



Survival of the Zargs

As long as the players shout at each other like in Mario Kart, our story works.

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The game *Survival of the Zargs* is a 2D collaborative story-driven game in which players experience an emergency landing with their spaceship on a foreign planet. They try to escape the planet again by working together as a team, while the game forces them to make difficult decisions all the time. Coordination outside of the game is the key to success.

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1 Overview

1.1 Main Concept

The special aspect of this game is that it is a cooperative story-driven game implemented with Airconsole. This means that the players are forced to make difficult (moral) decisions and therefore have to find a common ground. The game does not offer them any help in coordinating their efforts, it even tries to make coordination a bit toxic by giving single players the option to undermine collaborative decisions. Our vision is a room full of players that are shouting at each other like they were playing Mario Kart, while playing through an investing story.

1.2 Unique Selling Point

There are already many games like the one we are making—but they are mostly offline games with pen and paper played on group dynamic seminars and similar occasions. However, we don't know of a game that offers all those aspects and combines them with digital technology that offer the additional layer of complexity of a computer game. We combine those group dynamic games with simple elements known from point-and-click adventures as well as 2D games like Zelda.

1.3 Focus

The game should only be difficult in one way: Do the players manage to coordinate without killing each other—or not?

2 References

Mario Party Mario Party is a party game which is played by multiple players in the same room. Although the players in this game generally do not cooperate but go for individual success, there are elements that *Survival of the Zargs* and *Mario Party* have in common. One of these elements is the fact that decisions made by players can negatively impact other players or the collective. In *Mario Party* this will often send players to states of exasperation and indignation, particularly in case of prior inebriation. Another aspect of *Mario Party* that leads to achieving the cacophony that may ensue in the room is the 1v3 minigames that make the group collaborate against a single group member. We aim to achieve a similar effect with the voting system.

Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes is a local multi-player game where one person is trapped in a room with a bomb (displayed on the TV screen) and has to defuse it with the help of the other players, who get a printed out manual for bomb defusing. The main similarity between *Survival of the Zargs* and *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes* is the communication and decision making aspect. Both games aim for a social interaction to achieve a goal in order to win the game. One major difference to our game is that we give each player the same mechanics, instead of one player with a special task to defuse the bomb. Additionally to local-real world interaction, we can also provide a virtual interaction between the players by means of their characters. Finally, we will not put the players under time pressure, in comparison to *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes*, where the bomb explodes within a certain time limit.

Artemis Spaceship Bridge Simulator In *Artemis Spaceship Bridge Simulator* you come together to be the crew of a spaceship, where everybody has a special role (bridge, navigation, communication, weapons, technician, ...) and a specific view, according to the given role. The communication expert will for example see messages from nearby spaceships and can communicate with them. The weapons expert on the other hand will have insights in the weapon status and can fire torpedoes or lasers. The fact that everybody can see and provide different knowledge to the team is similar to the inventory we are going to provide, where players need to talk about the items in their inventory and make a plan on how to use or combine them to get something done. Therefore, again, communicating with the other players is important, and the better you cooperate, the better you will be on your missions. While playing *Artemis Spaceship Bridge Simulator*, everybody can control different aspects of the game and annoy others by doing things without communicating and being a maverick. With *Survival of the Zargs* we plan to enforce group decisions with a voting system, where either all players need to agree on one decision, or a majority vote will be the decision.

3 Specification

3.1 Player(s) / Target-group

The target group are players that enjoy playing together in a room (like in the earlier days of gaming consoles) and like to not only play against each other but collaboratively to beat a game.

3.2 Genre

The game is a story-driven science fiction multi-player game played with Airconsole.

3.3 Art Style

We use simple 2D graphics like they appear in many older and newer pixel art RPGs. Games that may look similar to our game include: Pokemon (Gameboy), Legends of Zelda (Gameboy). The visual art was created by the team members.



Figure 3.1: Art example

3.4 Forms of Engagement

Seen within Hunicke's 8 kinds of fun, our game strongly focuses on Fellowship and Narrative.

