Understanding War Game Experiences: Applying Multiple Player Perspectives to Game Analysis

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Introduction

When we play videogames, we go through many of the same cognitive processes as when we read a novel or watch a film. With basis in the material that is presented to us, and our own literacy, we interpret and create meaning out of the events that are presented for us. But while films and literature are static structures that do not change between one traversal and the next, a videogame may present very different realizations of itself in each traversal. This means that to analyze a videogame, we need to adjust the methods of analysis that we have previously used for literature and film.

This chapter argues for what I call a multiple player perspective to game analysis. This is a qualitative approach to game analysis that stresses the experiences and insights of more players than the researcher analyzing a particular game. While the argument for taking into consideration multiple user perspectives may have its benefits also in traditional media, this perspective is in particular relevant for games because a game will respond differently to different player actions, playstyles, and player skill level. In order to illustrate the benefit of using multiple player perspectives, I focus here on the war-themed game *This War of Mine* (11 Bit Studios 2014) as a case. While the term *wargame* traditionally refers to games that simulates or represents a military operation and are used for military training (Frank 2014: 5,

Zagal 2017: 4), it has also been used as a term for commercial videogames that stage war conflicts. In this chapter I follow Zagal's broad delimitation of a wargame as "any game that includes direct or indirect representations of war where "war" is a state or period of open and armed hostility between organized groups" (2017: 4). This description is appropriate for *This War of Mine*, which distinguishes itself from most commercial war-themed games in several ways: First, rather than telling the hero-story in which the player takes the role of a brave soldier who fights evil forces, *This War of Mine* provides the player with a civilian perspective. Second, rather than putting the player in a position of empowerment where they become instrumental to resolving the conflict, the player' main challenge is simply to survive, using the meagre means available to them in a city bombed and under siege.

With a Metacritic score of 90/100 for the iOS version (Metacritic n.d.b) and 83/100 for the PC version (Metacritic n.d.a), the game was critically acclaimed for taking a different perspective on war. However, the game was also criticized for not being entertaining, for making the player feel bad, for its high use of pathos, and for being another management game with a novel theme. What the differences in responses tell us is that a multiple player perspective is likely to give a different and fuller analysis compared to a single-researcher analysis. What we will see below is that there can be huge differences in how the game is received based on playstyle: While players who play the game as a role-playing game may emotionally affected by the game, players who play the game as a management game may found the use of game mechanics to be speculative.

The method described in this paper is sensitive towards how differences in gameplay style, as well as individual interpretations, can affect the experiences of a game. More importantly, the method is able to provide alternative perspectives that the single-player analysis would risk

not being able to grasp at all due to limitations connected to their own play style or game literacy. Adding a multiple player perspective enables the analyst to get insight into options and alternative pathways that they did not even know were there.

Gameplay as a research strategy

Following traditional text analytical approaches, a common way to analyze games is to play the game and subsequently analyze its representational and/or game mechanical elements. Different frameworks and methodologies have been suggested (e.g. Konzack 2002, Consalvo and Dutton 2006, Klevjer 2008, Fernandez-Vara 2014, van Vught and Glas 2017), and there is a high level of agreement in game studies today that scholars need to play games as part of the analytical process to understand them.

In the influential paper "Playing Research: Methodological Approaches to Game Analysis", Espen Aarseth argues that there are three ways of gaining knowledge about a game:

> Firstly, we can study the design, rules and mechanics of the game, insofar as these are available to us, e.g. by talking to the developers of the game. Secondly, we can observe others play, or read their reports and reviews, and hope that their knowledge is representative and their play competent. Thirdly, we can play the game ourselves.
> (Aarseth 2003)

Of these, he argues, the last one is the better. Postulating that a researcher must experience the game personally to avoid misunderstandings, Aarseth stresses that simply watching a game would not put one in the same position as a film audience, because what we see on screen is only partly representative of the player's experience. The more important part concerns the

interpretation and exploration of the rules and affordances, which are not accessible for the observer (Aarseth 2003).

