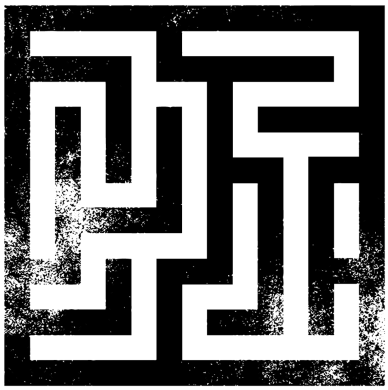
Moirai's Trial

Workshop Report

2nd Dev Cycle - April 2021



MOIRAI'S TRIAL

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1 Introduction

Last friday, 17th of April, 2021, **Moirai's Trial** development team conducted a user centred workshop with the intent of further deepening our core game design loops, mechanic ideas and to flesh out concerns and problems about the game's concept.

Throughout this report we will go over each of our activities, their aim, what happened during them and so on.

2 Activities and Procedure

2.1 Procedure

Due to the current pandemic, the workshop was conducted over *voice chat* through the usage of the ***Zoom*** platform. To allow for certain activities to take place we also used ***Miro*** as a replacement for the traditional "white/post-it board". The workshop counted with the presence of all four of our team's members plus 4 volunteers who all got together at 15h30 for a 2hour session.

Before the session took place the volunteers were given a handout containing a short description of all activities they would be asked to participate in. Then, during the session, the team started with a brief description of the game and it's main mechanics/gameplay.

2.2 Activities & Goals

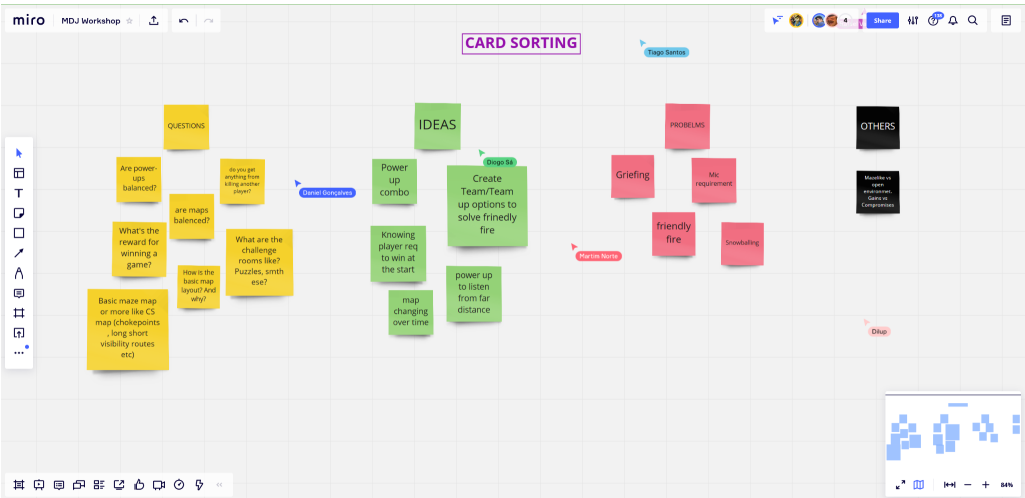
2.2.1 Card Sorting

The first activity consisted in a form of **Card Sorting**. All volunteers were given a link to a **Miro board** that initially had just 4 post-its: A green one that said "*IDEAS*", a red one that said "*PROBLEMS*", a yellow one that said "*QUESTIONS*" and a black one that said "*OTHERS*". For the first 7 minutes of this activity, participants were asked to write several post-its under each of these categories with anything they could come up with.

After time was up, we asked participants to delve and further explain their post-its, in order to allow for everyone to fully express what they meant, and further delve into their thoughts.

Our goal for this activity was two-fold. We wanted to both see how many questions appeared just from a description that we gave of the game in order to figure out how to best describe our game in a manner that is understandable for people outside the project. The second, most important, goal was to gain new ideas to possibly implement in **Moirai's**

Trial, and (even more relevant), figure out problems and design holes that spur from the game's design that we may have missed or tunnel visioned during our own design and brainstorming process.