Fellowship Our main goal is to get the players to play together to beat the game. However, the game tries to make collaboration hard by giving them challenging and hard decisions which may not have a right answer. They have to make difficult decisions that decide on different ways to play the game. This should encourage players to keep every member of their team satisfied and engaged, because unhappy team members have the power to sabotage the team's doings.

Narrative The game evolves around the story of a crash on a planet. The crew of the crashed space ship has to find a way to leave the planet again and continue their journey. There are hard-coded events to progress the story, small puzzles and dialogues to progress the story, all presented in text windows or in the game world itself.

Submission Well, if this game doesn't sound like the perfect game for after three beer, we have done something wrong.

4 Gameplay and Game Setting

4.1 Mood and Emotions

The game creates a fun and exciting atmosphere within the group of players. It aims to give the players a mixture of emotions: from euphoria through frustration and anger to disappointment, and back to euphoria again.

4.2 Story

4.2.1 Main story

We have a crew of a space ship as our main characters. Every player plays as one member of this crew. During a quite normal expedition to a foreign solar system, something terrible happens to the ship, while the crew is in stasis. The ship is in a bad condition, the only way to survive is to land it on the closest planet, which the autopilot decides to do. The landing is a crash, and although all of them survive somehow, not everyone is out of danger.

The first goal is to safely escape the ship. As soon as that is achieved, the players try to get everything together to continue their journey. For that they have to find fuel and food. On the planet once lived an alien race. Those aliens may have left fuel, which the players can use for the ship. Also the planet has plants, which may be eatable. As soon as the space ship is refueled and food has been gathered, they can take off again and the game is completed.

4.2.2 Planet background

The planet is fertile and a species once lived on that planet. Through rivalry amongst individual nations a war arose, that nearly wiped out the whole species. The once left keep them selfs very hidden.

4.2.3 Level Structure

Every level, except the forest, contains one exit, where the players exit, when they have achieved their goal. The forest has three exit, to connect the levels.

4.3 World/Environment

The game takes place in the crashed space ship as well as the surrounding area. The space ship itself consists of several layers (implemented as Z-levels), the surrounding area is mostly flat land with a few small alien buildings, where all the spare parts and tools are stored. Some of those buildings also consist of more than one Z-layer.

There are four different levels in the game. The start level is the space ship level, where the players have to escape. Then outside the space ship, in the woods, the players can find paths to the two other levels, an abandoned mining station and a jungle.

4.3.1 Level - Ship

The ship is the level the game starts with. On the fourth deck the crew is locked into their stasis chambers. In order to open them, the engine needs to be started.



Figure 4.1: Ship fourth deck

On the third deck a fire blocks the path. A button temporarily extinguishes the fire.

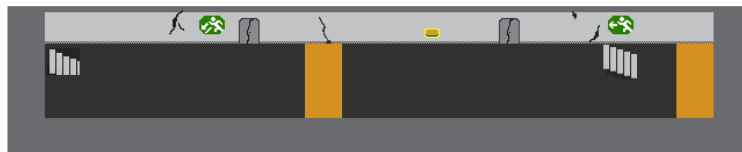


Figure 4.2: Ship third deck

The second deck serves as a mess hall and a control center. Systems can be turned off at the main console.

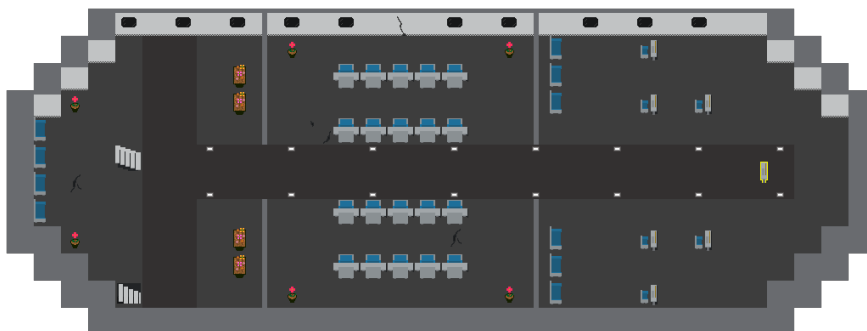


Figure 4.3: Ship second deck

On the first deck goods are stored and contains smaller stasis pods.

