

Games Help Humans Enable Change

“We will change the choices we make when we change the way we make choices.”

Using strategy games as a tool for improved environmental policy-making

Why is there a need for improved environmental policies?

Environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, and climate change are impacting billions of people worldwide, costing lives and trillions of dollars in damage. Scientists identify what measures can be taken to stop and reverse these trends. Yet humans are proving to be unwilling, unprepared, or unable to change. As governments around the world struggle to reach critical environmental targets, a new theory of action demonstrates how role-playing games lead to transformative change.

Games offer more accurate models of human behavior to facilitate environmental policy-making

How does playing a game change environmental policy?

Games are models, and game rules represent system processes. This paper in Nature Sustainability proposes using strategy games as an effective way to find novel solutions to complex socio-environmental issues. Strategy games allow players to experience how a system works from the perspective of different stakeholders. These games offer opportunities for strategy formulation, conflict resolution, and the construction of new agreements, helping players break free from established norms in the policy-making processes.

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**Environmental
policy-making:
Flaws in how
decisions are
being made**

Can we change the choices we make by changing the way we make choices?

Even with clear scientific consensus around the negative consequences of environmental degradation and the critical need for effective environmental policies, little attention is paid to how environmental policies are affected by human behavior, limiting their effectiveness. “Other models are not aligned with how people act,” said study author Dr. Claude Garcia. “With games, real humans make real decisions in a context where emotions are important and stakes are high.” Games give players new insights into how to resolve difficult socio-environmental issues.

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play the most
important
game of our
generation?**

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Games and the interactions players have while playing them support transparent dialogues that bypass limitations inherent to current decision-making. For the game-playing experience to translate to real-world policies, it requires stakeholders who have power to change the way a system works to play. The strategy game experience offers a chance to discover new solutions that can lead to effective policy.

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