

Research examines the structure of videogames

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Alice Madness Returns.

Research at the Universidad Carlos III of Madrid (UC3M) analyzes in depth the content of videogames and their interaction with the player. The study of this material shows the importance of this industry, which is experiencing exponential growth.

The videogame business has experienced spectacular growth since Nintendo took the Christmas gift market by storm in the mid-eighties. This enormous industry is more than a [moneymaking](#) machine. Its volume is so large that it has reached the academic world, where its contents have become the subject of in-depth study.

Antonio José Planells, a researcher in the Department of Journalism and Audiovisual Communication at UC3M, considers [videogames](#) to be

"ludofictional worlds" in which we can find various facets that are worthy of study. In his doctoral dissertation, he explains the existence of some static dimensions in which all of the action develops, and other dynamics that correspond to the psychological world of each of the characters that appear in the story. "In the 'Mario Bros' dynamic world the princess, who is Bowser's prisoner, must be saved, while in 'Bowser's' world, the princess must remain a prisoner. This sets up the challenge," he indicates.

In Planells studies, videogames are analyzed by examining various aspects, such as the construction of the characters, the options that modify the [virtual world](#) and the scenarios. The conclusion he comes to is that these are not stories themselves, but rather that they can generate distinct experiences keeping in mind the way in which each player understands those fictitious worlds and how they related to them. These relations, he points out, are what incite players to immerse themselves in the games during their free time.

These analyses, carried out in the [academic world](#), may serve to help a sector that is constantly in search of not just new ways to improve their products and new perspectives to make them more original, but also of new ways to interact with players. "More attractive characters and more coherent worlds can be created, and the impact of controls and screen interface can be tested as well," adds Planells.

Social values in videogames

Still, there are many other aspects of videogames that should be studied in order to increase the margin for improvement that they still have. Among these, the UC3M researcher suggests the possibility of analyzing the evolution of the female characters or the introduction of social values like family or democracy.

Spain has a nascent videogame industry that can become very important in the next few years. However, at present and "in spite of being the fourth country in terms of videogame consumption in Europe, it is hardly even a player in the global context as far as design goes," notes Planells. "Considering that this sector is one of the few that are weathering the economic crisis and generating employment, it is inconceivable that Spanish universities refuse to give it their full support," he criticizes.

This sector represents a market that has not stopped improving over the years. The players, who twenty years ago were boys under 15 years of age, are now, on average, over thirty years old. Girls also play and users are more demanding nowadays, thanks in part to the evolution of the technology of both the design of graphics and the way of playing itself.

In the book *La protección jurídica de los derechos de autor de los creadores de videojuegos* (The legal protection of the copyrights of videogame creators -Trama Editorial, 2012), which Antonio José Planells has written together with Francisco Javier Donaire, there are more studies on the role of intellectual property in the videogame industry and on the protection of creativity.

Provided by Carlos III University of Madrid

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