MISE-EN-SCREEN FROM DIGITAL GAME

SPATIAL PHILOSOPHIES TO INTERACTIVE DIGITAL NARRATIVE DESIGN IN VR

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ABSTRACT

Once upon a time, and ever since, storytelling has been a fascinating and effective means of communicating events, possibilities and narratives - always with a spatial dimension through visualisation, gesticulation, and imagination. At the intersection of artistic techniques and technological evolutions, a novel format of storytelling developed in the form of Interactive Digital Narratives (IDNs) - taking shape as hypertext fictions, digital games and Virtual Reality (VR) experiences, to name a few. Of these, VR experiences prove significant as artefacts of spatial research. This is owing to their embodied nature of narrative encounters by means of experiencing a 360 degree virtual world and utilising real world interactions (such as hand movements) that are reflected in this mixed spatiality. Spatiality here denotes the dynamic qualities of space as a processual being that is enacted upon by the viewer's agency, as opposed to only being an inert backdrop element.

The main question this thesis looks to understand is what roles the spatiality of VR narrative experiences play as part of their storytelling process. This question is examined by turning to the literature and theories embedded in the extensively researched domain of digital games, as a contemporary comparison of IDNs. By inquiring into research on digital game spatiality across themes of narrativity and interactivity, we explore the space as an experienced aspect of the narrative. This intersection is further developed into a speculative framework which aims to present the roles that spatiality plays in IDNs using VR, by recontextualising spatial ideologies prevalent in digital game experiences. The framework is then expounded by examining two case studies of VR Narrative Experiences - **Berlin 2037 and Emperor** - and viewing how their spatiality exists and is experienced based on personal observation. The thesis finally concludes by discussing the importance of spatiality within the domain of IDNs as they would contribute to the narrative experience of this rapidly evolving storytelling format, and calls for further experimentation and research based on the spalities that exist.