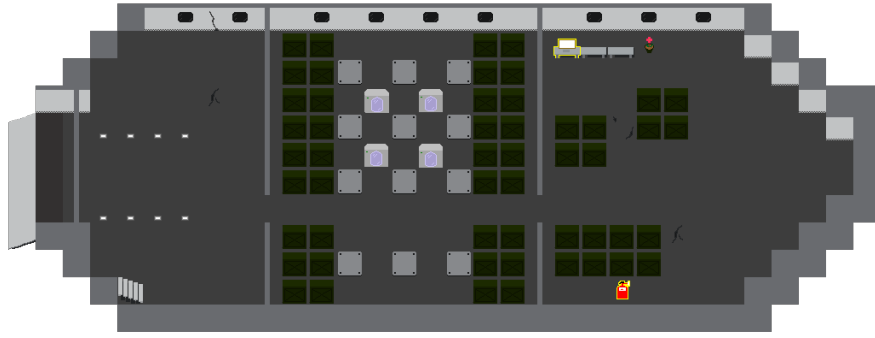


Figure 4.4: Ship first deck

4.3.2 Level - Forest

This part of the forest was used for logging by the native species. Most of the trees not already cut were cut during the crash landing.

In the north the path leads to a fertile land, the jungle. A river interrupts the northern path, but a nearby plank may help to cross it. In the west there are mountains, where a mining station was built. The western path is blocked by a rock, which can be removed with pry bars left by the native species. Only if two work together they have enough strength to get it out of the way.



Figure 4.5: Forest map

4.3.3 Level - Mining Station

The mining station seems to have been abandoned a long time ago. It is partly collapsed, but fuel can still be found here. The native species apparently mined green ore and through some complicated process produced fuel here.

The native species wasn't that advanced, but still managed to lock their precious resources behind a door, that is sealed by a DNA lock. There are of course a few corpses here, from which the DNA can be extracted to pass the door. For that, a DNA extractor is needed, which is hidden in the med station. Wary as this species was they also locked the medical station. Only the medics know what the code is. Hopefully they have recorded it somewhere.