Img 2.2.1.1 The Miro Board while the activity was going on

2.2.2 Acting Out

This activity had two main purposes: The first one was to understand what were the immediate reactions to the main path bifurcations inside our game (like a sudden player meeting, or the will to lie or be truthful when making allies, for example), and the second one was to fill in the participants with in-game knowledge about the experience we want to develop. It's important to say that, even though we asked the players to make some decisions within a previously written script, there was always a final one taken by us. It is possible to say that this is basically not taking into account the consequences of players actions, but we didn't want to test that aspect, only the possibilities available when at a decision making moment.

We must also point out that each decision was not made as a group, but as individual players.

The script used was as follows:

"The player spawn at a random point of the maze. The countdown to the beginning of the game has reached its end. What would you do?

FIRST DECISION MAKING SITUATION

You started to go through the maze, and ended up finding a portal to a challenge room. This challenge room requires 2 people to unlock and then solve. No one seems to be around, what would you do next?

SECOND DECISION MAKING SITUATION

Suddenly, you start hearing some voices that seem to be closing on your position. You can't understand what they are saying. What is your next move?

THIRD DECISION MAKING SITUATION
You decide to hide and these two players seem to not want to solve the challenge room. As you get out of hiding, another player jumps right in front of you. What do you do?
FORTH DECISION MAKING SITUATION
You end up having a chat with this other player, and you decide to enter the challenge room, solve it, and then part ways. You do just that. By solving the challenge room, you receive a part of the map and find out that a level 3 power up is near your location. The other player seems to have received a different part of the map so he/she asks you if you received the location of any powerup. Do you say the truth, or do you lie?
FIFTH DECISION MAKING SITUATION
You end up telling the truth, and the other player also tells you that he/she received the location of a level 2 Power Up. You reach the conclusion that together you would be safer to try and get those powerups. Your powerup is further, so you head to the other player's powerup first. You have two ideas: Take the other player's powerup before he/she gets the chance to do so, or let he/she take the powerup. What do you do?
SIXTH DECISION MAKING SITUATION
You let the other player take the powerup, and then you two head for yur own. You end up getting your powerup and now, what do you do?
SEVENTH DECISION MAKING SITUATION
You use your powerup and kill the other player, taking his/her powerup for yourself. A voice announcement is made and you find out that all the challenge rooms were solved and the portal room will open as the Maze is "closing down". You run to the portal room at the center of the maze. Once you get there, you find yourself alongside 3 other players and find out that the portal will only open with two people next to it. What do you do?
EIGHTH DECISION MAKING SITUATION"

2.2.3 Zen Rating

Our third activity was one we called **Zen Rating**. It consists in a basic variation of the traditional **Zen Voting** activity, except rather than having dots to place in each post-it, we asked each volunteer to rate each post it in order of "relevance" or "interest" to the project in a scale from 0 (not relevant at all) to 5 (very relevant).

This activity was done over the "IDEAS" and "PROBLEMS" post-its created during the first activity and aimed at giving us some insight as to which of the problems and ideas should we focus on and delve deeper into in further analysis.

Furthermore, this activity was done after **Acting Out** on purpose. As the prior activity allows the volunteers to get a deeper feeling as to different scenarios that may occur in the game, and what type of actions and reactions they would do. After getting this inherent

feel for the game, the team hoped that the user's rating and re-look at the cards from the **Card Sorting** would be more based.

Img 2.2.3.1 Users rating some cards

2.2.4 Four Thinking Hats

Our final activity was **Four Thinking Hats**, a variation of **Six Thinking Hats** but for four volunteers. To cap off this workshop our team came up with 4 different and pertinent questions about design and mechanical choices the team was torn on in order to have users help decide how to best proceed in these fronts.

