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Design Enterprise 2

APPENDICES

**HOW
USER INTERFACE
DESIGN AFFECTS
THE SUCCESS OF
CONTEMPORARY
VIDEO GAMES**

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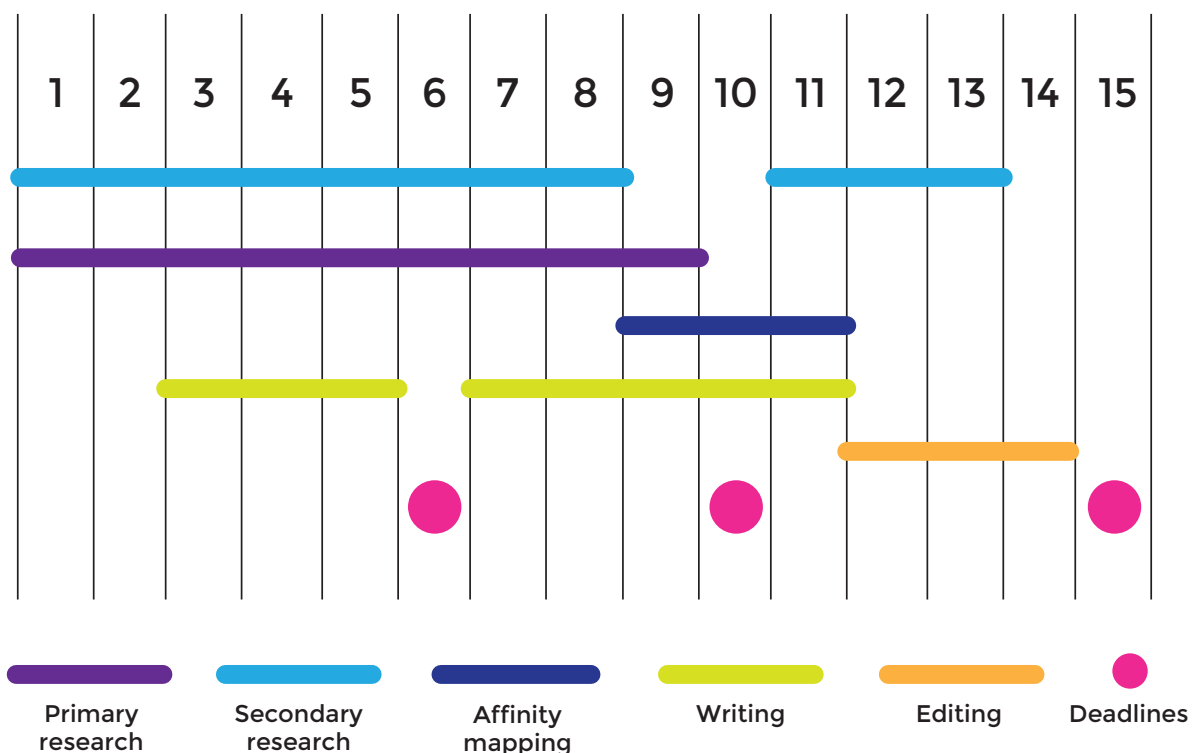
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1. PROJECT PLANNING

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & GANTT CHART

- How user interface design affects the success of contemporary video games?
- What do I need to know to evaluate the user interface design in video games?
- What is succesful user interface design?
- What is the context of user interface design within video games?
- What is the market for user interface design and how it is likely to develop?
- Why is it relevant for the company?
- How do players currently perceive the role of UI design?
- What are the players' experiences with different UI designs?
- How do game developers perceive the role of UI?
- What requirements the UI design needs to meet in different video game genres and on different platforms?
- What are the potential points of improvement in game UIs?
- What less used potential does UI design have in video games?

Weeks



2. PLAYER INTERVIEWS

2.1 KEY INSIGHTS

- The interview participants were aged between 20 and 28.
- Participants had varying backgrounds in video games.

PURCHASING:

- How often the participants buy new games varied from months to multiple games a week.
- All participants buy games mostly based on how interesting the story is and how fun the gameplay looks.
- When deciding which games to purchase, all participants look for a creative or unique concept. All participants agreed that the visuals are also important. One participant also mentioned the length of a game as they don't want to buy a game that is too short (Player 1.).
- Two participants specifically mentioned multiplayer as a consideration when buying games, as they prefer to play with friends (Player 1. & Player 2.).
- All participants buy games based on someone else's opinions and recommendations, which is why they read reviews and watch gameplay videos. All interviewees also described themselves as "a bit picky" when it comes to buying new games.
- Three interviewees specifically mentioned, that a well implemented user interface gives an impression that there is more effort put into the game, and the game seems more professional and serious. It can also make the game more appealing, and the player is more likely to want to buy the game (Player 3., Player 1., Player 4.).
- All participants liked to play either demo or beta versions of a game as it lowers the risk of accidentally buying a game that is not fun.
- Two participants specifically mentioned that they have a negative opinion on DLC content, as they often seem like a money grab (Player 1., Player 3.).
- All interviewees have bought or considered buying DLC content, if it included new story content for a game they already liked a lot.
- Two participants mentioned how they buy cosmetic content to enhance their own visuals and to

show off to other players (Player 1., Player 3.).

- All interviewees were less likely to buy games from studios and publishers that had previously released a frustrating game.
- 75% of the interviewees mentioned that a well-designed UI gives an impression that there is more effort put into the game, which in turn increases their trust in the product.

EXPERIENCE:

- All interviewees agreed that a poor user interface affects their gameplay negatively and makes their gameplay experience worse. Clunky interfaces make the game more frustrating to play.
- Participants described good user interfaces as something that is unnoticeable, intuitive clear simple and serves its purpose.
- 50 % of the participants felt that if the game has other redeeming qualities such as a strong narrative or visuals, they were willing to try to learn the interface approximately 3-5 times, after which they would give up with the game and move on to others.
- All participants would only give a limited amount of tries to learn the UI before they would give up on the game.

- All participants agreed that a combination of visual and auditory clues is mandatory.
- All participants mentioned how kinetic feedback, such as controller shakes at the right moments feel good and rewarding.
- All interviewees agreed that quick time events are annoying when unprepared, but can make the game more interactive if the game is based around them.
- All participants mentioned a diegetic UI in games as an appealing factor.
- Three participants mentioned how visual insignias and level borders motivate them to play (Player 1., Player 2., Player 4.).
- Two interviewees specifically talked about how genre changes the requirements for the UI: clarity of the UI is more crucial in team-based games, such as FPS games, as the player needs to focus on targets to kill. In story based games the player has more time to admire the visual UI (Player 1., Player 4.).
- When asked about good UIs, 75% of the interview participants referred to a MMOFPS “Overwatch”.
- Participants look at UI elements such as health bars depending on the genre. In team-based games

- the participants follow the health as it is an important resource. In single player story based games, all participants said they rely on other visual effects, such as red flashes or grayscale effect to tell them if their characters are on critical health.
- All participants agreed that they don't pay attention to damage value numbers, unless they are changing a load out in a very specific situation. Instead the feeling of improvement in the game comes from how the gameplay feels, and how they can see enemies dying quicker and their own character having advanced moves.
 - Three out of four participants mentioned that they enjoy seeing their gameplay statistics, such as hero classes played, kills and deaths even if they won't affect the progression in the game. According to the participants, statistics and achievements also add replay value to the game.
 - Three out of four participants explained how they always modify the crosshair in first person shooter games if possible. All participants would like the option to modify and customise the UI if possible.
 - Three out of four interviewees mentioned how player profiles in MMOs help in team-building and strategy, but how they also enable harassment and judgement.
 - Three out of four participants mentioned quick menu wheels as an intuitive and useful UI element, especially if the content can be customised. They also mentioned how Overwatch's communication wheel implementation reduced the harassment via the game's voice chat (Player 1., Player 2., Player 4.).
 - One interviewee described how a GUI with clear symbols in games allowed them and their family to play without understanding the language English, as the UIs' visual symbols were universals (Player 4.).
 - When asked about visually impressive UI's, all interviewees mentioned Persona 5. Only one interviewee had played it themselves. All of the interviewees agreed that the interface was visually attractive, and made the game and gameplay seem more professional and appealing.

2.2 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What kinds of games do you play?
2. On which devices do you play?
3. What genres do you prefer?
4. What are your favourite games?
5. Why do you like them?
6. How does the gameplay contribute to the nice feeling the game gives you?
7. What are the most important goals or objectives in those games?
8. What are the most important things you need to follow?
9. Do the games have cooldowns or other kind of resource management?
10. How do you do the resource management?
11. What things help you to do the resource management?
12. Do you find the resource management easy? Why, why not?
13. Do you look at damage values?
14. How do you track the progress in the game?
15. How does the game give you feedback on your progress?
16. How does it help you to play?
17. Would you say the UI has a great impact on the game?
18. Do you find any UI elements conflicting in the games?
19. Do you find any UI elements hard to track?
20. Can you tell me some games that you think are frustrating to play?
21. Why are the games frustrating?
22. Does the UI lack something or make something difficult?
23. Can you name games with UIs that you think just look bad? Why?
24. Can you name games with brilliant UIs? Why are they brilliant?
25. Have you ever specifically noticed the game UI when playing in one way or another? How?
26. Most games have health or mana bars. How often do you pay attention to them?
27. Have you ever felt that the game

- UI specifically made you fail or succeed?
28. Have you ever quit a game because the UI has been too frustrating?
 29. Do you feel like the games give you enough feedback for your inputs?
 30. Can you give me examples of games that in general give you good feedback of your actions?
 31. How would you define success or failure in a game?
 32. What makes you feel like you have succeeded in the game?
 33. How does the game give you information that you succeeded or failed?
 34. How do you gauge your skill development in a game?
 35. How often do you look at player profiles in games?
 36. What things do you usually look for?
 37. Do you look at your own player profile?
 38. How often do you modify the visual UI in games?
 39. How do you modify them?
 40. Are there some games you wish had an option to modify the UI?
 41. Have any of the games you've played added new features that have clarified the gaming experience or made it worse?
 42. What are your thoughts on quick time events? Do you like them? Why? Why not?
 43. Is there something in the game environment that makes it easier to navigate / more dynamic?
 44. Would you say the UI enhances your reaction time or that it has potential to do so?
 45. How often do you buy new games?
 46. What do you usually look for before you decide to purchase a game?
 47. Do you play or want to play demo or beta versions of games?
 48. If so, then what do you look for in the game? What kinds of things do you pay attention to?
 49. How often do you buy DLC content?
 50. What motivates you to buy DLCs or add-ons?

2. PLAYER INTERVIEWS

2.3 PLAYER 1 - INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

**What kind of games do you play?
Overall, you could mention some
genres et cetera.**

Single-player, adventure, role-playing games.

Do you play any mobile games?

No, no I don't except for Fire Emblem Heroes. I play FPS if FPS has like different elements to normal FPS games.

What kind of different elements?

Meaning not realistic FPS games, I don't like them that much.

**Do you play any racing games or
strategy games?**

Strategy. Fire Emblem. If it's turn based it's considered strategy. Mario Kart is the only racing game I've played. I don't really play racing games.

**Okay! Which devices do you usually
play on?**

Computer and PlayStation 3 or 4.

**Do you have any handheld
consoles?**

Well yeah I have Nintendo 3DS, I have PlayStation Vita, I have PlayStation

PSP and I have Nintendo Switch.

**Okay, do you play any MMORPGs or
any collaborative games?**

Only MMO I play is Guild Wars 2. But it's like a straight up MMO. There are a lot of the games that have MMO elements that aren't like exactly MMOs.

**Do you have any examples you
could mention?**

Destiny 2 is the kind of game. You have all the others, players in the area, but you don't really interact with them. In Monster Hunter there's like a lot of online opportunities and you can hunt with other people. But it's very— you could use your experience with that.

**Okay, could you tell me some of
your favourite games?**

Okay, Persona 5. Overwatch. Sly Cooper! The Last of Us. Alien Isolation is a great game.

**Can you explain a bit more why
they are your favourite games?**

Well I like Overwatch because it's very different to a normal FPS game and it's very colourful and stylish. In Persona I love the characters and the gameplay a lot. And the kind of

pacing in the game is interesting. Alien Isolation is the best horror game I've ever played. It has an interesting story and very cool AI.

How does the gameplay contribute to the kind of nice feeling the game gives you?

A lot. If the gameplay feels clunky it's not fun to play and that's the reason why I can't play some of the older games. Because the gameplay is so bad. Also I forgot to mention Kingdom Hearts, it's one of my favourite games too.

Do you have any other examples after kind of like clunky games that you don't like playing anymore?

I tried playing Crash Bandicoot like it was like a multiplayer and it just felt really horrible to play. It was like the original Crash. Like Mario Party but with Crash characters. The animation seemed to not match the movement and it felt really slow and confusing.

In the games you mentioned — your favourite ones, but also including games like Guild Wars or Destiny — what would you say are in general the most important goals or objectives in those games?

In Guild Wars I think it's like the class building content you can do. It's like a choose your own adventure type of thing even though it has a campaign. You don't have to do it if you don't want to. Well with Destiny it's very much like — there is this issue that there's some content less than enough. Since in Destiny One if you didn't have friends you

couldn't play all the content, you had to have existing friends already to play with, so you could like take part in the raids and the multiplayer content. But Destiny 2 has included matchmaking so you can play alone, even though I never use it since I don't like strangers.

In the games you play, what are the most important things you need to follow? Or to pay attention to?

Visual information is something all the games have. But when the game has audio information it's a lot better. For example in Overwatch you hear a lot of the information what's going on in the game through the audio. And can make a lot of decisions just based on audio.

Do you feel difficult to follow games that rely only on visual information?

Yes! You can follow with only visuals but in some games the feedback is really lacking when you don't have the audio. Yeah like in PUBG it's like "boom you're dead". You can't see it coming and you can't hear it coming. You're just dead. No audio clues.

Do the games have like any kind of cooldowns or other kind of resource management that you need to keep track of?

Usually you don't really have to keep track of cooldowns. In most games they are so short that by the time you need it you usually have it again. It's more like feeling the pace of do you have your ability or not because it's like a muscle memory type of

thing. You know when you have the abilities and when you don't. So like I keep track more in games like Divinity, which I've been playing as well. It's a tabletop role-playing type of experience and it's like -- you have a cool down for two turns. So you look at the cooldowns a bit more since they're much longer. If it's like a 5 second cooldown I don't really pay much mind to it.

Okay! Is there some kind of visual indicator in those games for the cooldowns?

Like in Overwatch there is. Usually there's always a number, like in Divinity there is a number and in Destiny there is a number on the cooldown, and in Overwatch there is a number on the cooldown. Like in Overwatch the ultimate like lights up a little, you know if you have the ability ready so you can just use the corner of your eye to see if you have it or not. You just register it at the back of your mind. You just know that now you have the cooldown even though you don't have to actively search for it.

Do those games you mentioned have any kind of other like resource management, for example organising your assets or something similar like that? How do you feel about them?

In Divinity you have a lot of like grenades and stuff like that you can make, but it's not very harsh because you can always use your abilities out of combat. And you do get them quite often and you can also wait and you can lose stuff but get them back quickly so it doesn't really matter.

Resource management is really a thing, in my opinion, in survival games like Last of Us. You have to do more to like save your resources since you might need them later. Or like in Alien Isolation where you do the same thing because you have less stuff to loot. Maybe in Overwatch in a certain situation in a game you know you can't engage without all your cooldowns available. Well it's very character specific.

What are the kind of things in games that help you to do the resource management?

There's always some sort of, like if it's a story game it's the story pacing, so you usually know when you're up against something big or there's gonna happen something big, so you know when you have to save up items for a boss and when you don't. Like in Kingdom Hearts and in Persona you go around the area and when you're like mostly down with it you know there's gonna be a boss, so you have to have saved some potions.

Yeah. Do you find it easy to do resource management in those games?

Yes in a story game it's really predictable.

How about other games?

In the fast paced games like Overwatch it's very like — sometimes you really get caught off guard. And all your teammates just killed someone else and then you used all the cooldowns to do that, and there comes another guy behind the corner

and kills you because you don't have any stuff available.

Do you think that there's something that the game could do in order to make it easier for the player to follow the cooldowns or resources?

In most games if there's a cooldown they have a bit of like a sound indicator like some kind of ping or push kind of noise effect that tells you that you have a cooldown. But sometimes you use an ability but it gets like lost in translation or something. It gets cancelled and you're like "where's my ability?" There's a lot of clarity that could be done with that.

Yeah, many games show you the damage values like in numbers or using some kind of other visual indicator of for example, how hard did you hit the enemy. Do you care about them, do you follow them often?

It depends on the game if it's a role-playing type of game like Final Fantasy I think the numbers are part of the business because it fits the role-playing genre. In games like Overwatch you don't see the numbers because it doesn't fit the game, because it needs to be as clear as possible so you don't want any extra information in your face. But they do have the numbers in Destiny which is kind of like a same type of FPS game. But Destiny is a bit slower so it's okay to have the numbers in there.

Yeah! In Overwatch for example they have this kind of enemy health

bar and in some other games there are other ways of conveying the player the information of how much health the enemy has left.

Like Monster Hunter.

Yeah! So do you have any preference on the kind of indicators that show you that information? Do you find it hard to track games that do not have that kind of indicator at all?

It really depends on the game. In a game like Monster Hunter where you don't see the health bar up the enemy or the monster, but you can see it from the way it behaves. It works because it has so much health anyway so it would be useless numbers to show. The feeling you get when you know and you can see it slowing down and it's starting to limp it's very satisfying in a way. But in a game like Overwatch it's very important for you know how much health the enemy has so you can make the quick decision if it's worth it to go chase the enemy who's running away or not.

How do you track the progress in the games you play like how much you've played the game or how far ahead you are in the game? Can you explain a bit about that?

In the game like Spider-Man. The new PS4 Spider-Man there's a big percentage number which tells you how far in the game you are. Many games have that kind of a percentage, like a "completionist" type of indicator so you can always also use that and I usually do check it if it's a story that how long is the

story. Because if it's not long enough to my standards sometimes it's not worth it for me to buy the game. Like for me the Spider Man was very short, like 20 hours maybe thirty if you're generous, and it was too short for me but it has other redeeming qualities. Meaning the story was good even though it was short and the gameplay was very satisfying but it still makes me a bit sad it was so short. In a game like Persona where I can put 300 hours in the game, even though I've played it already because the replaying value is so much higher because you can do your own builds, you can play the game differently. There's a lot more to achieve and to complete the game 100%. But in a game like where there's no story, where there's no end, it's very much on the scale of the time you've spent on it. You know in Overwatch you can see if you've played a lot and you are getting better it's very fun to see because you played it so much so you obviously I get better. And of course in a game like Overwatch it has a level. Like you can see how much you played from your higher level, and the border system it's very satisfying because you want to get a higher border and higher play time because the border looks cooler when you have played more.

Yeah! You mentioned the Overwatch borders already but do you have any other examples of how the games give you feedback on your progress?

Usually when you finish a game -- sometimes the title the of game changes in the main menu. For example in Final Fantasy when

you've finished the game the title screen changes to another picture. Quite often but not in every game. And then it gives you the new game plus plus. Like it gives you that in Kingdom Hearts, and in Kingdom Hearts the title picture changes as well. And Steam tracks your game time on each game, so you can always see how much you've played. How much I was on Skyrim that's kind of cool.

Does it affect your gameplay in some way knowing that you are closer to the end or something else?

If it's a very story driven game I binge play it. I played the new Spider-Man game and I played the Batman Arkham Asylum game when his first come up. I played it in two days, I kept playing it because I was so interested in the story. I tend to rush if it's an interesting story so it feels very dissatisfying in the end because you feel like it's over already. If there's a lot of side quests I tend to do the side quest as much as I possibly can and then I get tired of them and I just want to do this story. And then maybe I'll come back for the side quests.

Would you consider yourself like a "completionist" in a game, as in do you collect all the collectibles either on your first play-through or on the second one?

I try to keep my first play-through like guide free like organic in a way that I'd behave the way I would behave. For example it's like a character choice-based game I make decisions

that I think I would make. Like in Mass Effect there's a lot of like decisions you have to do, some are good some of them are bad but I would I pick all the ones I think are right even though it might not come to the best conclusion. Then in the next game I play I start to make it a perfect run. I enjoy achievements very much so if I love a game I will try to do all the achievements.

Cool! During your first play-through for example, or in general, do you pay attention to the kind of like visual indicators that you've missed some of the content? For example in many games are markings on the map that show you that there's a side quest or a collectible or something. Do you pay attention to those? Do you think about them?

Yeah if there is a treasure or something in the map I always go for the treasure. And on a Kingdom Hearts map I always check every nook and cranny before I move on to the next story area. But if the map is too big like in Witcher 3 where there's so much stuff you could do, at first I always tried to do all the things before all the other things, like before I did the main quest. It got too hard to do that so I had to compromise and do some other side things and then do the main quest.

Moving on to user interfaces in general. Would you say the user interface has a great impact on the game?

Yeah I like user interfaces a lot. It makes the game seem professional

when it's done right, you can take things more seriously. Or it looks more visually appealing to the player.

How much would you say you pay attention to the UIs?

In a FPS game the UI should be really clear, so you don't really look at the UI too much in an FPS game. You should focus on the targets you're supposed to kill. But in many games like in Persona 5 you spend a lot of time just admiring the UIs because it is really pretty. And like the way the UI is presented, it keeps the kind of wow effect. You're like wow this game is really cool. It really sets the mood for the game you're playing but I think it's like a more story game based thing. Spider Man had a great UI and there was little spider man dude hanging on the screen that was really charming.

In any of the games you've played, do you find any of the UI elements conflicting or hard to track or kind of like in your way?

Well the Overwatch capture point icon. Before you didn't have to option to make it more transparent. It would always be like in-your-face capture the objective. But it's been fixed now so there's not too much issue there. There's not much UI issues I can really think of. Maybe like if you talk about visual issues in video games it's like —if you have a platforming game and you have to jump, sometimes it's really hard to do you because it's then like you don't have a sense in 3D where the character is going to land. It's hard to see that. Especially if there's no

shadow sometimes it's really hard, and I'm like am I gonna hit it or not. It's easy to miscalculate your jump.

Could you name any examples?

The Hat in Time. Sometimes there's this kind of lines you have to jump to and it's kind of hard to judge but it's not too bad. I have played ones that have been really hard because of that but I can't remember them. I think Crash Bandicoot remake had the same kind of issue that was hard to judge where you're jumping. I remember the remake had some gameplay issues like they didn't really match the visual information you were given.

Could you give me examples of games in general that you just think are too frustrating to play or you don't like playing? But you've tried to play them basically.

I'm sure I have an answer for this. Sometimes there's like some parts in the game that you'll get really stuck on. I got stuck in Dead Space one on some sequence where you had to shoot and use this space cannon to shoot asteroids that we're flying at you. Like comets or whatever, and it was really hard to do. Especially if with a controller and I just couldn't do it. And I was stuck there for like a year before I started trying again. So that kind of thing really stops you from playing because it began to be too annoying. And sometimes – I just played Divinity earlier today and there was like an twist you had to do, escort this one dude away from a city because he was being wanted. I would be escorting him

and there's a guy who saw us and I would be like "no I will protect you" but the fugitive would still be like "no you've betrayed me". And that's like -- why is he like that? There is no I indicator of what happened. It was really annoying and frustrating and it made me rage quit.

Do you have any examples of games that have UIs that you think work but they just look ugly, or they just look bad?

Maybe you like old games in general like Persona 4 has this kind of ugly interface but it's still works.

What do you consider to be an old game?

Actually old game is like fifteen years old or older. If it's like 2005 then it's kind of old already. So yeah within ten years it's like a modern game. And in like five years it's a new game to me. New enough.

Can you name some games with like really brilliant UIs? You already mentioned Persona 5 but do you have any other examples and why do you think that they are so brilliant?

Well I do like it Ôkami even though it's very simple UI. It fits the aesthetic of it and the way it fits in the game is really cute. I like the way that the whole game is rendered like a type of painting and then your ability is to paint. I really like it.

Yeah it's really beautiful! Next question is that most games have for example health or mana bars,

or stamina bars that tell you things about your character. How often do you actually look at the mana bar or health bar?

In Kingdom Hearts I look at it all the time. It's very big and it's in your face and you need to keep track of your health in a boss fight. And you have to keep track of your mana because you can be pretty heavily matched in Kingdom Hearts. In Overwatch I always check my health. I won't engage if I'm too low on health. In turn-based games it's also very important to check your health because in a game like that it's more like management on how to keep everyone alive in a fight.

Some games or like the newer ones I usually have a kind of like a red flash you get when you get hit or these screen turns grayscale or similar. Do you rely on those or do you actually pay attention to the health bar as well?

I always check my health state, it's a thing for me. Some people forget to the heal and forget to look at it, but I'm always like "heal, heal". Full health all the time. Mana doesn't really have like a flash kind of thing yeah so sometimes I do forget to check the mana in Kingdom Hearts. Because the mana recharges with a very slow rate so it's like – "what it's not done already?" type of thing. And there's of course like ultimate bars in some games so those are also very useful to show and track.

Do you find them easy to track?

They are usually big enough so and

they are shiny usually. So it's easy to track.

Have you ever felt that a game UI has specifically made you fail in something? Or succeed in something?

Well sometimes there's like things that give me an advantage. Like in Overwatch there's like many times I've been having like a battle with someone and there is a Hanzo dragon between us I just get a random headshot on the another dude because they are like "what I can't see anything" and I'm estimating where he is and it feels very stupid. Well even though I've heard lots of people having trouble because of the Overwatch marker issue, there's like capture objective marker in the way, but I haven't really had too much issue with that.

Yeah, have you ever quit a game because the UI has been too frustrating? We already talked about frustrating games in general but if you think about the UI specifically, have you ever quit because of that?

I might quit the game because it is too aesthetically boring or ugly to me but I can't really think of anything really.

Can you remember any examples of ugly games?

It's funny but Sonic the Hedgehog that's just a bad game. The original Sonic the Hedgehog. But usually if I quit a game it's because of the gameplay or the story and not the

visuals. Because even if the game has visual problems, if it's fun to play and has an interesting story it makes up for it.

Do you feel any that any games have the kind of UIs that are difficult to learn or too complex? Do you play any of those kinds of games?

I think UIs are kind of simple. I feel like the ways UIs are designed it's supposed to be clear for the player.

Do you feel like for example that Guild Wars has a clear UI?

The game itself might be a little bit like "how do you get started" but I don't think it's the UI itself that makes it complicated. Same thing with Division it has a lot of like little windows. You can look at all your stats and skill bars and crafting tab and stuff like that. I think they're very self explanatory to me.

Yeah, do you feel like the games in general give you good enough feedback for your inputs? Any input, for example you hit the enemy.

Some games have like have a very clear like hit marker that turns red when you hit and that's like a different kind of sound when you do a critical hit. You do damage and there's like a sound. In Overwatch it is great. In like Warhammer Vermintide 2 it feels very satisfying to hit someone. The enemy because turns into this gruesome mess and it's very bloody in that way so it feels like you're doing a lot of damage. It's very harsh. There's a lot of sounds in Monster Hunter and Dark Souls

when you hit the big boss there's kind of like illusion of blood even though it doesn't show anything on the ground. But it feels awesome even though you've been hitting this monster for like three hours but it's still not down, it still feels like you're doing damage. In Divinity when I hit someone they actually bleed and they use the blood for stuff. Divinity has a cool UI by the way and it has — when you loot the body the box of the item frame they have is surrounded by bones. When you loot a book case it's surrounded by books, and stuff like that. It's really neat, it's really cute, I love it. But like if it's not satisfying to shoot something the gameplay gets very boring, it's if it feels like there's no impact to your punches. In Spider Man it's very impactful to punch someone, when you punch someone there's a knock and sometimes your controller vibrates and it's like the feeling of weight between the punches. But in a game like PUBG it feels very airless all the time. It's a lot of shooting and you have your recoil in your gun but it still just feels very impact less to kill someone. You don't really feel anything about it except like a notification that you've got a kill. But you know, it doesn't seem much fun in my opinion.

You mentioned Player Unknown's Battleground -- it has a quite different UI compared to Overwatch for example. How quickly would you say you adapted to it?

It's very hard, I don't think I've still adapted to it. Because it doesn't have hit scan it doesn't like -- where you aim does not indicate where you're gonna hit. And it's all very realistic,

it doesn't have a crosshair, you just use the gun's own crosshair when you scope out. There's very bare minimum in the gameplay screen. Of course when you have the inventory screen it's very like "this is your gear and this is where you put the gear". But it's it feels fake. Actually PUBG because it's so frustrating and I keep losing track of items or where I put the items it's just so hard to use things and you don't know what goes and where. Like which items fit each other and which don't, because the game itself doesn't give you an indication. Because you have to learn and you have to know what works. And you have to know which guns are the best ones and which have the best scope so it's very uninteresting and takes effort to get into it. And honestly it's not gonna be that much fun so why try to learn.

So would you say about it makes you less likely to play the game because the UI is difficult?

Yeah yes it does.

Since Overwatch has a really great UI in many people's opinion and enemy outlines for example, do you ever wish that some other games or some other FPS games would have similar UI effects? For example the enemy outlines.

I think enemy outlines a very accessibility type of thing. It helps a lot of people to play the game and makes it easier to play other games in a way that it's more clear to see. Especially now that they have more colour-blind options in games. And have made the colour-blind options

better. There's a lot less of the sneaky element — even though you can hide in Overwatch because it's so colourful anyway so most people just brush off the enemy outline anyway. It's just to keep a clear indication like who's on your side and who's not on your side. Since in Destiny I sometimes shoot my teammates because they come behind the corner and surprise me and I'm like "an enemy!"

