

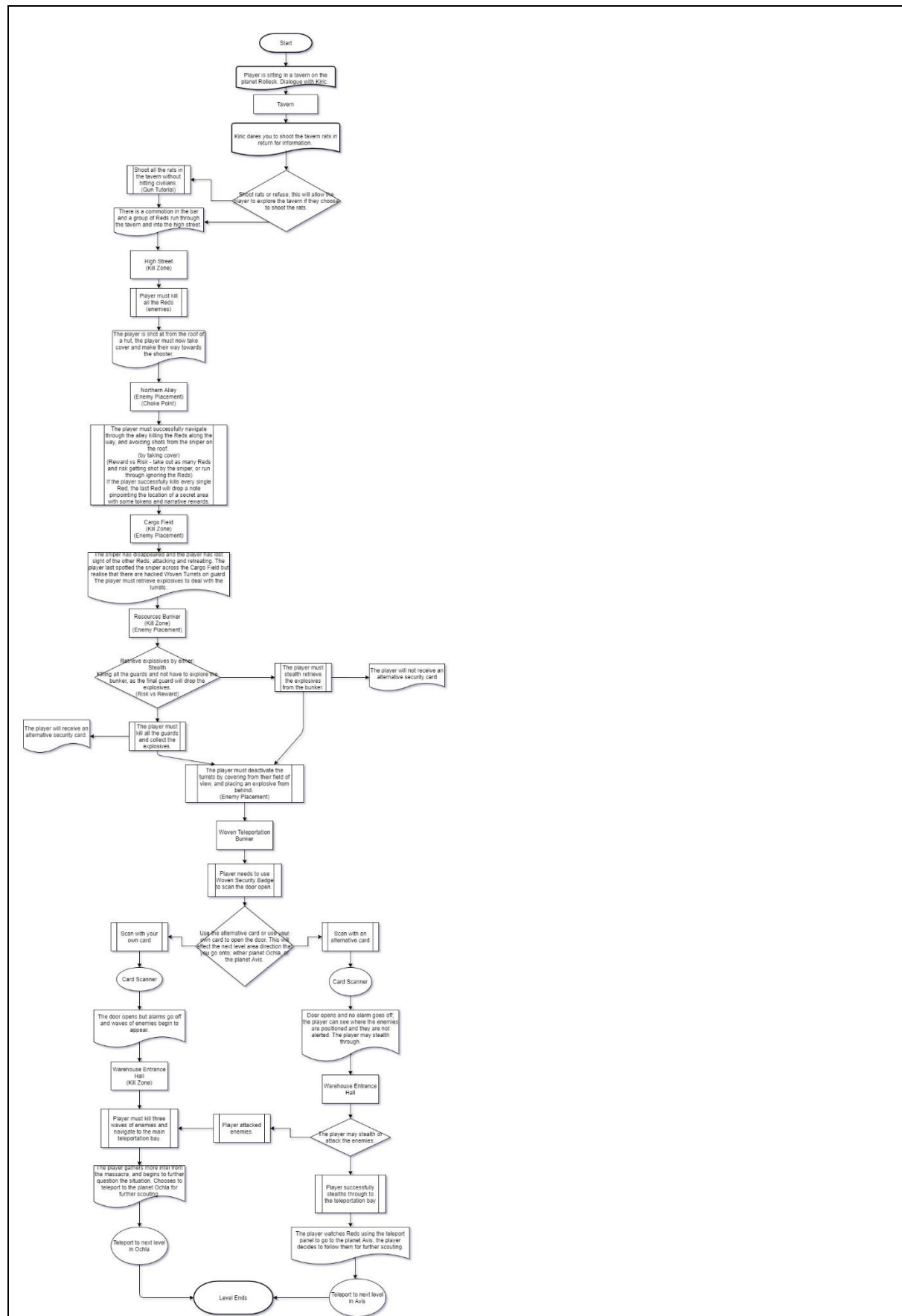
MS5040: Game Level Design

# CW1: Portfolio

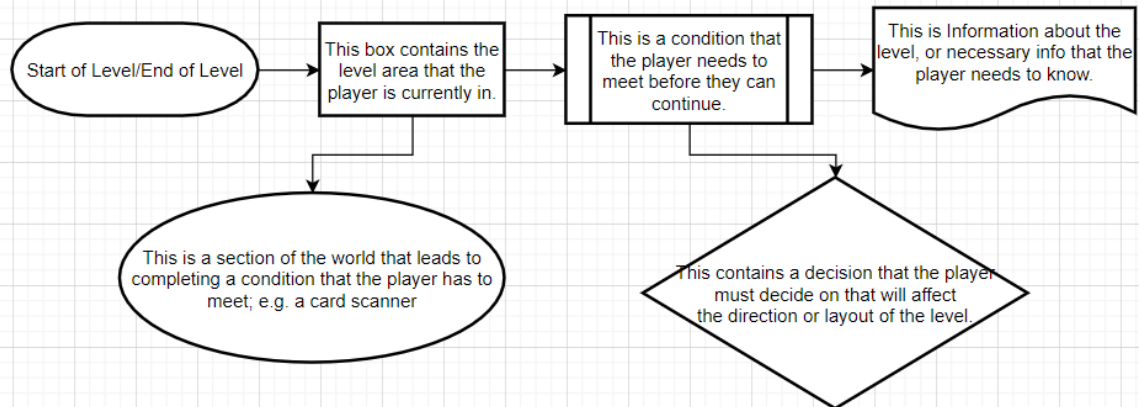
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# Level Flow Chart