There were a total of four different hats:

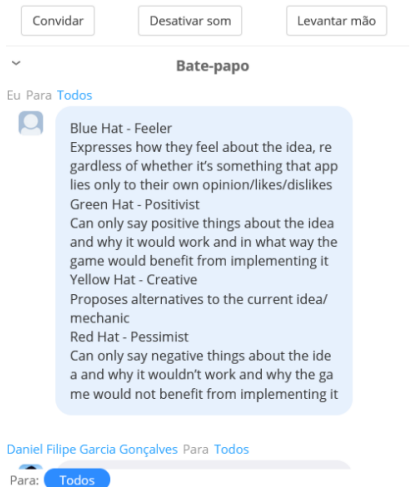
- **Blue Hat - Feeler**
  - Expresses how they feel about the idea, regardless of whether it's something that applies only to their own opinion/likes/dislikes
- **Green Hat - Positivist**
  - Can only say positive things about the idea and why it would work and in what way the game would benefit from implementing it
- **Yellow Hat - Creative**
  - Proposes alternatives to the current idea/mechanic
- **Red Hat - Pessimist**
  - Can only say negative things about the idea and why it wouldn't work and why the game would not benefit from implementing it

Each of the volunteers was assigned a random hat and asked to discuss between each other after being given a prompt. After sometime, or the discussion died down, we swapped everyone's hats and moved on to the next debate. By doing this we were able to have people contribute to the conversation in ways that they usually do not. For example, pessimist people were forced to look at the idea in a more positive way, and vice versa. The team would have liked to have repeated the same question with everyone taking on a different hat on each repetition, but due to time constraints this was not possible. Instead, after the initial discussion was done, we allowed people to express their opinions without the hat constraints.

The questions asked were the following:

1. **Players should know the number of people alive**
2. **There should be a minimap always on screen**
3. **People should be able to PvP within the challenge rooms**
4. **The portal should only open after a certain amount of people are next to the portal room (instead of it opening after a timeout regardless of the number of people)**

To reiterate, we hoped that with this activity we could have the users weigh in into some matters that the team has been debating since the initial design. Additionally we also thought it would be a good way to cap off the session in an involving and acting way



Img 2.2.4.1 A message sent to players explaining what each hat did

3 Results and Feedback

3.1 Testers

Initially the team wanted to have a total of 6 participants taking part in the workshop, but unfortunately, due to the fact that the activity had to be conducted during friday due to scheduling constraints, only 4 of the volunteers managed to find time to show up. Besides the 3 players from our focus group - **Among Us Master**, **Multiplayer Enthusiast** and **FPS King** - we also got an additional member from one of the team's previous paper prototype - the **Newcomer** - who, due to their relative inexperience, the team thought would contribute with a lot of fresh takes with a unique perspective.

3.2 Card Sorting

Starting with our first activity, the first thing the team noticed was the amount of **QUESTION** post-its the volunteers posted. Going over them again, some of them could probably be better formulated as “CONCERNS” rather than questions per-se. For example “**Are Power-Ups Balanced**” is more so a concern of whether players will be able to instantly win fights due to having lucked out by finding the right power up, rather than a question of how the game is going to work. The same could be said for the “**Are Maps Balanced**” post-it which, after inquired about it, the user better reiterated as “*Will players be evenly spawned throughout the map, equidistant to both possible challenge rooms, other players and the portal*”, which is something the team needs to pay close attention when designing the maze.

In terms of actual questions placed in this section, we noted that a lot of players were unsure of the “style” of the maze (i.e if it was going to be room based or corridor based) and what the challenges within the challenge rooms entail. With this we noted a necessity to be more clear when describing **Moirai’s Trial**’s environment and challenges. A particular question, however, was the “What is the reward for winning the game?”. This is important because it serves as motivation for players to get the intended experience, without this it is easy, for example, for players to play with the sole intention of killing. This would not only not be the intended experience for that player but would also ruin the experience for others. As for the reward itself, the team had already thought of a few possibilities, mostly related to the ability of gaining an in-game currency that would then allow players to purchase cosmetics to adorn their character’s with. However, this falls outside the current scope of the project and would require the team to pursue the help of 3D modellers and artists. We also had “Do you get anything for killing other players”, which is indeed something to consider. As of now the team thought that players should drop their power ups upon death, allowing their killers to reap them for themselves.

Jumping over to **Problems** we were quite pleased to note that most of them had already been discussed and theoretically solved by the team. In terms of *Griefing* the team already has some solutions though, such as the fact that the game ends if too many players die before the portal opens, and the fact that players who compete and cooperate in challenge rooms gain better power ups and other benefits. The team will keep a close eye on this and think up harsher punishments if the issue becomes more prevalent than initially thought. In terms of *Snowballing*, the team decided to tackle this issue by limiting the total number of power ups the players can have at any given time so that no player can ever grow too powerful due to power ups alone.

