FALSE PROPHETS

Exploring Hybrid Board/Video Games

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THE PROBLEM WITH COLLABORATIVE GAMES:

BOARD GAMES ARE INTERACTIVE BUT DON'T PROVIDE A LOT OF FUNCTIONALITY.
VIDEO GAMES PROVIDE THIS FUNCTIONALITY BUT AREN'T VERY INTERACTIVE.

SOLUTION: CREATE A HYBRID BOARD - VIDEO GAME LEVERAGING THE ADVANTAGES OF BOTH!

BOARD GAMES

Players have a high degree of interactivity in a low-tech environment.

Players interact with the board...

...And with each other.

INTERACTION BENEFITS

Collective in nature.

The board and rules are present to facilitate interactions between the players.

Boards are non-oriented, mobile, allow for a dynamic number of players, and house rules.

DISADVANTAGES

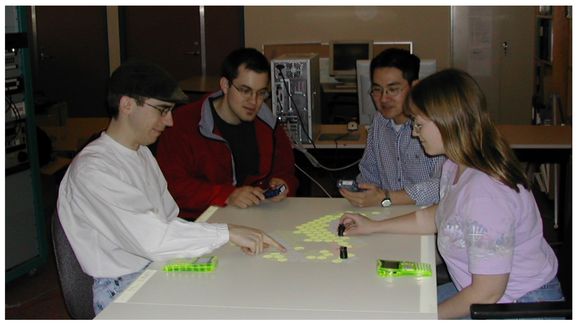
Static game environment, no ability to save state of game, simple scoring rules.

FALSE PROPHETS: THE GAME

- Game environment is a map, projected on a tabletop display system.
- The map has four terrain types and is dynamically revealed as players travel.
- Players travel by moving a physical playing piece around the board.
- Players are separated into two teams, the goal being to discover your teammates.
- This is done by gathering virtual clues, making virtual observations, and using this information to solve a logic puzzle.

SENSOR INTERFACE

Infrared emitters and phototransistors are used to track the location of game pieces as well as actions invoked using the game pieces as input (button presses). These link to the game server using the serial port.



FUTURE RESEARCH

Next step: Analysis of users of the system.

Goal: Extend the function of the playing pieces so that they are small characters that: travel with the owner; communicate with other proximal playing pieces; store data; and interpret contextual information.

GAME FEATURES

- Players gather clues in rocks and logs
- They make observations by passing other players. Physical proximity of the pieces determines the level of detail of virtual observations.
- Private communication is not supported. Bargaining or alliances must occur in the physical world.
- To avoid a static turn-taking strategy, we implemented an energy-based system to move around the board. There is an energy factor that depletes as players move.

HANDHELD INTERFACE

Complex interactions and display of private data occur via a handheld computer, linked to the game server through a wireless network (802.11b).

VIDEO GAMES

Players have a low degree of interactivity in a high-tech environment.

INTERACTION DISADVANTAGES

Support interaction with system rather than with other players.

Computer: Played alone or with others over a network.

Gaming consoles: Allow for multiple players but they sit side-by-side, interacting with each other via the interface.

COMPUTATION BENEFITS

Simulations, evolving environments, impartial judging, suspension of disbelief, and ability to save game state.

Many thanks to Electronic Arts Canada, the New Media Innovation Centre, and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Council of Canada for funding.

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Thanks to all Edge Lab members, both at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, and Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, for contributing ideas.