Yeah. Would you say that you as a person are more likely to play games with more clear enemy indicators for example, or is it just like a funny thing but you don't really care too much about it?

I like it when it's clear in a game where you can hurt your own team like in Rainbow Six: Siege it's very — you see someone moving and you shoot at it and oops you killed your teammate. It's just more fun to me to know that this is an enemy this is your teammate and it's just like no extra effort to that just the game. Even though I know some people love the realistic feel of it but if it's too realistic then what's the point of it being a video game?

How would you personally define success or failure of a game?

If it makes people happy. If someone, even a small group of people think that this is a great game and I'm happy it got made, it's good enough. It doesn't have to be a triple-A game as long as it has players who like the game. And it doesn't hurt anyone. As long as it doesn't like very clearly insult and isn't toxic. Yeah like as long as it doesn't insult anyone.

What makes you feel like you have succeeded in the game?

If I have fun. I don't need to be good in a game. If I am good that's great, but I still think I'm bad so it doesn't matter how good I am. If I have friends playing it with me if it's a multiplayer game then it's great. If I don't have anyone to play with in multiplayer game it feels a bit sad and lonely. If it's a single-player game it's good if it can offer me a good story experience and my own way to customise it, my own way to experience a story. Then it's a great story.

What makes you get the kind of sense of accomplishment in games? And does it matter to you?

If there is a ranked system it feels good to get a high rank. It makes you feel a bit validated and the icon is really shiny. I really like having the grandmaster icon in Overwatch because it's really shiny. The shiny factor is the most compelling to me. Because it's just visually more cool. But there's also a lot of like downsides to me considered being a top ranked player because it feels like I can't enjoy the game the way other people do, I cannot play casually and I always have to perform or people are gonna be like "boosted grandmaster". I feel like I'm really stuck in my rank and it defines who I am even though I don't really feel like I've even deserved the top rank in the first place.

That's understandable yeah. You mentioned the shiny factor of the insignias or the markings. Let's take Overwatch as an example and say all the ranked insignias were

the same. Really basic just different colours for example. Would you say it would make you less likely to want to get a better rank, because it's just the same icon, just a bit different colour but isn't shiny or anything?

Yeah I wouldn't care that much. Really the most important thing to me it's just play the game which friends. It doesn't need to be any kind of accomplishment because if I play with friends I'll play games to have fun and to be less sad. Even if I'm bad or even if I'm good, I'm still gonna I enjoy it.

How do the games you've played give you information that you either succeeded or failed in the game? For example Overwatch has this really like defining "defeat" — you have the text and you have the sound and you have their voice telling you that you lost. Do you have any other kind of like examples?

Well if you die that's an automatic fail. But you can always retry stuff. In games that you can decide what you want to do, like in Mass Effect, even if you pick their assumed bad option it's still not failure in a way. The game doesn't really let you fail unless you die but since you can always retry there's not really any failure in a game like Mass Effect or even in any story game. You die but you can always try again so it just lets you retry and to keep trying until you succeed. In Kingdom Hearts if I can't beat the boss — there's like a lot and lots of super bosses that are very hard to hurt them in the first place

and sometimes it's just too hard to beat them. I can't beat them all, some of them I've managed to beat and it feels really like "whoa I beat the super boss" and some of them I just haven't been able to. But it doesn't really make you feel like you failed too much. You can still win, you can still keep trying if you want to. It's more like in those competitive kind of games like team versus team. Usually if your opponent is a person it's another living person then it's more like a failure versus success type of deal. If your opponent is the game itself the AI and the computer generated and enemies then there's no fail you can always succeed. Even if you take so long.

Yeah that's true. How about what makes you feel that you're good in the game? At what point in the game you're like "I'm actually good at this"? What makes you feel that?

In a game like Persona it's like outplaying an opponent and making a persona build that can overcome anything that the opponent throws at you. It's really fun and satisfying and if you have skill enough to build a really powerful persona and you can adapt them to specific enemies and situations. And just playing it on like a higher difficulty because if you if you beat the game on "merciless" it makes you feel pretty badass.

Cool! In multiplayer games, how often do you look at other players profiles?

I don't look at it anywhere else than Overwatch. Because Overwatch is a team comp building game and if

you know them the strengths and weaknesses of your own team you can help them build a better team. If you see that there's only one main tank main on your team and you play tank kind on the side, but you see no one else play tank, but you have two great support mains even though you're a support main, you can still pick the tank and you help your team. You know what the other people are play playing and what they are comfortable with so you win the game more easily. But since Overwatch now uses private accounts as an option you can't do that anymore, even though I really do like the private accounts. I'm private on my alt at the moment because I started feeling bad about it. That people will see me and see my profile and judge me based on it. I think it's very important that it's a choice you can make. There's so much harassment in Overwatch.

Would you say private profiles affect your gameplay experience?

Yeah, yes they make the team building like choosing your character different, but also it makes you feel more free and you can play what you want. You won't be pressured into playing anything you don't want to play and you won't be pressured into this little box like "this is who you are is what you're supposed to play". It's very free in that way.

How often do you look at your own player profile, and what kind of things do you look in there?

I like meaningless stats. It's fun for me to see that "I have played this

and this many hours” during my Overwatch career. Those types of fun stats are fun to see.

Yeah! How often do you modify the visual UI in games? Some games give you option to do it within the game itself and in some games you have to download a third person mod to do it for you. How often do you modify the UIs?

If it's third person mod then I usually won't bother, but with my poor TV I have to modify the UIs always if it's possible. In Witcher you can choose your screen size so you can fit the screen to your TV so it's really good I use that. In Persona 4 Arena Ultimax you can also lower the enemy health bars and the combo bars. You can move them but where you think they are best for you, and you can choose the size and stuff like that. Very useful to me, because if I can't do that I can't see all of the screen I can't see all of the UIs or the health bars so it's difficult to me to play games like that. If the details are pretty small then they usually get cut off by the edges of my TV screen, like in Kingdom Hearts Fragmentary Passage in the 2.8 collection, I couldn't see their health bar correctly. The edge of the health bar didn't show up to me so the health was full I could see it but it was like just a tiny bit left I didn't see the health at all. It was kind of frustrating, but it's just my bad TV. But if there is an option to change things I'm very happy. Because I can bypass my problem.

Do you modify the crosshairs and FPS games and why?

Yeah because the default crosshairs are big and sometimes the crosshairs are in the way. That's a thing actually. I used to play with the big dot and the sometimes it was just too big so I couldn't even see enemy's head because the dot would cover too much. I wouldn't be able to hit that target so now I use a dot with empty space inside, it's like a small ring. I usually use the standard crosshair but with the space in the middle so I can see. I do like editing it. With D.Va I like to have like a pink square because it's really cute. D.Va has a large damage radius so it's not precise and works well for D.Va.

Have any of the games you played added any new kind of features that have clarified the gaming experience or like clarify GUI or the visual information?

The colourblind options in Overwatch. You can change your team colour you can change your enemy team's colour so you can see the difference more clearly. Even though it's still on PTR, it's still a great change.

How about any elements that have made it harder or easier to access some information in menus or quick menus, for example you bring up like a common wheel or similar, how do you feel about them?

Communication wheels are useful to me, I like them. I memorise the positions so I do them really quickly so I am able to just flash the comm wheel and do a quick "hello", quick "thank you" or quick emote. I did it accidentally but usually I don't do

it accidentally so it's very strange they happen. I like that you can choose your own stuff what you want on them, in the wheel. In Alien Isolation your items are in a wheel and your crafting is in the same wheel so again it's just hold to craft which is kind of interesting to me.

How do you feel about quick time events in games? Do you like them?

Useless. They're fine but just give me a cutscene so I can eat crisps while I watch the cutscene. Some people really hate them, I don't mind them too much but I think they are useless.

Are mini-maps important to you in games?

Yes, mini-maps, I use them all the time.

Why?

I use them more than the actual map. The actual map you have to bring it up you have to look at the map you have to find where you are and then you have to close the map. But with mini map you can keep moving I look at it at the same time. It's much easier.

In the games you've played, are there some things in the game environment and that make it easier to navigate or make the game more dynamic?

If the map is too cluttered it makes it kinda hard to navigate. If the map has every single nook and cranny and every and every shading you have in the real game world then it makes it a bit messy like. It effects

more the height situation. If there's a Spider Man backpack on the map is it on the ground or is it one kilometre in the air. Is it on top of a building or not. The map doesn't really help you much there so what I usually do is just I pin the target that I want. Then it becomes like a bar of light that shows you where it is in the gameplay.

In many game such as the Spider Man or the Last of Us there is this kind of an extra sense that gives you extra information about enemies and your surroundings. Do you like that kind of feature, or do you prefer to play games that have that kind of feature?

I like it because I never tend to watch the enemies anyway always. I always watch the Spider Man as in "he has such cool moves" and since the spider-man has the spider-man sense I don't even have to know who's attacking me or when, I just know that there's an attack coming in and I can react and dodge it. It makes it easier to play in a way. In spider-man it fits the lore, it's very cool because he actually has that kind of spider-sense and have it featured in the game it's very like satisfying and wakes the inner nerd in me.

Would you say that the game UI enhances your reaction time or does it have the potential to do so?

Without that kind of spider sense I there would be a lot of attacks that I would just fail to dodge. With that sense I can flawlessly dodge every single attack that comes on my way. It's so good and makes it really easy.

If you compare the RPGs to more turn-based combat games, for example Persona or Final Fantasy, which ones do you find easier to play or harder to play and why?

I like being able to take my time and think about it. Sometimes if the game is too hectic it can be stressful sometimes and then in a turn-based combat you have this time to really think of what you are gonna do. But sometimes when I play Fire Emblem I just like move my characters by whatever guys I wanna place fast. Sometimes I play it too fast and it backfires because I was too hasty with my movements.

Are there some things in games that help you to make decisions quicker or better?

If there are weaknesses and you can scan the enemy to see if they have armor, if they have magic armor or magic resistance, you can try to take advantage of those kind of weaknesses. If they immune to fire of course you don't want to use fire then. In Persona there is this rush button that lets your characters attack the enemy freely, and it goes fast forward. Your entire team does just standard melee physical attacks to the enemy and everything goes faster. In a fight where I know it's gonna be easy, I know I'm over levelled for the fight, I'm high enough level to do that. I just like I go into a fight and press that button and I keep it pressed until the battle has been won.

You mentioned that you play some handheld console games like

Switch or Vita or mobile games. How would you compare the UI of those games to say, console game UIs or PC game UIs? How do they make you feel differently?

They do. In handheld console games you have to take into account that you don't have as many buttons. In games like Starcraft where every single button on your keyboard has a use it's different. Most of the buttons do something. But with handheld consoles you don't really have so many buttons you only have two of the shoulder buttons so you're already missing two buttons, and some of the handheld don't have this kind of standard analog stick so you only use the d-pad. That also affect it's the kind of game you can have in that console. For example in Monster Hunter, which is in 3D, you don't have a camera button so you have to either stand still while you turn the camera or you have to use lock on which can be a bit wonky. If you have the 3DS new version you have that kind of camera stick so it gives you this kind of little advantage depending on which kind of console you have. But and even if it's simple the gameplay usually isn't that that's simple. Even if you have less buttons like in Breath of the Wild, you can still do a lot of things even if you're missing two shoulder buttons, and it still has that kind of engaging gameplay but it's being produced by other means than just "oh you have this many buttons". The world has kind of physics that enable you to do more interesting stuff even though it's simple mechanics.

In general, how often do you buy new games?

It depends, when I was working and I was earning a lot of money I was buying games more I was buying a lot of stuff. I would spend that money on loot boxes too. Now when I don't have that much money to spare I only buy games that I know are worth it. For example Divinity, I just got it and it because I've heard a lot of praise for it. There's a lot of games that I wait to come out. For example I waited Spider Man to come out and I'll be waiting for the Kingdom Hearts 3 to come out. So when they come out of course I'm going to buy them, even if I don't have too much money to spare.

What kind of things do you usually look for before you decide to purchase the game?

If it's a new IP if it's an interesting concept, interesting gameplay, if it looks like its story, chapters and world are interesting and if it has a lot of potential story elements. In a console game I look for I look for those kind of story elements, I look at the kind of games like the Last of Us, Horizon Zero Dawn and Spider Man are like. They're all single player experiences that you can play on the couch. But if it's a multiplayer game and it's more reliant on your aim, I buy them on computer. Or if it's cheaper.

Do you play any demo versions of the games you want to play before you buy them, or do you want to test them?

Usually I watch a video about it, I watch gameplay, maybe watch a stream. If there's a demo I usually just play it because I can't buy it yet. I did play the Final Fantasy XV demo, and the demo was nothing like the actual game, like absolutely nothing in common. I was very confused about that. I was expecting that scenario from the demo to happen in the actual game, but it never happened. I was very confused about the purpose of the demo.

What was the difference?

Well you were able to do like this kind of a dream magic ability, change the environments. But you couldn't really fight in the game and you were playing as a little kid you were playing as the main character but as a 10 year old and there was a big dog who would be following you. And you would see that dog in the in the actual game in some of the photos but he was never there. Actually present. There's a doctor who takes photos and you would look at the photos and you could spot him there, and then he would be gone again. I still don't understand what's the deal with that dog? What kind of magic dog. It felt like a dream sequence rather than an actual game.

A few last questions... Do you usually buy cosmetics or other in-game content such as DLCs?

I buy DLCs if I really like the story. If the DLCs are story content that I would more likely get them, but if it's just like "oh you can get this persona in Persona", I won't buy it, I won't pay five euros to get Izanagi in Persona 5.

In Persona I bought the good outfits, but most of the good outfits are free anyway. In Overwatch I bought loot boxes because I have this I need to have every single cosmetic in the game. I need to complete, I need this, it's a completely honest kind of issue. But now that I already have most of the skins I get the new skins more likely so I don't have to buy loot boxes anymore, since I also play so much that I earn enough credits to buy the things that I want. And I've been trying to spend less on loot boxes since they are stupid.

Why is Overwatch the kind of game in which you want to own all the cosmetics, compared to like some other games that you really care about?

We used to play it a lot and when I started playing it some of the events were still new so it was really exciting. And the skins were very exciting then and the game used to feel more exciting back then. I used to have a lot of more friends playing it, I used to play it every day, a lot consistently, but not so much anymore. It's just because the game is dying.

When you're deciding to purchase a game or when you look for new games do you pay a lot of attention to visuals?

Yeah, if it's a good looking game it's more appealing to me. That's like one thing about Destiny actually because in Destiny the DLCs cost the same amount of money as the actual game costs. I absolutely despise it, it's horrible! I already have the game, why do I have to pay another \$70

dollars to get the game again? It's just like, well it just feels like with the new expansion I'm so disconnected from the game it's like "nah". It's annoying to me because if you would buy the game now, you get all the content from before and the new content for the same price that it takes for me to get the new content. It makes it feel pretty unfair and I don't get the new content because of that.

Yeah that's true. Do you have anything else to add? Do you remember any frustrating UIs?

It's very hard, most games focus on it so much there's rarely too much issue there. Sometimes the cameras in games suck. The cameras are hard to turn. In Stardew Valley I used to have the problem that I didn't know what block I was interacting with, I kept miss clicking, but then I found a setting in the settings that highlights the square you you're hovering over. So there goes that problem.

Yeah! If you don't have anything else to add, do you mind if I ask you some follow-up questions later or send you a message?

Yeah sounds good. I don't have anything else to add.

The participant added later:

The reason to try to achieve a high ranking in Overwatch is also that you can express your opinion without people undervaluing it, as in "you're just a platinum you know nothing". Also there are some UI problems in smaller horror games, in which there is rarely any HUD visible or other

information on the screen. And their objectives contain really minimal information and you usually need to run around a lot looking for a small key or something, that isn't even highlighted on a map or anything. So that can take a lot of hours to be stuck on a task like that. The Conjuring House is a good example of this, very frustrating. You need to search 20 keys for doors and 5 artefacts and 6 voodoo dolls and 5 gems et cetera. A maze with no sense in it. Also the map in Alien Isolation is really nice, but it basically disappears from use when playing on a higher skill level.

How often do you make in-game purchases, such as cosmetics, loot boxes, stat upgrades etc? And in which games? Why do you buy them?

I'm trying not to buy cosmetics. Usually I get tempted by them too much and spend way too much money on them, tens of euros. I used to buy Overwatch loot boxes for the hero gallery completion, but only through the first year in 2016 when Overwatch was released. I bought the boxes for 40€ in every event. But then stopped as I felt like the quality of the skins went down and didn't care too much.

How often do you buy DLCs? What is your criteria before buying them?

DLCs must have good new story content and enough value. If they do I do like to get them. Especially in games like Destiny 2 where DLC lifts level cap and opens end game content.

Which games have you bought the DLC for?

I have DLCs for games like Destiny 2, Dragon Age, Persona 5 – only the best cosmetics – the Last of Us, Witcher 3, Sims expansions, Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild. Generally I have a negative opinion on DLCs since they seem like a money grab but I have no self restraint for cool stuff. I once spent a lot on Destiny 2 Eververse loot trying to get a certain exotic rare emote "selfie" and ended up wasting 60€ on it and regretting it.

2. PLAYER INTERVIEWS

2.4 PLAYER 2 - INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Let's just start with general questions — what kind of games do you usually play?

I play multiplayer and personal favourite is playing co-op, that's what I enjoy, I enjoy playing like games I can play while talking in group on voice chat or Discord. So I might play co-op games straight up. The genres are like arena shooters, I like RPGs, I like I guess platformers, 2D platformers, 3D platformers. I like a lot of stuff, kinda anything goes.

Cool! On which devices do you usually play?

PC.

PC only? Do you play any mobile games or other?

Not often.

Console?

Again not often. I have done like last few weeks I've been playing like Spider Man or Detroit Became Human but that's only because you can only get them on PS4. If they're on PC I play them on PC.

Okay. Do you have any favourite games?

Yes! Hollow Knight is probably my

favourite game of all time. I'm playing a game called A Hat in Time which I'm more into than in any game I've been into for a long time. Overwatch is obviously great, I used to play a lot of Team Fortress 2, I love that game. And Dark Souls.

Can you explain a bit more why do you like them so much?

Each one kinda has a different reason. Overwatch is obviously a very tight shooter, it feels great to play. It's got great competition. Each of the characters are very sort of stylised and built around different play styles, and you can really get into those play styles. Hollow Knight again... I guess, I guess all of these games share that they are very nice to play. It's the same with the Hat in Time, they feel really nice to play. The controls are very responsive, very fluid and very quick, and I like that. I like the sort of reaction based games.

So would you say they are all quite dynamic in their gameplay?

Yeah I think so. I think so. Dark Souls stands out as being a bit less dynamic but maybe because the controls are there and are a bit more kinda floaty and clunky and not quite as refined. But Dark Souls is a fave for a different reason, I love the world and I love the

way they present the game and the way they want you to go throughout the world and the story. The world is for itself instead of giving you a quest or a tip telling you what to do.

Okay, let's pick an example. For example Hollow Knight. What would you say are the most important goals or objectives you need to follow? In that game.

For Hollow Knight I guess this is a personal thing I guess. I think a lot of people take that game straight up into a different direction, but for me the most important thing was just to explore. Just see what that game and that map has to offer. Metroidvania, are you familiar with that term?

Yeah, yes.

It's just explore what you can. A lot of new abilities so you can explore more things. And that's for me another thing I love. I love games with emphasis on you finding your own way through the map and through the game. And experiencing your own path through the game. So yeah, for me the most important thing first up is to explore through the world. The second is have fun playing the game and have fun getting proficient in the controls and fighting the hard enemies and the hard bosses. And getting through the game as sort of dying as little as possible once you get to that point in the game.

Okay! Can you give me examples of the games you play and what kind of cooldown management and resource management do they

have? Overwatch is like an obvious example but do you have any other games in mind?

Okay, so in Hollow Knight for example you have what are called the spirits. Which are kind of, you use mana for your magic abilities. You regain it I think by killing enemies. I like playing RPGs and what I've done in more recent RPGs I've played I've tried to use everything they offer you. So when I played Skyrim I picked a sort of fighter class which generally starts with burn arrow and sorts, and that was about it. When I played Witcher I got into using the bombs and the poisons and the buffs and the magic abilities. When I've been playing Monster Hunter I've gotten really into using all the craftables and I guess that's a resource, you're limited by how many you can craft.

Nowadays health is kind of a resource, in a lot of games I've played they give you like health upgrades constantly throughout the game. Dark Souls has a stamina bar, which when I played I tried to get as much out of it as possible. I wore light armor and took stamina buffs so I could just keep kind of up a really aggressive playstyle without having to worry about the stamina bar as much.

Yeah, do you find it easy to manage these kind of resources? Why and why not?

Okay, stamina, mana, health yeah, that's kinda simple for me. It's there, it seems like a major resource it's important and right there. That I can manage quite well. When getting into the crafting elements of the games and using the tools and the bombs

and things like that requires a bit of thought and planning for me to use them and remember they're there. It feels great when I do use them and remember that they're there, but it's kinda like an active thing I have to do.

Are there some things that help you to remember that they exist in the game? Or when do you get the realisation that wait I can actually use this thing to do this specific thing, do you have any examples of that?

A lot of games now have that kind of quick select. Like Monster Hunter has it's resource bar, Witcher has this kind of quick select bar where you can add specific things onto like a health potion or a bomb. So yeah that will tell you when you're out of things but also act as a reminder that they are there, they're available to use and are just a button press away. Yes, there are things that prompt you more and more.

How often do you look at let's say health bars? Because you know, in some games the screen turns grayscale, for example, when you're about to die. And most people rely on that kind of visual information, but how often do you actually look at the bar that tells you your health by numbers?

Yeah you're right, we're kind of conditioned to not look at the health bars until we get that sort of red flash or grayscale like you said, and yeah I'd say in a game like Overwatch where your health is really important I look at it a lot. Because you know,

you lose your health you die, you lose the point. It's a very important resource. Things like Witcher, I say I look at it a lot. But in a lot of situations I would have missed it and I would have missed that my health is low or I would have died if not for that red flash or grayscale effect.

You mentioned that you like exploring in games, how would you say you track the progress of exploring something in general?

Mainly by the maps. The number one that sticks to my head is the Witcher. Have you played the Witcher?

No I haven't but I have seen gameplay of it.

So you have your map and you start out, and you have your quest objective, your main quest objective but also on the map you have little points of interest, little question marks that are monsters or nests or side quests or shrines. And that's how I track progress in that game, how many of those things I would have hit? And I'd look at the path to my next objective that has a lot of these question marks or an area that has a lot of these but where I haven't been to. And that's where I'd go next and how I track my progress in that game. In how much of that world I have explored and experienced. Hollow Knight your map is black and as you go around different bits you reveal different bits of the map, and that's how I track my progress in that game. Some games don't work that way, in some games you have your quest log but that will tell you the percentage of the story that you've

done and you can kind of guess when it's winding up to the end of the game.

Would you say the games give you good feedback on your progress? So you see what you've explored. Would you say the feedback is juicy for the player?

In the games I've played then yes I would say so. It might not be them directly telling you that you've progressed this far. But when I opened that Witcher map I saw that I've been to all these places it felt great, you know. It felt kind of reminiscent I could remember little bits of the game and I remember like yeah I've done that and in Hollow Knight when you open your completed map it feels like an accomplishment.

Moving on to the user interface design in general. In the games you've played, do you find any of the UI elements conflicting? Or like they're distracting you from something else?

I guess so, I can't think of any examples. I don't like the sort of overloaded, you know when you get the compass on top of the screen, and that shows you the quests, I don't like that being overloaded. Sometimes in a game like Skyrim you look at that and there would be a town, town, town, dungeon, objective, a building, and that would just be overloaded. And that's kind of off putting. Anything kind of clunky or obtrusive that takes up a lot of space or anything unnecessary. That you can't switch off, or like a bar at the bottom of the screen that you

can't reduce in size or turn off from the background. I can't think of any other examples.

Do you feel like any of the UI elements are hard to track? In the games you've played.

It kinda goes back to the last question. You know the death icons in Overwatch?

Yeah.

Sometimes they get in the way of you. Hard to track yeah there are some, mostly in the quick arena shooters. Sometimes I miss the kind of healing icons in Overwatch and stuff like that but I don't think they're hard to track I'm just focused on other things.

Can you give me some examples of games you think are frustrating to play?

Dark Souls. I mention this because I've asked a person I know to play Dark Souls and she has expressed her concerns over certain things in that game. And I agree with her on this, the invasion mechanic does get a bit frustrating. The fact that if you want to play with other players in co-op you have to face other players in PvP and sometimes they are, or all the times they are more prepared than you are, and that's kind of frustrating, it holds your progress. Let me look at the recent game's I've played if I can find some.

It's fine if you can't come up with any, that's cool as well.

I mean there are some games I've

been frustrated with, let me see if I can come up with an example. But mainly it comes down to clunky controls and, what's the word, and sort of non-intuitive controls and controls that don't seem to make sense.

In those games, would you say the UI lacks something or makes something more difficult?

In regards to what I just said, no. It's just how the game feels when you play it. Yeah not in that regard.

If you don't remember any games that make you frustrated when you play them, do you remember any games you've seen with UIs that just look bad to your eyes? Or look too clunky or unclear.

I don't do well with the strategy game UIs. The new Civilization games are a lot more refined but the old Civilizations were just information overload. It was just too much for me. And a lot of the strategy, the RTS games, show just kind of too much in the UI for me.

Would you still play those games?

Yes.

Why?

Because if I like the game, and if I was into the gameplay I would struggle through it. I would learn how to use the UI or mod it or you know. If that option was available.

Do you have any examples of the games that you like but you spent

quite a long time trying to learn the UI or mechanics or visual mechanics like the menus and stuff?

Yeah the strategy games are one example I spend a lot of time trying to find my way around them. Trying to work in different bits of information at a time. Sometimes in RPGs the quest logs and the monster logs and the item logs get a bit too much for me. Crafting menus I don't really enjoy that much.

Could you name any games you're talking about?

Witcher has a lot of information in their games and it's good it fits that sort of style. But I tend to gloss over it. Again, Civilization 5 I ended up getting a reworked UI, not because the original UI seemed terrible, but the mod that I got was just much more streamlined, the information was ruled on the little buttons on the side instead of having to go into menus and having big floating boxes on there. You could just kind of click them and minimise them when you needed to.

Could you name any games with brilliant UIs that you've really liked and that have impressed you in some way?

I like the streamlined UIs, Overwatch I think is good, the only problem I have with Overwatch is one the death markers and two the ultimate is just a bit too central. When I say that I mean there's just a bit too much on your field of view. I guess that's fine because it's a powerful tool and

you need to know when you have it. One thing I do like about Overwatch is when you're playing a character like Mercy or Zarya or Moira, the information you need to know, like healing on Moira or your energy on Zarya the information is right there right next to the crosshair. And that's good, that's very good. I love the UI in Death Space. That's quite a specific example — have you played the Dead Space?

No I haven't but I know the UI and how it's not there visually.

Yeah it doesn't really exist. The UI exists in game and I love it I think it's brilliant. I love that. And a more extreme example is Hellblade, which has no UI at all and it's great it fits right into the theme of the game. It just works. I like the Half-Life and TF2 for the same reason as Overwatch, they're streamlined and they tell you everything you need to know. They fit the themes of the game.

Great! Can you come up with any games with really eye-catching UIs?

Hollow Knight has a very stylised and a very pretty to look at UI. The same with a game called Ori and the Blind forest. It just looks nice.

Oh yeah that's really beautiful.

Yeah the whole game is beautiful. Add that to the list of favourite games. Love that. What else.

Have you played any Persona games?

I haven't no, I have watched (another person) to play Persona 4 I believe, but I haven't played them.

Okay. Have you ever felt like the game UI specifically has made you fail or succeed in something?

I believe I've died a couple of times in Overwatch because the death icon has been in the way of someone I'm aiming at, or maybe not died but lost the kill. I feel like many game UIs have some helpful tips on like when to dodge, the new Spider Man game and the Batman games, they tell you when you need to dodge and it's great. It feels great when you land those dodges. So you can succeed on that. Obviously the environment scan and the red flashy health thing saves me a lot when I otherwise wouldn't be looking at the health bar. I can't think of any other examples. There was a time when I was playing League of Legends and the map on the bottom right corner used to be really big and clunky and used to block some information sometimes and it would always be on the top on the Southeast side or the Northwest side and would give you the advantage to just use the position of the map because it blocks a lot of information. And that is where you would need to see because the enemy team would be coming from there. That's kind of what I remember getting blocked by a few times.

Have you ever quit a game because of a UI that has been too frustrating?

Probably. Probably. I feel that it's harder to get into new games especially if they have a lot of

information to take in. And if there's something difficult and the UI is sort of unintuitive or it's hard to get around or there's just too much information. I might just quit and come back later to try to get into it. And then drop the game.

How many times would you say you're ready to try to get into a game before you decide that this is not for me?

If I bought the game and it looks like something I'd enjoy, obviously I must have a reason to buy the game so if I bought the game, I'd be willing to give it a good three four five times before I'm like nah.

Do you feel that the games in general give you enough feedback for your inputs?

The games that I play yes, I think they do. The games that give you haptic feedback such as vibrations in the controller or in Rocket League when you hit the ball or Spider Man when you get hit. That's good I like that. But when I was talking earlier about games that they feel great when the controls feel great also ties into that they feel responsive and the sound cues match up to when you get a hit and when you don't get any physical feedback you know when you've hit a shot or you've been hit, or you hit a magic attack the sound cues are very helpful.

Cool! Let's say you've played Overwatch and play some different game after that. How quickly would you say you adapt to the new UI?

Very quickly.

Even if you've played two FPS games in a row?

Yeah very quickly. I don't have too much problem with switching from one game to another.

