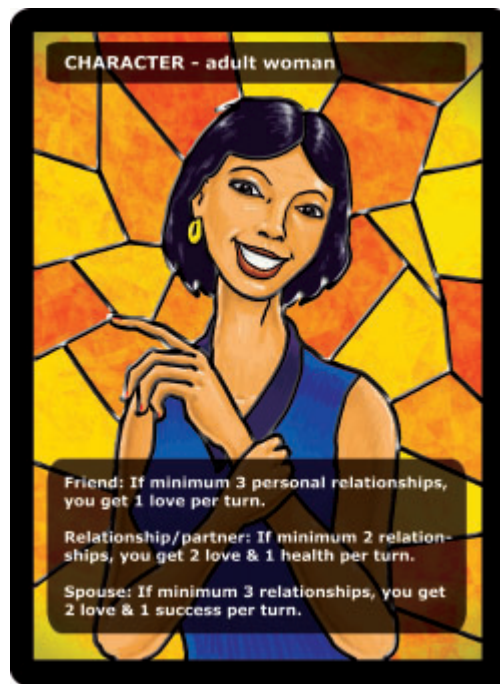


Good Life Game Prototype

Designing Game Mechanics for Group Interaction



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1. Introduction: Group Interaction in Games

For a few years there has been a lot of discussion and outright hype in different media about the possibilities of various online game applications. The most common view of online game playing seems to be that it is much more fulfilling than playing video or computer games by oneself or with a limited number of people sharing one TV or computer monitor screen. The online gaming over the Internet is supposed to offer the participants a feeling of more significant interaction as the opponents are actual people instead of just artificially intelligent characters, i.e. computer controlled 'bots'. To some extent this claim is justified, in my opinion e.g. 'first-person shooter' type games like *Unreal Tournament* or *Quake-series* certainly feel more substantial online because real people are not as predictable in their behavior as a computer AI and often react emotionally to the game events. Sometimes during the matches one can even get involved in very heated, albeit mostly pretty superficial, typed exchanges of opinion.

Over the last few years the genre of first-person shooters has steadily evolved into the direction where the emphasis is increasingly on team play instead of just single player 'death match', free-for-all type of gameplay. Typical representatives of online games focusing on team play are e.g. *Counterstrike*, *Tribes 2* and *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*. While often very enjoyable, I find that even the latest of these games don't really offer a truly satisfying feeling of group interaction that, due to all the hype, one might expect to find.

Naturally first-person shooters aren't the only online game type vaunting to offer meaningful interpersonal interaction. Arguably the most evolved form of online game group interaction can be found from the Massively Multi-player Online Role Playing Games or MMORPGs that have evolved from the early text-based Multi-User Dungeons or MUDs. The best-known MMORPGs like *Ultima Online*, *EverQuest*, *Dark Age of Camelot*, *Final Fantasy XI* or *Phantasy Star Online* offer the players the possibility to ally with other players to form groups or parties that usually fare better in the hazardous game environments and have a better chance to make it through the various quests on offer. Recently, alternative type of MMORPGs offering more open-ended gameplay have begun to appear, most notable of these is probably *Second Life*. In my opinion the foremost problem with all MMORPGs is that they make enormous demands on the players' leisure time – one must really devote a lot of time and money in the form of monthly payments to thrive in these games. It is practically impossible to just dip in every now and then to enjoy a quick game with a group of people.

The other multi-player online games are usually various types of strategy games that at best offer very limited chances for group interaction. Some

new RPGs like *Neverwinter Nights* also make it possible for a group of people to enjoy a role-playing campaign online – this is clearly a step in the right direction for an easier form of group interaction than the heavy demands of MMORPGS. However, this kind of games are still very few and often limited e.g. in regard to their subject matter. To my mind then, there is a lot of room for improvement in the online game experiences available for a group of players.

While the online gaming has made slow but steady progress towards improved and more fun group interaction, the very epitomes of group interaction, i.e. board games, have also evolved to better meet the contemporary consumers' demands for their entertainment. In the 1970's and 80's, in addition to the traditional two major poles of the board game continuum, the light and fast, mostly child-oriented games and the deep two-person strategy games, there appeared games of such complexity and detail that they could require several hours or even days to play from start to finish. With the accelerating communications and entertainment consumption cycles of the 90's information society, the board games took a turn towards a shorter playing time. Nevertheless, thematically and mechanically they have attempted to retain the pleasing complexity and depth of gameplay that was so much in evidence during the 70's and the 80's. The clear majority of these new wave games originate from Germany, the country where board games are played the most and where many people equate them with family values and companionship.

