

GDC 2006
Game Design Challenge
Harvey Smith

Nobel Peace Prize

Nobel Peace Prize



Nobel Peace Prize

- “Serious Games”



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Nobel Peace Prize

- “Serious Games”
- Games that *try* to change society



Nobel Peace Prize

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 - ...for the better



Nobel Peace Prize

- “Serious Games”
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Nobel Peace Prize

- “Serious Games”
- Games that *try* to change society
 - ...for the better
- *Good examples exist*



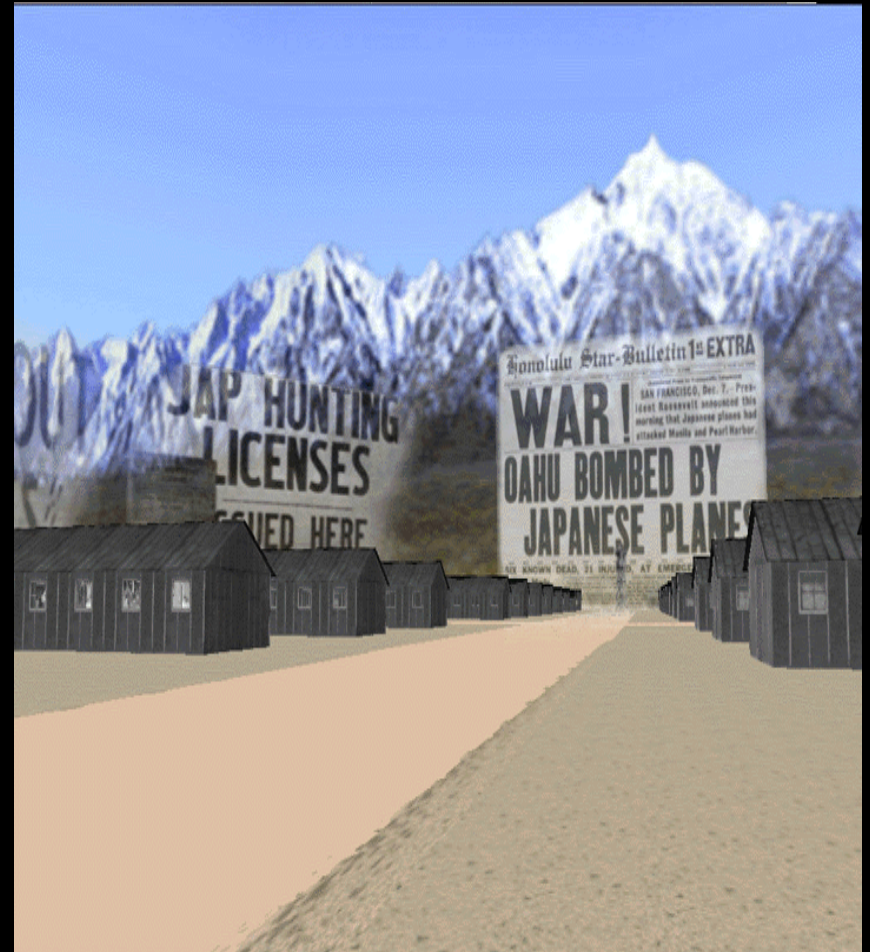
Escape from Woomera

- Australian game mod
- Player tries to escape a refugee detention center



Beyond Manzanar

- Virtual art installation
- Set in California
 - WWII
 - Player explores Japanese-American internment camp



Rejected Concepts

- Before I talk about my game concept
 - Some ideas I liked, but threw away...

Children's Character Game



Children's Character Game

- Cute Life-sim Critter



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Children's Character Game

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- ...subversively trains kids in moral behavior



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- Give out Nintendo DS to kids in impoverished environments



Children's Character Game

- Cute Life-sim Critter
- ...subversively trains kids in moral behavior
- Give out Nintendo DS to kids in impoverished environments
 - Teach them healthy practices, social skills, educational concepts



The Subvert-the-Nobel Game



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The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

- You work in PR for an *evil* corporation



The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

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The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

- You work in PR for an *evil* corporation
- Your goal...



The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

- You work in PR for an *evil* corporation
- Your goal...
 - Get your "scientists" nominated for the Peace Prize



The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

- You work in PR for an *evil* corporation
- Your goal...
 - Get your "scientists" nominated for the Peace Prize
 - ...for one of their world-changing "improvements"



The Subvert-the-Nobel Game



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The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

- Like...



