

Section 2

Chapter 7 - Videogames as educational tools

Case Scenario 2

Title: **Civilization IV**

Description:

This real case scenario presents the educational exploitation of the popular 4X (eXplore, eXpand, eXploit, and eXterminate) empire building videogame [Civilization IV](#) in order to engage students in the topic of ancient civilizations.

Civilization IV provides players with significant power over the development of their societies (**Figure**). They can select the location to build their cities, use workers to create farms, mines, fortifications, etc. Larger, more efficient cities can sustain larger, more professional armies useful for protecting less built up cities, while roads connecting cities facilitate the distribution of goods and resources. Players can select specific governing policies and use more powerful economies to build structures that support and expand cultural and religious power. All of these offer the player a variety of ways to influence or even fully absorb neighboring civilizations.

These processes model ancient civilizations which included agrarian communities, cities and towns, hierarchies, armies, systems of religion and ideology, etc. Studying and understanding ancient civilizations is fundamental to understand how our current civilization came to be.

In parallel to the lectures on the topic, students can experience in the game how multiple factors (military, economic, social, scientific) go into any historical event or decision, impact a civilization and nothing is ever certain. The students are able to watch the results of their own decisions on their own empires. In that way they can exercise strategic thinking, judicious resource allocation and cost benefit analysis.





Figure: Screenshot from *Civilization IV*

In general, the *Civilization* series have been exploited educationally by various educators, mostly in History and Social Sciences classes. As an after-game assignment, teachers have asked students to write their personal feelings and lessons learned in essays which were published as [blog posts](#). These essays include feedback on specific questions related to the game evolution in correlation to real life, or to what extent the game has been educational for them.