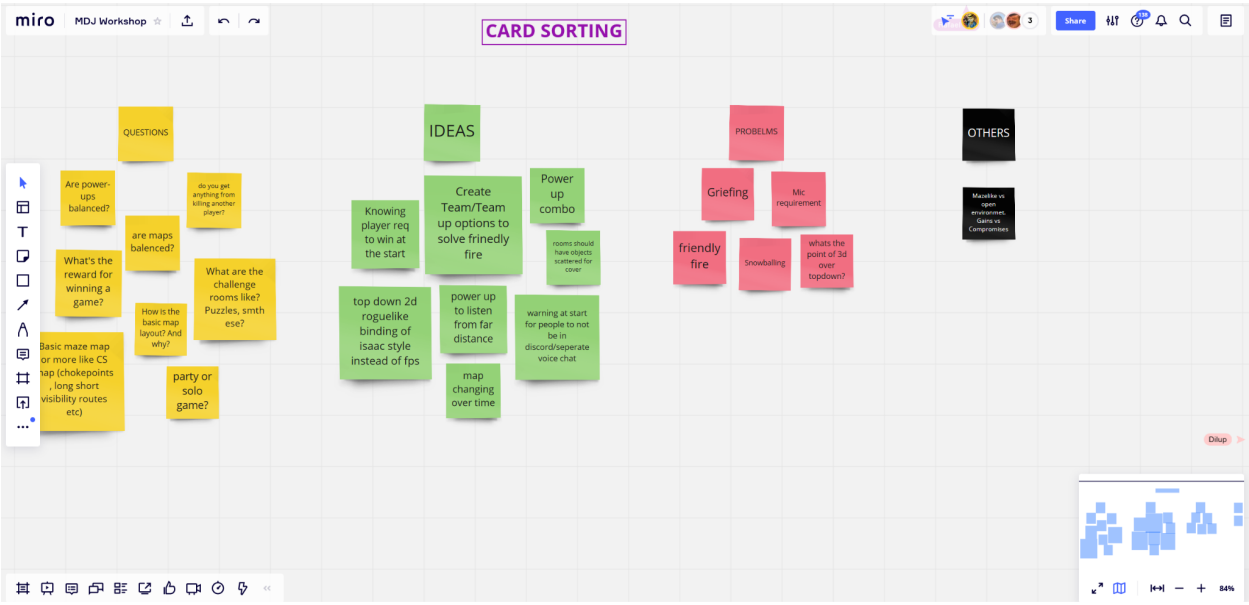
A very interesting **problem**, however, was the **Mic Requirement** which no one on the team had thought of. Indeed, a player with no mic, or who does not feel comfortable to talk would not be able to play **Moirai’s Trial**. After some discussion the team thought a possible solution would be to allow players to type in a chat and either have their

messages displayed on top of their character's heads (so that only closeby players could see it), or use some form of *text-to-speech* to simulate the player talking.

In terms of **Ideas** there were a lot of fresh takes the team had never thought of and that could add value to the game. We will be going over them one by one in the **Zen Rating** section, mixing the feedback we got from that activity with the team's post-workshop analysis and deliberation:

- **Knowing Number of Players that need to be alive to win at the start**
- **Create Team / Team up options to solve friendly fire**
- **Power Up Combo**
- **Rooms should have objects for cover**
- **Powerup to listen to people from far away**
- **Map changing over time**
- **Warning at the start for people to not be in external voice chat applications**
- **Top Down 2d rogue-like style rather than FPS**
- **Name gets more red the more players you kill**
- **Powerup to see everyone on the map (radar style)**

One of the volunteers also wrote a particular post-it in the OTHERS section and stated that it was something they felt we should consider, but that didn't constitute an idea per se. They said that we should check the gain and compromises we get from opting to have the game take place in a maze rather than an open map. This, however, came before we further elaborated that the maze functions by using rooms rather than claustrophobic corridors. After this was clarified, they stated the post-it wasn't as relevant.



