The Paradox of Deception and Game Design

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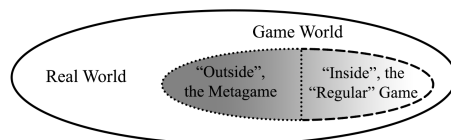
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Layers of deception

- Deception can happen at three levels
  - Inside: Internal mechanics for deception
  - Outside: Metagaming
    - Players lying to each other, using metaknowledge
  - Real World: Game builder lying to the players

A Rough Conceptualization Of The Space In Which Games Take Place

Real World

Game World

"Outside", the Metagame

"Inside", the "Regular" Game

Dashed Lines indicate permeable barriers, dotted very permeable barriers

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The Paradox of Deception

> The more formally you try to integrate deception, the less it works

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Enabling

- Creating mechanics or conditions that enable deception to take place
- Most commonly, creating situations of Incomplete information
  - Hidden goals
  - Hands of cards
  - Hidden units/double blind
  - Hidden movement

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Incentivising

- Prime and encourage players to act outside of the explicit rules of the game or assumptions on
  - Can range from creating a more freeform system (i.e. matrix game) to setting up mechanisms to encourage negotiation and interaction

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Building Deception Cont.

- There is overlap between enabling and incentivizing
  - Often games use both
- Mechanisms to signal, and convey intents & information
- Simple systems and mechanics
  - Too complicated and players will not be thinking of deception within our outside of the game
- Can be fleshed out into a game about deception and narratives explicitly

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Deception in Digital Wargames

- Deception in digital games functions differently
- Harder to metagame with, less freeform
  - Can't as easily signal intentions, tone, sincerity, etc…
  - Can't easily free adjudicate new ideas
- Key vector for deception becomes mechanics internal to the game
- Way Out, Frog Fractions, and real world deception

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