

The Philosophy of Computer Games Bergen 2013

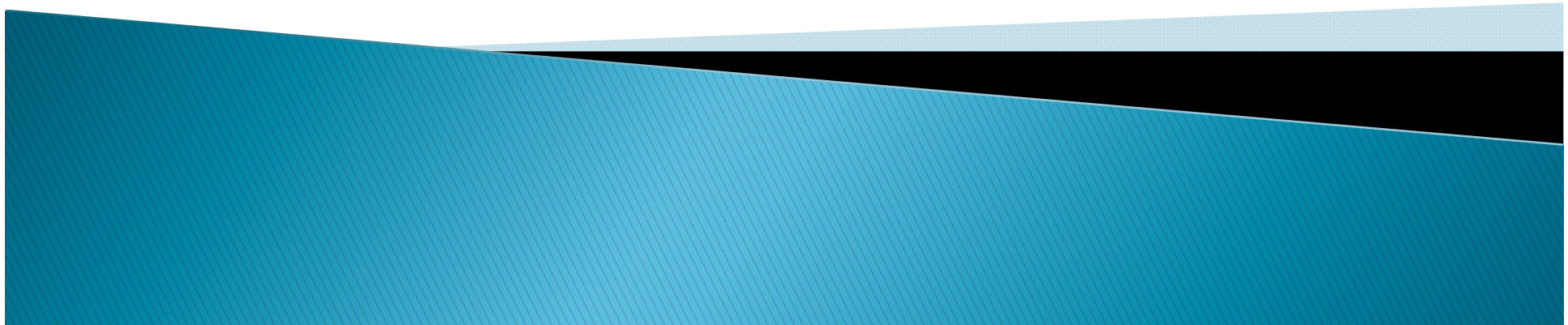
Half-Minute Hero and the genre-dependent construction of spatiality in videogames

Joaquin Siabra-Fraile

Spanish National Research Council, Spain

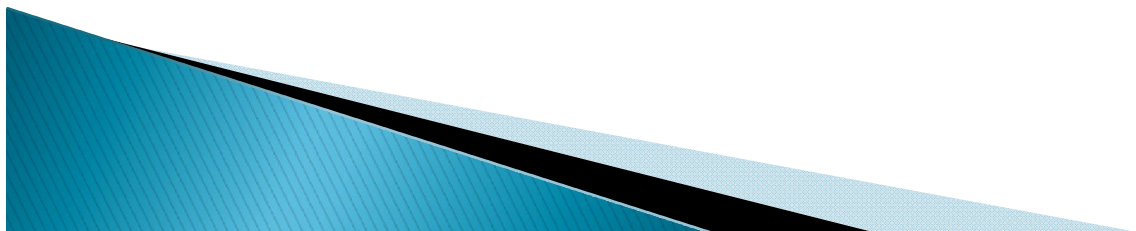
joaquin.siabra@cchs.csic.es

Joaquin.siabra@gmail.com



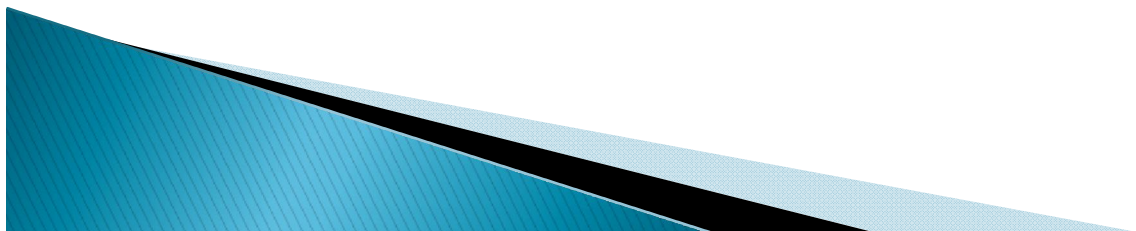
Videogame as virtual world

- ▶ Interactivity of videogames
- ▶ A videogame does not simulate *things*, but the *laws* that rule the behaviour of things (Frasca 2003:2–4)
- ▶ Virtual world: the simulation or implementation of a set of rules for the behaviour of objects
- ▶ So a *videogame is a kind of virtual world.*



Videogame as virtual world

- ▶ Virtual world: both the goal and the result of the actions *may be* external to the virtual world. Example: *Facebook*
- ▶ Videogame: both the goal and the result of the actions *are* internal to the virtual world. Example: *Hitman: Blood Money*.

