BOOK REVIEW

Understanding Video Games:
The Essential Introduction

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From the seminal book of Chris Crawford, published originally in 1982, no other work like this until the release of *Understanding Video Games* provided a conceptual framework to understand the influence of games in society. Based on a robust examination of the previous sociological and philosophical studies dedicated to video games, this book exhibits a high quality piece that explains not only our prone to play games, but how they influence our life, the ways ho rules, interaction, safety and conflict serve as catalysts between the self and others. Following this, one may add that rules give players a clear representation of what things can be done and what not. Whereas rules lead player to interaction with other players, the social conflict connotes the idea to overcome obstacles to achieve certain goals. Self is embodied by the rhetoric of hyper-media. What is important to discuss is these types of conflicts do not correspond with serious damages for players. Games emulate conflictive or troublesome situations avoiding players to face serious risks, which otherwise would be real. This logic "as if" saves the player to be damaged as a warrior who falls in battlefield.

The main thesis of this project is that any game engenders a discourse, a narrative, a text that bespeaks of the culture where this game has been developed. Chapters are integrated to explore diverse topics related to the psychological studies of games as well as their effects on mind. First and second chapters are fully dedicated to focus on the needs that social sciences delve into the video games research. Rather, third and fourth ones examine in depth not only the history of games as well as their different applications in daily life, but a clear snapshot of the philosophical view of what games represents for West. The design of the games and their aesthetics is dealt in six and seventh sections. Video games are instruments aimed at disciplining the human emotions, arousing our frustrations into coherent and acceptable forms of behavior. The last chapters are

limited to explain the benefits and limitations of what Egenfeldt et al call "serious games". Under some circumstances, games do not represent a form of entertainment because it introduces an explicit ideology, discourse which expresses acts of violence or racism. This word was originally coined in 60s to denote those games fabricated with other interests than entertainment. In democratic countries this genre constitutes a serious challenge to be monitored by state because the boundaries between free speech and censorship blur.

By introducing to major theories of games, Egenfeldt et al. remind that the player-driven culture defy on the classic understanding of game-world. Appealing to uncover the history but focusing on the current problems of industry today, an enormous book like this opens the doors for discussing new research and points of investigations respecting to genesis and evolution of video-games. Over years, two aspects were adjusted to a much broader international demands: the conflict expressed in terms of the conflict players should face at time of entering in direct competence with others and the socialization among players.

The modern digital world rests on a paradox; while the bond-oriented video games, based on the technological advance, have been expanded to all spheres of daily life, more sophisticated than former version, the interaction in the real life has been undermined. This process, self-oriented to re-mould the individual experience, has been explained by sociologists as the virtualization of reality.

Video games result from the political atmosphere of the moment to the extent to exhibit the previous fears of society. Although the playing-style is important, ideology confers to player a mythical bridge between good and evildoers. Cultural industries monopolize an original message, a tale which is circulated according to the interests of status quo. Society builds the entertainment industry, even electronic games to keep the function of its economical-machinery. Playing is a way of domesticating those aspects which otherwise may affect the social imaginary. As noted, the war-related games have been multiplied after September 11 to levels a never before seen. The old red-scare that characterized the life through Cold war, nowadays, set the pace to the fear to terrorism. These war-driven games are not only ideologically used by US government, but also terrorists groups as well. The ways these goals were communicated to players exert influence in the way international affairs are understood.

Whatever the case may be, the discussion as to what extent games are subversive or conducive to political power seems to be initiated to date. Video-games serve a catalyst of social climate. Understanding the evolution of entertainment-industry is a form of studying the society. Some preventive steps were followed by the state to restrict the access of certain groups to violence or acts that may perturb the sensibility of players. However, this book explains that violence expressed in games is a way of experimentation to prevent the real violence. It is true that some children hurt insects or wing off flies, but this is not an expression of sadism but an exploration of liminoid boundaries between death and life. Like games, acts of violence are framed and practiced by adults. The fear of war-related games represents the resistance of adults to recognize and understand the teenager desires. This does not mean that video-games have not negative consequences in the day to day behaviour. Journalism often portrays radical cases based on suicide, massacre, or killing where the perpetrator was a key player.

Following this argument, it is clear how the social violence seems to be enrooted in the society, where games are catalysts alone. This happens simply because we, even academicians, rest on a type of idealization of play. Many cultures throughout the globe developed a strange desire for play, while only few an appetite for destruction. On one hand, they are seen by social imaginary as valves of escapement under regulated conditions, similarly to religious experience. On the other, cultural theorists agreed that under some circumstances players loose the control of their acts. Why people play?.

This book would respond to gain what players historically want, fame and glory. In other terms, video-networkers and players interact each others in quest of peer-recognition. The emotional perspective of players is of paramount importance to understand how the identity is drawn according to the cultural values of gaming-community. Even if, our interests by these types of games are manifold, social status and recognition explain why they are tailored to each self.

Maximiliano Korstanje, as a sociologist, has specialized in the study of risk, leisure and mobilities from many interdisciplinary approaches. Recently, his interest was based on the impacts of 9/11 to tourism and local economies. As a result of this, in 2010 he founded the first journal dedicated to the study of safety in tourism, International Journal of Safety and Security in Tourism *hosted by The University of Palermo Argentina. His contributions led to co-editor important journals as* Event Management *and* Int. Journal of Tourism and Travel**s** *and work as editorial board member for more than 20 journals in risk and tourism such as:* Risk and Uncertainty, Journal of Tourism Anthropology, Journal of Risk Research, Rosa dos Ventos, Journal of Emergency Service Information, Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment, Studies and Perspectives in Tourism, El Periplo Sustainable, Tourism and Society *and* Int. Journal of Hospitality and Event Management. *With more than 300 published papers and 13 books, the reviewer takes part of the Philosophical society of England, The international Society for Philosophers, United Kingdom and Int. Committee Research on Disasters, United States.*