In discussing play as a research method, van Vught and Glas agree with Aarseth that play is an important analysis strategy. They argue that there are many play strategies that can be employed, and that a researcher that is also seasoned player will have a very high level game literacy, which may be beneficial for using play as a research method. One of the strategies they suggest that a playing researcher can employ is an "exhaustive playing strategy" where they "try to perform all the different actions that a game makes available", since such a broad approach that includes an exhaustive number of perspectives would make an argument stronger (2017: 6). An alternative is that the researcher approaches the game from the perspective of Aarseth's *implied player* (2007): This indicates that the researcher tries to follow what appears to be the intended design of the game, or that they take an approach in which they are cooperative to the game's rules and design (van Vught and Glas 2017: 6-7). A researcher may also take the strategy of the rational player (Smith 2006), which acts in accordance with the ideals of mathematical game theory.

However, a primary challenge connected to restricting the analysis to one's own gameplay is that a playing researcher will – intentionally or not – add research-oriented perspective to gameplay. A researcher will never be able to completely set aside their academic curiosity and analytical way of thinking when playing. Further, attempting to take on the role of a rational or implied player is to put onself in an impossible, ideal position that no player actually can take. The idea that one can take on the role of an implied player also assumes that the game clearly communicates what the optimal gameplay would be, and that the most interesting gameplay is what the designer intended. Also, to assume that one researcher, or

even group of researchers, should be able to employ an exhaustive playing strategy is naïve: While it could in theory be possible for certain kinds of narrative-oriented games, for open-world games and multiplayer games with emergent gameplay, this would not be realistic due to the number of factors involved.

Towards a multiple player perspective

The main collective idea in the above discussion concerns the fact that a game is not a static text, but requires the player's input to be realized. Thus, since games are processes and activities as much as they are objects, it is not possible to study games without also taking into account the player and how they interact with the game (van Vught and Glas 2017: 4 & 8). It is important to see this argument in connection with how meaning-making happens in the context of gameplay. According to Torill Mortensen, the meaning-making process that takes place between player and the game happens through play, and she argues that this activity is closer to a performance than of a reading (Mortensen 2002). Expanding Espen Aarseth's idea of *real-time hermeneutics*, which is a game-oriented "analysis practiced as performance, with direct feedback from the system" (2003), Jonne Arjoranta argues that the hermeneutic process that players engage in when interacting with games go beyond the interpretation that we know from non-interactive media. Rather, when playing games, the hermeneutic process is "concerned with the processes of interpretation that are active when the player plays" (2015, 59). In this sense, the meaning-making process in games is characterized by the fact that the player may change their gameplay style and course of action during play based on how their understanding of the game changes over time as they play.

The idea of real-time hermeneutics allows us to understand the complex interplay between interpretation and gameplay, and subsequently, between the player and the game. While real-

time hermeneutics is a phenomenon that is at work in each instance of gameplay, it implies that the interpretative process that takes place when *I* play will be different from the process at work when *you* play. However, this is not delimited to the interpretative process that takes place in my head; this also concerns the way the game is played and how the game text is realized for each player. With this in mind, there is reason to believe that an analysis based on the researcher's individual gameplay will offer a very limited and necessarily subjective account that may not always resonate with the experiences of other players.

Following this line of thought, I argue that games are better understood through multiple player perspectives. This means that including other players' perspectives in addition to the researchers's own is important for conducting well-rounded analyses of games. From this perspective, while I believe it is fruitful and absolutely necessary for game analysis that game researcher play, this method should not operate alone. Rather, I argue that combining one' own gameplay with other players' perspectives is not only optional but mandatory for any serious investigation of games.