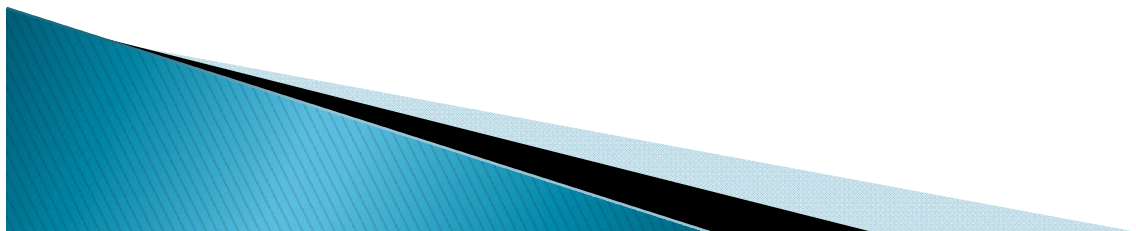


Virtual world as logical space of conditions

- ▶ What is, then, an object within a virtual world?

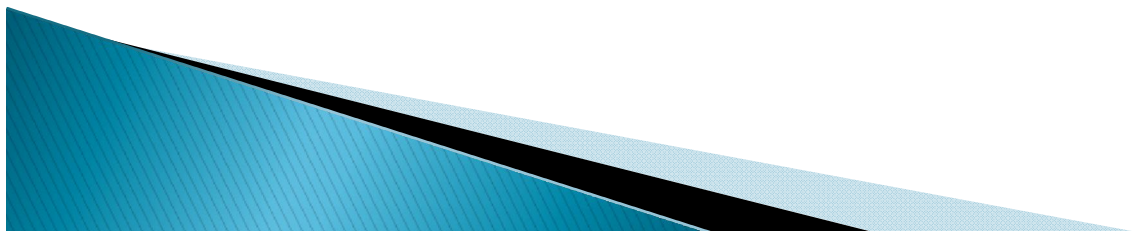
Object: everything that works as *condition for* something else

- ▶ Concept of object in Wittgenstein
- ▶ Possibility of interrelation of objects in the virtual world = possibility of actions in the virtual world.



Logical space of conditions and goals in a videogame

- ▶ Pragmatic net of objects and meaning
- ▶ Meaning and goals
- ▶ Goals and immersion



Genericity of logical spaces

- ▶ Genres = outlines of logical spaces
- ▶ When it is said of a videogame that it is of some genre, the gamer is being told *what kind of world is going to find* or, in terms of immersion–incorporation, *what kind of things the gamer will be able to do*. Example: *bottle* in *Lost in Blue* or in *Manhunt*
- ▶ *Genres are* historical conventions consolidated by use (*not deducible from a principle*)



From logical space to physical space

- ▶ Videogame, as a virtual world, is a set of rules of dependency between objects.
- ▶ The representation of these objects is subject to the rules of dependency between objects (representation is virtualised)
- ▶ *So in a videogame the physical space depends on the logical space upon which the virtual world is constructed.*
- ▶ The Problem: *the logical space is a kind of ontology, the physical space defines extensions.*



