

# Thinking about Gameplay

C395 Computer Game Design

Ken Forbus

Spring 2002

# Overview

- The idea of gameplay
- Case study: Age of Kings
- Analysis

# Gameplay

- “A game is a series of interesting choices”
  - Sid Meier
- Key problems for designers:
  - How do you make a player’s choices interesting?
  - How do you ease a player into your world?
  - How do you keep them interested as they gain experience?

# Problem: Worlds tend to be complex

- Can overwhelm player
- Solutions
  - Organize game into subsystems that can be mastered semi-independently
  - Interactions between subsystems provide interesting properties of game world dynamics
  - Introduce new features gradually
    - Also provides intermediate goals for player
    - Also keeps game changing, hence interesting

# Strategy games

- You control an organization rather than an individual
  - Armed forces
  - Company
  - Ant colony
- Winning requires managing your resources
  - Noticing important conditions
  - Short-term versus long-term investments
  - Multiple activities in progress at once
  - Self-motivated campaigns, plans, strategies

# Case study: Age of Kings

- Time to experiment...

What are some key features of the modeled world?

# What are some key features of the modeled world?

- Continuous flow of time
- Map provides the stage
- Monitoring activities of multiple agents requires substantial player attention
- Player must organize production activities
- Right level of abstraction critical to determining how fun the game is

The Story: What is it?

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- A conflict
- It has a beginning, a middle, and an end
  - What these are like in a particular game arise from the player's interaction with the model
- Beginning
  - ????
- Middle
  - ????
- End
  - ????

Why include campaigns?

# Why include campaigns?

- Provided short, bounded experiences
  - More likely to pick it up again than if it always took hours
- Simplifies design of the AIs
  - Range of necessary behaviors limited
  - Can craft strategies for the specific scenario
- Provides structure for player to monitor progress

What would have to change to make a  
persistent world?

# What would have to change to make a persistent world?

- Renewable resources
- More capable AIs
  - High-level strategic shifts as game conditions change
  - Ability to orchestrate long campaigns

What does the Research Tree provide?

# What does the Research Tree provide?

- Staged introduction of capabilities to help manage complexity
- Opportunity to balance long-term and short-term investments
- Progress tracking

What is the purpose of relics and wonders?

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- Produce instability later in the game
- Increase uncertainty of outcome