Project Report Gameplay 1

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Experience: Played previously Unstable Unicorns where everybody was pretty evenly matched up except one player that was ahead and technically \*won\* already but they had a debuff which made all their winning conditions faulty. It basically turned all her unicorns into pandas. But in order for the rest of the players to deal with her unicorns/pandas we needed to get rid of her debuff which in turn meant for instant win for her.

Ideas:

1.Dragon nursery- Get eggs that will hatch into dragons after X amount of rounds that will affect other players eggs/dragons. Kill all other players dragons while defending your own

2. Don’t steal- You’re a team of explorers (think Lara croft/Indiana Jones), the aim is to escape the ancient tomb but if any of the players steal anything and gets caught it will triggers deathly traps for everyone. Escaping is final goal for everyone, Escaping with stolen loot will give you more money. The person who escapes with most money wins.

3.Lie- One vs Many- You are settlers and one of you is there to ruin everything. Try to sabotage other peoples efforts at settling down while not being detected by the others.

4. Many vs Many- King of the hill- You are an organism that is trying to fight for survival. Pick your traits (defensive or offensive) that will battle with others in order to reproduce.

-Idea generation

- Development of the game

- Testing and feedback

- Art and finalizing

- Conclusion to the project

Introduction:

We started this class by coming up with sentences for games. They could be anything and after bringing them up in class, they were fleshed out with the help of Joshua! My sentences are listed above. Dividing ourselves into groups around the sentences mentioned was the initial step.

After finding a group that wanted to go with a combination of sentences/ideas, we (the group) decided to go with a version of the first and last idea previously mentioned but also some other sentences the group members had. So, we started doing drafts of rules and coming up with a play sequence that made sense and was enjoyable. These drafts were made in a shared google document and were written not in a professional sense but more of a notepad so we can keep track of all the ideas and comments being brought up under sessions in class. I will now go through the drafts in a summary form but also post the entire draft so the process of going from draft 1 to draft 4 will be shown.

Initially as our idea took form and we started doing drafts, we looked into different types of games for inspiration and to see how other games implemented their rules and play styles into games. We wanted something that wasn’t incredibly difficult to get into but also something that could turn into a more advanced playstyles if you were familiar with the game and tactics available to you.

One of these games that we looked into was Smash up (AEG, u.d.)While I thoroughly enjoyed Smash up, it was quite of a steep learning curve. It took some trial runs and some discussions to understand the flow of the game, it took more than what reading the rulebook itself provided.

Though the rulebook wasn’t exactly what one would need to fully grasp how to play the game, it was very visually pleasing and easy to read through. Some hick-ups were present but overall, it was a pleasant read that introduced you to the theme very clearly. This was something that we took inspiration from since our theme of Silly and quirky mixed with medieval fantasy were a very important piece to our game.

Another game that was quite the opposite of Smash up in terms of learning curve was Sheriff of Nottingham. (cmon, u.d.) This game went fairly quickly to get into, that might be because of the nature of the game is very different compared to Smash up. Here your purpose is to get away with as much money as possible without getting caught, you can either play it truthfully or bluff your way through the game. Smash up on the other hand is completely different since even though you do have a common goal, there’s multiple ways to get there and several different tactics depending on what cards you have available to you.  
  
Sheriff was very enjoyable as well, the game itself passed very quickly. I think a game lasted 20-30 minutes with 5 players involved. Even though the rules were explained through players who previously played it, reading through the rulebook on the side provided the same knowledge that was required to play the game as was explained. The rules were properly written down to explain each sequence of the game with examples and pictures which helped explain the process.

So just from these two examples of games we aimed to get something with the same simplicity as Sheriff of Nottingham but maybe add some more complexity and tactics as Smash up. After this we divided our tasks, where Amy and Mia stated that they wanted to do the art and design work for the game. Me and Dan continued to work on the mechanics with help from Amy occasionally.