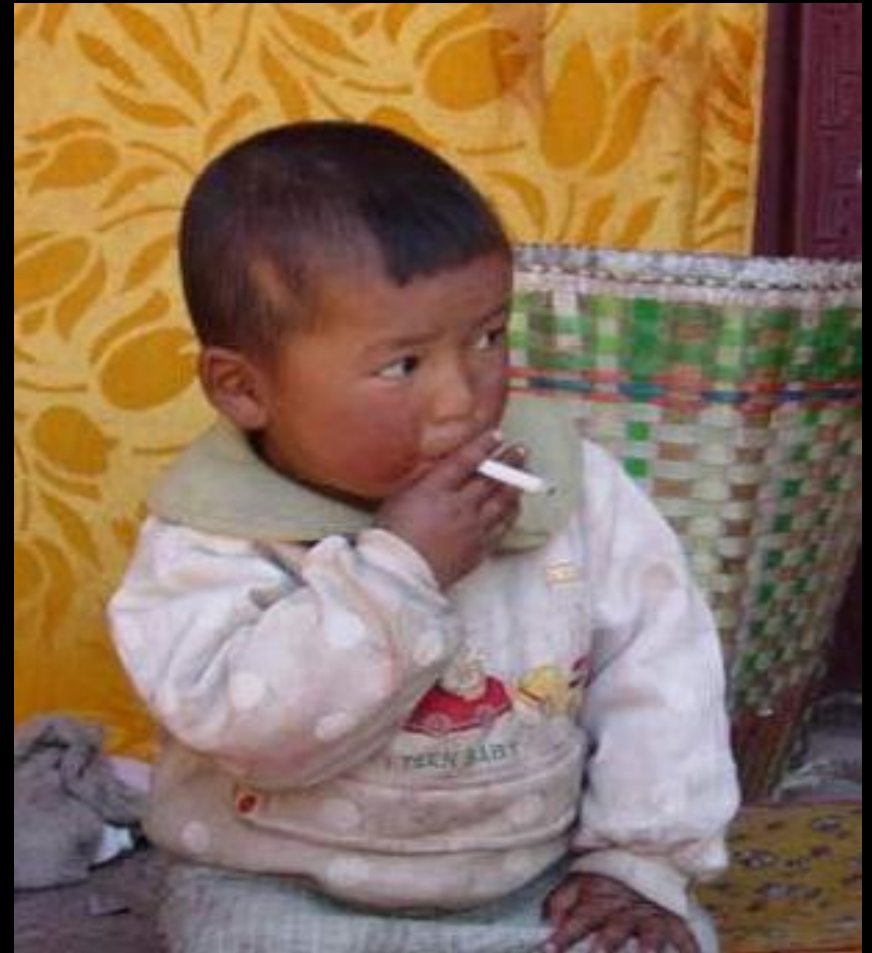
The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

- Like...



The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

- Like...
- FLAVOR-CHOICE
ENHANCEMENTS™



The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

- Like...
- FLAVOR-CHOICE ENHANCEMENTS™
 - *Increasing cigarette addictiveness*



The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

- Like...
- FLAVOR-CHOICE ENHANCEMENTS™
 - *Increasing cigarette addictiveness*
 - *...preserving “consumer freedom”*



The Subvert-the-Nobel Game



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The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

- Like...



The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

- Like...



The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

- Like...
- CURING AVIAN BIRD FLU



The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

- Like...
- CURING AVIAN BIRD FLU
 - ...by killing off those pesky, vermin-like *birds*



The Subvert-the-Nobel Game

- Like...
- CURING AVIAN BIRD FLU
 - ...by killing off those pesky, vermin-like *birds*
 - Via beneficial oil spills



Empathy Meme

Empathy Meme

- Action game using atypical characters

Empathy Meme

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 - ...expand the player's “circle of empathy”

Empathy Meme

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 - ...expand the player's “circle of empathy”

Empathy Meme

- Action game using atypical characters
 - ...expand the player's “circle of empathy”
- Humanize the downtrodden

Empathy Meme

- Action game using atypical characters
 - ...expand the player's “circle of empathy”
- Humanize the downtrodden
 - ...by making them into gaming avatars

Empathy Meme



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Empathy Meme

- Example—Sneaker Sweatshop



Empathy Meme

- Example—Sneaker Sweatshop



Empathy Meme

- Example—Sneaker Sweatshop
- A young woman must build a ***social network*** among her fellow workers...



Empathy Meme



Empathy Meme

- Example—Escape the Money Collectors



Empathy Meme

- Example—Escape the Money Collectors



Empathy Meme

- Example—Escape the Money Collectors
- A former police officer must use ***stealth*** to get his family to safety without attracting attention...



Bono's *Africa*



PAUL O'NEILL
U.S. Treasury Secretary

BONO
Lead singer of Irish rock band, U2

GHANA
ACCRA

ETHIOPIA
ADDIS ABABA

UGANDA
KAMPALA

SOUTH AFRICA
PRETORIA

The U.S. treasury secretary and rock star Bono are on a four-nation African tour to call attention to the continent's distressing problems. Dubbed the "odd couple" of international aid, the pair are looking to ensure that aid money is being spent in the most effective way.



