

EDITORIAL

DANIEL CARDOSO

FILIFE COSTA LUZ

UNIVERSIDADE LUSÓFONA DE HUMANIDADES E
TECNOLOGIAS

Research around videogames is an emergent area of study within social sciences. The number of games published annually keeps growing exponentially, with an enormous diversity in content, spanning all areas, from education to entertainment.

Several international organizations – in particular The European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA) and the Higher Education Video Game Alliance (HEGVA) – seek to organize the debate around the academic training of researchers, programmers and artists in the video game area, to forestall a growing confusion in how they integrate curricula. In Portugal, the Portuguese Society for Videogame Sciences (SPCV) seeks to promote and develop videogame sciences and congregate all those involved in them to foster knowledge and scientific interchange.

On SPCV's behest, the coordination of the degree in Multimedia Applications and Videogames of the Lusophone University of Humanities and Sciences organized the International Videogames 2017 conference, under the title "Videogames as a form of art", in order to promote debate, scientific culture, research and the videogame industry in Portugal. Likewise, the International Journal of Film and Media Arts has partnered up with this initiative, by hosting this special issue on gaming studies, thus furthering the scientific contribution into contemporary challenges around gaming research in academia.

This special issue has four papers in it, all somehow addressing the connection between videogames and media arts, especially cinema. Drawing from a multitude of scientific areas and discourses, this special issue demonstrates clearly how interdisciplinarity is fundamental to advance the study and teaching of videogames within Communication Sciences, Computer Sciences, and Arts Studies.

Eva Filipe's paper focuses mainly on emotion and its role in videogames. The author notes how different games position themselves individually between existing as pure game and as pure narrative, and that will also impact on the emotions in play. These emotions are all the more potent when the player is made to become part of that narrative world, made to feel that their experiences are connected to that universe, and that connections can indeed be made to other elements of the game, elements that the player cannot often control directly. Such emotions can be positive or negative, but even negative emotions – like sadness or loss, rather than failure as a player – can connect the gamer to the game, and reinforce or call to question the player's position and his egoic projection into the gameworld. Eva

Filipe used focus groups to understand how gamers experience the connection between narrative and gameplay, especially when the game creates seemingly counterintuitive emotional experiences (e.g.: sadness for defeating a 'boss'). Thus, disempowerment – moments when the player is forced to confront his connection to the gameworld through negative affects, or is faced with outcomes they cannot change – changes the stereotypical view of gaming as a way to reassert the power one cannot have over the physical world. Eva Filipe goes on to explore the different ways this can impact people and the world at large, as games tackle ever more relevant social issues.

Sofia Romualdo considers in her paper how the past is made present, namely what curatorial strategies are employed to present videogames in museums. The author begins by making explicit just how difficult it still is to conceptualize videogames as belonging in the category of art, and how some appearances of videogames in museum expositions allows the medium to be further legitimized as art and also to be further reflected upon. As Sofia Romualdo puts it, "We are currently at a stage of experimentation" regarding the framing of

videogames in museums. These strategies are varied in form and scope – museums engage with gaming communities to create virtual representations of works of art, create virtual exhibits, but they also buy games to showcase. It is on this second type of integration that the author focuses on, since the way games are shown speaks to how they are conceived – as design elements, as aesthetic objects, or as games proper. Through a historical account of different ways by which games have occupied museum expositions, Sofia Romualdo shows how these exhibits are usually done as a metaphor for other real-world situations – the LAN party, the cybercafé, the arcade – but that there are also other potential strategies that have been underexplored. The author ends with a poignant question – should we indeed seek to bring videogames into museums?

Lluís Sayol and Àngel Colom Pons write on how to study suspense in video games, and on how an appropriately nuanced and complex analysis requires the mobilization of different elements than those deployed when analyzing the way suspense is constructed in film narratives, and how considering the role of the player is fundamental to this

analysis. They refer to this as the implied player – not any specific player of any specific game, but the theoretical existence of a player playing a game – and the relationship this creates with two other elements of analysis: perspective and focalization. After discussing the specificity of the implied gamer, perspective is discussed, both visual and auditory, and how games tend to differ from cinema in how they operationalize perspective, as well as the implications of that for the emotional tension created. The analysis then shifts to focalization, “the focus that directs the narrative information”, and how different games approach this issue, especially in how they handle time. Time, in fact, is fundamental to suspense – but given how videogames can be replayed, and how in videogames the narrative suspension works only by the player not advancing the narrative, unlike what happens in cinema. As the authors explore in depth, this does not mean that videogames are incapable of suspense, or that suspense only happens in cinematic moments within games, but that it is connected “to the loop structure of video games”.

Jacopo Wassermann, in his article, talks about videogames as the object of cinematic adaptation, and his starting premise is in fact a defense of the ontological validity of movie adaptations of videogames as objects of analysis, in spite of the cultural stigma surrounding them. Discussing the theoretical and historical

tensions between games studies and cinema studies, the author shows how there are both points of contact and fundamental differences between the two industries and between the two modes of constructing media experiences, thus opening up the theoretical stage for adaptation studies as a field in itself, capable of understanding how videogames and movies have influenced each other for decades. By placing these two registries side by side and on equal footing, the author is able to see what from video games is actually adapted into movies, and goes on to point out that movie adaptations of video games create a depuration of what is cinematic in video games, rather than (failing to) translate a gaming experience into movie form.

As editors, we hope this special issue will contribute to further advance research and theory between different areas, and foster academic work in Portugal and beyond.

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