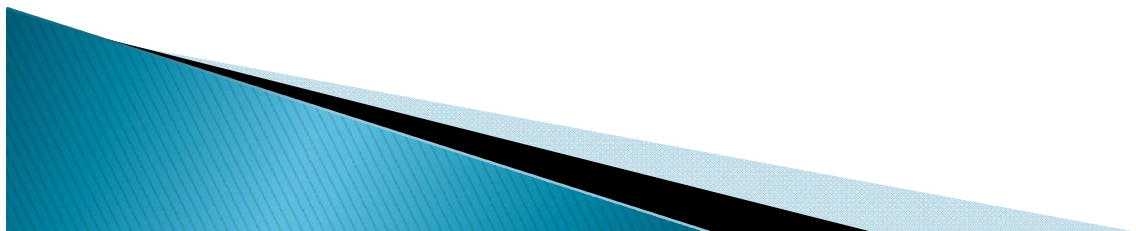
From logical space to physical space

- ▶ A relational theory of space: Leibniz (Clarke–Leibniz 1717: Leibniz's Fifth Paper, §47).
- ▶ *Situation, Place and Space*
- ▶ physical space in videogames = *the set of representations constructed from specific situations of objects, which situations are adjusted to a general model of conditions between objects.*
- ▶ physical space in videogames is always *logically qualified* by that which can or cannot be done



Genericity of the physical space

- ▶ If logical space determines physical space,
- ▶ And logical spaces are defined according to certain genres or combination of genres,
- ▶ Then the physical spaces are generically determined.



Genre-dependent construction of spatiality in *Half-Minute hero*



Figure 1. Representation of a physical space “P”. Source: *Half-Minute Hero*, Marvellous Entertainment PSP, 2009