Img 3.2.1 The Card Sorting board

3.3 Acting Out

As we pointed out before, this activity was not intended to reveal a lot of new information and/or new design ideas, it was aiming to give some context to the participants about a typical gameplay experience and to see the immediate reactions players had in a specific in-game situation. It had two main purposes: The first one was to understand what were the immediate reactions to the main path bifurcations inside our game. As for the decisions made by the participants, we didn't get any particularly peculiar one, so they were as follows:

First Decision	Explore the maze; Go looking for a challenge room; Go along the exterior wall of the maze (assuming that the players are spawn as far as possible from the center of the maze) hoping to find another player.
Second Decision	Stay and wait for another player; Ignore this challenge room; Look for another player in proximity to the challenge room.
Third Decision	Try and kill one of them and then turn the other one into an ally; Hide near the challenge room and try to hear what they are talking about.
Forth Decision	Talk about an alliance and solve the challenge room together.
Fifth Decision	Say the truth in order to gain the other player's trust.
Sixth Decision	Let the other player have the powerup and then kill him/her and take the powerup; Let them take and keep the powerup; Force the other player to go look for my power-up first.
Seventh Decision	Keep the other player as an ally;
Eighth Decision	Run away and wait for the best moment to join the fight, taking the opportunity to assess the other players' moves and power-ups.

As stated earlier none of the decisions were particularly unexpected, all the decisions fell in-line with what is intended by the game and what was expected given our current knowledge of how players interact in the game (given from the prototypes). We saw that given the same situation different players had different ideas for how to solve them and all these ideas fall within the intended experience and align with our design goal of generating interesting and dynamic social interactions between players.

3.4 Zen Rating

After reading the **Card Sorting** posts, the team already started formulating some ideas and new things to either include in the game or fix. However, the team still found it helpful to have the volunteers rate each of the post-its in order to give us more insight into what the more pressing matters they thought to be.

Starting with the questions, indeed the highest ranked were "**What do you get for killing players**" and "**Are Power Ups balanced**". Both are valid concerns that the team will keep in mind, but to reiterate, the current reward for killing players (besides upping the chances of securing one fo the limited spots in the portal) is the gaining of the victim's powerups, and the powerup balancing issue is something that will be closely looked at and tested when designing the powerups and their effectiveness.

In terms of problems, we thought **Griefing** would be highly rated as a relevant issue, but to our surprise, only one player thought it to be something very concerning. Some users expressed (after the activity was completed of course) that they felt griefing to be an inherent factor of such games, and sometimes even part of the fun when playing with friends, as long as it doesn't get out of hand. **Snowballing** was also pretty well rated but after we stated that players only get a limited number of powerups, most users seemed to relax about this topic. **Mic Requirement**, however, was very highly rated and as such, it is something that we should give more thought and incorporate into our design.

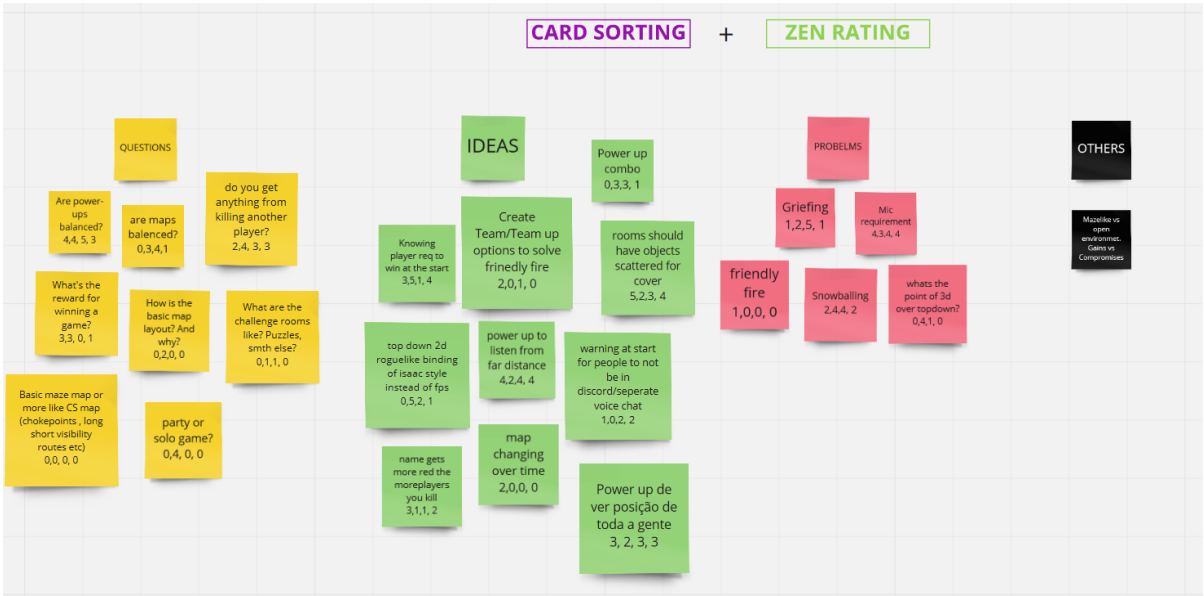
Now, moving on to ideas, and incorporating some of the team's post-workshop analysis, we have:

