

Systems Make Statements: Simulations And Intentional Design



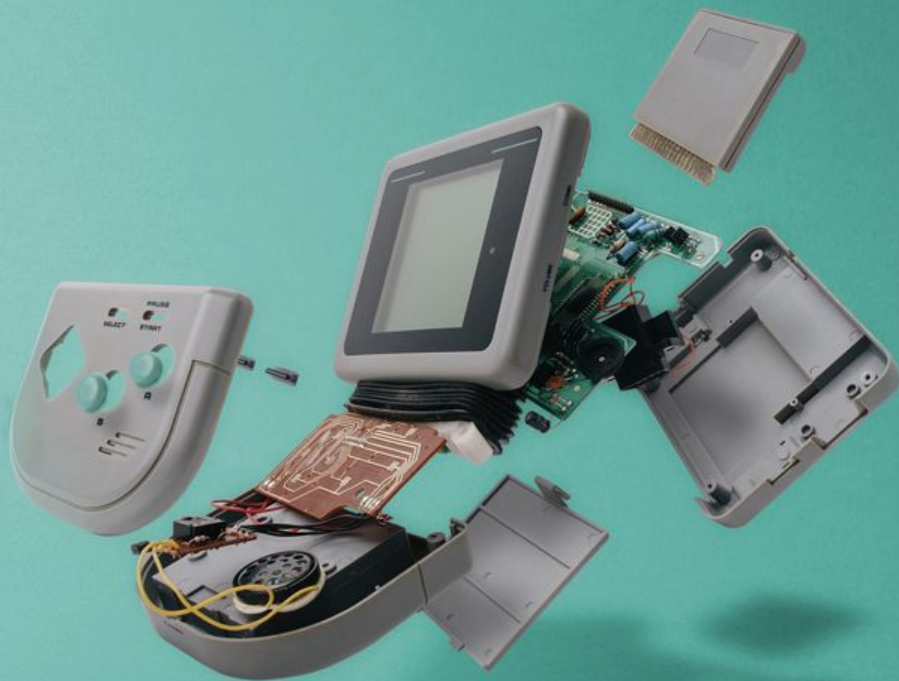
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SUBWAY SURFERS



EMPATHY ENGINES

Design Games That Are
Personal, Political, and Profound





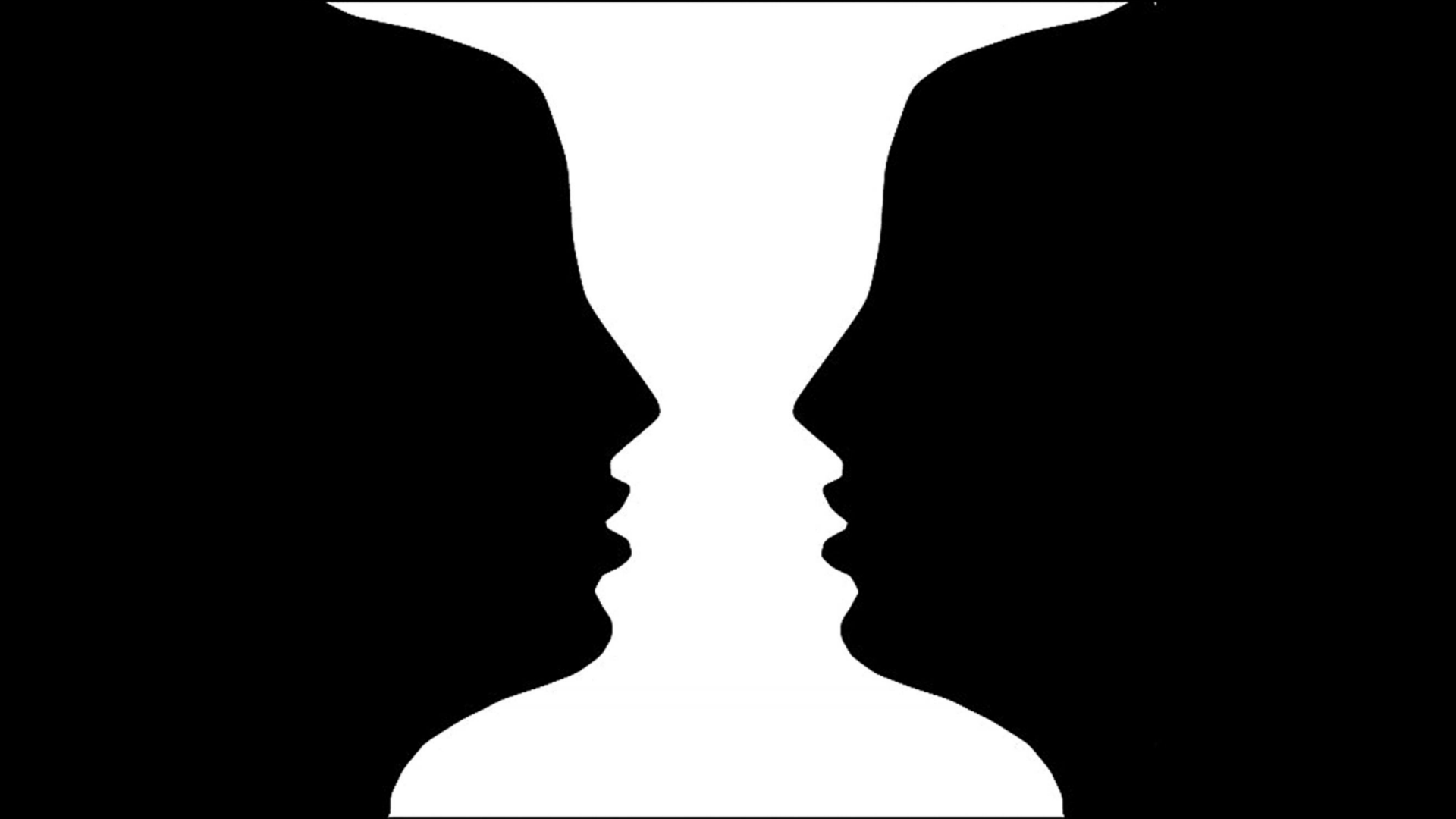
There's no such thing as a **neutral system**



