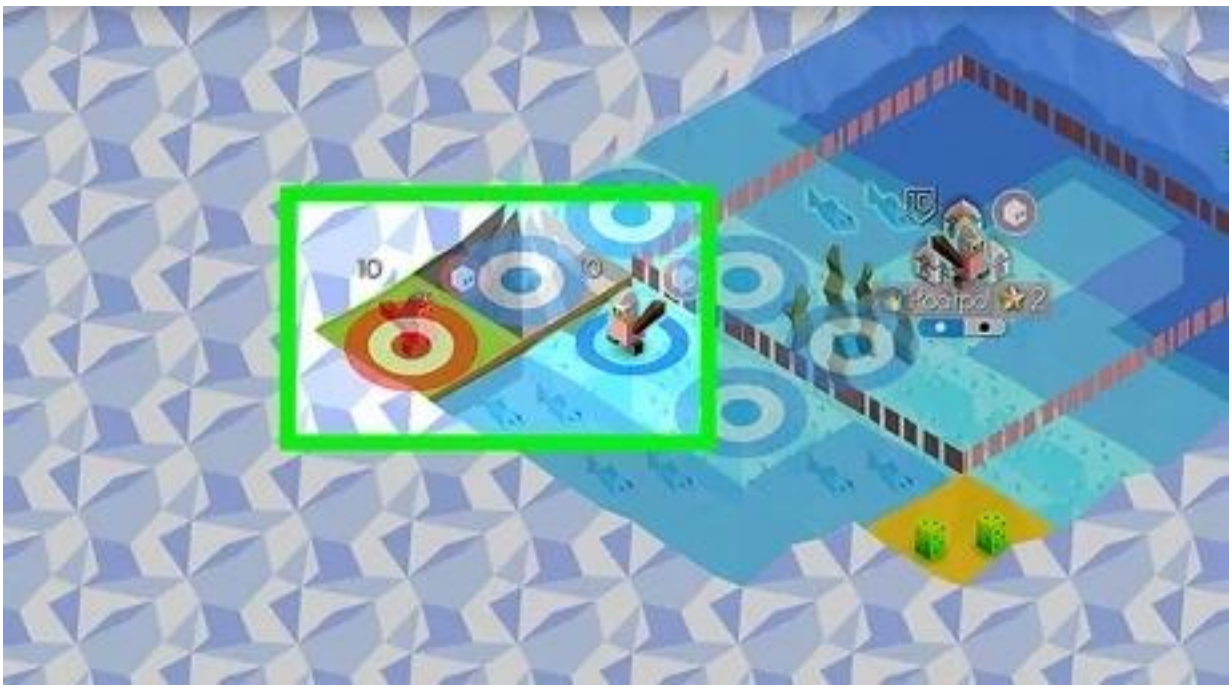
Michael Sinclair
A01050793

Case Study 3 – Battle of Polytopia

Battle of Polytopia is set up to assure one thing: if you play it once, you'll likely play it again. It does this with the system in which it interacts with its players by uncovering new strategies and concepts that aren't initially introduced to the player. Battle of Polytopia consistently implements interactions that are explicit, functional, and cognitive. Its system consistently implements explicit interaction as its system for managing tasks is all the same: tap a component, then tap its goal or destination. This simple system is implemented not for its explicit interactions but the cognitive ones. Like many other board games or turn based games, it is a battle of the wits. The other main explicit interaction that the player takes is upgrading their arsenal which unlocks new actions to be taken. The player can only spend a certain amount of stars per turn, so they must strategize and select what items they will spend on.

This game is easy on the eyes and since its difficulty can be chosen, it is great for those of age 12 and above. One form of functional interactivity that is appealing to its players is the chess or checkers like movement of the units. Especially when defeating an enemy and conquering their territory, the familiar sense of accomplishment when moving onto a new plot of land can intrigue the user to discover more new territory and keep them engaged in their strategy until they win. The game's components are laid out in a way that the player's focus is drawn to the entire board rather than one specific component. In result, many small tasks can be managed without overcomplicating things. The players, enemies, and animals are oversized to a hyperbolic extent, contrary to the mountains, dunes, and icebergs which are extremely undersized. Even the action of attacking an enemy is as simple as moving the unit onto an enemy's plot by tapping the enemy.



One form of cognitive interactivity that the player experiences is unlocking the map through breaking ice to discover new territory. In my first playthrough of the game, I didn't even know you could break the ice by placing a unit beside it until about my tenth turn. Silly, I know, but there is no indicator (e.g. pickaxe or construction tool) that's given off by any of the units to signal that they can break icebergs. Until I experienced one of my units breaking an iceberg, I didn't truly understand the importance of moving your units every turn. In result, I initially had no or very little strategy in using cognitive interaction as I had no set goal on what to unlock.

Other players may be lucky enough to discover this right away by prioritizing their units' movement in order to research what they can discover. As soon as the player breaks a chunk of ice, the importance of discovering new territory throughout the game becomes immediately apparent. Battle of Polytopia implements cognitive interactivity for its users so that the game becomes re-playable. Aside from explaining to the player how to move their units, it doesn't give many tutorials or explanation until the player is at the peak of the action. In result, the player discovers with each new interaction.

One thing I surprisingly didn't realize until late in the game is that you don't have to have a unit on top of a plot in order to perform an interaction such as hunting, mining, and collecting food. So long as it's within the player's territory, the plot can be selected, and the resources can be collected. Although this makes sense, this concept is not intuitive as it's not visibly apparent that there's anyone on the player's team available to collect the plot's resources. Cognitive experiences stem from how intuitive the interaction is as casual gamers will be able to grasp the concepts right away, although hardcore gamers will more easily discover the unintuitive concepts.

Using the "anatomy of choice" model, these are 2 choices I can break down clearly:

- **Choice #1: Venturing out with your units to discover new territory**
  Before venturing one's unit(s) out, the player may not be aware how or if the ice can be broken. Since the motive is not yet conveyed to the player at this point, their focus may be only on collecting what's in their territory and purchasing more units. The possibility of breaking the ice is conveyed when a unit is placed beside the ice. With the probable case that there will be a component or resources to collect under the newly broken ice, the player will be shown the value of venturing out one's units. The player also may be made aware the consequences of this action as enemies will be hidden under the ice.

- **Choice #2: Capturing new territory**
  Before given the option to capture neutral or enemy territory, the player may be motivated only to defend their current territory, and in result they may not venture out to capture additional territory. However, it is unlikely that the player will sit there and do nothing for all of their turns; it is common sense that this would result in losing the game given that there is a lose condition. The possibility of capturing territory is given to the player by either disclosing an enemy or a neutral hub which can be captured. If the user is feeling brave enough to perform such an action, they will venture out their unit(s) to capture the territory. In result, the player will be made aware that with each new territory

comes new resources to collect as well as more units to purchase. The importance of gaining territory is displayed to the player as they get more experience playing the game; once the player has played a full playthrough of the game, they will realize that they need the most territory in order to win the match.