Game Design 3 - game analysis

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Crop Out!

Introduction

Are you up for the task of surviving the harsh apocalyptic Earth landscape through the genetic modification of crops? Put your creativity to play, craft completely new crop-types by combining and enhancing their seeds. Watch as you survive against the zombies.

Gameplay-loop

The main goal of the game is to inform people about the possibilities and importance of genetically modifying crops. The game shows both the good and the bad sides of the subject, and teaches how it could be used to be beneficial.

The player will attempt to survive for as long as possible, while defending the tree of life located in the middle of the field from the crop zombies.

The gameplay loop consists out of the following elements:
- Harvesting parts
- Placing crops
- Modifying crops

These steps will be repeated until the player has reached a 'game over'.

Harvesting parts

The player roams around the map in the search of dead crops. These dead crops can then be extracted in parts to be used later.

Placing crops

The player can use the harvested parts to place new crops, if they have enough fruit. This can either be a defensive crop, or a fruit crop. Defensive crops fire projectiles at enemies to protect the tree of life. Fruit crops produce fruit for the player to pick up and use to plant new crops.

Modifying crops

Every now and again the direction from which enemies will come to destroy the tree of life will change. To move the defensive crops to a tactical position, and the fruit crops to a safe position, the player can replace the parts of the already placed crops to modify their behaviour.

MDA framework

I have conducted an MDA framework for 'Crop Out!'.

Mechanics	Dynamics	Aesthetics
Crop Out! - MDA framework		
Components	Exploration	Creativity
Score	Chance	Challenge
High-score	Consequences	Competitivity
	Strategy	Narrative
Controls	Continuation	Emotions
Difficulty-increase timer	Combat	Norms and values
Enemy direction randomizer	Strategy	
Enemy spawn-rate		
Crop component spawn-rate		
Courses		
Survival		
Defend the tree		
Break the highscore		
Fend off the enemies		

From the MDA model seen above I could conclude a couple of interesting things about the game.

It appears that the game is, due to its high-score based gameplay, competitive and challenging and thus pushes players to keep trying to beat their friends or their own personal high-score. The feeling of competition is strong.

I do believe that the narrative of the game, and its applied goal, should have a bigger focus within the gameplay itself. As players tend to get confused as to what the deeper goal of the game is aimed at.

Game scope

The cards that I've drawn from the deck came with the following questions:

1. Beïnvloeden mede of tegenspelers het spelverloop? - No
2. Krijgt de speler in het spel een duidelijke verantwoordelijkheid? - Yes
3. Krijgt de speler in het spel de instructie om een fictieve rol aan te nemen? - Yes
4. Kan de speler 'zonder veel uitleg' snel aan de slag met het spel - Yes
5. Kan de speler het spelverloop beïnvloeden? - Yes
6. Zijn de acties voor de speler gemakkelijk uit te voeren? - Yes
7. Is de gekozen spelwereld motiverend voor de speler? - Yes
8. Is het doel van het spel duidelijk voor de doelgroep? - Yes
9. Houd het spelontwerp rekening met de fysieke omgeving waarin de speler zich bevindt? - Yes
10. Krijgt de speler tijdens het spel zodanig feedback dat hij het spelgedrag kan aanpassen? - Doubt
11. Is er in het spelontwerp voldoende rekening gehouden met ongewenst speler gedrag? - Yes
12. Sluit het spel aan bij verschillende types spelers binnen de doelgroep? - Yes
13. Is het spel zo ontworpen dat de speler zich door de opdrachtgever gewenste gedrag laten zien? - Yes
14. Is de beschikbaarheid van digitale hulpmiddelen een absolute voorwaarde voor de spelervaring? - Yes
15. Zijn er extra prikkels om de spelers te motiveren, zoals de competitie spanning kansfactor rollenspel? - Yes
16. Is de doelstelling van de opdrachtgever door het spelen van het spel behaald? - Yes
17. Kun je het concept later eenvoudig uitbreiden? - Yes
18. Kun je het concept eenvoudig opschalen? - Yes
19. Is de verhouding, kosten / baten in balans? - Yes

'Beïnvloeden mede of tegenspelers het spelverloop?' - No

At the current state of the game, it's a single player experience. This means that other players can't have a direct impact on one another's playing session. However, the players can take turns and leave their own personal high-score behind, which causes the other players to gain extra motivation to beat this high-score and thus play the game.

'Krijgt de speler tijdens het spel zodanig feedback dat hij het spelgedrag kan aanpassen?' - Doubt

The game is still at an early stage and user-feedback was pushed way too far to the back of the development phase. The result of this choice is that the user-feedback can sometimes be unclear, or not present at all.