Genre-dependent construction of spatiality in *Half-Minute hero*

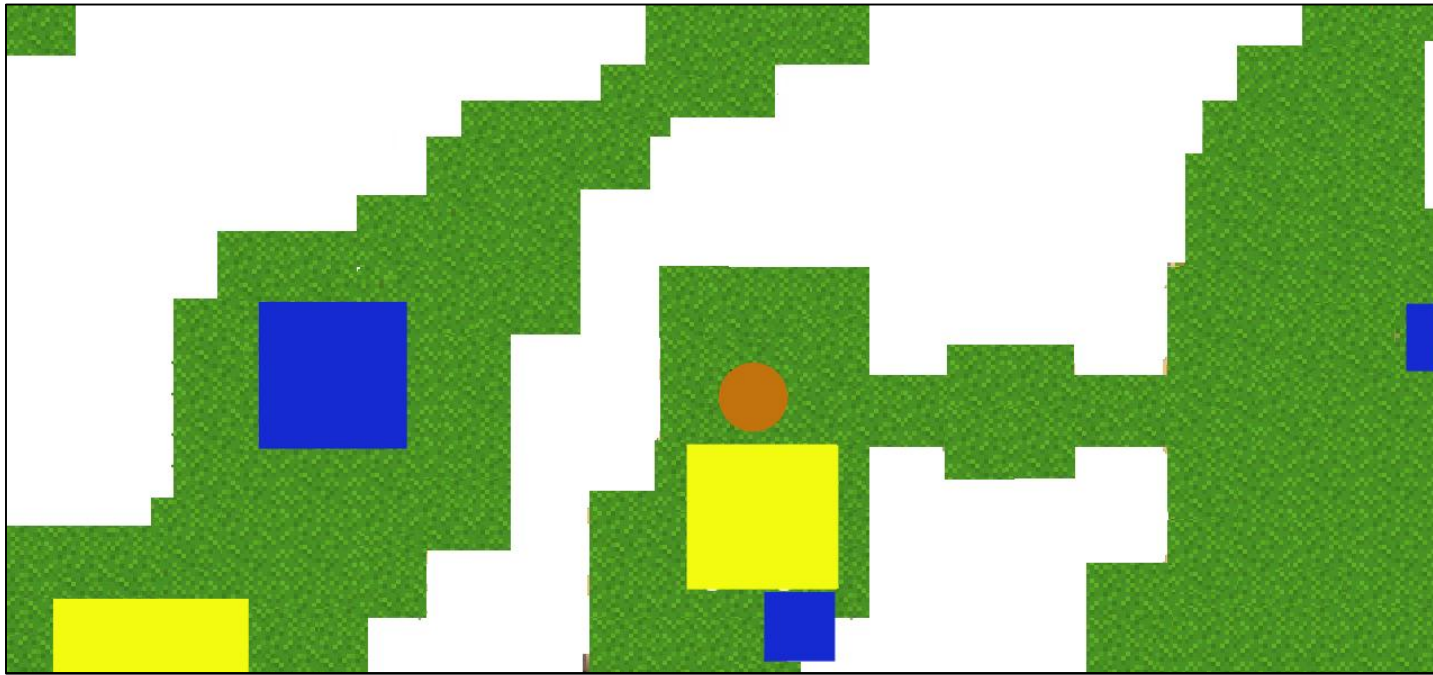


Figure 2. Qualified space A of P (simplified) if there is no object "ship". White; Inaccessible space. Green: accessible space with low level enemies. Yellow: space with high level enemies. Blue: links to cities or end boss. The brown circle is the character. Source: prepared by the author based on the figure 1.

