



# Fictional Worlds in Cinema and Games: Affinities in Their Conceptions, Creation, and Goals

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**Abstract.** Any cinematographic or videogame storytelling and narrative, real action, drawn or digital - imply developing replications of Man's life and existence, that will have to be unavoidably anchored in its fictional space. Only with those worlds the game or movie character's script and plot can make sense.

The player lives and experiences these fictions and their worlds, feeling himself a protagonist of the fiction and a co-builder of it.

Any linear cinematic narrative has a great amount of aspects that differ from its nature of being the strictly controlled narrative and representation of cinema or animation, compared to the player interaction with the fiction of a game.

It is this common ground and distinction between linear and interactive narratives – film and animation versus games - that this article tries to analyze, understand, and explore. Toward this aim, some paradigmatic films and games will be used as case studies.

**Keywords:** Games · Movies · Language · Fictional space · Viewer/player

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Viewer/Player Existential Experience of Fictional Worlds and Their Tales

The space of a fictional world is inseparably connected with the characters who inhabit in it and act on it, and with the action and narrative flowing from it: it is the support where happens all human experience. It is where he lives, acts, and interacts with the world and the others.

The cinematographic or videogame storytelling and narrative, real action, drawn or digital - imply developing replications of Man's life and existence, that will have to be unavoidably anchored in its fictional space. In these worlds the script and plot make sense to the game or movie characters: *“The atmospheric qualities of sets, places and environments are essential in establishing a mood and the deployment of an emotional feeling about the world around the movie”* [1].

Each space of a world is unavoidable linked with its inhabitants: worlds and characters, in their interaction, foresees action and narrative flowing from it. The

Fictional Space is the support where happens all human experience of the plot, relating the World, their Characters and their Action and Plot.

Any narrative in a linear cinematic or game interaction environment simulating Man's life existence is necessarily anchored in its fictional space. Only with this space makes sense the game/movie narrative, being told as the script and plot unfolds.

A game player must plan and act in response to challenges that are posed to him. He lives and experiences these fictions and their worlds, feeling himself a protagonist of the fiction and a co-builder of it: narratives enable the viewer to apprehend, ok think and place himself before new challenging and never thought perspectives, ideas, values and concepts: *"the subjective experience that emerges from the interaction between game and player"* [2].

In a game tale storytelling and script, the cinematographic linearity should become theoretically in infinite lines of possible events and plots, with diverse endings, in which a narrative story line can diverges in multiple plots and outcomes. Also, this relationship between the gamer, the gameplay, narrative and fictional worlds imply a storyline and plot where the player can go through a infinite fictional space in a immersive and free path through the Fiction Space. So, space and plot are inseparable from the fiction narrative and storytelling.

This "freedom" appeals much to the player as also allows him a greater immersion in the game world, because it facilitates the projection of his imagination about this world and the events that he himself casts. In order to maintain a sense of freedom in the game, this control is done in a subtle and indirect way through various forms, called "indirect control" of the player, such as constraints, objectives, interfaces, visual design, characters and music [3].

## 1.2 Living Versus Interacting

In a game design or a film plot characters inhabit their world's existential space: the viewer/player is constrained to be aware of realities, spaces, events, and the other characters, and is bound to those, engaging and interacting with them. He is totally immersed - soul, senses, and body - and experiences these interactions with the fictional world in the first person: *"not only enters in the worlds games, as well he changes them and their elements"* [4].

To understand the full Storytelling of a Cinematic Fiction and to be interact with that fiction, in a game, requires to the viewer to look to it, but to be fully immersed and feeling a sense of "presence" in the Fiction World: *"is when the mental division between the player's real self and his in-game avatar softens, so events happening to the avatar become meaningful as though they were happening to the player himself"* [5].

This implies the player as the center of a fictional world, that surrounds him, feeling fully immersed in the fictional space and world. This is used in movies as in games and make the viewer/gamer feel he is in the world of the fiction and belongs to it and its living story. This degree of the player immersion can vary in depth: *"we can develop a set of design criteria that will enable us to judge a game's degree of impressiveness, engagement, and the degree of presence possible"* [6].

This living as the potential to make the viewer or player apprehend, think, and situate himself before new perspectives, ideas, values, quests, and concepts: *“the characters, events and architecture interact and designate each other”* [7].

In any linear cinematic narrative, of cinema or animation, a great amount of aspects differs in its nature, being a strictly controlled narrative and representation, compared to the player interaction with the fiction of a game.

