

Chapter 19

Uganda's Road to Peace May Run through the River of Forgiveness: Designing Playable Fictions to Teach Complex Values

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ABSTRACT

While gaming technologies are typically leveraged for entertainment purposes, our experience and aspiration is to use them to encourage engagement with global, politically-sensitive issues. This chapter focuses on our game design concerning the struggle of Uganda, a design that allows players to experience the atrocities and inhumane conditions and, by illuminating such values as peace and justice, helps them more generally to appreciate the moral complexity of a humane intervention. Rather than theoretical constructs to be debated in the abstract, the ethical struggles involved in determining a humane intervention in the game setting are grounded in different Non-Player Characters' perspectives and operationalized within the underlying game dynamics. Beyond reporting on the designed game, the chapter draws the reader into the struggles of designing such an ethically contentious game.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most persistent problems of this period is how to reconcile conflicting goals in the aftermath of severe criminality.... The regime responsible for crimes against humanity or genocidal behaviors [remains] as part of a bargain by which its impunity was "purchased" in exchange for its voluntarily relinquishment of power (Falk, 2000, pp. 24–25).

The violence committed by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) for over 20 years on the Acholi people of northern Uganda has resulted in the death and displacement of millions, and left countless others mutilated, raped, or enslaved as child soldiers (Eichstaedt, 2009). Reports suggest that torture continues to be practiced among security organizations, including the arrest and beating of opposition members of Parliament (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008). In 2007, the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, requested support from the International Criminal Court (ICC), which then issued arrest warrants for top LRA leaders. However, a year after the warrants were issued, Museveni offered the LRA amnesty in exchange for an initial ceasefire and eventual comprehensive peace agreement—despite the fact that the warrants were issued at Museveni's request. This example highlights the tension between seeking peace and attaining justice. Ugandan human rights lawyer Barney Afako argued that seeking justice through the courts will prolong violence, stating: "Justice needs to be justified in terms of lives," adding that "the [international] criminal justice system is isolated from the moral consequences of its intervention" (LegalbriefToday, 2006). Others, however, maintain that peace is dependent on justice, as only through attaining justice can there be reconciliation and rehabilitation (Falk, 2000).

A core question illuminated in this chapter is how these particular dilemmas and the underlying universal struggles that they involve might be translated into game play. More generally, we are

interested in how to leverage videogames to engage citizens in challenging situations so that they can appreciate the ethical and moral complexities of social issues while experiencing the problem in a personally-relevant way. This challenge—to structure engagement with issues in ways that both address their complexity and bear relevance beyond the specific context—is what we regard as central to our work as designers of games. To tease out these challenges, we use the complex case of Uganda. Solutions to Uganda's situation that are prominently advocated by the international community and in human rights statements have emphasized the need for justice to achieve peace, as if this were a universal truth. Such a perspective, that peace is dependent on justice being enforced, is regularly adopted regarding global justice more generally (Falk, 2000). However, as one inquires deeper into the local phenomena, which in this case is the Ugandan story of justice, the accepted disciplinary "truths" become complexified (Hannum, 2006). Indeed, as our design work advanced, we examined more perspectives and even talked with local Ugandans, and such lofty statements became less useful, compelling us to question whether peace in Uganda is necessarily dependent on justice being enforced.

Such grounded engagement with any theoretical claim, shifting from general platitudes to specific instances, is necessary not only for the struggles of Uganda and the tension between peace and justice but for other concerns as well. The hesitation to accept such a ready-made solution as the correlation between justice and peace and, instead, the patience to discern an emergent solution, synthesized from alternative perspectives, represents a sophisticated and adaptable approach to a wide range of important problems. It reveals aspects of Uganda's struggles not previously appreciated and offers, if not a path to their resolution, then at least a step toward that path. And to consider the Ugandan context from this perspective equips one with the experience of engaging complex issues in a manner bearing rel-

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