1. The Project
In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the study of multimodal communication and the role of space in new media environments (cf. Beisswenger 2013; Naper 2011; Sindori 2014).

Similarly, video game livestreaming is an emergent (social) media environment, which has gained a lot of general popularity over the past few years, but is still scarcely tackled in academic research (cf. Hamilton et al. 2014; Hope 2014; Kaytoe et al. 2012).

Thus, in combining the three research interests multimodality, space, and video game livestreaming, this study will help further advance the general research on multimodal communication in online spaces – a topic, which only recently gained the attention of researchers interested in digitally-mediated communication (cf. Berger, Jucker & Locher 2016; Herrling 2015).

3. Research Questions
Theoretical Research Questions:
1. What is going on with regards to verbal and non-verbal communication during video game livestreaming sessions (i.e. what modes and what channels of communication do participants use in order to communicate)?
2. How is space constructed, used, and referred to in a video game livestreaming environment?
3. How are the different layers of space navigated and connected? What modes (e.g. language, bodily conduct, images) play a role in this?

Methodological Research Question:
4. How can the communicative processes be transcribed in a meaningful way in order to analyze them within and across all communicative channels and spatial layers?

4. Data and Methodology
a) Research Question 1: Communicative Modes & Channels of Communication
   • 18 broadcasts by 4 different streamers (first hour)
   • Ethnographic method: observation and content analysis
b) Research Questions 2 - 4: Twitch study
   • 2 broadcasts by 2 different users from Twitch
   • Data driven: Qualitative data analysis
   ➔ coding broadcaster’s interactive instances with MAXQDA
   • Theory driven: Multimodal computer-mediated discourse analysis (MCMDA)

Preliminary Findings 1 (see Fig. 2)
Channels of Communication & Modes (RQ1)

- A streamer can communicate through the modes of spoken and written language with all participants in the relevant chat rooms and with all actual viewers additionally through non-verbal communication (gestures, emojis etc.).
- Participants with an all access status can also communicate with the streamer and each other through speech and writing, while the others are restricted to writing in the text-based platform chat.

Preliminary Findings 2 (see Fig. 3)
Connection of Layers of Space (RQ3)
The different spatial layers of a stream are connected and made relevant mostly by the streamers’ multimodal behavior through the modes they use simultaneously while they take on different roles during a broadcast:
- As a host, they manage their actual and imagined audience by communicating with them via spoken and written language, static images, and bodily conduct.
- As a player, they play and organize the game in its various stages via spoken and written language and, of course, also their avatar.
- As an entertainer, they keep the stream interesting by providing commentaries on their gameplay, making jokes etc. via spoken language and bodily conduct.
- As a moderator, they control and steer chat and player-to-player conversations via spoken and written language and static images.
- As a navigator, they direct the attention of the viewer to what is relevant at any given point during the stream via spoken and written language, static images, and bodily conduct.

References