The City Is A **Monoculture**



"It's a vicious circle, fully accounted for in SimCity without any reference to race or racism."





Day 1

1

3

2

*Do not use public
transporation tonight (no buses
or trains)

1. Coffee & Snacks:

Fourbarrel Coffee

375 Valencia St

Amount Spent: _____

2. Dinner:

Bar Tartine

561 Valencia St

Amount Spent: _____

3. Beer:

The Monk's Kettle

3141 16th St

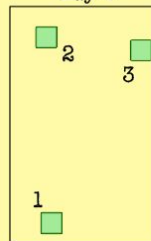
Amount Spent: _____

*Take it easy

1. Pastries:
Kings Bakery Cafe
2846 Mission St
Amount Spent: _____

2. Dinner:
Popeye's
2598 Mission St
Amount Spent: _____

Day 4



3. Drinks:
El Trebol
3149 22nd St
Amount Spent: _____

LOST OUR
LEASE

WE LOSE

LEAVE
! SPACE
NO MONEY NO LIFE!
NO ART

YOU LOSE

CULTURE

EVERYONE
MUST GO!



From whose point of view is this simulation accurate?











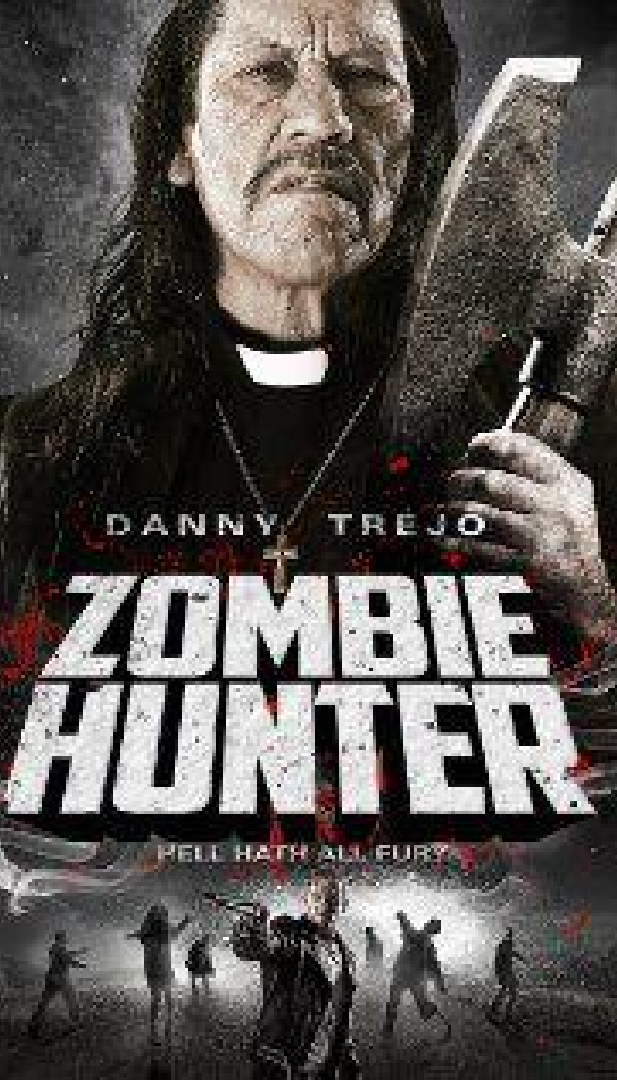
















We have to **recognize our biases**



OVERCOMING
UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Low Taxes Lead To Prosperity



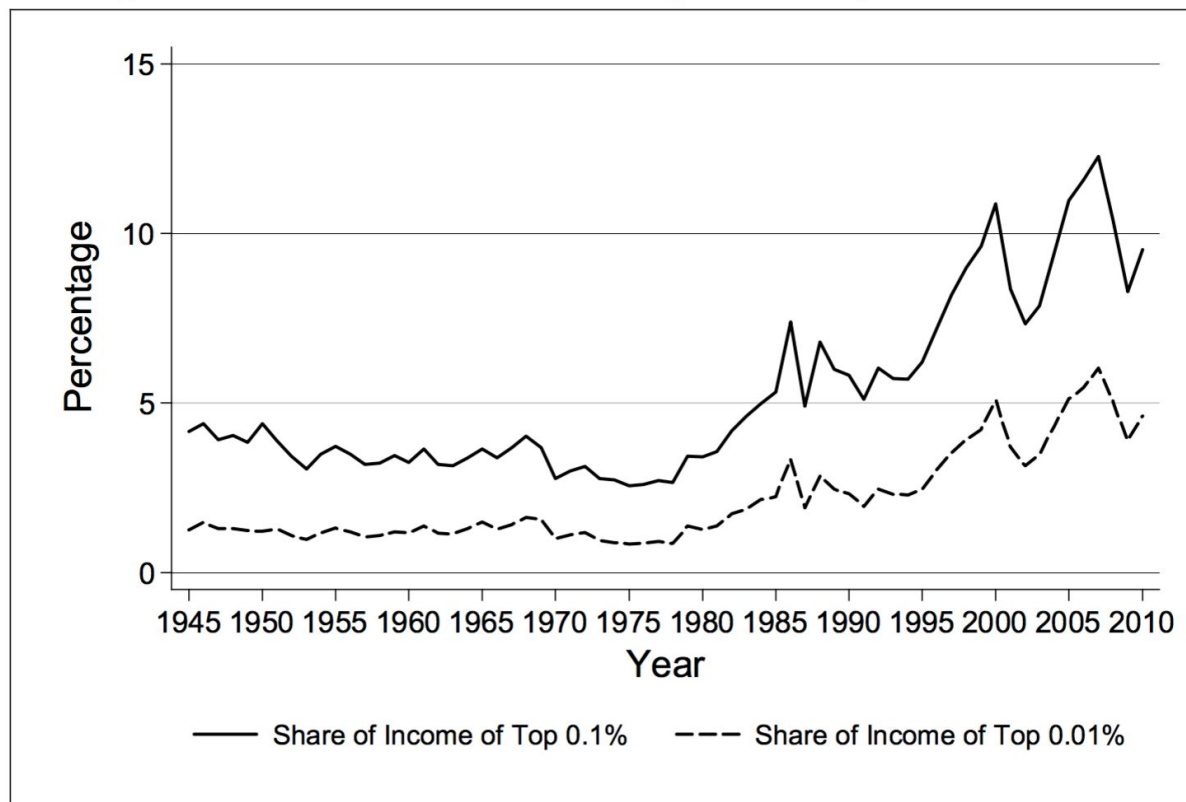
White Flight = Urban Decay

Race Does Not Exist In *SimCity*, so:

~~White Flight~~ = Urban Decay

High Taxes = Urban Decay

Figure 6. Shares of Total Income of the Top 0.1% and Top 0.01% Since 1945



Source: Piketty and Saez.

Note: The vertical axis is the share of total income.

