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2012-06-21
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Gaming Development: Online Video Games as Aestheticized Ideologies

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MA Dissertation

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this is my original work, and that it has not been copied or cited without the relevant referencing.

Abstract

It can be argued that the online video game medium has provided new opportunities for the dissemination of educational and informational content, and indeed, such new opportunities have become increasingly exploited by various international organisations, as well as independent gaming producers in order to promote developmental messages. *Food Force*, *Fate of the World* and *Wildfire* are exemplary of such games that seek to inform players of methods that can be utilised to enhance development and alleviate poverty within developing nations. While the games' presence on the internet provides allowances for the dissemination of alternative and novel suggestions for development, the games prove however, to promote mainstream forms of development, most notably modernisation theories and participatory paradigms. Indeed, *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* strongly adhere to modernisation theories through their emphasis upon the necessity of intervention on behalf of developed nations and organisations in order to stimulate development and progress in developing nations, whereas *Wildfire* proves to be highly informed by participatory paradigms due its stress upon the potential of communities to bring about development by themselves and for themselves. However, due to these influences of such theories, the games also appropriate many of the problematic aspects of these theories. Thus, the games prove to offer ideological conceptualisations for development that are highly flawed and ineffective, and thus serve as a means to encourage and promote the hegemonic positions of developed nations and organisations within the developmental process.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Last Moyo for his constant guidance and assistance throughout this research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Statement of Intention.

Using social semiotics as well as a multimodal discourse analysis, this study aims to examine the ways in which development is conceptualised and portrayed in popular games aimed towards social change, namely *Food Force*, *Wildfire* and *Fate of the World*. The study also aims to investigate the extent to which these games engage with traditional development theories and how they conceptualise and operationalise development through the gaming medium.

1.2. Research Problem

The increasing prevalence of the domestication of video gaming in the everyday lives of millions of people across the world has warranted extensive study into this relatively new media technology, placing extensive emphasis on issues such as new forms of identity, communication, and controversies regarding its reception. Indeed, the success of the video game medium as a communicative and informative tool has resulted in new optimism for its potential to act as a means to spread positive humanitarian messages for societal change. (Kahne et al.2009; Dayha.2008).

The appropriation of the video game medium for purposes of societal change has been used by many international organisations such as the United Nations, and the World Bank Institute, as well as gaming production companies such as Player Three, Educational Simulations, and the Centre for Digital Media. This includes the award-winning game *Wildfire* (See Figure 1.1); produced by software developer By Implication, which has achieved remarkable success. Through the means of recruiting volunteers and assigning them to different tasks, players must address numerous societal issues which are informed by the United Nations Development Programme's Millennium Development Goals, that is, the "globally accepted benchmarks of broader progress, embraced by donors, developing countries, civil society and major development institutions alike" (Guthrie. 2008: 166) which are arguably the embodiment of United Nations' values concerning developmental progress. Such values are manifested within the game by achieving these goals by eradicating extreme

poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, and combating fatal diseases amongst others, while overcoming obstacles to societal development.

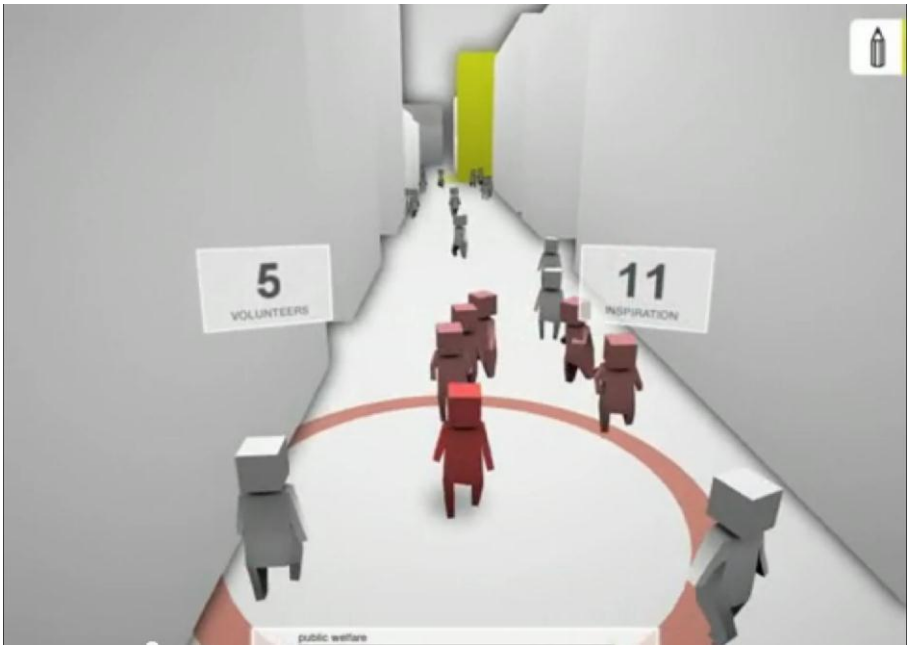

Figure 1.1: Inspiring local citizens to assist in developmental change in *WildFire* (By Implication. 2010)

Many of these games have achieved world-wide success, such as *Food Force* (See Figure 1.2), which has garnered an estimated 10 million players in over 200 countries[1], and aims to uncover the processes and challenges faced when delivering food aid. Located on the fictitious island of Sheylan, players must address numerous issues such as negotiating with armed rebels and rebuilding villages in order to dispense food aid as efficiently as possible, with the hopes of eventually establishing sustainable food production within the impoverished island (UN News Centre. 2006). The game is produced by the UN World Food Programme, a humanitarian organisation aiming to deliver emergency food aid through the use of volunteer donations. However, this emphasis on emergency deliverance of humanitarian food aid does prove to some extent contradict the notions of sustainable

[1] World Food Programme. 2011. *Food Force: The First Humanitarian Video Game*. Retrieved 5 March 2011 from the World Wide Web:

http://www.wfp.org/how-to-help/individuals/food-force

development highlighted throughout the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, thus isolating humanitarian aid from the UN's aspirations for greater forms of development.

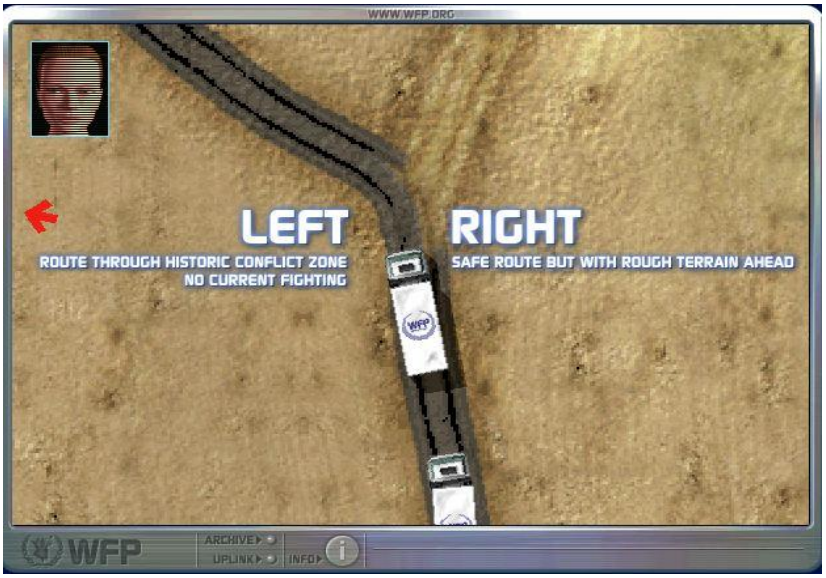

Figure 1.2: A Mission in *Food Force* depicting the challenges faced by emergency food delivery. (World Food Programme.2005)

Similarly, *Fate of the World* (See Figure 1.3) by Red Redemption, an independent game developer based in the United Kingdom, has also received raved reviews for socially-positive messages. Set in the year 2020, the world is in a state of disarray, with scarce resources, environmental degradation and international conflict. The player acts as head of the fictitious Global Environmental Organisation (GEO), and is required to make vital decisions in order to prevent and address these issues over a 20 year period in order to save the world from destruction.



Figure1. 3: Playing Cards for development in Africa in *Fate of the World*. (Red Redemption Ltd. 2011)

However, it can be argued that such games are largely informed and influenced by development theories which are highly flawed in their epistemic formulations of the development concept and process. Consequently, these games serve as a means of perpetuating notions of development that hinder as opposed to assist development in communities. A cursory look at some of the games shows extensive influence by modernisation theory, which posits that underdeveloped, or the so-called third world countries have experienced certain obstructions to their evolution on the development scale, which would need to be overcome should they be able to achieve the highest level of modernisation like that of industrialised Western countries (Harrison. 1988: 2). Indeed, this standpoint has been heavily criticised for its strong bias and disregard for socio-political and cultural contexts in which it intends to be implemented, and in fact has "failed to lead to very much real development" (Sparks.2007:39).

In addition, many of the games promote aspects of development which are informed by participatory paradigms, which place vast emphasis upon notions of democratic engagement and the inclusiveness of local communities, are also to a large extent highly flawed due to their oversimplistic and overoptimistic perspectives with regards to development, as well as their failure to address issues of power distribution, which serve as threatening obstacles to development.

This study therefore seeks to critically investigate the ways in which the selected games are influenced by and engage with the dominant and alternative models of development. It also aims to critically analyse the efficacy[2] of the gaming medium in development as an entertaining as well as educational medium.

1.3. Research Questions

Questions that this research seeks to address are:

1. To what extent do modernisation and participatory approaches influence the construction and understanding of development in *FoodForce*, *WildFire* and *Fate of the World*?
2. How do the three games critically engage with the limitations of these models of development?
3. To what extent is the gaming medium effective in terms of its usage of the infotainment genre?

1.4. Motivation

The video gaming market commands billions of dollars all over the world, with a $2 billion market in Latin America alone (Bonita. 2008). It is estimated that about 65% of all US households play video games (Education Database Online. 2001), and thus, such a vast growth in the medium necessitates investigation into its role within society. While extensive studies have been conducted concerning the video game medium's potential for the dissemination of educational information, many of these studies are primarily concerned with the uses of video games in the classroom in order to stimulate cognitive development within children (Dumbleton et al. 2006; Gee.2007). Indeed, while such studies provide valuable

[2] This research does not intend to conduct an audience effects study, but rather the term "effects" is used in the limited sense of medium analysis.

psychological approaches to video games and their potential for cognitive-based education, the uses of games as tools for social awareness and social development have however remained relatively untouched and underemphasised as an area of study. In fact, the severity of developmental issues such as poverty, disease, famine, and political instability and conflict faced by many countries (80% of the world's population survives on less than $10 a day (Global Issues. 2010)) warrants investigation into the ways in which awareness and possible subsequent solutions for such problems can be encouraged through new media technologies. This necessity is compounded by the fact that gaps between the rich and poor are widening globally, even in regions which are commonly perceived as wealthy such as the European Union, which has an income inequality ratio of 4:9 (Poverty.org.uk.2005). The adoption of media technologies such as video and television in an attempt to fulfil this role to inform, educate and stimulate social action is not a novel concept; however, the appropriation of the video game medium in order to serve these functions is a fairly recent implementation, and indeed, has proven to be a highly useful medium due to its pervasive and immersive character, whereby player's experience "being in rather than before the image that is being expressed" (Lister et al. 2003 :114), thus increasing player engagement within the game.

Thus, due to the dominance of literature concerning the psychological potential for cognitive development of educational video gaming, there has arisen a distinct lack of focus of video games as being potential platforms for the promotion of social change. Therefore, an analysis of the ways in which video games can potentially assist in developmental processes and encourage social action is necessary for bridging such a gap in the field.

Food Force, WildFire, and *Fate of the World* prove to be good examples when considering efforts to utilize video games for social awareness of development and its associated difficulties. Produced by various private and public organisations, these games and their narrative and visual compositions offer various conceptualisations of the issues posed by development, as well as proposed solutions to such problems, many of which can be construed as being potentially problematic and flawed.

1.5. Conclusion

Thus, the increasing popularity and pervasiveness of video games around the world, as well as their utilisation as a platform for the promotion of social change on behalf of international organisations and gaming producers demonstrates the necessity to investigate the ways in which games such as *Food Force, Fate of the World* and *Wildfire* disseminate messages concerning development, as well as what informs such conceptualisations for development.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The subject of development has proven to be a highly contentious one, and much debate has circulated around the policies and suggestions proposed by a number of different developmental theories. This literature review will present an overview of video games as tools for learning and knowledge theories as well as an overview and critical analysis of these proposals for development, namely by modernisation theory and participatory paradigms.

2.2. Gaming as Infotainment and Edutainment

The increasing pervasiveness of the gaming medium has resulted in growing interest into the ways in which it can be utilized in order to serve as a means for learning, educating, and disseminating information (Miller. 2008: 185). In fact, the term "edutainment" is speculated to have been coined by Electronic Arts founder, Trip Hawkins in 1984 to denote a digital game which aims to provide both education, as well as entertainment (Egenfeldt- Nielson et al. 2008: 211).

Indeed, the advantages of using video games for facilitating learning have been widely celebrated, as it is believed they are able to stimulate and maintain motivation and engagement during learning, as well as provide a means in which to apply knowledge, thus increasing problem-solving skills in the real world (Chen et al. 2009). Similarly, video games' ability to contextualise concepts and problems through their utilisation of dialogue, images, actions and experience (Gee. 2008:36), player engagement increases the perception of relevance of information, as opposed to traditional passive text-book learning (Egenfeldt-Nielson et al. 2008: 219). Indeed, the immersive and engaging qualities of video games also allows for flow experiences, which increases the chances that abstract concepts will be appropriated by players (Chen et al. 2009).

In addition, the emotive nature of video games also proves to be highly useful for the dissemination of information. Indeed, many players experience high degrees of emotion, and particularly attachment to an avatar during game play, therefore enhancing engagement within the content of the game (Gee. 2008: 35). Moreover, games which involve interaction with other players also promotes notions of teamwork and action around a common goal or

purpose, thus enhancing skills relating to organisation as well as specialisation of knowledge (Gee. 2007: 27), factors which prove to be highly useful for social movements. Indeed, hopes that the knowledge and skills gained from video games can be used for social action have also emerged. Problem-solving and collaboration found in many video games hold promise for new forms of collective intelligence and possible civic engagement by those who play video games (Kahne et al. 2009:7).

However, video games have not been short on criticism and many have doubted their potential for educating and disseminating information. Indeed, video games have been disparaged for placing too much emphasis on extrinsic motivation, that is, the promise of mostly instantaneous reward (usually in the form of points), as opposed to intrinsic motivation whereby gratification comes from the learning experience in itself (Egenfeldt-Nielson et al. 2008:212). There has also been criticism that many of these games also place too much importance upon entertainment, thus undermining the educative aspects and failing to achieve an integration between the two (Egenfeldt-Nielson et al. 2008:212). Furthermore, scepticism as to whether such games are actually effective in transferring knowledge (Egenfeldt-Nielson et al. 2008:219), and warnings of possible social isolation and anti-social violent behaviour have also arisen (Kahne et al.2009:2).

2.3. Modernisation Theory

This study aims to examine *FoodForce, WildFire* and *Fate of the World* in accordance with a number of different developmental paradigms. The first paradigm is that of modernisation theory, which has gained an international attention for several decades (Sparks.2007: 28). Modernisation theory emerged in the 1960s as a means to explain the reasons why certain countries had attained what was considered as a high level of economic development, and why others has not (Anderson et al. 2008: 252). Arising from the Marshal Plan and the Point Four program, which were originally implemented to address the issues posed by the destruction of Europe from the Second World War (and had proven to be highly successful), modernisation theory aimed to lessen suffering through the means of capital investment (Melkote el al. 2001:52). Being highly informed by evolutionary theory, modernisation theory posited that underdeveloped, or third world countries had experienced certain obstructions to their evolution on the development scale, which would need to be overcome should they be able to achieve the highest level of civilisation (Harrison. 1988: 2).

Indeed, according to modernisation theory, such obstructions to development could be found in the very nature and way of life of these underdeveloped countries, which were characterised as being highly lacking in technical skills, with little emphasis on issues such as money circulation and markets, and having a perspective that was not conducive towards future planning (So. 1990: 25). Static traditional values as well as insufficient work ethics, cultural norms, poor time-management and lack of emphasis upon education were seen as the primary reasons behind the third world's poverty and subsequent lack of development (Andersen et al. 2008: 252).

Conversely, modernisation theory conceptualised the industrialised West as being the paramount example of the highest level of development. Characterised as having high degrees of specialisation of labour, rationality, literacy, urbanisation, with money and markets as a high priority and valuing hard work (So. 1990:25) and efficiency and planning for the future, such countries were thus considered to embody the ideal "modern society" (Andersen et al. 2008:252).

Thus, according to modernisation theory, in order to achieve a high degree of development, and therefore alleviate poverty, third world countries would be required to emulate the values and societal structures of that of the "developed" West, and abandon their traditional ways of life. One of the ways in which this could be achieved is through the mass media, which would be mandated with the task of disseminating perspectives and viewpoints held by modern societies in order to ease these third world countries into a mindset that is more favourable towards development (Sparks. 2007: 24). This materialised through the implementation of the diffusion of innovations approach, that is, the use of mass media in order to ease third world countries into the adoption of these new Western ideas (Melkote et al. 2001: 56). New technologies, with particular regard to agriculture would be introduced to these areas by more developed societies, and the state and elites within these third world countries would play a vital role in assisting the spread of modern ideals (Sparks. 2007: 35). Thus, in accordance with its evolutionist roots, modernisation theory asserted that social change was a slow, gradual, and unidirectional process by which third world societies could progress towards a more advanced and developed goal (So. 1990: 19).

However, modernisation theory was not without its flaws, and underwent massive attacks by critics by the 1970s (Melkote et al. 2001:155).While its implementation had proven to be effective in post-World War II Europe, it did not however prove to be as successful in a third

world context, and the adoption of its policies proved sparse (Melkote et al. 2001:54). One of the primary criticisms of the theory centred around notions that it was inherently bias, in that it makes assumptions that modernity is the natural pinnacle of developmental progression, and that it is unnatural for traditional societies to remain traditional (Preston: 1996: 174). It was accused of perpetuating the notion of Western superiority through disseminating binaristic terms such as "primitive" and "modern" , and also denied any responsibility on the part of first world countries in the creation of deprived situations in third world countries due to colonialisation and skewed international trade systems (So. 1990:58). Indeed, neo-Marxist criticisms have posited that such an ideological assertion of Western superiority through modernisation theory has been used in order to increase US intervention within third world countries for its own benefit (So. 1990: 58).

In addition, modernisation theory has failed to account for culturally specific circumstances and contexts such as social and political structures, in which the imposition of a Western model may prove to be irrelevant in such a context (Melkote et al. 2001:155). Indeed, because modernisation theory did not take into account specific contexts, it assumed homogeneity in all underdeveloped countries, thus rendering much of its prescriptions ineffectual or inappropriate and challenging the theory's notion that conceptualisations of modernity are universal (Sparks. 2007: 41). Furthermore, it has been argued that despite the efforts to implement modernisation theory's recommendations, little development has actually occurred. Instead, wealth gaps have widened, and those who have benefited most have been the elite as opposed to the poor in many third world countries (Melkote et al. 2001:159). Indeed, many poor countries remain subjected to the cultural and economic control imposed by Western nations (So. 1990: 58).

2.4. Delinking Theory

One of the primary criticisms of modernisation theory was prevalent in Samir Amin's notion of "delinking", that is, "the refusal to submit to the worldwide law of value" (Amin. 1990:70), and that third world countries should emancipate themselves from the world economy and make their own decisions with regards to their own national issues in order to break away from their dependence on first world countries, and thus stimulate development (Kiely.1995 :52). By doing so, capitalistic exploitation on behalf of first world countries on the periphery would be challenged, thus allowing for greater autonomy for nations and well as peoples (Robinson. 2011). Accompanying this emancipation would be drastic reforms in

third world economies, with vast emphasis placed on agriculture, a redistribution of resources, and the elimination of dominant forms of private ownership (Robinson. 2011), as well as the imposition of "self-reliant socialism" (Kiely. 1995:53).

However, delinking theory has also been heavily criticised, most notably for its failure to acknowledge exploitation and unequal power relations at a national level. Instead, delinking theory overemphasises this exploitation at an international level, thus rendering it ineffective in addressing inequalities within countries themselves (Kiely.1995:52). In addition, delinking theory has proven to be somewhat irrelevant, especially with the rise of vast economic power on behalf of previous third world countries such as India and China, who have thrived because of global trade relations, thus challenging the notion that inter-global trade relations are necessarily hindrances to third world development (Robinson. 2011). Furthermore, delinking theory's emphasis upon socialism, and its recommendations that third world countries ally with socialist blocs have become largely irrelevant, especially since 1989 with the decline of socialist ideologies (Pieterse.2001 :62). In addition, the tight state control advocated by delinking theory in order for countries to protect themselves from outside influence is also not viable due to increased levels of mobility and communication on a global scale (Pieterse. 2001:61).

Thus, despite delinking theory's aims to establish a solution for development that would serve as an alternative to modernisation theory, it has however, proven to be highly flawed and is consequently, an outdated and ineffective means of development.