So what does this mean in practice? In my own research I have argued for including players as experts when analysing games (Jørgensen 2011), interviewing them and discussing the meaning potential of aspects of specific games. Observations have also been carried out in order to understand the players' playstyle and to have a specific gameplay case to focus on in the discussion. In the current study I asked players to present their thoughts and emotions in gameplay journals. Inspired by the interpretative phenomenological analysis approach of qualitative psychology (Smith, Flower & Larkin 2009), I have focused on the player's own experiences and allowed them to share how they subjectively interpret the game. Bear in mind that employing multiple player perspectives does not mean that game analysis always should

be accompanied by full-scale empirical player studies; it could instead include references to existing research, to popular media accounts such as reviews and walkthroughs, or other publically available material that would broaden the researcher's singular perspective. By including multiple player perspectives, research is moving from triangulating data to triangulating sources; or more precisely, triangulation of interpretations.

Using this player-oriented game analysis methodology of including additional players allows the researcher to study a game both as a process and as object simultaneously rather than focusing on one or the other. It allows the researcher to understand how other players than themselves interpret the game both by way of its representational aspects and its game mechanics, and to understand the actions and behaviors of empirical players apart from themselves. Unless the observed players are instructed otherwise, including other player's gameplay in research makes it possible to study subversive strategies such as cheating, griefing, and the use of exploits as part of ordinary gameplay (Aarseth 2007). Further, it allows the researcher to discover and explore contexts and practices that they may not be intimately familiar with, and the method takes into consideration that there may exist play styles that the playing researcher does not think about or does not have the literacy or skill to perform. This is a particular benefit in games with emergent gameplay.

Understanding war-themed games

In a recent paper, Jose Zagal presents a framework for analyzing war-themed videogames using a critical-ethical perspective (2017). Offering a perspective from which we can analyze ethical issues in videogames that represent war, the framework is based in traditional war ethics relating to ideas of morally justified warfare. Zagal's framework is sensitive towards the perspective offered to the player, the scale and scope of the war presented in the game,

how central war is in the game, what type of military is represented, and the authenticity of the war representations (2017: 5). However, the framework is intended as a traditional toolbox for analysis carried out by a single researcher, and as such his framework is delimited to the singular perspective of a critical researcher, who may hardly be seen as a typical player. While Zagal outlines a framework for analyzing war-themed games, this is not the aim of the present paper. This paper complements Zagal's approach by describing a holistic methodology for understanding the player experiences of such games that embraces the interaction between the representational aspects of games and gameplay. The methodology is thus sensitive to the fact that war representations are experienced in a gameplay context, and towards the fact that the meaning-making process takes place in the interplay between interpretation of said representations and interacting with them through game mechanics.

A challenge of war-themed commercial videogames, or "militainment" (Payne 2014), is that they often are the product of a close relationship between the entertainment industry and militaristic interests (Keogh 2013, Nieborg 2006). This has contributed to war-themed games often featuring romantic stories of the good war hero who fights against evil forces. These kinds of games have also been criticized for presenting war in a sanitized way (Pötsch 2017) that do not problematize the darker sides of war. For example, military shooters tend to avoid showing dead civilians or slaughtered US soldiers because of possible negative reactions (Payne 2014: 279, Pötzsch 2017: 160). While this may not be a surprising in the light of commercial interest and the wish to market games to a broader audience, there is also the question about how such sanitized games are received by the audience. While a playing researcher may indeed present insightful critical analyses of such games based on their own gameplay as well as earlier knowledge about the variations in how audiences decode representations (Hall 1980), this will only give limited insight into how different play styles,

skill levels, and choices of actions affect the gameplay experience. Take the infamous "No Russian" chapter of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* (Infinity Ward 2009) as an example. The chapter involves the player taking part in a terror attack at an airport security checkpoint in which civilians are killed. While critics argued that allowing players to take part in such actions was inappropriate in a game (Horiuchi 2009, Orry 2009), defenders argued that the transgression was mitigated because the player character works undercover in this scenario, and that it is possible traverse the whole chapter without raising the gun at all. However, others criticized the game for not taking the series' most profound scene seriously by allowing player to skip the chapter altogether (Gillen 2009). While using one's individual gameplay as the only source for analysis may indeed be able to uncover arguments for and against such game content, the variation in responses presented above are necessarily lost for the single researcher. Further, subjective accounts relating to whether or not uncomfortable game content is experienced as something that breaks or enhances the gameplay experience is also lost.