Genre-dependent construction of spatiality in *Half-Minute hero*

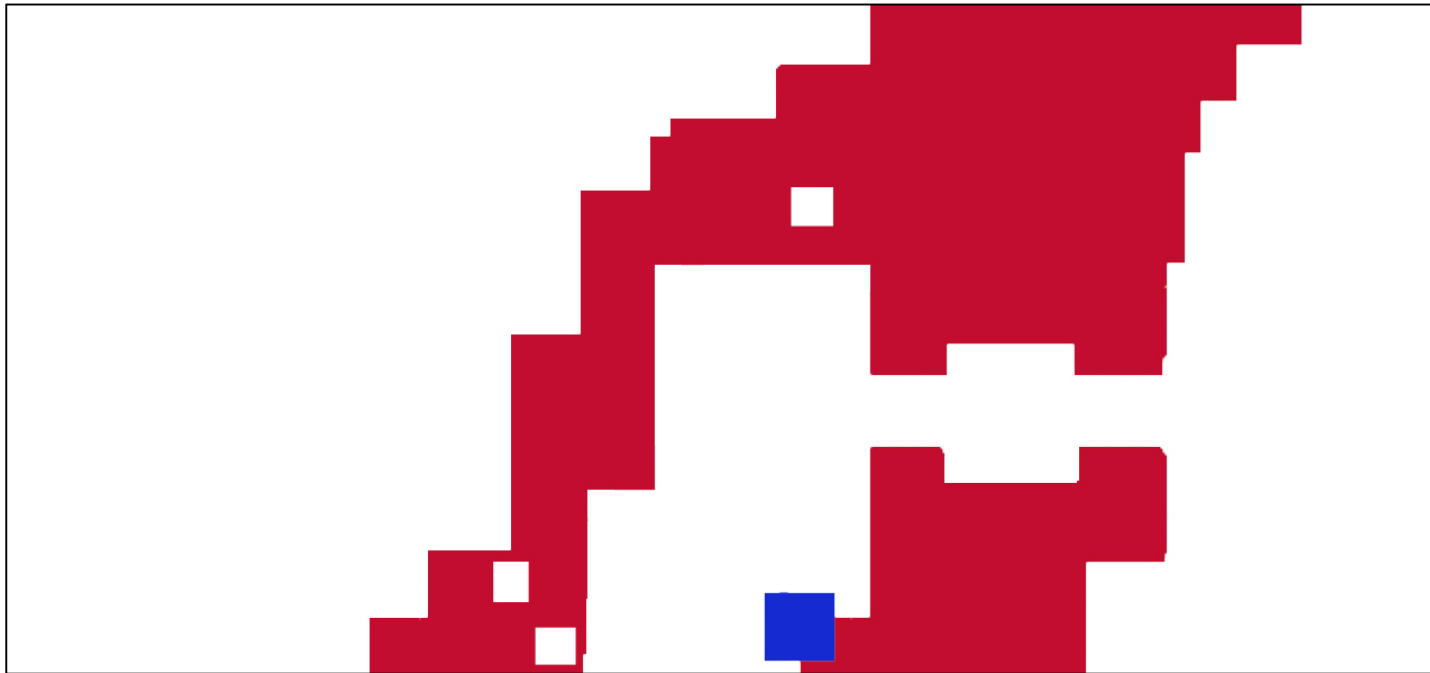


Figure 3. Qualified space B of P when we sail on a ship. White: inaccessible space. Blue: the harbour (switcher between A and B). Red: space we can move through. Source: prepared by the author based on the figure 1.



Genre-dependent construction of spatiality in *Half-Minute hero*

- ▶ Role-playing video game: Hero 30 Mode



Source: *Half-Minute Hero*, Marvellous Entertainment PSP, 2009

Genre-dependent construction of spatiality in *Half-Minute hero*

- ▶ Real-time strategy game: Evil Lord 30 Mode



Source: *Half-Minute Hero*, Marvellous Entertainment PSP, 2009

Genre-dependent construction of spatiality in *Half-Minute hero*

- ▶ Shoot 'em up game: Princess 30 Mode



Source: *Half-Minute Hero*, Marvellous Entertainment PSP, 2009

Genre-dependent construction of spatiality in *Half-Minute hero*

- ▶ Hack-and-slash game: Knight 30 Mode



Source: *Half-Minute Hero*, Marvellous Entertainment PSP, 2009

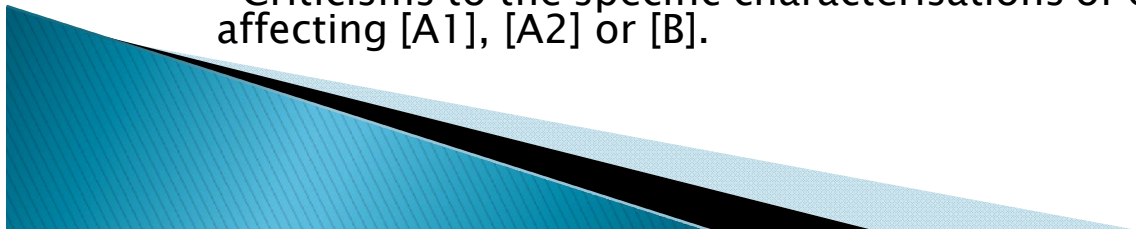
Genre-dependent construction of spatiality in *Half-Minute hero*

► Hub mode



Conclusion

- ▶ [A1]: videogame as a kind of virtual world (=a net of objects or logical space of conditions characterised by its function or rules of use).
A criticism should explain how the interactivity without an autonomy of the rules (implementable by means of a Turing Machine) is possible
- ▶ [A2]: generic outlines of such nets of objects/rules of use or logical space of conditions = genres of videogames
A criticism should account for the different meanings of the objects in, for example, a platform game in relation to an RPG
- ▶ [B]: the physical space is constructed upon the rules of that logical space: because the logical space is established in the shape of diverse genres, so the physical space, dependent on the logical space, will be established dependent on the genres.
A counterexample could be an alternative theoretical mechanism by which the physical distance in a videogame is independent from the set of goals (established with and from the existing objects, in accordance with one or various genres)
- ▶ [C]: RPG, Shoot'em, RTS and Hack-and-slash games from the analysis of *Half-Minute Hero*
Criticisms to the specific characterisations of each genre are possible without affecting [A1], [A2] or [B].



The Philosophy of Computer Games Bergen 2013

Half-Minute Hero and the genre-dependent construction of spatiality in videogames

Joaquin Siabra-Fraile

Spanish National Research Council, Spain

joaquin.siabra@cchs.csic.es

Joaquin.siabra@gmail.com