### Level Flow Chart Key/Legend:

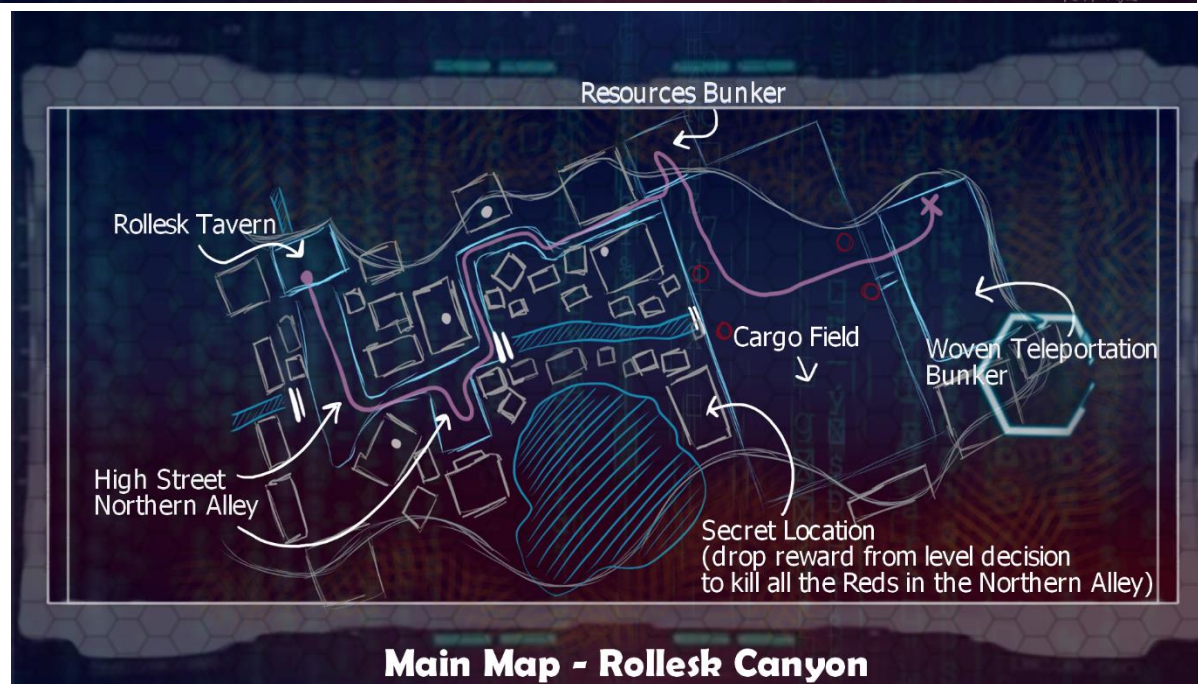


**Level Theme:** The dominant theme of this level is an oppressed Greek/Roman era society, the civilians and the player should feel anxious and tense.

