

# Interview: LEGO® Worlds

By HispaBrick Magazine®

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Kari Vinther Nielsen is the Marketing Manager of Digital Games in the LEGO® Group. She answered our questions about LEGO Worlds, the new attempt from LEGO to succeed in the sector of the Online Digital Games.

**HispaBrick Magazine:** Why did LEGO decide to enter MMOG games in the past?

**Kari Vinther Nielsen:** First, let me introduce myself: my name is Kari - I work on most of what we call our realistic games, so that's games that really take the LEGO DNA, the bricks, the physical build into the game. I have been involved with Worlds and I'm the Lead on that, and then Dimensions and then LEGO Minifigure Online, which is an MMO. So was LEGO Universe. Worlds is actually not an MMO. It will have online multiplayer, but it is not where everybody can just join and play. Right now in terms of experience, Worlds and a lot of our other games are what we call Local co-op, meaning that you can play together, but you have to sit on the same device. For Worlds we will add online multiplayer, and that's coming in a couple of weeks, but it's not having the whole world in one game. That's not where we are going. It's an open world game sandbox experience, so that's what it caters for, but it is also a game for kids, so we want to build an experience as a goal to see how we are going to interact and have multiplayer come into the game.

**HBM:** At this moment LEGO Worlds is under development. You can play with it, but more features will come in the future. What can players expect to find in this new game?

**KVN:** Worlds is a big sandbox where everything is made of LEGO. We decided to launch the game on Steam™ as part of the early access opportunity they have. Steam is a place where you launch a game that is not yet finished, just to collect feedback and build a game for the community and that is what we wanted to do with Worlds. We wanted to learn what the community is saying, and we are testing it with the kids on the site to hear what they are saying, and then we combine that feedback and build the game as we go. That was one of the main reasons. So right now in the game you have a very creative experience. You can explore LEGO characters and creatures, vehicles, there is a lot of great animation in the game, there are some quest types in the game, and you can build – these are some of the builds that the community are doing – this is something a community member built in the first week and it took around 40 hours. So there is a lot to do in the game and there is a lot to explore, discover, create. With the local co-op we have, you can also play together. So there is a lot of great LEGO content in one game and it is a great way to play with LEGO in a digital way.



**HBM:** What are your expectations for this game?

**KVN:** Right now our expectations are to really polish it and get it right so we can take it out of early access on Steam™ and get it ready for what we call a commercial launch, or a bigger launch. I think LEGO® as a company really likes the game and we are very keen to see where it goes. The whole early access phase has been more than we could have ever hoped for. We had 400% more people signing up than we had anticipated. In Steam it was part of the top 10, although it was an early access game, so that was also a great compliment. We haven't done any communication around it. We really wanted to keep it under the bar, because when we first launched the game, the specs the computer needed to have to be able to run the game were quite high. So we didn't want everybody to play it. We wanted a very narrow targeted audience on Steam. These people really enjoy being part of building a game and setting up the experience you get in the game. Now it is playable on lower spec PCs and more people can play it. As a result we have had a lot of great feedback from the community, but the game is not finished yet. We are still collecting feedback and we love getting it. It is really great to see how people feel about the game, their passion, what they really want in the game. I can only encourage you to go into Steam and see what they have been doing there.

**HBM:** When is the official launch planned?

**KVN:** Right now we don't have a final launch date - not before we feel the game is really good. That is the most important thing for us, to have a really great experience out there. And we can finally do it because we didn't launch a final product: we launched a product that we wanted to develop with the community.

**HBM:** Do you think that this will be the definitive game that allows LEGO to triumph in this gaming genre?

**KVN:** That's hard to say. I think we have a fantastic portfolio of games. This is just one type of experience. We have Dimensions, which is part of the Toys-to-Life category, we have story driven games, we have adventure games ... I believe that Worlds will be a great success. And it is the first time we are doing this sandbox experience. We have done these types of games before, but this is very unique because with Worlds it sits within its own sort of territory, everything is built out of LEGO, so we expect it to do really well and we really look forward to seeing how it will go with the multiplayer element of the game and getting it out to more people.

**HBM:** LEGO computer games appear to be more successful than online games. What do you think differentiates the physical games you can play on a console like a PlayStation™ from these online games?

**KVN:** I think if you look at the whole landscape of games, kids are becoming digital natives. Kids and also adults are getting more and more used to digital devices. That's how the world is right now and where it is going. I feel that with Worlds we are really getting into a place where we have a great experience for kids in the digital world. This is a way for them to get introduced to LEGO digitally first and then they can get inspired in the physical world.

**HBM:** What departments are involved in designing the game?

**KVN:** Right now digital games and apps - the department I work for - is running with the game. I have a testing team who are the creative leads and I am the marketing lead and we are working very closely with One-off and TT-games on developing the game. We are of course talking to a lot of other departments within LEGO to get this game right. We talk to the different product groups



to make sure that the minifigures are doing the right thing, and that the animation is great – it has the right LEGO® DNA. If we add a model to the game we talk to the different design teams. We actually have the Creator house in here, so we talked to the Creator designer to see that everything is right: the animation, the way the vehicle works, the characters and so on. We work a lot with the product groups as well. It is very important to keep the DNA and the tone of voice the same as in the physical part.

**HBM:** Do all the constructions in the game that people can build use only existing parts?

**KVN:** No, we have a specific palette of bricks. We have been very blessed that we have a very engaged community, so actually one of the community members created a palette for the lead designer, so that everything you build in LDD using that palette you can actually import into the game.



**HBM:** Do those constructions need to be buildable in the physical world?

**KVN:** Yes, actually one of the things we did a couple of months ago was a contest on ReBrick. The winners of that contest will get their model included in the game, but Nathan (Sawaya) is also building them in the physical world and they were displaying them at The Art of the Brick.

**HBM:** Can you use illegal building techniques?

**KVN:** Yes, because you can build in the sky and you can't do that in the real world! But we are using the LEGO palette of bricks. You could say we cheat a little, but I prefer to say we allow for even more builds. We have quite a large palette, but we are still adding more doors, windows, etc. to the game as well. We also have all the different LEGO colours, so again it is very true to the physical way of building and playing with LEGO, but it is in the digital world and there are a lot of elements in LEGO so we can't have all of them in the game.

**HBM:** Do you think that children still prefer physical play over digital play?

**KVN:** I can't say what children prefer. Children are very different. Some prefer physical building, others prefer digital building. The physical brick will never die - everything we do is centred around the physical brick. That's also why the game has the brick as the centre of play and why there is building in the game. I hope kids will enjoy this experience as much as they enjoy building in the physical world. But kids are different and they have differing needs. Time is different - in the game I can build a castle in just one minute and in the real world it would take more time, but there is still the satisfaction, and it shows I can do stuff and be creative, which is something we really enjoy seeing. I enjoy building digitally, when I am in a specific state in my way of playing, and I love playing physically - I have those moments when I'm opening up a new model, seeing all the functions and features. They are two very different experiences, but I love them both and I hope kids see it the same way.

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