2.5. Participatory Theories

The third theory in which the selected games will be analysed against is the participatory paradigm, which emerged following ongoing criticisms against the previous dominant paradigms for development (Sparks. 2007: 56), and has become "increasingly emphasised as a means of combating a range of social malaise" (Osmani. 2008:11). In opposition to the modernisation theory, participatory paradigms for development saw such methods as ineffectual due to their inability to rouse motivation from the local populations concerned (Sparks. 2007: 57), and also aimed to challenge notions of development as being a centralised and one-way process (Kapoor. 2008: 60). Instead, emphasis within the participatory paradigm was placed upon notions of inclusiveness of local people within decision-making processes in

order to properly ascertain their needs and desires (Melkote et al. 2001:337). The paradigm argues that through such inclusiveness, a more democratic environment can be created in which bottom-up decision-making can take place, thus allowing for traditionally marginalised sects of society such as minorities who can contribute to their own development (Cissna. 2009: 519). Hence, it is argued that through these practices of participation, shared ownership (as opposed to sole ownership by expert elites) in developmental projects can be achieved, thus resulting in more even distribution of resources (Cissna. 2009:520), as well as full engagement on behalf of local people in the developmental process (Melkote et al. 2001:338). In addition, through the empowerment of the local population in developmental projects, participatory paradigms assert that development can further take place and be sustained following the end of the given project (Jennings.2000:2).

One of the main methods in which participatory paradigms aim to achieve such ends, is through the means of communication, which, converse to the modernisation paradigm, assumes a more horizontal form, allowing for dialogue and information sharing amongst the population (Cissna. 2009:509). It is argued that such methods will help facilitate and encourage idea sharing and the agreement on common goals (Melkote et al. 2001:337). Furthermore, instead of imposing modern values and knowledge on developing countries, participatory paradigms aim to incorporate traditional knowledge systems in order to achieve developmental goals (Schneider et al.1995 :30).

In addition, participatory paradigms also strove to acknowledge specific cultural and political contexts in which developmental processes were to take place. It argues that this is imperative in order to ascertain the source of a country's individual problems, and to thus find solutions that are specific to these obstacles (Jennings. 2000: 2). Thus, in accordance with these problems, solutions may or may not be guided by Western developmental recommendations (Sparks. 2007: 57).

However, despite the participatory paradigm's appeal against modernisation theories, it was also heavily criticised for a number of reasons. Firstly, the theory has been accused of being overly optimistic with regards to issues of inclusive participation. While it is presumed that people will participate in such projects in order to better their lives, there are also a number of cultural reasons as to why people may not participate, such as patriarchal cultural norms (Cleaver.2001:52). In addition, such a theory also neglects the potential for exclusion from participation based on inherent hierarchies within societies (Cleaver. 2001: 53), and thus may

fail to acknowledge or even serve to reinforce these inequalities of power (Kapoor. 2008:60). Indeed, preference for one faction in society over another is to a large extent unavoidable, thus rendering the concept of universal participation void (Sparks. 2007:65). In spite of this, even if power were to be reallocated in the given population through developmental projects, such redistribution may serve to create new conflicts by those who oppose it (Sparks. 2007:67). What's more, participatory theories also often neglect notions of external power, such as that of global organisations, and how these threaten the true participatory nature of development (Cooke et al. 2001: 10). Furthermore, the presumption that consensus will be found through the means of democratic and inclusive debate and dialogue proves to be oversimplistic, as it fails to consider the possibilities for conflictual interests and values within a population (Sparks. 2007: 65).

Indeed, the theory has also been accused by critics for placing too much importance upon the notion of participation while neglecting aspects of resource and financial availability which are imperative factors in the developmental process (Cleaver. 2001: 46). Furthermore, while participatory theories aim to combine traditional and modern knowledge systems, these are often contradictory, and can thus be very difficult to implement into an effective system of poverty alleviation and advancement (Sparks. 2007: 61). Moreover, despite the claims to the incorporation of "local knowledge" within participatory development, these are often, however, not implemented to their full extent, and are rather manipulated by externalplannerse with very little knowledge used from local populations (Cooke et al. 2001:8).In addition, the theory aims to implement a developmental system by which foreign as well as local experts merely play a facilitatory role in the developmental process while allowing most of the change to come from within the local population. However, even through such a method, a hierarchy of power is still implied, thus undermining the autonomy of the community (Melkote et al. 2001:338).Indeed, it can be argued that many of these problematic aspects faced by participatory paradigms are often overlooked due to the "trendiness" and popularity of its recommendations, leaving its policies largely unquestioned (Kapoor. 2008:68), and thus, the possibility of participation as being an inevitably "tyrannical" and possibly oppressive approach to development goes largely unaddressed (Cooke et al. 2001:15).

2.6. Conclusion

Thus, an analysis of the appropriate literature reveals the flaws within the conceptualisations of development of both modernisation and participatory paradigms. While modernisation theory proves to fall short of its ideals due to its biased and ineffectual propositions, participatory paradigms likewise fail to consider many of the institutional and social obstacles facing development, as well as providing solutions which may be construed as oversimplistic. Despite this, an overview of the potential of video games as edutainment is demonstrative of the ways in which these developmental messages can be appropriated and possibly put into action by those who play such games.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3.1. Introduction

It can be argued that *Food Force*, *Fate of the World* and *Wildfire* can be defined in terms of alternative media due to their low-budgets and online distribution. Indeed, the power of new digital media technologies to disseminate alternative media messages as well as contribute to the overall experience of media texts is a fundamental component of the video game medium. In addition, the games prove to be highly ideologically loaded, and serve to contribute towards the hegemonic position of first world nations. Such ideologies are largely disseminated through the use of interpellation of players within the games.

3.2. Alternative Media and Digital Media Theories

This study aims to analyse the selected video games in terms of alternative media theory, and argues that new media (such as video games) hold vast potential as a new means of producing, disseminating, and promoting alternative media messages. Being low-budget, created by independent producers, and disseminated over the internet mostly for free (as opposed to mainstream platforms such as Sony Playstation or Xbox), and are thus mainly intended for altruistic purposes, it can be argued that the selected games for the study are exemplary of alternative media. Thus, due to such an alternative and independent position of the producers, the games are given the opportunity to subvert the dominant Western discourses that would usually pervade mainstream games and other media platforms. While messages for development have previously been disseminated through the use of mass media (in accordance with the diffusion of innovations approach) in order to encourage action and educate people of the methods of developmental policy, the use of alternative media, especially in the form of video games (otherwise known as "serious games"), is becoming increasingly prevalent (Frasca.2008 :94). Indeed, the use of video games in order to promote developmental strategies proves to hold potential as a new and alternative means of exploring approaches to development.

The definition of alternative media is a highly contested one, but can be described as being "a range of media projects, interventions and networks, that work against or seek to develop different forms of the dominant, expected (and broadly accepted) ways of doing media" (Atton. 2004:ix). Alternative media is generally perceived as being in opposition to mainstream media, or mass media (Waltz.2005:2), and seeks to provide messages and

information which is not commonly available through such mainstream outlets (Atton. 2002:12), Alternative media could be seen as using much of the techniques employed in mass media, however, there is, according to Silverstone, a focus on "critical or [the] alternative agenda ... from the underbelly of social life" (Atton. 2002: 1). In addition, proponents of alternative media agendas regard mainstream media as being largely homogeneous, undemocratic and limiting in terms serving public interest and addressing social issues (Atton. 2002:20).

One of the primary aims of many alternative media products is to provide a means to which citizen involvement and participation can be achieved, whereby the opinions of ordinary people and small minorities can be articulated and expressed (Atton. 2002: 16). Alternative media is naturally orientated towards communities, and unlike mainstream media, serve as a means for community participation as well as two-way interaction between media producers and receivers (Bailey et al. 2008:10). This aspect involves both participation in the media, whereby ordinary citizens can actively assist in the production of alternative media texts, thus enhancing the democratic nature of alternative media forms, as well as participation through the media, which places emphasis on deliberation and self-representation of communities in public spaces, as well as collective decision-making and dialogue (Bailey et al. 2008:11). Thus, alternative media have the ability to empower citizens by giving them opportunity for their voices to be heard, therefore facilitating opportunities for social change and development (Bailey et al. 2008: 14).

Indeed, the democratic and inclusive nature of many alternative media forms seek to promote a space in which the needs of citizens (particularly minorities and disenfranchised communities), as opposed to elites, can be granted salience, which they argue, has traditionally been neglected by the mainstream media in their pursuit of profit (Atton. 2002: 7). As such, alternative media challenges the notions of concentration of power in the media, and conversely aspire to create a more horizontal and collective (as opposed to a vertical system) of media production, sometimes through the means of deprofessionalisation, deinstitutionalisation, independence, and citizen-produced media, thus subverting notions of hierarchical systems of media development, and, at least according to Williams (cited in Atton.2002), are able to realign media development and production with the above mentioned aspects of democratic communication (Atton. 2002: 4). Furthermore, alternative media is commonly non-commercial, and are therefore at times marginalised due to their unsustainability and failure to achieve mainstream appeal (Waltz. 2005: 3), as was

highlighted by Comedia's critique of alternative media as being characterized by financial 'underdevelopment' and having a somewhat cavalier approach towards finance. Of course, what is less clear is whether such a characteristically non-commercial, non-hierarchical approach has the inevitable quality of failure as Comedia suggests (Cited in Atton. 2002: 33). Indeed, alternative media has often been linked to activist media, in that it often seeks to serve a role of social responsibility through addressing pertinent issues within society. This is commonly achieved through the encouragement of its audience to promote and initiate social change, sometimes with the hope of breaking into mainstream media outlets to achieve wider recognition (Waltz. 005:4).

The subversive nature of alternative media, and its abilities to allow ordinary citizens to speak back to media as well as participate within it can be explained by Foucault's "insurrection of subjugated knowledge", whereby the heterogeneous voice of those considered to be the "other" becomes able to express itself, and thus, alternative media can be conceptualised as being a means of conveying such a multitude of voices (Atton. 2002:9). The implication of power is the possibility for resistance, and due to the flexibility of meaning, language allows for such resistance, thus marginalised groups can exercise their counter-hegemonic voice through alternative media (Bailey et al.2008:17).

Thus, while alternative media have traditionally been faced with marginalisation from the mass media, there is however, potential for such problems to be overcome through the use of new media, especially the internet. The term "new media" refers to the changes to media accompanying the technological developments occurring during the late 1980s, which promised to transform notions of mass media audiences (Lister et al. 2009: 10). The use of digitised forms, (in particular the internet), have been employed by numerous groups (most notably the Zapatista movement in Mexico) in order to deploy alternative messages and exploit the democratic nature of such new media (Atton. 2002:135). Indeed, a number of characteristics of new media, namely digitality, interactivity immersion, hypertextuality and dispersal, are demonstrative of the ways in which many new media forms may be considered to be alternative media. Indeed, because the selected games for this study are primarily accessible through the internet, this notion of producing and disseminating alternative media through new media becomes imperative for exploration.

"Digitality" refers to the phenomenon in which media texts become dematerialised and are made to be compressed within digital formats (Lister et al. 2009: 16). While "digitality" does

not necessarily imply a complete break from analogue formats, it is rather perceived as being an extension or continuation of such forms (Lister et al. 2009: 14-15). Through the conversion of data into numerical forms, various media formats such as text, images and audio can be processed and thereafter distributed in a variety of forms such as online sources, or digital disks. Due to their removal from physical space, such media forms become highly manipulatable and changeable, allowing any net user to alter the text's information as well as their circulation and distribution (Lister et al. 2009: 17). In addition, the digitisation of media forms also allows for the distribution of high quantities of material at very fast rates (Lister et al. 2009:17). Indeed, this constant state of flux that media texts are subjected to through digitality can be argued to hold promise for alternative media forms seeking to produce and disseminate information across geographic boundaries, and in turn gain wider following and support, as well as facilitating notions of discussion and debate pertaining to social issues that alternative media seeks to address (Coyer et al. 2007:4). File sharing and open software over the internet has resulted in greater freedoms of access to information, as well as the possibilities for the dissemination of user-produced content (Atton. 2004: x). Indeed, the widespread availability of free online video games over the internet has allowed for new opportunities for groups with alternative views to circulate their messages and gain wide audiences outside of mainstream media outlets.

The interactive characteristic of new media allows users to become more engaged with media texts, and also gives users the freedom to "speak back" to texts (known as "registrational interactivity"), as well as provide greater freedom of choice and selection of media texts (Lister et al. 2009: 29). Thus, due to new media's interactive characteristics, it can be argued that greater degrees of citizen participation and indeed of citizen-created media can be achieved, aspects that were previously absent from "old media" forms (Lister et al. 2009:22). The selected online video games for this study are accompanied by forums in which players may discuss and critique the games in question, thus allowing for discussion surrounding issues commonly ignored by mainstream media, and to a certain degree, alteration of the creative processes of the games' production. Due to these interactive qualities, digitised new media forms also have a very apparent "immersive" characteristic, whereby visual and sensory stimulation takes place as users manoeuvre through digitised space (Lister et al. 2009:33). This relates strongly to the concept of "hypertextual navigation", that is, pathways which connect various units between texts, which allows users to actively make choices from the available data in order to create individual experiences of digitised texts.

The selected games for this study are indeed exemplary of these characteristics. Being low-budget and developed by small teams of producers, many of these alternative video games have managed to subvert mainstream influence, especially due to their distribution over the internet, allowing for feedback and discussion on the game's respective forums on their websites concerning the creative processes of these games (Frasca. 2008:94).

Finally, the element of dispersal within new media has resulted in the hierarchical and centralised nature that was evident in mass media has being challenged (Lister et al. 2009: 32). Instead of these centralised methods, dispersal has allowed for greater power on behalf of users to produce as well as disseminate media content in accordance with their own specific needs and interests, thus arguably reinstating the media's fourth estate function through the creation of alternative news and information (Lister et al. 2009: 70). Indeed, due to this dispersal, it can be argued that the games selected for the study are able to take more creative risks and thus provide greater originality and experimentation (Frasca.2008 94), as the internet has afforded them independence from mainstream gaming developers, thus allowing them to address issues regarding human and global concerns, as opposed to themes more commonly seen in mainstream games.

3.3. Ideology, Hegemony and Interpellation

It can be argued that development is not a neutral concept, but is rather one which is highly embedded within ideological frameworks determined by the hegemonic positions of elitist entities. Modernisation paradigms largely served as ideologies in which Western notions of civilisation were perpetuated at the expense of traditional cultures and knowledge systems. The ways in which such ideologies are articulated and disseminated can be explained by Gramsci's notion of hegemony, as well as Foucault's concept of power and knowledge. Such concepts are useful in the investigation of how modernisation ideologies have influenced and informed the expressions of development in *Food Force* and *Fate of the World*.

The term 'ideology' was likely first coined by Claude Destutt de Tracy, and for him the term stood for the science of ideas and their origins. For de Tracy ideology was the consequent of

the various forces and manipulations found within and around the commonly perceived material environment of humans beings that tend to shape the ways in which peoples both think and interact (Sypnowich, 2001). However, today, the use of the term 'ideology' has moved away from its original epistemic scope to having a far more fundamentally political nature in meaning. In this modern sense of ideology, it can now be viewed as a tool in the assertion of a particular political viewpoint, or in the interest of a specific group of people (Sypnowich, 2001).

The ways in which ideology is conveyed and disseminated can be perceived in terms of language, that is, the way in which language can be seen in terms of being an active agent in the production of ideology (Scannell. 2007 : 219). It is here in which language can be seen as a means of constructing notions of both identity and consciousness, therefore demonstrating the ways in which ideology may be both assimilated as well as produced through language in vehicles such as media texts including the selected games in this study (Scannell. 2007 :219).

The notion of "aestheticized ideology" stands in contrast to the common perception that media, and in particular video games, exclusively serve an entertainment function. Conversely, it can be argued that such media forms are in fact highly potent with ideological messages, especially since that their entertainment value often acts as a means to conceal such highly ideological content.

"Hegemony" can be defined as a process by which the meanings and activities that are inherent within ideologies are disseminated and maintained (Barker. 2008: 66). It is through this hegemonic perpetuation of ideologies by powerful groups that certain ideologies come to take precedence over others, thus allowing these powerful groups to reinforce and retain their dominance within society (Hawkes. 1996: 114). One of the methods used in order to encourage consent to these hegemonic and dominant perspectives is through the naturalisation of ideologies, that is, such ideologies are perceived to be universal truths, and thus come to be common-sensical and are carried out through people's daily lives and experiences of the world (Barker. 2008: 67). Thus, ideologies are sustained largely through consent of the people, whereby "…the attempt is always to ensure that force would appear to be based on the consent of the majority expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion – newspapers and associations" (Gramsci. 1971:80). Therefore, when ideologies become taken-for-granted, they become perceived as non-ideological within societal views, and thus serve

as a means of perpetuating imbalances of power relations and domination (Zizek. 2008: 31). Zizek (2008) puts this point across in its simplest and most direct form by stating:

> "Certain features, attitudes and norms of life are no longer perceived as ideologically marked. They appear to be neutral, non-ideological, natural, commonsensical. We designate as ideology that which stands out from this background…" (Zizek. 2008: 31)

Related to Gramsci's conception of hegemony is Foucault's notion of power and the ways in which ideology is constructed. According to such a theory, Western modernity has spawned an ability for those in power in society to disseminate discourses which contribute to the given society's knowledge (Hook. 2004: 211), that is, information that has an authority of truth, and thus materialises with societal institutions such as that of the media. (Foucault. 1977:27). Therefore, it could be said that such discourses and the subsequent knowledge that they disseminate produce a very overt form of ideology (Hassard et al. 1998: 85), whereby social and cultural factors are largely determined by such knowledge (Barker. 2008: 91), as well as the ways in which representations and social relations are articulated, for example, the classification of friends and enemies (Barker. 2008: 91). Thus, it could be argued that through such knowledge conveyed by those who hold positions of power, a process of reality construction takes place as such knowledge becomes normalised and naturalised with society (Merquior. 1985: 108-9).

Usually operating at a subconscious level, interpellation is a process contributing to the meanings and identities of audiences (Fourie. 2003: 279), through the means of imposing such identities and social positions upon individuals (Grossberg. 2006: 244). This occurs through positioning the audience member as a subject by the text through using symbolic and linguistic codes (Hartley et al. 2002: 125), and thus addressing the subject in such a way that allows for audience recognition within the text, otherwise known as "hailing" (Fourie. 2003: 315). Therefore, audiences come to identify themselves within texts, and thus experience it through the author's perspective, and in turn recruit the audience member into a particular ideology (Woodward. 1997: 43)., as the reader becomes "a subjected being who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his

submission (Althusser. 2001:123). Indeed, the rise of new interactive media forms such as video games has resulted in new forms of interpellation, whereby texts themselves become environments, and thus aiding the construction of a "virtual life" as players become immersed within the text (Holmes. 2005: 141).

Indeed, the inherently immersive nature of gaming is highly conducive to processes of interpellation, and in fact ideological dissemination, as players become active participants within the game, and thus become "lost" within the alternate reality that the game presents due to the sensory engagement such as sound, touch, and bodily movement (Delwiche. 2006: 96). Accompanied by immersion is the process of "transportation", whereby players become unable to discern between reality and fiction, driven by emotional reactions to the game as well as the game's imagery, and thus become vulnerable to beliefs and messages disseminated by the game (Delwiche. 2006: 96).

3.4. Conclusion

Hence, this study analyses *Food Force*, *Fate of the World* and *Wildfire* within the context of alternative and digital media due to their independent and altruistic nature as well as their dissemination over the internet platform. As such, the games allow for the expression of perspectives and conceptualisations outside of mainstream media, thus affording them opportunities to convey messages of social change and development. In addition, the use of concepts such as ideology, hegemony and interpellation are useful frameworks in which to investigate the influences of modernisation theories and participatory paradigms on the games.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This study aims to look specifically at the aspects such as that of audio, visual, textual and verbal elements within the various levels of *Food Force* and *Wildfire*; and the first level of *Fate of the World* which is most applicable to development. This will be achieved be using multimodal discourse analysis as a primary methodological framework, and semiotics as a facilitatory methodology.

4.2. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

The concept of multimodality refers to the analysis of a number of different "modes", that is, various aspects of texts such as language use (speech and writing), as well as non-verbal aspects such as images, colour, audio, video and layout and gestures, and how such aspects contribute to meaning-making processes (Kress. 2010: 79). The social and cultural contexts of language use, as well as larger units of words and sentences are also taken into account, as well as the ways in which such factors contribute to and are constitutive of broader social practices beliefs (Fairclough. 2003:3). Indeed, the choices of modes used within media texts impact highly on the potential for meaning that a text possesses, as each mode serves a as a means to create a particular form of signification (Kress. 2010:1). Thus, the analysis of individual modes becomes highly imperative when considering media texts, as they have "consequences for learning and knowing and shaping information and knowledge, for attending and communicating about the world and our place in it" (Kress. 2010: 5).

This study aims to utilize multimodal discourse analysis by looking specifically at sample levels and stages within *FoodForce, Wildfire* and *Fate of the World* which are most applicable to development.

Indeed, multimodal discourse analysis' considerations for multiple points of analysis such as visuals, language and auditory factors make it a particularly useful method for the study of the video game medium, which encompasses a number of different mediums such as speech, text, music and video in its compositional structure. In addition, multimodal discourse analysis' social constructivist perspective, and its emphasis on the ways in which social reality is constructed through discourse and language informed by cultural and social environments (Phillips et al. 2002: 4) also proves to be highly beneficial for the study, as it

will provide a means of investigating the ways in which the discourse of development theory within the selected games serves to perpetuate perceptions of such development which may be considered erroneous.