Okay cool. In many FPS games there are no enemy outlines for example, Overwatch is a really juicy game in that sense that it gives the player a lot of feedback. Do you ever wish that other FPS games would have similar features as Overwatch does, like enemy outlines for example?

Yeah I could definitely see that. Overwatch has a lot different things and colours going on and without the outlines some characters could blend into certain maps. Where it would be useful I definitely hope they'd have that enemy outline in similar games. But then there's a lot of similar games it wouldn't work, for Player Unknown's Battlegrounds can't have red outlines on everyone it wouldn't work. The only thing I do miss in some games is hit markers. It's good to know when you've hit someone if you're shooting them otherwise it just feels a bit floaty. It feels a bit disconnected.

True. How would you define success or failure of a game?

One is popularity. You know if your game's popular whether it's good game or a bad game. It's success. In some ways for me personally if I enjoyed the game but that's just me personally. And then there's games like Dark Souls which is I forget what

the name of the person who created that is, but he's obviously got a very specific way he wanted to create this game. And to me it looks like it's come out quite close to what he envisioned, and I consider that a successful game. It does hold its own place in the market very well, a lot of other games have tried to kind of creep into that little niche and are very stuck but Dark Souls does do it very well.

Could you could you come up with any reasons why the newcomers, like other similar games haven't been as successful as Dark Souls? What do you think is the reason?

I don't know I guess they just don't nail the same kind of combat the same the same kind of feeling. The feeling of kind of chipping away each level and each enemy in each area until you can finally get through and it feels like "yes I've done that!". And then on to the next one. It all ties in to the world and the feeling that there's this big world and you're a tiny part of it and you're just experiencing it. That ties in to the gameplay very well because the gameplay makes you feel like you're nothing. Any enemy can just smack you if you're not paying attention and that just fits in the whole theme of the game.

What makes you feel like you're a small person in a huge game? Is it when you open the map and the map is actually really huge or something? What gives you the feeling?

Yeah that definitely works. One thing is when the world is living and

breathing, it does not revolve around the player. You go to a town and there are things going on, they're not just waiting for you to turn up. There's stuff happening you know. In Skyrim it felt like "you are, the dragonborn this is your destiny" you go around and everything's waiting for you to turn up. Whereas in Witcher it feels like the world is a living breathing place. In Dark Souls it feels like the world is a dying place and you're dying with it, you're not anything to the world, you're just there. I don't know if you know the lore of Dark Souls, but there's thousands of souls dying and if the mission is failed you're just another one of them. And that does make you feel very tiny when you realise that.

Yeah, I agree with you, I have played Dark Souls and it's an experience. What makes you feel like you have personally succeeded in a game?

When I get good at the game, I do enjoy that feeling like I've mastered certain aspects of the game and have gotten good at the game. Another thing that makes me feel like I succeed is when I develop these things, many games give you the tools to develop your own play styles and your own strategies. When I've developed a certain play style and there's been a progress in the game and finally gets this point when it's all come together that feels great. And you can play it your own way, I tend to go for like mobile stealthy kind of things when you have a build that can just dash around a million times in combat, built that up from the start, it feels great.

What gives you this kind of sense of accomplishment, what are the things that like you enjoy seeing on your screen?

Big numbers completely like a complete health bar and a really badass weapon that you've made. Like I said when the Maps are complete that feels like an accomplishment.

Do you associate the feelings of success or failure to certain elements or information? For example in Overwatch you know you get the "defeat" and there's this tension building sound clip. Would you like to talk about that a bit more?

Yeah, when I die it feels like I failed in a game that's just me. I do enjoy doing well in games, I don't need to but it does it's definitely more enjoyable for me if I am doing well. I also feel like I failed when there's something that I've missed and I can't backtrack and go get it. So say I open the chapter select and there's a secret mission that I've missed and I can't go back and get it, it's there, that's like "aaah". Also if there's an item like that can't collect or a skill that I've missed.

How do you follow your development in game? What things you pay attention to?

I mean it's different from game to game, games that give you a skill tree that's a good way to follow your skill. Is this what we're talking about, development?

Yeah.

Yeah so skill tree is an easy to follow, how far you are in the game like levels, those make it easy to know how strong you are in comparisons to other things. In games like Overwatch is it's more a feeling thing when you know you're getting better. Obviously you have the rank the ranking system but I don't think many of us play enough to truly know where we stand in the ranked system, you do have to play a lot to even out and give you a true ranking. For me it's just when I feel like I'm getting more comfortable with the characters and the mechanics and that goes for a lot of games. When I feel like I'm getting comfortable with the mechanics and I can pull off the combos more often and I know when to dodge, just things like that just getting familiar with the game.

How often do you look at player profiles?

Often, fairly often it's probably not a good idea, but you have the SR, it's a quantifiable number that tells you how good or how not good this person may be and it's kind of comforting to know that.

What's the first thing that catches your attention when you open a player profile, in any game?

I guess stats, if it has statistics like you know kill/death ratio, how many kills, hours played things like that. Accuracy, the type of heroes they may play, the type of matches they may play, if the game shows the kind of class and the characters they play,

that kind of thing.

Do you think it's important that the game shows them?

No, no I think it's quite nice, I'm not sure if it's important not. It's nice on Overwatch but I'm not sure it's necessary and I think the developers agreed with that by making the option of having a private profile. I don't think they see it as a necessary point I think they see it as just a cool thing.

How often do you look at your own player profile?

Somewhat often. Mostly to see what heroes I've been playing, my most played heroes in competitive and hours played. It is interesting to see.

Yeah! As you mentioned Overwatch has allowed to make the profiles private, and an option to do so. Do you think that has affected the gameplay experience?

Yes, people have this have this notion that if your profile is private you have something to hide and that can be ammunition for some people. It's not right obviously but some people will take that and throw it back at people. On the other side in competitive it was quite nice to know what heroes your teammates played because I often play Reinhardt a lot and it was nice to see what other people played. I'd look at the profile and see what kind of heroes they play and see what they have been playing a lot and by extension what they could be comfortable picking, and pick my own in accordance to

that. You can't do that anymore.

How often do you modify the visual UI in games?

When available. I normally make it smaller, I like changing the colours, I like making my crosshair a nice bright visible colour, it often it starts as white or green. Green is okay, white I don't get on with. When the new colourblind options come to live in Overwatch I will mess around those, it's quite fun and they do help.

Are there are some games that you wish had this kind of option to modify the UI?

I'd like to make it a little smaller usually and I guess would be nice if you could change the positions of the things on the UI, I can't think of how anyone could get a real strategic advantage from that. That would be quite nice. Generally it's nice to have those options, if they're not there and there's something I don't like about in the UI it's a bit annoying I can't change it.

You mentioned the crosshairs, why does it matter to you? Could you explain how it helps you to get better at the game?

It just feels like it's more visible, I'm not sure if that's placebo or whatever I just like having it a nice visible colour. In games like Overwatch you can change your crosshair, I think it's useful and certain heroes do better with different kind of crosshairs, Widowmaker is great with the "cross" crosshair because you need to be able to line your shots horizontally

and vertically from far away. Trace doesn't need that because you're close so a small unobtrusive crosshair is better. I find, obviously personal but it's good to be able to change.

Are there any games you played that have added new features that have actually clarified the gaming experience in some way?

Yes, I'm sure, let me try to think. Overwatch has recently added outlines for your team through walls all the time which is very nice, they also at one point added the feature that you could turn allied health bars on on every hero, which is very useful. Other games I can't think of anything.

Alright, how about changes that have made it harder to access some features?

No I can't think of any.

Okay, how do you feel about the communication wheel in Overwatch, do you use it I use it?

Yeah I do use it.

Do you find it easy to use?

Yes.

Why would you say it is?

Because it's just one button. I mean obviously if you have the spray switch you might have to press an extra button but all the useful information you might need to use in a quick situation is there. All you need to do

is just press one button and then you do a mouse gesture and that's it. It's quick and it's easier and it can be assigned to muscle memory on your mouse. It's intuitive for me.

Are mini-maps important to you in games? Obviously most games have a huge fullscreen map, but the mini-map you have on the corner somewhere.

Yeah in games like RPGs and MOBAs mini-maps are good. It's nice to be able to see your local area when you're running around in Witcher, you know to see kind of like what might be just the other side of the trees without having to open up the map. Or see where to go in the city, how to get to a certain place and it's good as a quick reference. In a game like League of Legends when you need to know certain information about your team's position, where the enemies are positioned and things like that.

Do you feel like they're easy to follow?

Generally yes I think so.

You mentioned Spider Man, in that game and in other games, do you feel like there's something in the environment that makes it easier to navigate or makes it more dynamic to move in?

In Spider Man for example the movement system works great with the map, it's easy to navigate because it's all swinging between skyscrapers and around skyscrapers, on and off walls and over buildings. It's just great and it being easy to navigate

comes down to the control system they've made. I think it's great, using it was good fun.

Would you say that the UI enhances your reaction time in some games, or would you say it has the potential to do so?

Most definitely, definitely.

Do you have any examples or is it just a feeling?

Yes so games like Spider Man has indicators of enemies attacking and when you should dodge but also they still have very kind of recognisable attack animations, and I think both of those together give you the kind of anticipation of you've seen them come in for attack, and the cue it gives you allows you to dodge. You get a visual of when to dodge, it does enhance and also makes it very accessible. So they can make fast paced combat and have everyone feel like they can enjoy it and be able to dodge these attacks. Overwatch has a few things like when your teammates call for healing it is shown at the side of the screen, it will tell you where they are and that removes a little bit of thought and reaction time. You don't have to think about where you need to be looking to find them, you know, it kind of shows you.

How often do you buy new games?

Fairly often, I used to buy a lot of games, I used to buy games at least games like a couple games a week. Now I buy new release games that are really exciting to me or games that look good and have gone on

sale. If I feel like they're a good price that I can justify buying them even if I don't enjoy them. I buy a new game every week or so every week or two weeks.

What do you usually look for before you decide to buy it or not?

Well one thing that's probably not good, probably a little weak, I look up reviews. I like to know what people have played the game think of. Obviously I look at kind of reviewers who like the games that I'm into, so I feel like you know I can trust their opinions on the game because their taste compares to my own a little bit. I guess I look for certain genres, I like the RPG medieval fantasy setting, I like first-person shooters, I line up for that kind of thing. I guess I look for multiplayer, if a game has co-op I'll be more inclined to buy it.

If there is a demo version available do you usually try it or do you want to try it before you purchase the full one?

Often, I think is great for the consumer that there are demo options, I'm not sure if a demo is such a great idea from the developer point of view. That's a different issue. Obviously there's a chance that I would try a demo and then decide based on that. I do like kind of early access beta games, Overwatch had a beta. I like getting involved in those, it feels great especially when everyone was coming into that game, no one's played it before because no-one's had the chance, it hasn't been out, we're all in the same boat. All experiencing that for the first time, it's great I love

that. I love that environment in the game.

Yeah! Can you give me any examples of games that have easy communication features?

Overwatch obviously has the Battle.net communication, and Steam, any game on Steam. You can kind of extend that to every game on Steam because it has that built-in. Overwatch has the voice chat options and a push-to talk and an open mic, it's good. I like games that give you the option to get in contact with people that you've recently played with. Obviously that opens up a way for people who will say nasty things about you but I think that's an acceptable trade-off.

Do you have examples of poor ones that have poor communication features that could be improved?

I recently played, I bought a game called Pummel Party, a Mario Party clone it's for four players, and I wanted to I just jump into an online session. There was no communication there was no voice chat and there was no text chat and that put me off. Because I don't have anyone who owns that game and I'd like to play with people but it's not good if you can't talk to the people you're playing with. There should be some kind of communication it feels flat without that especially on that kind of game where most of the fun comes from the silly mini games and the reactions you get from other people.

My final question is what are your thoughts on the quick time events in games?

I have mixed feelings about them. On one hand I like them, I just think they're instilled at the wrong points, one example for me is Halo 4 where the last boss just ended as a quick time event. That's disappointment. But quicktime events in general are fine because they make the cutscenes a bit more interactive and it kind of it kind of feels a little better I guess if they're done right. Some of the bottom mashing things you can feel like they're forced but for example Detroit Become Human has great has really great quick time events in the in the fights, because they kind of fit. So you it uses the thumb-stick a lot and the directions make sense. It feels really good.

Is there anything else you would like to add? Anything that comes to your mind?

I don't know, you covered everything quite well.

Do you remember any frustrating games?

I wish I could because there have been some. Not really, but Civilization 5 was one I ended up modding modding to get rid of it.

Do you usually rely on third-person mods to fix some things that frustrate you in games or do you just let them be?

It would have to be like a real kind of like torn situation where I enjoy the

game so much, but I hate this about the UI and at that point I'd go looking for a fix. Otherwise it would be I've seen something on the internet or friends recommended it for me and it just looks better and that's when I'd go for it. I don't rely on it often but given the opportunity of or driven I would go looking for it.

Do you mind if I ask some follow-up questions later via a message or something?

Not at all, go ahead it's fine.

This was really informative, thank you!

Thank you!

2. PLAYER INTERVIEWS

2.5 PLAYER 3- INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Okay so let's get started, what kind of games do you usually play?

You mean like genre?

Genre or anything that comes to your mind.

Well let's start. I play on three platforms. Okay, so I have my 3DS, I have ps4 and I have Nintendo. So a PC, a bigger console, and a handheld console, and I usually I like to play adventure games and action games a lot, but I also enjoy puzzle games. Oh let me think if there's anything else, puzzle games, role-playing games, yeah I guess those are the main ones. Visual novel sometimes, but yeah those are the main.

Do you play any FPS or RPG games?

I do not.

Do you have any favourite games?

Any favourite games, um I like, I think most of my favourite games are in the action-adventure genre. So currently I really like shadow for Colossus and the Last Guardian which are both third-person adventure action games. I like Yakuza or like I've only been playing Yakuza Zero but that one is really good. Ôkami is really good as well and those are very similar games actually, Yakuza and

Ôkami. I guess I like Zelda games a lot as well which I really similar to a Ôkami once again. I like puzzle game so like Ace Attorney, Professor Layton, Ghost Trick, those are really good.

Why do you like them?

I think they are, they combine I guess game mechanics which are enjoyable to play with good story, interesting characters, good music, good visuals. Good visuals are surprisingly important to me but I guess I'm often looking for, you know, when it comes I'm looking for things together. You need to feel to them which is why I'd really like Shadow of the Colossus or Yakuza. Which they have really sort of very distinctive visuality and you couldn't get a sort of experience from anything else. And you couldn't get from any other mediums, and that's why are only my favourite video games. They are also like you know my favourite piece of media I think.

How does the gameplay contribute to a nice feeling at those games give?

I think it has to be, oh also when it comes to favourite games I also like Monster Hunter. But yeah I think when it comes to game mechanics I think that it just has to be fun. Um I really think it depends on, I I'm not

big fan of really difficult games most of the time. Monster Hunter is my one exception for this rule, so if I like the game, it doesn't need to have big challenges, it doesn't have to pose me any big challenge for me to enjoy it. Sometimes I feel like you know for example, Monster Hunter has you know, it's a really complicated game, it takes a lot of time to get into. It's fairly challenging actually but it manages to be lots of fun, it's sort of it's a weird thing, it sort of combines challenge with these you know, complicated you know, mechanics you need to master. You need to master things like, you know these, how to use your weapon, how to dodge, how to time your attacks. So that you know these big punches kill you, but it sort of comes, but there's an interesting balance of like you know challenge. You have to be really good at dodging, and make hitting to beat the monster. I feel challenge versus you know the skills you have there. Like you know there's a good balance of that and I think the fun from there comes from overcoming something you didn't think was possible. I think it's the mechanics. With puzzles I like I like having to think, that doesn't really relate to mechanics per se. I guess I'm sort of trying to think of like a mechanic in some other game I would have enjoyed.

Oh I think, how the mechanics are tied to the plot. So like how they help you to you know how they aren't tied to like you know advancing in the story. How is advancing in the story, how is it made fun. If it's like a Zelda dungeon then like you know solving the puzzles. Zelda games are really good introducing you to like

for example a new weapon or like a new item you can use to advance, and then you have to figure out how to use it. And I think you know that is lots of fun and then like it rewards you with you being able to advance in the game, advancing the plot. That's fun.

You mentioned that in Monster Hunter it's really important that you know how to dodge and you know all those kinds of combinations, does the game give any kind of visual cues to aid that?

I think it's not in the way that many other games would do. So basically Monster Hunter really doesn't hold your hand, it doesn't have a good, it doesn't, how like you know for example lots of games would probably have know quick time events or something like that. So it would tell you when to do things but Monster Hunter basically gives you this character, like in a fighting game you know each character has a specific number of different moves, and with Monster Hunter you know these monsters have, you know, restricted number of moves and animations. Therefore when you play Monster Hunter you have to sort of read the movements, learn to recognise okay when is this monster starting this animation, and what does that mean. It's not like you know realistic, it's not imitating your realistic fighting since you know, it is about basically learning to exploit the fact that you know it is an artificial character. Joy comes from learning to exploit that, it comes from learning to see all the animal lifts its head, like this, so that means it will stay still for three

seconds, and that means I will have time to hit it two times. Someone I once knew called it dancing.

You also mentioned these Zelda weapon introductions and how they managed to do it well. Do they have some kind of like tutorial that guides you, or how are the weapons introduced? And what makes it so pleasing?

You are usually told how to, you know, told what the item does. So for example, I think in Skyward Sword, I don't remember how would they do it. The game just doesn't tell you, it does show you. For example you can move, what's the word, they show you a lever, and they tell you to try the whip on it. And then you try it and then you realise you can pull levers that are further away from you by you know using the whip. And that is all they tell you, they tell you how you can use the item but then they throw you in situations where you have to, you know, remember that this is what this item does. And you have to figure for example, you know, how to get open a specific door somewhere. You have to figure out if you can use the web somehow in that situation, you have to find the lever. Or maybe there's a similar trick you can perform with the whip. It's about either discovering how to use it. You are supposed to use it often, but the way you know when to use it, where to use it, in what order to use it. What other uses like this one item can have based on the information you have. I think that puzzles are created and based on what you know, and like you know sort of discovering new things based on the information

you already have. It's what makes it fun I think.

Yeah! Think about all the games you previously mentioned, what are the most important goals or objectives those games? You don't have to talk about all of them but just the ones that come to your mind. What does the story or the game tell you to do basically? What are you trying to achieve in the game?

I think most of the game like when it comes to adventure games there is like you know, there are two elements usually. A story you have to advance with and then you have the world you can explore. I don't play that many completely open world games, the only one I've ever played, the Skyrim, which I also like but you know most of the time there is sort of the story and yeah opposites the story and the explore exploration possibility. And I think I do enjoy doing both of those. There are definitely those and with puzzle games, they are more you know you, you are solving puzzles and solving the puzzle is the main goal. And usually those are tied to the plot, for example when you play Ace Attorney you will not, your goal is to win these court cases and the court cases themselves are puzzles. So it's either about that, by you know winning, knowing, solving puzzles. Or like in adventure games winning combats or like you know clearing like a platform. Like solving a puzzle but then there's also the more open-ended exploration. The world, find secrets about it.

Going on more on the user interface side of things, what kind of like visual markers do those games have? How they guide you towards those objectives?

I think a lot of games I play tend to have sort of, you are supposed to find these clues through exploring the world naturally. I think lots of games nowadays do sort of like, they have like tracking systems or such. Like Skyrim for example has. Basically they put a marker on in the world. You can like use a compass to like figure out where you're going, you basically know always where you're going. If you want to do something you just have the marker you have to follow.

Also in Shadow of the Colossus they have like a they have a tracking system. That's basically you can like raise your sword. And the sword, there's like a light reflecting on the sword, and the light shows you where to go. So you don't have to do any of like exploring of your own. If you want to explore it is up to you. And there's nothing else but the monsters you have to fight. But yeah I think a lot of times those games try to you know sort of convey these things in sort of like diegetic way. The Last Guardian for example does sort of a bad job with it, like you know, it was like really hard to navigate sometimes. It sort of seems to rely on your being able to tell where to go based on the world, but it's not very good. Whereas for example in Ōkami you can fight enemies in the world, and they have clearly defined sort , you can see the spots on the world these spots appear to the to the world that you touch and then you will have

like you know combat. And Yakuza has like you know these clusters of gangsters. They're like different gangsters but they have like these clusters, or like these 3d characters always like you know dressed up in these distinctive clothes. That if you approach them they will pick up a fight with you. I mean sometimes games like, you know, puzzle games especially do also I in the world stuff. Like Ace Attorney and Professor Layton for example rely heavily on you know like the touch screen, and it's about, especially In Ace Attorney, when you're investigating you're supposed to find things that look suspicious. So you touch things look suspicious. And that is how you advance it the story. Some games do have maps, Zeldas have maps that help you to maybe figure out where you are and where other places are. Skyrim does have the same. I think a lot of pieces like conveyed through the game world.

Do you feel like it's a good thing that navigation is done through the world, instead of having maps for example?

I think often it is a really hard thing to do well I think. I I'm grateful for maps. I really love Yakuza, and it does have a really small overworld and I enjoy exploring. But I must admit I haven't been able to sort of, it feels like it has been created to be a sort of world where you're supposed to be able to navigate the overworld based on all your like, here's this landmark. It seems like I'm supposed to be able to do that, but I'm not able to do that yet. So I rely on the map and the markers on the map a lot. So

if you know it has different markers for like shops and like entertainment centres and so on, I can navigate based on that. Although I wish I was able to navigate based on the world alone, so I think you know it's a really impressive thing when games make me feel like you know I can navigate the world based on just the world itself. That's fantastic, I love feeling like it. It's really hard to do well.

Do you have examples of games that don't do that well?

Well funnily enough, after I've played Skyrim a lot I think I see, Skyrim is trying to be a really immersive experience. I think you learn to navigate the tides in there for example really well, since you spend a lot of time in there. Some of them are distinctive buildings and such. In some places in Skyrim you learn how to navigate the specific spaces really well, when you familiarise when they are given enough uniqueness. I'm wondering if there are other games. I think Ôkami, it's a fairly old game so their world so basically, it's not like one big world it's like sort of smaller like 3d environments linked to each other. And I think each one of those have like you know smaller amount of you know places. Relatively small amount of stuff in them, enough to make them feel like you know full environments, but you know not too much that you get lost navigating. Ôkami's game world is really I can even now tell you how to navigate the game world, I could probably you know tell you how to get from the from like one part of the map to like the completely the other part. The sort of placement of things

work really well. Games like The Last Guardian, that's kind of hard which is sad.

Do any of those games have like cooldowns or resource management that you have to do?

Resource management, let me think. Health is the most obvious, mana usually as well, some games have this kind of stamina bar that goes up the more you hit. Zelda has health, Skyrim has health and stamina and magic or mana.

How do you feel about the resource management? Do you find it difficult to follow?

Monster Hunter does as well I think. I think they are sort of like they are so common in video games that they are like, you know when have played video games from a young age they are something really easy for you to understand. They just feel like part of like general knowledge.

How often do you look at those kind of bars? For example in some games when you're lose your health the screen turns grayscale or you get the kind of like red flash. Do you rely on those kind of visual cues or do you actually look at the health bar itself?

I think it depends, often times I'm really better looking those in action games, when I'm in the middle of combat. In Yakuza they have like health bar and they have a stamina bar or something, so basically the more stuff you do in the fight the more sort of fills up. You can like do

like extra moves like super special moves when you do that, and I it's really hard for me to keep track on either of those things. Unlike, I think Zelda games are nice since they give you that, like you know sound cute. They give you an audio cue when your health drops down, so that helps me to keep track of it. But yeah often times it's really easy for me to lose track of the health bar. The only game where I'm really pay attention to the health bar is Monster Hunter, since when I play the game there is so much more tactical thinking involved. So in that keeping eye on the health bar and stamina bar is really important in order for you to succeed. I think it's more about the all the other game mechanics and how they work together with the health bar and other cues. Like that you know guides me to pay attention to it and when other things in the game seem more important to me. Like when I'm doing combat in Yakuza I'm more interested in like you know performing. I'm having fun with the combat moves so I don't pay as much attention to that.

Do you care about damage values? Some games show you in numbers what kind of damage do you. Do you usually care about that?

I do notice when I've gotten stronger, and like you know it's a nice feeling when weaker enemies die quicker. But I can't really say I calculate those or anything. I when I play Skyrim my like magic bar is constantly just like you know dying out. I don't realise I can't do spells since I don't have any more mana left. So yeah I'm really bad at noticing those either. I'm

a good at paying attention to that when I play Monster Hunter so it's not some sort of you know personality trait I have. I mean game probably has something to do with that but I think there's something about you know, what I feel when I play, what I feel is important. So when I play Monster Hunter it's very tactical and I step into the game wanting to play that game tactically. I know I that I it's sort of like, I'm I set myself to that mode. We're calculating health stamina our ammo. If I use any of the weapons and use ammo where those are important, so that guides me to you know change the way I see the game. But when I play action-adventure games I'm more interested in the action. Especially when it like Yakuza or Ôkami I want to have fun, I like the combat style of those games where you can perform like you know cool-looking moves and that is what I'm interested in when I'm playing those games. That is where I derive the fun from so in those cases I'm more focused on that and sort of the thrill of the moment. So I'm not calculating and paying attention to bars. I also wonder if there might be something about the design but I can't think.

In the games, how do you track the progress? Things such as how many monsters you have killed or how much of the map you have explored. Do you have any examples of that?

Mostly I really don't keep track of that if it's like, it's something I can't hold in my head. I can't say I really bother I, lately I've been trying to keep a track on side missions in the games I play. So in Yakuza you have

these side stories where you can just encounter random characters in the overworld. And it could be something like every time you meet this policeman character, every time you sort of think ,you know walk past him, he asks you to like show something you had in your possession. I kept tracking like you know how many times I encountered him, you know to figure out like I'd remind myself what happened.

I played at Night In the Woods recently and they also have a sort of like, you to wake up every day and you go around this character's hometown and you talk to different people. And I wanted to make sure I wouldn't miss any dialogue since I was really interested like, you know in the dialogue, in the writing of the game. So I kept track of how often these specific characters appeared so I could like you know have a pattern. So for example a teacher character who you could talk to every other day, every other day he was away and every other day he was like, you know, in this one spot. So you could talk to him. So I figured out that you know he appears every other day by keeping track of those daily cycles, and that way I could make sure you know I would I wasn't missing any interesting content. But I don't think that's very common nowadays, I think that's a really old-fashioned way of doing it. Most people don't really bother with that.

I guess sometimes I want to complete stuff a lot of the games provide you with you know their own systems. Yakuza Zero for has meters that tell you like how many side stories you completed and like what the percentage of the game you've

completed is, like 15% of all the side story. So I do sometimes look at those if I don't want like to miss any of the side stories. They are really lots of fun.

Would you say in general that the user interface has a great impact on the game?

It really it really depends I guess it's something you know you mostly notice if it really sucks. Or like you know the user interface seems its best when you almost don't notice it's in. When it is built so well in the game that you almost forget it's in there. You know when it serves the purpose it has, you know it improves the quality of the game. And when it's a bit clunky, when it's a bit bad it's like, you know it's going to worsen your experience.

Yeah, do you find any user interface elements conflicting in any of the games you have played?

Conflicting, I think that they're hard to track. There have definitely been some, let me think. I'm just trying to think of anything, ok, a weird the thing that comes to my mind is, I can't think of anything else right now. I was thinking of like some iconic games. Some of them might not be friendly for people who are new. Some iconic games might have, like you know being iconic also requires you to know stuff. Like you like you having sort of like your own almost internal logic, and it can be sort of unfriendly for people doing for the first time. So I was thinking of Animal Crossing as well, and I hadn't played any games before a New Leaf came out for a

3DS. And I think they have, when you have the item inventory, they have different symbols for work clothes and socks and your clothes and like items and so on. And there's only one icon for every single of those. First of there is one icon for each of those things, so for example if you if you are carrying three different shirts, all of them have the same icon. So figuring out which shirt it is, is a pain. And especially if you're not familiar, if you don't remember what each of those shirts looked like. So if you're like for example selling stuff, you have you have to rely on the name of the item. I want to sell my slate shoes, and if you don't remember what your slate shoes look like, you're not sure if those were the ones you really liked, you might end up actually selling that. It's not conflicting but that's bad design. All the items, the symbol for the item is a leaf. And that is really difficult for someone who hasn't ever played an animal crossing game before to figure out, she's wondering why do you have all these leaves in your inventory. I just remember that's being sort of difficult to get hang on. Especially when they do have, for example, different icons for these tools you can use. Like watering can, and there are like different sort of watering cans you have, like a plain one and a silver one and a gold one. And those have different icons so you will not like, you know end up using like you know a plain one when you could use a gold one. That is better. They don't have any sort of like you know more intuitive inventory system. That's one thing that comes to my mind. I'm trying to think of maybe like more in terms of conflicting. Yeah I

think lots of times like you know the sort of symbols you use, those might be hard to read. You have to be really careful about the way those are designed. They have to be really easy to understand or you might really risk someone not understanding what the information you're trying to convey means, and that is a risk since you know players do plan their gameplay experience based on the information the UI conveys. But yeah I can't think of anything else right now.

Would you say that the issues you mentioned makes you or a new player in your opinion less likely to sell the shoes because it's too much of a bother to try to think what the icon most likely means?

It means you have to backtrack in New Leaf if you want to sell something and you are not sure what item. In case you will have to go all the way back to a place where you can take those. Well you can take this, you can wear the shoes any way you want. So that's an easy one. But for example if you are buying flooring for example, and if you don't remember the flooring has the same problem. So if you want to know what kind of flooring you have in your inventory, you have to go to one of the two places in the game where you can you know spread the flooring on the floor of a building and see what flooring it is. And then you will have to go back all the way to sell those things. So it does make it more difficult. You either give up and I often end up storing these items away and forgetting about them, and then I'll buy another. You know another one of the same designs.