After a period of relative disillusionment with the online games I took an interest in a variety of modern cutting-edge board games and discovered a lot of the entertaining group interaction that I couldn't find on the Internet. The contemporary board games do not require excessive amount of time to produce enjoyment for a small group of people and increase the social interaction and consequently the cohesion within such a group. Naturally I started to think how all these wonderful game experiences and mechanics could be modified and transferred into the online environment.

To certain extent my knowledge of the contemporary board games is based on various Internet and magazine sources, yet mostly on first-hand experience of playing them with a small group of people. All in all, I have tested c. 60 games for this thesis. The games were selected according to Internet and magazine reviews and also the game mechanics they incorporate, my goal was to get a good enough overview of the games and the game mechanics available today.

I didn't want to produce merely an intangible academic study of game mechanics, and I quickly came to the conclusion that the best way to delve into game mechanical issues would be to design a game by myself. This game would

have to be a board game, not only because I had found them innovative and efficient from the point of view of group interaction but also because I am not a skilled programmer – designing a functioning online game would thus be too large a project for my final thesis. I wanted to include a strong storytelling element into my game design as I felt it might offer a good basis for dynamic social interaction between the players and increase their immersion in the themes of the game. Very early on I decided it would be a life game, i.e. the game design would be based on a human's life arc. While there has already been several representatives of this genre in the market, I have always felt that they have been unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. I wanted to design a life game that would encompass more aspects of human life than the earlier games, it needed to be rich, complex and varying enough to present a thematically satisfactory view of the inherently complicated subject. I anticipated that with such a tough design challenge involved, more opportunities for game mechanical innovation would arise. Furthermore, with a common subject like this any person would be able to offer feedback on the game and its thematic verisimilitude. After the preliminary design was finished, I tested the game in groups with a varying number of players, asked the players for comments on my game design and wrote down the feedback.

In this paper I first aim to elaborate on my theoretical and other influences as well as the decisions and goals I set for my project before I started the actual design process. After this, the design process itself is described in detail. This is followed by an account of the game testing phase and its findings. I end my thesis with reflections on how the game design could be improved and how various discovered game mechanisms could be applied for online applications to enhance their social interaction or entertainment value. I also intend to touch on the question of commercial potential of this type of game as well as what other possibilities for game development were found during the whole project.

2. Overview of the *Good Life* Game

To make it easier for the reader of this thesis to understand the theoretical background as well as to follow the description of the development process of my life game design, I will now provide a brief overview of my *Good Life* game prototype. *Good Life* is a work-in-progress board game for three to five players. The general idea of the game is that each player chooses a character whose life they then play from birth to death, trying to make this life as successful, as satisfying and good as possible. The game is mostly played on a general game board but each player also has her own game board for record keeping purposes. The game also makes use of a large number of cards and plates that are respectively used to represent longer and shorter term phenomena and things in the characters' lives.

