

Infra-Ordinary Rewritings: Animal Crossing: Pocket Camp as an Introductory Study

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I will attempt to situate the need for Georges Perec's theory of the *infra-ordinary* within Game Studies, utilising *Animal Crossing: Pocket Camp* as a case study. I will start by briefly explaining and situating Perec's theory, within both his literary and political background. This will be followed by a textual writing of a short infra-ordinary playthrough of *Pocket Camp*, specifically focused on five chosen in-game areas. Through this playthrough, I will attempt to show the value attained of an infra-ordinary playthrough within *Pocket Camp*.

Keywords

Perec, infra-ordinary, animal crossing, lefebvre, OuLiPo

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I will look at *Animal Crossing: Pocket Camp*, utilising Georges Perec's notion of the infra-ordinary. The infra-ordinary is that which is opposed to the extra-ordinary; that which stands out from being ordinary (not extraordinary, meaning amazing). Both can be uninteresting, but only the infra-ordinary can be mundane and quotidian. Through a better understanding of the infra-ordinary, I posit that we can achieve a better understanding of what sets out the extraordinary as such. We can also adopt a critical lens to the ignored everyday things, hidden within the infra-ordinary, that lead to extraordinary events.

I will start by placing Perec's notions both within their literary and philosophical history, as well as tying them to current questions and discourses within game studies. Firstly, Perec's methodology for his infra-ordinary inventories stems from his membership with the OuLiPo, a French literary movement which exists to this day. Their aim to create an infinitely consumable literature, conceived of through impersonal reiteration, can lead us to divergent readings of current play experiences, such as auto-ethnographic approaches and phenomenological approaches. Secondly, the paper's rhetorical scope ties closely with his friendship to Lefebvre, which leads us to explore the latter's theories within previous applications in game studies, and seeing how this paper performs these theories differently, thanks to Perec's intervention.

I will show how this can be done through an infra-ordinary rewriting of *Pocket Camp* (2017), a mobile game in November 2017 by Nintendo. After explaining how my methodology fits within the literature scope detailed above, I will read *Pocket Camp* from its infra-ordinary rewriting, analysing whether this new method led me to new readings. I will also compare it to a secondary reading of a previous game in the

Animal Crossing franchise, in order to see what infra-ordinary rewritings lead us to learn better.

INFRA-ORDINARY

Conceptual Overview

The most cited of Perec's writing about the infra-ordinary is *Approaches to What?* (Perec 1997, 209-211). He opens this essay by describing how what is seen, and thus consumed is the extra-ordinary; coal mine explosions become more visible as the number of people they kill in the blast increases, aeroplanes only start to exist as they are hijacked. However, he notes that this focus on the extraordinary event subverts attention from the mundane lead up to it which diverts from the true scandals. The true scandals are not the coal mine explosions, but rather the precarious work conditions in the coal mines themselves, which are bumped down to an everyday inevitability.

He poses that the problem lies in the writing of these things. Writing about the extraordinary happens often, perpetuating it as an event that is worth noting, reading and questioning. However, the habitual is not written about, and thus not noted, not read and not questioned. He explains that this is not because the everyday is uninteresting, where he cites Verne's science fictional fascination with phones which has now shifted to the mundane. The everyday can be interesting if we find time to rediscover it, question it and explore why it has ceased to astonish us on a daily basis.

This is where the infra-ordinary exists. It exists in how many tea spoons we put into our tea, what lies under our wallpaper, how many movements it takes to dial a phone number, as well as what local grocery stores sell, don't sell and why. What is important in this question is not necessarily the underlying methods and principles behind these actions, as there might be none. What becomes important is how these explorations became mundane and vain, which lead to them not being asked about, and thus forgotten and unquestioned, potentially missing out on any underlying methods and principles they might have.