You will accidentally probably sell something you're really liked so it just makes playing more difficult and more frustrating. You can just check those things up or like online, but I don't think that is good game play design by any means. If you have to rely on stuff like that.

Yeah. Can you think of a game in which you have actually noticed UI in some way? If it's really brilliant or it's really eye-catching, or is it just kind of boring or terrible?

I think everyone always talks about Persona 5 which has really visually really beautiful UI. I remember really well like Persona 5 has a really you know, that's a really unique way of like organising your stuff. It's very cool looking. I think another one I remember really well when it comes to visuals is a Rule of Rose, which is a horror game. Which takes a lot of visual inspiration from like sort of old-time orphanages and schools. So basically the inventory system looks, it's a fairly traditional like you know, you have basically squares for items. Each square has like one item. You know square space but all of this is designed to look like it's a drawing on a blackboard. So like you know all the items have like if you take you like a black background and white lines and I remember that being like so visual. It's very old and it's not you know unique, but the way it was presented, the way it was designed it looked memorable. It fits the sort of the feeling of the game, the ethics of the game, and that was pretty interesting. A lot of times I remember a lot of those, that you know like just looking really clunky. In many other

games like I can't think of anything, I think that sort of like you know it just looked pretty. And I still remember how it looked like. That's like one of the few moments when like you know I remember what this thing looked like in a positive way. It was like visible to me, it gave feeling but it still served its purpose fairly well.

Well you mentioned Persona 5 as an example, do you think that the visual UI makes the game more appealing to you? As in would you like to play it based on what you've seen, and if you think about the user interface does it make it more appealing?

I mean I think it's personified overall. This is interesting, I haven't played the game and I don't know much about it, I'm not even sure I've always seen really cool pictures of the interface. So I'm not really sure how it functions or like you know does it serve its purpose. It definitely gives me like you know when you have sort of like a sort of UI I've never seen before, and I guess when you know it's only a visual thing that I can like observe. Presenting this information it has something unique in it. It sort of makes me even if it's just like a visual thing, it gives me this impression that there is some thinking behind the game, some genuine effort put into the game, and that comes to me as one of the examples. Or like one piece of information about the game that makes me want to, gives me like a positive impression of it. I would like to play this game since based on the information I have, one of these is this UI design, it makes me think it's a game that has lots of effort put

into it. And if it's like I thought, has like lots of effort put into it, it must be good. So that makes, yeah that does make me want to play it more.

Have you ever thought that a game UI specifically has made you fail or succeed? I know that this question is probably more relevant in like FPS games, but I believe there is some relevance in the games you play.

I'm thinking of Monster Hunter, it is sort of famous for having a reputation and it's a difficult game. Also because I thought UI design, it's a bit shit or like it's a bit hard to learn. I think that's the thing, like often when you play MH and other the games even. For example you can, when you scroll your inventory, I think it's dragged into this mechanics, when you scroll your inventory the game pauses. But hunt it doesn't pause so basically you are playing in real life, as you are scrolling through inventory. When you play Monster Hunter you don't usually open your inventory, since that would, it takes up like half of your screen and that would be really bad. So you have like a shortcut, so you can press down one button and sort of scroll through the items you have, with like arrow keys or like when you have a d-pad with the right and left buttons of the d-pad. Basically it only gives, you can I scroll through these icons of like what you have in your possession, and they say small text telling you what this specific thing is, which is really hard to read when you're like you know fighting up in real-time. So for example if you know the same kind of items have the same symbol, so if

you have different types of potions which you know give you a different amount of HP, so there have been cases where it's really crucial for me to save the best potions for the last minute. And I've accidentally used those potions instead of the weaker ones, when I wasn't supposed to or vice versa, because the design of the UI. You know it's really difficult to pay attention to something like that when there is also the fight going on. That is definitely something I remember being really annoying and that has cost me actual combat. You know stuff which is really bad, since in Monster Hunter all of those fights really matter, and starting over it's a big thing. It's really time consuming

Have you ever quit the game because the UI has been too frustrating?

I've played Thief games lately and I've played Thief is it Deadly Shadows or something like that, I don't remember the exact name of it. I think I can check it out some other time. But there's a good Thief game, and basically they give you these 3D environments where you are supposed to navigate based on based on the cues in the world itself, but you also are given a map which is supposed to give you like you know an overall sense of the world. But those maps are not realistic in the same way as maps in most games are. Like Yakuza gives you a perfect map of like all the streets of the area, Thief's maps are drawn, they look drawn and they are like the measurements that are wrong. It's sort of like they give you a really vague idea about anything. So you

can't really navigate based on those. I assumed that is for reason, it is supposed to like you know encourage you to look more into the cues in the world itself. But it's an old game and sometimes not well designed when it comes to some puzzles or you know things you can do. So having a map that would give you any kind of idea where you are, where the things you want are, would be really helpful. Sometimes I'm just like okay I I'm sort of stuck I'm not sure where to go next, and this map is not helping me, I'm not, I'm going to like you know come to this game later. When I have the energy to figure out where I am. So I assume if the UI, in this case the map, wasn't like that it would have been easier for me to you know enjoy the game for longer.

Cool, do you feel like the games in general will give you enough feedback for your inputs? Such as knowing that you hit the monster.

Can I give another example of like the UI?

Yeah of course.

Also thinking about Thief and basically it's a sneaking game where you play as a thief. You have to use the darkness for your advantage, so you basically have to stay in the shadows, any dark places in order for people to not notice you. It gives like a meter in the corner, trying to tell you like you know how much how much in the lights you are, so how likely it is you know these characters will seek you. If you're in plain sunlight they will see you. If you're in like you know pitch-black they won't see you,

and there's like you know like a range in between. And it's like this gamble, like okay how much can you risk, how much do you want to risk. That changes depending on like you know where you move but it's sometimes a bit unreliable. So it's not always perfectly aligned with the you know exact moment. So there have been cases where I've thought I should be visible, but the meter tells me I shouldn't be visible. The meter sort of moves a bit too slowly. So before I realise I'm in the light and someone has noticed me, I am in the light and someone noticed me already. That has been sort of a situation where I've gotten into trouble, because the UI doesn't quite match with what's going on with the game.

Do you feel like the games in general are giving you good feedback for your inputs? Such as you hit the monster instead of missing it?

I assume like you know some games you want to sort of hide, you know information they give you. Like for example I'm thinking of the Last Guardian where the point is you bonding with this big animal creature, and I think that's sometimes really hard to like you know decipher. For example you can pet the animal but it's not always so good to, it's sometimes really hard to decipher whether or not like you know for example petting it is a good idea. How long can you pet it, there aren't things like that, I feel like it's hiding some of that feedback. Or like it's not telling you everything. I believe it is due to it give you this impression of, like you know, this animal having a mind of its own and I think that

in some cases it can be interesting. You don't have like an affection meter that tells you how much it likes you, it's more about you know you're supposed to read the cues of the animal. And yeah so I think sometimes not giving that feedback is a good idea. I think most games I've played are really good at giving you like you know that feedback, and I really like tangible feedback a lot. Like you know when it's not just about visual cues. You know when you land your hits and like the control shakes, I like it when you sort of physically almost feel the impact. Those are the most rewarding ones to me. I like games that are really good of doing that well, a lot of time I guess combination of lots of things, like you know those shakes and like camerawork, sound design. I think most games give me all that feedback and I don't think I would convey it, it would be confusing to play a game that wouldn't give you that feedback. Unless it was like you know for some purpose. I don't like that the Lost Guardian doesn't give you feedback when it's important. If you take off an enemy, like the animal can be hurt by the enemies and you have to pull them off you know. The feedback is really tangible, it's very you know it sort of almost rewards you for doing that. I think most games do that well.

If you play let's say two games in a row, how quickly would you say that you adapt to the different UI or different controls?

I think most games I play are fairly well designed, so I don't think that's much of a problem to me. Controls might take a bit longer depending on

how well I know these games, how long have I been playing them and so on. But I think most games I play it's really easy for me to remember how to play them. Monster Hunter, every time I come back to it I there's a very good sort of, the game explains the technical aspects. In Ôkami as well. I definitely remember how to do it. I think that's very good game design, well it's like you know the more intuitive it feels the better, and I think that's like you know, I still remember. I haven't played a copy in years but I still remember how to control the brush. Since it's like you know it's such a well implemented, in a one button press. It's like one of those things when the game is really well designed you remember it even though there are years between you and the playing experience.

In more skill-based games, how does the game give you information of that? How do you track your personal skills, like that you're getting better at this game?

Well Monster Hunter is much more skill-based than anything else. Basically Monster Hunter has a mechanic where you can break the monster, so if the monster has for example big horns and you kick them enough they break. The breaking moment is a very tangible feeling, there's once again the sound, you can feel the impact almost when you do it. There's a good unique animation, I think the camera might shake a bit. I feel like you're being able to do that quicker, it's a strong indication that I'm getting stronger, its overall just adjusting my rhythm with the monster, since basically

every single new monster you fight, you have to find the good rhythm with it. When you learn all of its moves, when you learn what each of those things mean, then you know you've got something better, then you know you can handle the specific monster. And that's sort of like you know a combination of once again animation, it's your moves. You can just really tangibly feel when you have learned what the monster has to offer, and you can overcome it. There are stuff like you know their hits doing less damage, you being able to take hits stronger.

Cool! Have you ever modified the UI, like downloaded a mod or otherwise modified and made the text bigger or the icons bigger?

I used to slightly mod Skyrim and that one added some extra menus and such. Where you could like tweak them. There is like a very popular are mod for Skyrim where it modifies the entirety of the UI. But I haven't had any need to modify that per se. I'm fairly satisfied most of the time with the UI systems I've been given. I have not had and I don't have the means to modify those either. Beyond that one which is really popular, that's the only reason why I know about the Skyrim mod. I'm not aware of like you know those mods, I don't have means to develop my own. There are very rarely ways for me to you know, to download those or modify those in any way, I mostly play like console games. Why to modify UI, I guess sometimes would be useful to have an alternative, or I would be interested in having an alternative. For example as I said Monster Hunter

has a really difficult one to use, that would be nice. But I think most of the time I'm unfairly satisfied. As long as it works I don't have a reason to change things like that.

Just a quick question before I ask the next question, have you played any game series fully, and how have the games changed during the series?

I've played I played Zelda games which is a series which has changed over time. I've played Zelda games I think five or six of order, so also like you know there's like you know like big differences between them. I've played oh I've played all three original Ace Attorneys. I think Professor, all the Professor Layton Games. I guess Pokemon, I played most of the main Pokemon games. Which have had changes.

Have those games ever added new UI elements that have made it either easier or harder to access some features?

I think Pokemon has definitely had the most changes, since it's such an old game series. So the original one for Game Boy had very, they had like text-based ones and you needed to know which button to push to like find the menu. And then like into the menus. For example I remember like you're in the original blue and red and yellow, the first ones. I mean they had limited amount of icons for like each Pokemon. So you actually couldn't tell what species Pokemon was if based on those icons. Those icons were more like they represented types of Pokemon,

not species. Well that has definitely changed, have like different sprites for more and every like you know each and every species, so when you open your menu for Pokemon you can see what species you have with you. It's not something that you know the player has to know. It's not that big of a thing I always, it wasn't back in the day, since like you know in the end you're supposed to know what Pokemon you have with you. But you know it's still like, that is still a thing, that is interesting.

I think that is definitely yeah. That is definitely thing I've noticed. I think I'm trying to remember what kind of UI Zelda games had they haven't changed that much in the end, but I remember they have surprisingly maybe stayed sort of the same now that I think about it. But they have some variations, or for example like the mines I think. The new, I haven't played the newest one, but I played Skyward Sword to Twilight Princess, I remember Twilight Princess having like a very, like it's having like very big, so let's say this way. I played Ocarina of Time that came before Twilight Princess and Ocarina of Time had only slots for a few items. And I don't remember if there was some way for you to see that like as you were playing, like you know in the corner. So you could see what items to you I get at hand. But you only had maybe space for like maybe one item, so you had to switch between. If you want to switch the item you could use, you had to go to the menu and your inventory and like pick the one you wanted to use. And then like to remove that but you have to change it every single time. Whereas Twilight Princess always had a more

than one item you can use. Twilight Princess and Skyward Sword had at least five slots for items, so you could basically use five items from the inventory without having to, like you know, switch between the menu and then you know the video rolling all the time. But that came with like a bigger and clunkier like symbol, since it took more space from the screen to show like you know all these different item icons. I don't remember I think they did sort of like you know, scroll back from that. So the newer games don't have that many item symbols anymore. Those other ones that come to my mind quickly.

Thank you for that. What are your thoughts on quick time events?

I'm not a big fan of That, like I'm not good at reacting quickly to things. I think I think they might work in some games if it's, if the whole game is build around those, and you are sort of prepared to, you know, full of action. So like something like Heavy Rain for example, where everything you do is you press buttons in different ways in there, you know quick time events is basically the whole game. But that works since you know you are prepared to do that, but for example with Yakuza it came to me as a surprise, but there are quick time events sometimes. It seems like a very, I assume that, but I haven't find the logic yet so I've never prepared when there's a chance for me to do a quick time event. And that's why I don't enjoy those, if they jump out of nowhere I'm not prepared for them. So I will fail every single time, and they really

don't bring anything I think to the game. And they almost take me away from the flow, like I mean if I'm in the middle of combat in Yakuza I don't want to suddenly have to press any extra buttons. I want to do the stuff I know how to do, I want you know, if you form these you know combat manoeuvres I know how to do. So I'm not a really big fan of quick time events to be honest.

Cool, thank you. Just a couple of more questions. How often do you buy new games, and what kind of things do you look for before you purchase them?

I buy new games sometimes, I would say maybe once in every two to four months. And it can take like almost a year and I don't buy any games, and then suddenly I buy more. What I look for in the game, yeah I think I think visuals are really important. I want to play a game that catches my attention with the way it looks. I want to go for something that looks like fun to me, so it usually goes within those specific genres of like adventure action, third-person RPGs I tend to go for. I don't like, I'm not interested in sort of war games, I'm not looking for great experiences, I'm not looking for like really violent experience. I'm sort of like, you know, those other things I'm trying to do, something I'm sort of trying to exclude.

I guess I'm mostly looking for you know something for a fun time, I think I don't really mind how long the game is, it doesn't have to be a very long game. I can buy a short game that seems like fun. That's really, I don't know, I don't know what I

should go with this question. I'm just looking forward to have fun. If there is something about the gameplay that captures my attention that might be interesting. There's something with the music, the visuals, the story. I know that's something that just sets it apart from lots of other stuff. Something that you know gives me this feeling of I haven't experienced anything quite like this before. Those are sort of things that get me going, like get me into gaming.

Would you prefer to try out the game, or test a demo version or beta version of the game before you actually purchase it?

I don't think betas give you good information about the game. I'm interested in like you know alphas and betas and those sort of versions for other reasons. I think you know being able to I like actually, I've actually tried demos before. I've tried four games, I used to play this, this game for 3DS. I had fun I had seen pictures of it, and it looked cute. But I would have never wanted to make the purchase, because I didn't know like, you know how it worked as a game. I didn't know if it would be any fun. I wasn't a big fan of Solitaire at that time. But there was a demo of it, and when I tried it I really enjoyed it. It's a really good game and I remember being like I played the demo. Basically you can play 3DS demos for a specific number of times, I played it until the very last like try. And I was like ok I really want to play. I like it when you have stuff like 3DS demos that allow you to try these things and experience it. Yeah so definitely I would like to go for those

a lot of times, I think there are games which might not be. I would have never gotten into Yakuza for example by visuals alone, I tried it because I heard from people I respected it was good. But I took a risk by buying, I wasn't sure if I was going to enjoy it. I didn't know what kind of gameplay it did have, and when I figured I it had the kind of gameplay I really loved, I was really happy about That. But it was a big risk for me. It could have been a really bad experience, so yeah definitely being able to try games it's always different. You can't really tell gameplay mechanics but just watching people stream it.

Yeah, that's about it, do you have anything else to add?

I'm trying to think of frustrating UI Designs, nothing just comes to my mind.

It's okay, if anything comes to your mind later you can just send me a message. Is there anything else?

No, nothing I'm this was good.

Do you mind if I ask some follow-up questions later by sending you a message?

Absolutely you can!

Awesome, thank you!

The interviewee later answered additional questions:

How often do you make in-game purchases, and in which games? Purchases such as cosmetics, loot-boxes, stat upgrades etc. Why do

you buy them?

I haven't made in-game purchases in traditional video games. I used to "play" web-based pet games, namely Flight Rising, and sometimes used real-life money to buy visual enhancements, skins and wearable items, on the characters there. I bought the content because there was a big focus in visuals within the game's community. Clothes were for example a way to make this otherwise generic creature a character with distinct personality. It also felt nice to show off your aesthetically pleasing creatures to other players. There are some games that really tempt me with in-game purchases though. I sometimes play this connect three Pokémon game called Pokémon Shuffle that allows you to finish max five stages on one session. The wait time is half an hour which is frustrating especially because the game's hook is that getting a good score allows you to catch Pokémon. The gameplay's pretty addictive but the wait time is so ridiculous and clearly designed to force in-game purchases on you so I refuse to pay out of spite.

How often do you buy DLCs? Which games have you bought the DLC for? What is your criteria before buying them?

I haven't bought DLC for any games I've played. I prefer action-adventure and puzzle solving genres and older games, so often times there's no DLC available for me in the first place. I did however acquire all free-to-download extra material for Monster Hunter Tri and Monster Hunter Four.

The DLC for those titles consisted of new hunting missions, missions with raw materials that allow you to craft unique equipment in-game, new assistant characters and small visual tweaks like new outfits a pet NPC or new background options for a player info card that is visible for other players.

I downloaded all the Monster Hunter material mostly because I wanted to play the new missions and acquire the unique armor and equipment sets. The missions are fun on their own right and provide unique challenges like fighting monsters with slightly different move sets. The new equipment was often a bit silly which made me want to get it. You could forge an armor for your assistant that made it look like Isabelle from Animal Crossing, for example, which I was excited about because she is a very important character for me. I wasn't so keen on the extra assistants - they were just ugly recolour versions of the regular assistant but I grabbed them anyway because some had decent stats. I wouldn't have bought any of them had they not been free though.

I have regretted not buying DLC sometimes. For some reason I bought the DLC-less version of Skyrim which is annoying now because the extra content looks interesting and a lot of mods require DLC. I should probably buy the DLC at some point.

I'm pretty sure I'll also end up buying the DLC for Yakuza 0. I haven't looked into what kind of content it offers but I'm hoping for extra missions and other additional content like new mini-games. Apparently you can also change your characters' appearances if you own the DLC. That's not a

selling point for me but sounds like an amusing addition.

To return to my earlier point about spite I think the reason I'm willing to use money on Skyrim or Yakuza is because those games already provide me tons of content. It's often easy to see when the game withholds content from you to force you pay more and I don't want to be tricked like that. But if I can't get enough of the game already what's the danger in indulging a bit more?

I guess I'm just not used to spending extra money on games. I've never been big on shopping online or other stuff like that so having to juggle card numbers and having my bank details with me is a lot of unpleasant hassle.

2. PLAYER INTERVIEWS

2.6 PLAYER 4 - INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

(The participant's first language is not English)

What kind of games do you usually play?

Quite a range actually probably pretty much everything from adventure RPGs to first-person shooters and then like this sort of retro look-alike games. A lot of different stuff but yeah mostly action-adventure in all of these sort of different varieties those offer. Also MMO's.

Do you play any mobile games?

Very rarely, occasional Pokemon Go maybe, beyond that not really.

Alright, so on which devices do you usually play?

Mostly on PC but then again a lot on console as well. Especially in the past I used to play a lot on PlayStation and currently still doing it, but not as much since PC has kind of taken a lot of space from that.

Okay, what are your favourite games?

My favourite games? Well like go to games for just spending time would probably be Overwatch right now. Overwatch and then sometimes World of Warcraft I guess. Some

other favourites would probably the Mass Effect series and I quite like Dishonored. And then past favourite is probably LittleBigPlanet, it is something that I've spent so many hours playing that it's really difficult to actually quantify.

Could you explain why they are your favourite games? What are the aspects that make you like them so much?

Well Overwatch and World of Warcraft are both games where you can literally just open the game, play for a while and they kind of respect your time so to speak. So they are more bite-sized compared to many other games and also like having them on the computer really makes it sort of snappy because it doesn't take forever to actually load a game. It's really quick to just open it, do a couple of quests in World of Warcraft or do a few quick matches in Overwatch and that's kind of it. Overwatch itself doesn't really have any kind of narrative or story to it or mostly doesn't have that so it's more just like you and your team versus the other six people completing random objectives. Just quick and fun pastime but also challenging and fast-paced enough that for example it helps sort of focus on something totally different from everyday stuff. With World of Warcraft it's just that

the quests themselves are very short and the game is surprisingly snappy to play for an MMO. There usually isn't like a lot of travelling within the game or a lot of messing around with different objectives or sort of halfway points or waypoints for the quest themselves. It's just something that you can do very efficiently but you don't have to spend your evening doing that. Of course you can if you if you want. Those are easily approachable. When I play on console I feel like it just takes more time to approach those things so it's more of a commitment to open a console and start a game on it.

I guess those are something where I want to have more than just an hour or two to put into it. But then again the games I play on console tend to be more narrative heavy ones or otherwise can really take up a lot of time. For example in LittleBigPlanet there is a lot of story in it, not exhaustively so, but a lot of it. Also there's like there's an element of collection so you play different things over and over again to really collect all of the teeny-tiny stuff in it. And it has a level editor so it's also like this creative tool. I've spent like days just compiling level designs of my own and stuff like that so that's a very different game from most of the other games I play, since it is heavily creative focused. Whereas other games like Mass Effect are more narrative based, so it's a long story to play through in shorter sessions. But still I feel like I really need the time to actually engage with a session.

How does the gameplay contribute to the kind of nice feeling the game gives you?

The amount of time is also tied to the way a game plays I think.

For example, Dishonored is a stealth game. So you have a closed area where you have to complete a certain series of objectives but you have to figure out the proper pace and like which one to do first, which one to do next, on your own. Whilst also exploring the map area. So it requires a lot of thinking to actually get a satisfactory result out of a mission. I feel like that's the sort of challenging game I really like so the game itself pushes me to think my approach. Overwatch is a very similar game in a very different way, it also forces you to think about your approach but this time it's in the context of playing against other people. So you have to try to outplay your opponent and also synergise with your own team. It's not just randomly running around and shooting, it really has this sort of tactical feel to it and tactical quality to it. I really like that kind of thing in games that it isn't just like running in corridors and shooting everything that pops up. But actually thinking your approach with the game.

Then stuff like LittleBigPlanet or World of Warcraft, those are very different. LittleBigPlanet is I just like I set story, same actually with Mass Effect. They are set stories but in LittleBigPlanet you have to use your tactical wits in some ways just to clear maps. It's a platformer so you have to think how to best get through a level. Itself it is not too difficult but then there are additional objectives like a complete level without dying or complete a level while also collecting all of the materials within that level, or complete a level with a set minimum score. Those are

things which also sort of require planning and planning as you go as well. I really like this sort of slightly challenging aspect to a game so that it makes you think.

Then again I really also enjoy narrative, so Dishonored and Mass Effect especially. The narratives in those games are really good and Mass Effect being something of a fairly regular shooter with some tactical elements to it in the form of squad optimisations. And in the form of like broader tactical play, which is still fairly insignificant towards the end game and towards the outcomes of the game. Narrative is the carrying thing. I really enjoy games that tell good stories and I guess that's kind of like why I also enjoy some other adventure games. Firewatch is really good, it's a really interesting game because of its story. Story is an important part.

Do you consider yourself a gamer?

It's a very loaded word but definitely. I spend most of my free time playing different video games and definitely I have aspirations to the way I play those games, and to the way I engage with those games. For example with Overwatch I want to improve. So the game itself offers this sort of route of development through matching you up with opponents who are on a similar skill tier or a similar level of skill regarding to tactical and mechanical skill required for the game. Whenever you get better you get better opponents. Just sort of getting that sense of increasingly difficult games and then again still beating those difficult games is really rewarding. It's a good game

in the sense that it makes it really clear how you progress through things and it has a lot of these sort of satisfactory things where you just really get the feeling of "hey now I succeeded in this thing". It gives you a lot of feedback which is really nice. I know it's a feedback loop but it's a really well-designed one, it really keeps you within the game and keeps you enjoying the game.

Can you tell me a bit more about the feedback loop, or what kind of feedback does Overwatch give you?

Well since the game is all about playing against other players and it's heavily focused on just eliminating the enemy player. So efficiently clearing the map of the enemy or controlling certain areas of the map. Establishing control over the other team. So stuff like mechanical skill is talked a lot in that context. That kind of relates to just how good are you at pointing your mouse, estimating for example the possible travel time a bullet might have or a projectile might have, to an enemy. It also has different sort of abilities which are not just shooting a gun but actually using different objects or different features of the characters. For example you can lay down shields or block a route with an ice wall or similar. You can manipulate the environment or add things to the environment in a way that it supports your team. It all ties to tactical side of things. You can kind of you use the environment and build around it to protect your team and make it easier to attack an opposing team. For example you can give your team cover to shoot behind from, or

you can use your abilities to defer the movement of the enemy team or just cut their path. There are very different facets to the game and it's heavily based on this sort of tactical synergy with your team and against the tactical synergy of the other team. All the different characters have very different abilities and you pick the character that most works, or you think works the best against the characters that the enemy team is using. It's sort of huge thing of composition and composition picking various skill sets and putting those together in order to play better than the opponent. To clear them away from the map or to make keep them away from a certain objective.

How does the game give you feedback on those things?

Because you have this sort of huge amount of things you can do within it but you have the distinct goal of keeping an objective or attacking an enemy, the game itself helps that a lot by giving these different kinds of indicators which help you track your performance. The most immediate ones are that whenever you use a skill the skill usually has a cool down timer so you can't just spam a certain ability, but you have to think about when you use it. The cool downs are visualised very clearly by counters and by colour highlights on a HUD overlay that you constantly have. It also keeps track of your vitality or health and other important aspects. It keeps track of your abilities and of your ammunition. You have these indicators for the skills you use for ammunition you use so you remember to reload and makes

it easier to manage all of these resources. It also gives you feedback on your performance in the sense that you get both audible and visual feedback when you hit an enemy with a bullet or with a skill. You get audible and visual feedback when you use a certain skill or a certain item. Helps you pinpoint where a certain thing might have gone what might have happened.

For example, you could throw a mine somewhere where you don't really see it but the game might show you an indicator that's where the thing is. And also gives you an indicator when for example when it detonates or when someone might destroy it. So it helps you it helps you sort of keep track of the playing field as well. It's a first-person shooter so you have a limited field of view all the time. So it's kind of like you yourself looking at a map but that kind of makes it difficult because you can't observe everything at once. So you can use your skills to observe broader areas of the map itself.

The game gives feedback if you hit, how you hit your enemy. So for example if you hit a critical point in your enemy which deals more damage than the rest of the enemy. So for example shooting enemy the head compared to the body or shooting a specific spot on an enemy that is less shielded than the rest of it. For example, there's an enemy that's practically really scary high powered turret, Bastion, but if you shoot the rear of the turret where there's glowing magazine, a highlighted spot on that enemy. You know that highlight glows from there it just gets your attention and it also signifies that this is the weak spot,

shoot here. And the enemy will die off more quickly so these kinds of things. If you shoot that thing, even though you wouldn't see that thing, but if you hit it you get a certain signifier: a nice audible cling along with a certain pattern around your crosshair. You still know you hit a critical spot I probably should shoot the same spot now. Those kind of things just make it much easier to play these kinds of games.

Also there are indicators for the map goal, so it's not always just about shooting your enemy. Sometimes it's about escorting a payload so a moving object through longer map which has different environments placed along the path the object travels through. Or then you have this sort of control points where there's a certain area that you have to clear of enemies and keep your team within to gain a point. And after you gain hundred points or the timer reaches 100 you win that objective. So those objectives they are marked with indicators in the game world so instead of using a map you can just look around you, and you can see the objective pointer even through other objects. You can see the pointers through everything so the game gives you an indicator of pretty much every important piece that is relevant to your gameplay.

Yeah! Have you played Destiny 2? How would you compare Overwatch to that?

Comparing the shooting in Overwatch to Destiny 2 for example or other first-person shooters, some enemies glow when they have weak spots or like their weak spots glow. And that's

something that happens in Destiny 2 as well. I think like when compared to Destiny 2, Destiny 2 makes those weak spots slightly more well. Not always but often they are slightly more visual compared to Overwatch because for example in Overwatch the head of every character doesn't glow. That's something that you just instantly are to know from it being a humanoid figure. But if it's not a humanoid figure there usually is some sort of indicator. In Destiny 2 there are a lot of glowing things on enemies so it's kind of easier to track those but then again they also it's graphically a very different game.

So it's graphically kind of heavy contrast and it can be quite difficult to actually distinguish an enemy from your surroundings. Whereas in Overwatch everyone has a sort of glowing red aura. Which you can by the way just change the colour of if red is difficult for you to actually perceive in an environment. So Destiny adds these sort of details to the enemies, so either they have glowing eyes or a glowing light or orb in its face. Or if it's this huge floating global or shooting lasers then it usually has this sort of glowing eye or a glowing circle or piece of something in it. Sometimes it can be easier, but it doesn't give a similar feedback on like the way you hit things.