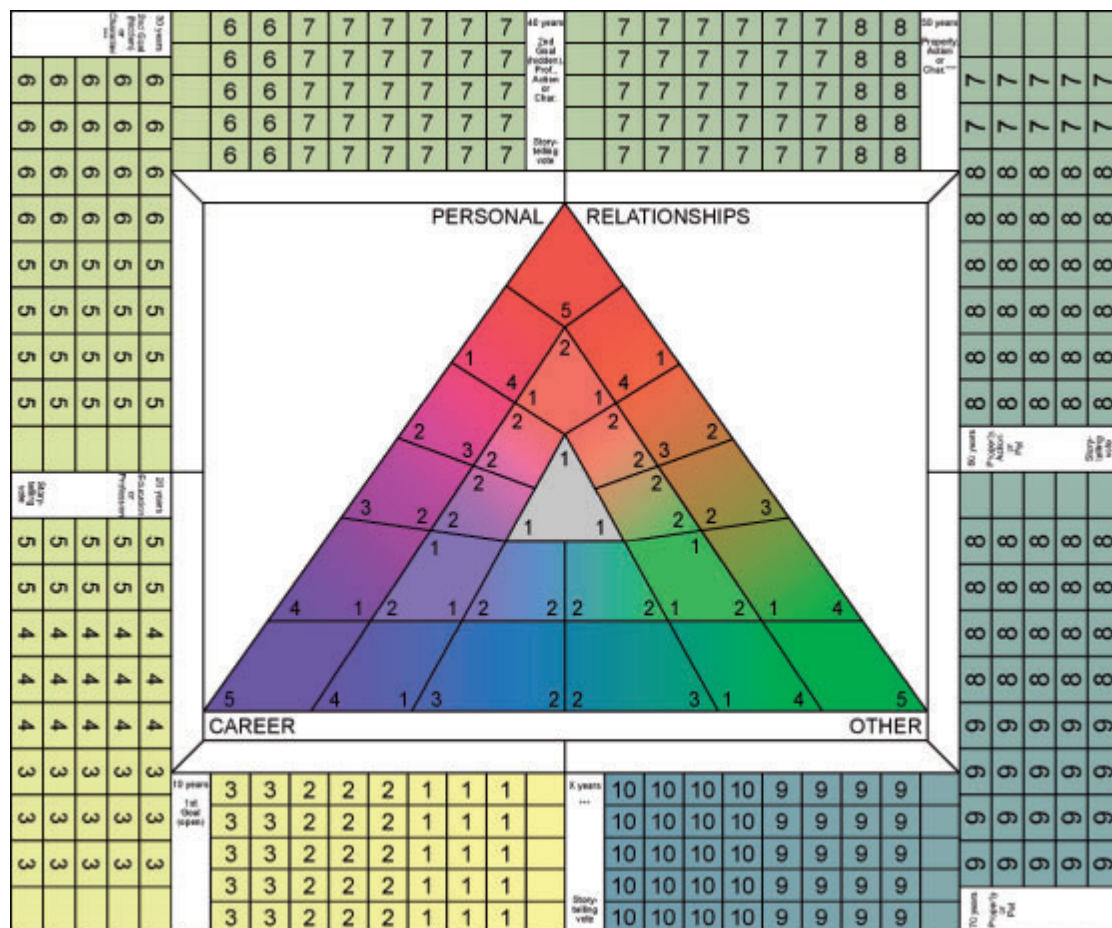


Fig. 1. The general game board of *Good Life* game prototype

The general game board is composed of the age phase track, the timeline and the mode triangle. The age phase track encircles the board and is comprised of eight age phase fields, each representing a ten-year chunk of human life. Towards the center of the board, surrounded by the age phase track, there is the timeline which is used to mark the passage of time, i.e. to show

which ten-year part of life the characters are currently living. In the center of the board one finds the mode triangle that is used to control what the characters are interested in, which part of their life they are currently emphasizing: career, personal relationships or other things. The players' own boards are used for two purposes: keeping track of the characters' resource points and for placing of various cards to indicate longer-term entities and phenomena in their lives. There are three different kinds of resource points in the game, success, love and health points, which correspond to the three peaks, the three points (career, personal relationships and other) of the mode triangle. With these three different sorts of resource points the players can obtain happiness points that ultimately dictate how well the player has played her character, i.e. how happy the character's life has been. On their own boards the players play cards which deal with the character's personality, her aspirations in life, the character's spouse and family as well as her property, friends, hobbies etc.

20		20			25			30			35			40
19														
18														
17														
16														
15		15			Own character	Quality	Education	Profession / Pension	Goal 1 (visible)	Goal 2 (hidden)				
14														
13														
12														
11														
10		10			Spouse	Family >> (children, pets etc.)								
9														
8														
7														
6														
5		5												
4					Property, friends, hobbies >>									
3														
2														
1		1												

Fig. 2. The players' own board prototype.

The age phase fields consist of a grid on which the players can play plates depending on the numbers on the plate and the field square. On their turns the players can use action points to advance to these laid-down plates and turn them over to reveal their text. Text on the plates tells what happens to the character at that point of her life. The player pieces move on the horizontal lanes of the age phase field grid according to how many action points the players are

willing to spend, changing lanes costs additional action points.