Case: *This War of Mine*

In order to provide specific examples from a war-themed game about what a multiple-player perspective may add to a self-play analysis, I will in the following discuss data from a qualitative study in which players where playing *This War of Mine* and filling in a gameplay log and also participating in a follow-up interview.

Developed by the Polish 11 Bit Studios and released first on Steam and later on iOS and Xbox 360, *This War of Mine* is a management simulator set among civilians in a war-ridden fictional setting strongly inspired by the siege of Sarajevo during the Bosnian war. The game received critical acclaim for taking the perspective of the civilian rather than soldiers in the

time of war (Grayson 2014). In terms of Zagal's perspective, the player controls a group of civilians trying to survive in a derelict building until ceasefire, and must make sure to keep them alive by reinforcing the shelter and scavenging resources such as food, medicine, repair equipment, and fuel. The scope of the war is limited to the shelter during day, and to different scavenging locales throughout the city during the night. Based on the characters' special abilities, the player will assign them to different missions – the fastest runner may be allocated to scavenging, while the best cook creates the meals. In their scavenging hunts, the player must choose whether to risk less danger and find less valuable goods, or risk greater danger for higher reward, and ethical issues arise as scavenging often means intruding into other civilians' homes and stealing their belongings and sometimes even risk getting into combat Hostile encounters with other survivors also take their toll on the player characters, which may become injured and also suffer from psychological trauma – both which hinder them from contributing to reinforcement and scavenging. The role of the military is small in the game. As a general rule, the player only interacts with other civilians, although there is a military outpost that can be scavenged for those willing to take the risk. The game is in many ways a downward spiral; when things start going bad they are hard to change: When your expert scavenger is injured, another less proficient character must be assigned. The less proficient scavenger brings home fewer resources, which affects the psychological state of all characters. Depressed characters do not work well, and in severe cases not at all, and in the situation where one of the character die – either from injury, sickness, or suicide, the mood becomes even lower. Looking at Zagal's idea of centrality, war is not only central to the game, but pervasive to it – the player is a victim to a siege that affects all actions available to them. In a recent auto-ethnographical study and subsequent analysis of the game, game scholar and folklorist Kristian A. Bjørkelo gives a deep and personal analysis of the game and how the combination of game mechanics and a social realist fictional setting has an emotional impact

on him (2018). While the game models actions in a caricatured way it is hard to call authentic or realistic in a classical sense, Bjørkelo argues that the situations and the ethical dilemmas that the player find themselves in appear authentic.

As part of the *Games and Transgressive Aesthetics* project funded by the Research Council of Norway, we carried out a study following the idea of the multiple player perspective to game analysis. The project studied player experiences with games through a journal study, in which players played a selected game at home and responding to a limited number of open-ended questions after each play session. The reason for choosing a journal study was to get as close as possible to the gameplay experiences while allowing the players to play the game at their own pace in the safety of their own homes. While no methods will allow us to observe actual experiences, with journal studies the player write down their actions in the game and how they felt about it immediately after ending a session. Participants volunteered to the study by responding to posts in online media and on physical bulletin boards at Norwegian educational institutions, and for the games where more than five players signed up, participants were selected based on a motivational screening. We aimed for having at least one participant of each gender playing each game. The partipants played for as long as they wanted, and were subject to a follow-up interview once they had completed the study for the sake of clarifying what they had written in the gameplay logs, but also for the purpose of being able to analytically reflect on the gameplay events in retrospect. Of a total of thirty players across six games, five participants abandoned the study after only one or zero entries and stopped responding to emails and calls. Four of the participants played *This War of Mine,* and all who signed up for this game completed the study. These four players were the following:

- "Leon" (39), a photographer from Lithuania. His favorite genre is strategy games, but he also plays action games. His journal consisted of 5 entries between Sept 9-Oct 2, 2016, and was subject to a follow-up interview on Oct 13, 2016. He played through the campaign mission once successfully.