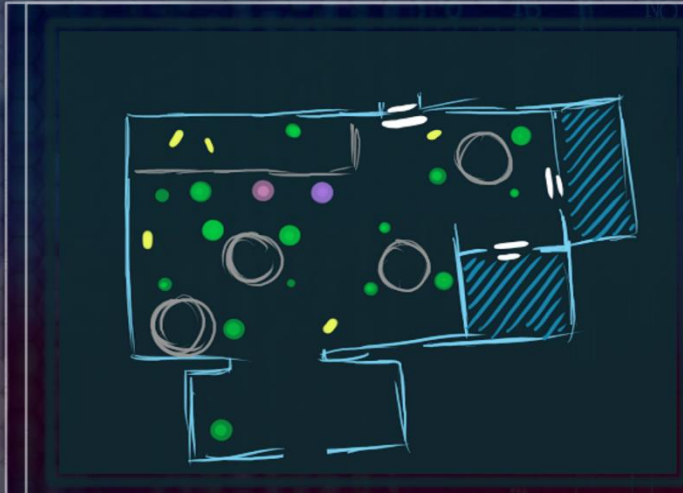
Sore-thumb sci-fi elements (hi-tech Woven equipment) that leech on the natural culture of the civilisation, like electronic parasites feeding from the planet's resources, will be apparent in this level as the oppressive side.

A core sub-theme is political unrest; the Reds are battling for power over the Woven.

## Level Map







## Rollesk Tavern

The starting zone is the tavern, where the player gets their first impressions of the world. There will be environmental storytelling and dialogue happening around them; with Kiric and background chatting. It is a relaxed area.



## The High Street and the Northern Alley

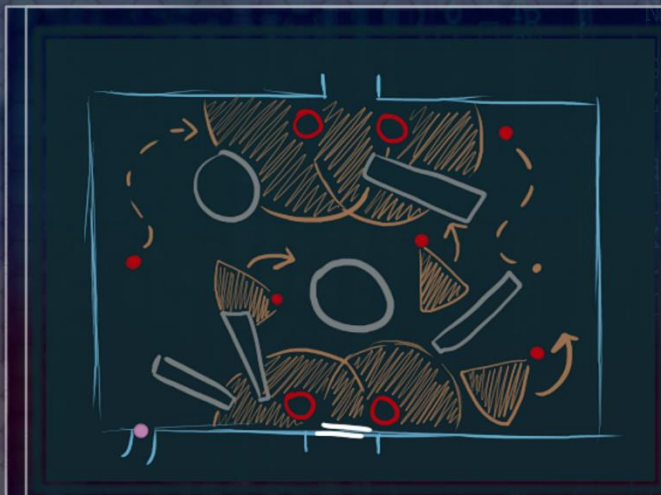
This is the area that the player encounters after drinking in the tavern with Kiric. It's a tense level sector where the player's life is at risk. There is a chase to get to the sniper before the player loses track of them.