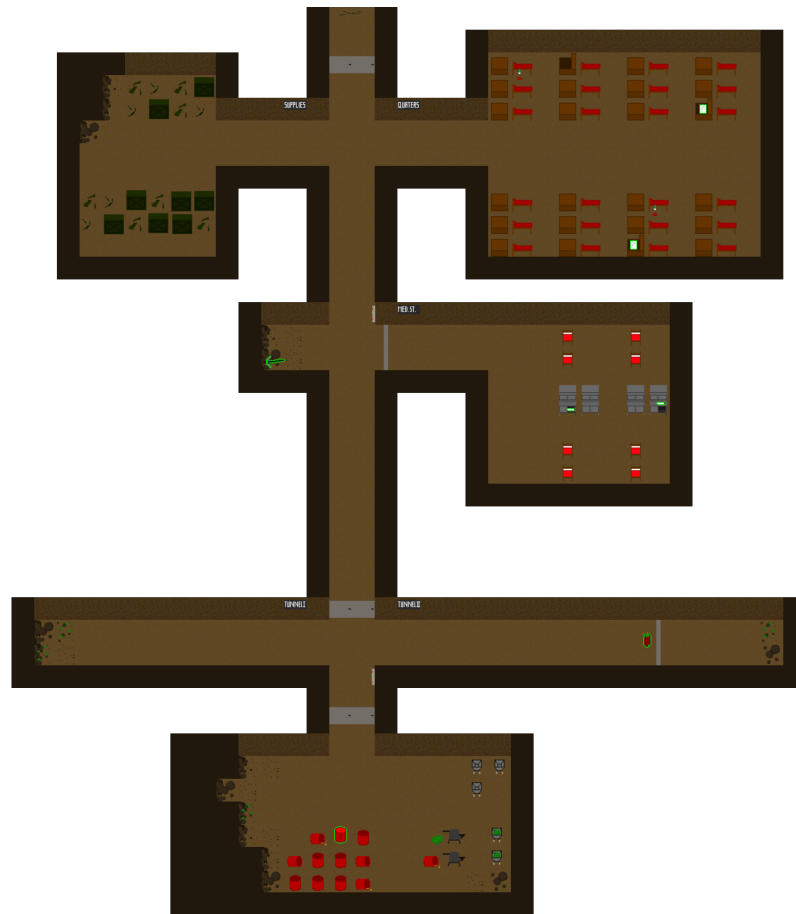


Figure 4.6: Mining Station map

4.3.4 Level - Jungle

In the jungle level, the crew shall collect food for their further trip. The jungle consists of 3 subareas, where different fruits can be found on trees. Since the players don't know anything about the vegetation on this planet, they will have to decide for each fruit whether it should be collected and added to their food supply or not. Furthermore, there is plenty of high grass, blocking the paths. A machete could be useful to cut the paths free.

In the end, the decision of which fruits to collect will have an impact on whether they can safely continue their trip and survive, or if they get in trouble because of toxic food.

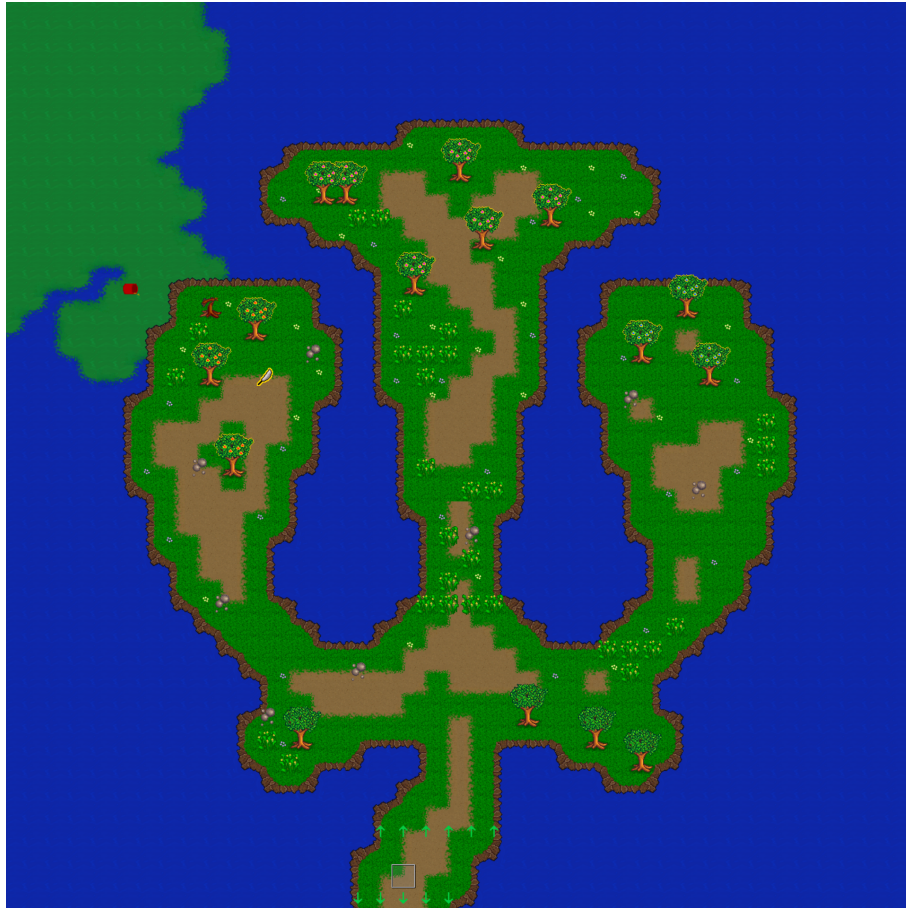


Figure 4.7: Jungle map

4.4 Objects in the Game

The objects in the game are mostly small items that can be picked up, stored in the inventory and used on special other objects. This includes things like a fire extinguisher, pick axe, dynamite and so on. Every intractable object is highlighted by a yellow border for better visibility.