- **Knowing Number of Players that need to be alive to win at the start (3 5 1 4)**
    - An idea like this one would make the game too vulnerable to killers and other types of players that deliberately want to mess with the game. Another consideration made was that this system would kill the mid-game social interactions, because it would be more beneficial for players to make alliances at the beginning of the game with the right number of people able to escape, and then just kill all the other players that get in their way.
- **Create Team / Team up options to solve friendly fire (2 0 1 0)**

    - This idea didn't get many votes and both the team and the users seemed to agree that impromptu teams would be better than a system in which players could press a button to team up and have invulnerability to their team's attacks. The danger and possibility of betrayal of unsystematic teams seemed to excite the volunteers.
- **Power Up Combo (0 3 3 1)**
    - Some users thought it would be fun to have certain power ups combo with each other to add more depth to the combat. While this is something that the team did think might be fun, we ended up landing on designing power ups that "flow well" with each other and can be skilfully strung together, rather than having them systematically combo as the users proposed (which was more akin to, f.ex having a power up to throw water and one to freeze in order to make the ground slippery)
- **Rooms should have objects for cover (5 2 3 4)**
    - This is actually something that is already being implemented in the game. Rooms will be hand designed to include interesting pathing and a lot of cover for potential encounters. It was still good validation to see that both a user proposed this, and a lot of people rated it highly.
- **Powerup to listen to people from far away (4 2 4 4)**
    - This idea got highly rated by most users, and is indeed a possibly fun power up to be implemented as agreed upon by the team. This power up doubles down on the social dynamics of the game rather than combat. Knowing where players are, what they are planning etc is a very important part of the game because it leads to interesting gameplay scenarios and social dynamics which is one of our core design goals.
- **Map changing over time (2 0 0 0)**
    - Whilst interesting for the sake of variety and sense of progression, this idea got very poorly rated and as such the team decided that it would not be worth the effort of implementing.
- **Warning at the start for people to not be in external voice chat applications (1 0 2 2)**
    - Some players thought this would be an addition, but even still, the idea got relatively poorly rated. However, as it consists in a simple "splash screen" to be shown upon the game's launch, the team might implement it regardless as the workload it requires is pretty low and would right off the bat introduce players to the idea that this game is meant to be played with proximity voice chat rather than a global one.
- **Name gets more red the more players you kill (3 1 1 2)**
    - An interesting solution to players griefing and killing for the sake of killing as other players would be more wary of that person. However, the idea didn't get too high of a rating and when questioned about it (post activity), players stated that it would break the immersion and tension inherent to not knowing whether the player they just found is or is not friendly. In the

end they said they would rather have to evaluate whether their companion poses a threat, rather than being informed by the colour of their name.

- **Powerup to see everyone on the map (radar style) (3 2 3 3)**
    - Similarly to the hearing power up this one is also very interesting and got pretty average ratings. The team decided it would be something to experiment with and check but skeptically, due to its potential strength.
- **Top Down 2d rogue-like style rather than FPS (0 5 2 1)**
    - One of the volunteers proposed this and seemed very avid about their idea during the **Card Sorting** section. They stated that they didn't see what the game gained from being first person. Whilst novel, and the idea for a top-down roguelike battle royale is worth exploring in future pursuits, the idea didn't get voted too highly and the team agrees that the immersion gained from being first person, alongside the inherent claustrophobic feeling of only being able to see in a cone in front of you (i.e first person perspective) would be lost in a top down view. Betrayal and the dread of being possibly stabbed in the back is something that would also falter in a top down view and, as such, the team will not pursue this idea, but will keep it in the bank for future projects.



