MEIC-A: MDJ 2019/2020 - Group 15

Everybody's Sick Now

Concept Document

Index

1. First Tweet

There's a virus on the loose and we need **you** to manage and protect all of the citizens. Can you save the town from **Everybody's Sick Now**?

2. Game Concept

You control a population that is living in a town from an **isometric point of view**. Every person living in this town has a random movement pattern, every 'X' seconds someone becomes infected. The infected will have the same movement pattern but will be slower to move, everyone that approaches an infected person for a duration of more than 5 seconds gets infected as well.

As the player you can move (**RTS** style movement) the people to make them **dodge** the infected and we can move the infected to the hospital in which they will be taken care of. In the population there are several **scientists** that work at different locations, they can work to find the **cure**, help save your patients in the Hospital or in the quarantine zones. The moment the cure is found you win the game but the catch is that scientists can get infected too. Scientists are faster than the others but have a higher risk of infection. Scientists generate science points that you can spend on the **cure,** on **facilities(**more quarantine/labs/hospitals for example**)** or on **perks** to help contain the disease, buying you precious time to look for the cure. If a scientist is infected the amount of resources you generate is lower making it harder for you to find the cure and win.

As the game progresses the infected start to get quicker and start to **sneeze** which creates a cone of disease that can

infect other people. The infected also leave a **tray of disease** that has to be **cleaned**

During the game some **events** might pop-up, in these events you have to make a **decision** that can either be **good** for you and that will help you slightly or it can be a **bad** one that will damage your chances of success.

Building the cure: to build the cure you have to gather a certain amount of points (with checkpoints, for example if you need 500 to build the cure you can invest in intervals of 100), those points are the same that you use to buy perks and facilities forcing you to choose between what's most important at any given time.

You **lose** when more than half of the population is infected or when there are no more scientists to develop the cure, you **win** if you manage to cure the disease before this happens.

3. Game experience goals

We want the player to feel overwhelmed and to be forced to make quick decisions. We want the player to have the sensation that there are barely enough resources to save the population and that they have to manage those limited resources the best they can.

4. Competition and References

1. Rimworld (98% positive reviews on Steam)

   In Rimworld you control a colony of survivors in a space colony. You have to assign tasks and micromanage your people in order to survive against hunger, cold, wild animals and raids. The game can be as casual or as complicated as the player wants as Rimworld offers

different levels of difficulty in the form of narrators that control the randomness of the game events. Sometimes rimworld can be extremely unfair but that is by design. The goal of the game, as defined by the creators, is to build a spaceship and leave the planet you're stuck in. However most players seem to just play out the game and do what they want and when they get bored they decide to leave the planet.

We can learn some things from Rimworld:
- Different settings of difficulty for different people. Some people like to play games in a casual fashion and others love to feel the satisfaction of beating something that's nearly impossible to defeat and we should give them that option.
- Micromanagement of personnel. In Rimworld you can assign tasks to your survivors and give priorities to certain tasks but that doesn't always mean that they everything will work if you leave them alone. Every once in a while you have to pay attention to what your colonists are doing as they could be getting in trouble or maybe they have nothing to do because some resources are missing. In our game we should strive to achieve something with the management of our personnel. You can assign tasks but have to keep and eye on them every once in a while and may have to interact to make sure everything works out.

2. Two Point Hospital (90% positive reviews on Steam)

Two Point Hospital is a simulator where you have to build a Hospital, hire professionals and manage them in order to cure your patients. Two point is more of a tycoon style manager as you deal with the economic aspect of the hospital and have to meet certain goals. Even though our game shares a theme with two point and perhaps a spot in

the market our game has different mechanics to offer. Everybody's Sick Now dives deeper into the control of the pandemic having also the control outside of the hospital area.