Perhaps the clearest example of Perec's infra-ordinary in action would be his own *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* (Perec 2010) (hereby referred to as *Exhausting a Place*), in which he sits down at Saint-Sulpice in Paris, on three different days and lists all the different things he observed throughout the day. As noted above, he paid attention to the endotic (as opposed to exotic) and everyday, such as the buses passing, the shop signs, nondescript people going on with their days, as well as all the unnamed infrastructure such as trees, street lamps, and asphalt. He does not do this with any deep rhyme or reason. He does it only to chronicle that which would be not otherwise chronicled in a world that only pays attention to the extra-ordinary, as commentary aimed at our fascination with things changing.

However, this is hardly his only work that dealt with the infra-ordinary. *An Attempt at an Inventory of the Liquid and the Solid Foodstuffs Ingurgitated by Me in the Course of the Year Nineteen Hundred and Seventy Four* (Perec 1997, 244-260) (hereby referred to as *An Inventory*) somehow contains even less editorialisation of the infra-ordinary, as it is nothing more than every thing that Perec ate in the year 1974, sorted by type of food or drink. In *Exhausting a Place*, Perec had to make choices as to what constituted infra-ordinary, which resulted from his own cultural reading of what was quotidian in Saint-Sulpice. However, in *An Inventory*, the reading of the infra-ordinary emerges from how little we think of what we eat, rather than from his writing. It is a revelation not of an infra-ordinary space, but rather of infra-ordinary acts.

Based on the work presented above, whenever I use the term infra-ordinary within this text, I will be describing that which presents itself to immediate and easy description due to its familiarity, yet escapes constant or want-for description due to its mundaneness. It will be that which is obviously there, yet through expectation rather than through an active consideration.

OuLiPo

Perec's writing did not happen within a vacuum. On the one hand, the systematic dissection of everyday life comes from his destined membership to the OuLiPo, a French literary group dedicated to finding the underlying constructions of literature. While he was not a founding member of the group, it is clear to see why he became perhaps the most prolific writer within it. With seminal works such as *Life: A User's Manual* (2008), Perec managed to repeatedly show how writing within the confines of a restriction manages to reveal the confines outside of it.

Italo Calvino, a member of the OuLiPo, wrote of how he longed for the day that the figure of the author would be replaced by a writing machine. He argued that the authorial role is already a machinic one, and that any concept of "the 'I' of the author is dissolved in the writing." (1982, 15). With a writing machine, Calvino argued that notions of authorial transcendentalism or divine inspiration would be discarded with a much more sensible view of the author; as someone who creates readable systems. From there, "the decisive moment of the literary life will be that of reading" (1982, 15). It is the receiving end of the literary experience that Calvino, and the OuLiPo at large, feel is of value, because it is then that literature's potential to repeatedly shape its readers emerges.

Writing within impersonal confines is subverting these set-in-stone notions such as authorial voice, allowing for literature's maximum potentiality – it is the closest to the self-learning writing machine, envisaged by Calvino, that we can get to. It is the creation of artificially induced deconstruction of literary structures with Brutalist restrictions, in the hope that the reader can read something else. In *Exercise de Style*, Raymond Queneau, a founding member of the OuLiPo, rewrites the same story in a hundred slightly varied ways, both because he could, but also because each of those variations led the book to be read in a slightly varied way. Just as the voice of an author is a set of restrictions, so is using only a single vowel letter. However, unlike the voice of the author, this restriction has not become ingrained into the way we read literature, allowing us to read freshly again.

Writing about the infra-ordinary follows in this vein, albeit not necessarily aimed at authorial subversion. By writing about a situation with an infra-ordinary lens, it allows us to read the written notions in a different way. By writing about what is relegated to the infra-ordinary, it reveals what we conceive of as both ordinary and extra-ordinary, the locus of many other writings.

Placing these Oulipian notions in game studies renders some interesting notions for us to consider. For example, how does our reading of a game change when re-designing a game with minor variation, with Barr's *Snakism* (2017) coming to mind, where he made over 20 re-iterations of the classical game Snake. Does divergent reading extend to variations in console or controller, which works such as *Altice* (2015) and Jones and Thiruvathukal (2012) confirm and deal with extensively, albeit outside of an Oulipian lens.