In addition, multimodal discourse analysis also proves to be advantageous to the study due to its aims of uncovering and exposing the ways in which imbalanced social relations and dominant ideologies are disseminated and perpetuated (Jorgensen et al. 2002: 63). Such an approach will assist in the exploration of the representations of development, as well as power relations inherent within the selected games, and the implications that such relations have for the ways in which Western nations and organisations promote national development in developing countries. Furthermore, multimodal discourse analysis offers a means of deeper analysis of texts as opposed to a mere descriptive reading (Paltridge. 2006: 47), thus allowing for a more in-depth and interpretive analysis of the ways in which development is conceptualised in *Food Force*, *Wildfire* and *Fate of the World*.

4.3. Semiotics

A facilitative methodology will be utilised in the form of semiotics. Semiotics has often been termed "the science of signs" (Noth.1995:49). Its predominant focus is on texts, and seeks to investigate the ways in which meaning and reality is disseminated and constructed via the means of sign systems and codes that convey meaning, and may thus point to particular viewpoints and ideologies (Fourie. 2008: 148). It aims to achieve this through analysing communicative resources, or signs such as gesture, texts and speech in order to ascertain the ways in which such communicative aspects contribute to meaning-making (Van Leeuwen.2005:4) . Signs may also relate to one another in order to form codes (Fourie. 2008:150). It is via these codes which readers create meaning through intertextuality, that is, the relationship between certain codes in which readers use as reference points in order to construct meaning. Thus, meanings are attached to texts by readers via their knowledge of prior codes (Meinhof et al. 2000:62).

According to Roland Barthes, there are a number of ways in which the process of signification occurs, and can be analysed (Cited in Fiske. 1990: 85). These include denotation, connotation, myth, symbols, metaphor and metonymy.

The first way is through denotation, that is, common-sensical and obvious meanings of signs (Fiske. 1990: 85), which does not involve any form of encoding (Van Leeuwen. 2005:94).

"Connotation" describes the process of the insertion of feelings and emotions of users into signs, which are reflective of the values of their culture (Fiske. 1990:87). Such signs are thus highly subjective. For example, the frequent use of blue tones within *Food Force* arouses connotations of heraldry, as well as sincerity, thus illustrating the cultural and emotional values of the game's users.

'Myths" refer to the "broad and diffuse concepts which condense everything associated with the represented people, places or things into a single entity (Van Leeuwen. 2005: 97), that is, a number of signs which collaboratively construct a conceptualisation or way of understanding within a culture. Myths serve to naturalise meanings and understandings within a given society. (Fiske. 1990: 88).

When signs attain a meaning that allows them to stand for something else, they become "symbolic" (Fiske. 1990:91). Thus, it can be said that the icons of fists shown on the map within *Fate of the World* are symbolic of political protest and rioting.

The use of metaphor within media texts occurs when similarities and differences of signs are emphasised, usually in order to make sense of social abstractions (Fiske. 1990: 94). This is evident within *Wildfire*, where it can be argued that the malicious agents within the game are representative of either political forces or corporate power which seek to downplay development.

Finally, the concept of "metonymy", which serves to transfer the meaning from a single part to a greater whole, thus allowing users to create meaning of the excluded reality in the text, is also prevalent within *Food Force* through the frequent images of skinny and malnourished children, which allows users to deduce the economic and social situation of the country in which the children are depicted.

Indeed, semiotics proves to be a useful methodology with regards to the analysing of the dissemination of development theory within *FoodForce*, *WildFire* and *Fate of the World*. Through the analysis of signs contained within these individual texts, as well as their associated connotations, attitudes and perspectives concerning development can be revealed.

In addition, because semiotics is primarily concerned with the construction of meaning within signs, it also pays particular attention to who controls such meanings and thus controls reality (Kress. 2010:14).This factor is highly beneficial for the study, as it serves as a means of establishing the reasoning as well as the motivation behind the dissemination of various developmental paradigms asserted by the creators of the study's sample games. Furthermore, semiotics proves to be a highly systematic method of analysing texts as a whole, and points to cultural values and beliefs, and thus developmental perspectives and strategies, that are maintained throughout society (Chandler: 1994).

In light of the above methodologies, this study will seek to analyse *Food Force*, *Fate of the World* and *Wildfire* in terms of the following aspects in order to ascertain the games' attitudes and relationship with the discourse of development:

- Image – What angles, positions, colours and appearances of people, places and things are shown in the game and what meanings do these elements convey?
- Text – What written elements are there in the games, and what does such text mean?
- Speech – What is said by the characters? What does what they say mean connotatively and denotatively?
- Gesture – what connotative gestures do the characters use within the games?
- Moving image - What video images are used within the games and how do these contribute to the meanings of the games?
- Music – What connotations arise from the game's choice of music?
- Game play – what is the role of the player in the game? How much freedom does the game afford the player?

For example, considering the factors above and the following picture derived from *Food Force*, it can be argued that the game assumes a highly condescending attitude towards the local people, due to the high angle of the camera over them, but provides a more personal relationship between the WFP character and the player due to the close eye-level angles of the camera. Furthermore, the stern and direct glance of the WFP character in the top left corner of the image is demonstrative of seriousness of the operation in this game's mission, and positions the player in terms of an active agent in the progression of the mission.



Figure4.1: An example image from *Food Force*. (The World Food Programme. 2005)

4.4. Conclusion

Thus, through the use of multimodal discourse analysis and semiotics, the explicit as well as implicit meanings and ideologies of the games can be revealed. Indeed, the use of such methods prove to be highly useful when applied to the video game medium due to their considerations for multiple elements within the text, such as visual, auditory, textual and gestural factors.

Chapter 5: Analysis of Findings

5.1. Introduction

The use of the video game medium to disseminate messages for development and poverty reduction within developing nations has become increasingly popular, and indeed, such popularity has materialised within *Food Force*, *Fate of the World*, and *Wildfire*, which aim to portray various methods in which development can be achieved. These conceptualisations for development prove to be mostly informed by modernisation theories, and participatory paradigms for development. This study will argue that due to the influences of these models for development in the games, it can be argued that the games become highly ideologically loaded, and thus the problematic nature of these theories are perpetuated throughout these games.

One of the predominant methods used to disseminate these ideologies for development within the games is through the use of interpellation, which serves as a means of promoting player identification within the games, and thus increasing the chances that the games' messages will be appropriated by the player.

The influence of modernisation theories is most notable in *Food Force* and *Fate of the World*, whereby highly imperialistic attitudes prevail through the representation of developed nations and organisations as being saviours of developing nations, as well as the representation of local people and their cultures as being backwards and highly dependent upon first world nations to alleviate their suffering.

Participatory theories manifest within *Wildfire* through the game's emphasis upon citizens as being the primary purveyors of their own development. However, such a conceptualisation ignores aspects of the power relations that exist both inside and within these communities, and overvalues the abilities of such societies to solve issues of poverty and underdevelopment on their own. Additionally, while the game aims to create a platform of participation through

its use of internet technologies and social networking, these may be however, merely a cosmetic form of participation which is undermined by the lack of such technological resources by those who need them in order for such participation to occur.

Through these ideological representations of the developmental process, it can be argued that the games come to embody powerful ideological mechanisms that while intending to promote development, actually serve as a means of enhancing the hegemonic positions held by predominantly Western first world nations and agencies.

5.2. *Food Force*, *Fate of the World* and Modernisation Theory

5.2.1. Introduction

The modernisation or "dominant" paradigm is, in a contemporary context, considered to be a highly out-dated mode of development. It was highly criticised for its numerous shortcomings, namely its Eurocentric and almost colonial attitude, as well as its lack of consideration for cultural contexts of developing nations, and its abstract methods of applying development and measuring its efficiency. However, the conceptualisations for development proposed by games such as *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* are highly similar to those of modernisation theories, thus proving that the theory, despite its highly flawed nature, is not altogether dead.

Indeed, the correlations of the games to modernisation theory are observable in a number of different areas within the games, namely their representations of developing and developed nations, the condemnation of local cultures in favour of modernity, the promotion of an economic system that is highly capitalist in nature, technological determinism, and the overestimation of the abilities of international organisations to influence and bring about developmental transformation.

Through the use of interpellative methods, player's become highly vulnerable to these ideologies and conceptualisations that are portrayed throughout the game, as such methods

serve as a means of creating a synonymous link between the player and the first world characters within the game.

Through modernisation theoriy's evident influence over the conceptualisations for development within *Food Force* and *Fate of the world*, it can be argued that the games become a highly ideologically-loaded platform for the promotion of the hegemonic power of first world nations over third world nations.

5.2.2. Western Superiority and Heroism

One of the predominant criticisms of modernisation theory has been its glorification and emphasis placed on Western superiority over the so-called traditional societies that they seek to assist in development. Indeed, this hegemonic perspective is highly evident within *Food Force*, and the ways in which the predominantly first world-orientated WFP team are represented within the game. Through the WFP characters' appearances as well as their supposed acts of charity and claims of being the sole power to assist in the development of Sheylan, the WFP become largely defined as being heroic, charitable, intelligent and courageous, and it can be argued that the game subscribes to pro-westernised ideologies typical of the action-adventure genre. Through the use of interpellation, players are positioned within these heroic portrayals of developed nations, and thus, modernisation paradigms of development.

It can be argued that this ideology of Western superiority portrayed by modernisation theories is perpetuated within the games in question most notably through the process of interpellation. Firstly, the player is given no choice but to play a character working within the WFP, thus automatically interpellating them into this particular viewpoint. It is interesting to note that a majority of the characters within the game are from industrialised developed countries, such as America and Japan, with the exception of Carlos Sanchez, who appears to be of South American descent. In addition, the angle in which game play takes place is always eye-level, that is, the player's view is always at eye-level with the other WFP characters, thus establishing a sense of equality as well as identification and closeness with the WFP characters, as it is from this angle that we associate people whom we are emotionally close to (Jewitt et al. 2001: 146). Thus, the use of such a perspective allows the

player to develop a feeling of trust and closeness to the other WFP characters within the game.

The process of addressing the player and thus integrating them into the WFP character's identity is also observable within *Food Force*. This occurs through the means of direct address, whereby the other WFP characters refer to the player as "you", for instance, in Mission 4, whereby Miles states, "Oh, it's you, I was wondering when you'd come" while pointing directly at the player (See figure 5.1), and Joe Zaki's instructions to the player, "Now you have to help us…". In addition, the WFP characters frequently make direct eye contact with the player, thus demanding the player's interaction with them through establishing a form of imaginary contact (Jewitt et al. 2001: 145). Such direct address serves as a means of "hailing" the player into a particular subject position, that is, identification with the character as being a member of the WFP team. . Thus, this process of hailing results in a sense of recognition with the "self", therefore further increases the player's involvement, and subsequently, a stronger sense of immersion within the game. In addition, this process of "hailing" also serves as a means to create a sense of belonging within the WFP team. Therefore, instead of the player being an independent agent in their actions to develop Sheylan, a feeling of being part of the heroic acts of the WFP team is created, and thus, the player becomes part of the "in-group".

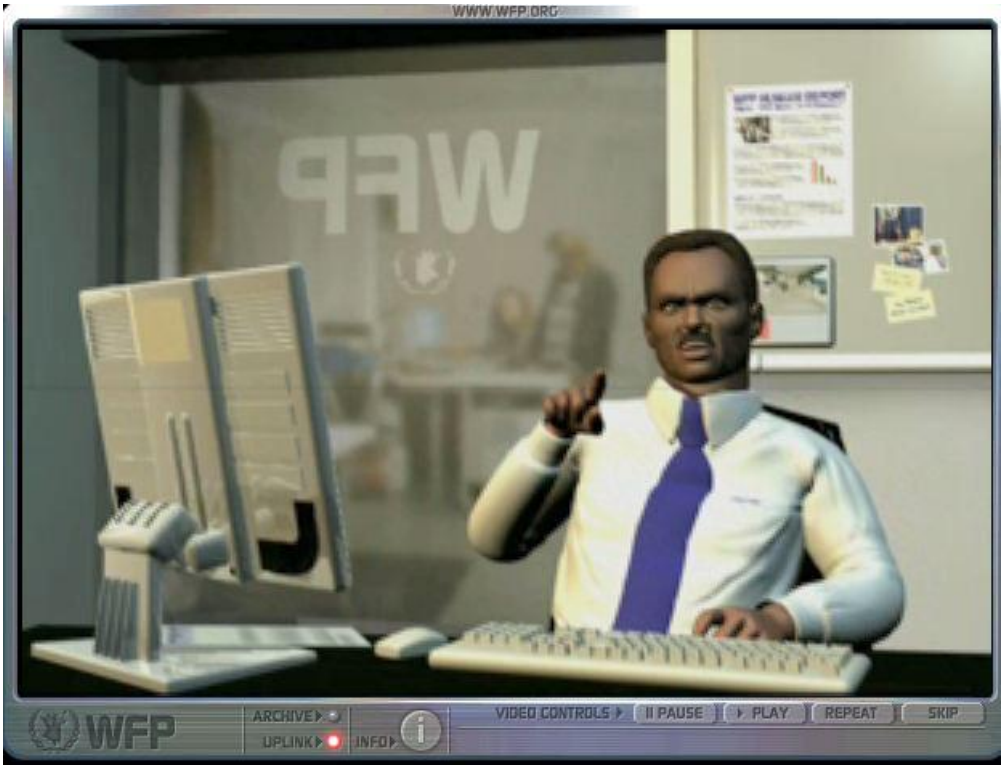

Figure 5.1: Miles interpellates the player by pointing and directly looking at them, the individual player. (World Food Programme. 2005)

Similarly, *Fate of the World* also uses direct address in order to recruit the player into a particular subject position. While there are very little verbal aspects to the game, it utilises direct address through text, also addressing the player as "you", for example, "As its new president, can you bring prosperity and peace…?". Additionally, the game allows for the player to enter their name, preceded by a title of their choice (such as "Lord" or "majesty") (See figure 5.2), which is used throughout the game in letters and reports addressed to the player, thus positioning the player as being part of the Global Environmental Organisation's (GEO) perspective.

Furthermore, the selection of titles available to the player is highly reminiscent of the colonial legacies of the past. Indeed, they tend to imply a very hierarchical, top-down position which in turn flatters the player, and thus increases the player's immersion within the game, and thus within Western colonial ideologies.



Figure 5.2: The incorporation of personal player names *in Fate of the World* enhances the player's interpellation within the game. (Red Redemption. 2010)

Processes of identification within the game are extended when considering their intended target audience, which, considering that the games are only accessible to computer users, can be said to be predominantly players in industrialised and fairly developed countries. As such, it can be argued that such a demographic enhances identification within the games' narratives, as it is likely that players, like the main characters in the games, are from developed, westernised countries themselves.

Thus, it can be deduced that through the utilisation of interpellation within *Food Force* and *Fate of the World*, players are encouraged to adopt a perspective that is sympathetic to developed' countries values and ideologies. This is largely achieved through the means of creating a sense of identification with the characters from developed countries, as well as use of direct address, therefore hailing the player to adopt an identity that is synonymous with these main characters.

In addition to interpellation, there are numerous other mechanisms employed throughout the games, most notably within *Food Force*, which serve as a means to perpetuate ideologies of developed countries as superior to their undeveloped counterparts. One of these mechanisms is the representation of developed countries as "heroes". Indeed, *Food Force* is in many ways reminiscent of an action adventure film, a genre largely dependent on the use of heroic figures.

The action and adventure genre is largely characterised in terms of binaries, namely good and evil, weakness and strength, and most importantly, "us" and "them". It thus positions certain elements as positive against those that it assigns as negative. (Lacey.1998:70). As such, the genre regularly features the stereotypical American male hero figure, who is typically characterised as being rugged, courageous, and well-built. Storylines are typically centred around the hero's goal to defeat the villain, who generally represents the "other" in terms of ethnicity and/or nationality. Thus, the genre comes to embody the notions that difference, and synonymously, primitiveness, are to be defeated and overcome by the hero, either through annihilation of the foreign enemy, or by achieving assimilation of the other into civilised, mainstream Western society, and indeed, the American dream (Croteau et al. 2003:175).

It can be argued that *Food Force* adheres strongly to the action and adventure genre. The game places heavy emphasis on the notion that the only way the undeveloped fictitious island of Sheylan can possibly overcome its plight, is through being rescued by the WFP. Indeed, the WFP (which, as mentioned previously, is predominantly comprised of people from industrialised nations) is commonly portrayed in terms of heroism, with the American, male narrator stating that the team must "play their part in helping save the people of Sheylan" and "Right now, the hopes of Sheylan rest in our team". Furthermore, the abilities of the WFP team is also highly exaggerated, with claims that they need to "feed millions of people in Sheylan", a claim which appears to be highly unlikely. In addition, the team is also portrayed in terms of their superior knowledge, as they constantly refer to themselves as "experts", as is evident in Miles' statement that the player should see "how the experts do it". Non-diegetic electronic music within the game provides a sense of urgency and seriousness, thus appealing to the idea that the WFP's missions are both dangerous and pressing. The portrayal of the WFP team as heroes is also evident in the introduction due to the accompanying text stating:

"Code Red Situation: Sheylan

Additional WFP assistance urgently needed

Solution: WFP Crisis Team"

Thus, the above quote implies that the sole solution to the plight of the people of Sheylan depends exclusively on the WFP.

The notion of developed nations as heroes is also expressed in the game's fourth mission, whereby players are required to "collect" monetary donations from governments around the world. It is interesting to note that a majority of these donations are from Western nations, with none from North Asia and only two from Africa, thus emphasising the charitable nature of the developed world.

The physical features of the WFP team are also arguably highly conducive to the representation of developing nations as heroes. Indeed, Rachel Scott, the team's logistics officer, highly resembles the classic adventure video game heroine Lara Croft, with her curvaceous frame, hair styled in a pony-tail, shorts, a tank top and utility belt. Indeed, Lara Croft, one of video games' first female action protagonists has come to embody the ideal Western woman – independent, strong, resilient, and at the same time, sexually attractive (See figure 5.3). It can be argued that by fashioning Rachel Scott in the likeliness of Lara Croft, the game implies that Western females are able to enjoy independence and engage in masculine activities – a factor which women in undeveloped countries are unable to attain. Thus, it can be said that the game, by emphasising gender equality through the character of Rachel Scott, implies the benefits of Western superiority over traditional cultures (See chapter 5.2.2 for an overview of the ways in which traditional women are portrayed)



Figure 5.3: Rachel Scott embodies the ideal Western woman. (World Food Programme. 2005)

It can be argued that the notion of the assimilation of the undeveloped "other" into Western civilisation and its benefits are also prevalent within *Food Force*, most notably through the characters of Carlos Sanchez and Miles. As mentioned previously, Carlos and Miles are the only two characters originating from developing nations, specifically Africa and Latin America. However, while the origins of the other WFP characters, such as Rachel and Joe are distinctly evident (America and Japan), the specific country of origin of both Miles and Carlos is never mentioned, thus, they become homogenised entities as the player is merely given a rough guess as to these characters' background. Indeed, both of these regions (Latin America and Africa) possess a history of Western influence, specifically the African slave trade in Europe and America, and European colonialisation. Carlos and Miles come to represent the "other" and are exemplary of the positive benefits of such Western influence, due to their highly educated natures and high-standing positions within the WFP, thus facilitating the positive effects of assimilating and "saving" individuals from developing nations



Figure 5.4: Carlos Sanchez arguably portrays successful assimilation into western culture. (World Food Programme. 2005)

Joe Zaki, the team's nutritionist, is the only Japanese character in the game, and accordingly, he conforms to the typical "Asian nerd" mould. Dressed in Chinos, a shirt, with short hair and a satchel slung over his body, Joe Zaki personifies the commonly held perception of Japanese intelligence and logic. It is through these representations of the WFP team as being brave, strong, intelligent and orderly that notions of superiority of the developed world are created (See figure5.5).

Thus, *Food Force* tends towards the usage of stereotypes when depicting the various WFP characters in the game. A stereotype can be defined as "a one-sided description which results from the collapsing of complex differences into a simple cardboard cut-out" (Hall.1996: 215). Stereotypes are an essential component in the meaning-making process, as they render reality in a way in which is easy to understand. By simplifying what is being portrayed (Lacey. 1998:135). Thus, stereotyping involves an exaggerated simplification of characteristics, in this case, the stereotypical notions of Asian intelligence and Western feminine beauty.



Figure 5.5: Joe Zaki portrays stereotypical Asian intelligence. (World Food Programme. 2005)

The portrayal of first world nations as being superior to those of third world nations, and indeed as being heroes within the games is highly reflective of attitudes held by modernisation theories. Traditionally, modernisation theory has by implication assumed the notion that developed countries (namely Western ones) are embodiments of the ideal modernised society, in which developing countries should strive to emulate during the developmental process in order to achieve modernity (Melkote. 1991: 48). Characterised by free market capitalism, differentiation, order, rationality, political freedom and democracy, the first world, and most notably the US, has been perceived as being the pinnacle of development (Sharp. 2009: 78). Furthermore, the very nature of these developed countries were seen as arising from a natural path of development, free from intervention, and as such, these characteristics of developed countries were seen as being the norm, and thus, developing countries are seen as being a deviation of such a norm (Sharp. 2009: 80). Thus,

these developed and mostly Western societies were portrayed as being the superior normative ideal within modernisation theories, and their values were very rarely questioned, but instead, regarded as being natural and rational (Swanepoel et al. 1997: 19).