We can still learn something from Two Point Hospital as the casual nature of the game and comedy sense really drives the likability of the game to the top. Since our game also takes a more casual approach to the Hardcore Management style games this inspiration can be an advantage for us

3. Frostpunk (89% positive reviews on Steam)

In Frostpunk you control a colony that is trying to survive extremely harsh cold conditions. In troubled times everything is a resource, wood, coal, food, steel and people. Frostpunk is an hardcore manager that really tests your ability to get the best out of an impossibly hard situation.

From Frostpunk we can learn 2 important things:

- People as resources (similar to rimworld). Making the player have to choose where to deploy their personnel is a really interesting mechanic. Makes the game harder, adds pressure and tension as the scientists can also get infected in Everybody Sick Now and that would be a major loss.
- Events. In Frostpunk, much like in Rimworld, a lot of the difficulty comes from random events that make you choose from different options and there's a chance none of them are good, just less bad.

4. Overcooked! (91% positive reviews on Steam)

Overcooked! is a casual, multiplayer game where you and your friends control chefs in a kitchen, but not a normal one. As the chef you have to take the orders, prepare them, deliver and then do the dishes, you can

delegate jobs between your friends or try and do it all. The game generates a lot of pressure and panic as the problems in communication start to surge and complicate everything. A lot of the adversity comes from the different maps that force you to collaborate by restricting some areas and forcing you to make an assembly line.

From overcooked we can learn that the way the level is displayed makes a big difference. The position of the houses, hospital and labs in our game needs to reflect what we want the player to do and what adversities we are going to throw at them.

Overall there doesn't seem to exist a direct competitor as we're trying to blend mechanics from different games and giving them our unique twist. However there are many spiritual competitors like the ones mentioned above, but as we learn and take away lessons from these games we can reach for something new, unique that merges the hardcore strategy style gameplay with casual and fun mechanics

5. Player Personas

Primary Persona

Laura Ipsum is a 22-year-old woman from Portugal that is currently doing erasmus in Switzerland. She's an introvert by heart but when she's with her group of trusted friends she is very outgoing.

From a very young age she started to read and completely fell in love with it. She likes real stories about people and real events mixed with fiction. She's hardworking and studies a lot. In her free time she likes to play videogames. She was always quite

fond of strategy games, she likes problems and loves to solve them. Recently she's been playing Frostpunk and Cities: Skylines.

Considering this background we can analyze her personality type. In the Meyers-Briggs test she would land on the INTJ category - Architect. She is an (I)ntrovert that trusts her I(N)tuition. Imaginative yet decisive, ambitious but likes her privacy, curious but focused. In Bartle's taxonomy Laura would be an Achiever.

Secondary Persona

Jon Notham is a 35-year-old man living in Manchester. He's a busy man, he studied business and economics until he was 23. Now he works as a regional manager of a franchise store.

Ever since he was young his parents pressured him to be the best, have great grades and go to a prestigious school. Besides his rebellion phase in his teens he always obeyed his parents and did what they told him.

To escape some of the pressure he used to resort to videogames. Now he doesn't have much time so he mostly plays them on the subway ride to work on his phone. Mostly casual games. Sometimes these games bore him, he likes the struggle and challenge. He loves to be the best and to compete.

In the Meyers-Briggs tests he is an Entrepreneur - ESTP. Extrovert, smart, energetic. In Bartle's taxonomy he fits in the Killer category, leaning towards Achiever.

6. Focus Group

Isabel

Age: 22
Gender: Female
Occupation: Finances Student
Does she play video games? Usually not, but lately has been spending her time playing the Sims collection more focused on the latest release.
Thoughts about ESN: She thinks the game has a lot of potential and is also very interested in the theme of the game.

Cristiana

Age: 22
Gender: Female
Occupation: Nursing Student
Does she play video games? The only game she normally plays is the Sims collection and now, because of the quarantine situation, has been spending more time playing.
Thoughts about ESN: She is one of the most excited about the game from the people we interviewed. She also thinks the game has a lot of potential and since the game theme is somewhat about her area of studies, she is even more excited.