However, considering that Perec's most famous infra-ordinary works were not slightly variant rewritings of ready-made texts, but rewritings of readily produced experiences, a more interesting question for this paper to consider is whether

rewritings of readily produced game experiences, outside of our personal standard play specificities (in the same way that infra-ordinary readings were not Perec's standard way of exploring space and food production), can lead to interesting readings.

Advocating for reading gameplay experiences is not necessarily the most novel idea within game studies. Westerlaken (2017) recently documented a Vegan playthrough of *Breath of the Wild* (Nintendo, 2017), which produced very interesting results in terms of the pervasiveness of animal consumption within *Breath of the Wild* specifically, and perhaps digital games more generally. However, this Oulipian methodology differs from this auto-ethnographic approach as it neither necessitates being auto (relating to myself as the player), nor does it necessitate being ethno (relating to people). Perec's role as consumer of food in *An Inventory* is auto-ethnographic, in the strictest sense of the word, but his writing is not reflective of himself and his consumption, nor is it overly reflective on the society's choices of consumption. It is, above all else, reflective on the extensive overly-elaborate details. Had it been someone else writing what Perec was eating, not much would have changed. Had Perec been eating in Hong Kong, over Paris, not much would have changed. Had he written less details, the entire work would have changed, since his restriction was related to this aspect, which then leads itself to be read by himself and others.

Similarly, this still differs from phenomenological readings of gameplay experiences, such as Leino's *Death Loop as a Feature* (2012), even though they are both divorced from personal focus of the auto-ethnographic, since Leino's positionality within the paper influences it only as much as the fact that he is the one writing it. It differs as the main focus of Perec's infra-ordinary rewritings is the potential readings set from the planned restriction of a known value, rather than the potential reading set from the unplanned restriction of an unknown value. Within a phenomenological approach, the interest is "how can I read this differently now that I am experiencing it in a different way". In an infra-ordinary approach, the interest is "how is this read differently, now that it is presented in a different way." Leading back to Calvino, the writing machine's value is the infinite permutations for our consumption in an infinitude of ways, as divorced from the egoistic I of the author's self.

Production of Space

On the other hand, as Highmore (2001) notes, Henri Lefebvre's friendship with Perec does more than solely punctuate Perec's work. While the *OuLiPo* is by design politically disengaged (Levin Becker, 2012, 287), it is hard to read *Approaches to What?* as anything but a criticism of the overly produced spaces in everyday life. This resonates quite clearly with Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991), in which Lefebvre talks about how signified space is produced socially, which means that the space itself becomes prone to becoming a tool for proliferation of the dominant social culture.

Lefebvre creates three concepts to describe space: spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces (1991, 38-39), each of which every person concretely explores and can move through without issue (1991, 40). Spatial practice within society is how society's space is both presupposed but also perpetuated. It is space as perceived. Society's space is constantly under production by this spatial practice, which leads to it being mastered by the practice itself. Lefebvre continues by explaining how societal space within neo-capitalism, exemplified by our urban reality which features separated nodes connected through routes and networks, is constantly being performed by our daily routines and reality. As neo-capitalism affects the way we act, encouraging us to separate our work and leisure so that each of these can be measure empirically, so are our spaces formed to accompany this activity segregation.

Representations of space are logically planned spaces, conceptualised by planners and engineers, technocrats and urbanists. It is space as conceived. Verbal representations of space underline the history of the ideologies that underpin the production of space. Anderson (2007) explains it succinctly when she states “Features that are emphasized in such representations of space often serve as signifiers of prominent ideologies or representational spaces.” Linking this back to Lefebvre, these representations cannot be solely symbolic, but must be actionable within a societal context (1991, 42).

Finally, representational spaces are the way spaces are experienced by its inhabitants, using images and symbols. It is space as lived. Lefebvre describes representational spaces not as dominant, but as “dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate,” (1991, 39) to which I would add that this change and appropriation exists not on a societal level, but on an interpersonal one. He explains that this space rests above the physical space, and it uses the physical objects as symbolic ones to.