Further facilitating this positive image of developed nations is the representations of the enemy rebels, who are prime catalysts for the civil war within Sheylan. Indeed, these rebels possess Arab features and clothing, with a menacing tone of voice, and directing a fire arm towards the player as they attempt to rob the WFP team of the emergency food supplies, but are prevented from doing so when the player rationally talks them out of it (See Figure 5.6). While the player is deceived into believing that they have the autonomy to choose as to how the situation should be handled, the game however will only accept a single answer as correct, usually the one which seems the most diplomatic. This lack of choice on behalf of the player thus further serves to position the player in terms of WFP agendas. The representation of the rebels serves to create a binary between themselves and the WFP team, emphasising the differences between the two, most notably, the difference between good and evil and modernity and primitiveness. The notion of binaries implies a situation whereby "the process of making sense of abstract concepts by metaphorically transposing their structure of differences onto differences of the concrete that appear to be natural" (Fiske. 1990:87) serves as a means of making sense of the world, as well as to promote a particular ideological position (Fourie.2001 :154).The ability on behalf of the team to subvert the rebels' malicious intentions, and thus overcome the will of the "other" serves as a means to enhance the justification of the WFP's presence in Sheylan, as well as their characterisation as heroes.

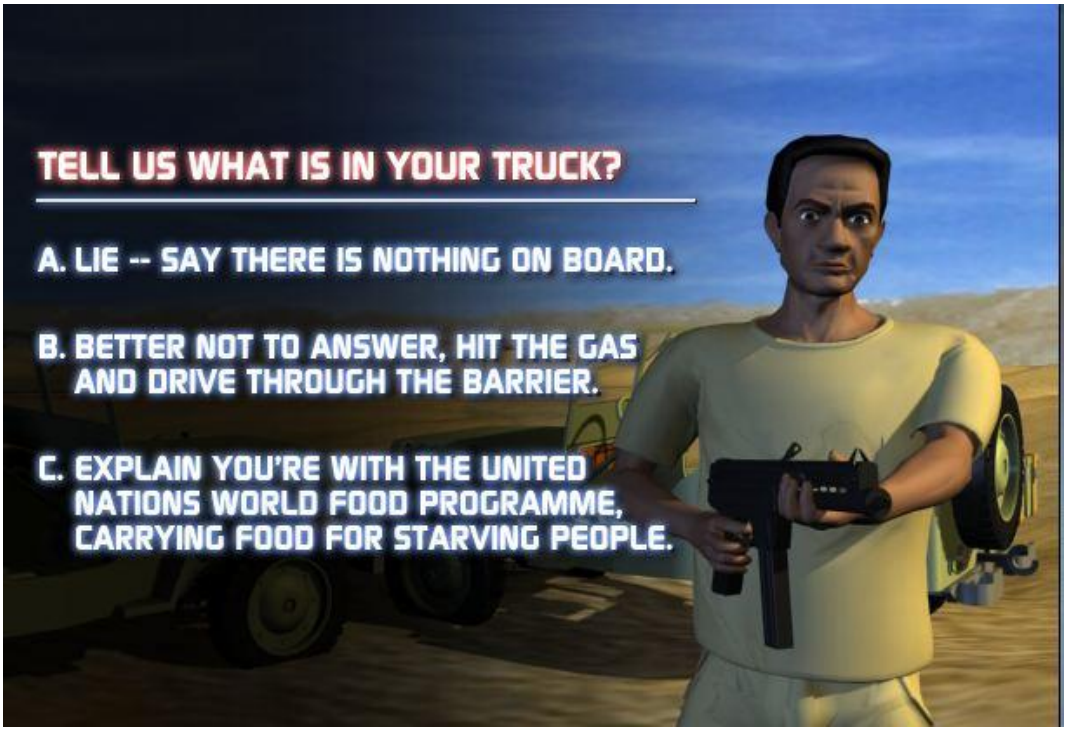

Figure 5.6: The representation of the rebels in *Food Force* reinforces the notion of the WFP as heroes through the binaries created between the two. (The World Food Programme. 2005)

Thus, the knowledge disseminated within *Food Force* is largely in accordance with the dominant hegemonic interests of the developed world. Representations are predominantly centred around notions of heroism, bravery, and charitableness on behalf of developed nations, most notably through the positive portrayal of the WFP characters, and the negative characterisation of their foes. Players come to be sympathetic with such representations as they are interpellated into the viewpoints of these developed nations. These heroic depictions of the WFP are highly typical of modernisation theory's implications of Western superiority and that the subscription to Western norms and values are the best method for development.

5.2.3. The Facelessness of Underdevelopment: Representations of Developing Countries

While industrialised Western societies were perceived in terms of being the pinnacle of modernity and civilisation, the developing world conversely came to represent the antithesis

of such perceptions. Defined in terms of primitiveness and backwardness, the representation of developing or third world nations served as a justification for the intervention of Western countries in third world affairs. Indeed, representations of developing nations within *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* are largely in accordance with modernisation theory and its conceptualisations of the developing world. Characterised by primitiveness, homogeneity and largely responsible for their own suffering, the games' representation of developing nations proves to be highly informed by modernisation models for development, and therefore serves as a means of reiterating the hegemonic perspectives of modernisation.

The notion of developing nations as being primitive is highly prevalent within the games, particularly within *Food Force*. The people of Sheylan are predominately viewed from a distant top-down angle, thus implying their inferiority to the player, as well as the other members of the WFP. Indeed, even when the Sheylan people are at eye-level, the player can mainly only see their backs and a partial view of their faces, which adhere to a standard mould (See Figure 5.8). Such angles serve as a means to emphasise hierarchical differences between developed and developing nations. The distance placed between the player and the local people also implies that such people are to be viewed as strangers, and that they cannot relate to the player and are thus unfamiliar entities. Furthermore, the people of Sheylan are also depicted in terms of senseless violence through their unexplained civil war, a trait which may be considered as primitive. In addition, the fact that not a single word is spoken on behalf of the citizens of Sheylan is also indicative of their weakness and lack of ability or perhaps education to even attempt to alleviate their dire situation. Thus, there is a distinct lack of interpellation within the representations of third world nation individuals, which therefore serves as a means of creating a separation as well as emphasising a difference between such individuals and the player, who lacks the ability to interact with these characters on a personal level.

In addition, the photographs displayed throughout the *Food Force* also hint at gender relations of developing countries. While women are often depicted in domestic situations, such as cooking and child-minding, the men are seen carrying out more strenuous tasks such as agriculture, thus suggesting a strong division in gender roles within developing countries. Indeed, this depiction of women in developing countries is in contrast to the Western female characters we see in the WFP, such as Rachel Scott and Angela Keane, who, as mentioned previously, hold highly empowered positions within the organisation, and who play roles equal to that of the men.



Figure 5.7: While the women of the WFP in *Food Force* possess empowering jobs, the women in developing nations are conversely portrayed in more domestic jobs. (The World Food Programme. 2005)

Figure 5.7 demonstrates the differences between the women of the WFP and the local women within the game. While Angela Keene (to the left) is clearly portrayed as being a "career woman", indicated by her suit and position at a computer, and therefore implying the progressiveness of her culture and her equality to men, the photo of a local woman on the right depicts a local woman carrying out a more traditional tasks assigned to women, such as childcare. Through these portrayals of unequal gender roles within the game, the notion of the people of Sheylan as primitive are emphasised, as it suggests that their social relations within their society are archaic and potentially oppressive, particularly with regards to women.

The depiction of the people of Sheylan as being primitive corresponds highly to modernisation theory, as one of the most common representations of the developing world according to modernisation theory was that they were primitive in nature. Indeed, such a representation was largely informed by modernisation theory's influence by evolutionary theories, which examined the evolutionary stages of biological species (Melkote.1991 :38). Comparisons between the processes of development and Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) were often made in order to explain the reasons for discrepancies between developed and developing nations. According to evolutionary theories of modernisation, societies, like biological organisms, evolve from primitive and simple forms in a unidirectional manner towards more complex and sophisticated forms, or in other words, modernity (Melkote.1991 :38). Such a notion was espoused by several modernisation theorists including William Sumner and Herbert Spencer, who claimed that the reasoning

behind the West's advancement in development could be attributed to their "survival of the fittest", and that by nature, their adaptability had resulted in their highly modernised state (Pieterse.2001 :19). Thus, the lack of development in certain nations was largely ascribed to the idea that they were not as highly evolved as their developed counterparts, and were thus primitive, thereby justifying European supremacy (Pieterse.2001 :19).

Further facilitating the perception of people from developing nations as primitive is the depiction of such people as homogenous and anonymous. *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* both display tendencies towards such generalisations within their representations of developing nations. The games achieve this largely through the means of portraying individuals originating from developing countries in terms of anonymity. In *Food Force's* first mission, players are expected to carry out a count of the people of Sheylan via helicopter (See figure 5.9). It is here that the people on the ground are reduced to mere indecipherable dots, gathered around in massive clumps, thus distanciating and standardising them, giving rise to notions of anonymity and literally, facelessness. Furthermore, the use of a fictitious island as opposed to an actual real-world example within the game serves as a means of decontextualizing issues of poverty and development. While the game does attempt to contextualise such issues through the use of photographs and videos of the development process at the end of each level, these however, are also largely random and decontextualized as it does not overtly mention the place names from which the photographs and videos originate, thus homogenising situation of poverty as well as the development process itself. Their voicelessness also renders them void of personality, and thus, this lack of communicative ability and autonomy too suggests that they are primitive by nature. Thus, the people of Sheylan are depicted largely in terms of homogeneity and anonymity, which sits in stark contrast to the highly personal and engaging relationship the player has with the WFP team members.



Figure 5.8: A back view of the people of Sheylan, reinforcing their anonymity within the game. (The World Food Programme. 2005)

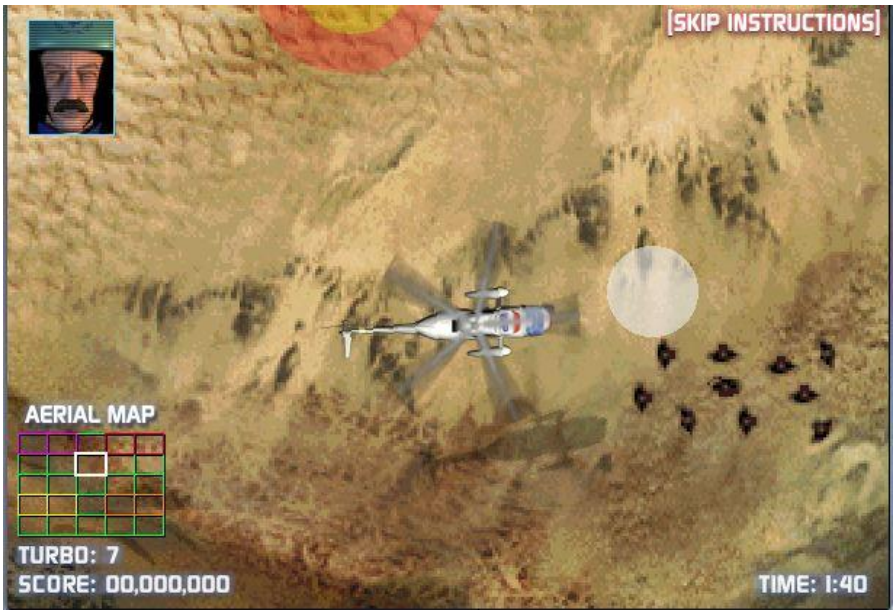

Figure 5.9: The people of Sheylan seen from a high angle, thus emphasising their anonymity. (The World Food Program. 2005)

The above images exemplify the ways in which local people are portrayed within *Food Force*. Figure 5.8 displays the distance and impersonal relations between the player and the people of Sheylan, as well as how such people are homogenised due to their standardised appearance. Meanwhile, Figure 5.9 portrays local people in terms of mere dots on the ground, thus increasing their characterisation of anonymity.

Similarly, *Fate of the World* also portrays developing countries in terms of anonymity and homogeneity. In fact, the game does not provide much visual representation of the people of

developing nations at all, albeit the occasional standardised pictures on play cards and news broadcasts. Instead, the predominant perspective of the player is of a spinning globe, with no representation of country borders or place names. Indeed, it is interesting to note that Africa, the focus of the first level is only divided into two regions – North and South, which are differentiated only by the patterns of the regions' name labels, a Moroccan-like tile pattern for Northern Africa, and leopard print for southern Africa (See figure 5.10). Thus, this broad division of Africa into a mere two regions serves as a means of homogenising developmental issues within the continent.



Figure 5.10: Northern and Southern regions of Africa are differentiated only by the patterns on their name labels in *Fate of the World*. (Red Redemption. 2010)

Indeed, it can be argued that the representation of third world peoples within the games as faceless provides an indication that the games possess a shyness or a reluctance to truly confront issues of poverty, which thus presents an implication for the games' abilities to address the needs of real people within the development process, which instead portrays them as being a singular, homogenous entity. The games come to portray local people as being homogenous masses, which lack the initiative to help themselves, as well as any heroes or heroines unlike the WFP. Instead, they come to embody faceless, starving "bodies" that are in need of WFP assistance, without which they will perish. Thus, these local peoples and their communities also become stereotyped as being weak, passive agents who are incapable of alleviating their situation and are thus fully dependent on food aid for sustenance.

The depiction of the people of Sheylan as well as Africa as being largely homogenous is also arguably informed by modernisation theory. Modernisation theory has previously been accused of generalising and homogenising situations of underdevelopment found in third world countries such as Asia, Africa and Latin America (Larrain. 1989: 100).

Thus, through the games' representations of developing nations as being homogenous and primitive, and developed nations as being more personal engaging with players, as well as intelligent and brave, a polarity is created between developed and developing nations. These polarities become established through the stereotyping of such nations, in particular the notion of "inferior vs. superior", as well as "us and them". Indeed, this process of "othering" developing peoples can be explained by Hall (1992) in terms of:

> "The Rest becomes defined as everything that the West is not – its mirror image. It is represented as absolutely, essentially different, other: the Other…Without the Rest…the West would not have been able to recognise and represent itself as the summit of human history. The figure of 'the Other', banished to the edge of the conceptual world and constructed as the absolute opposite, the negation of everything which the West stood for, reappeared at the very centre of the discourse of civilisation." (308- 314).

Therefore, through the creation of such polarities and binaries between developed and developing nations within the games, the hegemonic ideology of the superior West is both promoted and reinforced.

Both *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* also promote the perception of internal issues as being the root cause of underdevelopment. In *Food Force*, Sheylan is in the throes of a civil war, the reasons for which is never explained, but instead is merely described as being a crisis which has "resulted in entire towns being burned to the ground, essential transport routes destroyed, and landmines planted. The war has pushed the situation over the edge and Sheylan is officially in crisis". During the narrator's commentary on this civil war, photographs depicting African men wielding rifles and children sitting on tanks (See figure 5.11), suggesting a lack of morality and violence bred into such peoples. While the game uses civil war as one of the predominant reasons for underdevelopment in Sheylan, the notion of civil war, particularly in Africa, can often be traced to the European colonial legacies, whereby combinations of the creation of artificial borders and the installation of corrupt governments have resulted in many conflicts throughout the region (Global Issues. 2010). The origin of the war, as well as the source of the weapons used by the rebels in Sheylan is also excluded, therefore concealing possibilities for Western colonial influences as being responsible for such conflicts.

Indeed, Sheylan is highly reminiscent of stereotypical images disseminated concerning the situations of warfare, chaos and poverty in Somalia. This is evident in the horrifying images of skeletal children and hints at child soldiers are prevalent within the game. The correlations between the fictitious island of Sheylan and Somalia therefore indicate that the game is attempting to subvert the controversies surrounding the situation in Somalia by utilising a fictitious island instead.



Figure 5.11: The portrayal of young boys seated on top of a tank in *Food Force* implies a lack of morality, and serves as a means of shifting the blame for underdevelopment onto the people themselves. (The World Food Programme. 2005)

The second reason for underdevelopment in Sheylan mentioned in *Food Force* is attributed to global climate changes due to the excessive cutting down of forests. However, the reasons for such deforestation are not cited. Indeed, the primary causes for deforestation throughout developing countries is for purposes of global trade, as is the case in the Amazon Rain Forest, whereby thousands of kilometres of trees have been cleared for soya farming, used for chicken feed by Macdonald's (Greenpeace. 2006), thus implicating the aspect of external, capitalistic, industrial entities.

Similarly, *Fate of the World* is also extremely vague when considering the causes for underdevelopment. Indeed, like *Food Force*, the game's predominant reasoning behind Africa's abject poverty is environmental issues, which has subsequently resulted in civil warfare, thus, once again predominantly placing blame on developing countries for their state of poverty, unrest, and underdevelopment. Subsequently, the game also neglects to account for colonial repercussions as a possibility for underdevelopment throughout the African region.

Thus, the games utilise processes of selection and exclusion when considering the background of underdevelopment. Because the causes of the developmental issues are not explained in any depth within the games, and are primarily implied to be the creation of underdeveloped countries themselves, the possibilities for these issues as having been affected by external and industrialised nations becomes highly marginalised, thus depicting developing countries as being agents of their own suffering, and in turn preserving the positive image of Western nations and promoting the ideological stereotypes of local peoples as being inferior to those of Western descent.

Indeed, one of the major flaws of modernisation theory has been its portrayal of the actual causes of underdevelopment. Its predominant focus upon internal causes for lack of development, such as political instability and lack of education has resulted in its neglect of external aspects that could have influenced underdevelopment (So.1990: 58). Issues of an

imbalanced world economy, exploitation of developing nations' economies by multinational corporations, histories of colonialisation, and a manipulative world trade system have to a great extent, been ignored by modernisation theorists, thus giving rise to perceptions that developing countries are almost exclusively responsible for their situations of poverty and underdevelopment, while Western industrialised nations remain seemingly blameless, as well as responsible for the salvation of third world nations (So. 1990: 58). The notion of the developing world as needing to be saved from itself arose shortly after the Second World War and its subsequent decolonialisation, whereby the plight and poverty of developing nations came under close scrutiny by modernisation theorists (Larrain. 1989: 87). The rehabilitation of such countries on behalf of their old colonial powers came to be of prime importance (Treuricht. 1997:17) in order to transform the underdeveloped, backward and primal nature of the third world (Melkote.1991 :38)

Thus, in accordance with typically hegemonic and Eurocentric perspectives of modernisation theories, *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* offer representations of developing nations that reinforce hegemonic notions of Western superiority. The portrayal of such developing nations as primitive, violent and backward is promoted through *Food Force's* depictions of the people of Sheylan, positioning them in contrast to the depictions of the members of the WFP. Furthermore, the games also define developing nations in terms of anonymity and homogeneity through the use of distanciation as well as the generalisation of situations of poverty and decontextualisation of underdevelopment. In addition, the lack of thorough explanation for the causes of underdevelopment in the first place, and the implication of blame on developing nations for their condition of poverty neglects possibilities for such problems to be attributed to the exploitation and manipulation on behalf of industrialised nations. Thus, such depictions serve as a means of justifying modernisation theory's prescription for the intervention of developed nations in the affairs of developing nations.

5.2.4. The Transformation of Traditional Culture

The concept of culture was one that was of prime importance to modernisation theorists. The developmental process was largely dependent on the transformation of the ways in which

people within developing countries behaved and lived their lives. Indeed, such a transformation was predominantly concerned with converting traditional society and culture into more modernised and industrial social systems. Indeed, it can be argued that both *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* largely comply with these modernisation sentiments of cultural transformation, as is evident in their portrayal of and propositions for traditional culture, as well as their depiction of cultural aspects such as religion. However, such conceptualisations of culture prove to be highly flawed, if not hypocritical, as they serve as a means to enforce change through an oversimplified and generalised process which fails to account for unique socio-historical contexts.

It can be argued that both *Food Force* portrays developing nations in terms of traditional culture, which can be characterised as being low in specialisation, tradition-based norms and values, emphasis on familial relations and nepotism, high degrees of self-sufficiency, and little focus on money and circulation, (So. 1990: 25). Sheylan's social structures are highly characteristic of traditional society. Living in an extremely rural area , mostly isolated from the rest of the world, with very little infrastructure, the people of Sheylan largely portrayed in terms of being highly communal, and are rarely seen engaging in activities alone, but are instead often depicted in familial situations. Furthermore, it can be argued that the people of Sheylan are also depicted largely in terms of idleness prior to the intervention of the WFP. Indeed, there is nothing in the game to suggest that they are attempting to alleviate their situation themselves, perhaps due to lack of knowledge, thus implying attitudes of hopelessness as well as a lack of proactivity. Only once the WFP have implemented their long term solutions for development can the people of Sheylan be seen engaging in productive activities, such as farming and labour, thus suggesting that only once structured and rationalised plans have been introduced by more modernised individuals and groups can the people of Sheylan adequately address their situation of poverty. This is most notable in the final level of the game, whereby Joe Zaki explains to the player that the aid received from the WFP has multiple benefits, such as "…paying people with food to help in their future. By giving food rations as pay for work on community projects, families can increase their income while helping to build their country" and "Paying people with food to learn new skills. The better trained people are, the better the chance they have of feeding themselves". Thus, the game implies that through the influence of the WFP, Sheylan can discover the

benefits of productive labour, an aspect which was either practically not possible, or unrealised by the local people.

The representation of developing nations in terms of traditional culture within the games proves to be highly correlative to modernisation theory. Indeed, one of the predominant differences between developed and developing countries according to modernisation theory was culture, that is, the discrepancies that lay between the traditional societies of the third world, and the modernised societies of the first world (So. 1990: 25). As such, processes of developmental transformation were said to largely take place through the education of local peoples into the modernised lifestyles and habits of the West. This was to be achieved by the abandonment of traditional culture, and the adoption of more rational and industrialised social structures.