Bono's *Africa*

- A strategy game employing ideas put forth by *The One Campaign*



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 - Stabilize and enrich African countries



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 - Invert wargame models



Bono's *Africa*

- A strategy game employing ideas put forth by *The One Campaign*
 - Stabilize and enrich African countries
 - Invert wargame models
 - End chaos and develop infrastructure



And then...



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The Norwegian Nobel Institute



- *Oslo, Norway*

The Norwegian Nobel Institute



- *Go, go, go!*

Okay, on to my idea for a game...

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Game Design Challenge

Nobel Peace Prize

Flash Mobs

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- ...a crowd of people who assemble suddenly in a public place, do something unusual or notable, and then disperse

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Flash Mobs

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- They usually organize via the Internet or *other digital communications networks*
 - ...*like an online game*

Flash Mobs



Flash Mobs



Flash Mobs



Flash Mobs



Flash Mobs



Flash Mobs



Peace Bomb!

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- A game aimed at engendering constructive projects

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- Platform: Web-enhanced Nintendo DS

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Peace Bomb!

- A game aimed at engendering constructive projects
- Platform: Web-enhanced Nintendo DS
- Game world spills into real world
- The game creates *flash mobs in the real world*

Peace Bomb!



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Peace Bomb!

- Minimal graphics social network game



Peace Bomb!

- Minimal graphics social network game
 - Enlists the players in an underground movement



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- The game world is like ours, but poised just on the edge of a revolution



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Peace Bomb!

- Minimal graphics social network game
 - Enlists the players in an underground movement
- The game world is like ours, but poised just on the edge of a revolution
 - ...in the face of a totalitarian takeover by military-industrial economics
- Players must build social networks, negotiate, exchange resources virtually to work toward their goals



Peace Bomb!

Peace Bomb!

- Player goals:
 - Form groups and build resources
 - Design and promote peaceful insurgency projects
 - Try to move them to critical mass
- So it's a virtual trading, negotiating, social network-building game

Peace Bomb!

- Player goals:
 - Form groups and build resources
 - Design and promote peaceful insurgency projects
 - Try to move them to critical mass
- So it's a virtual trading, negotiating, social network-building game
- I like the fiction of players acting on some sneaker net to thwart or embarrass a militaristic, corporate government
 - Ties into the context of flash mobs
 - *Peace Bomb* becomes a portal to a revolutionary underground

Peace Bomb!

Peace Bomb!

- Ideally...

Peace Bomb!

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Peace Bomb!

- Ideally...
 - Cool, peaceful projects erupt all over the world
 - Flash mobs groups planting, cleaning, building, rallying, donating, collecting
 - Leveraging groups like Habitat for Humanity
 - The movement spreads because it's fun
 - A game that affords the players a sense of higher purpose

Peace Bomb!

- Two additional features
 - Community-driven scoring
 - Signature collecting using the DS stylus
 - Petitions, activism
 - ...play to platform strengths



The End

- *Thanks for the interesting exercise!*
- The first modern flash mob was organized in Manhattan in May 2003, by Bill Wasik, senior editor of Harper's Magazine.
- Escape from Woomera
 - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woomera_Immigration_Reception_and_Processing_Centre
- Beyond Manzanar
 - <http://mission.base.com/manzanar/>

Beyond the Ten Minute Window

- *Some of the stuff I had to cut...*

Rough Process—Step 01

- *What flashed through my head...*
- *Blink* Response
- Employ Lateral Thinking
- Toy with various ideas

Rough Process—Step 02

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 - Moody spaces to explore
 - I like general-purpose player tools

Rough Process—Step 02

- *Deliberately* consider the high concept
- *Deliberately* consider my identity
- Who am I as a game designer?
 - I like ecologies
 - Moody spaces to explore
 - I like general-purpose player tools
 - ...that allow the player to act *creatively*

Rough Process—Step 03

- Pick One Concept
- Research
- Constraints/Goals
- Develop the idea
- Talk to peers

Thoughts on fictional contexts in games

- Games are said to require victory conditions and often use war-like metaphors
 - Chess, for instance
- We could make games about creating gorgeous sunsets but we typically don't
- Even Minesweeper uses the *explosive* context
 - Why, it's just a logic puzzle. Why not allude to avoiding piles of dog poop?
- Why are so many games inherently tied in some way to conflict and chaos?
 - *We often use games to stimulate fight-or-flight in a safe environment*
- RPG's enforce "I am better than you" thinking
 - Levels/classes imply strict elitist structures?
 - Elves (+2 Intelligence???) That's racism!
- Are games evil? Am I evil?

A Force More Powerful

(Another example of serious games...)

- Strategy game
 - Accurate political models
- Player controls a nonviolent movement
 - Seeking social change



Platform

