Fimbulvinter Post-Development Reflection

Writing this post-mortem as a one-pager seems insufficient, but we’ll give it a shot.

First, I think the most important thing I learned is that, while I believe knowing the basics of an engine and its companion language is extremely valuable, I am not a developer. I’m a designer – I’m far more comfortable producing written material for narrative, research, and mechanics, or design artifacts, soundscapes, and compositions. I felt completely out of my depth doing the development work.

The most blatant example of this was my scope. The game I’ve submitted is nowhere near what I originally imagined it would be. While this was due to a few reasons, such as struggling to maintain any work/life balance with a full-time job/class and starting late due to personal issues, my lack of experience in Unity meant I couldn’t achieve a large chunk of the ideas I wanted to implement. Cutting things to make the scope more manageable was a near-daily occurrence.

When it came to assets, I think I spent more time on the aesthetics than I should have, and what I selected from the Unity Asset Store – particularly when it came to the player character – limited what I could do and ate up some of my time creating the different animations (the pack the player character sprites came from had no prefab animations, unlike the animals).

I struggled with implementing scripts – I was able to find tutorials to help me, but if I needed to create something hybridized, I failed nearly every time. I lost a lot of confidence in myself over this, which made wanting to continue exceedingly difficult. This means my playtest deadlines were consistently not met, which only raised my stress level.

I believe I would have had more success if I had created smaller milestones to meet. The list of items I wanted to implement for every playtest was long, and I was reluctant to test without completing it. From a designer perspective, I was far too focused on “pixel perfection”, which resulted in spending more time on little details than I should have.

While I do intend to re-visit this project with a team (I’ve got several interested teammates already), I know I’ll re-building this from scratch. The way my mechanics are built is very limiting, and some of the changes I made and sprites I used aren’t very user-friendly (or they’re straight up bad UX/accessibility). I’d like to try my hand at building my own UI assets, and implementing a more rigid design system so I don’t have to struggle with inconsistency. I’d also like to do a little more research on UI trends to create something that’s more modern.