In a linear narrative the viewer is guided, without any option, through successive spaces, events, premonitions, anticipations, fears, joys, expectations, and conclusions. Even the empathy or dislike he feels about characters and environments are not his choice, as he could thought, but it is the Art Director’s one. Everything in a Visual Linear Cinematic Narrative is predefined and intended.

Much of the cinematic language and syntax of its grammar, particularly in relation to the fictional world space and content and its visual representation - production design - applies to games as to cinematographic linear narratives in a very close way: relation to camera behavior, light and color, composition, balance, emphasis, perception, directing and editing and also in the way the fictional space is built.

In a game there are aspects like fiction implicit and explicit rules, design of implicit constraints, phased goals, rewards and penalties, concepts of infinite - space with boundaries, structure, and dimensions clearly finite - that differs from the cinema linear visual and telling language.

## 2 Case Studies

In this article the goal is to infer some assumptions about the coordinated use of the several grammars, leading to the coherence and effectiveness of a game, and also to verify the conception and use of its fictional space as a support of the plot, actions and storytelling.

For this analysis, some popular and paradigmatic film and games will be used as case studies to look to, try to identify and relate:

- The grammar of game and movie languages: visual representation and composition, scripting, directing, editing, lighting and game specifics.
- The fictional worlds and spaces used and their concept.

### 2.1 Linear Narratives and Their Fictional Worlds and Places



**Fig. 1.** Blade Runner - Spaces of Power and Society Contrasts with Monumental Architecture

### *Blade Runner* [8]

Blade Runner is a film that emphasizes power and world of pollution and harsh social contrasts, depicting cities inspired on Metropolis, multilevel, being the rich who inhabits in the highest levels (Fig. 1). Symbols of Power are all over the Film.

The Fictional Space is visual dominant in the film, full of signs about how is the people that inhabits in its very diverse spaces. The narrative and emotional role of its spaces and imagery is so important that the main telling is given by it (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** The Fifth Element – City Multilayer alike with monumental and Eclectic Architecture

### *The Fifth Element* [9]

In the line of Blade Runner but not so developed, this Film emulates and details, avoiding low key shots, the monumental, eclectic and multilevel nature of cities, at a urban and architectural level. The narrative role is not present, it consists more of a diversion background for the main story.

## 2.2 Games with Fictional Worlds as Parallel Telling Device



**Fig. 3.** Fictional World to place a non-related Music precision tap game

*Dancing Line* [10]

Dancing Line is a game where the player taps with the finger sync with the rhythm of popular songs (Fig. 3).

This would not have any relevance if they did not create:

- thematic spaces, filmed by a camera like in a film one
- It gives the player rich and imaginative worlds he travels along each song.
- Lines of rhythm become streets along detailed and cinematic spaces
- The Space metamorphoses along, synchronous with the progress of the player and the music.

**2.3 Role Play Games – Interacting with Living Worlds**



**Fig. 4.** Life is Strange: Game of Film Sequences unite by interaction stops

*Life is Strange* [11]

Life is Strange is the example how we can glue 3D shots, parts of the plot action, having between freeze shots were the player must decide what action he choose to take between a finite number presented. All the rules of cinema are present and applied with mastery (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 5.** RPG Toram Online – RPL with action in a supposed infinite world

### *RPG Toram Online* [12]

Toram online is a RPG with an apparent infinite world where the player progresses through quests, interacting with other characters (Fig. 5). This Infinite world are quite finite!

## 2.4 Alter Ego Worlds – Alternative Worlds to Live



**Fig. 6.** Star Citizen – An IA Universe where the player can have an alternate life

### *Star Citizen* [13]

Star Citizen is a new level of concept in game and Fictional Space (Fig. 6). It is an almost infinite and extremely detailed part of a univers, with stars, planets and moons, with all the dynamics of weather and vegetation, snow, sea, and physics laws. The most part is created by interactive IA that memorizes objects and places, having all-natural items natural movements, with the wind or when the player passes by.

Huge Cities and Industrial Complexes are full of transportations, detailed spaces with shops, offices, ships, dwellings, all usable and detailed.

In this hyperrealist Universe the player can be any profession he wants, can talk and collaborate with other online players (or their alter-egos avatars). The size and detail make this game infinite, for real!

## 3 Conclusions

The role of the Fictional World and Spaces in Films and Games is each time more important and storytelling, having a narrative fundamental role, framing completely the actions, emotions and ambience of the plot, characters, and players!

The visual representation, fictional spaces, lighting, framing, and camera angles is now the main tool in any 3D game or film.

But in this highly developed fictional spaces, characters and worlds, the actions and plots possible are now much more complex, parallel, and open ending!

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