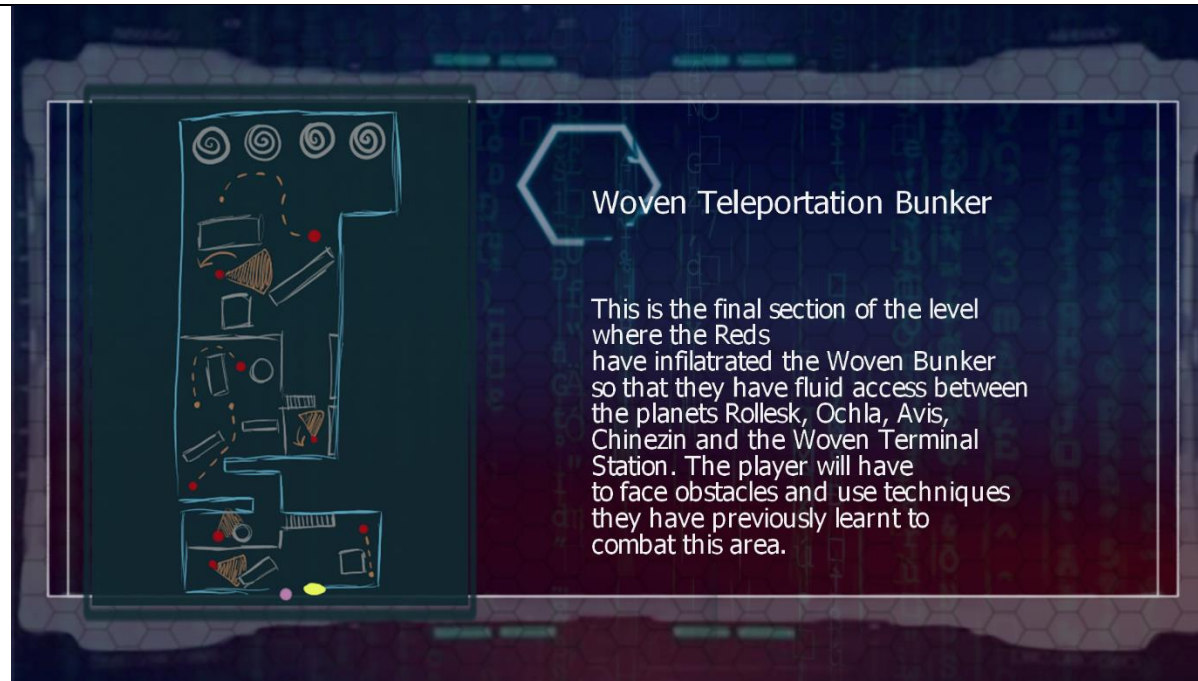
## Resources Bunker

This area is a quest zone with a heavy focus on giving the player an opportunity to use and practice stealth.



## The Cargo Field

This area is thick with enemies and a new enemy - the turrets. The player has a choice on how to combat this issue, stealth or a head-on approach. The cargo field is a large area for observation in enemy behaviour and environmental storytelling.



#### Possible Assets List:

##### Rollesk Tavern:

Tables, Bar, Mugs, Beer kegs, chairs, posters, jars/bottles, sci-fi emergency access points (would look like a key card scanner). Civilians.

##### High Street:

Houses, foliage, market stalls, run down houses, rocks, branches. Civilians.

##### Northern Alley:

Broken crates, posters, upturned tables, scraps of sheet metal, wagons and wagon wheels.

##### Cargo Field:

Mechanical parts, rocks, tumbleweeds, branches, foliage, run down houses on the outskirts, hi-tech warehouses, crates with ore, piles of ore, wagons.

##### Resources Bunker:

Metal Shelving, hi-tech access card scanners, gun safe, explosives storage, scraps of metal and ore.

##### Woven Teleportation Bunker:

Tables, Crates, Barrels, hi-tech vehicles such as hoverboards or motorbikes, portals, consoles, machinery.



