Analysis of Mechanics

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Title: This War Of Mine

Released: November 14, 2014

Author: 11 Bit Studios

Primary Genre: Survival strategy

Secondary Genre: War Simulation

Style: Grainy Graphic Novel

Analysis

This War Of Mine is an easy-to-control side-scroller with immersive elements in both its storytelling and its visual style with an emphasis on realism to portray war in its true light. The main idea of the game is efficiently communicated through immersion within a war simulation and a careful selection of mechanics used. This immersion is supported by story elements and dynamic environment.
Right at the start, the player is transported to a fictional location of a war-torn city center which was inspired by the early 90's siege of Sarajevo. The game is played by taking control over a small survival group with different characters, each possessing unique skills and storylines. As time passes, the gameplay is divided into two distinct phases, each with unique elements.

The first phase is a (mostly) peaceful colony simulator where you reinforce and prepare. While in this stage, multiple states or moods can be observed in players characters also featuring their current comments on the situation. To gather local information, radio stations are introduced as an easy and very effective medium of communication from external environment to the player which is the baseline for world-building. During the night stage of the game, you are introduced to the option of scavenging which will become a necessity due to lack of sources of resources. This scarcity combined with moral choices help with immersion and introduce risk factor which is supported by perma-death on every character. This is the only part in which the player interacts with places other than his settlement, best described as high risk, high reward.

The changing of these two stages helps with pacing and prevents the player from feeling overwhelmed instead of allowing them to experience the consequences of their decisions and learning from them. The environment starts to change both story-wise and in difficulty to provide needed challenge to preserve engagement. The main goal of the game is to be rescued and can be achieved with multiple approaches which supports replayability. The survival aspect goes hand-in-hand with the strategic part which makes managing resources key to game success. Survival in this case can be split into two factors, long-term resource management and short-term scavenging wariness. Both are always present in the game and reflect real-time war conditions.

The style of the game is grainy and lacking bright colours which is exactly on theme. Artistic expression is visibly present even while being grounded down to realism. It is differentiable from other games just from its graphical design, while also being accompanied by ambient, sometimes melodic, background soundtrack. The combination of these creates the perfect environment for a side-scrolling simulation.

After its release, this project left a cultural impact which resulted in the first integration of a computer game into recommended curriculum inside the school system. This opened the door for games being treated as a medium which can be used in multiple real life situations for learning and expressing, furthering possible artistic expression within the industry.