

Project Description

The project is meant to be an evolutionary simulator, dealing with observations of mimicked natural evolutions. The scope of the project is to produce a system that can be used to study evolution in an environment where the user can intervene and change the parameters. Particular interest is placed on creature and group behaviour, and population dynamics.

The project involves building a tool which allows visualisation of an environment and enables users to interact with various parameters in the environment. Creatures called “blobs” evolve in this simulated environment by having techniques used in Genetic Algorithms applied to their DNA. This DNA described their characteristics and behaviour.

Progress

The system was build using the Unity development platform. The choice was made due to familiarity of the language used (C#) and the portability of Unity (from Windows, to iOS, to browser). The simulator was built from a top-down perspective, first starting with the general layout, then moving on to implement the details.

At the time of writing, the system is capable of simulating a species of virtual creatures with variable DNA, in an environment with user-defined parameters. The system also shows statistics about the current simulation, such as: population size, number of food sources, etc. In order to analyst the characteristics of each “blob”, its genotype and traits are displayed, should the user click on a particular “blob”. A histogram of traits is also available for the whole population. The system also logs changes in the population, such as deaths, user clicks, and reproduction.

In order to provide better feedback, the system outputs sounds when food is eaten, or when “blobs” reproduce.

Plan

Future work on the project includes: changes to the behaviour of the “blobs”, sexual reproduction, and active food searching.

Problems

The main problems faced were, at first, familiarisation with the Unity platform. This, however, has been made easy by a series of comprehensive tutorials on the official Unity website.

Through the lifespan of the project, there was constant difficulty in the design of the system; mainly in deciding the discrete parameters of the environment and the evolution.