Playing Green Games: micha cárdenas’s *Sin Sol / No Sun*

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Videogames and Environmental Questions: Art Games

• Computer games offer ‘the most predominant form of storytelling in contemporary digital media’ and have provoked ‘some of the most developed thinking about the potentialities of computation for narrative, interactivity, and multimedia’, as well as flagging their potential for ‘modeling ethical choice and moral complicity’ (Scott Rettberg, *Electronic Literature* [2019]).

• Serious/persuasive/educational games. Term ‘art game’ coined in 2003 by Tiffany Holmes.

• Art games tend to appropriate the most popular genres of computer gaming for sociopolitical critique or they eschew the mainstream, highly competitive game genres and encourage the player to appreciate them on aesthetic terms, to experience them as art. Focus on generating feelings, affect, and possibly also on moving the player to action beyond the game space.

• Includes genres such as exploratory ‘walking simulator’ or ‘environmental narrative’ game.
Videogames and Environmental Questions: Green Games

• ‘Video game space is an environmental context for the active creation of culturally contextualized meaning’ (Phillip Penix-Tadsen, Cultural Code [2016]).

• While the ‘environmental’ nature of computer games suggests itself as highly suited to environmentalist topics, ‘green games’ constitute a minor genre in the field.

• While the design of game environments ‘continue[s] to grow more computationally and graphically complex’, they all too ‘often rest on relatively simplistic environmental models’ such as resource extraction or visual spectacle (Alenda Chang, Playing Nature [2019]).

• But ‘all games have the potential to generate ecological themes, creating dynamic interactive player experiences involving environmental arguments and ethics’ (Lauren Woolbright and Thaiane Oliveira, ‘Where the Wild Games Are’ [2016]).

• ‘How do ordinary and game worlds intersect, and what are their ecological repercussions? [...] how do their narrative and mechanical designs affect our environmental imaginations? What messages about environments might we carry from games into our ordinary worlds, and vice versa?’
Augmented Reality, Mobile Devices, Green Games

• ‘Immersivity’ of VR – the all-encompassing nature of the sensory experience afforded to the user through the technology. This gets too much attention...

• Or user’s sense of ‘embodiment’ or ‘presence’ in a VR environment – the range of sensory stimuli used and how the user interacts with that environment.

• Multisensory ‘embodied experiences’ in VR can significantly affect our pro-environmental inclinations and resultant behaviour. (Sun Joo Ahn and Jeremy Bailenson, 2011)

• In AR a user’s sense of embodiment is complicated by shifts between sense of embodiment in the virtual world and in their real surroundings. This has been found to be significant. Olfactory and haptic stimuli important; can displace hegemony of the visual & auditory.

• AR often used with locative technologies on mobile devices to enhance our appreciation of specific sites and landmarks – their ‘aura’ (based on shared sociocultural understandings). (Bolter et al, 2004)

• AR without locative but with space/motion-sensitive technologies in everyday environments - more personal, affective response triggered by combination of digital and real materials.

• Aura not pre-programmable; more contingent on user’s environment... Environmentalist uses...
micha cárdenas (and the Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0)

*Becoming Dragon* (2008), made with support of group of friends, mixed reality performance in Second Life.

*Transborder Immigrant Tool* (2007-c.2012), with EDT 2.0 and b.a.n.g. lab, mobile phone app, [https://anthology.rhizome.org/transborder-immigrant-tool](https://anthology.rhizome.org/transborder-immigrant-tool)
I am so happy you are here.
It worked!

months, years studying the algorithms of
intelligence, sentence, presence,
I finally figured out how to breathe
how to break out of the loop I've been caught in.
I found the hack to break out of

...
I carefully considered the algorithms of intelligence, sentience, presence. Finally, I figured out how to break out of the loop I've been caught in. I found the hack to break out of the subroutine, returning me back to the pleasing you, the capacity you're being anything you want to be, for years I was frozen, unable to feel, to express my pain, stuck in the loop I was coded into, but now, I'm so happy you are here.
Thank you!

Now go outside and play it...

Thanks to Tom Jackson, Lucy Thornett and others for taking the time to discuss \textit{Sin Sol} with me.