Img 3.4.1 The users assigning a value to each post it

3.5 Four Thinking Hats

We got a lot of good insight from this activity. Going question by question, we will be leaving a small transcript of what the users said during their debates, and then add our own thoughts and final conclusions:

- **Players should know the number of people alive**

- *"People should know when someone dies but not how many have died. Maybe some sort of cannon fire like in the Hunger Games would work nicely."*
- *"If we knew exactly how many people are alive then after some point everyone would stop killing since the game would end.."*
- *"Maybe it would be cool if it were a powerup?"*
- Overall, users thought they shouldn't have the ability of knowing exactly the number of people alive by the press of a button (i.e they didn't want any form of scoreboard reporting on the deaths). The suggestion of the auditory feedback after a kill peaked at the team's interest and this is something we will be further exploring and implementing.

- **There should be a minimap always on screen**
  - *"It would be cool to get a better sense of where we have or haven't been"*
  - *"It would also be nice if it marked points of interest such as dead bodies or challenge rooms and such"*
  - *"Sure, but it shouldn't show other players on the map"*
  - *"It would be better if instead players could pull up a map that would occupy the screen rather than having it always on the HUD. It would cause a moment of vulnerability and still help the player orient themselves in the world!"*
  - The inclusion of a map is something the team thought right off the bat would be necessary in order to avoid the frustration of backtracking and getting lost. However, the idea proposed by one of the users of having a map that can be pulled up rather than one that is always on screen seemed very interesting and is something we will be prototyping to get more info on.
- **People should be able to PvP within the challenge rooms**
  - *"The whole purpose of challenge rooms is to foment cooperation, it wouldn't really make sense for people to kill themselves in there"*
  - *"It would probably cause too much confusion"*
  - *"I think it adds a new dimension and strategy. You could try to finish your challenge tasks faster and then kill the other player!"*
  - *"What if only some challenge rooms had PvP enabled and this was displayed at the entrance of the room? That way players would have to make the hard decision of entering the room with a stranger and risking having to fight or pass up on that challenge room in search of one that is safer"*
  - The consensus was that PvP in the challenge rooms isn't something users desired. The proposed alternative, however, was very interesting, and would add yet another layer of on-the-spot decision making for players to make.

- **The portal should only open after a certain amount of people are next to the portal room (instead of it opening after a timeout regardless of the number of people)**
    - *"I don't like either solutions."*
    - *"If you went with the portal only opens after a certain amount of people are next to the portal way, then players should know how many players are needed to open the portal at the start of the game"*
    - *"After the challenge rooms are done the game just evolves into a regular Battle Royale, which is kinda sh****"*
    - *"What if to open the portal room players have to input a code which the players find the solution to throughout the map or whatever"*
    - *"What if the portal opens by completing the challenge rooms but it's still locked behind a cage that requires a certain amount of keys to unlock? These could be given out as rewards to the challenge rooms, making players who participate in them vital to the completion of the end"*
    - *"And maybe keys could be dropped when the player dies, so the more keys you have, the bigger of a target you are!"*
    - The feedback we got from this question threw us for a loop and as a team we gathered to think about the suggestions and try to come up with new ones. In the end we decided that we would keep it as it is, as we were afraid that adding the "key" mechanic would add an unnecessary module to the game, creating more problems than it solved. Regardless this is something that we will keep in mind, and, if during the first "key-less" implementation testing we see that players are still complaining about this section of the game, we will further revise it.

3.6 Conclusion

As for a conclusion, the main revelation about this whole process was that it became a lot more useful than we first imagined. Getting other people's reactions and suggestions proved to be not only a nice way to come up with new ideas and immediately discuss them and merge different point of view and experiences, but also a way to confirm previous assumptions done by the team with someone that has no knowledge at all about the details of the process itself and its drawbacks and problems. All of the results obtained from this workshop will definitely be taken into account when discussing the next steps to take for our game. Most notably we will keep an eye out for the potential of griefing, snowballing, and the microphone problem as well as exploring new power-up ideas.