strongly the European and world history. The project's key purpose and objective is that the knowledge received by using FoVi-game would reach so many goal groups people worldwide as possible, who for one or other reason are left without information on the Viking history.

At the same time we will increase their awareness of the countries, cities, municipalities, their people and cultures, tied to project and the production of the game, in one way or other. We try to raise in the players' consciousness of the Vikings' achievements a thousand years ago, and let them in their imagination compare the Vikings' life with the miraculous IT world of today.

Here is one of the most important motives for the overall goal that the players would be interested in travelling with their family to the places displayed and presented in the FoVi portal and the Foci Game. Localities which they during the game intermittently pop to from the Viking time in order to obtain additional funding – virtual money – for various purposes.

5.2. Qualitative objectives

FoVi game is designed using high IT skills. Demo versions will be developed, outside experts consulted about the game concept, and its functionality tested against any technical, educational and other deficiencies. These procedures will be reenacted near the game release to the public.

We do this because we want that the game playing as function of learning our would be most meanful and practical for especially the main target group: the pupils and students; that they could apply information technology to

gaining knowledge of new things and by playing experience joy of learning too.

“Built-in” withing the project's qualitative objectives, there is also an idea of socialization of the children, the significance of international understanding and cooperation, and perception of the values of different cultures between countries and people in a world shrinked through playing of the FoVi Game

For these noble objectives the project will build a repository for utilizing various social webmedia, for instance by establishing a club for the FoVi fans, which all the world's young can join for free: to discuss and exchange ideas, for example just around the history of the Vikings and other related topics.

An important qualitative objective is also that FoVi Game will be bound to the pedagogical learning structures (eg. the constructivist learning theory which has won good reputation for the Finnish school system) that are applied in the school curricula themselves, so that teachers can use it safely in teaching of history.

5.3. Quantitative objectives

Learning games played in the Internet are gaining more and more ground among the authorities of education and culture. The trend is strongly growing. Concerning FoVi Game, this opinion has been used for the assessment that the number of FoVi Game players number will rapidly increase after some shorter time of being acquainted with the FoVi world but and especially due to strong interactive Internet marketing efforts.

Please, find enclosed Appendix 1 that presents the estimate of the quantities of the players in Finland and other Nordic countries, in EU, United States and Japan. Changes in the number of players have been assessed in a five-year period of time through three scenarios, which are the weakest progress, the average one and the best option for development.

The table gives a good indication of how massive amounts of game players can be reached, when also those countries are taken into consideration whose young people – as well as any other target groups – are not now included.

Playing FoVi Game is free of charge all over the world, at least in basic mode using an Internet browser. Project financing from outside sources can for instance consist of subsidies by public administration and private sponsorships

Successful project funding affects the successful implementation of the marketing efforts which is the most demanding, even though also the most expensive work from viewpoint of achieving the quantitative goals.

When talking about the employment effects of the project it can be said that the project employs during its operating time approximately three part-time or full-time employees. When the actual project has ended and the number of

players get rising rates it is time to hire some more full-time employees, probably as early as in 2012.

6. PROJECT PARTICIPANTS AND MANAGEMENT

The project participants are, in a sense, all the representatives of the countries on whose territories the Vikings left their footprints. They are first and foremost those who will help in one way or other in the contacts between the information sources involved with Viking history and collecting of the texts, their verification and delivery to the main site in Loviisa. For this work they do not charge any compensation.

Countries from which the above-mentioned project participants come from are all the Nordic countries, England (including Scotland and Northern Ireland), Ireland, Spain and Malta.

The responsible entity is IT Company Terafox Oy, Ltd. from Loviisa, Finland. The Project Director is the CEO Kai Kurki-Suonio, and the Project Manager is the company's Marketing Director Jouko Hemmi, both from Loviisa.

Management consists also of a steering group, whose members are, in addition to the above, J.D. Vivan Storlund, Espoo, Lecturer Urban Fellman, Espoo and IT specialist Jani Kurki-Suonio, Porvoo.

7. COSTS AND FINANCING

Due to their characteristics, designing of games is rather an expensive job. Coding, programming and other such technical issues require high qualified proficiencies, and relatively more than the half of the total budget costs measured in working hours.

Another part of the project requiring a lot of human resources is marketing of the project which first of all means getting municipalities and localities, lying on the Viking routes, with into our project. There are more than 30 countries where the Vikings left their footprints, the number of localities covered by the Vikings amounts to far more than 1000.

Since the core idea of the project goes around learning (what it means to our future generations). Thus, the benefits of the project are directed to our goal groups, pupils and students and their families, with other words: to the public sector. This comprises the major part of the reasons why we also see the significance of participations of the public funding institutions in our project.

8. TIMETABLE

Our project is divided into two main parts: creating of the FoVi portal, and creating of the FoVi Game. The first one will be published in the beginning of September, the second one near Christmas 2011.

The project will start when getting guaranteed the most part of the outside funding, and it will end in one year after the project has started.