So when you are shooting stuff you don't get the sort of indicator pointers similar to Overwatch. What you get is you get numbers popping around your screen where you're pointing or where your enemy might be running, if you hit them and dealt damage. Which is kind of good that you can track how much damage

you do, which isn't useful with one enemy but it is useful over time as it's better. Just makes it kind of easier to evaluate which weapons do better damage to a certain type of enemy. Destiny is a game where you can customise your load-out. Overwatch doesn't do that, so those are very different games.

I played it, is it Call of Duty or wait no, Battlefield Bad Company. I played that on console. It was not very friendly, it's a very gritty environment with sort realistic graphics. It's really difficult to determine where an enemy is if it's an older game sure, it has really tiny indicators for different things on the map. It just harder to actually spot stuff in there. So focusing on mechanical skill is more difficult because it's more of first spotting your enemies, between buildings and so forth. It feels very different it's somewhat closer to Destiny 2 actually, in the sense that there's this sort of really dark high contrast graphical style to it. It makes it difficult to discern objectives or opponents in the environment. And you also you change your load-out, there's more to customise in itself. Whereas in Overwatch you have a set number of skills, which are also set based on your character. So if you want to change your load-out you actually have to change your character. So each character has been optimised for a certain load-out. It's closer to this sort of genre called MOBA, massive online battle arena, where the heroes have a similar self-contained skill set. But that is more strategy oriented than mechanical skill oriented. So they pretty much click on places and then your weird bug hybrid goes there and

smashes the enemy goblin and yeah, that's MOBA.

Overwatch is a first-person shooter, so there you actually have to shoot the enemy yourself. Overwatch is a very different game from a lot of these. The most similar one is probably Team Fortress 2, which I've also played. I feel like team fortress is more limited variant of Overwatch, it came earlier so Overwatch probably took inspiration from it. But Team Fortress 2 is also giving you pointers on what to do, how to do them. It doesn't really instruct you on how to, for example, build a turret or how to use any sort of advanced ability within the game. So it's just go out there and try to learn. It's really difficult to get a good grip of the game unless you play it a lot, or you go online and look for guidelines.

Of course people make a lot of videos like how to play the medic properly, how to play an engineer properly, which is probably the most difficult thing to figure out on your own in the game. Because it just doesn't give you any kind of feedback back whatsoever. So Overwatch fixes a lot of those things. They are similar graphically, so simplified with their graphics. They are heavily stylised, colourful. The contrast in the game environments is huge. When there's less contrast in the game environments it's easier to decipher where an enemy or an objective is, and the environments are less cluttered. I think it's just better designed because they avoid this sort of realistic look over a look that actually favours player engagement. What's kind of actually important in that you hone your mechanical skill and hone your tactical skill against

the enemy, instead of relying on who can see through the buildings the best.

You already mentioned cooldowns and resource management. Thinking about all the games overall, how do you feel about the resource management? Which games do it really well, which games do it poorly, what could be improved?

Well a game that is awful for a resource management would be Dark Souls. I mean Dark Souls is a very specific game in itself, but I don't like it all how it deals with its inventory, how it deals with all of the stuff that you have there. The game is really terrible, it has a system where you equip stuff and un-equip stuff, and then you get specialised menus for what you can put in a certain spot. But what fails is to actually give you information on what is what, what are the sort of relevances of certain items. You also kind of have to figure it out as you go, you have to try all the items because they don't necessarily tell you where they're actually useful. The game just throws you characters who offer you different services and stuff that you can acquire or do, but like you don't know how strong something can be for example. You can buy blessings that you can use, which are tied to a certain amount of usages, because then you have to buy another. Sometimes those are quite expensive in the game. And you have no idea that if you do a chant you first pay a lot of in-game currency to actually get one, if you use that you have no idea if it will be more of a summoning a bunny or

more of hauling down armageddon over a group of enemies.

So it just it fails to quantify the things within the game and it is also once again an older game. But it is it is cluttered, there's way too much information shown without actually showing relevance to it.

I feel that that is an inherent problem in a lot of games where you kind of level up your character based on allocating stat points, so you can allocate points to endurance strength. Ties back to tabletop role-playing games where those things are more relevant. But a game that does it well is Mass Effect series. Mass Effect has simplified those things so instead of having 12 different stats which don't show any direct correlation to any kind of actual in-game skill, as in if you increase your strength you can hit your enemies harder and deal more damage. Dark Souls doesn't necessarily give you that kind of information. In Mass Effect what they do is they reduce the stats down to around 5 to 10. They increase the stats as you go along the game. You first start with a limited set of things you can allocate points to and the games highlight what are the qualities that you can actually get out of allocating points to that. Marvel Spider-man does that too.

So for example in Mass Effect the first might be that you can choose between allocating points to technological damage or allocating points to brute strength. Or allocating points to biotic abilities which are kind of mental abilities and resemble magic or traditional magic. Then later on, you can distinguish those abilities. So then you can get an option you

can either use your magical ability or use your biotic ability to deal more damage to an individual character. Or move towards dealing damage to multiple characters at the same time. So you can customise it how you best value. If you like to pick individual characters off the map instead of engaging with a huge number of enemies, then you can choose to hone your character towards the direction that supports that. And the game always let you know what you get when you are using those kinds of abilities, and when you are using your stat points to gain abilities.

Dishonored and later Mass Effect games have a very clear menu which allows you to place those stat points. Especially Dishonored and the Marvel Spiderman have a similar one, where you have an indicator symbol and then when you hover on that indicator symbol or if you highlight that indicator symbol within the game menu, depending on if you use a mouse or a controller, it gives you a text box that informs you on what it actually does. You can also view the later point of improvement so it kind of builds this tree model. You have the initial choice between say three parts and then those paths diverge so after you've chosen a path then you might have two choices. Each path grows into a tree of different skills that you can pick.

Sometimes they might hide certain skills so you might have a question mark that says hmm a mystery skill. You don't really know what you're going to get, but you only know that when you've opened up that particular branch of the tree model up until that choice. But most of

the time you just hover on over an icon and the game gives you a text box explaining how choosing that particular skill or allocating points to that particular skill or particular ability, what it actually gives you. How it affects your gameplay.

Similar to also stuff like weapons customisation. In Mass Effect games all customisation of stats and modifying the game to suit your play to a place that the game explains all of these things to you on a fairly simple menu, which gives a lot of room for this information.

Would you say that knowing what you get when you choose a skill is more important in player versus player games or in different genres?

I guess World of Warcraft and Dark Souls are similar in the sense that it might actually mean a lot what kind of skills you actually pick within the game. So in Dark Souls if you decide to approach a situation where the skill set is not actually suitable for the situation, you get wiped out and it usually is a pretty severe thing in that particular game. In World of Warcraft it's less of a severe thing but for example World of Warcraft has these dungeons, which you clear with a team of other players. There it has similar quality to Overwatch but instead of just having a set amount of skills, you usually can customise the skills available to your character by choosing different specialisations. So for example you might want to play a tank character, a character that is able to take a lot of damage and also a lot of attention. So drawing the enemy fire or the enemy attacks toward itself - in a way to

actually protect the more fragile team members from taking damage, so that they can effectively use their skills in wiping out a number of opponents. You can focus on for example supportive and healing spec so you can boost your other teammates abilities and top-up their vitality or health bars so that they don't reach zero and their characters don't die in the middle of an engagement. So you can choose these different kinds of specialisations and especially in team context like in World of Warcraft's dungeons, or in like Overwatch where you often play as a team, those things can become really important.

And in World of Warcraft since you can customise the skill set it is really important to kind of know what might be beneficial in a particular situation. But also I feel like it's often referred to as the meta what is the most effective way to play the game. There's another dimension to it, you can customise those things to your own strengths. So for example if you as a player don't have a lot of mechanical skill or find it more difficult to manoeuvre within the game environments overall, either due to just slower reaction times or having trouble moving a mouse or having trouble using a controller really quickly, you can pick specialisations which also play to your strengths and diminish your weaknesses in mechanical skill.

And I think that's an important part of it as well. If games explain these things well and give you enough pointers to know how you deal some kind of damage, or allow you to change afterwards. So for example in World of Warcraft you can try all of

the skills available to you, and then pick the ones that you really like to play with. And then of course you can change those afterwards if you so feel. For example if you develop more mechanical skill you could pick something that suits more aggressive or fast-paced gameplay.

So games like World of Warcraft, Overwatch or any other game beyond this, their communication matters to you in some way. If you're a hardcore gamer you just have to google, it's mostly googling unfortunately so the meta itself is kind of difficult to establish. But I feel that games still give you certain pointers especially if you are thinking critically about the way you approach those games.

In World of Warcraft it's really important, you need to have a tank character and you need to have a healer in a dungeon. Like you could play characters which aren't healing focused but might be able to provide healing, but it is going to be trouble or not. So you have to really think about what to pick. But the game already lets you know this particular spec is really good at healing this aspect is really good at taking damage, so it already gives you these pointers.

Similar to Overwatch, you need to have either a superior team which is always unrealistic, or you need to have supporting characters and either pick a play style which works for a group of heroes. So you might have a support character and then all of the rest are damage dealers, but that would require a lot of creative thinking in strategy and manoeuvring. Whereas the more easy way around is to pick a team that actually can function in the sense that it gives more room for error so for

example picking up tank character or picking a support character or two, and picking a couple of DPS. It gives you more balanced combinations, and the game really establishes this. For example Overwatch gives you pointers that you don't have a supporting character in your team when actually picking the characters for your team. Or you might have too many snipers on your team. The game gives you pointers and it's up to the players to ignore those, but it gives you this sort of feedback on what might be beneficial for your gameplay.

You mentioned damage values already, but do you personally care about the kind of damage values that the games give you? Do you pay attention to them in some games over others?

It definitely depends on the game. I feel like personally I don't like seeing a huge amount of floating numbers around a map, say as in Destiny 2 or similar to World of Warcraft. So the numbers themselves don't necessarily mean anything. Because you practically have two different varieties, in Destiny 2 or World of Warcraft you have two sets of numbers. You have the smaller number and the higher number, and the value of those numbers just changes when you level up. So then your smaller number might go from 35 to 46 and your larger number goes from 65 to hundred.

What that essentially tells you is just that you've done a regular hit or you've done a critical hit which deals more damage. So I feel those are not

relevant, compared to Overwatch which you gives you just these two different ding effects when you hit an enemy. You get the regular when you do regular damage you get be more satisfying more audible ding when you hit a critical weak spot. Also the visual indicators play are also different, so I feel that's more meaningful in the middle of battle because it's less cluttered. But where the damaged values might benefit is that when you are changing your load-out. So for example in World of Warcraft you can use different weapons or different skills, suddenly when you when you choose a different weapon, choose to use a different skill instead of the one you used previously, your lower number of 64 might become 70 and that's an improvement. It's a small improvement with something, so that's the only point where I actually feel like there is a point in showing those values. They don't matter as much in other genres but when changing your load-out, it can help.

Also World of Warcraft shows you the kind of like visual indicator, the difference, it compares the item you have equipped now to the one you're about to equip.

Yes that's also in the menu system so each weapon has certain certain qualities to it and it highlights those by allocating number tier to it. For example you could have a weapon with a strength bonus of four or strength bonus of seven and you could get intelligence for wisdom bonus from a certain weapon, and the user interface allows you to compare. So you can equip one

weapon, then you can view another one in your menu, and you can view those stats of them side by side. Instead of having to go back and forth equipping the item after which it shows you the difference in skills, which is a pitfall in a lot of games. So I feel World of Warcraft does this really well. So highlighting these already in the menu makes it easier to manage your stuff. You use less time in comparing different things or equipping and un-equipping different items. You can just quickly go through all the gear you have.

Do you have examples of games that do not do that well?

Dark Souls is ok in that sense, games where you really don't have that kind of stuff. Uncharted might be one game, it's really difficult to establish the efficiency of a certain weapon, for example, unless you played for a while and you've tried all weapons. Because it doesn't give you that kind of damage number. So that's the context where the number can be irrelevant. Well similar to World of Warcraft, if you have an enemy with a really huge health pool, so you might make an attack that deals 1325 damaged points but you can't see it in the health bar. There can be the sort of diminishing progress bar which shows the hit points or vitality of a particular character. If the character has so many hit points that you don't really make an impact on health bar, it's useful to have those damage values visible. It's just how you make that visible.

So for example in World of Warcraft it can become cluttered, in Destiny 2 it's atrocious. Especially if you hit

multiple enemies at once you can have your entire screen full of floating number twenty fives everywhere and especially when the damage values go up, you have floating 368 all over the screen. Where is the enemy? You have no idea anymore at that point. So do you feel like it makes it more frustrating to play, or easier to play? It depends on the context. Less information makes it more frustrating to play.

A good example is Kingdom Hearts, especially the first one. Having this sort of indicator of an enemy's health bar is an optional thing that you have to purchase by allocating points in very awful in-game menu. I'm not going to bash on the menu too much because the game is more than 10 years old. Nier: Automata does the similar thing so it also gives you a sort of the option to customise the data that the game is showing, but in a much more direct way compared to Kingdom Hearts, where you can pick one or two things that you can show. In Nier: Automata it's actually part of the gameplay as well, so it ties the interface and all of the data visualised to you into the game world as well.

So it's diegetic, it's something that the characters might be aware of instead of being something that only the player is aware of. Similar to does the character hear the music within the game or is the game's music only an ambience delivered to the player. So does it have a meaning in the game world itself. Nier: Automata also gives you the sort of thing that you have to purchase a chip that allows you to see your health points or the enemy's health points. You can purchase a lot of different things too,

different qualities different things for your equipment and different skills as well. So it combines all of these things into the sort of cohesive customisable HUD and game experience. But yeah not having that health indicator, it's really cumbersome. Sometimes it's nice to have the option or like sometimes it brings additional difficulty to your game, so you don't have enough points to allocate to all the stuff.

For example in Kingdom Hearts there is often a lack of points, and you want to have your character as efficient as possible for certain encounters and the menu is awful. So the game really doesn't tell you anything about what to pick for that encounter. Is all based on how you yourself perceive what might become, what might come afterwards, what might come off the battle, and how you should prepare for it. But for example for for a boss battle I might choose to not have the health indicated even though that makes it more cumbersome, so that I can have something that can have a bigger effect on the gameplay. Otherwise for example, have a skill that allows me to dodge attacks more easily or similar. But that brings in another set of challenge and I think that's a charming thing like sacrificing some of the ease of use, or sacrificing some qualities of the data the game shows you in favour of improving the manoeuvrability of your character, or improving the damage dealing or healing aspects of your character.

But I feel that's something that has to be an option rather than something that is already there and then you have to earn the health bar. Earn this sort of indicator. So unless a

game does it really well it just feels cumbersome to start with. I feel like games overall well they've developed a lot in the sense that they give you more information all the time to make it easier to start the experience and learn the intricacies of a particular game. And for some that doesn't matter for some. It's a really big deal so for me. I get really frustrated if a game is too difficult and doesn't give you enough feedback.

Then if you go and google something and somehow someone has made a video explaining all the intricacies of the game, of course it makes the game easier to play because you can you can do all of the thing that that youtuber said. But it also shows that the game has failed in giving agency to the player and like giving access to its content. So yeah I think it's really important for a game to efficiently highlight information well.

You mentioned how games kind of like drop you abilities that can be a really crucial. So in Nier: Automata you have the option to choose between different chipsets that you have customised already. Similar to Kingdom Hearts it drops you like chips or abilities throughout the gameplay. So do you feel like it's more frustrating to start the game without these game-changing abilities, or do you feel excitement when you find them? How does it make you feel?

I feel like that's totally dependent on the way the game has been made. Thinking about Nier: Automata the game like the game still establishes itself better compared to Kingdom Hearts. For example, it depends like

if the beginning of the game without all of these sort of abilities is too difficult, you have this sort of uphill battle until you're about 1/3 in the game then you suddenly start to get all of these cool thingies which make it super easy to play the game. Then it's done. It's a downhill it makes it a really easy thing and then only in the last portion of a game it suddenly gets really difficult. I feel that's bad writing. Like a successful game is something that constantly gives you a slight uphill battle with certain downhills so that you feel like you've done something right. That you progressed. But it shouldn't be too much of a battle especially in the beginning of the game.

Do you feel like that applies to visual information as well?

Yeah definitely so I feel like a good example would still be Destiny 2. It kind of tries to highlight you how to play the game, it tries to incorporate all the skills that you can do within the game, and tell you what to do but it doesn't do it really well. And that makes it just a bit daunting because you suddenly you just die of something, you have really no idea why that happened or you have no idea what the game means by an energy weapon or switching to something else. Also it gives you very irrelevant notes on what you can do, it might not have any relevance to a situation you are in. So I feel that's just that's what once again that's bad design of the interface. And sort of like bad design in the sense of guiding a player into a certain system. Games which do it well establish

those skills one by one and in relevant contexts. World of Warcraft is decent at it, but then Uncharted is fairly okay, and establishing new concepts of things. Like it's less to do with the information within the game, more to do with the abilities within the game but it introduces to you to one thing at a time in a way that might feel more sort of holding hands to some. Like you being more guided than actually playing and like thinking for yourself. Little Big Planet does it really well so it introduces you to a single concept one at a time so that you get a grasp of all the mechanics within the game and it's a really good example of that kind of thing, because the game has a lot of different mechanics.

So does it visually give you information?

Yeah it gives you text usually, NPCs speak to let you know what to do. Sometimes it gives you icons, for example you might have an object that has a symbol of one on it, or bumper one. So that's an indicator to a specific button on the PlayStation controller. When you press that button the character grabs an object it also gives you nice indicators. For example all the objects that you can grab tend to have a fluffy texture to them or tend to have a certain kind of texture to indicate, hey this is soft this is something that I can grab. If it's a hard surface or an object with a really hard edge you usually can't grab it and like the objective quality, the qualities of different object or materials in it are defined by their visuals. Also sometimes their sound. So for example if you have a certain

object tumbling down the sound of it might give a guess that, hey maybe that thing could for example float or similar. Or maybe that thing is destructible, or maybe that thing is not destructible. So there are these sort of subtle things that it gives you. And also very clear-cut things that it gives you especially in the beginning of the game. So you can have this one symbol. Also it gives you symbols and when you can do something, so for example you have a grappling hook you might have a highlighted indicator in at the top of your screen when you are able to grab something.

Especially Little Big Planet Karting you get an indicator when you can grapple to an object, and those are really useful. They don't distract you from the main stuff on the screen especially if it's fast paced, like Little Big Planet Karting. You're literally driving on a nefarious track whilst trying to pay attention to all these keys but when the materials are already squishy you know, hey I can grapple that, and then you also get that indicator you can grapple something. Then those just make much easier to do stuff in the game. Also a lot of games offer tutorials. Little Big Planet's first tutorials are really short, easy to do, it might be one or two maps in the beginning of the game. Just so that you can get a grasp of how to play the game. There's an NPC saying hey you can, by the way, you can do something with that thing floating over there and you see a new highlighted object in the game world. It also highlights you the utility objects all the time, so they have a light around them. But it makes them so that it still fits the

game world really well.

So Little Big Planet is really good at giving you visual information on what to do, when to do, and how to do, and just visually guiding you in towards things that might be beneficial for your gameplay.

Cool! So in all the games that we mentioned previously, how do you track the progress of the game and how does the game give you feedback of the progress?

In story based games you pretty much just get forward with the story a lot of times it doesn't give you much else. Sometimes they might give you pointers. Like hey you've successfully eliminated an enemy, you get a rewarding enemy blowing up sound and visual effects. Pointing at Destiny 2 or similar. Like they might give you something to kind of reward you. World of Warcraft gives you an indicator or every time you level up that is more than just an indicator of level up. It gives you a really flashy thingy. They are showing hey you've gained a level. World of Warcraft does it so that it's rewarding, Destiny 2 does it so that it covers half of your screen, like obstructing most of the important information there, and it's just cluttering. I mean it might sound rewarding but then you've stuck with the indicator. You've gained a level for half a minute or so and if you're in the middle of a firefight at that point, it becomes really annoying. How the games do that is also like really important.

Do you follow the map progress? Usually in many role-playing games, for example, you start with

an empty map and you complete the map whilst you progress. Some games give you a story percentage on the menu that you can see. Do you have preference on those? Which ones do you like, which ones you don't like? Which ones make you frustrated or not?

I don't like story percentage just because that just indicates the game is about to end. And it's just that I don't want to know when the game is about to end. But thankfully for example in PlayStation most of the games I've played it only might show you the percentage when making a game save so then I'm just trying to ignore it. Some people might look at that but I didn't like it at all. I don't like to know when my game is about to end. Only what I like to have in the game is all the relevant information for the particular encounter, and all the relevant information for the particular skill set that might be useful. So if a game wants me to grapple over ravine I'd kind of like it to have some pointers on where to drop or where to shoot the grappling hook, instead of just expecting me to figure it out myself. What can I shoot this thing into? I've had this problem with portal sometimes, you get used to it but there are certain walls you can't shoot a portal into, there are certain walls that you can shoot a portal into. And those are really confusing at the beginning. So later on it gets easier but it's like some things like this are just frustrating. Similar to Uncharted games that generally highlight it fairly okay where you can for example grab a wall or where you can climb and similar stuff, or what might be point

or interest. It usually gives you some information but the problem is sometimes it doesn't. And for example my pet peeve is platforming games. Where you have a place where it seemed like you had two options on actually going through a certain jump puzzle, so you could have two platforms which seem to be a fairly similar distance apart. And sometimes it's just bad level design, one of them is a decoration and one of them is the actual platform you are supposed to go to, but the decoration appears to be closer and the easier route, over for example say like great fall or similar. So that is the most frustrating aspect.

I frequently run into in games that fail to highlight the distance you can actually travel between points, and they fail to highlight what's the actual route. I mean it's nice to do the mental gymnastics for finding the right route but sometimes it's just way too confusing, because the right route appears to be something which you can't actually cross. For example the jump might look to be long and then the game decides hey it was too long your character, tries to jump over it still, because there was some other pointer you were supposed to notice, but could not notice because it was not rendered in a way that it highlights its importance. So then you are supposed to do this impossible jump and you're supposed to try that instead of going the logical way around which only gives you an invisible wall and a fall. So those kinds of things. Like they are not the standard way of doing things but they still occur frequently enough that it just makes them frustrating.

Object importance is something that

I feel games really need to highlight. And also they need to make it clear how well you move from place to place, and make it clear how sort of far different things are. Unlike perceiving the environment overall, I'm decent at it, but like if I wasn't I would be constantly tumbling in the walls in games. For example in Kingdom Hearts I have no idea where to go at some points because the game does not give you any pointers.

Interesting! So moving on to user interfaces specifically, would you say that in general the user interface has a great impact on the game?

Definitely, a game that doesn't have a good user interface, I feel that kind of game either requires for it to have a really good tutorial on what and how to do, and requires it to have something to access. For example control features. So a menu even though it might be hidden. Hidden from you most of the time but something that you can open with the press of a button, usually pressing escape. It has to have a really good like in game menu, not necessarily for items but an in-game menu shows you how to move, how to manoeuvre and good tutorials. Show you with the traditional interface showing you the sort of specific stuff, like vitality or ammunition, or ability chosen. So for example if you're equipping grappling hook or a bunny.

Do you find any user interface elements conflicting?

These days they tend to be fairly okay, but sometimes they just are

poorly placed. So well, Destiny 2 once again, a good example of this. Placing the level up indicator in front of all of the relevant information you have, and also obstructing a lot of your view with it, is a poor design choice. Similar to having your screen filled with floating numbers. Also having graphics that are not the most clear. In Overwatch it's really easy to know a character, if you don't know this character in Overwatch it's usually your own fault. But if you don't notice a character in Destiny 2, like there are a ton of different things, which you can really blame for it. It might be that the scene is too dark or it might be that you have this clutter of white number 25's flow 25's floating around, so that you can make out this tiny white spot that is actually a critical hit spot for a particular enemy. So like it's good intentions but bad design choices.

With the rest of the game itself I feel that's also cool to tie an interface into the look of the game itself. So that it is helpful and distinctive, it is really important. And that's why I also feel like it's important to offer some sort of customisation options for people who might have trouble with some traditional approaches.

Distinguishing between red and green can be difficult for me with certain kind of muddled tones, and sometimes also with really bright stuff as well, if they are competing. So for me it's often nice to be able to slightly alter the colour scheme in the game, to make those things more obvious.

So for example with Overwatch I have a custom colour setting that I've cranked up the colour contrast in a way that the red highlights of

the enemies are clearer for me to see, and the cold colours look really vibrant. So I've done that in game, so instead of like trying to do that with the monitor itself or with of windows settings, which would be more difficult, it's easy to do it in-game because it gives you a few different sliders where you can adjust that look within the game. And it's also really useful, because when you have that kind of customisation option provided, it's easy you don't have to change throughout your computer because some other game might have totally different aspects to it. Some other games I really like to have looking more plain compared to Overwatch because they don't have as big of an importance in distinguishing those certain things in the game world. Similar in Overwatch you can customise for example the targeting reticle that you have and I feel that's a super important thing. Almost everyone I know has customised the reticle to suit their particular play style and preference. And you can also customise the colour of it which I find really important. It's difficult for me to follow a white pointer in the environment at times. It's also difficult for me to follow a green pointer in the environment at times, and that's if I remember correctly that's what the game starts with. I prefer mine to be yellow. It's vibrant and it's the colour that's least used in the game world, so it makes sense for me to change it into something that suits my particular play style. Someone might like pink for example if it might show better for them. And similarly you can change colours in game elements, like hostile abilities.

Even though the game designers have originally designed all the ice walls and freeze effects to be blue, because those are cool, enemy characters still have them red as standard. So that you can distinguish it. But you could also make them like bright green, like bright neon green if it's easier for you to perceive it. And those are super helpful things, they might not work with the visual intent of the game creators, but they acknowledge that for the playability of the game, which is far more important than the sort of artistic fidelity, they allow you to change those, to suit your playing style. And I feel that's super important these days, especially if a game is focused on you doing something that's fairly repetitive. You doing similar feel, fulfilling similar objectives on those same tracks, and same place or same maps and same places over and over again. If against different teams. Keeping that game engaging in that kind of setting requires the user to be able to tune it, so they can really enjoy it to the fullest.

You mentioned that in some games it's hard to track what's happening in the user interface or in the heads-up display. But do you feel like some UI elements specifically are hard to track?

I personally don't like numbers all the time. Sometimes they're good, sometimes they're bad it's like unless numbers are given significance, so for example, if you have a skill that says this particular spell uses 60 mana points — 60 MP, then it might be counterintuitive to so show the mana meter as a progress bar that

diminishes. Because then how do you know that you've used 60 mana?

Do you have examples of games that do that?

Kingdom Hearts I think. I'm not sure actually, I think it doesn't otherwise. I didn't remember examples but I definitely run into those kind of situations in Kingdom Hearts. It might actually just say a significant portion of mana a slight amount of mana, which is equally unhelpful, so it makes it really difficult to actually know how much mana something consumes. Unless you try it in the field and it gives you the sort of progress bar. Which is actually two-tiered, I still have no idea what the second tier actually does. I guess it has something to deal with the mana charging. Anyway like if you have a progress bar but you still have that numbered information for how much something kind of costs in game, how many points of something a thing costs, it's not helpful to mix between those indicators.

Number or text-based stuff is good, but then again sometimes a health bar can be easier to decipher than number. So for example some games where you level up you gain more hit points, so you might have fifty thousand eight hundred and forty hit points for your character, it becomes more difficult to observe how many, how big of a percentage you have left of those fifty thousand eight hundred and fifty hit points. Like it just it's more difficult, so a health bar is much easier that way or percentage. Because then it always keeps it the same, even though your

vitality increases you can take more damage. Still your relationship with the interface stays the same, it's easy to see okay I'm thirty percent now, I probably should heal up. Like the those kind of things, like it ties to how the game plays itself. But often times I feel that you have, the designers must make those decisions, and what's the most efficient way for the player for the play. That's why play testing is important as well and listening to the players.

Can you give me some examples of games that you think are frustrating to play and how it relates to the user interface of the game?

Destiny 2, it's difficult to establish if you're making progress or not. And also because it keeps cluttering your screen whole time, especially since I have a small monitor. If it was larger it might be easier because there would be more screen estate for me to actually look at different things and establish the visual stuff. For example Destiny 2 doesn't really make it too easy to make the game world easier to perceive. Or it just looks awful whereas Overwatch makes it easy without looking awful, because they've stylised it so well. Similar to World of Warcraft.

Other games which have been really frustrating with the information they give, sometimes racing games and it's tied to the way that, for example, it's been a while since I played many of those, but Need for Speed had really frustrating UI choices. Especially Need for Speed Pro Street. So you have this sort of boost ability for your cars, so you can use nitrous oxide. In the previous iterations of

the game you had the sort of progress bar for the nitro, so if your nitro tank was full, the bar was full, and when you used it, it would deplete. But it would deplete for as long as you pressed the nitrous button and it kind of indicated that it's a container that you can slowly empty during the game.

Which was intuitive but in Pro Street they changed the system to work more realistically. Which is you have the nitrous oxide, and you open the valve and it's a gas so it doesn't really work in the way that you could fine tune it in real life. You could use a tiny portion of it, but it's more uncontrollable. More like a shot than running a valve. But instead of changing the visual indicator for it, to for example how many shots of nitrous you could you have, it still keeps the progress bar, but now when you press boost button, what it does is that it drains the tank and drains the bar a certain amount, for example, if you have a big enough tank you could have three shots of nitro, but you still have a progress bar going down, say a third. I mean it makes it like clear enough but it doesn't feel controllable like previously. You pressed it for the duration of boost you want and, you stopped pressing to slow down, an established mechanic in the games. And suddenly its really frustrating, you press it for a little and then you have the next half a minute of your car going super fast and the indicator emptying. Without actually connecting in any way to the way you are trying to control the vehicle there.