**Drafts:**

Draft 1:

We came up with a first draft quite quickly. It involved more of a breeding scheme where you would breed your dragons to get a higher level of eggs that will in turn get higher level of dragons and so on. It revolved around levelling up your dragon and battling enemies and capturing locations.  
  
Some initial pictures that were drawn to illustrate the ideas are shown below, they show the ideas about the breeding, locations and also what your hand would look like.  
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This concept was founded on the concept that you would breed your dragons and gain a level for each generation of eggs produced. Each egg produced would have its own flaws and perks and you would have to give them traits that would transfer to the hatched dragons.

Another part of the concept was that the locations were divided between the players and hidden throughout the game which introduced a part of secrecy and tactics to the gameplay.

To describe more detailed information about the planned game play I will take notes straight from our shared document which will be detailed further down.

It would start with that all egg cards are level 1 and would level up throughout the game. While playing, your eggs would hatch after a certain number of rounds into the same level dragon. To get another egg, two of your dragons would have to mate and this would produce one higher level egg. This could continue until you max out at level 3.

Each round, every player takes a card from the deck on the board and gets one action.

Start your turn by drawing a card. One action is using the card you got from the deck on the board. You can choose to not use the card, so a pass. You can use one of your dragons to “scout” the area, but in doing so, you engage in immediate combat if the location you “scouted” has a player in it. If it does not, you can choose to change locations but that reveals your new location and gives your eggs 1 extra day of hatching time.

Every location has a trait: Swamp has a fog of war. Castle lethal mediaeval traps f.ex.

By changing your location to one you scouted, you automatically get different stats. For it to benefit the player depends on the situation, for example you can be forced out of your location by a plague spell.

The other player doesn't know what your actions are, unless you reveal it by using a location buff/flaw.

If you meet a player on your “scout” action, you are at a disadvantage because the other player has the defensive buff from their location. You automatically have the high ground.

Dragon fights are always 1v1, you can't attack with multiple dragons at once nor can you defend with more than one at a time. Once a battle is over the attacking player goes back to their base and can use the next turn to attack again (the same place). If you lose a battle, you lose a dragon or an egg. By default, if you have dragons, you lose a dragon before you lose an egg. So choose your dragon wisely.

Spell ideas:

* Plague spell:
* Fire spell:
* Location shuffle

Extra ideas/questions/thoughts:

* The winner who enters the castle rolls a dice that has a random set of “rewards”. One could be that you have to revive another defeated player and have it out with them till one of you wins. Though as you would already be the winner before rolling a dice, it might feel a little pointless to crown you a winner at that point.
* Since the castle of legend would be the end goal (and being the only remaining player), the castle could be a location with requirements one might say. To prevent avoidance of the main objective, which is to attack other bases and wipe out other players, entering the castle could be impossible without a certain level. Which you would only be able to raise by winning battles.
* There could be temporary ally options. F.ex: An ability card could double your attack points if you teamed up with another player, but they would gain the same amount of points you did. The alliance would only last one round.
* Taking out the breeding idea and levels. You could upgrade your dragon with AC, some AC will let you pick a new EC and roll the dice for hatching time. Keep track of hatching time on the board with pieces.
* Taking the idea with bases from Smash up, so instead of having bases you necessarily belong to you each try to conquer bases that will in turn give you points for upgrades. Once you’ve upgraded your dragon you can try to go for the castle which has a harder difficulty getting into. Once in there you start the second phase and battle out between the other players for the treasure.
* At the start of the game, one of the players pick basecards depending on how many players there are plus two.. So 4 player, means 4 basecards +2. Then you build the basecard to simulate a board on the table.
* Should we still make use of “scouting” an area in our game? You’d only know for certain there is a player in a location if there are no less than 5 players. Having that extra feature that bases on whether there are 5 or less people might be an unnecessary feature.

After discussing this between us and Joshua and reading through the draft and trying to come up with a clear rule set it became very complicated very quickly. What level could win over what, could you just rush to the max level and be unstoppable? What’s the point in having levels AND action cards if you automatically win by having a higher level.  
These were just a few of the complexities that we encountered and couldn’t find a way to solve so we decided to clean things up and start on draft 2.  
  