- "Stan" (27), a student from Poland. He prefers role-playing games, both of the digital and analogue kind, and strategy games. His journal consisted of 7 entries between Sept 11-Oct 8, 2016, and his follow-up interview was on Oct 14, 2016. His first two attempts at the campaign ended in all characters dead. He quit his third attempt after the game became glitchy.

- "Jane" (38), an IT support worker from Poland. She prefers adventure and role-playing games and casual games. Her journal consisted of 5 entries between Oct 5-Oct 23, 2016. She was interviewed on Oct 29, 2016. She played the campaign unsuccessfully once, then started two custom campaigns in which the second was successful. She also started a third before she got bored.

- "Fred" (38), a researcher from the Netherlands. He prefers action-adventure games and first-person shooters with role-playing elements. His journal consisted of 4 entries between Sept 23-Oct 26, 2016, and was subject to a follow-up interview on Nov 9, 2016. He restarted the campaign after having learned the initial game mechanics, but quit the game after his favorite character died.

Although the four participants were all experienced players and participated in the study because they were interested in playing a game that had received critical acclaim and which were supposed to take a different perspective on war compared to mainstream AAA games, their experiences with the game were varying. While "Stan" and "Fred" find the game to have the high emotional impact that critics have identified and developers reportedly have intended,

"Jane" and "Leon" are not convinced by what they find to be a simplistic modelling of the conditions of civilians in war. Also, how they respond to their experiences with the game is also varying.

"Stan"'s response appears closest to what the developers intended. He states that he loves the game, and describes it as a heavy game that makes him think, making the game experience what we can call a *positive negative experience* (Montola 2010), which are game experiences that are uncomfortable, yet rewarding. In his journal, he writes that he is emotionally distraught by the actions that the game motivates him to take, and becomes particularly moved by the ethical challenges relating to a situation where he finds himself stealing from an elderly couple. In the interview, he elaborates:

> "[I]n this game we can attack anybody, even elderly people. As soon as I discovered this option I felt destroyed inside, my heart was melting. Why did they program such an option? I would never, never attack them. I could see the option, I could attack, kill the elderly people, it's because of the social reaction that elderly people are known as defenseless people. More! I saw their reactions. They begged me, don't kill me, don't kill my wife." (Interview, Oct 14, 2016)

"Stan" has mixed feelings about the game. He finds himself engaged by the fictional aspects of the game. He is put in a situation where he is distraught by feeling forced into taking actions that make him feel bad, but where there are also rewarding moments that make him happy and motivate him to keep playing. His first playthrough ends with two of his characters are killed and the third committing suicide, something "Stan" describes as brutal. However, he still starts a new playthrough in which he uses knowledge from the first to play more

successfully. This results in taking actions that he describes as problematic. For instance, in the second entry he describes how he changes tactics into focusing on survival, first through stealing. When the game gets harder, he starts killing for items, but experience that characters get depressed. The playthrough ends with two characters running away, while the third commits suicide.

