COMP09095 Level Design

Week 04 Lecture – Level Design Documents

Brainstorm rules:
1. one idea at a time
2. encourage wild ideas
3. go for quantity
4. be visual
5. headline!
6. build on others' ideas "yes, and"
7. defer judgement
8. marking and sifting

Level Design Document

Your submission for assessment 1 will consist of a detailed Level Design Report containing a title page with details of the team members, and three sections:

1. Design
   1.1.   A brief narrative description of the design concept for your level
   1.2.   Settings, Theme, Focal Point(s) and Location(s)
   1.3.   Player Experience
   1.4.   Level Features
   1.5.   Usability and Gameplay Reference and Research
   1.6.   Photo/Video Reference and Research

- Architecture
- Environment
- Lighting
- Props/Artefacts
- Inspiration

   1.7.   Story

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1.8. Interactivity

- Objectives
- Obstacles
- Set Pieces/Scripted Events

1.9. Visual Development

- Style Reference
- Colour Palette
- Lighting

1.10. Top-Down Layout and Concept Art

- A detailed top-down schematic of the entire level
- Examples of concept art
- Screenshot(s) from UE4 showing blocked-out content

1.11. Uniqueness/Originality of the Level

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2.   Project Planning and Control

2.1.   A detailed project plan starting from the date of the first class for the module, and containing all of the tasks and sub-tasks involved in the project

2.2.   Estimated duration, start and end dates for each task and sub-task.

2.3.   Task and sub-task dependencies

2.4.   Allocation of tasks and sub-tasks to team members

2.5.   A Gantt chart showing all of the above information

2.6.   A description of the process that you will adopt to monitor progress on the project.

3.   Playtesting

One important component of your second assessment will be the results of the playtesting of your level. You should describe in detail in your Level design Report how you will approach this, and the processes, participants and documentation you will use.

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Note that all of the items listed above are mandatory, so make sure that you include all of them in your report. Note also that scripted events and other interactivity are very important. A very large level with little in the way of story and/or gameplay will not achieve a good grade, no matter how much static content it has.

Brainstorming Level Ideas

- Brainstorming for your level happens from the beginning of the development process
- Rate should increase once the level concept has been agreed
- Next step is creation of a Level Design Document

Level Design Document

1. **Define the setting:**
- What is the functional purpose of the setting?
- Does it have interior and exterior spaces?
- Do the spaces flow into one another?
- How big are specific areas in the level?
- How much time should the player spend in the level?
- What is the architecture like?
- Lots of decoration, or more functional?
- What objects/details fill the spaces?

Level Design Document

2. **Define the level narrative:**
- The story that the level tells
- A game has an overall story from beginning to end
- Each level can also have its own story
- A list of rules that you need to follow – helps design process
- You can break the rules for the sake of the level
- Be as detailed as you can