Summarising these three considerations of space would give us something along the lines of the following sentence: X is the space where I go to work (spatial practice), it is 400sqft wide with a singular cutout square partition (representation of space), and i sometimes host table-top sessions here (representational space).

Linking this back to Perec’s work on the infra-ordinary, Lefebvre wrote that representational spaces are often non-verbal, leaning on imagery and symbolism, and because of this it belongs mostly to its inhabitants, who imagine these spaces in different ways. However, he also say that this dominated space is the breeding ground of “a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do no more than describe”, and one cannot help but feel that there is perhaps an indirect allusion to Perec’s inventory work within the infra-ordinary.

Utilising Lefebvre’s concepts, we can state that in *Approaches to What?*, Perec argues that non-ideologically conforming representations of spaces are lost in text, as writers describe these built environment as perceived, through their spacial practice, rather than as lived, through diverse representational spaces. Focusing on the environments as perceived not only perpetuates this textual blind-spot, but also ignores how that which is not perceived also contributes to this spatial perpetuation. As Lefebvre explains, space is constantly being mastered by itself – not just in the hubs of activity, but also the routes leading to it (1991, 39). Perec’s *Approaches to What?* Explains and shows that these routes are not only roads, but also stones, signs, and people’s footsteps.

Within games, these Lefebvrian considerations are increasingly relevant, with game studies growing more and more interested in spatial ramifications. For example, Nitsche (2008) offers Lefebvre’s three spatial divisions as a starting point for his five planes of game space. Crawford (2015) applies Lefebvre’s ideas even more directly as he argues that sports videogames are not representational spaces, stemming from people’s imagination and symbolism, but rather part of spatial practice; themed “nonplaces” that offer people a quantifiable, segregated yet still homogeniously hegemonic space of escapism. Janik (2015) comes closest to our paper’s topic when she argues that the city structure in *Batman: Arkham City* allows the “author to explore the contemporary identity strategies”, with Ford (2016) bringing in a similar point with the concise “the lived navigated space is inseparable from that space’s ideological construct.”

Utilising Perec’s theories on the infra-ordinary allows us to gain a focal scopes that we would not have otherwise had with a direct application of Lefebvre’s notions. It

provides us with a different method of analysing social space as politically productive. Oulipian methodology, which often focuses on mechanising literary output possessing the potential to limit authorial voice through impersonal constriction, combined with Perec's infra-ordinary inventory style of writing, which Lefebvre goes as far as to categorise as representational space because of its descriptive scope, reduces this political underpinning. It would be incredibly naïve to argue my writing is apolitical, nor would I aim it to be as such. However, through this impersonal writing constriction, I can write of this space, as devoid of me (the auto), allowing me a clearer focus on the structural components of the space itself, which lead to its spatial practice. While I perform spatial practice, so does the space itself, meriting isolated study.

ANIMAL CROSSING: POCKET CAMP

Animal Crossing: Pocket Camp (hereby referred to as Pocket Camp) is the most recently released game in the Animal Crossing franchise. In this game, players run a campsite within which they can invite anthropomorphic animals. However, in order to invite these animals to this campsite, players must perform certain tasks. Firstly, they need to become friends with the animals. This can be done in two ways: players can either talk to them, an action the animals will only entertain once every three hours and which yields between up to two affection; or else players can perform the animals' requests, which exclusively involves the player collecting resources (fish, bugs, or fruit) for them, an action entertained more often than being talked to normally renders three affection unto the player.

Secondly, they need to make sure the campsite suits the animals' tastes – cute animals will want a very particular cute décor, while sporty animals, as one would expect, will want a very particular sporty décor. In order to do this, you have to craft furniture, which requires two things: it requires that the player collects materials such as paper, wool, metal, wood, essences, and bells (which serve as the game's currency), which the animals give you for performing their requests; and it also requires real-life time – furniture takes time to be completed, from thirty seconds all the way to twelve hours, which you have to wait out.

Finally, space needs to be made for animals in the campsite. Each campsite can host up to eight animals. Once this limit is reached, players need to remove animals from their campsite in order to host new animals. As campsite landlord, you get to make the choice.