While also experiencing that the game makes him feel bad, "Fred"'s response to this is in stark contrast to what "Stan" describes. In the interview he says that he "hated the game"; not because it was a bad game, but because it manipulated his emotions and made him feel uncomfortable. For "Fred" a good game experience is an action-filled experience where he knows what to expect. He explains:

> [I]t is a good game, but it is not a good game for me. And that's the big difference. I think it's a well done in terms of atmosphere, it's well done in terms of ludological game mechanics, it's very well done in terms of narratology, it really gives you the impression that you have to face the everyday moral problems, moral dilemmas that every war time survivor has to take every day. I think it's done brilliantly. But at the same time it is not a brilliant game for me, because I usually like a different kind of games. I don't like micromanagement games, I don't like god games, and especially I don't like games in which I cannot kill everything that stands in my way. (Interview, Nov 9, 2016)

"Fred" finds the game successful in simulating realities for civilians in war, and as a scholar he finds the game interesting and powerful. But this intellectual understanding of the game comes into conflict with the gamer in him who prefers shooter games, in which there is no

doubt that gameplay concerns pulling the trigger button to progress. This game, on the other hand, makes him feel bad. Later in the interview he specifies that what makes him feel bad is the atmosphere that suggests that something bad is coming, combined with the actions that he is doing that constantly pushes him towards doing something increasingly unethical out of desperation.

While "Stan" and "Fred" both find that *This War of Mine* has emotional impact on them, "Jane" and "Leon" do not have the same experience. "Leon" describes the game as a nice experience that makes him think, but believes that the game tries too hard to be serious, which sometimes results in situations becoming unintentionally funny. He finds that the game has surprisingly many mechanics that are at odds with what he would expect from an anti-war game, such as encouraging violent gameplay. For "Leon", the crudeness of the game mechanics weakens the profound potential of the game:

> Sometimes when you play a game, you open your head. But when you realize what the mechanics behind the narrative is, and... When you understand the role played, I think this game reminds a little of The Sims. (Interview, Oct 13, 2016)

For "Leon", the game is only another resource management game. He elaborates that as he learned the game mechanics, the experience also changed. At the beginning, he played according to what he expected to be meaningful given the situation of civilians in wartime, but once he learned the game mechanics he also started acting accordingly. At a point, he mentions that according to the game's logics, the key to survival is to start producing moonshine and sell it to other civilians. In the end, "Leon" questions whether games are the best medium to use if one wants to communicate what it is like being a civilian in wartime.

"Jane" is also critical of the game's instrumental approach to being a civilian in war, but her criticism is harsher than "Leon"'s. She finds the game to be speculative in promoting itself as an anti-war game when it is in reality a management game that makes war fun. In the interview, she states:

> We kind of *need* a game – we *need* a message, a pop culture message – that [states that] war is not fun. Because most of our messages and our stories are about how glorious war is. Because we have passed some time from the Second World War, and all we got now are the heroic stories. While, in the modern world, there is a war somewhere, and the people are in real problems, and we just don't feel that. So, we do need a message that [says] this is difficult, that this is important. And this game promised that, kind of, and then it just gave us a puzzle game. And it's just one more way to make war fun, and this is disturbing. (Interview, Oct 29, 2016)

In her gameplay journal, "Jane" expresses a general unhappiness with the interface and controllers, as well as with the game mechanics. She finds that the system does not respond to her the way she would expect. She is disappointed in the game which she thinks promises to treat a serious issue in a profound way, but where the game mechanics draw attention to themselves and thus get in the way of communicating an important message. With regards to the implementation of the topic itself, she is critical towards the fact that ethical dilemmas are treated like a resource management game. This lowers her interest in the fictional aspects of the game and pushes her into *gamer mode* (Frank 2014); that is, a mode of play in which utilizing the game mechanics become more important than engaging with the fictional reality of the game. Gamer mode taps into what psychology calls a *telic metamotivational state*. This

is a goal-oriented mindset that comes into being in situations that need strategic thinking and long-term planning. In games it concerns situations where the player is instrumentally oriented towards how to use strategy in a calculated manner in order to reach the game's goals (Svebak and Apter 1987, Stenros 2015: 66). "Jane" plays through the game twice and starts a third playthrough before repetitiveness becomes an issue. In the interview she states that what made her continue so long was the fact that she was playing for research, but she also wanted to see whether there were something more to the game. In the end she also decided to go for the last missing achivement, emphasising her interest in the ludic elements over the fictional.