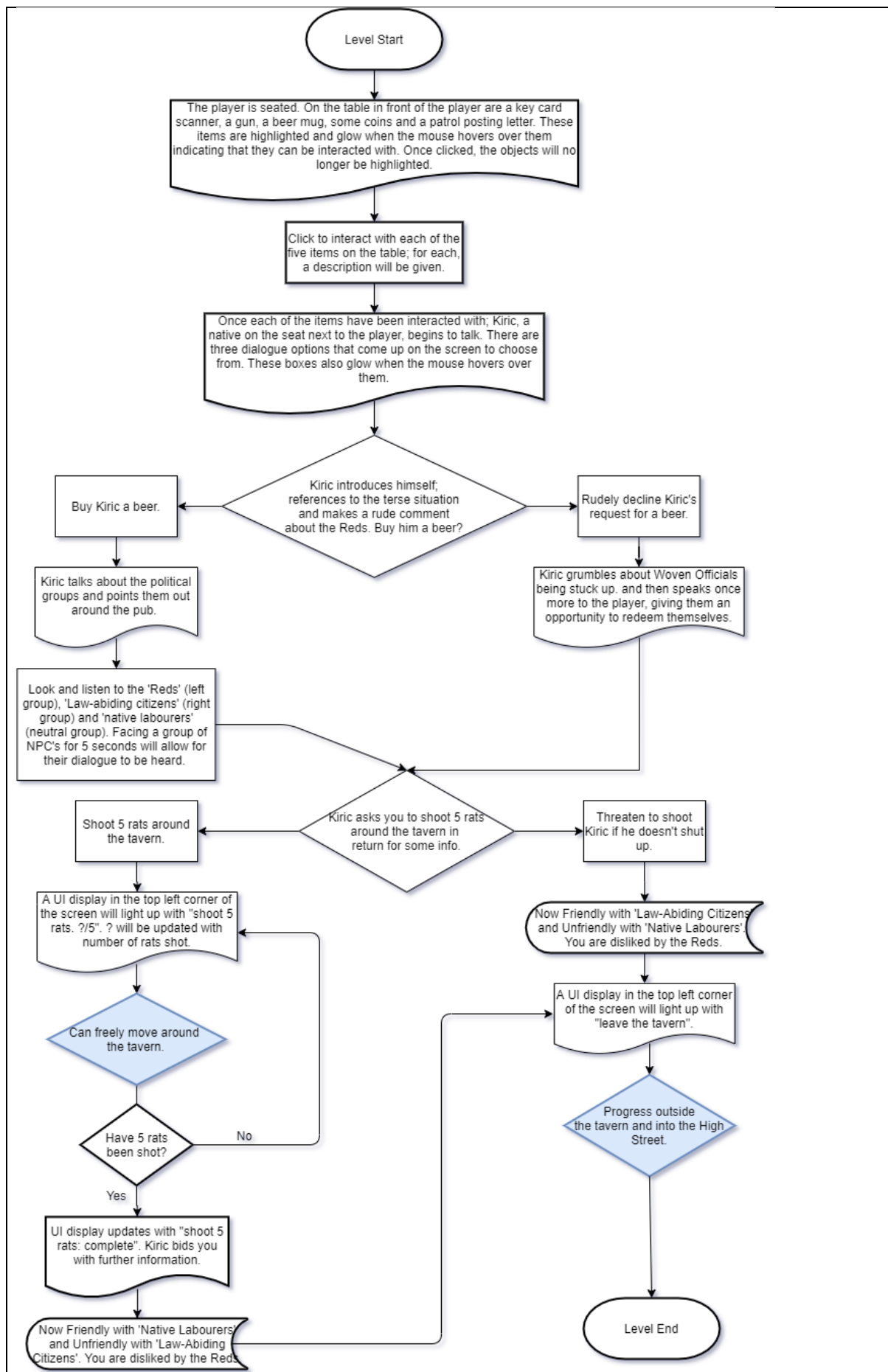
**Level Key/Legend:**

## Level Event 1

Event	
<b>Event Title</b>	Shoot or Refuse, Pistol Tutorial.
<b>Event Locations</b>	Rollesk Tavern.
<b>Situation</b> <i>Where is the player, what are the relevant surroundings?</i>	<p>The player is within Rollesk Tavern, a calm scene where they are seated drinking at a table. There are environmental storytelling elements around the room such as racist (to other alien races) graffiti in the corners, hate speech to the Woven Council, propaganda posters about the Reds (peeling/partially blacked out or attempted to blot or remove). There are murmuring civilians around with snippets of information in the background.</p> <p>On the bar in front of the player is Commander Reeds equipment; a key card scanner, her gun, a beer mug, some coins and a patrol posting letter.</p>
<b>Problem</b> <i>What does the player have to do or overcome</i>	<p>The player has to interact with items around her bar space before Kiric enters and begins dialogue with her. The player has the opportunity to find out more information about the world they are in and to befriend Kiric.</p>
<b>Type of Challenge</b>	Way to gain allies.
<b>How is the Player informed</b> <i>of the problem and solutions</i>	<p>The player hears a thought process of Commander Reed who talks about her position there at Rollesk (she is on patrol) and what she needs to do (find out more information about the tense situation).</p> <p>When Kiric enters, there is leading dialogue, and dialogue options for the player to choose from on the screen. When a storyline has been chosen (depending on the player's options) an update on the top left of the UI and will inform the player of their next steps, for example, "shoot 5 rats" or "head outside".</p>



<b>Solutions</b> <i>the player can choose</i>	Talk with Kiric either in a friendly or sarcastic manner; this will amuse Kiric and he will give more information about Rollesk and its terse situation. (On the verge of a civil war with a political outbreak from a group known as the Reds). The player is encouraged to look around the tavern and then dared to shoot 5 rats. Shooting 5 rats will gain respect from a political party.
<b>Solutions</b> <i>the player can choose</i>	Ignore Kiric repeatedly. The player will not gain much information from the native but is still offered to shoot five rats. Refusing to shoot 5 rats will lose you respect from a political party.
<b>Start Trigger</b>	Opening internal dialogue, items in front of the player on the table with mandatory interaction.
<b>End Trigger</b>	Kiric dares you to shoot the rats and the player either shoots 5 rats around the tavern or declines the offer. At the end of either option, a commotion in the high street occurs (scene ends).
<b>Success Consequences / Rewards</b>	Shooting 5 rats and pleasing Kiric will result in extra storytelling information and become friendly with the 'Native Labourers' and Unfriendly with the 'Law-Abiding Citizens'. You are disliked by the Reds.
<b>Failure Consequences / Risks</b>	Refusing to shoot the rats and disregarding Kiric will result in a lack of storytelling information and become Friendly with the 'Law-Abiding Citizens' and Unfriendly with the 'Native Labourers'. You are disliked by the Reds.