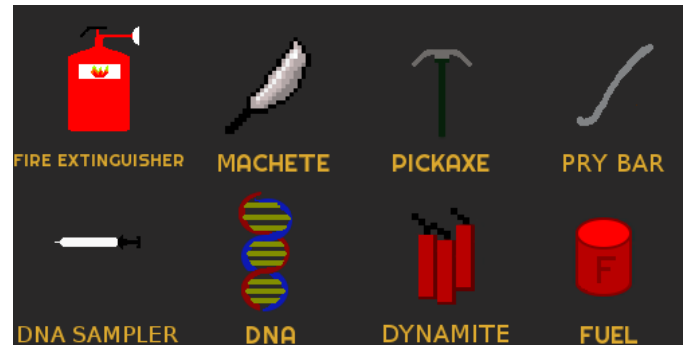


Figure 4.8: Objects as they look in the inventory

4.5 Characters in the Game

The characters in our game are the members of the crew of the space ship.

4.6 Main Objective

The main objective is to complete refueling the space ship, gather food and escape from the planet.

4.7 Core Mechanics

The players each have an avatar in the game world. They can move the avatar in all four directions, and they can interact with special items that are marked for interaction. This interaction is dependent on the item and does whatever the story requires this item to do.

Every player has an inventory consisting of four different spaces where they can store items. This enables the game to have simple puzzle games, but it also forces the players to interact more, because it may be important to have the correct items in the inventory in order to solve a puzzle.

Probably the most interesting mechanic in this context, however, is the *focus*. There is only one screen for all players, so not everyone may be able to see their avatar, especially if they are on different Z-levels. Every player has the option to *gain focus* at any given time, so the focus of the main screen switches to their avatar. This should encourage players to work together and care for everyone participating in the game. If someone feels left behind or is angry about something, s/he can easily disturb the game of the other players by taking focus all the time.

There are different small puzzles in the game that can be solved by combining things from the inventories and within the game world. There is no way to see what other players have in their inventory—you have to old-fashionably ask.

4.7.1 Code

On several occasions the players have to find a code to continue the level. The following screen shows how the code selection works.

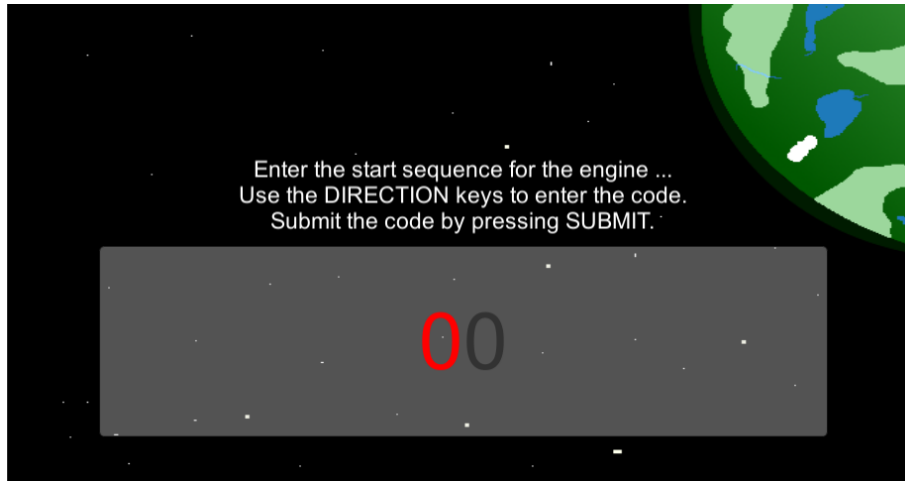


Figure 4.9: Code input screen

4.7.2 Decision Voting

For decision making the current level is interrupted with the vote screen. Where an important question is asked and the players need to decide.