Traditional society was seen by modernisation theory as being a strong hindrance to the process of modernisation. Here, traditional societies were seen as possessing attitudes and lifestyles that were archaic, out-dated, and reflective of those of the pre-enlightenment period, as well as social structures that were small, rural, and strongly based upon relations of kinship (Melkote. 1991:40). It was argued by modernisation theory that in order for developed countries to cope with the issues of growing populations, it would be necessary for them to abandon these structures in favour of more modern values (Swanepoel et al. 1997: 19), namely those of urbanism, less personal relations, and a lesser degree of shared values and tradition (Melkote. 1991: 40).

Such perceptions were informed largely by Max Weber, and the reworking of his theories by Parsons. Here, the notion of classifications was particularly relevant to traditional society, which stated that by analysing the "pattern variables" or social structures of different societies, one becomes able to ascertain the level of "rationalisation" within the given society, thus indicating its level of development (Larrain. 1989:88). Therefore, while traditional societies tended towards ascription, or social standing from physical characteristics such as age and sex, as well as non-specific roles, more advanced societies would by contrast, be defined in terms of meritocracy, bureaucratic roles, and transferrable status (Larrain. 1989: 89).

Furthermore, this lack of autonomous action on behalf of the people of Sheylan strongly relates to David McLelland's (1966) conceptualisation of "n-Ach", or the drive in individuals for achievement (Larrain. 1989: 94). The notion of n-Ach was used to address questions pertaining to the reasons why certain societies had been able to obtain advanced stages of economic growth and why others had not, and what impulse inspired this economic achievement. Thus, n-Ach was described as a mental "virus" prevalent within individuals in modernised societies, but absent in those from developing ones. In order to establish how developed a nation was and therefore how prevalent the mentality of n-Ach was, McLelland proposed studying how many entrepreneurs there were in a given nation, as entrepreneurs were regarded as being the best bale to take risks and make decisions based on both rationality and logic (Larrain. 1989:95).

While *Food Force* portrays developing societies in terms of traditional culture, it can be said that both the games portray developmental progress as being synonymous with the transformation of such cultures, that is, the shift from traditional towards the modern. The newfound productive and industrious tendencies of the people of Sheylan following the WFP's intervention does indeed arguably suggest that they have been to some degree "inspired" to achieve new levels of development, and change their attitudes towards more productive behaviours. Such a point is compounded by the fact that the game also stresses notions of individualistic achievement. For example, one of the ways in which development can be assisted through food aid is through the means of improving skills in order to enhance their opportunities, thus implying a more individualistic motive for work, as opposed to the more communal sentiments of traditional culture, thus promoting individual achievement prevalent within Western culture.

Indeed, the concept of attaining development through the alteration of culture is also prevalent within *Fate of The World*, most notably in the play cards. Players have the option to implement policies such as the "one child policy" thus limiting family sizes, as well as policies to encourage consumption and promote consumerist attitudes (See figure 5.12). Both policies available in game have strong inferences of transforming traditional outlooks into modernised ones, such as the deterrence of traditional large families, as well as the promotion of capitalistic values.



Figure 5.12: Playing cards in *Fate of the World* depicting means in which the player can transform the outlooks and practices in the African region, thus transforming their culture. (Red Redemption. 2010).

In order to achieve such transformation, the role of education is also highly stressed within both *Food Force* and *Fate of the World.* For example, *Food Force* places vast emphasis on notions of using school meals in order to encourage attendance, as does *Fate of the World* through the GEO's funding of educational programmes. Although the games do imply that this education does come from local teachers and not those from more industrialised, modern nations, the fact that such educational facilities would have been implemented or at least advised by such nations does to some extent imply that a more Western influence would be present within such educational structures. Similarly, in order to achieve cultural transformation, modernisation theory also placed strong emphasis on education as a means to inform and recruit people into modernised perspectives and lifestyles.

In addition, it can be said that *Food Force* also subtly addresses the notion of religion and its impact on development. While the game does not explicitly refer to religious practice as a hindrance to development, it is however evident through implication. For example, the people of Sheylan are seen donning what appears to be burkas – traditional Muslim dress – thus indicating that they are conformant of Islamic belief and culture. In addition, many of the videos and photographs featured during the intervals between the levels often depict women – mostly African and those who appear to be of Middle-Eastern descent – also wearing modest clothing required of Islamic tradition.



Figure 5.13: Many of the people depicted in the photographs in *Food Force* adorn traditional Islamic attire. (The World Food Programme. 2005)

The portrayal of peoples from developing nations within the game as predominantly being of the Muslim culture and religion is arguably an insinuation of the religious drawbacks during the process of development. While the game does not strictly advocate the abandonment of religion, the fact that almost all of the characters from developing nations are portrayed in terms of religious affiliation, and the characters from developed nations are not, further serves as a means to reiterate the differences between the two, and thus implies that religion, and more specifically oriental religions, are a characteristic of backward and traditional societies.

According to modernisation theory, the presence of traditional religions also served as a means of obscuring the development process. In fact, the values held by many of these religions, and Oriental and Eastern religions in particular, were regarded as being a predominant driver of traditionalist practices, and thus, were highly out of line with modern social systems required for development (Melkote. 1991: 52).

The predominant religions that were under attack by modernisation theorists were Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Islamic culture and belief was viewed as being excessively conservative and rigid; Hinduism was considered to be far too ascetic, and Buddhism was regarded as too far removed from reality. Such aspects of these religions were seen as being

highly irrational, and thus contributed to the stagnation of development as a result of (Melkote. 1991: 52).

The conceptualisation and characterisation of the notion of traditional societies by modernisation theories indeed proves to be highly problematic. The perception that traditional values act as a hindrance to the development process is one that is very difficult to prove, and thus remains highly debatable (So. 1991: 56). In addition, the criticism of traditional societies also proves to be highly hypocritical, as many nations considered to be modernised also display characteristics and sometimes values which can associated to traditional society. Furthermore, the eradication of traditional values and norms are also extremely difficult to replace, as many have been in existence for decades if not generations, and thus, many are bound to persist even following the introduction of modern values (So. 1991: 56).

In addition, modernisation theory also perceived the number of entrepreneurs in a developing nation to be an indicator of progress, as this pointed to an increasing sense of Western individualistic mind set. The use of the entrepreneur as being the ideal variable by which to measure development by modernisation theorists such as McLelland is also one that is highly flawed. Indeed, instead of considering the entrepreneur as being a product of a struggle of class interests which has resulted in the ability of imposing its interests upon other members of society, they instead see the concept of the entrepreneur as being void of influence by such socio-historical factors, and as a phenomenon that can be universally applied to any society and culture (Larrain. 1989: 99). Thus, modernisation theory, when considering traditional society, fails to consider differences within individual cultures and circumstances, and instead displays tendencies to lump these cultures together, thus not only homogenising such cultures, but also homogenising the very process of development and implying a universal, prescriptive path to be followed by all developing nations (Larrain. 1989: 99).

Thus, it can be asserted that *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* both adhere to modernisation theories' conceptualisations of the traditional society. Through the means of portraying people in developing nations as being unmotivated and stagnant prior to the transformation due to the development process, and the implementation of modern values and cultural norms through policy and intervention on behalf of developed nations, the games reiterate the notion of traditional society as being a hindrance to the development process. Furthermore,

modernisation theories' critical attitudes towards religion (in particular Oriental and Middle Eastern religions) and their negative effects upon developmental processes is indirectly, but nevertheless still prevalent within *Food Force*. Such attitudes towards traditional societies and cultures however prove to be highly flawed, as they demonstrate modernisation theories' failure to account for socio-historical contexts, are at times hypocritical, and oversimplify the developmental process to a singular, universal prescription for development.

5.2.5. A Capitalist Ideal for Development.

In addition to cultural transformation, modernisation theory also advocated that vast changes be made to the economic composition of third world nations in order to achieve development. Such suggestions were manifested in a number of ways, most notably through Walt Rostow's proposals for five-stage economic development, as well as numerous other factors including the promotion of free trade, capitalism, capital investment, the division of labour, and agricultural reform. Indeed, while such conceptualisations for economic development prove to be highly flawed, as they are ineffectual, and in many ways may even be destructive to development in third world countries, they are nevertheless prevalent within both *Food Force* and *Fate of the World*.

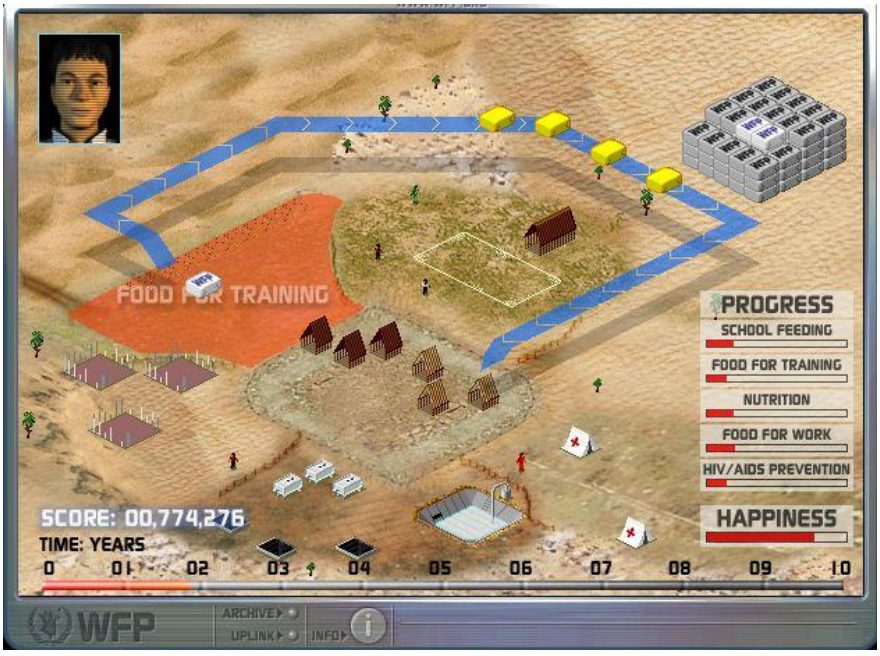

Figure 5.14: The final level of *Food Force* demonstrates how food aid can be used for sustainable development over a ten year period. (The World Food Programme. 2005).

The processes of economic development within *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* can be conceptualised in terms of stages, and players are able to witness the subsequent improvements of such growth. For example, while Sheylan is initially represented as being ravaged by drought, warfare and poverty, the final level of *Food Force* (See figure 5.14) depicts the positive changes that have been brought about through the implementation of WFP aid and developmental recommendations., Joe Zaki informs the player that following the WFP's intervention, Sheylan is given a ten-year period in which to attain sustainable development. Such sustainable development is to be achieved through the investment of food in a number of sectors, such as education, income, health, and training. Thus, the game visually depicts the economics developments as a result of the implementation of the WFP's economic suggestions for investment. As Sheylan's development progresses, their newfound economic strength becomes evident as they are better able to cope with crises, such as the drought that strikes the island, thus demonstrating the maturity of their economic system, as well as the sustainability of their economic growth. In fact, the player witnesses Sheylan's transition from a traditional society to a modern one, as tents become buildings, and as what was previously a rural and desolate landscape, transforms into a more urbanised one that resembles a Westernised town. Similarly, *Fate of the World* also depicts the improvements of nations through economic growth through the use of graphs and figures measuring aspects of such growth such as GDP.

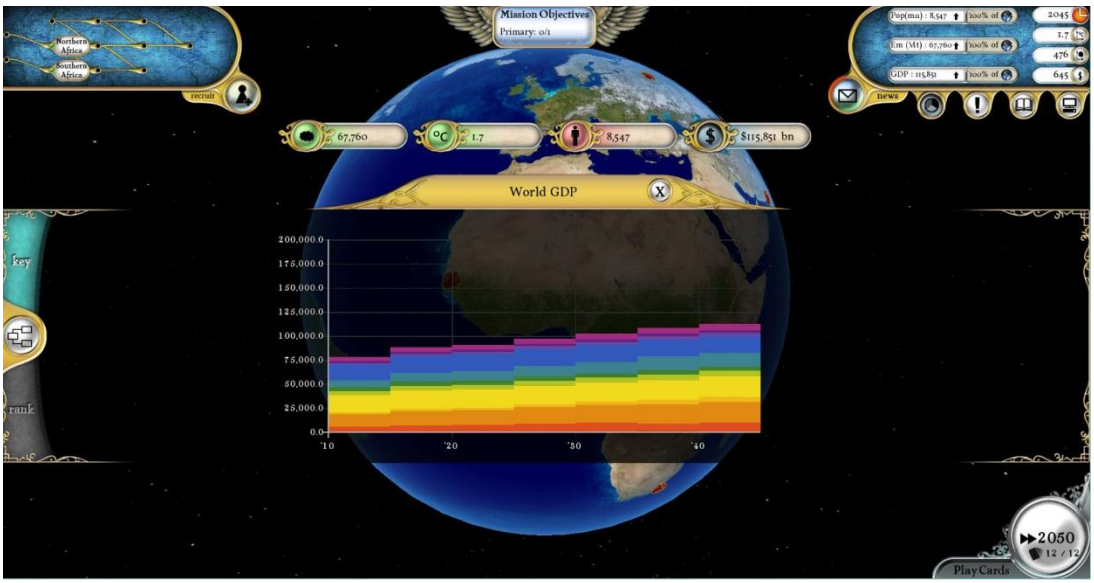

Figure 5.15: A bar graph representing GDP growth in *Fate of the World*. (Red Redemption. 2010)

One of the ways in which development is achieved within *Food Force* is through the division of labour. Indeed, this emphasis on divisions of labour and specialisation is suggested within

the final level of *Food Force*, whereby the skills and training advocated by the WFP are seen as very distinct and separate industries such as education, health care, agriculture and industry can be witnessed in very discrete areas, made distinct by terrain types and boundary markers. In addition, this division of labour is also shown through the individual roles that the local populations take on following the influence of the WFP, which is depicted in the photographs displayed prior to the last mission. Here, discrete professions and jobs such as teachers, farmers and labourers are in evidence, thus implying that in order for development to take place, local peoples must attain specialised skills.

There are also many policies that players are able to implement for economic development within *Fate of the World*. Indeed, the emphasis placed upon aspects of consumption and economy are highly prevalent within the game, such as the "Grow commerce" card, which allows for greater employment to be placed within the commercial sector, as well as development funding for companies, and the "Encourage consumption card", which serves as a means of invigorating the economy through deterring saving and encouraging spending on behalf of citizens.

Another aspect of development that is emphasised within the games is capital investment. While *Food Force* indicates that such investment can occur through "food investment" as a means of incentive and income, *Fate of the World* demonstrates this aspect in a more explicit manner through its policies, namely the “Tobin Tax” card, which imposes a tax on all financial transactions, thus allowing for investment in whatever way the player sees fit.

The changes that can be witnessed in *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* as a result of economic development can be compared to modernisation theory’s conceptualisations of what economic transformations should occur for development to take place. One of the most prominent theorists of modernisation theory was Walt Rostow and his economic conceptualisations for development. "The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto" (1960), outlined the ways in which developing countries could achieve development in a five-stage path from traditional society, to a more modernised and industrialised one (Melkote.1991: 43) .

The first stage of development began within the traditional society, which, as mentioned previously, was considered to be the starting point for development, or the most primitive stage of development, whereby modernised values and structures have yet to be realised (Melkote. 1991:43).

The second stage was dubbed "preconditions for take-off", whereby notions of modern science, economics and lifestyles were introduced into and somewhat adopted by these traditional societies. Here, modern ideals and norms were spread throughout the society, and aspects of such a modernised society began to permeate and become evident, mainly through private institutions (banks), infrastructure, and communications, and new mind sets more orientated towards private gain and profit. According to Rostow's model, in order for these traditional societies to surpass the "preconditions" stage, a stimulus must be present, usually in the form of political revolution, or through new advancements in technology (So. 1990: 29).

The third stage was the "Take-off" stage, whereby the traditional society transforms into a fully-fledged modernised state. It is during this stage that pockets of change and development spread throughout the entire society, and processes of economic growth become normal and commonplace. This stage was also characterised by the occurrence of growth of investment and savings increasing from 5% to 10% of the national income, as well as huge profit making on behalf of industry; investment in capital resulting in the stimulation of labour, as well as extensive improvements of the agricultural sector (Melkote. 1991: 44).

The "Drive to maturity" stage was defined by consistent economic growth that proved to be highly sustainable. Improvements within technology both invigorated and stimulated other industries, and the consequent economic growth allowed for the society to then participate within international trade (Melkote. 1991: 44).

The final stage was characterised by high mass consumption. By this stage, individuals within the society were yielding profits high enough to allow them to not only afford basic necessities, but also luxury goods and services. It is here that the given society's primary goal should be to ensure that at least 10% of the national income is continuously invested into the economy in order to overcome population growths (So. 1990:30). Thus, the final stage of Rostow's plan could only be achieved once the previously underdeveloped society can

demonstrate its abilities to emulate the habits and lifestyles like those of the West (Treurnicht. 1997: 19). It was argued by Rostow that this five stage system proved to be efficient and reliable due to its successes in both the United States and Japan (Melkote. 1991: 44).

In addition to Rostow's five-stage plan, there were also many other models for development within the dominant modernisation paradigm. Within these, there were several aspects which were considered imperative to economic development within third world nations. One of these aspects included labour. In order for underdeveloped nations to achieve economic growth, modernisation economists argued that it was imperative for such nations to implement a division of labour and specialisation (Melkote. 1991: 54). In addition, the investment in skills and human resources was also seen as a high priority in order to ensure a quality of labour that was consistent with the new forms of modern industry brought about by developmental change (Melkote. 1991: 54).

Another aspect which was emphasised by modernisation economists was that of capital, as well as investment within industries in order to stimulate various other sectors through improved machinery and goods (Melkote.1991:54). Therefore, increasing industrialisation through investment of capital was of prime importance. One of the ways in which capital was to be generated was through the redistribution of income amongst the capitalists and entrepreneurs in the given developing society, thus creating an initial inequality whose benefits would eventually permeate the rest of society (Melkote. 1991: 54). Another way of generating capital was through the means of imposing taxation and confiscation, as well as implementing institutions such as banks and stock markets (So. 1990:30).

The concept of free-trade and capitalists markets are evident, but very indirect within *Food Force*. Certainly, it is interesting to consider the possible reasons why the game utilises food as the primary form of currency as opposed to money. It can be argued that this substitution serves a means of masking and sanitising the implications associated with money and the

developmental process, that is, the potential for greed and individualism prevalent within many capitalist societies. Thus, while the use of food as currency is highly oversimplified and illogical in many ways, it does however serve as a means of concealing the flaws inherent within capitalist systems present within the developmental process. In addition, the final stage of *Food Force* also depicts this introduction of capitalist ideals when a market appears in Sheylan after their economy has reached a certain degree of "sophistication", thus demonstrating the consumerist aspect of capitalism and its introduction into the local population.

Similarly, modernisation theory also stressed the importance of utilising a free-market economy, private ownership, as well as free trade both locally and internationally in order to promote development and enhance economic growth, as this was seen as being highly successful throughout developed nations such as the United States and England (Melkote. 1991:56).

Finally, the factor of land was too a very important aspect of economic growth in modernisation theory. Through the efficient use of land for agriculture in particular, industrialisation could be accelerated as surpluses of agricultural output could be used in order to generate greater development (Melkote. 1990: 55). Such emphasis on agricultural development is also evident within the games, such as the "Grow agriculture" card in *Fate of the World* in order to stimulate agricultural output, as well as *Food Force*'s emphasis on agriculture as a means to sustainable development.

In fact, while "The Rise of Africa" level within *Fate of the World* does not use GNP as a measurement of development and thus success within the game, it does however utilize the Human Development Index (HDI) for such purposes (in order to succeed in "The Rise of Africa" mission, players must increase Africa's HDI to 0.7 or higher by 2045). While the concept of HDI intended to be an improvement upon GNP, as it takes into consideration aspects of basic education, longevity, and income per head, and would thus appear to give a far more accurate picture of development, HDI proves to be just as imperfect as GNP (Sen. 2006:258). While it does account for aspects other than mere income, it also fails to consider other factors which play a vital role in the development process, such as legal, social and political issues, thus rendering the concept of HDI very narrow and simplistic (Sen. 2006:259).

Modernisation theory measured such growth and development through the use of Gross National Product (GNP). Indeed, the use of GNP has proven to be highly flawed, as it provides only a very limited view of the progress of development within a nation, and can only account for economic aspects of development (Sen.2006:257). Thus, due to the use of GNP as the sole indicator of development, modernisation theory's only means of tracking development was through income and production (Sen. 2006: 257).

While such suggestions advocated by modernisation theory were widely applied, they were not without their flaws. One of the main criticisms - particularly of the promotion of free capitalism – was that modernisation theory had largely failed to acknowledge aspects of governmental influence in economic affairs (Andersen et al. 2006:253). Indeed, the role of governments of developing nations is vital, as they can both hinder as well as promote economic development through export strategies, trade embargos, as well as the functioning of private companies through policy (Andersen et al. 2006: 253). Certainly, political factors relating to economic decisions are largely absent throughout the games, and even the presence of national governments has been completely eliminated.

In addition, the notion of free trade is also a highly contentious one, as for many living in poverty, it is neither very free nor is it fair (Aristide. 2000:12). Instead, it may indeed serve to undermine local economies, as international entities compel such developing nations to trade (Aristide. 2000:12).

One of the economic mechanisms of modernisation theory still utilised today is the notion of food aid. Indeed, *Food Force* places vast emphasis upon food aid, and the ways in which the WFP gathers and distributes food aid to developing nations, particularly during food crises. This is particularly evident in the game's third mission (See figure 5.16), whereby players are required to participate in a WFP food drop by taking factors such as wind and position into account. While *Food Force* frequently espouses the advantages of food aid in the process of sustainable development and saving lives (which is clear in Carlos' statement that "the food drops are not cheap, but they save lives"), it does however prove to have many negative consequences which may serve as a means of actually undermining development.