Where more than one **belief** exists,
neutrality is impossible





2.2 Billion People Are Christian



1 Billion People Are Hindu

Choices Are Never Neutral





Systems Make (**Unintended**) Statements

“We have a very optimistic view of human nature”

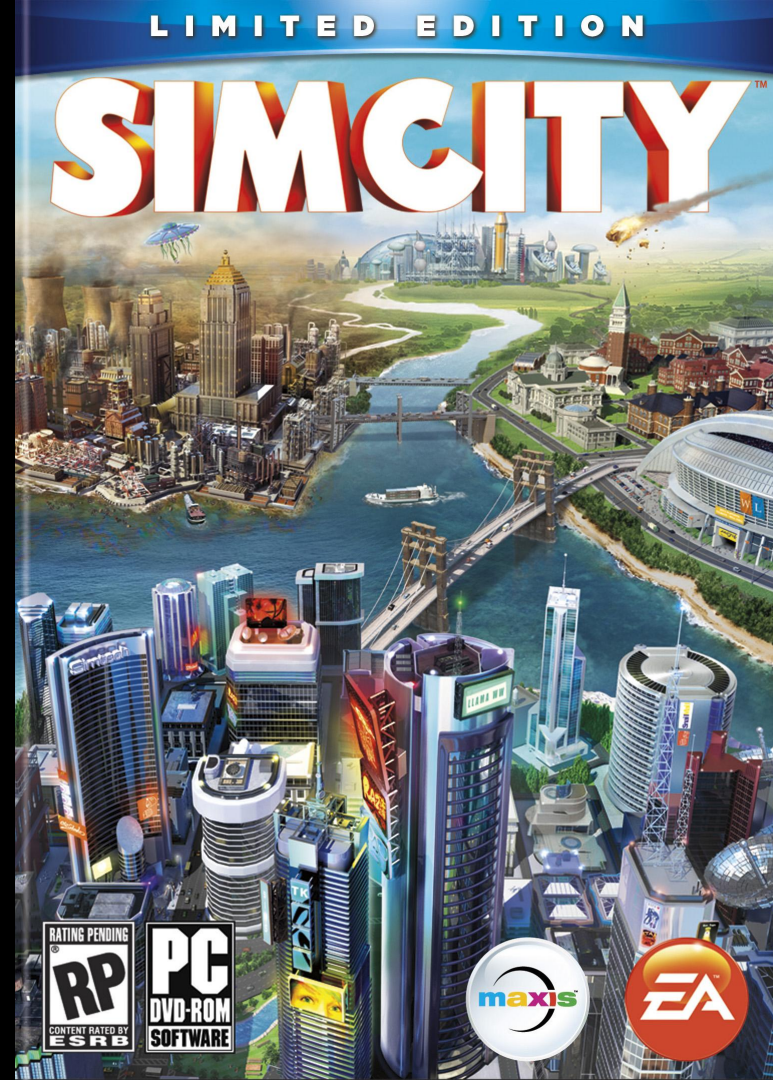
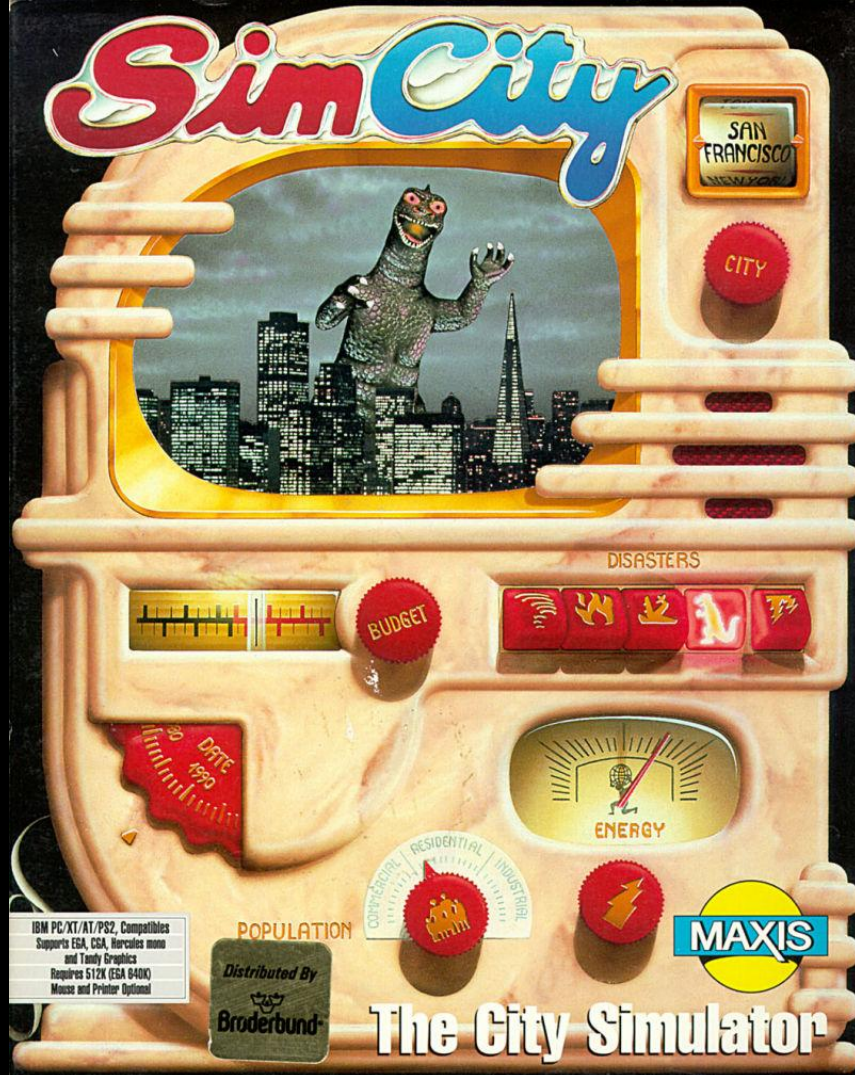