So having those shot icons instead of having that progress bar would

be more intuitive, because then you know okay I've used one shot of nitro, and it also makes it like less frustrating as it wouldn't have the baggage of the previous mechanism giving a sense of control that you've suddenly lost in the new game.

Do you still play the games with frustrating UIs, and have you ever quit the game because of frustrating UI?

I try to play them, often times they just deter me. For example Persona 4, Persona 4 is a game which has a really interesting story but the game itself suffers from it being really difficult at having very little guidance on how to play it efficiently. Very little guidance, like the elements you use, very difficult menu system to use, like all the information is highlighted in a way that it doesn't seem relevant or there's not a real information structure in it. An affinity of different things is not highlighted in an efficient way, so it's more of a mismatch of let's just place all these things in the menu so they can be accessed, but how they are accessed is really terrible. A classic engineering issue. So I feel like that's a good example. I want to play the game, I want to clear the story but the gameplay itself deters me from playing it. Just because I find it difficult to optimise my game style and optimise my inventory, it's just really cumbersome.

So yeah that's a really good example of a game that really just deters me and I've had similar experiences, like when the UI itself makes the game too cumbersome to play efficiently. So it just begins to bore you because you

spend most of your time diving in the menu instead of actually like beating the bad guys. In addition to Persona 4, Kingdom Hearts is one. It's really frustrating to optimise the gameplay especially since it's really important, same with same goes with Persona 4, it's important to optimise your gameplay, important to optimise your assets and to manage your inventory and manage your skills and money. Like inventory management. Managing stuff is super important to those kinds of games, Persona, Kingdom Hearts.

I feel that even though being a really great game or Kingdom Hearts is a game that kind of struggles for this as well, it's just a bit more forgiving with that. The menu system used too much text in it. It can be a bit difficult at times, and it's like the game doesn't give you pointers on what might be effective against a certain enemy. So compared to Little Big Planet, for example you could have a boss, a big battle that requires you to use a certain skill to clear it. It usually kind of guides you towards using that kind of skill and then you can by quickly looking at the environment, you can notice, hey I can grab that thing or I can destroy the particular thing. You know instantly what kind of mechanic, what kind of skill or how to clear the particular objective. Ôkami doesn't do it too well, it does it okay but it still requires a lot of critical thinking on what the game tries to portray.

Kingdom Hearts and Persona4 are even worse in that aspect, like they do try to give you pointers, but like Persona 4 is still kind of cumbersome. Like for example every enemy has a weakness but finding that weakness

is you having to try pretty much everything, and the game itself is really hard, so that trying stuff is actually taking a lot of risks. And combined with it being an old game with very little save points, and like very long routes of progress which you actually have to clear before you can save. Otherwise you have to go back all the way to the previous a point which might be even a couple of hours of play time back. It makes it really frustrating to actually fail in the game. So yeah the game makes failure into something that's not a fun part of it.

Do you have examples of newer games by frustrating UIs?

The problem is I haven't played too many games, I usually just focus on a singular game. Actually a newer game that, well it's not that new of a game, but it's still a newer game Assassin's Creed. Assassin's Creed 2 and sort of four following iterations of it, they were really bad at like setting up fighting scenes and setting up this sort of information about the weapons you are using. Setting up giving information on how to approach enemies. So especially in a game that focuses on stealth and not being seen by an AI controlled character, the game doesn't give you any pointers if you're hot hidden or not. And since it's also a clunky game played on a clunky controller, which is much more difficult than playing on a mouse and keyboard which gives you more nuance to the way you control your character, it doesn't give you any pointers on when they might see you.

Compared to that games like

Dishonored, the first Dishonored is not much older than the Assassin's Creed games, it gives you pointers on when you might be noticed. So all the guards give have a certain meter above their heads which shows that they might be. Their attention is focusing on your direction and the meter, first it fills up so that they might notice you so you might be in the corner of their eye and if you stay there long or move there too much then they notice you more quickly. If they notice you the indicator turns red. No if they explicitly notice you it turns red, if they notice you but can't explicitly make out that it's you, then it turns into full white. You can see the indicator, you know okay that guard is alarmed and is looking for you. If it turns red you know that guard knows exactly where you are, that guard is alarmed and that guard is going to beat you unless you change directions and hide somewhere. And also having that red pointer means that the guard will alert others, so like the game gives you these pointers on what's happening, who might notice you.

There are additional skills where you can even establish visually, they're sort of sight lines the characters might have. So an enemy character, you get a cone expressing their field of view, so using that particular ability which establish that makes it even easier to go around and avoid being seen. You can do that without the ability especially if you hone your skills within the game and think critically, but having those kinds of things assisting you makes it just much easier to clear a stealth game. And it makes it much more satisfying to have all those elements in game

that help you in like establishing the important aspect of in particular scene.

That's just makes makes it much easier compared to the Assassin's Creed's. And also the Dishonored makes it much easier to manage your inventory and tools available, compared to Assassin's Creed. They're very similar in the stuff that you can interact with and use for your advantage, but Dishonored just makes it much easier to use. It gives you a really handy quick menu. So played on the controller you can press a directional arrow, and through directional arrows you have four quick select slots. Then you have another menu that's not quite as quick, which is that you press a button that slows time in the game. Well doesn't it doesn't completely stop time in the game world, but close. Your character is frozen in place and you can select a particular skill. So you have a lot of skills in it, I think there is similar to Mass Effect. So you have around 20 skills that you can choose from, so you choose from a wheel of skills, so if you use the gamepad's control stick to point at the direction of the particular skill, and it highlights the skill. Pointing at the right direction it highlights the skill that you're pointing at, and then you can just close the menu or stop pressing the menu button and hey there you go. You're back in the game world and the time within the game world starts flowing normally. You don't get an unfair advantage over the enemy, so if you are too slow at choosing your skill you might still get eaten in the game world you could still take damage, but it gives you slightly more time to decide on

what you're doing.

So a game UI and the game itself work together to make it easier to change tactics on the fly and to engage and disengage with enemies, and use those things. Assassin's Creed does that by menu diving, you have to choose your gear carefully before you initiate an encounter and even at that point it doesn't make it clear when you might be seen or not.

Do you have any examples of games with boring UIs? Or have you ever actually bought a game because it looked cool, including the UI?

I rarely find a game UI that I find to be especially cool. I like the UI to look one with the game, so like for example it's really frustrating to look at Skyrim having that weird minimalistic bar system that does not tie at all with the medieval setting of high fantasy. But a game with a UI that I still think is pretty neat and at the time I thought it was revolutionary, though I was really young, but the game is Star Wars Republic Commando. Which does this sort of trope of a first-person shooter, so that you have that sort of first-person, you have that narrow field of view you would have as a person, but it's viewed from inside a helmet. So you have at the edge of your screen, you have this sort of shadows caused by your helmet visor, and the helmet has sort of protective plates, and also you have the sort of heads-up display of the helmet itself.

So it's diegetic, it's part of the game world it's what the character would see. It was really cool because it brought a sort of nuance and sort of

visual taste to the way that you're engaging with the character, it didn't seem like that something that's just put there to help a player. It's something that feels like it's a tool of the actual character, and just enhances the immersion a lot. That's something I haven't seen done a lot and I feel even now since though the game is really old, it's over 15 years old at least,

I guess it's still a game with super stylish UI even to this day, even though like the graphics have aged because of technology. But like the design direction and sort of design decisions they've made with it are really good.

Similarly the game has a really nice interface which is focused on you commanding your squad to certain positions. It highlights those positions on the map, so especially since it's an older game they probably had a lot of trouble in like incorporating the team member's AI. It's really nice to see that they established positions in the game environment itself, where you can with a simple button press and pointing at the particular spot, you can have a character go and take a position. As in for example shooting grenades into shooting heavy artillery, or like taking sniping position and similarly you can just have your squad go around with a simple button press, pointing at a particular objective. Hey there's a health dispenser, go and heal up.

Like it makes it really easy to engage with a game that has a set of strategic quality to it.

It is important to engage with, can't clear a game without actually engaging with that sort of strategic

elements. But it just makes it super easy and super stylish.

Does the visuality of UI matter to you? How much attention do you pay to it?

Simple for the aesthetics, that's better. The UI is ugly or sometimes. Like I'm not super keen on World of Warcraft's user interface, I know it's an old game but it looks a bit tacky. But it looks a bit tacky because a lot of games have copied it afterwards, so it's like. I feel like high fantasy RPGs could really iterate on what they look like.

But then again I find to place more importance on how they, UI and menus and so forth, establish affinity. How they portray what's important. If they are super cluttered they might be awful, if they are not cluttered I find them more tolerable, at least sometimes even more beautiful.

Especially if there are still art directed, like Persona 5 is a really good example because it's super creatively done but the menu system is still fairly straightforward. It gives enough attention to actually highlighting the importance and categories of different things. It's not too cumbersome to do.

Compared to the Persona 4 it's a really radical design change. Persona 4 has a really boring user interface that is also really difficult to use.

Persona 5 has a flourish one which you would not expect to be easy to use, but it is surprisingly intuitive and really good at establishing the affinity. So I really like to have a user interface that ties in with a game.

Persona 5 is probably the best example around in the way that it ties

with the game, along with I would still like to speak for the Republic Commando, because it also ties in really well with the game for it being a part of a game itself. In Persona 5 it is not a part of the sort of game world itself but it reflects the game world and the characters really well. But yeah those are two games which really caught my attention in regards to UI and in regards to the way it looks, so it's not just a utilitarian thing that helps the player, but it's also something that I really enjoy myself.

Mass Effect is decent now it as well but not quite as good. Like I feel that menus of Mass Effect kind of have this certain feeling to them because they are, they subside and they have this sort of command wheel style thing, where you also point with the control stick towards something that you want to choose, and then so forth. So the UI looked fresh at its time, nowadays it's more used but it's still kind of intuitive, and I like the sci-fi aesthetic of it. Like also I've seen the UI of Dead Space and I think it looks really neat. Well like beyond that though I'd say Persona 5 and Star Wars Republic Commando are my personal favourites in the way that the UI looks.

I rarely buy a game because of a particular UI, I really more focus on what the game's story has to offer so I'm more sort of driven to get games that have a really meaningful story, and have a story that I personally can find particularly attractive. But if a game has a good story but still has a terrible interface I might regret my decision later on. It's also difficult to establish that kind of interface thing before you do.

Do you have examples of games that have a good story but terrible UI?

Persona 4 is a really good example, I mean I kind of like I feel I find difficult to establish what I actually think of the game. The story is really good but it's just super frustrating to play.

Do you have examples of any newer games with ugly or frustrating UIs?

A really odd game but Everything. Everything is a game that has a really really odd UI to it, it's frustrating to use because it doesn't always make sense. And it also fails to establish importance of different things in game, so the thing that you are first to notice is actually at least important part of game, which is just random blubbering about some stuff. Which is this critical information probably meant for the players to like have this, oh whoa what does that mean thing, like the whole game is an abstract game, but I just feel like for usability of the game and exploring all its features, its content, to show the least important stuff with obvious visual highlights is not great.

How quickly would you say you adapt to different user interfaces? Obviously there are some standards within genres, like many first-person shooters use similar kind of UI settings. But how quickly would you say you adapt?

Well I kind of have to look back on that, but like thinking about it the first Mass Effect game was a bit difficult with its menu system. But

the overall UI of it was fairly easy to understand. But then again like it still dates back to traditions. Okay I guess the best example I could come up with is the Last of Us because it has a UI that's slightly different from the ones I've used before. Like the Last of Us has the similar quick menu in the directional buttons of the controller, as I did mention with Dishonored, but it has more to it so you can choose between a lot of different items under a system, under the same directional button. I guess Tomb Raider does the similar thing but I haven't played it myself so I'm not quite sure of it.

But yeah with the Last of Us all of the main elements that you use are under a UI that is usually hidden. So your menu items are hidden unless you press the directional arrow. So it's important to remember which directional arrow does what, so directional arrow to the left, if I remember correctly, that's the heavier arm. Up to the right is a side, on to the top was probably healing item. To the bottom it's a throwable. So that's the main a sort of point that you interact with your gear and your items, but it makes it surprisingly easy. It didn't take me a too long time to actually get used to picking different items from those tears and using those, and it's also, like it's part of the game to actually make it more cumbersome to access stuff that is not in a quick menu. Because it's kind of like part of game, you can't have more than a set amount of weapon holsters, otherwise you have to pick them from your backpack.

So I like the way they've tied the inventory management difficulty, is a part of the game instead of it

being something that isn't there just because of a design error. So they've made it easy to access certain things but they make it so that you have to be able to find cover and find enough time to actually reorganise your inventory, and the sort of additional inventory that you have. You can open this sort of bigger inventory where you, oh wait no, the bigger inventory is a crafting menu. So you have a crafting menu you can craft different items, you can craft health packs, you can craft improvised nail bombs and improvised smoke grenades and so forth. So the crafting menu is a separate thing that's also easy to access.

So most of those things are a button press away, if you press the wrong button for accessing the menu, it's still it highlights the menu but also gives you pointers on like how to how to go further. So it gives you sort of, pressing a triangle button does this, at this point you don't see those normally, but when you open this sort of quick menu you see those things and they also close off really quickly. So they don't clutter the overall game window most of the time, but when you actually interact with the UI and especially when you interact with the menu system, it's quite easy, it makes it easy to correct your mistakes and it makes it relatively easy to access stuff in your backpack. And super easy to access stuff in your holsters. And it also ties it to the game world, when you're not using your menu it only shows you your current weapon and your health or your vitality, and those are the important parts of the game.

Really because the vitality is not something that recharges so the game

has made deliberate this decision on you having to manage your vitality and it shows you your ammunition and it shows you your weapon of choice. So only the least amount of stuff that's relevant to the game at all times. So you can actually focus on the environment and focus on the characters, and I think like the game also does it really well in the sense that the art style is not quite like in Destiny 2, so it's still high contrast and this sort of realistic setting but it's just easier to figure out where the other characters or the enemy characters are in, and the game gives you a nice little tool, a visual tool for establishing those things as well.

You can go into listening mode so the character quiets down see this movement, crouches down and listens to their environment, and you see the sound imprint of enemies around you or you might even see the silhouette of them if they are really close. And your character here is in close, for example behind the wall next to them, so that makes it really much easier to establish where an enemy might be in a setting that might get quite confusing and clustered at times. Because of its sort of realistic art style.

So once again a really good way to visualise information within the game in a way that still makes sense with the story, because the character is the sort of survival type who has learned to listen to the environment, who has learned to manage resources carefully, and sort of it just all ties to this or narrative, instead of tying to good or bad decisions from the game makers. It makes it feel more natural how you interact with the game.

How would you define the success or failure of a game? Personally speaking, what makes a game successful to your standards?

I think a successful game is something that I enjoy playing and something I can return to without much fuss or worry. So a game that makes failure really frustrating or playing it really frustrating, like Persona 4, even though having a very redeeming story is not like, it's not redeeming enough for me to actually like encourage playing it. Whereas games like Little Big Planet which is exceptional in the way that it guides the player, is super easy to approach. Or similar Overwatch is super easy to approach, you always know what you're doing, you rarely get this sort of surprises that you're just dead because of something weird you don't know why.

Would you say that those games give you information on how you're succeeded or how, or why you have failed better?

Yeah definitely, so they establish it really well why I failed a certain task. Establish it really well, like why I succeeded in a certain task. They make it rewarding when I'm playing because they especially make failures feel like meaningful failures. So like it's easier to learn from them and they make successes feel valuable as well. It's a tiny pleasant thing when you hit a critical hit spot and you eliminate the character, and you help your team immensely by doing that. It's just those are super rewarding so all audio cues and visual cues when done in moderation, but in a

stylistic way, and so that it feels like they come up in the right spot. Those make it really rewarding.

Little Big Planet does pretty much the same, it uses this audible cues in different kind setups.

Yeah! In player-versus-player games, how often do you look at other players profiles, and does it matter to you?

Not that much these days, at one point especially in Overwatch I often want to look at what the other players might be playing, what their levels are. But I feel like these days since most of people have hidden their the stats, as it was made possible, which is a great decision, I feel like I'm doing it less and less because it doesn't matter as much. So like what I like to view is my own scores, how am I doing. Like sometimes I might access a like a third-party tool to compare my stats to some of the professional players out there, but very rarely. Like it's more about just me following my own development as a player of the particular game through the stats of my own play, and that's pretty much it.

How do games in general give you information about your own development or your own accomplishments? And do you have any preference on some games over others?

I feel games in general too are fairly poorly in highlighting long-term efficiency, because they rarely give you pointers on like, for example, how much your aim has developed. It might not even be if relevant,

so for example if you have a story based game, you're not playing against anyone else, you're really just wanting to progress with the story. I feel like that kind of giving me pointers on, hey you've hit 58 percent of your bullets this round, and like the kind of thing, it makes it more competitive. And I'd like that from a story based game, sometimes it can be nice, it might add some replay value to it. So for example Little Big Planet gives you pointers on how many times you died, and gives you pointers on your score on the map and that's kind of it. Those are relevant to the gameplay experience, because those are also tied to certain achievements.

But it's not too much to chew on, so to speak, like compared to Dishonored that after each mission gives you. Dishonored is good at showing that stuff but sometimes I feel that it's a bit daunting actually, the amount of information that it gives. Sometimes it can be encouraging sometimes it's not. So after yeah every sort of mission and gives you the sort of scoreboard which shows you how many enemies noticed, you how stealthily you played, how violently. You can make a pacifist run of it, so you don't damage any enemies and so forth. So it kind of gives you all these stats of your stuff, stuff collected and so forth.

Sometimes it can be a bit daunting, because it can feel like okay I really failed this one didn't I. Sometimes it can drive you forward as well, so like if you're trying for a stealthy pacifist run where nobody notices you, and like you're really being the infiltrator of your dreams in the game. If you're getting really close to it but the in

the game world, it hasn't been too clear, it might make it clearer in sort of after event scoreboard, so that might help you propel forward. But yeah it's not as important in those kinds of games compared to stuff like Overwatch where the entire point of it is to like, okay enjoy the gameplay, but also like enjoying for longer time really requires something else. Like wanting to improve in it. Or wanting to face these more difficult opponents, or more skilled players in practice.

The game also encourages progress, so like it encourages to propel forward by giving you cool or shinier stuff for your rank in the UI. In more traditional games you get shinier armor and weapons which shoot lightnings and lasers and rainbows and so forth, in Overwatch you get these cooler insignias showing hey this is your skill tier. You get nice effects, nice additional sprays and stuff but it's not too much. It's not daunting to this sort of starter player, not as much as in some games like World of Warcraft you log in and you're this sort of weird beginner panda in peasants clothing, which was super ugly, and then someone level 120 walked right next to you at the trade quarter's on super flashy celestial dragon being, wearing glitters or something. Like yeah that can be daunting since it's so much. To some it can be probably like encouraging but I find it a bit daunting. Overwatch does it really well because it gives these slight small pointers like golden weapons and so forth.

How often do you modify the visual UI?

I usually remove a sort of helpful tips thingies and like sort of unnecessary pointers if the UI works for me. Then I usually don't edit it much. Like yeah reticles for example are something that I kind of like to adjust, especially if they're too big or obstructing more of the view than actually showing. It's still kind of rare that you can actually modify a UI, it's not too often that you can do it, but when you can I kind of like to customise stuff to suit myself. I mentioned the reticles so targeting reticles are a really personal thing like I find that, for example, there's an effect called bloom which kind of makes the reticle grow to visualise weapon spread over time, when the weapon heats up or accuracy decreases. I like to disable those.

Especially Overwatch is a good example because that allows you to do all of this modification you might not be able to do in other games. Also when the UI is not something I can adjust, I usually pick stuff that has a particular UI element that I like.

For example in Uncharted games I really like to pick sniper rifles with laser dot sights compared to sniper rifles with a sort of cross reticle to them, because I just find it easier to aim with a dot rather than a huge cross on top of something. So like then I can't really specifically adjust the UI but I can pick stuff that suits my style of play, which actually still changes the UI elements. Yeah that lets you modify UI elements.

Do you have any other examples?

Kingdom Hearts in the sense that you can allocate different stuff to your menu, so for example I like to be picky about what items I include in

the quick menu. It has a quick menu for spells as well, so that's something I like to optimise for my style of style of play. So I usually have skills in the quick menu that I find important. I like projectile style spells in rather than area control or similar, so I tend to include those variety of spells in my quick menu, otherwise I need to menu dive for them.

Other examples, well in Little Big Planet, especially creative mode, allows you to set favourite objects and favourite sort of creative tools for your tool menu. I always customised that, I always wanted to make it easier to find relevant items faster. And then this is a tiny thing but in World of Warcraft like I want to have all of the items and skills, I want to be able to use, quickly available directly. And like it can be really daunting to actually dive those. Like to have a lot of those under button presses rather than mouse clicks because I find it more difficult to aim at a small square on the screen with a mouse in the fast-paced situation, compared to having those under button presses so I don't have to divert my attention from the enemies on the screen towards how to like aim a mouse or towards actually hitting a particular button at the right time.

So once again a preference. And then I find it really important in the sense that how do I manage, for example my backpacks, what kind of areas do they clutter on the screen, so if I can. On the top right corner of the screen there's a mini-map, and I find it really important to have that mini-map showing, so I don't want any bad items or any storage stuff to go over it. Which happens in the menu if the storage items are stacked in a

particular way, so I like to stack them in another way so that I can still have the mini-map showing it.

So like those kind of things, like making the important stuff visible, especially since I like to have my bags open at the screen. Many players don't like it because it obstructs a lot of the view, so I like to make it so that it obstructs as little as possible. I can still view all of those items. So yeah once again allows this sort of modification.

Have any of the games that you played added any new UI elements or features that made it easier or harder to access something?

Overwatch definitely, I feel like I'm talking a lot about it, but it's something that has seen many iterations in the stuff that they've added and tweaked. So the UI elements, the adjustable reticles were the first ones, and it was immensely helpful after actually finding that thing in the game and after they brought all the options of colours and so forth. It was surprisingly nice, I mean I wonder how I could live without it. Same with the other UI tweaks, so like tweaking the other colours in the game. And the communication wheel feature that's a good thing. Because before the communication wheel feature all of the stuff in game was like, if you wanted to synergise with your team without having to be on the microphone and talking with those people, which I quite dislike, because a lot of the players aren't that nice really, it's really easy to get profiled as something, especially like if you're part of a minority or if you're otherwise just something that

people like to pick on. So like I don't like getting picked on.

The communication wheel makes it really easy to quickly interact with your teammates, by giving pre-assigned commands. So you can have a command like let's attack the payload, let's group up here, I need healing or I need assistance. So you have those pre assigned, it gives a vocal command in game and it also gives a text command or it gives a text pointer in a game chat as well. So people know what's up.

Do you have any other examples of UIs that have clarified the experience, like Overwatch?

Very few of the games I have played have actually done anything after the release to make it easier and clearer to play them. So it's kind of difficult to give those kinds of examples, many games don't iterate on these things as much. But things that make the play experience more streamlined, I guess, well, in Republic Commando definitely the way they built over command system, so you still had multiple ways of accessing stuff, as well you could swap between weapons. I think you'd swap between weapons through your scroll wheel on your mouse, you could swap between weapons by the number keys above, and like having these different routes of accessing stuff can be really helpful.

Similar to many games either already binding stuff to your extra mouse button, some mice have extra buttons on the side, and might have this sort of scroll wheel that you can also tilt side by side instead of just scrolling up and down. Some games

already bind stuff to those along with to some of the keys on the keyboard, so you have two ways of accessing those different features. I think that's really helpful in the way that it suits different preferences and even like if in some games like, in some instances, I really like to have a control on the keyboard side within the same game. On some other instance I really like to have a control on the mouse side of things because I might be doing something else on the keyboard. I mean I might be controlling some other abilities in the keyboard, so just makes accessing different features easier.

You play some really successful games, we've talked a lot about Overwatch but you also mentioned before this interview that you play Minecraft, and Minecraft it's one of the most popular games. Can you, personally, say what do you think that makes Minecraft so popular and how it relates to how the user interacts with the world?

Well that's a really double-edged sword for me at least, since Minecraft I feel that the core attraction of it is the simplicity of everything you interact with. Your left-click and you right-click and that's pretty much it, then you can open a menu from e and that's the main part of the game, but also that sometimes makes it really difficult to access sort of more advanced features of the game. So for example if you're crafting really specific stuff, like your enchanting things, you don't necessarily have any kind of guide for that.

A lot of it is like still tied to watching YouTube videos and guides for

effectively doing things. Sure you have the manuals in game but not for everything, and they are just not cumbersome to use, like actually using those takes more time. In the sort of manual core version of the game, of course it might be bit different, seems like it has less stuff and more things that kind of encourage you to interact with those. And manuals have more info a but I still feel like that they overall it doesn't really give a lot of helpful pointers towards different things, so it's a game of failing and learning from that.

But then again if you're playing it with the sort of beginner friendly settings, so you're not playing the sort of one life kind of thingy where the entire game save is done for if you die, then in those instances it kind of makes it easier. Especially in the sort of intermediate part of a game, when you've already learned absolute basics for survival.

But yeah I feel that the interface, it's fairly intuitive especially if you don't have any add-ons or mods on it, it is really down to core and it still gives a lot of room for creative approaches, and it gives a lot of room for like manoeuvring the game world in a very nonrealistic way. Like for example piling up a tower of dirt in order to climb to visit wonderful slime island that's floating midair. Like those kinds of things.

The game is quirky but I like it, you interact with it through only like a couple of button presses instead of doing stuff like in Fortnite, where you have this sort of still manageable but difficult construction system where you have to press a lot of different buttons to actually quickly access

different things.

I feel that it requires a lot of repetitive learning and mechanical skill to get into that kind of build thing Fortnite has. It just fails to establish a lot of information in an efficient way and it's just not very refined overall. Minecraft overall is a refined experience, it's tricky at times because you suddenly have to read a lot of the manuals.

But I guess that's actually a problem in the sense that the core usage of it is so simple that there's just a huge contrast between reading a manual and just like clicking away in the world. Left click right click block block block. I guess the manuals themselves are not a bad thing, it's just that they distract from the other speediness and easiness of the game itself.

Do you have anything to mention about combat games, do you play combat or fighting games?

Do you refer to like Street Fighter?

Yeah I do.

Yeah I feel they are a very different genre by itself. I quite don't like it that they are so focused on the user community to figure it out by themselves, so like a lot of those are once again games where you go and watch YouTube videos and read wiki's on how to use them or how to effectively play them. Stuff like avoiding certain types of attacks which are directed in a very structured way, they attack directly particular spots and you avoid being at those spots. That's exactly my point, like they have a very specific

structure underneath to interact with but interfaces don't help it at all.

They make it really difficult to learn stuff, they usually have really few tutorials or tutorials which are really difficult to use or really time-consuming that takes away at the experience of actually getting to play the game. So you would have to be really hardcore, wanting to play the game to actually go and do all its tutorials, since the games also tend to be really hard, really difficult to play. Because of their sort of nuanced fine-tuned control over multiple moves with a limited set of like actual physical tools to interact with. So I feel.

I play those games but I'm mostly really frustrated with them. For example in like in World of Warcraft's are in a lot of like shooters you get these indicators on where an attack might be coming from, some stuff like that might be really helpful for a beginner. Like having a pointer of your getting hit by an overhead attack or you're going to be hit by a crouched attack or it's going to be an uppercut, stuff like that. Having those indicators in any way would be really beneficial but I haven't seen them in most of the combat games or then they have those but they are really hidden. There are audio cues you have to learn.

For example Street Fighter or a more modern variant, Skullgirls as well. In those you have to learn the enemy move set, so you have audio cues of someone's uppercut, similar, like announcing what they are doing and you have to react to those. You might not even have the time to react to those, so you have to learn, you have to still learn the audio cues to

all of those different moves that are coming up. But the reaction times are really short, I feel that it also like puts a lot of pressure on the hardware when you're playing. So if you have a normal tv that has a really long input lag to it, it's really daunting to play those games.

Also there are very rarely visual cues that you can react to usually. Like very rarely there are visual cues to react to in combat games, so that's something to improve on. Skullgirls is an exception in the sense that it has really like broad sort of set of tutorials to learn from, but they take a lot of time from the gameplay itself. And it's just a really difficult game to play if you have anything less than perfect hardware for it. I feel that discriminates on a lot of players on relying that they have good hardware which shows stuff in an ideal way and with a minimum amount of latency possible for them to actually react to stuff.

So that's where the UI really comes to help different gameplay types. And like also the way the UI establishes this, helps with these kinds of things. Like what I was talking about with a lot of games with ability points that you assigned to different abilities, if they make those abilities literally clear-cut, it helps minimise these hardware-based issues as well.

Because let's be honest if you are a casual player, you're not going to invest in a specialised monitor for your console setup just to be able to really enjoy and benefit from fighting games.

Yeah, would you say user interfaces have the potential to enhance your reaction time?

Yeah I mean totally. Like if you have both visual pointers, especially the stuff that comes before something happens, and audio pointers there's two routes that you can sort of get a notion of something.

For example in Overwatch, once again, because it does this well. Many ultimate moves, some major abilities which can really quickly alter the direction of the fight. Many of those have an audio cue which comes slightly before the ability hits, so you have the ability to either cancel some of those ultimate moves or react to them preemptively. So you can run away or you can try to circumvent those by using your own ultimate abilities or similar. So like you can try to either even the playing field or react to avoid stuff. In addition to Overwatch, some fighting games do it fairly okay.

Smash Bros has many ultimate moves which also give you this sort of initial pointer where like, you try to first focus on where the enemy character is and then the visual pointer might give you something to try to avoid.

They do it less well, I feel like, or they focus on warning about it when the attack is already going. Like it's more difficult to dodge those, whereas in Overwatch it gives you more time for the visual cues as well. Especially for people who might not be as sensitive to the audio cues which are the most used, I feel in all of the games I've played, the visual cues are important. If you have visual cues to indicate that something might be upcoming instead of something already coming.

