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Approach to Game Analysis: Landscape Studies for Computer Games

By analysing computer games as landscapes, we can connect them to a broader history concerning the relationships between humans and the physical environment. Landscape studies for computer games combines a play-based analysis with a contextual critique of the cultural and historical relationship between the player and the game. Computer game studies and landscape theory share common methodological approaches and concerns, such as the relationship between space, place and experience.

In my analysis, I contextualise the player experience by weighing the gameplay condition (Leino) against the congruence requirement (Galloway) and the simulation gap (Bogost), and acknowledging variations in modes of play and therefore possible experiences of landscape (Liboriussen). I compare player experiences to existing narratives of landscape from their cultural and historical experiences outside the game. I analyse how these historical narratives of landscape influence the significance and meaning of the game for the player, and use this relationship to form a criticism of the game based around the plausibility of these connections. My approach asks how computer games exist within a broader discourse of landscape, and how these two fields can mutually benefit one another through a case-by-case analysis, and also contribute to our understanding of the evolving relationships between humans and the physical environment.