A Teaching Megagame

Background

A style of large-scale, immersive play experiences known as **megagames** has grown in popularity in the last ten or so years.   Barring a small pandemic-related dip, the interest in this form of gaming has grown considerably.   Organizations all over the world will arrange day-long events and deliver experiences that are part board-game and part roleplaying game.   Some popular examples include:

- **Watch The Skies.**   Players work in teams to represent the important officials in various countries. All are trying to deal with a mysterious extraterrestrial threat while also managing their own national crises and international diplomatic worries.
- **A Very British Civil War**. Various ideological factions within the British state are at war, and each is trying to wrest control from others through clever political gambits and outright betrayal.
- **The Pirate Republic**. Players take on the role of buccaneers and merchants during the golden age of piracy. They plunder, trade, and politic their way to becoming legends of the Spanish Main.

There are many more.   Some of the features though that are often part of a megagame are:

- Played in real time, by large numbers of players simultaneously.
- Heavily rules based, but with organizers acting as referees and adjudicators that can bypass the rules and change game state directly
- Asymmetrical player factions.   Everyone has different capabilities, strengths and weaknesses.
- A set termination point when a condition is met in the game or when a set number of turns have passed.
- Team based play, where each player takes a specific role (with specific authority and powers) within a larger group.

Other features may be expressed more or less in specific megagames, but those above are present more often than they are not.

Description of the Project

In the course Introduction to Game Research, we teach students about megagames.   It is not feasible currently though for us to actually run one within the constraints of the course timetable.   They involve too much prep, too much active organization, and too much flexibility of time.   But I'd like if we could change that.

This project then is aimed at creating a megagame design that could work in a classroom setting, along with the assets and software tools required to run it easily.   Given that the emphasis of the course will change from year to year, it is also vital that the tools used to create and run the megagame are **modular.** It should be easy for the course team to add new rules, change old rules, and add in whole new systems if required.

It should be scalable, working with large ranges of student numbers.   It should also be possible to reach the end of the game in either a four-hour classroom exercise, or for the narrative of the game to be expressed in multiple separate 'episodes', each of which can fit into a classroom session.

The deliverables for this project will be:

- The Megagame itself, with manual for play and instructions for organizer.   Given that the game has to be modular, this should be something that can be procedurally generated from the rules rather than just delivered as a Word document.
- Any graphical, narrative, digital or physical assets required for playing the game.
- A set of tools for organisers that work on tablets, phones and computers. These should allow organizers to adjust game state, share state in real-time, and co-ordinate the referee duties of play.

This is a complex task, and so it is not expected that your final project would be 100% complete as a playable game – playtesting is likely to be done outside the confines of the project.   What's important is that the game can be adjusted, expanded and refined by the course team when the degree project is over.

Suggested Reading Material

- https://www.meeplelikeus.co.uk/watch-the-skies-dundee/
- https://megagamemakers.uk/
- https://www.megagamesgbg.se/
- https://www.beckybeckyblogs.com/tag/megagames/

Target group
D, DV and IT

Special Prerequisites
The exact emphasis of the project will depend on student capabilities, but will involve some mix of software development, game design, user centred design, player psychology and qualitative research methods.

The author of this proposal does not yet speak Swedish, so all correspondence/submissions are required to be in English.

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