Like the spider sense in Spider Man?

Spider sense, yeah that's a good point. Marvel Spider-Man gives you that visual cue. I find if those are implemented correctly that's a major thing for a game.

Are there any UI elements in games that you feel makes the game more dynamic or easier to navigate?

Well it's actually nice that you brought the spider sense, because I feel that in a lot of spider-man games that is a particular mechanic because of the character itself. And that being like a part of the character in the comics. But I played Marvel the Ultimate Spider-Man, which is sort of, I feel that this shares a lot of the stuff that's in new marvel's Spider Man that came out this year. But the Ultimate Spider-Man is an older game but it does it really well because you also you have the official indicator all the time that you might get attacked or you might be in danger.

Otherwise it really just helps you focus on different game objectives. It also comes up with like, there's an important notion suddenly, like for example the situation might change, you might have to save someone first or you might be able to choose.

Infamous is another game that gives you player choice in similar situations where you use your supernatural skills to do stuff and complete objectives. Sometimes you have to choose if you are going to save your loved one or if you're going to save for example a bus full of school children or medical equipment.

The interface does not actually have much to do with those skills per se, it's just usually like instead of you just being a regular person who

tries to like use physical force to do something, you are usually like enabled to do stuff that would be impossible for a regular person. Like in Spider-Man. So spider sense is also a such a supernatural skill in a sense. But the importance of user interface design comes from the pointers that it gives for different things.

First of all it helps establish the change in condition so suddenly you get a pointer hey wait something's happening there. Oh no there's a bus hanging off a cliff, whereas in the other point a weird mutant is trying to eat your girlfriend. You're gonna have to make a decision but you also get these sort of visual indicators on where those things are happening, which is kind of rare on some games. Some games rely on just having help me kind of shouts, so only an audio cue on something happening there and something happening elsewhere.

So the Infamous and Spider-Man games giving those spatial cues on things happening around you is once again something that just makes it more dynamic, in the sense it's easier to fluidly move from situation to another and adapt. So it's not just noticing things, it makes it easy to roam a certain place and do stuff in that area.

For example in the Ultimate Spider-Man the web swinging, it always gives you indicators and pointers around you where you can attach or what you can do. Like the visual indicators, not sound indicators like I feel that's super important for a game to successfully be navigable.

A couple of last questions, how much do you usually pay attention

to health bars, mana bars or speed meter bars in games? Or how much do you rely on the kind of visual cues like screen turning greyscale or that the screen the red flash when you're about to die?

The visual cues definitely more. And even like racing games I rarely look at the speed, I'm mostly just observing the ability meter. So I mentioned nitrous oxide or the boost meter, and then the indicators in many racing games gives you indicators that there might be a turn coming. So I know instinctively from looking at the mini-map that I might need to brake so that I can make that turn more efficiently. And similar in many other games, like I find the mini maps and indicators around you are much more important.

How often do you health bars and mana bars?

Health bar, it depends of the game. In World of Warcraft I look at them a lot, especially since in World of Warcraft I tend to take a lot of damage. I look at mana and health a lot because it's important to efficiently use all of your skills in the particular game. But like I'd say health bar usually is the least of my worries really, I'm more inclined to look at ability cooldowns. For example in Mass Effect I rarely look at my health bar as much because it's an instinctive thing, also Mass Effect does this really cool thing where you have shields and then you have depleting health. So like shields are something that charge back but health is not charging back, so when you break your shields

and start to take permanent damage it gives you this sort of flash on the screen, a visual flash and a sound effect which just makes it easy, okay now I need to find cover, now I need to recharge my shields. So yeah once again like a visual effect doing something for me.

How often do you buy new games and what you usually look for before you decide to purchase a game?

Usually it's the story of aspect, so very rarely do I purchase a game based on anything other than the story. Overwatch is an example of such an exception where the whole game is everything, but it has a poorly written story.

So it's just a nice game to play but yeah that's a rare exception. Mostly it's just a story based stuff, or then another exception is for example LittleBigPlanet where there's a great creative approach to a game. And Minecraft as well, Minecraft is also something that I like for its creativity. Not necessarily for its core gameplay.

Do you usually just like to try demo versions before you buy the actual game?

I really don't try the trial versions because sometimes they are more full of spoilers than actually good relating to the story. And also because I've always been like on this more sort of cash restricted end of the gaming community, so I haven't been able to afford systems which I could fill with demos and stuff. I really never had a hard drive space for that kind of thing, so no I really bought

the game, I rarely downloaded demos before. These days I might do it since like nowadays I engage more with beta content, so a game I might already own might have new features coming into. A beta content for those things I engage even more with.

What do you pay attention to when playing beta or demos?

Similar things as always but also when playing a beta I really want to engage with the new features or the stuff that they are changing, finding the sort of ways that changes the gameplay. The change to the field so I always compare a beta feature to an existing game.

I focus on differences it makes to the gameplay if it's a trial of course I compare it to the games I've already played. But I also want to establish if it's fun is it snappy, and I guess in trials like in trial versions of games the gameplay experience is much more important than a story. Unless the story part is really well done, so it already catches me. But like for example a trial version that I played was Just Cause two.

It established early on what the gameplay is like and it gave you a nice set of tools to really try things out, but I didn't really like the game still because it was a bit cluttered. You could do a million different things but the game didn't instruct you on how to do those things, so it was a failure in like interface side of things. It didn't have a redeeming story and even though you could do awesome stuff in it, like really cool things and explosions but then the game itself didn't just help playing itself. So I felt that that was just cumbersome,

you didn't have any direction to it.

Yeah how many times would you say that you're ready to give a game a go?

I try to learn to new interface because obviously you always have to learn the interface and the mechanics.

How many times would you keep trying to learn the game before you quit?

Well I mentioned that the one redeeming quality would be the story, so if the game has a really catching story I might be willing to try it quite a few times.

Especially like Kingdom Hearts and Persona 4, like those are really frustrating games to play. But with Kingdom Hearts and Persona 4 I want to play them through because the stories are interesting, especially with Persona 4.

So I'm willing to give those more tries than something else that might not be quite as appealing. I'd say like if I fail at a game more than like probably around five to ten times in a particular setting. And if I have to like go online and find like a cheat or a way to solve a puzzle in a game, after like 10 tries. And then probably giving it a nice rest and trying it again.

If it doesn't work that time then I'm just gonna scrap the game probably because I have other games to play which are nicer. It always still a disappointment especially since I rarely get to play a game like before actually buying it. It is kind of a big disappointment for me, but it also affects how I think about the studio.

So if there's another game in the series are from the same studio I tend to be more critical about buying a game from the same studio if their previous game was awful to play.

So would you say frustrating games affect the reputation of the studios that published it?

Yeah similarly to other things, like if a game studio seems to be engaging in unethical practices I am not inclined to buy the game. But also if the game is just really awful to play I'm probably not going to buy any other games of the same series and even similar games like from the studio. Even if that might be in a different series.

Do you have anything else to add in relation to user interfaces and how they affect the game's success?

Not necessarily much, it's just you know, personally it's about buying a game or not buying a game and so far it's mostly being that I tend to buy a game, and then be really disappointed in that particular game. These days when I have stuff to do I tend to be much pickier in the games that I choose.

And since YouTube is such a good place to learn about games before I buy, and I engage with games journalism a lot, I get this sort of chance to actually see how a game plays beforehand. Usually from like a gameplay footage like which is shown as a teaser, so I'm more inclined to look at those things and I'm much more critical in my purchases based on those things.

And as I mentioned I tend to avoid

some studios and their games unless I see that something is contrary to them. So for example I've longed for long I've had this sort of not really feeling it about EA's games and especially like certain studios under EA branding studio. And games like Call of Duty and so forth. Because I just don't like the way they play and I don't like the way they focus on the sort of super hardcore players who have super high end gear that they play the games with, and they can be really toxic in a way that they feel superior over other enemies.

Can you see it in the user interface in some way?

Yeah definitely because if I see a game like Call of Duty, if I see a game trailer and I can't really make sense of what's going on in that trailer, I'm probably not gonna buy that game. If instead if I see a game trailer that seems clear-cut, I can see what the person is actually doing and that they're not doing it through their superior gear and highly tuned senses and some supernatural godliness.

Like that you can see as a player like it's if it's coming from something that's in-game that the game is helping that player succeed in it.

Then it's something that I'm really inclined to try. Like if it seems that it's more suggests, you know it looks like stylised war movie but the main character is controlled by this former professional player, then I have no interest in that unless the story is super exciting. Just rarely happens.

Just to clarify, do you mean if you see interesting gameplay trailers that show you visually in the

user interface and how the game mechanics work, would you say that you are more inclined to try that game?

Definitely. Versus like if the game is more subtle in the way that communicates the mechanics to the player through the interface. If the game looks intuitive in a trailer I'm very inclined to try it, if the game does not look intuitive it will need some special redeeming qualities which usually come forth after the release by watching YouTube videos and stuff where people are like doing reviews and stuff.

And I might be surprised ok this might be an actually nice game, but to buy a game or even preorder a game, like I'm super critical on the way that it seems to play itself.

Similar like I've bought Skullgirls because I like the art style of it, but it's still kind of a disappointing game. The art style and music are good but the gameplay is not that good and it had some redeeming qualities but that's the only fighter game that I've actually bought. Because rest of them don't have those redeeming qualities in them and the fight style looks to be similar, like they are what they have always been. I'm not too interested in because of the way they play.

Strategy games like Civilization, those are different because I feel like those games are fairly self-explanatory in the way they play. Yeah I mean like they illustrated really well in their demos, like you click there you click there and suddenly something happens and it makes sense. But it's just they lack the kind of story aspect that I'm looking in game so that's just

me particularly as a consumer.

Are you put off by really complex UIs in strategy games?

Yes I am put off by those, I'm very put off by those complexities. If I need to access any aid beyond the game like wikis and so forth I'm usually frustrated of the thought. And even GameTrailers and reviews already make it fairly like evident that okay, I would probably need to do that instead of like engaging with the game itself.

You mentioned previously that if the gameplay or the user interface looks intuitive you are more likely to buy the game. What do you mean by intuitive? What's the standard for you?

The standard is that the game gives good visual and audible feedback, both. Not just one or the other.

And the game is successful in establishing its objectives, the game has enough sort of variants added to it, so changing a sort of difficulty of the game. I can customise my gaming experience by for example allocating stat points, changing the way I engage with the game. If there are things that allow me to customise my game experience then definitely like that's something that I expect from a good game.

And also that it just makes it clear to sort of interact with these sort of necessities for like going forward in that game in a speedy way. So that I can focus on what's important to me, the story and gameplay, not the menu system and like going through all of the particular items one by

one in the game just so that I can optimise the character to the fullest. I don't have this sort of patience for that kind of thing.

Do you consider yourself "a completionist" in games?

It really depends on the game. I'm normally not a completionist with games but I guess that it has more to do with the fact that I don't have the patience to grind stuff so to speak. I don't have the patience to go over and over again doing the same particular thing unless it's made really easy and made really intuitive, so games which kind of make me not work with the UI and work with the sort of supporting structures for the gameplay and allow me to focus on the gameplay itself, in those games I am much more likely to really go through all of the side missions and all of extra stuff.

For example, Uncharted, because it's really straightforward. So in uncharted I'm really inclined to go and do stuff like hunt trophies or try stuff like okay now I'm gonna do the head shot master achievement. And like I'm going to search all the treasures in it or similar. I'd like to go for all of the extra stuff if the game itself allows me to concentrate on those instead of concentrating on organising my means to access those things.

In addition, in relation to in-game purchases which are kind of normal these days, which is kind of a shame, for me to actually put money in a game. I'm really reluctant to do that. I have only done it to a couple of games which I've really enjoyed so I've bought the add-ons and DLCs

to those. So Mass Effect series being one. Mass Effect series is something that I actually put a lot of money into, comparing to the price of the base game. I put equally as much money into the add-ons as the base game itself, just because I've enjoyed playing it so much.

The story stuff is really good and it's also very intuitive to play, I can focus on the gameplay rather than organising items and so forth. And it's not crucial if I make a mistake in organising my items and skills and so in the game, because it makes it easy to backtrack and makes it easy to still succeed with a sub optimal setup. Especially in fact I might like the play-style of that suboptimal setup over the more optimal setup that might be harder for me to play. Similar to Overwatch, I've put in money for cosmetic items, the loot boxes of Overwatch, just because I like the game itself and I like the items and the art style of it. But I wouldn't put money in stuff that has nothing to do with the gameplay itself, unless the gameplay itself was already so redeeming. I like to put money in like customising the game visually in a way that's not in any way meaningful for the like gameplay objects or so such. It's just fun visual works to have in a game that I already enjoy playing so much.

Great, thank you for this interview! Do you mind if I ask you some follow-up questions later?

Not at all, contact me anytime you need. This was fun.

The interviewee later answered an extra question:

You started playing games in English at a very young age, but you are not a native English speaker. How did that turn out?

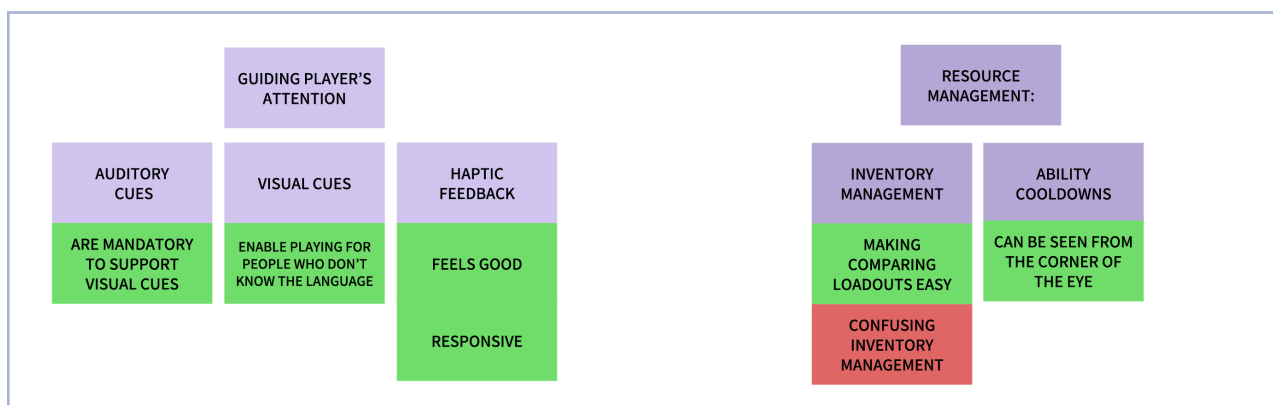
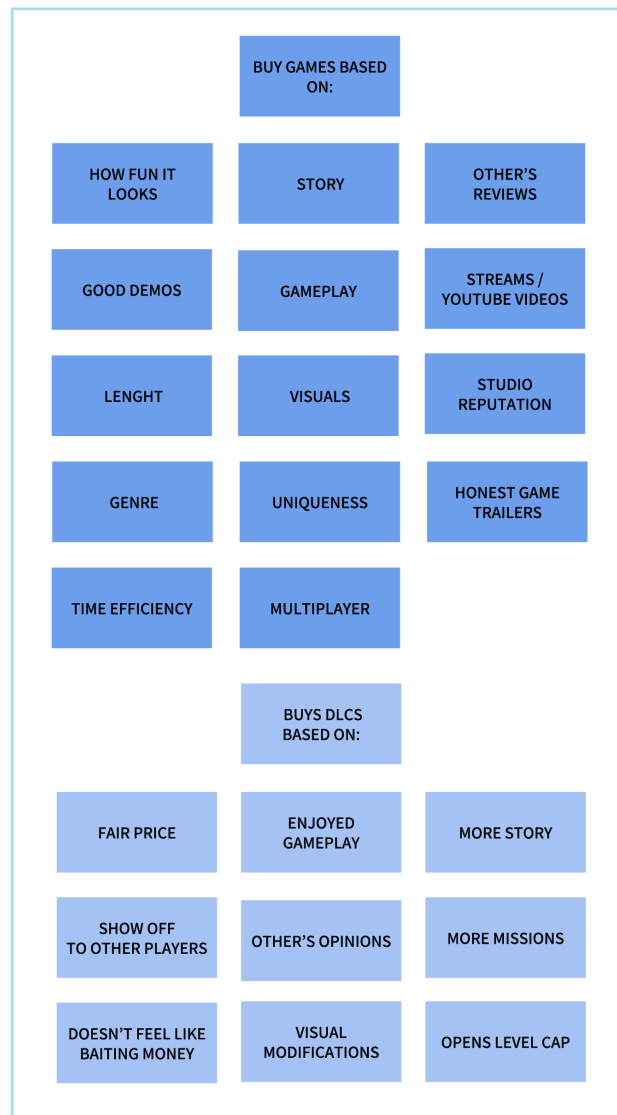
Badly at first, I played from age 7 to 9 without understanding what "save game" meant + was told to not touch anything on the computer I wasn't familiar with/didn't know what it would do. Republic Commando was one of the first big games I cleared in english at the age of 10 (started English around a year earlier) but the UI was very visual and tied distinct visual symbols for different functions to their assigned buttons on the mouse and keyboard. That along with ammo, health and shield indicators + brief tutorials and usage describing holograms near interact-able objects made it easy to figure out how to play whilst only understanding a fraction of the dialog, and my text comprehension being mostly limited to "new game, continue, Revive, & save game" Little Big Planet was a similar experience to my brother. The clear indicative visuals introduced him to video games (along with autosave function, not needing to understand english at all) the menus were also very clear and tutorial videos in-game explained how to use the controller, menu, items and abilities.

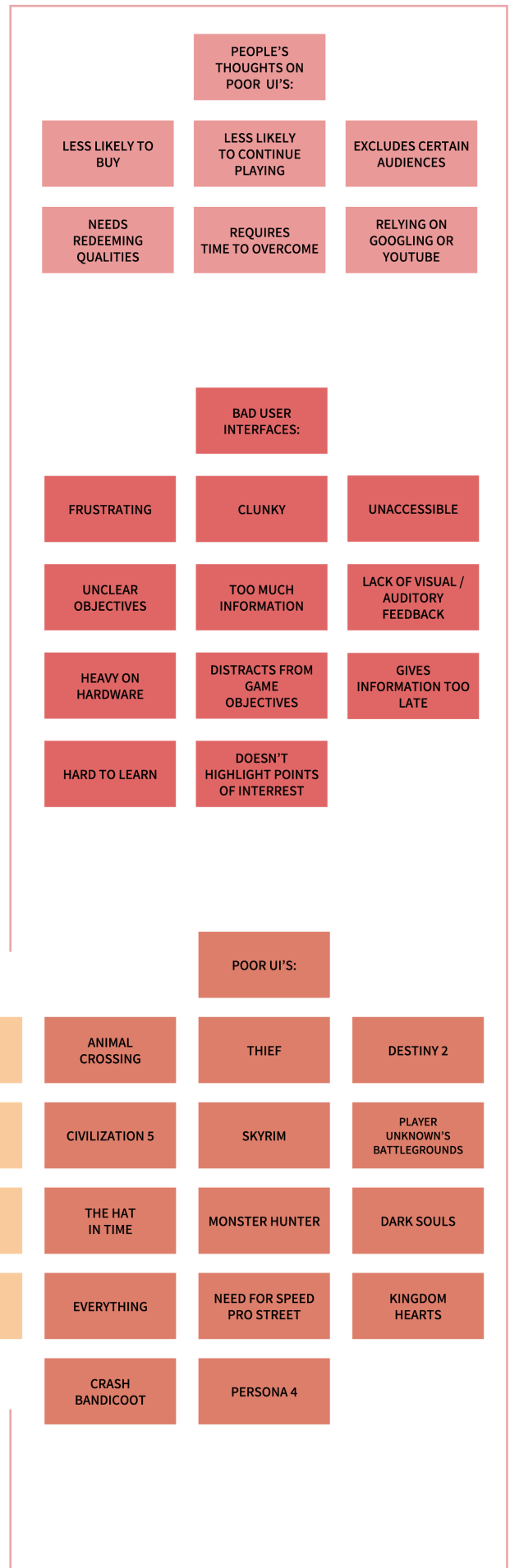
I would like to add that on the frustration aspect, after actively playing Pokemon Go for months, an update accidentally removed the slider to opt out of AR view when catching Pokemon. The forced AR

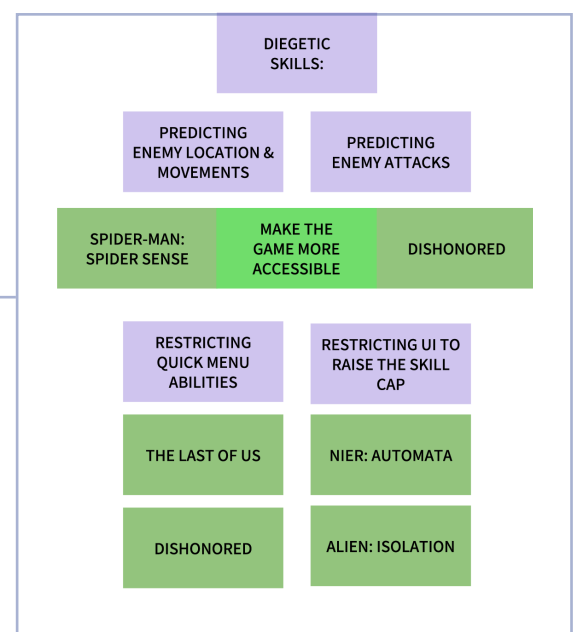
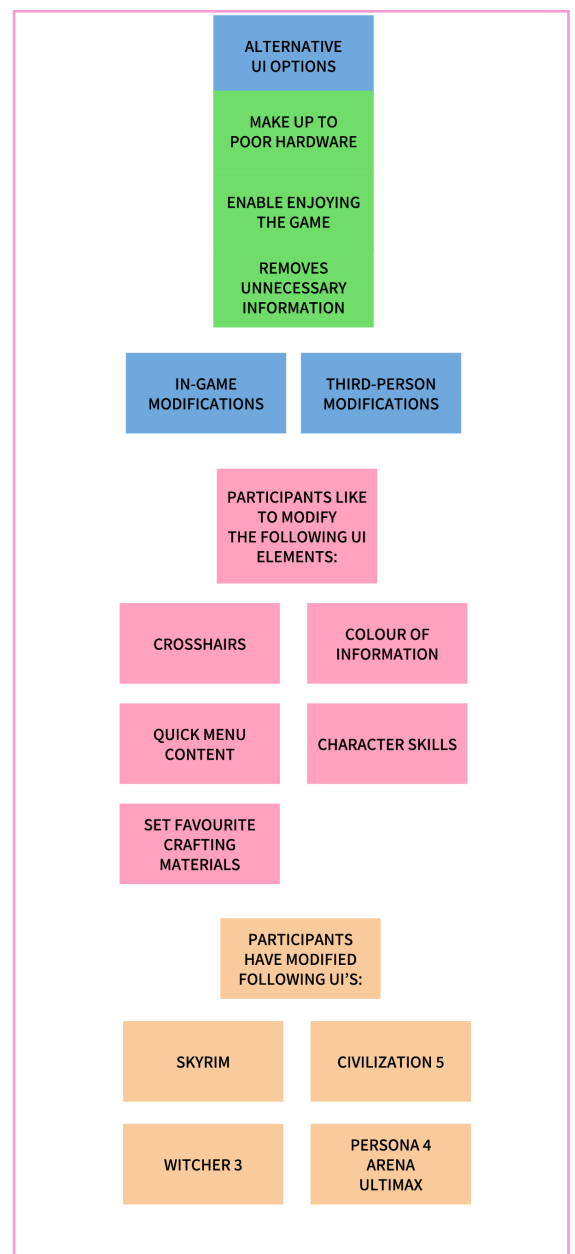
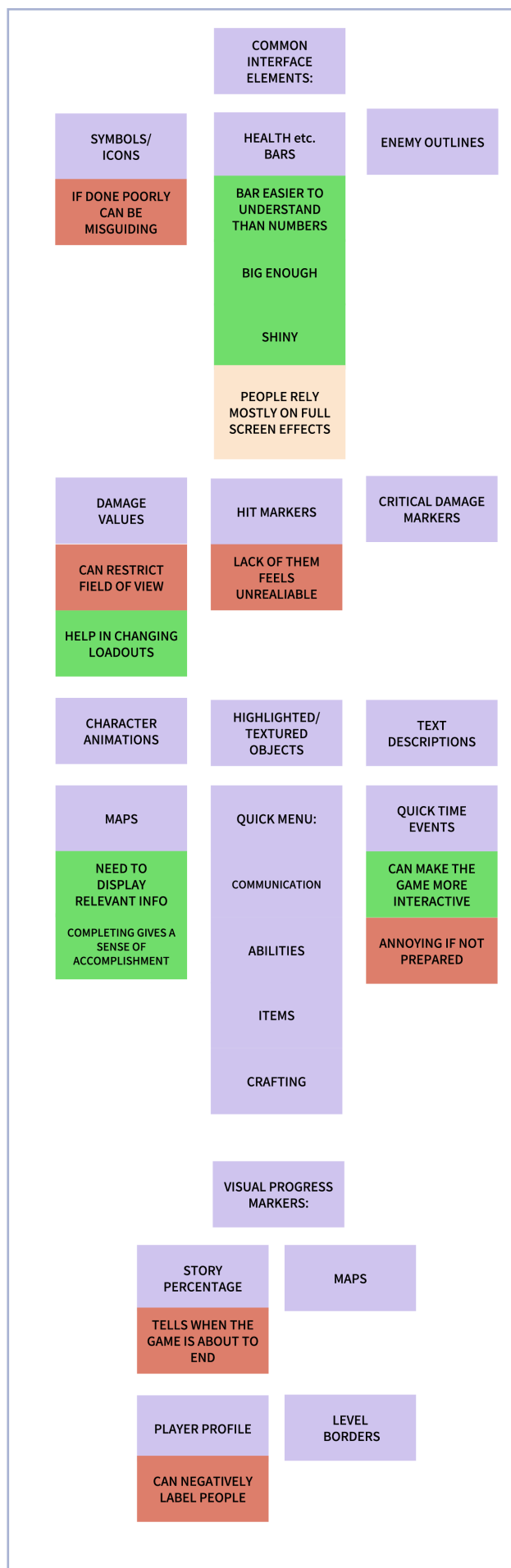
was apparently a bug and has since been fixed but after having ditched the game following a few frustrated days of cumbersome catching and battery draining I don't really feel like getting back to it anymore. Found other stuff to play already.

2. PLAYER INTERVIEWS

2.7 AFFINITY DIAGRAM







3. COGNITIVE WALKTHROUGH

3.1. QUESTIONS & SUMMARY

SCENARIO RESULTS:	Expected feedback	Player actions
SCENARIO:	<p>1. The participant is playing a first person shooter game. The participant's character is at an open environment with a good line of sight in front of them. The character has a weapon in their hand and they shoot an enemy.</p>	<p>2. The participant is playing an online multiplayer game, in which they are completing a task and unaware of their surroundings. Suddenly the participant's character begins to take damage and lose health.</p> <p>3. The participant is playing a third person role playing game. Suddenly their character dies, but the participant doesn't know why. They load the game save, and then arrive to the same spot where their character previously died.</p>
PLAYER 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An indicator determining if the shot hit the enemy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood on the screen • Character animation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to use visual and auditory information from death scene to look for corresponding threats • Look for traps, animals, snipers
PLAYER 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reload and shoot again • Look for more enemies • Look for teammates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood on the screen • Character animation • Estimate the enemy location based on a sound indicator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save just before the same spot • Look for flankers, corners, ceiling
PLAYER 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An indicator determining if the shot hit the enemy • Recoil animation • Ammo decreasing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood on the screen • Directional indicator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look own health to see effects such as poisoned • Look for environmental hazards, traps
PLAYER 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An indicator determining if the shot hit the enemy • Enemy health decreasing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood on the screen • Visual bullet trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for audio cues • Try to use visual and auditory information from death scene to look for corresponding threats • Replicate the situation based on memory

3.2. PARTICIPANT TRANSCRIPTS

3.2.1. PARTICIPANT 1

These three next questions are more scenario based. I'm gonna describe a scenario and ask you what you're gonna do in the situation. The first one is that you're playing an FPS game, you have a gun in your hand and you shoot the enemy. What happens next? What do you see? What do you do next?

All the enemies are gonna shoot me. I would strafe, shoot him, reload. It depends on what kind of character I'm playing. I would keep my position. If he was to kind of character who prefers close range and they would try to come closer to me and if I had abilities like the Soldier76 helix rocket, I would use that when he gets close. I can use that into my advantage. See if there is gonna be any more enemies, especially if I have other teammates around me and see if it is a safe position.

In the next scenario I want you to imagine you're minding your own business and someone starts shooting at you. How do you know it, what do you pay attention to and what do you do next?

I take damage of course and based on where the sound is coming from I can estimate where the shooting is coming from. In Overwatch for example there is blood on the screen, it shows to you from which side you're getting shot at. If the blood is on their left corner of your screen it's coming from it is really

simple. Usually there is high ground on your left side so you know where to look for. So you have the kind of visual information telling you where it is coming from.

Do you expect to see the kind of visual information?

There usually is some kind, of even if it's just like "oh you're taking damage". If there's not that's kind of information then I would just like look around, look at them most common routes people take and the kind of usual flanks. In Overwatch anyway, when I play, when I like just do my own thing and I'm shooting at enemy shields and whatever I tend to do, I keep an eye on the potential flanks that people might come attack me from. So I'm like ready for it anyway. You can't really ever stay still anyway so if you stay still you're in a bit disadvantage. Always keep moving and be ready for a surprise attack.