Figure 5.16: Mission 6 in *Food Force*, whereby players must complete a food drop over Sheylan. (The World Programme. 2005)

One of the factors that *Food Force* does not account for when distributing food aid is the implication of political forces. Indeed, no mention is given with regards to the Sheylan government. Thus, the implications concerning the undermining of Sheylan's sovereignity and security when receiving such aid are never addressed within the game. While *Food Force* tends to venerate the deliverance of food aid as being a purely humanitarian endeavour on behalf of both the WFP and donor nations, the underlying strategic political motives that often pervade such "charity" are not recognised at all within the game. Instead, the only considerations taken within the fifth level of the game (See figure 5.17), whereby players must select donations from various nations around the world, is price and location, and whether that given county's "blocks" of donation will fit into the puzzle block provided to the player. It is interesting to note that a great majority of food donations in this level are from North America, with none from Northern Asia and only a few from the African region. Indeed, the reasons for donating food aid are often for purposes of a political nature, usually as a means to secure national security of donor nations, as well as the security of the international system as a whole (Tisch et al. 1994: 52).



Figure 5.17: Mission 4 of *Food Force*, which depicts food donations from various countries. (The World Food Programme. 2005)

It is due to such political motives present within the process of developmental aid that has resulted in very few cases of actual poverty reduction, as much of this aid is not distributed with the plight of the poor in mind, but rather through the political agendas of both donor and receiving states. This serves to both undermine the development process as a whole, and also serves to render the process of sustainable development largely ineffectual (Tisch et al. 1994: 52).

These political motivations may serve as a means of coercing third world countries into compliance with trade with first world countries, thus possibly resulting in exploitative and manipulative trade relations whereby vital resources such as lumber and food are gleaned from developing nations for use in industrialised states as a means of debt repayment (Smith. 1994:63), and as a result, important services such as health and education come to be neglected (Shah. 2005). Furthermore, the distribution of cheap food aid can result in the destruction of local farming economies within the first world, thus undermining any possibility for sustainable development (Smith.1994: 67).

Thus, both *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* comply with economic conceptualisations of development of modernisation theories to a large extent. It can be argued that Walt Rostow's five-stage model for economic development in third world countries is somewhat influential on the economic suggestions evident within the games. While *Food Force* engages with Rostow's notion of development through its depiction of the ten year process from traditional society to modernised society, *Fate of the World* demonstrates its interaction with Rostow's model is evident within the games' play cards, and their emphasis on commerce and consumerism. The games also prove to engage with many other economic aspects of modernisation theory, such as the division of labour, evident within *Food Force's* final level; capital investment, seen in *Food Force's* "food investment" and *Fate of the World's* "Tobin Tax" card, as well as implicit suggestions of capitalism and a free-market economy. However, such conceptualisations and suggestions for economic development in modernisation theory as well as the games prove to be highly flawed and negligent of political aspects, which are vital factors regarding within the developmental process. Furthermore, the stress put on food aid as a means of development within *Food Force* is also a very deficient approach, as it allows for exploitation of third world countries on behalf of first world countries for debt repayments, and is often ineffective, as much of this aid either fails to reach the very poor, or even hinders local farming economies due to the distribution of this cheaper food. Hence, these economic proposals made by modernisation theory apparent within the games, are vastly defective in terms of their conceptualisations and efficacy for development.

5.2.6. Technology as a Tool for Development in Modernisation

According to modernisation theories, one of the methods to bring about economic growth and subsequently development within third world countries was through technological and scientific advancement. Indeed, such proposals for technological advancement and its assumed benefits for development have manifested within both *Food Force* and *Fate of the World*. However, the drawbacks and disadvantages of such technological transference such as the possibility of financial exploitation and the undermining of employment opportunities have been largely neglected.

Certainly, *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* like are highly promotional of the benefits of technologies in the developmental process. *Food Force's* interface is demonstrative of this. Framed by a silver metallic border with buttons and lights, the *Food Force* interface is highly reminiscent of a console that may be found on a space-aged computer. Indeed, the interface within the game places vast emphasis upon computer technology, as can be witnessed in the highly pixelated nature of the screen, as well as the granulated and stripy appearance of the videos displayed in the intervals. "Bleeping" sounds, as well as the sounds of white noise and tech music can be heard throughout the game, thus further enhancing the sense of technology. The *Food Force* team also utilised highly technologically advanced devices and gadgets, such as the "newly developed" x-com devices (See figure 5.19) used by the team to communicate efficiently with one another. In addition, the game also features technologies reminiscent of those in the sci-fi genre, such as Joe Zaki's holographic console (See figure 5.20) which he uses to demonstrate the values of the food packs to Rachael Scott. Indeed, the WFP are often portrayed in terms of technological superiority within the games, such as the video of the WFP team conducting advanced mathematical equations, as well as scientific laboratories. Moreover, the incorporation of these technologies prove to be highly exaggerated within the game, especially when considering that technologies such as holographic computers are barely in existence, and that the game states that the WFP doesn't "actually have money sitting in the bank awaiting these operations", which makes the possibility that the organisation would possess technologies such as these highly unlikely.



Figure 5.18: The use of digital technologies as a means to communicate and disseminate information is highly integral to the WFP in *Food Force*. (The World Food Programme. 2005)

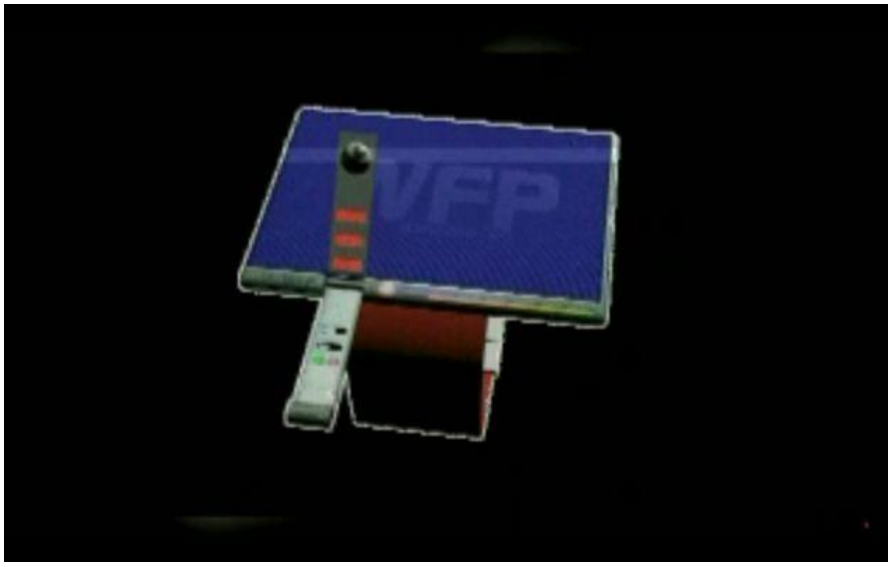

Figure 5.19: The X-com device supposedly used for communication in *Food Force*. (The World Food Programme. 2005)



Figure 5.20: Joe Zaki's holographic console, which he uses to pictorially demonstrate WFP strategies. (The World Food Programme. 2005)

Attitudes which are highly suggestive of technological determinism are evident within *Fate of the World*, as with almost every report given of conditions of Africa following each turn displays ominous news concerning their lack of technological progress, despite suggestions that the state of the continent is dire due to shortages of food and water as well as natural disasters. Thus bringing into question exactly how important technological progress really is in the region where people's basic needs are not met.



Figure 5.21: A frequent report from *Fate of the World*, expressing concern for the technological insufficiencies in Africa expresses a highly technologically deterministic attitude in the game. (Red Redemption. 2010)

In addition, the games also recommend the notion of transferring technological knowledge and infrastructure from more “technologically advanced” nations to those who are lacking in such resources. The concept of technological transfer is also discreetly prevalent within *Food Force*. While technological suggestions are never explicit within the game, the final level reveals such conceptions. Indeed, the town within Sheylan which is to developed by the player through food investment portrays many technological features, such the presence of solar panels, as well as power generators, which may be demonstrative of the shift towards technological progress on behalf of the people of Sheylan.

Fate of the World too is highly encouraging of technological transformation. Once again, the play cards available to the player reveal such sentiments. This is evident within cards such as the "Infotech Research Programme" card, used to spread and promote technological information throughout the given region; as well as other cards denoting very new and revolutionary technologies such as the "Biofuel and Nanomedicine", nuclear energy and "Robotic Research Programme" cards. In addition, the transfer of technologies from developed countries to developing ones is also explored with *Fate of the World*, most notably through the "Acquire <tech>" card, which allows for the acquisition of the player's target

region of a given technology that has previously been discovered elsewhere, thus demonstrating the promotion of notion of technological transference within the game.

However, while the games are highly technologically deterministic in their recommendations for development, this emphasis is however at the expense of the cultures of the local peoples. Indeed, the games fail to consider the impact of technological interventions and introductions into local cultures, and it can be argued that such technologies may in fact serve as a means to undermine and possibly eliminate the existence of such local cultures.

Technology and scientific knowledge were highly integral components of development according to modernisation theories. The emphasis on technological progress largely originated in the late 19th Century, whereby American presence in foreign nations became increasingly prevalent, and their perceptions of their own superiority with regards to technology and science began to permeate their missions of development in third world nations (Adas. 1989:425). As a result, technology came to be seen as one of the prime agents of bringing civilisation to developing countries, and the belief spread that what separated developing nations from developed ones, was the faith in science and technologies (Adas. 1989:414). Moreover, such an attitude manifested itself in Marion Levy's (1966) assertions that levels of development could be measured by the degrees of which it utilised technological factors in order to increase its efficacy within production (Adas. 1989: 414). Such developing nations were viewed as possessing technologies that were extremely primitive in nature, and as such, this low technological progress was blamed for the low level of development experienced. Indeed, the lack of technological progress was seen by modernisation theory as being the reason for the inability of people within third world nations not being able to "shape their own desires", and to adapt to and change their own environment as well as advance within their careers and pursuits (Adas. 1989: 413).

Technologies played multiple roles within the development process, namely economic growth, as well as the spread of modern and industrial values within developing nations. Indeed, new technologies were seen as a means of increasing production output and improving infrastructure, thus promoting industrialisation as well as agricultural production through the use of machinery (Melkote. 1991: 55). In addition, the deliverance of such

technologies to the elites of developing nations was seen as a way in which to spread and encourage the modern values of the West (Leys. 1996:10).

It was recognised by modernisation theory that it was not possible for third world nations to acquire such technologies overnight, and thus, the best way for them to obtain these technologies was for nations who already had them to transfer them, as well as the knowledge needed in order to operate such technologies. Thus, technology became another key component of developmental aid and technical assistance (Kirby. 2000:12).

However, despite this avid promotion of technology and science on behalf of modernisation theory and *Food Force* and *Fate of the World*, the concept of technologies as a means to development is in many ways flawed. Indeed, the transference of technology from developed countries to developed ones may actually serve as a means of undermining the developmental process, as many of the machines used for industrialisation were not locally produced within third world nations, but instead, need to be purchased from first world countries, thus resulting in the use of limited funds for such technologies (Melkote. 1991: 132). In order to pay for such technologies, many developing countries may be forced to borrow such funds from international organisations, agencies, and multinational firms, subsequently plunging these third world nations into debt with and dependency on industrialised nations (Melkote. 1991: 132).

In addition, the introduction of new technologies for purposes of industrialisation is also a highly flawed system. The purchase and utilisation of advanced technological machinery may also have dire consequence for employment within third world countries, as human labour becomes replaced with such machinery, and vital capital is used to purchase such technology as opposed to investments in employment (Melkote. 1991:132).

Furthermore, modernisation theory proves to be highly technologically deterministic when it comes to development, and the perception that technology has a very direct and trusted influence upon societal and economic change (Kirby. 2000: 12). However, it is an almost

impossible task to accurately prove these links between technology and developmental advancement, thus rendering such perceptions insufficient (Agnew. 1983:24).

Furthermore, technology is not necessarily as idyllic as it may first appear. Certainly, rather than advancing societies, it may conversely serve as a means of disrupting and disturbing conditions in society which were previously perceived as satisfactory, as well as the ecological stability of developing nations (Agnew. 1983:24).

Hence, technologically deterministic attitudes are highly evident within modernisation theories as well as *Food Force* and *Fate of the World*. The benefits of technology outlined by modernisation theory as being a means to achieve industrialisation and "modern" values are also rife within *Food Force's* depiction of technological development in the final level and the portrayal of the WFP's almost sci-fi - like technical knowledge, as well as *Fate of the World's* cards advocating technological transformation for societal change as well as the representation of technological transference. However, such conceptualisations for development are exceedingly flawed, as they present the potential for financial exploitation, may be detrimental to employment within the country, and may disrupt established structures and ecological balance (Agnew. 1983:24). Furthermore, proving the effectiveness of technological development of technologies is extremely difficult, thus rendering such technological assumptions unreliable (Agnew. 1983:24).

5.2.7. Globalisation: The Role of Global Organisations in Modernisation

The emergence of modernisation theory was largely accompanied by the rise of many global, multilateral organisations as a result of increasing globalisation. Indeed, while many of these institutions and organisations were created as a response to growing awareness of the need for development, many are however, highly problematic due to numerous issues. Despite these problems, both *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* promote the efforts of such multilateral agencies to encourage development, and thus offer a portrayal of development that is highly flawed.

This rise of global organisations and their role within the developmental process is thoroughly explored throughout both *Food Force* and *Fate of the World*. Indeed, the primary focus of *Food Force* is on the World Food Programme, a branch of the United Nations, and the role in which it plays in the saving of lives, as well as supposed sustainable development within third world nations. Here, the importance of global participation, as well as bilateral aid is perceived as being essential to the development process, and it is implied that without such intervention on behalf of the WFP, development within Sheylan would be impossible. This is evident within the narrator's comments that "...the hopes of Sheylan rest in our team". The global influence of the WFP is also suggested in the organisation's logo features throughout the game, which depicts a spinning globe juxtaposed by the text "WFP", thus implying the global power of the WFP.



Figure 5.22: The spinning globe logo of the WFP in *Food Force* may act as a symbol to depict the organisation's global power. (The World Food Programme. 2005)

Similarly, *Fate of the World* also implies the global power of the fictitious GEO (which can be argued to be an imitation of the UN) through the use of globe imagery throughout the game. The game's opening scene states in text, "How should civilisation respond?"(With reference to increasing global crises) juxtaposed by the image of earth, but with the camera angle predominant focused on North America. Like *Food Force*, such imagery gives rise to the idea of GEO as possessing absolute global power, however, this focus on North America,

and the insinuation that it is the "civilisation that should respond", also points to the notion that such global power is not necessarily spread evenly, but is rather in the hands of just a small selection of nations.

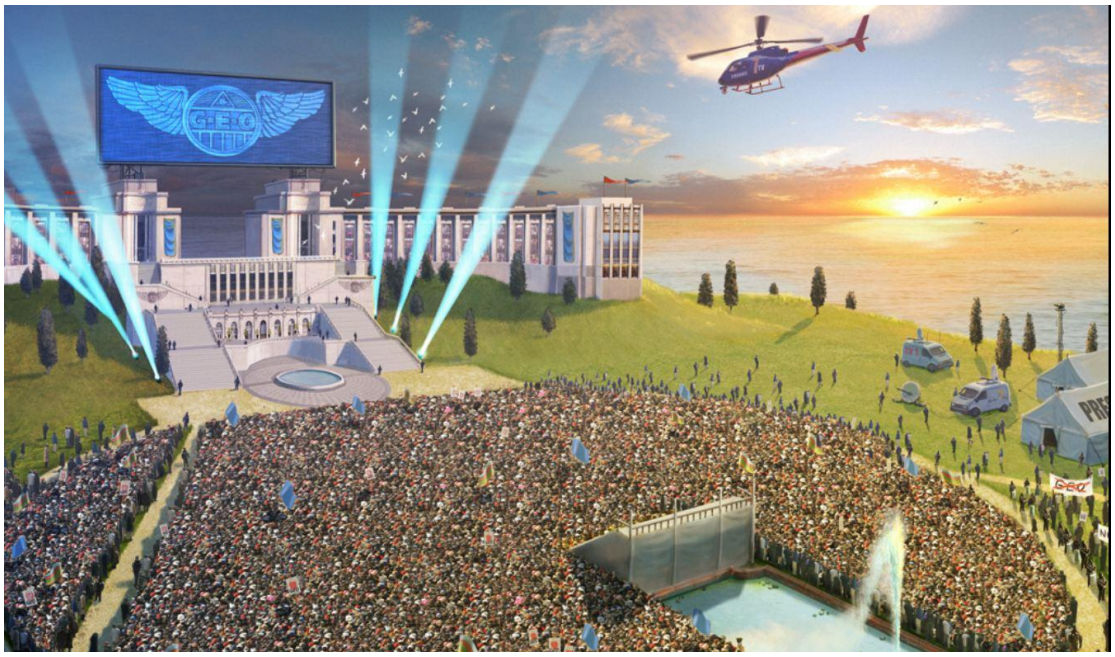

Figure 5.23: A portrayal of a GEO summit, which conveys the GEO's power over the people. (Red Redemption. 2010)

Moreover, figure 5.23 portrays an image of a GEO summit during the game's opening scene portrays an enormous GEO banner, presiding over thousands of people below, thus also possibly alluding to the global power of the organisation (over a mass of anonymous people). In addition, as "head" of the GEO, the player literally has control over the world, which is evident in the players ability to manipulate and manoeuvre the earth by dragging the globe, as well as implement policies and actions which determine not only the fate of a nation, but the world as a whole.

The concepts of globalisation and modernisation theory are closely related. Indeed, following the Second World War, both concepts came to gain greater significance, as the rise of new global, multilateral entities such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and new specialist agencies became ever prominent in order to address issues concerning development (Melkote. 1991: 35).

Indeed, while the games suggest that the solution to addressing the world's problems, and to implement development is through the imposition of global organisations, there are however, many issues concerning the rise of such global power, as well as their effectiveness. For instance, the United Nations, which has arguably played a vital role in the rise of globalised development aid (Eberstadt.1997:213), has been the constant target of many critics for its questionable efficacy of the development process. Difficulties concerning the implementation of strategies and policies, bureaucratic complications; speculations over corruption and the contradictions surrounding development programmes and their capabilities for sustainable development are indicative of the organisation's less than perfect nature (Mische et al. 1998:342).

In addition, the WFP has also endured many criticisms regarding the effectiveness and strategies employed by the organisation. Indeed, the WFP has been described as being " a massive agency of apparatchiks who are in the absurd situation of, on the one hand, being dedicated to the fight against hunger while, on the other hand, being faced with unemployment were hunger actually eliminated" (Shikwati. 2005). Furthermore, lack of accountability and transparency of the organisation, as well as suspected collusion between its workers and violent militant groups (The Economist. 2010) have severely impacted on the WFP's reputation. Furthermore, the WFP's use of emergency aid has also been said to undermine sustainable development through its excessive stress on food aid and its neglect of more viable and long-term alternatives (The Food and Agriculture Organisation.2006:65). Thus, while *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* offer depictions of multilateral organisations as being paramount to developmental processes, they do not however consider the numerous drawbacks associated with such organisations, and how they may even serve as a means to undermine development rather than improving it.

Food Force and *Fate of the World* largely ignore many issues associated with global organisations, in particular aspects of state sovereignty or the freedom of action by individual states (Steiner et al. 2008:690). *Food Force* states that they usually "carry out food aid like these with the help of local governments and voluntary organisations", the game however skirts the issues and implications of the loss of state sovereignty, and the possibility of unwanted interference of the WFP by asserting that the "civil war has made communications difficult", thus eliminating the possibility for such issues. Likewise, *Fate of the World* also

neglects issues of state sovereignity, through the GEO's ability to implement policies and action within any country in the world. Although these policies are at time met with resistance by local people, the power of the GEO to control aspects of security and politics, such as the Fund Black Ops card, which states that "We have established a covert presence in the region; now instigate Black Ops projects to further your ends" results in supreme control of the World by the GEO, thus undermining notions of national sovereignity.

Indeed, the aspect of the loss of national sovereignity due to multilateral, global organisations that has been neglected by the games has many complications and implications. The notion of state sovereignty can serve as a highly constrictive factor when considering the actions of multilateral organisations such as the UN. While states do under emergency conditions need to relinquish some degree of sovereignity in order to protect the lives of innocent people, yielding sovereignity does however have implications for the decision-making processes and autonomy of action on behalf of developing countries in determining their future (Childers et al. 1994:18). Furthermore, once sovereignity has been yielded for means of development, developing nations lose large degrees of control over their agriculture and food, thus resulting to a large extent, a loss of democracy (Mosseau. 2005).

Thus, issues concerning global multilateral institutions and organisations prove to be highly problematic when considering developmental processes. While both *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* celebrate the notion of international organisations (the WFP and the GEO respectively) as a solution to poverty, many negative implications such as excessive bureaucracy, corruption, and questionable efficacy plague such organisations. Furthermore, constraints to development posed by notions of state sovereignity, as well as the negative consequences associated with the loss of state sovereignity such as the undermining of democracy are to a large extent neglected by the games. Thus, the games, through their promotion of multilateral organisations offer a highly problematic and flawed conceptualisation for development.