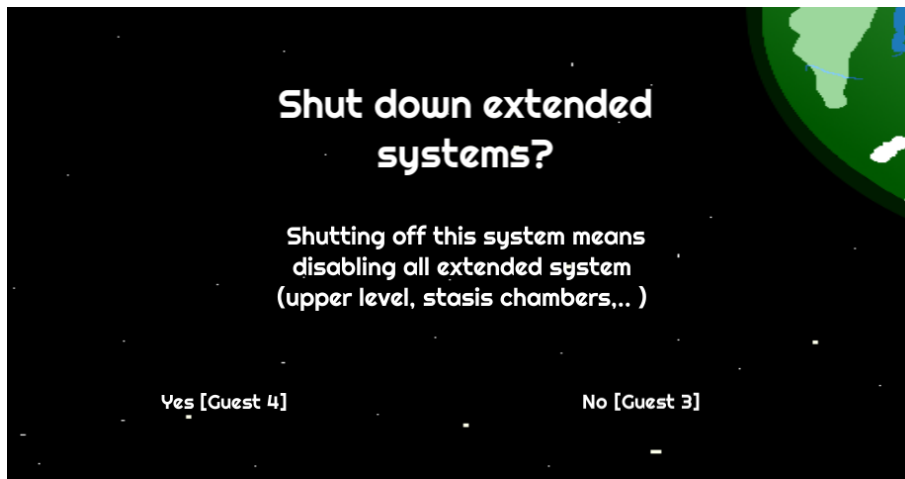


Figure 4.10: Vote Screen

4.7.3 Tile Puzzle

The tile puzzles consist of two tiles for each player, that are placed vertically, as seen in [4.11](#). The players have to rotate the tiles and switch them around in order to form a complete picture.

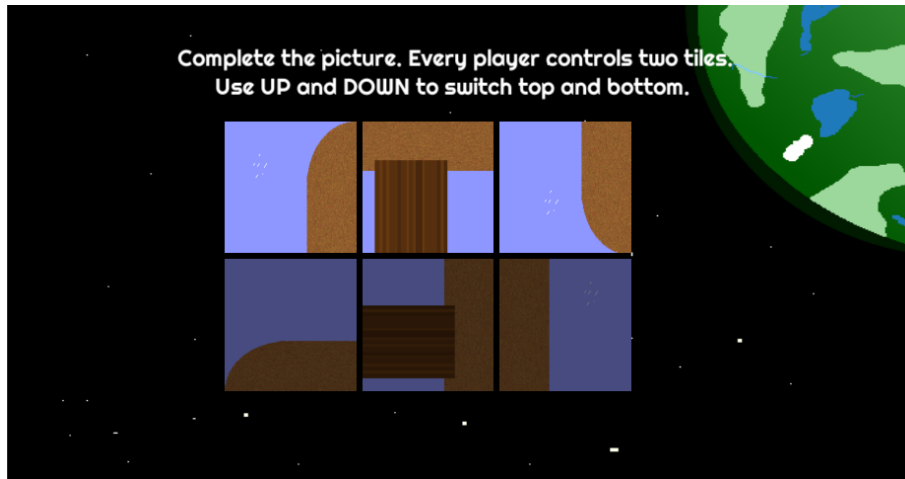


Figure 4.11: Puzzle Screen

4.7.4 Environment interactions

The players can engage with their environment through:

- Pressing the "Interaction" button,
- Stepping close to an object,
- Using an item from their inventory.

Some of these interactions require working together. For example by using two pry bars simultaneously the players can push a boulder off the road. Other interactions require only stepping close to an object as seen in [4.12](#) and [4.13](#).

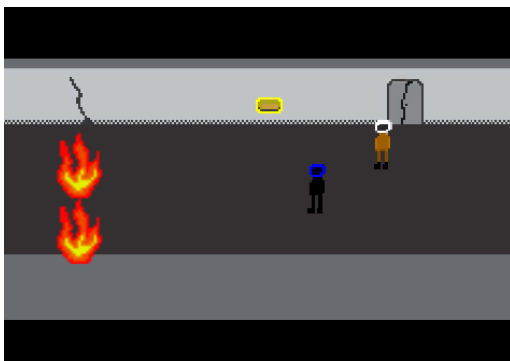


Figure 4.12: Fire burning



Figure 4.13: Fire turned off through button press

4.8 Controls

Each player controls his/her character with a GUI from his/her phone. This controller consists of movement buttons, a focus button, one or two interaction buttons and an inventory. The two "interaction" buttons change according to situation (voting mode/puzzle mode/etc.).

