

# What Realities do We Face?

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## Keywords

virtual reality, simulation, games, gaming, ethics, ethical, reality, truth

Dear readers of Simulation and Gaming,

Games are often copies of realities. Simulators, such as flight or medical simulators used for training, are incredibly accurate copies of real situations. Game designers strive to develop simulations that are as real as possible, such as training tools, and then measure their effect.

In contrast, simulations and games that deal with societies are much more complex and raise complicated issues. Realities are socially constructed, and we may see different realities or ‘truths’.

For example, suppose you want to design environmental games related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In that case, you have to analyze the status quo and decide the objectives of what players would learn by playing the game. Even if you use the same or similar data input, interpretations might inevitably differ depending on how the game is designed. The game’s objectives, i.e., what players will learn after gameplay, can vary even if players’ input is the same. Some designers may interpret the current global warming as ongoing but mild, while others may interpret it as extreme and that they are prompted for immediate action.

That, in fact, mimics real life very well. We also struggle with different realities or ‘truths’ in the real world, coming from the same data. We interpret what is happening in the world differently, as the beliefs and references we relate to our interpretations are all

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different. Indeed, international conflicts coming from different perspectives on reality have revealed themselves more explicitly and frequently than ever.

Then the question is: What interpretation of data, e.g., reality, do we, game designers and researchers, adopt? How can we learn and educate via games if the reality we believe is often so different based on the same data? Or do we avoid data manipulation, whether intentionally or unintentionally, to get to our own preferred reality?

Although simulation and gaming have expanded in their respective fields and are intertwined with our daily analog and digital lives, we should pause sometimes. We should take some time to reflect and think about whether what we see or experience is a reality. In other words, when facing designer challenges in games or simulation, we must address the associated ethical issues and recognize what we do not know and need help with.

Let's keep this issue in mind and, hopefully, continue the discussion with us!

### **Author Biographies**

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