**Draft 2:**

In this draft we tried to implement a more concise way of typing it out, so we introduced subcategories in the text and tried to stick to it better. This made it easier to read and easier to find information after the fact. We introduced narrative as a way to justify why the players were doing what they were doing. Was there a reason, what are they controlling etc.

All this to make it into a more immersive kind of experience. We also tried to start listing the components needed for the game, this went fine until we were going to define the *amount* of pieces and components. For example, we knew we needed dragon pieces and ability cards but not how many of each. Was it possible to even implement the amount that we wanted, or did we have to downsize based on the time that we had on our hands for the assignment?

*Draft 2: Rulebook, table of contents*

**Contents/components:**

* Gameboard
* ? Dragon pieces
* 1 Regular dice
* 5 Location cards (LC)
* 15+ Egg cards (EC)
* ? Ability/Action cards (AC)

**Game play & setup**

These dragons want treasure, and the biggest treasure of all is in a forsaken castle where tales of a legendary one lies in its depths ready to be discovered by the most skilled dragon out there.

1. Everyone plays individually, but there can be more people on one team. Every player/team starts out with 7 cards: 1 location card (LC), 2 ability/action cards (AC) and 2 egg cards (EC). The gameboard will show 5 different locations spread across it, and on each side of the castle of legend (in the middle) there will be a stack of cards for the players to draw. One stack will be the AC’s and the other will be the EC’s. All drawn cards will be kept secret from other players.
2. Each round every player can choose to either play or draw an ability card, but if you draw a card your round is over. Your dragon cards will not be able to do anything before they’ve hatched. Each level of EC hatch after a certain number of rounds. Keep track of hatching on the board.

The first few rounds will be only about being first to hatch your eggs. Everyone will start with the same number of rounds until you or someone else uses an action card to speed or slow down a process. Every new EC after the first 2 starters will need the roll of the dice to determine hatching time. New ECs are only drawn when an AC gives you the option to choose an EC.

This draft was a short one because we quickly got the feeling that it didn’t work. We discussed our idea with Joshua and also some other third parties outside of our group. We realized that some parts needed to be refined because we got some new perspectives after talking it through that lead to more questions that we didn’t have the answers for. One of the big questions were how would the locations provide any immersion other than just unnecessary complexity in terms of attacking someone? Wouldn’t there be constant battle at the castle? What would be the point in having any locations other than the castle one if the end goal was the same for everyone, e.g getting the biggest treasure at the castle?

We concluded once again to refine the mechanics while keeping the core parts. We knew we wanted action cards and location cards. You played dragons but how those dragons would be portrayed and used was still very vague.

*Draft 3*

This is the draft where we approached our last iteration of our game. We started the draft a bit differently than where we ended up. We changed the winning condition to not be dependent on one base in the center but instead everyone was trying to gather as much coin as possible. This would provide a bit of narrative approaches since dragons according to the norm, wants to get a hoard of gold.

We continued with still having upgradable dragons, you would have 3 slots to each dragon that would play into account when battling other players. These action cards that you would place in the upgrade slots would have a number to signify the power of the card, kind of the same way Smash up did it, and you would win a fight by having the highest total number in the battle. Locations would still be a thing but instead of having them handed out to each player, they would be a stationary thing on the table to form a board of sorts.

After playtesting that idea we felt that something was off in terms of the battles. We decided to investigate how other games used battles between players to gather some sort of inspiration where we could combine several things into one.

Some games that provided a lot of inspiration at this point which pushed some of our changes were Unstable Unicorns (Unstable Games, 2017) and Epic Spell Wars of the Battle Wizards (EpicSpellWars, u.d.). These gave inspiration on how we would continue to shape how our combat worked. Unstable Unicorns had a way to play different type of cards that affected both yourself and other players, these gave way to some interesting tactics that could change the tide of a game with just one card. But you would also have to think through what the other people had in terms of cards so your tactic doesn’t fail, you would have to always think three steps ahead. It also had several different expansions that made the game more or less silly, while keeping the theme.

