**DETAILED ADVICE FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT: PART ONE.**

This document covers the work we have done on the topic for your assignment so far:-

1. **THEMING YOUR GAME.**

Developing a THEME for your game is extremely important. By having a metaphor for the game as a whole the PLAYER can comprehend more easily what they are doing and WHY. This is part of you paying attention to the issues of Affordances.

This does not mean that the game has to be REALISTIC.

Remember Patchwork or Hive

Making a patchwork in real life is not the SAME as making a patchwork in the game, nor do the insects in Hive behave the way that they are expected to in real life.

Instead the Theme provides a coherent way of **naming objects,** an **affordance to what they do** in the game. This is critical when we want players to invest in our game.

Suuronen (2011) in Killer Game Loops in Social Games talks about the way in which Large houses are placed next to Castles and Hovels further away because this is what *really happened.* He is not saying Magic Land is real.

So the brainstorming tasks we did is a guide to the kind of initial work – followed by the research that I am wanting you to do. By moving past first level consciousness ideas and focussing on some novel or interesting situations or metaphors, your game will begin to provide some interest for the player.

1. **UNDERSTANDING GAME MECHANICS**

Your understanding of game mechanics and what they can be used for is crucial in your development as a game designer. My top advice is that you play lots of different types of non digital games, there are dozens of them in the games cupboard in the common room. Only if you are familiar with a number of different mechanics can you ever hope to move away from the most simplistic of responses to game making.

In particular this semester we are looking at the ideas of GAME LOOPS. Sets of actions that take place over and over and reward the player, while at the same time attempting to add a little of Suuronen calls ‘Smart Depth’.

So, for example, Patchwork asks the player to select and **sort shapes** and to place them in a 9x9 grid and **match** them in a way which means that there are as few gaps as possible at the end of the game.

We can see how this is a game loop.

* BUY ITEM
* PLACE ITEM
* WAIT INCOME
* COLLECT INCOME

Repeated over and over until the game ends.

SMART DEPTH?

* What item do I buy? The best this turn or to stop my opponent.
* Where do I place the item on my grid.
* Wait income, how much will this earn next turn.
* Collect income.

*Further strategic depth.*

* How many spaces does the patchwork fill up? (hidden income)
* How much income over the game will this piece generate

The game can be played without very much consideration to DEPTH. This can be discovered slowly, or quickly, over time. The game does not demand it in order for you to play.

One way to find out more about what a game can do is to practice some *Reverse Engineering* of the game. That is take the mechanics and simplify them or modify them. Remember that the THEME Patchwork, the artwork, is all the Intellectual Property of company that has made the game. The Mechanic, moving round selecting pieces and fitting them into a grid is a game mechanic. It is NOT the property of the company. By taking and playing around with these ideas you will move quickly away from THROWING DICE as a mechanic.

*Jaipur* had a simple set building matching mechanic in it. Players collected cards into sets and then cashed them in. What made this activity this game loop

* Collect cards
* Place cards down
* Wait until end of game
* Collect Income

into a GAME, is the use of a very simple RISK V REWARD mechanic.

Each time a card is cashed in for a set it is worth a **decreasing** amount of money. This *encourages* people to cash in small numbers of cards.

Each time a player cashes in a set of 3 / 4 / 5 cards they get an **increasing** bonus for this. This *encourages* players to hoard their cards. The bonus remains Hidden from the player until the end of the game. (Maddigan: 2014). It is a variable reward. This is the Smart Depth to this game.

Again, the mechanic is not the intellectual property of the company, it is something YOU can play around with to go with a simple matching or sorting game to add playability.

1. **What Next?**

If you spend some time now playing non digital games and gutting them for the mechanics and reviewing what they do, then when, in 2/3 weeks time we start the prototyping phases of your game, you will have run through some themes that appeal to you and some mechanics that you think might be suitable for the development of your game.

This should go alongside some serious consideration of a range of different themes and scenarios that might provide an interesting basis for your game.

If you do not do this, then when you come to your game development you will be lacking in the essential ingredients you need.

* Knowledge of sufficient game mechanics to generate an interesting game loop with a sprinkling of smart depth.
* A theme to attach this too so that you can think clearly about what the game affordances should be.