Level Design Document

3. Define the events that need to take place:
- Based on overall game story (level narrative), e.g.
- Meeting NPCs
- Finding items
- Gaining new skills
- Transitions from one area to another
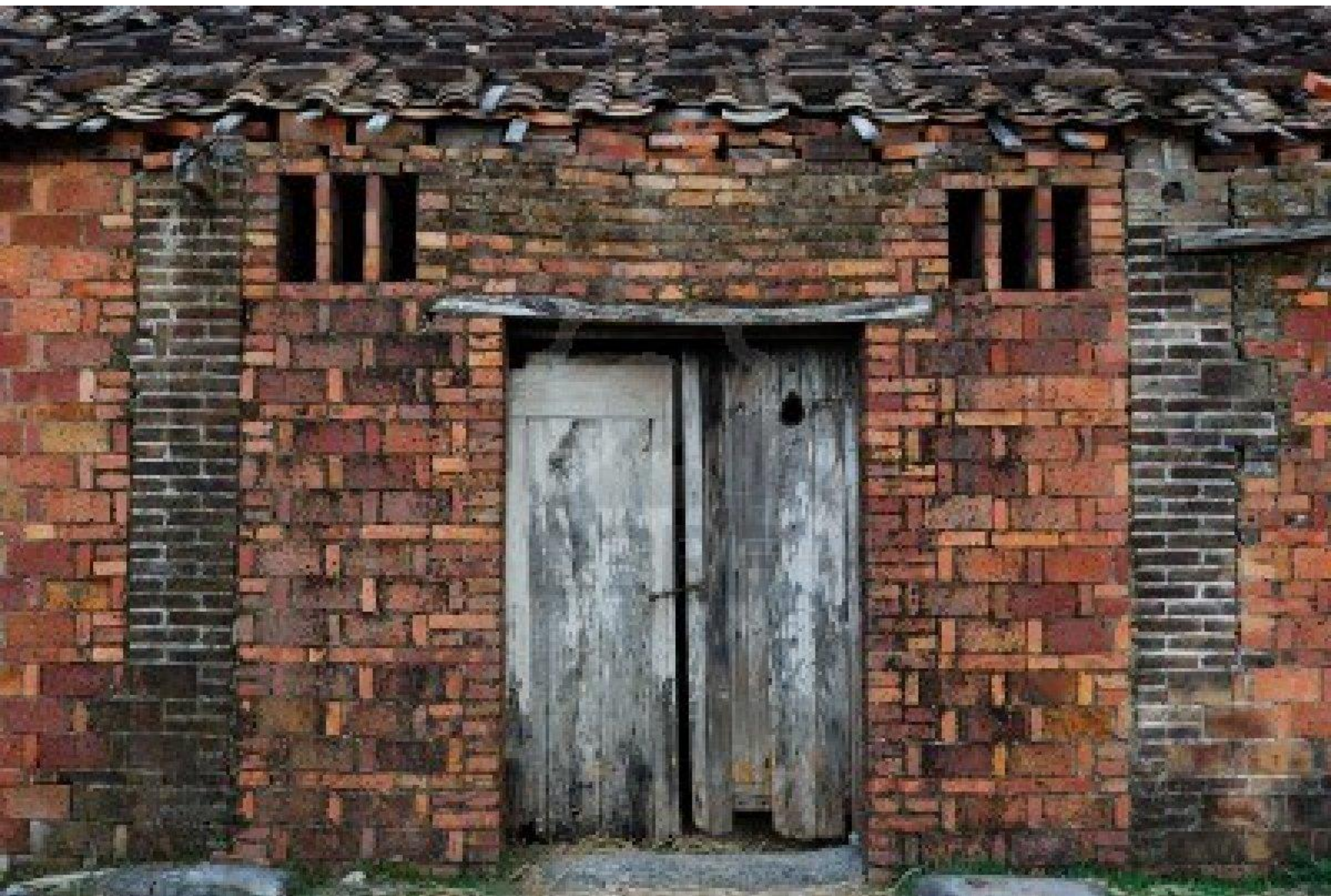- Scripted sequences
- Puzzles

Level Design Document

4. **Gather/Create Concepts and Reference Images**

- Solidify your LDD with reference images and concept art
- Helps generate ideas
- Useful for considering geometry/textures
- Artistic ability not important at this conceptual stage

Reference Image – Abandoned Factory

Reference Image – Weathered Timber & Brickwork

Reference Image – Derelict Prison Cells

Reference Image – Milwaukee Slum Buildings

Concept Art - Prison

Concept Art - Cabins Beside River

Level Design Document

5. **Interior and Exterior Spaces**
- Work very differently in a level
- Type of space constrains gameplay design options
- Interior space has a ceiling (may not be visible)
- Interiors usually smaller and easier to control
- Typically interiors have more detail
- Exterior uses terrain geometry

Level Design Document

6. **Spatial Scale**
- Include scale of the entire level and specific areas
- Can be difficult and time-consuming to get right
- Use e.g. a character or vehicle to give a sense of scale in concept art
- Start with simple architectural space and develop from there
- Use a sandbox level if possible

Human figures give a sense of scale

Level Design Document

7. **Landmarks**
- Every game level should include landmarks
- Sometimes called "focal points"
- Players use them to avoid getting lost or going in circles
- Can be anything, as long as it's unique and memorable
- Before designing a level you should know or determine the landmarks

Level Design Document

8. **Puzzles**
- Situations in your level that require the player to find a solution in order to progress
- Archetype is "lock and key"
- Can be used to slow player progression/change pace
- Add variety to the level
- Cause player to stop and think about how the level works
- Give the player a sense of accomplishment

Level Design Document

9. **Scripted Sequences**
- aka "scenes"
- Enhance the story of the level
- Drop important clues to the player
- Players remember good scenes in levels
- Can be simple, e.g. lights go out when player enters a room
- Can be complex and time-consuming to develop
- Need to specify in LDD