There does not seem to be a clear objective to the game; you cannot lose, die, or even perform worse at something. At worst, you may fail to collect one of the naturally replenishing resources. The only goal seems to be to have a campsite that hosts your favourite animals and yet is also customised to your own personal wishes. It is set apart from previous games in the franchise for two reasons. Firstly, it is the first Animal Crossing game on mobile phone devices, as opposed to Nintendo propriety devices. This allowed the game to reach a larger player-base than previous games would, as people are more likely to own phones than they are to own a New Nintendo 3DSXL. Secondly, it is the first Animal Crossing game that utilises a free-to-play model. This model allows the player to download the game for free. However, both through allowing players to only perform certain actions after enough time has elapsed, as well as through a dwindling supply of resources to an increasing demand from requests, it encourages players to spend real-life money in order to be allowed to make the gameplay experience more amenable. It does this namely, by removing time restrictions (from building furniture, performing requests, and collecting fruit) and allowing for more immediate supply collection (by allowing you to collect bugs and fish without a fail condition, five or more at a time).

I have had my own campsite in Pocket Camp since a day after the game's release. In the game, I am Level 22, which means that I have performed a significant amount of requests for animals. I also have two Level 3 natural amenities, which means that animals with a natural disposition have a threshold of liking me that is much higher than it normally would be for other animals. More importantly, just as Perec had a sense of Saint-Sulpice in Exhausting a Place (and a sense of food in An Inventory), I have a sense of the world of Pocket Camp.

INFRA-ORDINARY METHOD

In the following section, I will describe the infra-ordinary detail of five of the eight world divisions in Pocket Camp, and explore what questions we can raise, both about Pocket Camp as an artefact, as well as games in general. As explained earlier, I will take the infra-ordinary to be anything which I am not surprised to find there, but I never considered before. That which is mundane, both to this specific game and to the Animal Crossing franchise at large. That which does not constitute an extra-ordinary event, or signals to something in any way exotic to Pocket Camp.

I left the method displayed below for a few reasons. Firstly, it is there to allow for some level of reproducibility. Games are often changed, so results might become invalidated over time. Having the method below places a reified version of the gameplay.

Secondly, within a Oulipian framework, the method for the creation of a work within a constraint is incredibly important, even sometimes seen as more important than the work itself (although this part of the debate remains open, as Levin Becker (2012) explains.) My reading of the King James Bible will drastically differ from a priest's, or someone who can't read English, and yet they might all still be valuable – leaving the method used for the creation of the King James Bible as our only clue as to why this literature is valuable. As stated earlier, Calvino (1986) went as far as stating that he longed for the day when we manage to create writing machines, as the value of literature lies not within the authorial voice, but rather through the infinite readings possible. Leaving the method here, before the analysis, allows for personal readings of my observations of Pocket Camp before being subjected to my reading. Additionally, it allows us to see why my rewriting of Pocket Camp might be important, considering the method I chose to adopt.

Finally, still harping back to the previous point, it places the rewriting squarely as a rewriting of Pocket Camp space, rather than a reading of the space. Both the space as written by the level designers, as well as my infra-ordinary rewriting expose themselves to be read. The way they are to be read, suffice to say, will be very different – for starters, only one of them is ergodic, or even in any way interactive. However, they are both writings of the same space, with foci placed on different aspects. My reading of my writing afterwards will hopefully show how this change of focus in its writing lead me to read the game differently.

AN ATTEMPT AT EXHAUSTING ANIMAL CROSSING: POCKET CAMP

Saltwater Shores

- Eight sets of purple flowers, yellow flowers and red flowers.
- Fifteen autumnal trees, six dark wood trees, and many more trees in the far distance.
- An orange and white lighthouse, with two dimly lit windows.
- A man wearing a plaid purple and yellow shirt, looking at me intently.
- Fences, guarding the edge of a hill.

