

**Re-imagining the Risky Modernity by Procedural Rhetoric:
A Case Study on Dystopian Indie Game *Not for Broadcast***

Anqi Jiang

Abstract:

The concept of “dystopia”, which was bred from “utopia”, has been a popular motif of numerous literature and artworks, including video games. Here in this article, the dystopian indie games are discussed both in horizontal and vertical ways, which is aimed at finding the commonness of dystopian games and the reason for their emergence by textual analysis combined with the socio-historical basis. Through the case study of *Not for Broadcast*, it is discovered that by adopting a series of sophisticated procedural rhetoric techniques for interaction design, *Not for Broadcast* shows its persuasiveness on empowering and motivating individuals to fight against authoritarianism, and furthermore to play an important role in stopping catastrophes in a global scale. Then, by a thorough investigation of all the listed dystopian indie games under the framework of Risk Society, this article finds out that although their themes and appeals are different from each other, they all intend to express the prevalent inner fear towards toxic modernity, which means, individuals have fallen prey to “accountability”, they are under control in the name of scientific management, alienated from themselves, and distributed with systematic social risks. Hereby, procedural rhetoric is adopted as a way to shape the behaviors of players as normal individuals, and simultaneously offers a chance for them to break the rules to feel the tension between individual happiness and authoritarian collectivism, and thus be equipped with rebelliousness towards the status quo. However, the possible limitations of dystopian indie games are also been proposed in this article, pointing out that they are not disclosing how the dystopia is originally formed, but merely asks for individuals to remain furious, which is of limited perception when it comes to solving systematic social problems.

Keywords: dystopian indie game, procedural rhetoric, risk society, modernity, individualism