In the third scenario, you're playing a third-person role-playing game, for example. Suddenly you die but you don't know why. You load a save and you come to the same spot again. What do you look for?

If there's anything that's gonna flank, jump from behind or behind corners. Check if there is enemy action also check if something's on the ceiling. Usually there's nothing on the floor, it's always like on your

flanks and on the ceiling because you don't look at the ceiling very often. In Alien Isolation it was a thing that sometimes you would, like if you walk just minding your own business, and you walk under a vent you might die because sometimes there's a friend in the vents waiting for you. I would also try to die again if I'm really interested, and then pay attention to what I saw at the end. Look at the situation a bit more, so let's say save just before.

3.2.2. PARTICIPANT 2

These questions can be a bit more obscure but they do serve a purpose for me. Imagine this scenario where you're playing an FPS, you have a gun in your hand and you shoot the enemy. What happens next? What do you see? What do you expect to happen?

Some kind of indicator that I've hit them, or no indicator. I mean I expect to see either a hit icon or a miss icon or something that registers if I've hit them. Obviously if I haven't I don't expect to see a hit marker, but let's just say there are hit markers in the game, I'm expecting to see a hit marker if I have shot them or not if I've missed. Overwatch is great because most guns give you some kind of indicator of how much ammo you've got left. Some of them are a bit obscure and some of them aren't there at all but you know certain things about that can change. That's I guess more of a thematic thing it's more of an immersive thing. I expect to see something from my

character that shows me that I've shot, some recoil or some animation. And obviously the relevant info like you lose a bit of ammo on your clip, anything like that.

Great! In the next scenario you are minding your own business and someone starts shooting at you. What do you expect? What do you pay attention to?

Obviously most games will give you an indicator that you've been hit, like blood splatter on a screen or a kind of shake reaction, recoil thing or both. A lot of games give you a direction indicator that shows you where you've been shot from that's very useful. It doesn't fit in all games but it is very useful so I expect to see that. I guess I don't have to actively look for that because it's so ingrained, I think, now we just kind of see it and look in that direction without having to put too much thought into it. Or then I expect to see a "you are dead" screen.

Yeah! In the final scenario you're playing a third-person role-playing game. Suddenly you die, you don't know why. You load a save and come to the same spot again where you previously died. What do you look for?

Something that would kill me. I guess if I didn't know what killed me I guess first I'd look for something environmental, like I'd look for a trap or or some kind of hazard I might have walked into without realising. I'd look for enemies and if that failed I'd look at my health to see if I was poisoned or something.

3.2.3. PARTICIPANT 3

The next questions are more obscure scenarios that I'm going to tell you. I'm going to ask you your thoughts on them, so this can feel a bit weird but there's a purpose for this. The first one goes like this: imagine you're playing a role-playing game, you have like a bow in your hand and you shoot the enemy. What happens next, what do you see, what do you do?

I want to see if the arrow hits, I want to see whether I hit or not, and then I'll act based on that.

Cool, in the next scenario you're minding your own business, and someone starts shooting at you. How do you know it? What do you pay attention to, what do you do next?

I assume it's the information, I'm picturing this is like from the first-person view for some reason, the first thing would be cues on screen. Like for example lots of games are when you like you know gets damaged like you know they appears like there's like blood in the screen or the screen turns yeah like you know slightly red or something. I would assume that would be that. That would be the first one and maybe sort of like a sound effect combined with like a movement, so like your character sort of like you know twitches or it does something like you know sort of you know basically impacts. And the sight and the movement

emphasise it. And there would also be information in the form of maybe blood or something like that. That is what comes to my mind.

In the last scenario is that you're playing the role playing game again. Suddenly you die. You don't know why you died, you load a save, you come to the same spot again. What do you look for?

I'd look for, in environment I would assume in this situation there would be, if I didn't know what I died for, I assumed there would be some sort of trap, or like some sort of instant death. So I would like, you know, I would deduce based on the information I have from the death and I would try to look for something. That would have inflicted that sort of like, if I die and there's a crunching sound, I would try to look for something that might have crunched me. Like a stone rolling, if something dropped from the sky, if there's like you know. If there's a bite effect or something I will try to look for an animal that that could you know have heard me, something that moves. If it's like a weapon I would try to look for like maybe a sniper or like an enemy creature, so I'll try to combine the information from when I died, and I would use that to deduce what killed me. And what I should look out for.

3.2.4. PARTICIPANT 4

Alright! Next I'm going to describe you three scenarios, and i want you to tell me what you would do in each scenario. In the first one you are playing in first-person shooter game, you have a gun in your hand and you shoot the enemy. What happens next, what do you see and what do you do next?

Well what I see at that point is what I hope to see. That if I actually hit the enemy or not. Like I hope to see if there is an impact to what I do, or what I decided to do. If there is an impact on me shooting that enemy or not, if there is zero impact whatsoever then like, I don't really know how to continue from there. I might shoot again and like I would repeat the particular action just if get some sort of indicator that I'm having an effect on something. If I'm not having an effect, that's frustrating.

What kind of indicator would you expect to see?

Either sound or visual indicator, some kind of red splatter or otherwise just a ding or anything that indicates a hit in a meaningful way. It might also be stuff like the enemy health bar just decreasing, that's the minimal amount of something, that even if it doesn't give anything else I just want to see something pointing out that this person is either taking damage or immune to damage.

In the second scenario you are minding your own business and someone starts shooting at you. How do you know it? What do you pay attention to and what would you do next?

Usually it's through some sort of visual cue. So audio cue might not be enough, especially if I'm not wearing headphones because directional audio is an important thing in a lot of those scenarios. If it doesn't work too well it's usually the visual cue. There it's an established concept by now that there usually is a sort of red visual cue at the side of your screen, like think about the bruise so you get red bruise to the side of the screen that indicates okay I'm taking fire from that direction. I'm not already seeing where the fire is coming that is usually that. Otherwise if I would be facing the enemy it would usually give me other pointers on where the fire is coming.

In the final scenario you are playing a first-person role-playing game, suddenly you die. You don't know why, you load a save, you come to the same spot again. What do you look for?

If I die suddenly it usually is a super frustrating thing. I try to remember what happened in a previous instance and kind of replicate the situation or look for things that might be the cause of it. I'll try to hear if there was a voice of any sort or audio cue, I try

to look for the source of that kind of thing. If I don't have anything like that then I usually just like hop around and try to replicate something, and usually expect it to be a bug, if there is not anything else around me to suggest that there would be a cause and an effect. Looking around, just going around trying to replicate stuff if there's nothing else to point what went wrong. Yeah super frustrating situation to be in.

4. DEVELOPER INTERVIEW

4.1. CORRESPONDENCE

Interview with a game developer who wished to remain anonymous. The interviewed developer is a professional user interface designer who has worked in various video games from indie level to highly commercial ones for years.

I am Virpi Väinölä, a final year Digital Interaction Design student at the University of Dundee, United Kingdom. I'm writing my dissertation about the role of user interface design in contemporary video games and their success, and looking for comments from game developers on their UI aims and goals.

I'm very interested in hearing about your personal opinions and experiences with user interface design in video games, and would like to request a short interview to find answers to the following questions in order to help me understand the developer side to game user interfaces.

You may answer to as many questions as you want, in any way and level of detail you feel comfortable with. Your contact information will not be shared or displayed, and if you wish your correspondence can be kept anonymous.

Thank you very much for your time!

The interview went as follows:

How would you define a successful user interface?

A great user interface is easy to comprehend and easy to use. It is made with functional graphic design and it's flow is perfected. A great user interface takes into consideration the medium (or mediums) which it exists in. Different mediums have different perks and different downsides.

However due to budgets and other realities of everyday production, not all user interfaces can be great, hence; a successful interface gets you to gameplay from the menu with ease and supports the gameplay efforts in non-intrusive ways.

According to your personal experience, how does UI design tie into the gameplay experience?

The UI can be a part of the narrative, giving the player hints of the world or the story.

What value does a successful UI design create for the game and the company?

Usually the UI is the first thing a player sees – at least the first thing they interact with.

The UI usually comes first in the

shape of a menu system – there might be a logo or a cutscene before the UI (or in some cases I even short gameplay), but usually menu appears pretty soon after launching a game, because most games want you to make a couple of choices before starting to play.

It is an integral part of the game brand; the UI combined with visuals and sound / music should convince the player that the game is worth playing. Combined with correct choice of music the UI can already start communicating to the player the game's atmosphere and/or world / story.

In this way the UI can also tie in with the brand of games made by certain game company. For example in the 1990s LucasArts and Sierra had in their own respects very similar and individually branded UI's through out most of their games, but by looking at the UI alone, one could tell what company had made the game.

How does the UI tie in to artistic choices or a game's style?

As UI is an interactive visual asset by itself, in my opinion it has to be well designed both visually and experience wise. Both UX and the visuals should be resonating with the actual product and not be a separate artistic endeavour; the game and the UI must work seamlessly and neither

of them cannot be a distraction.

For instance in the Fallout -series most of the in-game UI follows suite with the Pip boy -theme.

Could you mention some specific principles or considerations that need to be taken into account when developing a video game UI for a mobile platform?

Physical buttons of the device; does the device have a back button or only a home button? Sometimes when something has been designed with an "iOS first" -principle the Android experience suffers.

In mobile VR the remote and it's buttons or the lack of a remote is a UI defining limitation.

Device resolutions and scaling the UI; since these days there are multitude of different resolutions the UI has to have a solution how it scales to all of them. Questions like; "Does the UI have a static resolution, or does it scale dynamically?" need to be answered when designing an UI.

Testing the UI is a must.

5. CASE STUDY

5.1. QUESTIONS

EVALUATION ON THE APPEAL OF GUILD WARS 2 AND WORLD OF WARCRAFT BASED ON THE GAMES' VISUAL INTERFACE

1. What is your first impression of Game 1?
2. What is your first impression of Game 2?
3. Which one of the games looks more appealing to you? Why?
4. Which one of the games looks more fun to you? Why?
5. Describe the user interface of Game 1 in three words:
6. Describe the user interface of Game 2 in three words:
7. Would you try playing Game 1 if it was free?
8. Would you watch someone else play Game 1?
9. Would you try playing Game 2 if it was free?
10. Would you watch someone else play Game 2?
11. If you had to choose, which one of the games would you rather spend money on? Why?
12. How would you compare the resource management in those games to each other, based on how it looks?
13. How would you compare the maps of the games to each other, based on how they look?
14. In which game do you feel that your current objective / quests are easier to track? Why?
15. In which game does character skill building look more appealing to you? Why?
16. In which game would you rather fight in combat? Why?
17. How would you compare dying in those games to each other, based on how it looks?
18. Have you played either Game 1 or Game 2 yourself?
19. How did you feel about those games when playing them?
20. Is there anything else you would like to add?

5.2. FIGURES: GUILD WARS 2

NCSoft (2012). GUILD WARS 2. [VIDEO GAME]







5.3. FIGURES: WORLD OF WARCRAFT

BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT (2004) . WORLD OF WARCRAFT. [VIDEO GAME]









5. CASE STUDY

5.3. KEY INSIGHTS

GAME 1: GUILD WARS 2

- First impressions:
Generic, uninteresting, straightforward, modern, fantasy, realistic, minimalist
- Appealing to 33%
- Looks fun to 17%
- Described as:
Small, simple, non-changing, contemporary, serious, sleek, standard, inconspicuous, cluttered, complex, non-obtrusive, aspiring, unbalanced, illogical, stylised,
- Would try playing if was free: 33%
- Would watch someone else play: 67%
- Would choose this game to spend money on: 33%
- Resource management looks:
Inventory slightly better than game 2, neater to have all items under same tab, less time consuming, easier to read, difficult to follow, odd choice for a health ball, small icons
- Map looks:
Better than Game 2 because shows landmarks, markers are clear, realistic, more precise, detailed
- Tracking quests/objective:
Rather easy, good completion meter, would like to hide quest markers, easier to track than Game 2, bland, clear icons for different missions
- Character building looks:
Many tabs, training window unclear, skill tree is nice, easier to understand, more interesting than Game 2
- Would fight in this game: 17%
- Dying looks:
Less painful than in Game 2, more to do than in Game 2
- Has played this game previously: 33%

GAME 2: WORLD OF WARCRAFT

- First impressions:
Generic, nostalgic, childish, stylised, confusing, traditional, old
- Tracking quests/objective:
Toggle map markers good, toggle quest log is good, good legibility and hierarchy in texts
- Appealing to: 67%
- Character building looks:
Simpler UI to understand, talents window straightforward, nice symbols, easier to understand than Game 1, seems nicer than Game 1 for leveling up, more personalised builds
- Looks fun to: 83%
- Would fight in this game: 50%
Affinity of enemies is better, UI cooldowns are better, combat has more abilities
- Described as:
Customisable, colourful, cartoony, bold, boxy, heavy, cluttered, confusing, obtrusive, legible, balanced, dated, clear cooldown numbers
- Dying looks:
Better than in Game 1, the graveyard mechanic looks good
- Would try playing if was free: 83%
- Has played this game previously: 33%
- Would watch someone else play: 67%
- “Tried Both, stayed for number 2 because it was more coherent and intuitive. Actually paid money for it as well. Number 1 was very hit and miss whenever the 3d visuals stopped inspiring play.”
- Would choose this game to spend money on: 67%
- Resource management looks:
Complex, hard to tell skills apart, easier to track health and gauges, bigger icons, different inventory slots allow to show only specific types of items
- Map looks:
Old map, harder to navigate, unreliable, stylised, colourful, fits the theme, cleaner, dated easier to read

5. CASE STUDY

5.4. TRANSCRIPTS

5.4.1. PARTICIPANT 1:

1. What is your first impression of Game 1?

Generic MMO.

2. What is your first impression of Game 2?

Generic MMO as well.

3. Which one of the games looks more appealing to you? Why?

Game number 2. The graphic design of the game appeals to me.

4. Which one of the games looks more fun to you? Why?

Game number 2. Design is appealing.

5. Describe the user interface of Game 1 in three words:

Small, simple, nonchanging.

6. Describe the user interface of Game 2 in three words:

Options, customizable, colorful.

7. Would you try playing Game 1 if it was free?

Yes.

8. Would you watch someone else play Game 1?

If the person is interesting, yes.

9. Would you try playing Game 2 if it was free?

Yes.

10. Would you watch someone else play Game 2?

Yes.

11. If you had to choose, which one of the games would you rather spend money on? Why?

Game number 2. It feels more appealing.

12. How would you compare the resource management in those games to each other, based on how it looks?

Game 2 has more management compared to Game 1.

13. How would you compare the maps of the games to each other, based on how they look?

Game 2 is easier to read but Game 1 is more detailed and precise.

14. In which game do you feel that your current objective / quests are easier to track? Why?

Neither, both are very similar.

15. In which game does character skill building look more appealing to you? Why?

Game 2, it feels easier to understand.

16. In which game would you rather fight in combat? Why?

Game 1, the combat feels more versatile than in Game 2.

17. How would you compare dying in those games to each other, based on how it looks?

Game 1 has more stuff to do when dying than in Game 2.

18. Have you played either Game 1 or Game 2 yourself? How did you feel about those games when playing them?

Yes. Both games were entertaining to some degree.

19. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Warcraft has better lore.

5.4.2. PARTICIPANT 2:

1. What is your first impression of Game 1?

It looks like a very standard MMORPG – so much so it looks very generic to me. I can't tell if it's one of the big ones or a cheap one-in-a-dozen. The world looked pretty uninteresting and the UI was pretty straightforward but also lacked personality.

I liked the game's map design. It was pretty simple and the lodge icons were almost comically big, but the map was also easy to read and friendly to the eye.

2. What is your first impression of Game 2?

Graphics-wise I liked the bolder colours and more cartoony art style. The art style, the font choice and the map made me feel almost nostalgic. They made the game look rather old, like the PC games I used to play as a child. However, they made the game look a bit childish, too.

There were quite many small icons as part of the UI at the bottom of the screen. I wonder how useful that is – are the players really able to make sense to so many small icons at once?

3. Which one of the games looks more appealing to you? Why?

Game 2 had more personality to its graphics, from the cartoony character models to the similarly stylised world and the bright colour palette. Even the UI has some nice touches to it like the metallic-looking borders of some of the windows. Sure, the

font choice is kind of unpleasant and makes the game look childish, but the old-school PC game like look the game has charm to it too. I've been into late 90s and early 2000s games lately, so I have a soft spot for the game's overall look.

Game 1 looks more contemporary, but it also lacks personality on all fronts.

4. Which one of the games looks more fun to you? Why?

Game 2's personality-filled visuals makes it look like more fun to play, too. The world simply looks more fantastical and therefore like something that has lots to offer while adventuring and such. The cartoony style also makes the game look less serious and therefore more fun to play. Game 1 has a more realistic style and a muted colour palette, which makes it seem like a serious game. Serious games can be fun too, but Game 2 looks more welcoming because it doesn't seem to take itself too seriously.

5. Describe the user interface of Game 1 in three words:

Sleek, standard, inconspicuous.

6. Describe the user interface of Game 2 in three words:

Bold, boxy, heavy.

7. Would you try playing Game 1 if it was free?

I might give it a try if someone recommended it to me, but I don't have a desire to play it based on

these pictures alone.

8. Would you watch someone else play Game 1?

I don't think so.

9. Would you try playing Game 2 if it was free?

I'd be interested to at least try! The world looks very inviting and fun. The UI seems a bit too complex to someone like me who hasn't played MMORPGs before, but I think I'd get used to it quickly as long as the game was fun to play.

10. Would you watch someone else play Game 2?

Maybe. I'm not a big fan of watching other people playing video games but the game's world seems interesting enough for me to want to see someone exploring it.

11. If you had to choose, which one of the games would you rather spend money on? Why?

If I had to buy one of the games, I'd definitely choose Game 2. Game 2 looks like it has more interesting things to offer in terms of purchasable content too. I can imagine the fancy weapons, weird armour and fantastical beast companions! Game 1 doesn't look like it could offer me anything that unique.

12. How would you compare the resource management in those games to each other, based on how it looks?

Resource management looks very similar in both games. When it comes to the inventory, I'm for the slight favour of Game 1. It simply looks neater to have all different inventory pouches under the same tab than having to open multiple windows like in Game 2. I'd guess it's also less time-consuming.

The bottom bar with what I assume is also items is similar in both games, but I think Game 1 having less slots is a good thing. Game 2's bottom bar seems to have slightly too much going on, and I can't really tell different items apart. Game 1's boring graphics actually make the item icons slightly easier to interpret with a quick glance, which I think is a plus.

13. How would you compare the maps of the games to each other, based on how they look?

I like Game 1's map more. I mostly like how it actually shows you what the world looks like as you play. The landmarks are clearly marked which makes navigating the game world seem very straightforward. The markers are clear and there aren't too many of them.

While I like how Game 2's map looks like an actual old map, it also looks much harder to navigate. The roads, rivers and other landmarks aren't as recognisable, and you can barely see some of the roads on the map. I assume that might encourage the player to explore the world more, but if you're in a hurry somewhere, having an unreliable map can be frustrating.

14. In which game do you feel that your current objective / quests are easier to track? Why?

I like how you can apparently toggle which map markers are shown on Game 2's map. It seems like an easy way for the player to keep a track of their quests. Game 1's map marker system looks rather easy to understand too.

Game 1's completion meter is something I haven't seen in MMORPG's, but it seems very useful for those who want to meticulously explore the game world for everything there is to obtain.

I don't like how Game 1 seemingly displays the objectives on the screen all the time. I'd prefer having at least an option to hide them, like is the case with Game 2. Having a lot of text on screen takes up a lot of space and reading the screen takes your attention away from the game which is annoying.

15. In which game does character skill building look more appealing to you? Why?

The character windows themselves are pretty similar in both games, but Game 1 seems to have more tabs. I tend to prefer games with simple UI, so here Game 2 looks more appealing to me.

I also prefer Game 2 when it comes to how character features and skills are presented. I don't understand the information displayed on Game 1's "training" window, whereas the "talents" window of Game 2 is extremely straightforward.

16. In which game would you rather fight in combat? Why?

I was surprised that Game 2 showed the health bars of all characters on top of their names. With many players, even the names hanging on screen is very distracting to look at, so I wish they didn't have them. In that regard, I prefer Game 1's choice to only display the character name. I don't really have a preference when it comes to the combat of the two games. I am used to seeing my character's health bar at the top left corner, so in that regard I prefer Game 2's approach.

17. How would you compare dying in those games to each other, based on how it looks?

Dying looks pretty much the same in both games. It took me less time to register that the character in Game 1 was dead, however. I assume it is the positioning of the "you are defeated" text – my eye was more drawn to it than it was to the Game 2's small, less noticeable window.

18. Have you played either Game 1 or Game 2 yourself? How did you feel about those games when playing them?

I haven't played either of the games myself, nor have I played any games of the same genre.

19. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Not really.

5.4.3. PARTICIPANT 3:

1. What is your first impression of Game 1?

Another beardy man doing quests the game

2. What is your first impression of Game 2?

Fun, stylized? Visuals?

3. Which one of the games looks more appealing to you? Why?

Game 2, better color schemes, nice art style.

4. Which one of the games looks more fun to you? Why?

Game 2, more “cartoony”, less gritty.

5. Describe the user interface of Game 1 in three words:

Cluttered.

6. Describe the user interface of Game 2 in three words:

Cluttered.

7. Would you try playing Game 1 if it was free?

No.

8. Would you watch someone else play Game 1?

Yes.

9. Would you try playing Game 2 if it was free?

Maybe?

10. Would you watch someone else play Game 2?

Yes.

11. If you had to choose, which one of the games would you rather spend money on? Why?

Game 2.

12. How would you compare the resource management in those games to each other, based on how it looks?

Both feel cluttered, game 1 having a big red button looks bad, prefer game 2.

13. How would you compare the maps of the games to each other, based on how they look?

Game 1 feels like its going for realism by being dull, though nice effects + 2D art. Game 2 feels more

colorful and fun, stylized.

14. In which game do you feel that your current objective / quests are easier to track? Why?

Game 1, maybe, it's tidier.

15. In which game does character skill building look more appealing to you? Why?

Game 1 has an actual skill tree, I like that.

16. In which game would you rather fight in combat? Why?

Neither, but game 1 has cuter seeming enemies.

17. How would you compare dying in those games to each other, based on how it looks?

Both seem to be a pain, game 1 less so maybe.

18. Have you played either Game 1 or Game 2 yourself? How did you feel about those games when playing them?

No.

19. Is there anything else you would like to add?

I hate MMORPGs.

5.4.4. PARTICIPANT 4:

1. What is your first impression of Game 1?

Fairly modern MMORPG, PC probably? fantasy, customizable characters, community, pretty standard stuff.

2. What is your first impression of Game 2?

Another one of the same, wait this is Warcraft isn't it, yeah I see those elf ears, god these games look confusing.

3. Which one of the games looks more appealing to you? Why?

Visually the first one, but I kind of wanna know what it's like to play warcraft. If I didn't know what it was though, the first one for sure. Less cluttered and old looking.

4. Which one of the games looks more fun to you? Why?

Probably Warcraft but not a fan of the genre so neither really.

5. Describe the user interface of Game 1 in three words:

Small, complex, non-obtrusive.

6. Describe the user interface of Game 2 in three words:

Confusing, cluttered, obtrusive.

7. Would you try playing Game 1 if it was free?

No because I don't care for these types of games.

8. Would you watch someone else play Game 1?

If they were a friend yes.

9. Would you try playing Game 2 if it was free?

Yes but only try and only because of Warcraft.

10. Would you watch someone else play Game 2?

Same as the other one.

11. If you had to choose, which one of the games would you rather spend money on? Why?

Game 1 because it seems less annoying.

12. How would you compare the resource management in those games to each other, based on how it looks?

Game one looks better but both stress me out tbh.

13. How would you compare the maps of the games to each other, based on how they look?

I actually prefer game 2 more because it fits the feeling and looks cleaner.

14. In which game do you feel that your current objective / quests are easier to track? Why?

Looks equally confusing if I'm honest, the why is because I have no experience with these types of games.

15. In which game does character skill building look more appealing to you? Why?

I like symbols of game 2 better but game 1 looks easier to understand.

16. In which game would you rather fight in combat? Why?

I don't understand enough based on these screenshots to say.

17. How would you compare dying in those games to each other, based on how it looks?

Dying is definitely better in game 2.

18. Have you played either Game 1 or Game 2 yourself? How did you feel about those games when playing them?

Nope.

19. Is there anything else you would like to add?

I only played 15 minutes of Runescape and I'm sorry, I'm not good at these.

5.4.5. PARTICIPANT 5:

1. What is your first impression of Game 1?

Modern, realism, minimalist, kinda neat in places but a bit unsure of its visual direction?

2. What is your first impression of Game 2?

Very traditional but really clear and legible. Looks older but the visual language is nice and coherent.

3. Which one of the games looks more appealing to you? Why?

Number 2 by a small margin. Number 1 looks a bit sterile and uninspiring.

4. Which one of the games looks more fun to you? Why?

Number 2. All its elements inspire and intrigue whereas number 1 relies too heavily on its 3D graphics but has dull menus and visuals.

5. Describe the user interface of Game 1 in three words:

Aspiring, unbalanced, illogical.

6. Describe the user interface of Game 2 in three words:

Legible, balanced, dated.

7. Would you try playing Game 1 if it was free?

Yes!

8. Would you watch someone else play Game 1?

Potentially yes.

9. Would you try playing Game 2 if it was free?

Definitely!

10. Would you watch someone else play Game 2?

Potentially yes.

11. If you had to choose, which one of the games would you rather spend money on? Why?

Number 2 since it appears more balanced and interesting. MMO's rely on menus anyway so its nice they aren't dull. The legibility of number 1 would be awful on my monitor but number 2 would likely pop nicely.

12. How would you compare the resource management in those games to each other, based on how it looks?

Game 1 has some odd choices like the ball shaped health bar. Probably difficult to follow. There is a nice amount of free space between elements but the icons are tiny! Those will be Difficult to click. Number 2 has bigger icons and more easily trackable health bar and gauges.

13. How would you compare the maps of the games to each other, based on how they look?

Number 1 has a really cool one. The artstyle looks nice. The markers could pop more though. Number 2 looks really dated but the markers are very clear

14. In which game do you feel that your current objective / quests are easier to track? Why?

Definitely number 2. I can barely read the quest log on number 1 and it just looks bland. Number 2 has good legibility and nice markers and hierarchy between texts.

15. In which game does character building look more appealing to you? Why?

Cannot really comment much on it. Number 1 has a cooler look but number 2 seems nicer for leveling up.

16. In which game would you rather fight in combat? Why?

Number 2. The affinity of different

enemies and damage values is nice + the big icons, clear ui elements and countdown timers make it more approachable for someone whose mouse hand isn't the steadiest.

17. How would you compare dying in those games to each other, based on how it looks?

Looks a bit boring on both to be honest. Game 1. Looks more final tho?

18. Have you played either Game 1 or Game 2 yourself? How did you feel about those games when playing them?

Tried both, stayed for number 2 because it was more coherent and intuitive. Actually paid money for it as well. Number 1 was very hit and miss whenever the 3d visuals stopped inspiring play. A cool concept that still felt cumbersome.

19. Is there anything else you would like to add?

If actions feel like they have an effect or at least show they register some way, the game experience becomes a lot better and easier to learn! Without different micro-animations and visuals like timers the gameplay can easily turn daunting.

5.4.6. PARTICIPANT 6:

1. What is your first impression of Game 1?

Classic MMO with a more story driven gameplay.

2. What is your first impression of Game 2?

MMO with a more focus on combat and world exploration.

3. Which one of the games looks more appealing to you? Why?

Game 1 because the graphics look better and the fonts and text colours are more appealing.

4. Which one of the games looks more fun to you? Why?

Game 1 because it has boss fights with a lot of other players.

5. Describe the user interface of Game 1 in three words:

Stylished, serious, lots of quest icons that look cool and inform the player what kind of quest it is.

6. Describe the user interface of Game 2 in three words:

Cartoony, very clear cooldown numbers, very colourful.

7. Would you try playing Game 1 if it was free?

I do already.

8. Would you watch someone else play Game 1?

Maybe.

9. Would you try playing Game 2 if it was free?

Yes I like some MMOs and they are fun with friends.

10. Would you watch someone else play Game 2?

No.

11. If you had to choose, which one of the games would you rather spend money on? Why?

Game 1 because it looks prettier.

12. How would you compare the resource management in those games to each other, based on how it looks?

Game 1 has all your items in one window which might turn out to be confusing to look for a specific item, game 2 has item bags in different windows so you can choose to have only one type of items showing.

13. How would you compare the maps of the games to each other, based on how they look?

Game 1 map looks more detailed and clear they shape of the mountains are very well distinguished and it has more information showing, game 2 has more cartoony fantasy map like appearance which looks good but makes it harder for gameplay to see any details in it.

14. In which game do you feel that your current objective / quests are easier to track? Why?

Game 1 because it has more clear icons for the type of mission you are doing.

15. In which game does character skill building look more appealing to you? Why?

Game 2 because it has skills you get to choose from so you have more personalized builds.

16. In which game would you rather fight in combat? Why?

Game 2 seems to have much more abilities available but otherwise the combat looks very similar.

17. How would you compare dying in those games to each other, based on how it looks?

In game 1 you can fight for your life to get up, I'm not sure if you can on game 2. I like the graveyard thing in game 2 but game 1 warp to a waypoint is probably more functional.

18. Have you played either Game 1 or Game 2 yourself? How did you feel about those games when playing them?

I have played game 1 a lot and it's one of my favourite MMOs since I love the mounts and clothes on that game.

19. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Game 1 is very old but holds up pretty well for its age but the graphics are definitely not as good as in newer MMO games.