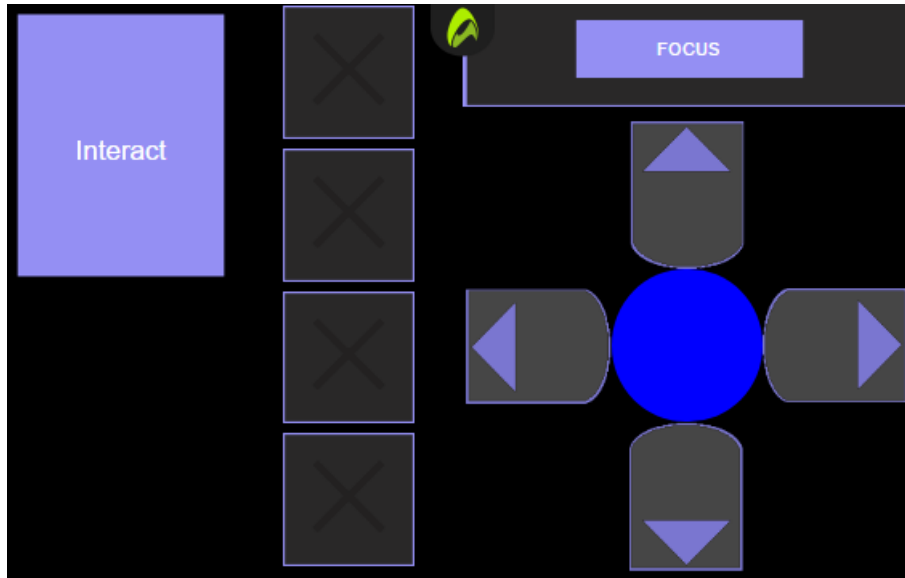


Figure 4.14: Controller Mockup

5 Front End

For this game two screens always have to be considered: the smart phone screen that hosts all the controls, and the big central screen that shows the game scene.

5.1 Start Screen

On the start screen the number of connected players is shown. If there are a minimum of three players, a button is displayed on the mobile screen, that lets the players start the game.



Figure 5.1: Start Screen

5.2 Menus

The game has no menus. Nothing needs to be adjusted by the user.

5.3 End Screen

If the players succeed in escaping the planet, they get a victory screen, otherwise the failure screen is shown. The success depends on picking the right fruits. Without fuel or having picked fruits the players cannot enter the ship again.



Figure 5.2: End screen if game is won



Figure 5.3: End screen if game wasn't successful

6 Technology

6.1 Target Systems

1. PC / Mac / SmartTV / Tablet
2. Android / iOS / Windows-Phone

6.2 Hardware

- One main screen (Beamer / PC / Mac / SmartTV / Tablet)
- At least three mobile phones

6.3 Development Systems/Tools

1. Unity
2. Tiled
3. Gimp

7 Marketing and Publishing Strategy

The product is not so much the game itself, but more the interaction between players. Therefore, promotion videos of the game should focus more on the players playing the game, and less on what the game looks like. A promotion video can be as easy as filming a group of players while playing the game, and putting the most intense 60 seconds into the finished video, followed by a short info screen with the title of the game and some other basic information.

Since the game works with Airconsole, it would be crucial to get the game to the Airconsole web page. The rest is a lot of social media activity.

We would also encourage our players to film themselves while playing the game (probably with a GoPro) and send the best snippets of the videos to us. The best of those snippets can be awarded as the "Best *Survival of the Zargs* Moment of the Day/Week". This could encourage people to play the game and providing us with the best video snippets for our marketing—hopefully a self-sustaining circle.

8 Timeline

Planned Schedule

Milestone	Description	Date
	Official start date	03.12.2016
1	Load screen and mobile device GUI	16.12.2016
2	Player movement and camera focus	24.12.2016
3	Basic game functions and background sound	31.12.2016
4	First prototype with a tutorial level	13.01.2017
5	QA Report	27.01.2017
6	Enriched story with inventory items and riddles	01.02.2017
7	Complete story line with varying endings	27.02.2017
	End of the project and final presentation	10.03.2017

Table 8.1: Schedule

9 Team and Credits

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