Uppgift 3

Flow, Gameplay and Mechanics
Discussion with Neverwinter

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Termin: Summer 19
Ämne: Datorspel – en introduktion
Kurskod: 1ME005

1 Introduction

The game selected for this report is a free to play fantasy massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) developed by the study Cryptic Studios and published by Perfect World Entertainment. The videogame follows the table-top game basic mechanics, that will be explained in the following sections, a group of players fight against monsters and dragons through a set of dungeons.

2 Gameflow

Sweetser and Wyeth mapped the eight elements of flow from Csikszentmihalyi (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) with the key elements for player enjoyment in video games, calling it Gameflow and being these elements: Concentration, Challenge, Player skills, Control, Clear Goals, Feedback, Immersion and Social Interaction (Sweetser, Wyeth 2005). Further studies about gameflow provided a group of heuristics criteria more useful for the evaluation of games that are going to be used to evaluate the videogame Neverwinter: social interaction, immersion, player skills and challenge (Sweetser et al. 2012).

2.1 Social Interaction
Neverwinter main game mode is online, with a stable server that is required to maintain 2 hours per week. The players play as a team with formed groups or by matching players by role. However, players can not record the dungeons to replay later using the game software but can be done by third party software applications. Finally, the game has a level editor where the players can create their own maps and quests.

2.2 Immersion
Narrative is the main point on this game, that follows the Forgotten Realms campaign setting from Dungeons and Dragons (Neverwinter contributors, 2018). Each campaign and most of the dungeons include cinematics to explain about the story and background. The player is encouraged to follow the role play style of game by giving options to personalize their character, adding a background story. Gameplay and mechanics work correctly but they will be elaborated in the sections "Gameplay" and "Mechanics" of this report.

2.3 Challenge
The game provides hours of entertainment trough main campaigns and smaller challenges, divided by level. Each character can build two different stats for their character, so the player can change depending on the challenge. Each race has different stats that change slightly but not so much that discourages the role-play.

2.4 Player Skills
All the campaigns include an introduction to the objective that is easy to follow and can be done in solitary (something that is not possible in most of the other game

modes because of the nature of D&D games). All the challenges share a pattern of "Explore dungeon – Defeat enemies – Come back", as the table-top game also does, so it is easy to learn by new players. However, the user interface, while not different to many other similar videogames, it is not easy to understand, but I will assume that this genre does require a more complex interface than other kind of games. Despite a crowded interface, Neverwinter has an official wiki that provides all the background, mechanics and general help to follow the game for those that are not familiar with the world of D&D.

2.5   Conclusion

For this report I wanted to play a game which I had a general idea of the mechanics and world building while not being played lately. I have played Neverwinter for more than 800 hours but I stopped playing three years ago to focus on my education. I was able to get the mechanics of the game easily, but the game had change so much in these tree years that it felt almost new. I decided to play for two hours but I end up playing the whole day, so I can conclude that this game is indeed well done for encourage immersion. It felt like Sweetser et al. criteria worked if compared with the expectation I had for the game.

3   Gameplay

In this section I will elaborate about the gameplay of Neverwinter as the group of challenges that the player must overcome and the actions available to do so (Adams 2013).

As a MMORPG, Neverwinter has no victory conditions and is settled in a persistent world of the kind *Dungeons & Dragons model* (Adams 2013), as it literally is from the franchise D&D. These conditions make that the player's objective is to advance his character by seeking challenges by himself. This genre supports a rich variety of challenges and game modes to keep the attention of the different type of players that approach this genre as seen in Bartle: Killers, Socializers, Achievers and Explorers (Bartle 1996). The game is specially focused on Achievers and Socializers. The game offers a group of campaigns with a main challenge and smaller intermediate challenges in the form of quests. The campaigns can be, and should be, followed simultaneously so the player has stimuli to keep their attention on the game.

This game is a multiplayer game in the form of that players must group to overpass the challenges. It is too difficult, and most of the time impossible, to play Neverwinter alone. For this reason, there are guilds, alliances between guilds and an automated system of match making by role that creates groups automatically from a queue. Explorers have small challenges that make you move around the multiple open world locations where other players can have access too. All these challenges use to fit in exploration-conflict challenges (Adams 2013).

For these challenges each player has to choose a race with special and unique stats and a role, with special abilities. Each role as two sub-class with different abilities. Each player has the possibility to play with each sub-class when they want, to change of sub-class you only need to reach a peaceful location. To improve

socialization, the player has access to multiple chats and different shards (or maps) to avoid overcrowded locations. However, as a persistent world, there is no possibility to save you game or stop it, it keeps running until the server is shut down.

However, the most important difference from other games from the same genre is the key mapping and lay-out. Almost identical to a MOBA, Neverwinter only uses the mouse buttons plus 3 main keys to trigger abilities ("Q", "E" and "R"). The player has more abilities to use, but they use to be secondary and in more uncomfortable keys.

4 Mechanics

One of the most striking attributes about Neverwinter is their tactical manoeuvring mechanics. The camera is in third person, as is common for the genre, but the player can not move away from the character in a long distance, making your point of view shorter than other games. The player cannot see more than the character can, for instance. If the player wants to see what is behind him, she has to move his character. If the player does not know what is behind her, she may run into more enemies without knowing. The way you move your character also differs from common MMORPGs. Instead of "point and go" movement, Neverwinter uses "wasd" keys to move the character. This may be inconvenient for long distances, so the game has a shortcut to automate "going forward". If the player pushes the key "F", your character will keep going forward, the player only needs to move right or left. Neverwinter also changes the way of battling an enemy. The player does not need to select an enemy from the map to attack. In this case this game looks more like a first-person shooter in the way that the player has to aim. Killing enemies depend on the skill on aiming, you may fail shooting your enemy.

5 References

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