Project Idea

Name: TBC

The idea that the Holy Pirates want to bring to life is a virtual world platform that is part MMO and part shared social space.

Taking inspiration from various fictional virtual worlds from different forms of media, the shared social space is a graphical take on social communication that many authors thought the next iteration of the internet might have looked like. It is a space for users to interact with each other via customisable avatars, graphical interpretations of the users. Users would communicate through voice chat or text-based chat, using text-to-speech/speech-to-text and universal translation to allow for international communication. The virtual world itself would be represented as an endless space with user created spaces, or hubs, in a stylised visual representation that does not require high graphical fidelity devices to interface with.

Users can also have their own hubs that can be shared to the rest of the virtual world or be set up for more personal interactions. Groups can also have their own hubs as well. Groups can take on the form of clans, that can interact with the MMO portion of the platform.

The MMO portion of this platform is a living simulation that is influenced by both the users and the artificial intelligence that inhabits these worlds. Users (or players) would take their avatars and place them into the MMO and allow them to ‘live’ in these worlds.

The MMO has no set theme. It does not need to be, for example, a fantasy action RPG or a science fiction shooter. How we can do this is to make it live in seasons: have set timeframes for the life of these worlds seen similarly in competitive gaming. By having rotating seasons, we can rotate the themes and genres in and out, with the added benefit of letting these virtual worlds have a beginning, middle and end.

There’s always been a problem with long running MMOs in that the majority of all players will experience the same content. The quests will be the same. The enemies will be the same. Or that rarely will a new player be the first to experience something unique. But with each new season, new worlds would be introduced, with procedurally generated content at first. With AI that constantly ‘live their lives’ through the course of the season, there would not only be changes to these worlds that happen organically due to the AI inhabitants, but also events caused by players that alter the world. Not all players will populate the same worlds at the beginning, and no two player experiences would be the same.

Throughout the lifetime of the season, the world itself will grow (for example, players finding new regions) allowing more content to be introduced. And as more content is accessed, more and more players will get to interact with each other, players can choose to take on an active or passive role in these worlds; to engage with or against these other players, or to mingle with the AI and interact only with the virtual space of the world itself. They can choose to take a hostile or friendly approach to those they meet (these are approaches that can also apply to the AI NPCs as well) and every gamut in between. As these worlds grow, they would start to connect with the other populated worlds of the season, allowing more interaction between both players and NPCs.

As the season comes to an end, worldwide events can be introduced allowing the season to end with a bang. These could be cataclysmic in nature with players fighting for survival, or maybe a resigned and melancholy finale. When the season reaches its climax, ‘fragments’ of these worlds are given back to the players as keepsakes in their social spaces, and a new season starts, with fresh slate and theme for players to participate in.

Players can freely hop between the MMO space and social space.

There could be a metatextual component to the MMO within the social space as well. Like how users can take up either an active or passive role in the MMO, they can also do this in the context of the MMO being competitions or levels, with the more active players gaining points on scoreboards. The higher the score, the more recognisable the user is in the social space. Users can be more passive and interact with events and activities in the social space that could be considered ‘games’ rather than ‘competition’. In that sense, the MMO would actually be a game inside another MMO, the social space. And as our MMO rotates its themes and worlds, players can decide they want to take a break for a season, the social space would allow the users to keep a presence in our platform.

Finally, we want to touch on the topic of interfacing with the platform. We want our platform to be as far-reaching as possible, so how would we do that? We would create a client that tries to answer one question: can it run Doom[[1]](#endnote-1)? Mobile device technology has gotten really advanced, but there are still at least 3 concerns to address: battery life; connectivity; and storage space. Having the client-side handle most of the assets (textures, sound, music) might alleviate the problem of huge amounts of data being transmitted over networks, but in games these things are probably one of the main culprits for the size of games ballooning these days.

That is why we decided to use a stylised representation of the world rather than a heavy graphical implementation. By doing this, the user clients should stay to a more manageable size, and the networking would require less data to be streamed to devices. With the graphic processors being used less, that means battery life should lengthen. For other clients that might not have such issues though, we could implement different levels of graphical fidelity, like realistic 3D graphics, or could include other choices for personal preferences, like low poly popularised by Minecraft, or even 2D options. The underlaying interactions would be the same on all clients. The user might see different interpretations on their devices, but the platform is still doing the same thing underneath. Ultimately though, visual style will be more valued than graphical fidelity.

1. https://motherboard.vice.com/en\_us/article/qkjv9x/a-catalogue-of-all-the-devices-that-can-somehow-run-doom [↑](#endnote-ref-1)