## Level Event Key:

This box indicates the start and end of the level event.

These are a group of processes such as a minigame or complex mechanic that is explained elsewhere.

This indicates a choice that a player has made.

This box gives information on how the player will be guided and how it will be displayed on screen.

These are actions that the player completes to progress through the level.

This is a Game Rule that is based on player decision or a game state; the system decides which route is to be followed.

This box is a gameplay flag where information is stored to be used later in a game, in my example, reputation with certain factions.

## Process:

### Player Steps:

#### Step 1:

Click on each of the following items; key card scanner, gun, beer mug, coins, letter.

#### Step 2:

Choose one of three dialogue options with Kiric. Two options will lead in the same direction. One will go in the other.

#### Step 3:

Buy Kiric a beer or threaten Kiric.

#### Step 4:

If the player bought Kiric a beer; listen and look around at the groups in the tavern before daring the player to shoot tavern rats.

If the player threatened Kiric, he doesn't give introductions but still dares you to shoot tavern rats.

#### Step 5:

If Yes, shoot 5 rats in the tavern, then head outside into the High Street.

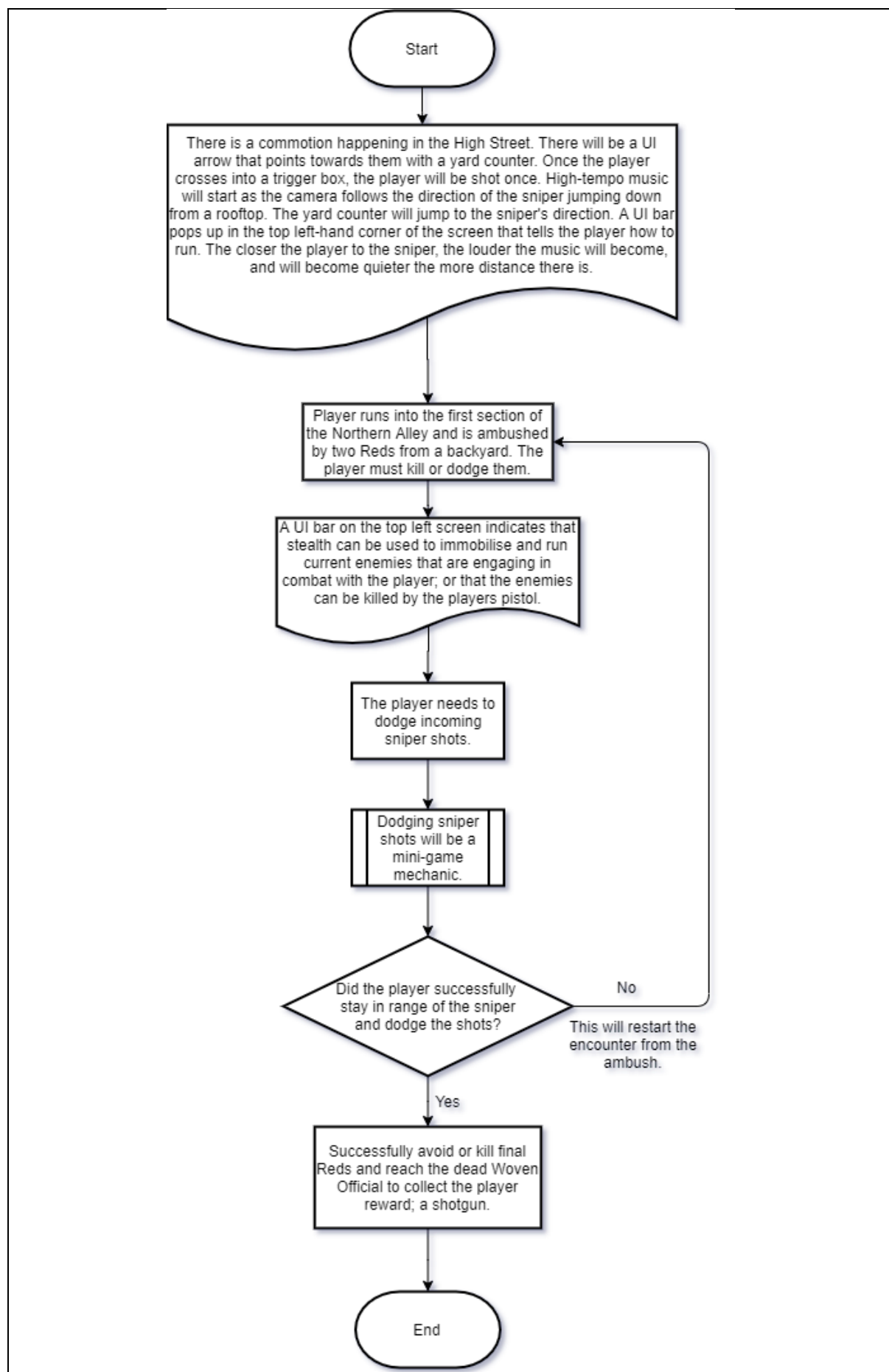
If No, head outside into the High Street.

