INTRODUCTION

Gwent the Witcher card game is a resource management card game where players battle in a best of three format to win a game. In this analysis, the mechanics will be broken down. Followed by the dynamics so as to show how the data design in the mechanics enables player limitation in deck building and in gameplay. And finally, how the aesthetics are enabled by the dynamics which arise from the data design implemented in the mechanics of the game.

MECHANICS

Gwent is a complicated game with many intricate mechanics that use data to interact with each other. For the purpose of this analysis, the broader game mechanics will be discussed in order to gain an understanding of the base game and how data design is implemented in limiting player decision in every step of the game. The mechanics will be discussed in the following order: Deck building and in game mechanics.

Deck Building

Deck building in Gwent uses data to limit players in multiple ways. Firstly, there is a card minimum of 25 cards that must be included in a deck, 13 of those 25 cards must be unit cards. There are four types of cards: Unit cards which have power value and cost provisions. Special cards which are removed from a game after satisfying their ability, they also cost provisions. Artifact cards which have special abilities, no power value and cost provisions. Finally, stragam or tactical advantage cards which are given to player one at the start of the game. They have no power value and cost no provisions.

Provisions are the amount needed for a card to be recruited or put in a deck. Each card has a specific provision amount it needs to be recruited, currently the lowest provision amount a card has is 4 with the highest being 15. With each card recruitment, its provision amount is subtracted from the total provisions the player has which is 150 at base. Cards with lower power value or weaker abilities tend to have a lower provision cost, whereas powerful cards tend to have higher provision costs.

Another important mechanic in deck building are factions. In Gwent there are 6 factions. Each faction has its own leaders who provide unique faction abilities. Only one leader can be selected when building a deck. Like cards, leaders affect provisions. Instead of taking provisions to include a leader in a deck, these leaders add to the total amount of provisions

made available for deck building. Weaker leader faction abilities add more provisions to the total provision amount, whereas stronger faction abilities add less provisions.

In Game Mechanics

At the start of any game both players draw 10 cards. Both players are also able to mulligan their first-hand, to mulligan is to swap out some cards in hand with those from your deck. Player one can mulligan 3 cards and player two can mulligan two cards. The player going first is given a tactical advantage or stratagam card which boosts a unit by 5. At the start of subsequent rounds, both players draw three cards from their deck.

DYNAMICS

According to the MDA framework, dynamics are the resulting behaviours of the mechanics based on player interaction. In terms of data design, the players influence the way the data of the above-mentioned mechanics interact with each other and limit player decision. In terms of deck building, players are limited in how they construct their decks due to the provision mechanic. A dynamic of deck size arises where the players can either have a large deck with low provision cards or a smaller deck with high provision cards. Data design is used in the mechanics to give rise to this dynamic, which in turn can be used in balancing the game.

Faction leaders are complicated as each one has a different effect on how they affect deck building and in game mechanics. In a broad sense that is the dynamic they bring into the game. Each leader has a unique mechanic they have which affects the data the base mechanics have in game. For example, some leaders provide more provisions but are weaker and enable larger decks, while stronger leaders enable stronger in game mechanics at the cost of smaller decks.

In game mechanics also make use of data to give rise to different kinds of dynamics. Since both players have 10 cards in hand at the start of the game, certain advantages need to be given to the first player in order to make the mechanics of the game fair as the game progresses. Hence, the mulligan and tactical advantage mechanics. If these were not in game, the dynamic of card advantage could have been a problem as player one would always be in a 1 card disadvantage throughout the game.

AESTHETICS

The main aesthetic of Gwent is fantasy. This aesthetic is enabled mostly through the faction system and the use of faction leaders. Each faction has a unique playstyle which is facilitated

by its leaders. The dynamics of the game are the ones that make the fantasy aesthetic possible, and all this arises from the data manipulation made possible by the mechanics implemented in the game.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Gwent is a mechanically dense game which makes use of data in multiple ways such as deck building, card limit in deck building, as well as in game interactions and game balancing. The result of this data design in the mechanics creates a realistic aesthetic of fantasy in the players through the resultant dynamics of the mechanics.