

Hotseat

Justification Report

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TEAM

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OVERVIEW

Hotseat is a minimalist grand-strategy game where the main objective is to lower global carbon emissions through clever country management before the world is overcome by global warming. The player plays as a faceless avatar capable of lightly influencing each country to further this goal.

Our goal is to use this game as a persuasive message against the inaction to face global warming we see on a global scale.

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GAME GENRE

Our game's genre itself plays an important role in making our game impactful. Part of our message is that reversing global warming won't be an easy task and that it will take a global effort. By making our game a grand strategy game, players will pick up on this message more easily, as the genre itself lends to big-picture thinking. The only difference of course being that you can influence every country instead of just one.

GAME TYPE

Of the different types of impactful games [1], our game would fall under the persuasive games category with a little influence from the serious games category. While our game has been 'game-ified', it still has educational and academic aspects that help to ground it in reality.

Of the two models of persuasive games, ours easily falls under the classical model, aiming to change our player's opinions in a teleological way [2]. For example, our game posits that in order to prevent irreversible global warming, we must lower our carbon output. By having the player actively lowering each country's carbon output, we teleologically argue: "Why do we have to lower carbon? So that we can save the planet; Carbon is bad."

Despite arguing for the lowering of carbon emissions, we still recognize that doing so will make resource gathering and processing much harder, which we reflect in our game with its resource management and foreign aid system.

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RHETORIC

There are a few arguments we are attempting to make with our rhetoric. 1) Global warming will have disastrous effects on our environment. 2) We are running out of time to prevent irreversible global warming. 3) Preventing this will take a global effort.

PROCEDURAL RHETORIC

Our game is heavily rooted in its systems, rather than any story, and because of this we ensured that these systems were there to further our impactful intent.

Our first argument will be portrayed through our in-game events. As the game progresses without substantial change to the global temperature increases, the world reflects the outcomes of the environmental damage, not only to the natural world, but also to the people living in those countries. For example, some winters may become too extreme, making it impossible to work, tanking the country's resources and giving the player a little event message about the frigid cold. Similar to events in Plague Inc. [3]



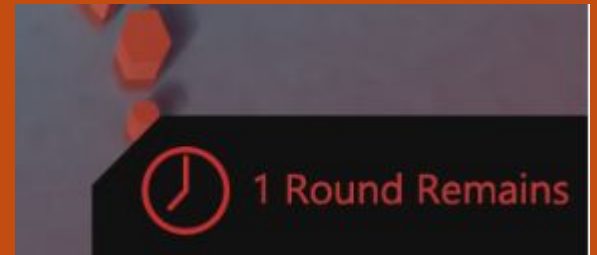
Left:
An example of an in-game event to display the effects on the game world as a result of global warming.

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PROCEDURAL RHETORIC CONT.

Our second argument, regarding lack of time, is represented in our game by the round system. Each round spans a few in-game years and shows the progression of the world on a grand scale. If the player is failing to lower the global carbon output, as described previously, this has a negative impact on the world. As we've learned in previous game design classes, simply adding a timer to your game can invoke a sense of urgency and pressure in your player [4]. While not as intense as a real-time timer, our round system is still designed to act as a limit and a warning, telling the player that they don't have a wealth of time to save the planet.

Additionally, when the player enters the danger zone, a point at which it is almost too late to reverse the damage, a blood red vignette encroaches the screen, and the round timer becomes red, a popular allusion to being incredibly damaged.



Our final argument, regarding global effort, is represented in the core mechanic of the game. While each country has varying amounts of resources and carbon contribution, the player's influence is consistent. This is meant to show the player that despite their differences, each country has a role to play in ensuring the world's survival. For example, a country could have low resources/influence and carbon output, but a keen player would not count them out. Such a player would find advantages in using such a country to influence others.

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EMBODIMENT

Our lack of player-character is purposeful. We believe no one person could have such an impact on a global scale, nor could they realistically handle such a role. So instead, our player is meant to embody a faceless, mute entity. This way, the player can draw their own conclusions and feelings from their impact upon this world without being told how a given player-character feels about it. The player adorns a role, rather than a character. As this entity, the player gets to see the full extent of their influence on the world and its effects over time.

FUN

Our game derives fun from intellectual problem solving and advancement & completion as outlined in the 14 Forms of Fun. [5] It is important to us that our game is fun because it encourages players to share the game not just for its message but additionally for its fun. The more people our message gets to, the better, which is all the more important with an indie game. We've taken into consideration the examples provided in Lecture 6 [6] on things that decrease fun and limited micromanagement, keeping the resource management relatively simple. Additionally, the gameplay is designed to avoid stagnation with limited actions, the round timer, and most importantly the randomization of the game world, allowing for multiple different playthroughs. The game uses this randomness to additionally avoid predictability, throwing in additional events and interactions between countries.

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REFERENCES

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