5.2.8. Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that both *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* exhibit conceptual characteristics that correlate strongly with modernisation paradigms. The Eurocentric, abstract, and ahistorical flaws, as well as the notion that development can take place through the same process as that of Europe and North America that were associated with modernisation paradigms prove to be strongly evident within the games. Through the process of interpellation, players of the games are encouraged to adopt a first world perspectives and identity, as well as adhere to first world ideologies and viewpoints of the developmental process. Both games portray strong ideologies that celebrate and favour first world nations and organisations as superior, in particular the WFP and the GEO. Depicted in terms of heroism, as well as rationality and intelligence, the games' overestimation of the abilities of developed nations to "rescue" developing nations from poverty acts as a means to reinforce as well as justify ideological and hegemonic power of such nations.

In addition, positioned against this glorified portrayal of first world nations is the representation of developing nations as being primitive, as well as homogenous and anonymous with no voice. Rather than accounting for the devastating impact of colonial legacies on third world nations, the blame is instead shifted onto the third world nations themselves. Thus, developing nations come to be represented as being far inferior and "backward" compared to developed nations, facilitating the perspective that they are in need of being "saved" from their self-inflicted problems.

The cultures and religions of developing nations are also seen as highly problematic factors for development within *Food Force* and *Fate of the World*. The transition of local people from traditional culture to a state of modernity is clearly visible within the games, as people relinquish a culture that is implied by the games as being lazy, uneducated and unskilled.

Furthermore, according to the games, this change in culture is accompanied by an economic transition towards a more capitalist-orientated system. The recommendations within the game for development strongly reflect a highly capitalist and free-trade mentality, and also promote the practice of charity on behalf of first world nations, most notably in the form of food drops,

despite implications of the possibility for exploitation of third world resources as a result of national debt to first world countries.

Furthermore, like modernisation theories, the games also assume a very technologically deterministic attitude, suggesting that technological advancement holds an absolute fundamental capacity to solve developmental issues. The exaggerated technological proficiency of first world nations and organisations within the games are exemplary of such a point, however, such representations do not account for the flawed logic of technology as a means to development that accompanies them, such as the loss of employment opportunities amongst local populations.

Finally, the games are also highly promotional of the concept of international institutions as being a fundamental element in the developmental process, in particular the WFP and the fictitious GEO. However, the reliance upon such institutions for developmental progress within the third world also proves to be an unreasonable recommendation for development, as it ignores issues concerning state sovereignity, as well as matters of corruption and inefficient bureaucracy that have pervaded many of these organisations such as that of the WFP and the UN which thus have implications of undermining developmental initiatives.

Thus, *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* offer a conceptualisation of development that is highly reminiscent of modernisation paradigms. Through these depictions and representations, the games subsequently promote a conceptualisation of development that proves to be highly flawed as well as an ineffective method for achieving development in the real world.

5.3. Participatory Development and *Wildfire.*

5.3.1. Introduction

The increasing popularity, and indeed "trendiness" of participatory theories as an alternative to modernisation theories for development have resulted in widespread acceptance of such theories as being a key solution to developmental deficiencies and poverty. Certainly, it can be argued that such popularity of this framework has manifested within *Wildfire,* which seeks

to promote a form of developmental progress that strongly resembles participatory theories. The game's emphasis on volunteerism on behalf of local communities to help alleviate societal ills and promote development within their own communal spaces, empowerment of local populations in decision-making processes, as well as the supposed consideration for local contexts and situations are all highly conducive towards a participatory approach to development.

However, due to the game's strong link to participatory theories, *Wildfire* also exhibits many of the shortcomings prevalent within the theories. The game's usage of the United Nation's Millennium development Goals act as a means of promoting these ideologies of participation, despite the fact that they prove to be highly unachievable with participatory measures alone. Furthermore, these processes of participation by communities are also highly undermined within the games due to their disregard for both external and internal power structures. Finally, instead of contextualising developmental situations, the game conversely decontextualizes such situations and people through its heavy stylisation and homogenisation of the people and places within the game, thus reducing the game's applicability to real-life situations despite its claims to provide inspiration for transformation in the real-world.

Despite such drawbacks, *Wildfire* does however hold potential to act as a means of participation for players in itself, due to its promotion of democratic discussion and deliberation through the use of the internet and social networking, although these ambitions may also be undermined by factors concerning the digital divide.

5.3.2. The Ideology of Participation: The Millennium Development Goals and their Manifestation within *Wildfire*

Following the increasing demise of modernisation theories as solutions to development, participatory theories have gained increasing popularity as new strategies for development and the fight against poverty. Indeed, it is highly evidential that *Wildfire*'s suggestions for development have been largely informed by such participatory theories, as well as the United Nations' Millennium development Goals (MDGs) which largely recommend participation and inclusiveness of citizens for development. However, the use of the MDGs as well as

citizen participation in the development process proves to be a flawed conceptualisation for development, and may serve to undermine development rather than encourage it.

Like *Food Force* and *Fate of the World*, *Wildfire* also employs interpellation in order to increase player engagement and immersion within the game. This is achieved through the positioning of the player as an active character within the game, in particular a block-like figure whom the player has total control over and can manoeuvre freely. In addition, the camera angle is constantly positioned behind the player's character, thus enhancing the feeling that the player is synonymous and intimate with the character. Furthermore, the game also addresses the player directly, utilising words such as "you" ("You can help out… You can join…") which subsequently positions the player within the text itself. Through the use of such explicit interpellation within the game, the player becomes vulnerable to the ideologies that are present within the game.

Wildfire promotes a system of development which highly involves the participation of local people. This is most notably prevalent by the fact that there are essentially no other characters within the game other than the citizens themselves, thus emphasising their presence as being paramount to the health of their society, as they are the only ones who can influence change within their society. Indeed, this notion of action through participation as opposed to the passiveness of local people inherent within previous modernisation theories is largely portrayed through the colours used throughout the game.

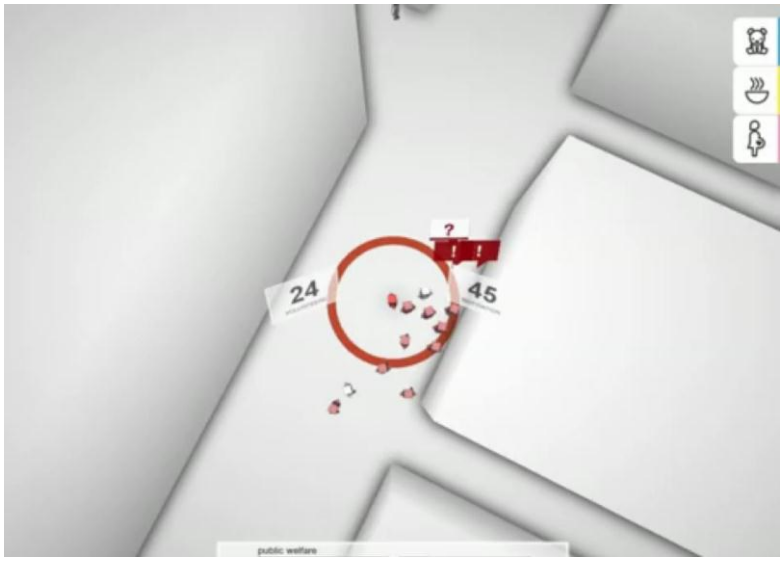

Figure 5.24: The local citizens in *Wildfire* turn from red to white once they have been inspired to take action in order to increase development. (By Implication. 2010).

For instance, figure 5.24 demonstrates how the citizens within the game are initially displayed as aimlessly wandering through the city at a slow pace, and are portrayed as being white in hue. However, upon being "inspired" to take action by the player, the citizens assume a red colour, and begin to race towards their tasks. Red, which is connotative of action, determination, energy and strength, is thus used to portray the newfound zeal of the citizens through their participation for the bettering of their society

Moreover, such a point is also made within the diegetic music within the game. The steady progression of speed of the soft piano music in the background gives rise to connotations of positivity, and thus the increasing feelings of positivity and ambition amongst the citizens as they come to realise their potential for change and development within their society. Thus, the game portrays participatory measures for development in a highly positive light, therefore promoting the ideologies of such strategies for development.

This emphasis upon the participation of local people for development correlates strongly to participatory theories for development. It can be argued that participatory theories for development arose as a response to the flaws that were inherent within the modernisation paradigms, which were seen as being driven by Euro-centric, colonial attitudes (Kapoor. 2008:60). While such modernisation strategies promoted top-down and bureaucratic measures for development, these were seen as being highly ineffective and misrepresentative of people's needs, and thus participatory theories called for a far more inclusive approach, whereby decision-making processes takes place by those who would be most deeply affected by them – the people themselves (Osmani. 2008:14). The subsequent empowering effects of such an inclusive structure was argued to be a far more sustainable approach to development, as it provided a much more long term solution to problems within developing countries (Schneider.1995:31) due to the psychological and physical control and ownership of the development process on behalf of ordinary people which served as a means of stimulating motivation and will to sustain developmental programmes (Rogers et al. 2008: 228). Such inclusiveness and endogenous development was also argued to encourage togetherness, interaction and social bonding – essential aspects in creating social capital, as well as a more cohesive social network which was seen as paramount for social responsibility, as well as addressing the distanciated and removed nature of previous developmental theories (Osmani. 2008:19).

Furthermore, participatory development has also been seen as a way to combat negligence commonly found in more top-down approaches, as well as enhance notions of accountability, and provide a voice for those who were previously marginalised within the development process (Sen.1999:110). In addition, while participatory development had proven to be more time-consuming, it has however, been praised for being highly understanding of people's needs and goals, and has in recent years has been increasingly utilised as a means of addressing numerous social problems (Osmani. 2008: 11).

Victory within *Wildfire* is measured through the completion of tasks which contribute towards the achievement of the eight Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development goals were implemented in 2000 by the 189 member states of the United Nations Assembly along with the Millennium Declaration. The MDGs were (like *Wildfire*) used as a measure of developmental success within individual nations, and were referred to as "globally accepted benchmarks of broader progress, embraced by donors, developing countries, civil society and major development institutions alike" (Guthrie. 2008: 166), and were aimed at enhancing the lives, living standards, and global equity of developing nations by the target year of 2015. Such goals were to be achieved through the mobilisation of civil society, and thus through the participation of ordinary citizens, as well as through the cooperation between nations, governments, and developed and developing nations (Guthrie. 2008: 166).

The use of the Millennium Development Goals as a measure of victory within the game can be argued to be another ideological mechanism used to promote participatory developmental strategies as well as the hegemonic position of the United Nations. Indeed, this proves to be highly problematic as upon examination, many of the recommendations for the achievement of the MDGs are highly flawed, as well as oversimplified, and are in many ways, ambiguous, and have little relation to actual societal development.

Many of the various tasks assigned to the player in order to increase city health in accordance with the MDGs prove to be highly ambiguous ("You yourself can volunteer to help the social enterprises in your area") as well as somewhat insignificant for greater social change, such as the handing out of leaflets in order to spread information promoting maternal health. Indeed, such ambiguous and minor contributions to development recommended by the game make

the sustainability of the MDGs highly questionable, as well as their feasibility for development unreasonable.

Furthermore, the MDGs have been highly criticised for being hypocritical in their conceptualisations for development. Indeed, while the MDGs are aimed towards sustainable development and poverty alleviation, they are also however, arguably unachievable without the interference of global capital (Amin. 2006). This has led to criticism that in order to achieve such goals, excessive privatisation of numerous aspects of society such as education and health would need to be implemented, thus facilitating the power held by capitalist institutions such as transnational corporations, thus increasing the potential for exploitation of developing nations and their economies (Amin. 2006). In addition, the undermined role of governmental structures within the process of development outlined in the MDGs is also highly problematic, as it limits resistance to the expansion of such global capital, thus resulting in growing polarisation of wealth gaps on a global scale (Amin.2006). Thus, due to such implications, the use of the MDGs within *Wildfire* proves to be a problematic measure for development.

The basis for development within the game lies in the player's ability to recruit volunteers in order to carry out the tasks of the MDGs. Indeed, citizen volunteerism plays a very crucial role within participatory theory as a way to involve people in the development of their own societies. The recruitment of volunteers within the game takes place once the player has successfully "inspired" other citizens within the game to make a difference within the community (See figure 5.25). Certainly, the use of the word "inspire" as opposed to "influence" indicates a possible attempt to conceal any undertones of ideological indoctrination. In addition, many of the recommendations for volunteerism within the game often involve aspects of donations, such as "building houses for the poor", or "collecting textbook or cash donations from multiple benefactors". Furthermore, it can be argued that the use of donations employs a similar strategy to modernisation theory for development, as it involves the transference of aid for development – a method proven to be highly ineffectual as well as unsustainable. Thus, while *Wildfire* promotes development that is participatory and inclusive in nature, such strategies become undermined by the utilisation of modernisation strategies which participatory theories sought to improve upon.



Figure 5.25: Recruiting volunteers through the use of "inspiration" can be seen as an attempt to cover up ideological connotations. (By Implication. 2010)

Thus, *Wildfire* largely subscribes to participatory developmental theories, as is evidential in its use of both visual and auditory indicators, as well as its use of the MDGs as a measure for victory. However, while the game promotes such conceptualisations for development through inclusive and voluntary citizen action, such strategies for development prove to be highly flawed, as such goals are unlikely to be achievable without the interference of global capital, which may serve to inhibit and exploit developmental growth instead of promoting it (Amin.2006). In addition, the suggestions for volunteerism and development through donation are also a highly problematic method for development, as it indicates a relapse back to modernisation's developmental aid strategies.

5.3.3. Empowerment and Power: The Democratic Role of Citizens in Participation and its Implications.

Participatory paradigm largely sought to address issues that were inherent within modernisation paradigm. One of the ways in which it sought to do this was through empowering local people, through giving them the means to make their own decisions within the developmental process and thus give to them the control in which to determine their own destiny (Melkote. 1991: 242). This was largely to be achieved through democratic means as well as discursive deliberation on behalf of communities. However, while such democratic power is highly emphasised as being imperative within participatory theories, *Wildfire* however does not demonstrate such democracy despite implying that development lies within the hands of the people. In addition, both participatory theories as well as the game fail to

acknowledge internal and external power struggles that may act as a means to hinder participation due to the exploitative and manipulative nature of such power imbalances, thus proving that *Wildfire* offers a conceptualisation of development that is both unfeasible as well as faulty.

Wildfire places vast stress upon the democratic empowerment of local citizens due to its celebratory attitudes to the abilities of such local people to initiate change and bring about development within society. However, it can be argued that such a democratic focus is highly problematic within *Wildfire*. First, it appears within the game that the democratic power of the people, despite the game's assertion that ordinary citizens are primary purveyors of their own development, is largely absent and/or minimalized. This is evident in the fact that just about none of the game's suggestions for development on behalf of the citizens involves the alteration of public policy, despite the game's website's claims that one of the game's aims is to "seek legislation on key Millennium Development Goals" (http://wildfire.byimplication.com/. 2010). In addition, the game portrays the citizens as literally having no voice – a possible indicator of their inability to exercise and assert their democratic power. In fact, the citizens do not act upon voluntary activities on their own, but rather their actions are dictated by the player once they are assigned tasks to carry out, therefore suggesting that the democratic power of the people is restrained. Thus, it becomes evidential that the power to make decisions on behalf of the citizens is highly limited, and therefore, the efficacy of the characters within the game becomes highly questionable without the presence of such democracy.

This aspect of empowerment through participation evident in the game is highly similar to participatory theories. One of the predominant premises of participatory theories concerns the empowerment of local peoples in order to make active decisions during the development process and have a voice in the addressing of their own needs and desires. Indeed, many participatory paradigms placed much blame upon the disempowerment of people as being one of the most salient reasons for both poverty and marginalisation of people (Piffero.2009: 44). While such claims are practically impossible to validate, the emphasis on the empowerment of people is perceived as being a pretext for the creation of a self-reliant and sustainable method for development, in which self-determination and equality could be established amongst local communities (Rahman. 1993:207). In accordance with such

empowerment, those who were perceived as being marginalised and disadvantaged during previous developmental frameworks were argued to be enabled to articulate and assert themselves, thus establishing an atmosphere of self-help as well as control on behalf of ordinary citizens (Melkote. 1991: 242).

Such notions of empowerment were intended to be initiated through constructive and highly interactive dialogues between both researchers as well as communities, thus arguably safeguarding the development process from external manipulation, and providing local people a platform for which to decide their own developmental fate (Melkote. 1991: 242).

Thus, participatory paradigms are largely concerned with the notion of democratic decision-making as an imperative contributor towards the developmental process. Here, democracy is perceived in terms of being one of the most basic and fundamental forms of participation in order to combat the issue of poverty (Osmani. 2008:10). In fact, the presence of such democracy, especially through the means of debate and deliberation, is often perceived as being an effective measure to enforce accountability and responsibility throughout the development process (Osmani. 2008: 12).

While *Wildfire* heralds the participation of individuals within communities as being active agents in their own self development, there are however aspects indicating the presence of external power structures that can influence development, as well as undermine the extent of agency that can be exercised by such communities. Most notable of these is the suggestion to engage with social enterprises that is, "businesses that value positive societal change over simple profit generation". Such a suggestion thus places emphasis on the abilities of corporate entities to promote development within communities, and while these may be to some degree effective, they do however diminish the role of individual citizens, thus creating a false link between participation and development. In addition, this suggestion also introduces neo-liberal agendas, which have been a contentious issue in participatory development as they threaten to introduce both exploitative as well as manipulative ideals.

In addition, the use of the MDGs as a means to promote and measure development within the game implies that development is structured in terms of the United Nations' agenda, as opposed to the agenda of the local people themselves, thus portraying the strong implication

that the will of the people plays a less fundamental role than that of a global organisation such as the United Nations.

The presence of external entities within the game is portrayed through the metaphor of the "agents" – men in black suits, ties and dark sunglasses (See figure 5.26) – that continually threaten to undermine city health if encountered by the player. Indeed, while the game's official website describes such agents as "representing various forces opposing positive social change" (http://*wildfire*.byimplication.com/. 2010), the literal meaning behind such agents is never overtly made cogent to the player. Their appearance and attire is reminiscent of governmental secret agents or corporate spies found in popular culture, thus suggesting that their negative impact on development is the result of either governmental and/or influence and interference within the developmental process, thus stressing the depoliticisation of such processes that is implies within participatory paradigms.



Figure 5.26: The menacing agents in *Wildfire* may be a symbol for corporate greed or political hindrances that undermine development. (By Implication. 2010)

Similarly, while participatory theories celebrate the notion of democracy and empowerment of local people as being an effective means of attaining development within third world nations, issues surrounding both internal as well as external entities prove to be highly problematic. While such empowerment can take place for some local populations, for many,

it can also serve as a means to invite both manipulative as well as exploitative practices into the developmental process (Melkote. 1991: 244). Thus, participation may even serve as a means to reinforce the oppressive practices of modernisation theories that it sought to address in the first place:

> "…tyranny is both a real and potential consequence of participatory development, counter-intuitive and contrary to its rhetoric of empowerment though this may be." (Cooke et al. 2001:3).

Indeed, the aspect of power relations is one that is commonly ignored in participatory theories, but nevertheless proves to be a concern of utmost importance.

In addition, While participatory methods for development seek to a great extent to depoliticise the developmental process through their suggestions for community empowerment and action on behalf of community members as opposed to political elites, such suggestions are however simply not feasible considering the extent of the presence of external entities during such processes, as well as the power imbalances their presence introduces (Cooke. 2004: 43). Such influences of external entities are largely manifested through the presence of international organisations such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank, who, despite large degrees of participation on behalf of the local community, usually prove to be the ultimate decision-makers during developmental processes (Cooke. 2004: 43). In addition, issues surrounding debt repayments, as well as loans given to private sector institutions and companies within developing countries prove to wield much greater decision-making power when it comes to the economic and developmental fate of countries than can be conceived of by local people (Cooke. 2004: 43). Furthermore, the depoliticised process associated with participation is not only unreasonable considering the impossibility of such depoliticisation (Hickey et al. 2004: 4), but it may also act as a means of displacing blame and responsibility from political elites to the people themselves whenever developmental imperatives fail (Cooke. 2004: 93).

The neglect of power structures within many conceptualisations for participatory development is also manifested within the failure to acknowledge localised imbalances of power. The introduction of participatory methods for development have a high improbability of addressing power relations that have always existed within communities, such as those of

landlords, political figures and the like (Curtis. 1995:118), thus limiting the ability for participation to empower those who are positioned at the bottom of such power structures.

The issue of power discrepancies between men and women in many communities is also explored within *Wildfire*, and its MDG aim of creating gender equality. Tasks concerning the empowerment of women through women's cooperatives, the support of Women's' rights NGOs, and letter-writing to governments are however, highly oversimplified and vague. While such suggestions seek to address imbalances in power structures at localised levels, they are however arguably ineffective measures to solving issues which are largely cultural-based, and thus do not offer a method for development which is truly participatory in nature.

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In addition, such neglect of internal power imbalances are largely evident the ways in which the aspect of gender is treated by participatory paradigms. Also participation implies gender blindness, the culture of gender differentiation and exclusion of women within developmental practices, as well as the neglect to explore and analyse the role of women within local communities serves as a means of undermining the truly participatory and equal nature of such development (Weekes-Vagliani. 1995: 65). The disadvantageous position of women in many societies is thus an issue which cannot be simply remedied by participatory paradigms' suggestions for economic productivity for women; wage discrepancies; education and the like, for such suggestions may act as a purely cosmetic solution to a problem which is deeply rooted within many societies and culture (Weekes-Vagliani. 1995:65).

