

VIDEOGAME SOUNDSCAPES

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Abstract

This paper proposes a methodological framework to analyze the sonic output of computer games by investigating and adapting available soundscape studies, as discussed primarily by R. Murray Schafer and Barry Truax.

While the current academic research about sound in games highlighted the problematic nature of the application of film sound theory to videogames (Jørgensen 2007, 2009, 2011; Collins 2007), this paper considers studies concerning videogame audio, soundscapes and acoustic ecology (Grimshaw 2007; Grimshaw and Schott 2007; O' Keefe 2011; Droumeva 2011) by re-focusing the attention on existing soundscape methodologies, analyzing their theoretical validity and the productiveness of such an approach.

By critically considering Truax (2001) analysis of an arcade game room soundscape, videogames will be repositioned by considering them objects for meaningful acoustic communication. An analysis of the sonic environment actualized by the videogame player during a play session is performed, identifying the key features (keynote sounds, sound signals and soundmarks) and the level of definition of a videogame soundscape (high or low definition). Examples are based on modern games such as *Street Fighter IV* (Capcom 2009) and *Grand Theft Auto IV* (Rockstar Games 2008), as well as classic titles like *Pac-Man* (Namco 1980) and *Bomberman* (Hudson Soft 1983).

Keywords: videogame, videogame sound, soundscapes, acoustic communication.