Gonçalo

Age: 22
Gender: Male
Occupation: Engineering Student
Does he play video games? He plays a whole variety of games not being stuck to one gender or one game in particular.
Thoughts about ESN: He was one of the interviewed people who participated more in the discussion of ideas due to his better experience in gaming. He thinks the game might have what it takes to be a great game if we, the developers, can capture and balance some of the characteristics of the game right.

Miguel

Age: 23
Gender: Male
Occupation: Design Student
Does he play video games? Lately he has been playing Star Wars: The Old Republic and Mass Effect but throughout his life has played almost every genre except for Football and FPS games.
Thoughts about ESN: He shares the opinion of the above people that the game has a lot of potential and is looking forward to playing and testing it.

Thibault

Age: 22
Gender: Male
Occupation: Engineering Student
Does he play video games? He doesn't have a lot of time to play video games but he is very interested in esport so he plays the most well known games with his friends, such as League of Legend, CS GO, Valorant etc.
Thoughts about ESN: He is waiting for the prototype to judge but so far he think the idea has potential and would like to play it to discuss about it

Maxence

Age: 23
Gender: Male
Occupation: Engineering Student
Does he play video games? He used to play a lot of games in a lot of different varieties (like simulation, FPS, strategy etc.) but he recently stopped playing because he doesn't feel the drive to play and has grown a bit bored
Thoughts about ESN: He is hopeful about the idea, and although it's not something that is up his alley he'd like to watch how it will come out. He participated a lot to give some ideas

7. Play Scenarios

Scenario 1

In a way to connect with her friends back home she usually plays games with her friends online. When they can't play

together they usually play single player games and talk about them. Her friend Jane told her about this new game called Everybody's Sick Now and Laura decided to try it. Every day they both played a bit and discussed strategies to get those 3 stars for each level.

After a long study session Laura decides it's time to take a break. She boots up Everybody's Sick Now. She's on an advanced level now. Every new level brings a new problem. Some she can crack right away and others she needs to think and adapt on the fly. She's focused, she moves every pawn she can, she assigns her scientists, she saves people. Yet another successful level. She only got 2 stars so she restarts the level for the perfect score.

Scenario 2

Jon is working from home today, he likes to do this once in a while to lift some pressure off his shoulders. He's working but he's thinking about that Everybody's Sick Now level he couldn't beat the day before. What did he do wrong? Suddenly a click. Something in his mind says "I know what to do now". Jon takes a small break from work and rushes to play the level. He struggled but he did it, he finally beat the level that has haunted him for hours. He feels happy and smart. He only beat the level with 1 Star but it's enough for him, at least for now. He goes back to work.

8. Gameplay loop

There are a few components in the game:

1. The main loop revolves around moving the people of your town in order to prevent them from getting infected as well as moving the infected to the hospital/quarantine zone.

2. Keep your city clean by removing infectious areas.

3. Manage your resources to stay afloat and save the city.
    a. Pay attention to the economy by keeping your people healthy and your costs to a minimum.
    b. Keep your scientists safe and available to find a cure or man the hospital to protect the ill.
    c. Upgrade your facilities for maximum efficiency
    d. Buy perks to help you contain the disease

9. Control Scheme and Presentation

The first idea the group had was instantly the one we ended up settling on, however we did have some other modes in mind.

The current mode we have is the **God Mode** with **RTS style controls.**

9.1 God Mode

We call “god mode” to the way we control the characters in our city because we are essentially controlling every citizen at once as if we could put thoughts into their minds and telling them “go here” or “do this”. In god mode you also have the freedom to make macro decisions like improving certain departments, buying perks and responding to events. All the actions are taken by clicking, pointing, dragging and with a few shortcuts.

9.2 Mayor Mode

One person in our test group suggested Mayor Mode. In this mode the player would be the mayor of the city and instead of directly controlling the population of the town, they would pass policies that would, indirectly, control each department of their town. Said departments would then act on their own according to the policies.

