

Computer games

context project - T12805

Background context

In many circumstances, **a whole bunch of people have to spend time together at the same place**. Sometimes, this is because they are **colleagues working in the same company or department** and share a corporate workplace, culture and goals. Often, however, those **people do not know each other and just have to stay together at the same location** (possibly waiting), **for a considerable lap of time**: waiting room, staying in line, classroom, airport or train station, auditorium, party, train, traffic jam, airplane, theme park attraction, concert, stadium, festival,... you name it. In many cases, this sense of co-location is one of the few factors uniting all those people; in other cases, they may have come together for whatever common purpose.

Anyway, it is a very interesting and attractive challenge to devise ways of **collectively entertaining such (large) groups**, even if it is only for a relatively short period of time. On the one hand, playing a game is a virtually universal pleasant experience. On the other hand, if there's some waiting time involved, a game will likely make it more bearable or even fun, all the more if this all happens interactively, collectively, competitively or collaboratively in the same local, social context. Ideally, one might even manage to make something useful emerge and last beyond that entertaining period, like having a problem or puzzle solved, offering participants a new insight on some matter, leaving behind something built, classified, etc. In any case, at the end of such a collective experience, the **sense of amusement** and/or fulfillment in each of the participants should definitely be amazing, regardless of the location, the group's demographics or the social context.

Project description

In this project, you will **design and implement** a prototype computer **game with a purpose** that fits within the above context. The game will have to fulfill a number of requirements, both functional and technical, which will be communicated at the start of the course.

Your team will start by choosing one (or more) concrete context(s), for which several game concepts will have to be sketched, evaluated and pitched to a jury panel; eventually, the team's strongest concept will be selected for implementation throughout the rest of the semester. In any case, you will have a (way too...) large freedom on the concrete domain and on designing your own game.

As you can imagine, the task of making such a game is at the crossroads of **creativity** and **technology**, which is why game design and development is such a complex and challenging endeavor. Regarding creativity, you are encouraged to seek inspiration in whatever legitimate (digital or human) resources you see fit, as long as your final game is substantially **original**. Keep in mind, however, that you will not be assessed for the beautiful art or awesome animations in it. The emphasis, therefore, will be on designing and building a fully functional game prototype, which smartly uses whatever combination of **low-budget technology**, so that it smoothly and effectively suits the chosen context. Examples of this are microphones, Kinect, (web)cams, smartphones, WiFi, Bluetooth, NFC, Oculus Rift, etc. In other words, seamlessly blending the story, the gameplay and the players' interaction, within your particular context, will expectedly take a good deal of your

attention. The bottom line is that the game should not require a very elaborate technical or logistic setup, neither of the location nor of the players.

Your team will work in an interdisciplinary fashion, with **roles and responsibilities** assigned to each member, as in a small game studio (e.g. lead programmer, producer, lead designer, lead artist, lead tester, etc.). Of course, everyone will be programming a lot.

The project will consist of the following phases (approx. durations):

- Design and Proof(s) of concept (2 weeks)
- First (convincingly playable...) prototype (3 weeks)
- Beta (3 weeks)
- Release (2 weeks)

Lectures

In the initial phase, various topics will be handled and discussed in a few plenary sessions, as for example:

- group dynamics and entertainment
- inspirational TED talk videos & discussions

Team

Coordinator: Rafael Bidarra

External advisor: Ben Kybartas

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