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Paper proposal:

Platform Studies and the Construction of Game Space: The Nintendo Wii as a social platform

When Microsoft entered the mimetic-interface motion-control video game console market in 2010 with the introduction of the Kinect, it pitched the system in oddly anachronistic terms as the fulfillment of the old dream of total immersion. The symbolism at the elaborate and theatrical E3 2010 Kinect release pageant was focused on eliding the mediation of the console itself: “Might the next step be an absence of an object?” The *absence of an object* meant literally no controller, but it can also be read as an ontological claim implying a total, sublime domination by the *subject* (“no gadgets, no gizmos, just you,” in the words of one slogan). By contrast, as we’ll show, Nintendo’s Wii (2006) is a gadget-ridden “object-oriented” system, that leverages its constellation of components in a kind of personal area network, to shift attention to physical player space, the living room (Juul), and to the relations between the player and game by way of the components--all objects in the system. As a platform, the Wii assumes that gaming is less about (immersive) *cyberspace* than it is about (engaged) *cybernetics*--in Norbert Wiener’s sense: mechanisms of control and feedback, designed to focus attention on the negative space between the player and the game, facilitating a “dynamic heterarchy ... characterized by intermediating dynamics” (Hayles). Drawn from a forthcoming book in the Platform Studies series at MIT Press, this paper (with slideshow) will read the two competing motion-control platforms in the context of these

conceptual design differences, arguing that the Wii is a particularly vivid example of the platform as a social phenomenon.