## Level Event 2

Event	
<b>Event Title</b>	Stealth and Shoot; Chase the Sniper.
<b>Event Locations</b>	The High Street and the Northern Alley.
<b>Situation</b> <i>Where is the player, what are the relevant surroundings?</i>	The player begins in the High Street. The player is shot at from the rooftops by a sniper, leading into the Northern Alley, and the chase is started. Around are groups of civilians that disperse at the sound of the shots fired. The Northern Alley is filled with broken wagons, propaganda posters and other signs of political unrest (broken furniture and buildings, surrounding graffiti).
<b>Problem</b> <i>What does the player have to do or overcome</i>	The player has to chase down the sniper through the Northern Alley. The player will come across enemy Reds who they can choose to shoot or avoid. Clearing the Reds entirely will drop a secret location. The player must use stealth when the sniper is making shots at the player, which can be detected by the player's hi-tech equipment. Reach the end of the alley giving chase to the sniper.
<b>Type of Challenge</b>	Hot Pursuit/The Chase.
<b>How is the Player informed</b> <i>of the problem and solutions</i>	The player is shot at. High-tempo music starts, and the playable character is able to run (A UI bar in the top left corner of the screen will indicate how to run) in the direction of the sniper. If the player doesn't give chase to the sniper within ten seconds, then the encounter is restarted. Text on the screen will imply whether or not the player is losing the sniper or not (the music fades the further the distance). If the player loses too much distance, the encounter is restarted. If the player loses too much health, the encounter is restarted. Once the end of the alley is reached, the music will calm, and the playable character will speak "They went into the Woven Teleportation Bunker. How did they get access to a gun and a pass? Could it really be a rogue Official?" and the level will end.
<b>Solutions</b> <i>the player can choose</i>	Using the pistol and stealth, clear the way through the Northern Alley, whilst avoiding being shot by the sniper. Reaching the end of the Northern Alley will reward in success and the level end.
<b>Solutions</b> <i>the player can choose</i>	Using the pistol and stealth, clear the way through the Northern Alley, whilst avoiding being shot by the sniper. Reaching the end of the Northern Alley will reward in success and the level end. IF all the Reds were killed on the way through the Northern Alley, the final Red will drop a note revealing a secret location and some storytelling rewards.
<b>Start Trigger</b>	Stepping into a trigger box which will be situated in the centre of the market-place where the commotion is occurring.
<b>End Trigger</b>	Stepping into a final trigger box at the end of the Northern Alley will end the chase and cause the player to say her final words in this level event.



<b>Success Consequences / Rewards</b>	At the end of the encounter you are awarded a shotgun that a dead Woven Official has in her arms.
<b>Failure Consequences / Risks</b>	Dying in the duration of the chase or becoming too distanced from the sniper will cause the player to restart the encounter.



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## Process:

### Player Steps:

#### Step 1:

Step into the trigger box (by walking towards the commotion in the High Street).

#### Step 2:

Run towards the Sniper's position down the Northern Alley.

#### Step 3:

Fight off the ambush and shoot/avoid two Reds.

#### Step 4:

As you run through the Northern Alley shooting/avoiding the Reds, use the mini-game mechanic to avoid being shot by the escaping Sniper.

#### Step 5:

Run to the end of the Northern Alley and collect the shotgun from the Dead Woven Official.