What does this mean for the multiple player perspective?

Following Stuart Hall, a reading – or decoding – of a media text can fall into broadly speaking three categories: It can be *dominant/hegemonic* in that it follows the encoded message that is ascribed into the text. Alternatively, the reading can be *oppositional* in the sense that it rejects the message presented. Also, the reading can be *negotiated*, thus partly accepting the encoded message (Hall 1972).

If we compare the four viewpoints on *This War of Mine above*, we witness four widely different experiences with the same game. Spanning from the dominant reading of "Stan", who is sympathetic to the encoded anti-war rhetoric of the game, to the highly oppositional reading of "Jane", who does not accept the rhetorical message presented in the game, and including the negotiated readings of "Fred" and "Leon", we see from a small sample the diversity in readings that a single-player perspective would not be able to grasp. If we were to include these into an analysis of *This War of Mine*, we would get a much fuller analysis than one based on the gameplay of a single researcher. Such an analysis would go beyond the dominant reading that Bjørkelo (2018) presents from his auto-ethnographic account of *This*

War of Mine, and that follows the intentions of the developers (Preston 2015). Thus, referring "Jane" and "Fred"'s experiences, we would be able to show that the procedural rhetorics (Bogost 2007) that emerges from the specific combination of game mechanics and fiction may be experienced as forced, or even as speculative.

Although there is little data to support an argument that the respondents traversed the game in radical different ways, the four respondents above do have different playstyles. "Leon" describes how he first approaches the game as an explorer (Bartle 1996, Bartle 2004: 130–32), as he approaches the game with a naïve perspective in which he does not know much about the game but tests out his gameplay options in a way that makes sense according to the fictional setting. In his second playthrough his style moves into that of the achiever, as hetakes a more strategic approach where he enters gamer mode and plays to win. "Stan", on the other hand, is not able to let the fictional reality go, and thus his interpretation and thus experience of the game becomes less cynical and more involved. Also, if we look at "Fred"'s perspective, we see that there can be a complex interplay between an oppositional and dominant reading. He has no problem recognizing the encoded meaning, but cannot accept it out of his general game preferences. Not least, just like "Stan" he finds the game to affect him emotionally, but he just does not like that games make him feel uncomfortable. Similarly, "Jane" also understands what message that the game developers try to communicate, but finds the game mechanics to be unable to fulfil their intentions. Her response is to become almost provoked by the attempt of promoting a serious message through crude game mechanics.

In combination, these viewpoints and experiences can expand a game analysis and make it more nuanced. Not only invite multiple player perspectives a researcher to include viewpoints that are in contrast with their own, but also to include different interpretations relating to

viewpoints similar to one's own. By allowing the viewpoints of "Jane", "Stan", "Fred", and "Leon", we can present an analysis that puts weight not only how *This War of Mine* presents the civilian war experience, but we also receive a number of arguments of whether and in what situations the techniques actually work or not, and with what effects. However, for researchers interested in adopting multiple player perspectives, it is important to state that this approach does not make collection of empirical data mandatory. Some other options is to use the perspectives of other researchers, look at how people discuss the game in online forums, or also include viewpoints of journalists or game reviewers.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued for using multiple player perspectives when analysing games and has applied it to a case study of *This War of Mine*. The multiple player perspective methodology implies using the experiences of a multitude of players when carrying out game analyses. I have argued that since games are dynamic and emergent media where player style and proficiency as well as choices differ from player to player, we need to take multiple perspectives into consideration when conducting serious, scholarly analyses of game. While the chapter is a critique of game analyses carried out from an individual vantage point, my goal here is not to disqualify all such analyses. Rather, the aim is to acknowledge the weaknesses of adapting methods of analysis for non-interactive media, and suggest other fruitful methods. My hope is that this chapter has helped us on the road towards looking for such new methods.

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