

# Ecology and Games: Regenerative Play

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The “EAG: Regenerative Play” research program sets out to scrutinize a form of play that is *regenerative* in various ways and aims to resensitize the player of video game narratives to the beauty of the natural world, the benefits of a balance between ecosystems, and forms of sustainability. This occurs through aesthetic experiences in the gameworld, where the player may find or actualize *participatory spaces* (utopian enclaves) with the potential of establishing a *counter-discourse* to negative tendencies of the empirical world through play. This includes the players’ experience of the (natural-cultural) environment, the interaction with characters or animals, or player actions such as the creative use of items, moral/ethical choices concerning the human and non-human, as well as the establishments of a society as a whole, etc.).

To explain this regenerative effect of play, the program builds on the results of Farca’s 2017 dissertation—“Playing Dystopia: Nightmarish Worlds in Video Games and the Player’s Aesthetic Response”—and Lehner’s research into self-reflexive video games intertwined with ecological issues. It aims to further illuminate the player’s experience of meaning in the gameworld by laying emphasis on the tripartite dialectic between (*eco*)game, player, and culture (world). The act of play is as such regarded from a phenomenological point of view, where the player composes creative connections between the gameworld and her/his empirical surroundings.

The research endeavor follows a theoretical approach and situates itself in a *transdisciplinary environment* by relating the research fields of cultural ecology/ecocriticism, utopian/dystopian studies, theories of fiction/narratology/aesthetic response to game studies and game culture in general. Of particular concern will thus be the *structural organizing* of the above-mentioned *participatory spaces* (their perspectival structures, interrelations, and arising blanks) and how a *counter-discourse* to negative tendencies of the contemporary present is initiated through play—and in the interplay of the fictive, the imaginary, and the real.

## **Publications:**

Farca, Gerald and Charlotte Ladevèze. “The Journey to Nature: *The Last of Us* as Critical Dystopia.” *Proceedings of the First International Joint Conference of DiGRA and FGD*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2016, pp. 1-16. *DiGRA Digital Library*, <http://www.digra.org/digital-library/publications/the-journey-to-nature-the-last-of-us-as-critical-dystopia/>. Accessed 05 Oct. 2017.

Lehner, Alexander. “Videogames as Cultural Ecology: *Flower* and *Shadow of the Colossus*” *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2017, pp. 56–71. <http://ecozona.eu/article/view/1349/2089>. Accessed 18 Nov. 2017