Epic Spell wars introduced the sequence battles. You would have starter cards which symbolized what character is the spell caster, then you continued to fill out parts of your spell which could be as long or as short as you wanted, and you had a chance to play a finisher to that spell which would do different things depending on what the card states. This also introduces quite a bit of tactic to the battle but also keeps the theme since there’s illustrations on all cards and they also have names that would turn into the spell name. What we took inspiration from here was the fact that the battles were mostly everyone versus everyone. You could have multiple people fighting one or they could target everyone with a group damage spell. This gave the game more interactive elements since nobody would have to sit and do nothing while waiting for a battle to be finished.

After taking those ideas into account, the major changes we did to the game was:

* Instead of having separate location cards handed to each player, we decided to have stationary locations that would act as a board to play on. This removed the complexity of every round that was introduced when having secrecy as a component around the bases. Such as *how do I know who I’m targeting? Scouting is confusing, why would I send a dragon as a scout when I can go for the treasure?*
* Action cards are now something you can play as a spell whenever it is your turn, not just in combat.

At this point we needed to start playtesting properly in tabletop simulator to get a feel of the game. Before this point we’ve just played it out theoretically by talking about, “I go here, I do this” without having any sort of game available to play around with. To proceed with playtesting properly myself and Dan needed some actual cards to place into tabletop, while less than a handful of action cards was provided at that point from the part of the group that were supposed to do the design, we started creating everything needed to playtest it properly in tabletop simulator. This led to that the second draft of action cards and the quick first draft of the dragon cards were done by me, and the location cards/pieces were done by Dan.

Me and Dan continued to playtest it and wrote down the results of the session. The results were that we needed different winning conditions, it felt kind of flat and not very interactive if everyone was just collecting gold. There was no point in fighting each other which made it feel kind of boring.

After this, the entire group play tested it together with Joshua. At that time, I personally realized that not everybody in the group had been present in the discussions nor had they participated in the shared google docs or the group chat where the information was shared and had to be told repeatedly which mechanics were present and which had been scrapped previously.

This play test gave way to some fine tuning by the help of the feedback provided by Joshua. This feedback was;

* The overall mechanics were good
* The player had a sense of ownership over the dragons when you moved them, and when you captured a base.
* The combat needed to be sequenced in terms how who flips their action cards first and what cards effect is re-enacted first.
* Initially, the text itself on the action cards were the only descriptor to if you could or couldn’t play it in combat. This needed to show more clearly.
* The theme was good

After this feedback I went back and started writing on the final draft of the game.

***Draft 4:***

The last and final draft ended up being this, draft 4. After taking all the different inspiration from games and feedback from Joshua and third parties I landed on a similar, but a little bit different draft compared to draft 3.

Most of the cards works essentially the same. We fine tuned the cards with new visuals and clarifications. The last draft is a refined one and doesn’t need a summary more than the one provided previously. This is the content that has been used when I created the rulebook.

*Draft 4*

***Contents/components:***

* 7 Base pieces
* 15+ Egg cards (EC)
* 27 unique Action/Augment cards (AC)
* 5 Dragon cards
* 30 number pieces

***Story:***

Dragons are escaping a cataclysmic event where a lot of dragons have already died. There are 5 different factions of dragons escaping and will now try to establish a hold on this new land that has been discovered by the group. Each player will control one faction of dragons as they try to become the wealthiest and most powerful faction in the land while also trying to sabotage other players by combating them.

***How to win:***

To win the game there are several winning conditions, these are listed below:

* Gold Hoarder: Collect enough coins(80) to go “legit” and buy yourself a plundering license.
* Temper Tantrum: Fight the other factions and kill a minimum of 2 dragon per faction
* Wrecking Ball: Destroy 3 locations
* Dragon God: Become the dragon god and gain acolytes by hatching dragon eggs and gathering 6 dragons
* Stingy Dragon: Hold control over 3 bases simultaneously for 3 rounds.

