Community based translations of games
Why babelfish ain't enough

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Why translate games?

- there is more than English (or „insert your language here")
- many people don't speak English
    - either (well) enough to enjoy a game
    - or prefer their own language
- because it can be done!

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About me

Real Life

- German (mother tongue)
- studied computer science
- working in research

Involvement in Battle for Wesnoth

- translator since 2004
- Internationalization manager since 2005
- Release manager since 2006
- now: all the above and more...

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About Wesnoth

- turn based strategy game
- fantasy scenario
- singleplayer and multiplayer supported
- content for >100h singleplayer gameplay included
- close integration of user generated content
- (partially) translated into 53 languages in 1.10.7
    - 7 translations 100% completed (mainline)
    - 18 translations >90% completed (mainline)
    - 15,327 strings in mainline, comparable to amount of text in LotR 1+2
    - 62,835 strings in mainline + UMC, no translation at 100%

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i18n basics

gettext

- standard for internationalization in open source projects: gettext
- good tools for devs and translators available
- (rather) easy to use but powerful
- can be used for „standard" code and for other languages using extra tools
- in Wesnoth: C++, Lua and WML (Wesnoth Markup Language)

make it easy

- non techies afraid of technical parts
- reduce technical barrier
- for games: don't make it too easy or the quality will suffer!

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Structure and domains

structure

- translators
- translation maintainers
- internationalization managers
- release manager

textdomains

- split translatable text into different textdomains
- try to group textdomains by content (e.g. one domain per campaign)
- split helps teams to break up the work

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Tools

tools

- gettext.wesnoth.org
- units.wesnoth.org
- po2po
- pofix.py
- wmlxgettext
- sanity checks on files to find strings not marked translatable
- wiki and mailing list

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gettext.wesnoth.org

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poedit

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Releasing

best practices for releasing

- make sure translators are aware of plans for releases
- moving targets suck!
- provide fixed targets (stable releases) which feature bugfixes and translations
- string freeze before start of new stable series

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Implementation of system

- write clean code where (visible) strings are touched!
- raise awareness of known problems among coders
- include translators in release processes
- update files regularly
- don't forget complimentary files (manual, ...)
- don't reinvent the wheel, using existing libs (e.g. pango cairo)
- make sure people know it can be translated and help is wanted!
- make use of your brains ;)

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Motivation of translators

- treat translators like other contributors (coders and artists)
- listen to translators and provide platform
- motivation of translators very similar to coders, make sure they can be proud
- ask your existing community members (even coders!) to kickstart the translations
- repeating same work sucks, provide and use tools
- create „competition" between teams (e.g. show stats of other langs)
- provide treats for accomplishments (e.g. announcement exclusive in language ABC if goal XYZ met)

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Consistency

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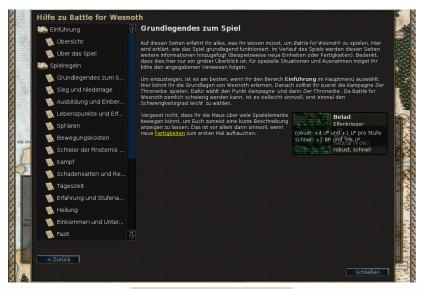## Common problems

- string length differences
- no fitting/known abbreviations
- context differences („general" in the preferences and as unit)
- plural form problems
- gender fun
- LTR support
- font challenges

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Images and textures

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Consistency

- drive by translations problematic for consistency
- style clashes break atmosphere
- encourage teams to use list of common terms
- encourage teams to have people responsible for domain
- translation maintainer for lang should coordinate / try to enforce this
- make sure content belonging together is grouped in domain

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Conclusions

- easy to do basics, hard to master
- many problems because people think English
- keep thinking „what would this be in my language?"
- abbreviations are evil!
- you will always encounter new problems

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Time for discussions and questions

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Thanks for your attention!