Although interesting this would drive the game away from one of our main goals with this game. Both the chaotic nature and the micromanagement would suffer or straight up disappear.

9.3 Single Control Mode

The third option was to have an Overcooked style control scheme. The player would be a pawn and would wander around town picking people up and keeping them apart. This idea fell through pretty quickly as it wouldn't make much sense in the style of the game and all of the macro decisions would have to be removed.

9.4 RTS Controls

This is the other component of the control scheme we chose. It is, simply put, the same controls of classic RTS style games like Starcraft, Age of Empires, etc.

Using the mouse to control the pawns, improve buildings and interact with menus, WASD to move the camera and shortcuts to open menus.

9.5 Pick em Up Controls

The other way we thought about moving the pawns would be to use the mouse pointer as a sort of pincer that the player could use to pick up pawns and drop them somewhere else on the map. This is inspired by some tycoon games (rollercoaster tycoon, Zoo Tycoon) where you would deploy your staff in this "pick em up" style.

10. Progression

10.1 Difficulty

There are four main complexity points to take into account in difficulty management: **City size, Disease Strength, Economic Balance** and **Events**. By iterating upon these 4 concepts we can balance out the difficulty of each level to make it more challenging the further the player progresses.

1. **City Size**: A bigger city leads to two complexity aspects. The first is that if the player can't see the whole city at once it will be harder for them to identify everything that is happening with just one look. The second is more population, if there are more pawns to keep track of the game will become more complicated. The city size has an influence on the mechanical development of the player and should be increased slowly as the player learns the language of the game.
2. **Disease Strength**: The idea of having different ideas for different levels is one we had from the very beginning. However it is a hard one to manage both in the creative term of finding new mechanics as well as familiarity for the player. If every level is substantially different it is really hard for them to get used to the mechanics and to learn the language of the game. A solution could be having a small set number of diseases and introducing them slowly as new mechanics once we feel the player had time to learn all the previous ones.
3. **Economic Balance**: How much should this aspect change in between levels? If we assume that bigger cities will be

more complex and complicated (by virtue of the fact talked about in point 1) then maybe the economy should act as a balancing element. Bigger City = Bigger Economy so while the micromanagement becomes more robust and hard, the macromanagement simplifies giving some room for the player to breathe.

4. **Events**: The big purpose of events is to complicate the player's life, maybe sometimes give a little hand but mostly the purpose is to cause chaos. This will also be used mostly as a tool to balance each level. On the other hand it can also serve as a thematic approach to make new levels. Say one level has a permanent event that is always active that, for the duration of that level, complicates the player's life.

10.2 Characters

Another form of progression can come from Perks and Characters. One thing we could implement is multiple playable characters that the player can choose from. Each would have pros and cons and would be unlocked between levels. This idea could be interesting however it is not something we are aiming at. Could maybe work as future content or if we feel like the game is lacking something. We feel this is the right choice because we want each player to feel like their own character, each have their pros and cons. While some will be great at micromanaging the city others might have a great sense of macro.

10.3 Inside the Level

All the progression forms we mentioned earlier are aimed at the feeling of progression one gets when they complete levels and get further into the game. But what

about inside each level, how can the player feel closer to the goal.

1. **Perks:** perks are the main way the player progresses inside each level. In each level the player can buy some perks that will help him balance his economy, control the disease, increase his profits and make his workers become more efficient. This is a big point that is open for creative ideas. There can be unique perks for unique levels and it is also the sort of mechanic that can always be improved upon with some brainstorming if we feel like the game is lacking in in-game progression.
2. **Upgrades:** similar to perks but associated with buildings/departments. Throughout each level the player can invest in various departments and buildings to improve their efficiency and capacity. This will have upsides but will also come with some economical downsides in the form of a higher upkeep
3. **The Cure:** an interesting point about our main goal of each level is the fact that it is, in itself, a progression measure. The player will invest science points into the cure in small intervals. The more the player invests the closer he gets to the end, therefore the player always has an idea of how close they are to the goal.