

The King and the Crowd: Concept Doc

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Explain what you made, and why.

Our team, Team Parliament, created a game called 'The King and the Crowd' that is a mixture between a management game, a text-adventure game, and an audience driven story. We had four main reasons why we created this game: 1) to increase the stake the audience has in a streamed game, 2) to foster better communication and community between the streamer and the viewers, 3) to create a unique gameplay that force the streamer and the audience to have to work together to achieve goals, and 4) to tell a story that is evocative with a meaningful narrative arc.

The audience in Twitch chats do not really have a significant stake as they cannot tangibly affect the streamer. In contrast, the audience interface we made is like an actual game that is not simply a modification of the chat, but a tool for viewers to become actual players in 'The King and the Crowd' and have an essential stake in the game. Communication between audience and streamer is essential so that community does not wither away and to build rapport between the people participating in the gameplay. Interaction also encourages people to continue playing these kinds of audience participation games.

In terms of forcing streamer and audience to working together, we thought this to be an integral part of our project since this structure places streamers in a situation where they have to negotiate with viewers in order to make the most optimal decisions. Finally, we wanted to tell a story that goes beyond a cause and effect. We strived to tell a story through our game that would feel complete enough that even after playing our game, the narrative story would stay with both streamer and viewer, since that would also mean that our game was engaging and entertaining.

What made you think it was a good idea?

We pursued this idea of a streamer relying on their viewers for outcomes, and vice versa, because we believed that this would enliven the gameplay. Through our audience interface, which allows viewers to make influential decisions, the story being told is not singularly in the streamer's point of view, but rather it is interactive and viewer-inclusive. Additionally, the traditional linear-sequence of events in text-adventure games became, instead, in our game, an organic, complicated web of occurrences that can change at any minute by any decision by either streamer or viewer.

How did things you learned in this class inspired you?

There were many sources of inspiration in this class that our team drew from to create 'The King and the Crowd.' For example, our team was inspired by an audience participation game we learned about called 'Choice Chamber' which is a "real time, crowdsourced, procedurally generated game where your fate is in everyone else's hands."¹ This game aligned with many of our goals for 'The King and the Crowd' such

¹ <http://choicechamber.com/>

as increasing interaction between the streamer and viewers as well as giving the audience a larger stake in how the gameplay pans out.

Additionally, throughout the class our team was inspired by the potential of the Twitch chat, leading to our own audience interface. We created this separate interface to allow the viewers and streamer to still talk in the chat, rather than play the game in chat, as we believe the chat to be the most important medium of communication between the streamer and viewers. This way, we have an interface for the viewers that enables them to play the game outside of chat.

What material outside the class helped you develop your ideas? What existing games, software, or social experiences are in a similar space to what you made?

The idea that brought us all together in the first place was an “audience-driven story,” involving a crowd-controlled environment like the Twitch stream as the audience. One of us had pitched the idea of creating a dynamic relationship between a “king” (the streamer) and the “parliament” (the viewers), and we all found it an interesting concept to explore.

We researched and played different games to inspire us on how to properly convey a relationship between a king and his kingdom, including *Reigns*, *Sort the Court*,² and *Long Live the Queen*. All three games are similar in that they utilize stats meters to show how well the player is doing, and we looked into how we could take an idea like that and bring it into a crowd-controlled game.

We were also inspired by the quirkiness of *Sort the Court*, where the events that the king has to deal with are a bit strange and unexpected, but contribute to the overall charm of the game. In *Sort the Court*, the repercussions of the king’s actions are usually small and inconsequential to the player, so to increase the stakes and make gameplay more exciting, we asked ourselves “what if the kingdom could make their own decisions and affect how the king approaches the problems he faces?”

How does your work improve on the current status quo, or fill a gap in the ecosystem?

Right now, the Twitch games that involve crowd participation seem very one-sided in their gameplay. For example, *TwitchPlaysPokemon* involves almost no input from the streamer, and a game like *Choice Chamber* has the audience make decisions independent from the streamer’s in-game choices and gameplay. Our game introduces a more dynamic and meaningful interaction between a streamer and his or her viewers. “The King and the Crowd” implements the idea that viewers can actively play the game with the streamer, since both parties’ decisions affect one another. We also decided to divide the chat into different factions to give different incentives and increase the level of pride they have in being part of the chat. By giving the streamer and the viewers different in-game roles that they can identify with, their relationship with one another becomes more robust and dynamic.

² <https://graebor.itch.io/sort-the-court>