Thus, despite participatory theory's attempt at creating an empowered and democratic structure for development, the process does however remain highly imbalanced in terms of equality in power. While participatory theory celebrates the notion of democratic decision-making as the primary means to achieve equality and development, *Wildfire* does not however indicate that such a democracy exists within the game, despite its promotion of ordinary citizens as being the key agents to development within their own societies. In addition, while participatory development does not perceive growth within third world communities in terms of the agency of local people, participatory paradigm, nor *Wildfire* take into account imbalances of power that exist both within as well as outside such communities

that may serve to hinder development rather than promote it. Indeed, the presence of international organisations such as the United Nations evident within the game, as well as corporate influence such as the suggestion for the promotion of social enterprises within *Wildfire* prove to be highly problematic for participation on behalf of local populations due to the possibilities for both manipulation as well as exploitation, and the undermining of the democratic and participatory roles of citizens in their own development. In addition, the failures to acknowledge power imbalances on a local level also serve to hinder the participatory element within the theory, as is evident within discrepancies of power between men and women within many communities. While participatory paradigms, and indeed *Wildfire* itself seek to address such discrepancies, the suggestions for such issues prove to be highly oversimplified as well as vague, and may instead serve a more cosmetic role rather than encouraging real, sustainable development.

5.3.4. The Subordination of Cultural Contexts and Local Knowledge in *Wildfire*

The consideration of individual cultures in third world nations is an essential component in participatory paradigms for development, as it served as a means of challenging previous notions of western superiority and Eurocentric attitudes. This was to be achieved through contextualising developmental projects in accordance with the cultures within individual third world nations, as well as accounting for traditional knowledge which was seen as having an important place within the developmental process. However, *Wildfire* does not take such aspects into account through the lack of socio-cultural positioning of the environment and characters within the game, as well as its promotion of Western knowledge as a solution to societal ills. Because of this, the game fails to provide an account of true participation. In addition, like participatory paradigms, *Wildfir*e also tends towards the idealisation of local communities, as well as their abilities for development by citizens alone.

Like *Food Force* and *Fate of the World*, *Wildfire* also proves to be guilty of homogenising the local people within the game. In fact, it can be said that *Wildfire* completely strips its characters and their location of culture, and decontextualizes both the location and the people within the game.

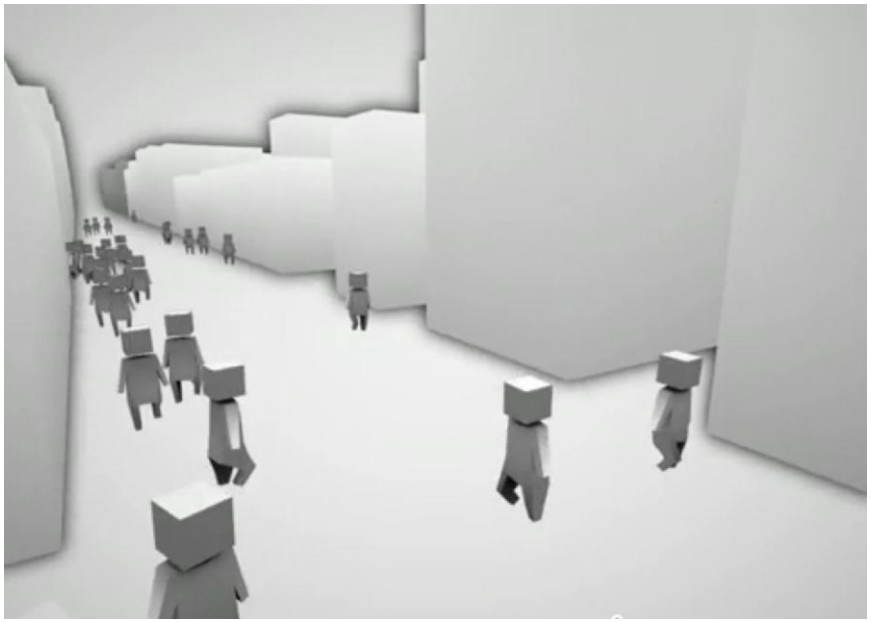

Figure 5.27: The local people in *Wildfire* become highly homogenous due to their representation as being mere faceless blocks. (By Implication. 2010)

This is demonstrated in figure 5.27, whereby the characters within the game are portrayed in highly stylised and simplistic forms, as crude block-like people lacking in detail and even facial features In addition, none of the characters possess any obvious voice, making them void of any differentiating markers to indicate their identity. Furthermore, the environment in which the game takes place is also largely ambiguous, and is solely characterised by tall, white buildings, thus demonstrating that the only visible characteristic of such an environment is that is clearly urban. In addition, such heavy stylisation and deconcontextualisation within the game, coupled with the recommendations of the MDGs implies that such suggestions can be applied to any context, and thus culture throughout the world, therefore undermining the important aspect of cultural contextualisation within participatory paradigms.

Similarly, one of the predominant aims of participatory paradigms was to make the process of development more relevant to the locality in which development was to take place. Thus, it aimed to make the process far more contextualised, and more sensitive towards the individual cultures within the given region. By doing so, it was assumed that the developmental process would be far more successful should the individual needs and desires of people in developing nations be satisfied in accordance with their own experiences and "local realities" (Weekes-

Vagliani. 1995: 72). Such a newfound awareness for diversity of cultures was thus seen as an imperative aspect of development (Weekes-Vagliani. 1995: 69).

However, it can be argued that despite claims that culturally-sensitive and contextualised forms of development may be more appropriate towards participation, the emphasis on cultural-diversity may also be seen as a means to justify behaviours concerning inequality and oppression that run throughout a given culture, and cannot possibly be addressed without the transformation of such cultures (Piffero. 2009: 41).

It can be argued that many of the recommendations and knowledge portrayed in *Wildfire* appears to reflect that of more Western orientation. This is evident in many of the recommendations for development provided within the game such as that of inoculations and vaccinations in order to prevent child deaths (as opposed to suggestions for alternative forms of medicine), as well as the emphasis on "educating citizens on how to protect their own homes" to promote disinfection and pest control. Thus, while the game's aim is to promote development through citizen involvement, many of the recommendations for such development appear to originate from a largely Western point-of-view, therefore neglecting individual, local scenarios and circumstances and implying that such participation is not necessarily in the hands of the people themselves.

This aspect of local knowledge is also highlighted throughout participatory paradigms. In accordance with the aspect of cultural contextualisation, participatory paradigms also aimed to incorporate more local knowledge of concerning third world nations into the development process. This arose out of out the criticism of past developmental theories for their Eurocentric attitudes towards modern knowledge and science, and their inconsistencies as well as their unwitting promotion of inequality through the encouragement of economic discrepancies (Wignaraja et al. 1991:207). In addition, Western knowledge and its claims to superiority came to be seen as flawed as it did not account for multiple cultural circumstances (Wignaraja et al. 1991: 208).

Thus, newfound considerations for more traditional knowledge came to be seen as a means of addressing these concerns, as well as implementing new systems of developmental knowledge that were diverse and pluralistic (Wignaraja et al. 1991: 211). By doing so, it was

argued that development could be better realised if the superior knowledge of local peoples of their own environments (for instance, in farming) could be utilised, usually through the means of "knowledge-sharing" in an equal exchange of information, as opposed to previous top-down models (Melkote. 1991: 252).

However, while "knowledge-sharing" was intended to address issues of inequality, it can however have opposite results. Indeed, it can be said that "local knowledge reflects local power (Mosse. 2001: 19), and thus, such local knowledge is not necessarily that of the local population as a whole, but instead that of authority figures. In addition, the employment of traditional knowledge may not necessarily contribute a great deal towards participation of local people themselves, as the active presence of developmental researchers implies that their planning and input will directly influence such projects, thus possibly undermining the role in which such local knowledge plays during these developmental processes (Mosse. 2001: 19).

In addition, *Wildfire* itself proves to be guilty of the idealisation of local communities. Through the means of mere inspiration, the game implies that communities alone are able to address their societal issues and implement development. Such an implication proves to be a highly simplistic one that exaggerates the abilities of ordinary citizens, and thus creates a flawed perception of local communities that does not account for many varying contexts and circumstances within given societies. In fact, the game's name and tagline - the "spreading of *Wildfire*" – is intended to be a metaphor for the spreading of inspiration for development the world over, which is, once again, a highly unlikely and exaggerated ambition, as well as an overestimation of the abilities for local populations to create such drastic developmental change.

Like *Wildfire*, One of the primary criticisms of participatory paradigms is that they promote a perception of local communities which is largely idealised. Indeed, the very notion of participation implies a cultural shift concerning a revelatory moment whereby such communities "uncover their previously hidden knowledge" (Williams. 2004: 92), and experience a newfound determinism and will towards self-development. In addition, the

conceptualisation of local communities within participatory paradigms is also largely defined in terms of being homogenous, fixed, and unproblematic, whereby local peoples possess unlimited potential for development and solving of their issues (Piffero. 2009: 41). Such a conceptualisation however serves as a means of contradicting notions of cultural contextualisation, as it ignores individual power relationships and potential for conflict within such communities, thus demonstrating its lack of consideration for unique circumstances within third world nations (Piferro. 2009: 41).

Thus, while participatory paradigm places vast emphasis upon cultural contextualisation as a means of addressing the flaws from past developmental theories, this aspect is not however taken into account within *Wildfire*, which instead utilises heavy stylisation and in fact decontextualisation in its portrayal of both its characters and environment. It can be argued that without such contextualisation, the potential for the game's suggestions may remain ineffectual and unlikely to be able to achieve any feasible form of participation. In addition, the importance placed on traditional knowledge and knowledge-sharing by participatory paradigms is also not realised by *Wildfire*, which conversely appears to promote more Western means of development. Furthermore, the idealisation of communities and the spontaneous cultural shift implied by participation paradigms is also prevalent within *Wildfire* through its overt overestimation of the potential and possibilities for development by citizens alone. Thus, while *Wildfire* ascribes to participation as a means to develop third world nations, it does not however consider many aspects of participation such as contextualisation and the incorporation of local knowledge which are vital and necessary facets for true participation.

5.3.5. *Wildfire* as Participation: The Internet and Online Games as Tools for Democratic Participation.

The ever-increasing popularity and prevalence of the internet has given rise to new expectations for its potential for democracy and interaction on behalf of users. Indeed, *Wildfire* utilises such potential in order to extend its messages of participation to a more practical use through its free-to-play nature as well as its use of Twitter in-game to provide its players with the option of participation through discussion and suggestion. In addition, *Wildfire* may also serve as a means for effectively disseminating information and thus

promoting the participatory development cause. However, despite these attempts, the potential for participation through online video game such as *Wildfire* may be undermined by issues pertaining to the digital divide, and moreover, may be insufficient for creating a form of effective participation.

Wildfire's adherence to participatory paradigms for development extent beyond its content, and can in many ways be considered a tool for participation on behalf of its players. This is evidential first of all in the fact that the game is free to download and play from the internet. This aspect of both availability and indiscriminate access thus facilitates its characteristic of openness, and therefore places the game itself in the role and practice of participation.

Secondly, *Wildfire* also attempts to provide a platform in which players may actively participate in discussion about the game and the issues it raises through an in-game Twitter feed (See figure 2.28). This aspect thus allows players to provide feedback as well as suggestions and formulation of ideas for development, thus creating a space in which democratic and free discussion can take place, thus promoting participatory interaction.

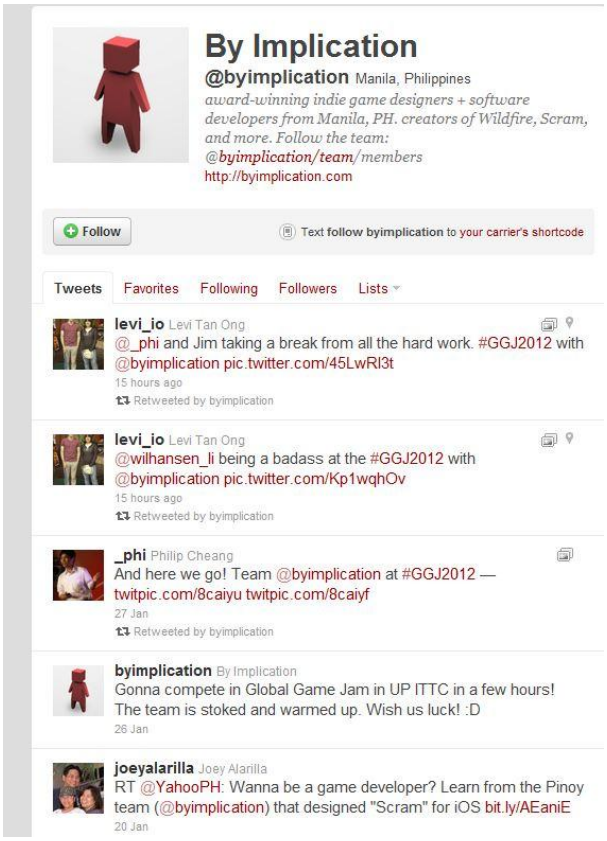

Figure 5.28: *Wildfire* allows for an in-game Twitter feed, thus increasing the game's interactive and participatory qualities. (By Implication. 2010)

This aspect of unrestricted deliberation made possible by the internet is a highly valuable and imperative facet of participation for development, since it serves as a means to depoliticise the bureaucratic structures associated with working models of developmental progress. This is due to the fact that the internet provides a means in which ordinary citizens can engage with and express themselves freely without any hindrances imposed by governmental entities.

It can also be said that due to the unrestricted and open nature of the internet from which *Wildfire* can be accessed, the topic of development, which may not necessarily be of interest to mainstream media platforms, can be addressed.

The use of the internet for democratic and deliberative discussion concerning ideas and suggestions for development by *Wildfire* also correspond highly to participatory theories' frameworks for communication, which aimed to provide a bottom-up approach, in which citizens could provide suggestions pertaining to their real needs and problems (Melkote. 1991: 245). However, despite these intentions to provide a more grassroots-orientated strategy for participatory communication, these have to a large extent been unsuccessful in their attempts

and have failed to overcome elitist ideologies concerning development, and most decisions for development have ultimately been left to external development agencies (Melkote. 1991: 245).

Thus, it can be argued that despite the apparent potential abilities for the internet and online game such as *Wildfire* to facilitate participation, this can be however, a very "cosmetic" form of participation which is unlikely to have any form of profound effect upon policies and decisions concerning development.

In addition, the power of the game to be a true platform for participation becomes highly questionable and limited when considering aspects of the digital divide. Indeed, obstacles to access may serve as a means of undermining participation, especially by those who are in most need of development. Thus, the game comes to offer participation mainly to those who are situated in more Westernised and developed societies.

Furthermore, it can also be argued that *Wildfire* has the potential to play an integral part of developmental processes through its ability to distribute information regarding development, and thus can act as an effective tool for learning. In fact, *Wildfire'*s integration of both pleasure through the gaming experience itself and informative elements can be said to be highly conducive to the distribution and appropriation of material regarding participatory development.

Indeed, it can be said that video games are "…like literacy and computers, sites where we can study and exercise the human mind in ways that may give us deeper insights into human thinking and learning, as well as new ways to engage learners in deep and engaged learning" (Gee.2007 :28). In addition, video games also hold potential for increasing problem-solving skills within players, as well as how to make good guesses as how to solve the problems and how to address problems further on in the game. Such a point proves to be a vital aspect when considering *Wildfire* and its messages for development. In order for the message of participation to be made tangible within the virtual world of the game, players must be able to solve problems in order to solve problems of underdevelopment. Thus, through *Wildfire*, it can be argued that players can learn skills which may assist the participatory endeavour in the real world.

Thus, *Wildfire* attempts to go beyond its suggestions for participation by providing a platform for which players can actively participate in discussions concerning development as well as the game itself through its Twitter feed and free-to-play nature. In addition, it can be said that the game holds potential for learning and skill acquisition in players, which proves to be a paramount aspect of participatory development on behalf of local citizens. However, despite these attempts to implement participation in a more practical way, these are however limited in their potential efficacy for promoting true participation, as well as possibilities for exclusion due to issues surrounding the digital divide and other restrictions to access faced by people to whom development is most vital.

5.3.6. Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that *Wildfire* has to a large degree been highly influenced by participatory paradigm's conceptualisations for development. The game's focus upon the role of citizens to create societal change on their own behalf, as well as its emphasis on the empowerment of people in the development process demonstrates its similarities to participatory paradigms. Like *Food Force* and *Fate of the World*, *Wildfire* also utilises processes of interpellation through close angles, distances and direct address in order to position the player within the ideology of participatory theories, as well as those of the Millennium Development Goals, which can be seen as a manifestation of the values of participatory development.

However, the game has also appropriated many of the problems and flaws which have been associated with participatory theories. Firstly, the game's inability to contextualise situations, people and locations due to its depiction of local people as being homogenous and anonymous, faceless block-like figures is highly problematic. Indeed, depicting the game's characters in such heavily stylised and abstract manner has resulted in the game's ineffectiveness to portray a concrete conceptualisation for development that can be practically in the real-world.

In addition, the game also idealises the role and ability of local people to change their circumstances and bring about transformation through development. While the game

perceives citizens as having unlimited potential for change, such a view proves to be highly over exaggerated, as well as unreasonable

The game also neglects many vital limitations to the abilities for local people to carry out development themselves, most notably those concerning both internal and external influences. Although the game does acknowledge and condemn the presence of such powers (albeit ambiguously) in the form of the agents that decrease city health upon contact with the player's character, the game does not however account for the role in which such powers such apolitical powers, which will almost certainly be the ultimate decision-makers within the development process, as well as social powers which may serve to undermine equality of citizens, and thus their democratic abilities, and thus, their potential for participation.

Furthermore, the disregard for local knowledgean aspect which proves to be invaluable for participatory theories - is also demonstrative of how *Wildfire*'s conceptualisations for development are flawed. Indeed, this aspect of participation through the use of local knowledge is absent in the game, and instead, most of the recommendations stem predominantly from Western origins.

Moreover, *Wildfire* provides a framework for development which is highly flawed and oversimplified, and in fact, while masquerading as an effective means to promote development through participatory measures, actually encourages many practices which may be considered to be a reincarnation of modernisation procedures, most notably the game's suggestions for charitable practices such as donations, which cannot contribute to development which is sustainable, but rather depends on the actions of more privileged entities, a factor which is highly reminiscent of aid on behalf of developed nations within modernisation paradigms.

Finally, while the game itself aims to provide a means for player's to participate in a democratic and deliberative forum in the form of its in-game Twitter feed may also merely be a cosmetic form of participation, despite the internet's potential for open and in discriminatory debate. Nevertheless, the game does prove to hold enormous educational value for the dissemination of developmental messages due to the video game platform arguable abilities to inform and to educate.

Thus, *Wildfire* offers a model for development that promotes ideologies of participatory development, and in turn perpetuates the hegemonic position that the theory holds in the field of development despite its shortcomings.

5.4. Research Conclusions

Thus, through a multimodal critical discourse and semiotic analysis of *Food Force*, *Fate of the World* and *Wildfire*, it can be concluded that the games are highly influenced by modernisation theories as well as participatory paradigms for development. While modernisation theory clearly informs *Food Force* and *Fate of the World's* favourable attitude towards first world nations in the developmental process, *Wildfire* proves to be exceedingly informed by participatory paradigms due to its stress upon notions of citizen-based development. However, due to such high influences of these developmental theories, the games have also fallen prey to the flaws that accompany such theories, and therefore they arguably do not offer frameworks for development that are either effective or sustainable., Instead, what is offered as a solution to poverty is a framework that either undermines the integrity and local cultures of those living in developing nations, or over exaggerates the abilities of local communities to stimulate and implement developmental transformation in their societies. The constant portrayal of developed nations as well as global organisations as being highly superior economically, culturally and technologically to their developing counterparts within *Food Force* and *Fate of the World* breeds a highly Westernised perspective within these games, and the cosmetic forms of citizen participation seen in *Wildfire* encourages developmental practices which are largely unachievable. Additionally, the process of development becomes highly oversimplified within the games, and many of the limitations of such models for development, such as the possibilities for manipulation and exploitation on behalf of external agencies and other entities, are mostly excluded altogether.

Indeed, it can be said that the games serve as a means of promoting ideological developmental messages that do not benefit those who are in real need of development, but rather promotes the powerful hegemonic position of developed (and mostly Western) nations and organisations. Through the means of interpellating the player into a position that situates

them in terms of a Western perspective, and creating a sense of identification with the developed nations' characters, players become immersed within the games, and become more receptive to these ideological messages. Similarly, while the video game platform holds vast potential for the dissemination of educational and informational content, mostly due to its highly immersive and engaging nature, the games are thus able to communicate these messages of development efficiently. However, this immersive quality of the video games means players come to perceive development in terms of problematic and ideological frameworks that are ineffective and misguided.

In addition, while the games arguably attempt to disseminate developmental messages in an alternative fashion through use of the internet as a distributive platform, it can be said that they fail to capture an alternative viewpoint. While the internet, due to its open and interactive nature possesses the potential to assist in the dissemination of alternative messages for independent media producers, the games' heavy dependence on dominant modernisation and participatory theories have resulted in their message for development becoming a perpetuation of mainstream ideologies instead of providing a possible counterhegemonic and alternative suggestions for development which address the inadequacies of modernisation and participatory theories.

Therefore, such findings confirm that while the video game platform holds vast potential for the infotainment genre, in particular the dissemination of developmental messages, the suggestions for development within *Food Force*, *Fate of the World* and *Wildfire* serve as a means for promoting the ideologies of modernisation theories as well as participatory paradigms for development, and thus encourage the hegemonic positions of such models despite their deficiencies.

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