- Two plastic chairs, with a plastic table in between. On the table, two orange, presumably alcoholic drinks, each with a blue straw and an orange cocktail umbrella inside of them.
- A think stump of driftwood.
- Dark sand and light sand, alternating.
- Waves ebbing back and forth.
- Purple and grey hill-walls, with uneven rocks in the middle, that are consistently smoothed at the top.
- A blue tent, with a white and blue chequered pattern at the bottom.
- A footpath next to the sand, with an alternating pastel triangle pattern, broken only by oblong grey patches, with a grayscale circular pattern

OK Motors

- Four oil slicks.
- A garage populated by indiscernible tools, a wheelbarrow with tyres on it, and a laptop on a workbench.
- Three bins: red, green and blue, with unclear symbols and less clear words.
- Nine wall stickers, each having their own words or acronyms: NTDO, Tough, SPH
- Autocampsite, OIL 710, Animal Crossing, CAMP, Mountain, NTD, and Stalk Price
- 99.
- Two plastic chairs, with a plastic table in between. On the table, a soda, a beer and a juice. One of the chairs is blue.
- Eighteen cans of paint.
- Two red cones.
- Two long green hedges, which separate the road from the workspace.
- Two tulip crops, one white and one yellow. A daffodil crop, yellow. A rose crop, far back, white.
- Scattered tools on the floor, including a hammer, a powerdrill, three nuts, and a spanner.
- Rusted metal partitions, separating the workspace from the woods behind them.

Marketplace

- Eight sets of decaying flowers.
- A yellow bench, with dark green metal legs and similarly coloured bolts.
- Four banner-posts, with similar narrow swallowtail flags, each bearing two hollow diamonds, and one full circle.
- Gravel formation on the floor, set apart by their irregular circular pattern forming irregular circular shapes.
- Two leafy bushes, set in pairs, one elevated and lighter in colour. One lowered and darker in colour.
- A blue lorry, with writing in a foreign language. Following the writing, there is a pattern of square triangle circle circle – cross square triangle – cross triangle.
- A large tree, with wilting leaves, that looms over a large stretch of the square.
- Two sets of travel brochures, encouraging camping, as one has a camper and the other has a camp.
- A poster, encouraging camping, with a camper and a camp in the picture. It also has foreign writing.
- Two sets of four fences with space in between, through which I do not fit.

Campsite

- Two planks of wood placed diagonally.
- An axe lodged deeply into a wood stump.
- Two stacks of triangular wood, placed in a triangular formation.
- Four sets of four decaying flowers
- A single stump of wood, placed on a slightly elevated ledge in between two dark wood trees. Above it, red daffodils.
- A wood log fence, made of the same dark wood as the trees. There are 48 logs, split unevenly in two to make way for a footpath.
- A lake, out of reach, with the current flowing south-easterly. Behind the lake, there is an unpopulated shore, with similar trees and a similar opening in the trees.
- Two rock stumps, one level with me and one elevated, next to another elevated stump between two de-elevated trees.
- A third stump at the opening of the camp. Each stump, on second look, has a notch where an axe should be, but is not.

Shovelstrike Quarry

- A different ground pattern, with greyed out pastel oblongs irregularly split.
- Tufts of wilting grass, sticking out of oblong patches, barely supporting the life they host.
- Two sets of two red cones, connected by a stick, signalling caution. Behind them, there are two oil barrels, a reverse triangle caution sign, as well as two identical wheelbarrows, filled with rubble.
- Another set of two red cones, connected by a cautioning stick. Behind them, a tree stump and a rock.
- Yet one more set of two red cones, connected by a cautioning stick. Behind them, a forklift.
- A final set of two red cones, connected by a cautioning stick. Behind them is unknown.
- An automatic oil extractor made of wood.
- A solitary red cone.
- A foot-path that cannot be reached.
- Two porta-potties.
- Two oil barrels.
- A wooden table, accompanied by a plastic bench. On the table, a filament lamp, three onigiri and a thermos.

