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Why a survival game?

We did a brainstorm session and at first we wanted to do something with zombies regarding the social example presented in class. It would be more of a way that if you didn't clean up the trash in the game that a (trash)zombie would appear (hoping that people would clean up their trash in real life in fear of a zombie spawning). We scrapped the idea, because zombies weren't serious enough for us to use and the idea was initially intended as a joke. Next we thought more of a remote island where you somehow ended up at (be it plane / air balloon / ship). This idea evolved to being a survival game (again zombies popped up for fun, but recreating Minecraft was not our intention).

With the survival idea settling in, our thoughts went out to what we could teach the players. Here we focussed on basic survival skills like how to make fire, gather fresh water and even set up traps in hopes of catching a meal. We think these skills are needed, because if any major event is to happen then we have to rely on these skills to survive. For example: a solar flare hits our planet, then our electronics are simply fried. With so much usage of these electric systems, we would have to rely on non-electronic ways to survive. This would include basic survival skills.

Each of us remembering the survival show on Discovery Channel with Bear Grylls as the host, we came up with the name "Project Bear Grylls", however this might interfere with copyrights and whatnot so we changed the name to "Living Bearly", still hinting at Bear Grylls, but at the same time giving the survival message to those that read it.

How would the game be realized?

To make the game accessible to everyone we are going to make it in Unity (the engine), because this can be displayed on a browser. Programming languages as JAVA/C/Python would not be suited here because their graphical interfaces are (fairly) tough to program, while Unity appears to be more free with the environment. The coding of the GUI (Graphical User Interface) where the user will make their choices is still mostly made using code, though here we have the option to use JavaScript and initial testing with the UnityGUI has proven to be quite easy to get a grip on which, regarding the time limit of the project, is a great help to finishing on time.

Mechanics wise I believe that the game needs at least a health bar which goes down with each bad decision that you make. In turn this will affect your survival 'score'. When you make good decisions your health can't go over a maximum, but you might be able to score bonus points for keeping your health as high as possible over time. For example: over average of a single survival attempt you had 95 percent health (or some other metric) then you could get a score modifier based on that. Here I think that 0 percent health has a score modifier of 0 and 100 percent (read: full) health has a score modifier of 2. Thus for the example of 95 percent you would get a modifier of 1.9. So your score is almost doubled.

Another addition to modify score would be the time you survived before you reached the end of the game or perished. This modifier should be slightly exponential, because otherwise a player surviving for half the 'complete' time with a high average

health percentage would get roughly the same score as a player who finished the game, but with a lower average health percentage. Instead of exponential, finishing the game could add enough points to differentiate players' abilities better.

Nice technical talk, but how to tell the story?

This posed a problem to us at first, since the island you are on is uninhabited. We thought about adding a person, but only the face. Here we thought of an initial tutorial and personally I think you rather find someone's log in this case and that you learn the basics from reading that log (after that, you're on your own).

Living Bearly is born, so what impact would the game have on people?

For what I personally think, is that people that play it regularly enough would start using quotes from the game in their communications with friends. What I also expect is that people would/could run off to the stores and start packing their survival knives and other gadgets that might be useful. Another thing could be that some people might actually go out and try surviving in a remote area for themselves.

Are there any downsides to the game?

If people actually try to survive in remote areas without any other survival training than the skills taught through the game, then yes the downside is that those people are likely to not succeed in said survival, thus putting their own lives at risk. On the other hand, when applying common sense one could say that those people make their own decisions.
An extreme I can think of is that it can happen that more people might go out into the streets to protest against society/technology as it currently is.

Any last words? (conclusion)

I view our project as something fun. That is, something to break the daily routine and to still learn something from it. For me, that would be learning about using Unity better, since I already like to do a lot of programming to enhance my skills (and for that, I need to think of a reason/goal to challenge myself with).
A survival game is what neither of my group members (nor myself) ever made, so this was a refreshing experience (especially our times when we were doing short brainstorm sessions).

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