

No Man's Sky's biggest thematic problem, explained in four tweets

It's all for you to consume, because you can never run out



Opinion by **Ben Kuchera** on
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The question of **what you "do" in No Man's Sky has been answered** now that the game is released. You explore, you mine stuff and you sell stuff. The core loop is about grabbing what you need or can sell to upgrade your equipment to get closer to the center of the galaxy.

Walt Williams has a long history in AAA gaming, having worked on titles like *Spec Ops: The Line*, *The Darkness 2*, *BioShock 2*,

industry called *Significant Zero*. He knows a thing or two about writing and design, and his most recent tweets about *No Man's Sky* did a great job of summarizing something that has been bothering me for a while.

NMS is a beautiful game undercut by bleak, expansionist mechanics. A whole universe of "what can I discover and how much \$ will it earn me?"

— Walt Williams
(@waltdwilliams) August 11,
2016

It's Independence Day from the aliens' POV. Like locusts, moving from planet to planet, you consume every resource and then move on.

— Walt Williams
(@waltdwilliams) August 11,
2016

What's sad is despite all our ingenuity, so many of our mechanics reinforce ideas and behaviors we know to be harmful.

— Walt Williams
(@waltdwilliams) August 11,
2016

We're capable of creating endless numbers of worlds and species, but

— Walt Williams
(@waltdwilliams) August 11,
2016

This thought has been in the back of my mind for a few days now. We're landing on planets we know nothing about, in systems that are completely alien to us, and we just start strip-mining each environment for minerals? We'd be a bit annoyed if aliens landed in the Grand Canyon and, after spending a few minutes gawping at the majesty of the place, took out their space lasers to carve up the landscape for fuel.

The Sentinels are annoying, but they mostly only fire on you once you've started taking from the landscape without asking anyone's permission. Maybe that whole area is a national park and they're the sentient park rangers, just trying to keep random asshole aliens from taking whatever they want.

Hell, our own Samit Sarkar **has posted a story about killing wildlife** just to scan it! What's he thinking? For all he knows, that flying heffalump is endangered, and he's just another tourist taking a picture next to that thing he killed after the Vy'keen have spent millions of units and decades on breeding programs. What a jerk!

I'm being silly, of course; this is just a game, and I don't think anyone is going to get the message that it's OK to fly to Africa and kill a lion because they've scanned a bunch of

exists for your benefit, that it's OK to blindly consume and profit from everything you see. It's just what you do: You land on a planet and take whatever you can grab for your own profit.

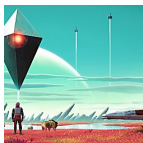
I personally really enjoy *No Man's Sky* and will continue to, but it's a bummer that the entire game is based around that unquestioned consumption on the part of the player. There is no way to create on these worlds, no way to look for balance or to react to each unique environment. For a game that's supposed to be about the wonder of the infinite, it's a shame that the only tools given to the player are those that let them take whatever they want. The attitude that we can use as much of whatever we want — due to there being an infinite amount of everything — is a bit outdated, if not outright ugly, in 2016.

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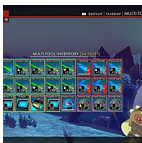
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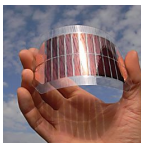
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