THE NON-EVENT OF THE INFRA-ORDINARY

One of the first aspects I noticed from my reading of my infra-ordinary rewriting of Pocket Camp was that all the objects I wrote of, and thus had not noticed before this exercise in my readings of the original writing of Pocket Camp, were nonergodic (Aarseth 1997). They were nonergodic not only within the scope of my re-writing (as everything is non-ergodic), but also within the original writing of Pocket Camp. No matter how I pressed my touch screen, none of the things I mentioned above responded to my touch. No matter where I placed my in-game character, none of the things adapt or shift to its position. The objects are there to be present, but not noticed. They are there to project a productive space, and yet not be a part of its conceived production. Within Lefebvre's terms, they are products of the spatial practice; routes that lead players to their quantifiable hubs of perceived activities, the core gameplay events.

By implication, if the infra-ordinary is nonergodic, then it would be safe to say that the ergodic in Pocket Camp is extra-ordinary. Events in Pocket Camp's original

writing necessitate not being infra-ordinary because they are calling upon us to act upon them for them to be realised. More simply put, if we do not notice that we can act upon something, then there is a risk of that thing becoming part of the mundane, and thus non-interacted upon, albeit still interactive. Instead, *Pocket Camp*, and perhaps digital games at large, foreground the core gameplay events, that which is extraordinary, in order to background the spatial practice underpinning these events, constantly appropriating and mastering.

As Perec noted, writing about the extra-ordinary is pervasive in news media, because it is an event – it is not something that continuously is, but something that unexpectedly but noticeably happened. Similarly, games' core gameplay events are read because they are what is written most pervasively and explicitly with games. Moreso, players go into a game to actualise these events, as it is these events which are advertised as that which make or break the game, and very importantly they are all contingent upon us willing them into being. With this in mind, earlier on I showed how Perec argues that these unexpected events are expected, as there is a practice that leads to them. As it is necessary to ask questions about the mundane lead-up to these newsworthy event, it is equally necessary to read whether there are infra-ordinary significations leading up to games' core gameplay events. Perhaps more saliently, since the claim that objects in games relate to the actions you can take within them is not a particularly bold claim, readings of infra-ordinary writings can lead to show us how this happens, allowing us to very clearly separate that which is livable by the player and that which is perceived by the player.

Let us take an example of a reading of *Animal Crossing*'s original writing so that this line of thought can be analysed a bit more deeply. In *The Rhetoric of Video Games* (2008), Bogost explains how *Animal Crossing* uses procedural rhetoric to push forward a model of consumer capitalism, which I will briefly paraphrase below. While Bogost does not write explicitly about *Pocket Camp*, he does write about *Animal Crossing*, a self titled game in the franchise. The text in brackets will be equivalences within *Pocket Camp* to show that this procedural rhetoric carries over within the franchise, and is still applicable to our case study.

In *Animal Crossing* (*Pocket Camp*), the player takes a loan forward from Tom Nook (Giovanni and his brothers) in order to upgrade their home (their camper). In order to pay this loan forward, the player has to collect fish, bugs and fossils and sell them to Tom Nook (collect them from animals, in return for fulfilling requests). Once players have collected enough bells to pay off this loan, Tom Nook offers to further upgrade their home. The larger the home, the more niceties the players can amass. However, the larger the home, the larger the loan the player has to pay back, which creates the common economic dilemma within capitalist societies: that higher standard of living comes with higher costs, leading to a life of subsistence.

This is not a reading of either of the *Animal Crossing* games that I would necessarily object to. What a reading of an infra-ordinary writing provides is a closer look on the spatial practice that leads to this emphasis on a life of subsistence, whether this practice is procedural or otherwise. Bogost notes the existence of the infra-ordinary, but does not develop it as the writing he is reading does not support it. For example, he notes how the villagers are happy with their belongings and do not ever seek to propagate their goods – their houses remain modest, their clothes never change, and their wishes are described as “rare and charming [...] in terms of inveterate longing” (2008, 118). He notes how the villagers' only changes relate to the extra-ordinary, that is, that which the player interacts with in the core gameplay event.