The Player Is The Government
+ The Player **Wants** To Play
= **Big Government**



The Penny Building

Hey, is that a fire?









Nothing Is Neutral

WE'RE A CULTURE,
NOT A COSTUME

YOU THINK IT'S **HARMLESS**,
BUT YOU'RE **NOT** THE
TARGET.



Graphic by David Reaney - Photos by Alex Pomeroy

WE'RE A CULTURE,
NOT A COSTUME

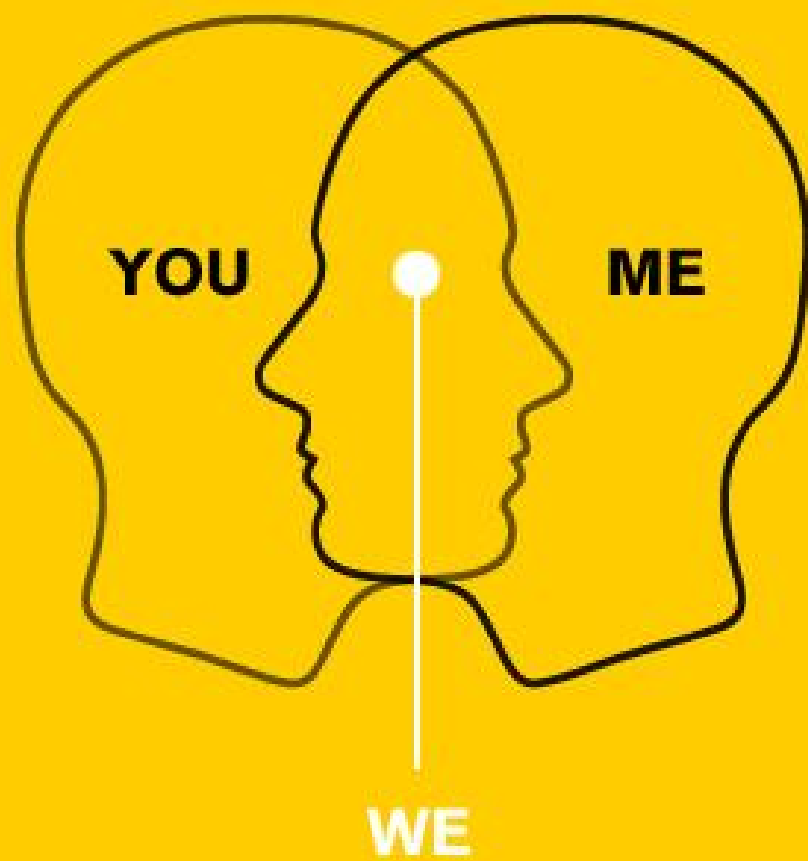
YOU WEAR THE COSTUME
FOR **ONE NIGHT**.
I WEAR THE
STIGMA FOR
LIFE.



What **Key Assumptions** am I making?

How would someone **different than me**
evaluate this system?

Is this something I **want to say?**



THANK YOU!

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Empathy Engines:
elizabethsambat.com/books