## Reflection

For this piece of coursework, I had to outline a level that might occur in 'Dead-Force'. I was given a brief of what the core storyline was and the player's main character, Commander Reed, and her abilities. Involved in making the level plans, I had to write out a level flow-chart, map and keys to both; bearing in mind the 'Dead-Force' brief given to me. Then the next major step was breaking down that level flow-chart and planning out two key level events, which are sections of the overall level flow-chart, except in more detail. This involved using Draw.io, thinking about how the events were triggered, and laying out step by step processes that the player would have to follow. Not only does it include these simple layouts, but I had to think about how the player would know what to do, know where to go and how to complete their tasks. I therefore had to think about the UI and what techniques I could use to guide the player throughout the level that I had mapped out.

At first, I felt very confident and presumed that this was an easy task. When it came down to it, however, I realised the tiny details that brings together a level. I had to think about very small questions, that without an answer, would break the level apart. Examples are, how does the player know to click on the object in front of them? How does the player know what the current objective is? How does the player know where they are going to go next? As I was shown the extent of the details, I suddenly became very overwhelmed on the topic and had to crunch down on the size of my level events as they were admittedly becoming too large to manage. Once I got into the manner of thinking that I needed, and understood the finer details, I began feeling more comfortable with the level planning process. I am particularly proud of my environmental storytelling within the level events and blending together the reinforcement of mechanics and the world that the player resides within.

One of the biggest upsides to having pulled together and designed my own level and events was understanding and realising the scope of thinking that games designers need when creating lore, mechanics and storylines. I noticed that sometimes sacrificing something ambitious (which could end up with flimsy design), it was a much stronger avenue to choose something realistic and core to the gameplay's themes and mechanics. Having struggled with fully recognising the need to think about every player step, I had to re-do large sections of the level events to incorporate the correct usage of the level key nodes – I kept misunderstanding the use of the diamonds, which indicate a player's choice. I also had to bear in mind an appropriate length of a level event, and my first few attempts made the level events lengthy and long-winded for the player to work through. I felt this badly affected the gameplay flow and the three-act structure I had designed originally, which was another reason I re-did sections of the level events.

Reflecting on how I approached this piece of work, I should read or look into further level techniques or landmarks so that I won't need a large abundance of UI pointers – letting the level design do most of the work, therefore increasing immersion. An example of this would be to look further at 'Call of Duty' campaign maps, where a lot of the routes are physically blocked off (thematically), or that there are a large group of enemies which indicates to the player if they are going in the correct direction or not. 'Mario and Luigi: Superstar Saga' also uses these techniques, if there are enemies in the area, it indicates that the player hasn't yet explored that area and reinforces that they are going in the correct direction. These games also reinforce that the player is going the right way by smoothly continuing the quests and actions. Kill the enemies, pick up the item, take the item to said NPC, for instance. I really enjoyed putting together my level and eventually managed to simplify it into manageable chunks of five steps each, for the player to work through.



Most of my key resources that I used to guide me were my experience of other games that I have previously mentioned; the 'Mario' series, 'Last of Us' and the 'Call of Duty' series. I did also consider Jesse Schell's 'The Art of Games Design', 'A Word about Landmarks' where he talks about a game called 'Colossal Cave'. "Players of Colossal Cave learned to drop items in the mazes, forming landmarks that helped them find their way. Any good game space has built-in landmarks, which helps the players find where they are going..." (Schell, 2019). I kept this piece of information in mind when I was designing my level events – I needed to position the quests and the player in the right spaces so that they could work out for themselves where they were going to go next.

In conclusion, I now know the inner workings of a level design; most parts and sections of a level weren't accidental – there's normally a good reason as to why something is there. Things that seemingly go unnoticed make a big difference in how players know where they're going – for example, in 'The Last of Us' there are yellow objects that routinely indicate a quest item or direction. A yellow bar on top of a structure meant Ellie could access it, or a yellow wire leading to a generator that needed powering on. I understand that I need to approach game levels with care, and slowly work through each step and event that the player will encounter.

In the future, I will take into account level processes and events by perhaps making a detailed paper template walkthrough of my level event and reading it aloud to a friend or family member to see if they understand what is required of them. Then I could get feedback or advice that might help me see what the player doesn't or does. In using this technique, I would make the level feel more solid and balance the gameplay flow appropriately. This will improve the overall gameplay immersion.

## References

2003. *Call of Duty*. Activision.

2003. *Mario And Luigi: Superstar Sega*. Nintendo.

Schell, J., 2019. *The Art of Game Design*. 3rd ed. Taylor and Francis, p.371.

2013. *The Last of Us*. Sony Computer Entertainment.