With a reading of an infra-ordinary writing of Pocket Camp, we can note more of these aspects, and perhaps make observations regarding their place in production. For example, in my reading, I managed to note how homogenous the spaces were. I noted that the floors had an oft repeated pattern of either pastel triangles, set on a brown background, or greyscale pastel circles, set on a grey background. The walls, also had a very common pattern of purple-grey uneven rocks smoothed at the top. Similarly, trees were almost exclusively either the autumnal brown trees, or the dark wood trees with circular patches. Flowers were only ever afforded three colours and four shapes. This is set to complete contrast to the ample types of furniture you can purchase, and the very distinct villagers that you can befriend and invite to your campsite. Game assets were only distinguished when they are productive to the core gameplay event. Additionally, since many of these assets, such as the trees and flowers, they can only ever get as far as being used as representations of space or perpetuators of spatial practice, since they can never be lived by the player.

My reading also allowed me to note the difference between endotic and exotic foreign text. There are two infra-ordinary language scripts displayed in the game: one in an indiscernible script and another in Latin script. The first script is intradiagetic: it references aspects of the game-world. For example, the brochures signify themselves as something given to future campers that wish to book a campsite space. However, the Latin script is often metareferential and extradiagetic. For example, two of the stickers at OK Motors (NTDO and NTD) refer to Nintendo, the publishers of the game. The text that might not provide relevant information to the gameplay event is in a foreign script. However, the publisher Easter egg is in Latin. The player not only has a foreign consumerist ideology in this world, as the native animals do not seem too invested in making their own campsite, they also have a foreign language. Not only is the player's act exotic to the space's pre-player production, but so is their in-game representation. Through this reading, we can note that the player's entry into the game completely changes the spatial practice – despite the friendliness of the game space, the player acts as a disruptive presence.

Finally, my reading also allowed me to note how the island space was merely connotative of one, rather than actually performed as one. Many objects and locations are easy to miss because they are not there to perform themselves, but to convey a place that can perform their actions, yet does not. Benches and chairs in the examined locations are many, and yet not a single one can be sat upon. There are pairs of drinks scattered on tables, yet not only can you not share them with other villagers or other players, you cannot drink them at all. Even the beach is not a beach, as the shallow tide, which shows wet sand below, somehow also hosts large fish to be caught. The infra-ordinary objects in the game are largely connotative. For an object to become denotative, you have to assign it as such. Village benches cannot be sat upon by villagers, but the benches you purchase and place can be used as benches. You not only determine your own production, but also the socio-spatial production of Pocket Camp, for yourself as a player and the animal non-player characters around you.

For the extra-ordinary procedural rhetoric that Bogost explains to work so well, it needs all these infra-ordinary elements to segue easily into this core gameplay loop. For resources to be worth collecting, they have to be set apart and named, which the otherwise homogenised space helps to further set apart. For your capitalistic spatial production to not stick out in an otherwise previously communal space, the endotic foreign text that shows that you are an exotic visitor, is tantamount. Finally, for your purchases to feel worth investing in and encouraging you to build more and build larger, the village's preplayer items need to merely imply that they are there, rather

than to actually be there. And these are merely three lessons that made themselves more ready to be read from an infra-ordinary writing than in the original one.

CONCLUSION

Through Perec's theory and writing, we have learnt that for there to be an extraordinary, there has to be an infra-ordinary that subsists within all the space that the extra-ordinary does not inhabit. We have also learnt that since the extra-ordinary is, by definition, out of the ordinary, and as such, it is more amenable to be read and written about. However, since the extra-ordinary does not exist in a world of its own, it is imperative that we study the context it that it grew out of and was moulded by – the infraordinary. As Perec explains, it becomes a responsibility to make sure that the mundane is read, analysed and chronicled.

In this paper, I have shown that games are no different. When the player is called upon, there is an extra-ordinary act. It might be worth reading a game beyond what is called upon us as players, and also read into all we consider as everyday and endotic to the games we play. Such readings could reveal the infra-ordinary practice that builds up to and shapes the extra-ordinary. In turn, understanding this infraordinary practice will help us understand the underlying structures present within these games, helping us to know better the spatial practice pervasive within the space and what shapes the player acts as extraordinary.

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