These winning conditions will be shuffled and one will be given to each player, which will result in nobody knowing what the other players need to do to win the game.

***Setup:***

In the beginning of the game, each player will choose a faction and then shuffle the deck of action cards into one pile in the center of the table. Shuffle the deck of locations and then place out 2 more bases than there are players (e.g in a 3 player game there will be 5 locations on the table) on the table next to each other. These will form the land that the dragons want to take control over and where the game will be played out.

Each player will start with 2 dragons that they can control and 8 action cards on hand.

Two examples of action cards are shown below. Action cards with a red background are only playable in combat and action cards with blue background are only playable out of combat. The name of the action card is displayed at the top of the card, the effect and description of the card is displayed underneath the image.

A picture containing text

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An example of a dragon card is displayed underneath, the grid to the left is the tracker for health. This has 6 columns which are numbered 1-6, this corresponds to each dragon that you own. Each column has 6 rows for the health that each dragon has. The tracker to the right is the egg tracker that is in play when a dragon is not hatched yet, where you start is determined by a 1-6 dice roll which will tell you how many rounds are needed to hatch. You can have up to 6 dragons in total and when you want to move a dragon to a location you move the piece with the corresponding number to the dragon you want to use.

Diagram

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***Gameplay:***

***Actions:***

Each round you do an “action”, these actions can be several different things. Each choice comes with different consequences.

* Moving your dragons to a location
  + This is an action that will attempt to capture a location for your own gain. Attempting to capture a location also makes you vulnerable to attacks from other players. At any point another player can move their dragons to the same location which will trigger a battle between the players in the location. Only one player can have control over the location at once.
* Playing an action card
  + This will trigger the magical effect on the card straight away and then go into the discard pile.
* Buying a card from the ”shop”
  + This action means that you will spend your earned gold coins to purchase an action card. These come in different tiers and will cost differently depending on which tier you purchase. There will always only be one card in each tier and this will be replaced once purchased. The downside of this would be that this is an option action which means that everybody see what card you’re purchasing. The highest tiered card is always an egg card.

You end your round by drawing an action card. If you have less than 4 you will draw until your hand is minimum of 4.

Gaining coins is only done through owning a location(s).

***Locations:***

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Locations, such as the castle that are shown above, have different perks depending on the location.These perks dont come into effect before someone owns the location. The locations have a possibility to give you coins for every round you own them, in the castle example you gain 4 coins every round. To capture a base you will have to move a dragon there, if contested you have to win the battle and then you own the location immediately after the battle is over.

When capturing a location, there’s a capturing time worth one round. This means that when you go to a location, everybody in the game gets a turn to either play an action or move one of their dragons before you own the base. If a capturing attempt is contested by another player, the battle will take precedence and will be played out before the game continues.

***Battle:***

When in battle, the players involved will put down a sequence each that consists of 2 cards. These will determine the outcome of the battle. You can do any sort of combination as long as the cards are usable in combat (this is indicated on the card itself).The sequence is played face down on the board.

When all players who are participating in the battle have placed down their sequence facedown, the actual battle starts.It starts by the player who got attacked, e.g the defender of a location, OR the player who got to the location first, flips their first sequence card (you go from left to right) and the cards effect is triggered and corresponding healing/damage is dealt out.

After this effect is triggered the next person in the queue,(go clockwise starting from the defender), flips their first sequence card. This will keep going until every player in the battle has flipped over their first sequence card. You continue the battle by doing the same procedure but with the second sequence card. The winner is determined by who gets out of the battle with the most health, if two or more players end up on the same health its a draw and nobody keeps the location.

Calendar

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This is an example of a battle between 2 players, both have placed down their respective sequence.

The bottom player is the defender in this scenario and flips their first card first. This turned out to be a ghost, which means that they steal one of the opponents cards (which now comes into effect)  and then discards the ghost itself. This gives an advantage to the first player since the second player now only has one card in their sequence. It continues with both players flipping their second card and playing out the effect. In this instance the defender wins and keeps the base.