Each game round begins with an Auction phase in which the players bid for new cards with their resource points. They can also 'trade' the position of their piece on the mode triangle to pay for the bid cards with 'location points'. Having bought a card each player lays a plate face down on the current age phase field. The round then continues with the players each on her turn using up to seven action points for movement on the current age phase field or mode triangle. By paying one action point, they can also turn over any plate that they can reach on the age phase field. At the end of each round the player whose piece has advanced the furthest along the current age phase field is the winner of the goal of the age phase. She gets to choose her prize from the greatest number of cards, i.e. four cards, while the other players choose their phase ending card from a successively smaller number of cards. Cards are mostly used to denote long-term phenomena like characters, property, goals etc. in the game but some cards can be used to interrupt another player's turn and force them to face and do surprising things.

Storytelling plays an important role in *Good Life*. While playing the game, the players are meant to narrate for each other what is happening in their character's lives. They are supposed to interpret the game events and turn them into a coherent life narrative for their character. After every second age phase there is a storytelling vote in which the players vote on who has told the best, i.e. the funniest, the most touching or otherwise the most appropriate and fetching narrative for their character. The winner of the vote gets a reward for her performance – to give everybody a sporting chance, the same player can't win twice in a row.

There are lots of other minutiae to *Good Life* like selectable open and hidden goals, professions, relationships and marriage which I will go into more detail later in this thesis. As *Good Life* is still in the prototype phase, there are also a number of unresolved questions, problems to solve and directions to take – I will discuss also these open possibilities later.

3. The History and Classes of Board Games

According to David Parlett's *The Oxford History of Board Games* the board games are a very old invention, signs of board games have been found among the remnants of practically all major early cultures. Building on Johan Huizinga's work, Parlett states that play validates itself, and its value and purpose are intrinsic. Parlett considers true games to be those which "serve no conscious practical purpose beyond that of satisfying an urge to play which is sometimes regarded as an instinct" (2). He claims that true games must be taken up willingly, it isn't really game playing if one engages in it for any other reason than to satisfy the urge to play. Although several games are primarily used for gambling, Parlett seems to say that gaming for any such express purposes goes against the basic principle of gaming, i.e. simply having fun. Parlett classifies games into informal ones, usually childrens' impromptu games that resemble play acting, and formal ones that are structurally based on both ends and means. They are contests to achieve an objective, a winning condition that determines the winner of the game, and they also have an agreed set of equipment and rules to manipulate this equipment towards a winning situation. While Huizinga stated that "every game has its rules", Parlett goes one step further and claims that "[e]very game *is* its rules, for they are what define it." (3) He sees the element of competition crucial for games, e.g. solitaire-type games can be understood as competition between the player and the game itself. Likewise, co-operative games are interpreted as multi-player solitaire, i.e. the players compete as a team against the rules of the game and try to reach the winning condition with collective play. On the surface, games may often seem structurally different, yet games that end when a certain end is achieved, those that are played up to a certain score or those that are played for an agreed amount of time are all according to Parlett essentially about fulfilling the preset winning condition. He further separates games from sports by observing that sports are inherently time-dependent as the time to make a move in them is limited by the very nature of the play (e.g. returning a ball in tennis). Another factor separating games from sports is the intrinsic physical requirements of sports, they cannot be played without being bodily present. However, *Chess* and other board games can easily be played by mail or proxy.

For his classification of board games Parlett considers the possibilities of traditional or evolved (e.g. *Chess* and *Draughts*) versus proprietary or invented games (e.g. *Monopoly*, *Cluedo*), but he finds that this distinction is too uncertain when considering individual games. There is too much overlap between these categories for them to be really useful. Basically the same can be said of the division of games into abstract versus representational games. Many of the

traditional games that we now think of as mostly abstract used to be considered representational or symbolic, e.g. at the time when it evolved, *Chess* was a representation of warfare, while early version of *Snakes & Ladders* was used for moral instruction.

As a better basis for categorization of games Parlett puts forth a division between positional versus theme games. Positional games encompass the ones usually played on boards like Chess and Backgammon. However, not all games of this type need a board, rather the defining feature of positional games is that they are played on a pattern composed of significant markings. These markings can be printed on a board but they may equally well be scribbled on paper, drawn in sand or shown on a computer monitor etc. Old traditional folk games all fall into this category.

Theme games are typically commercial and proprietary products that deal with themes or thematic material in representational fashion and can also include role-playing or quasi-dramatic elements. They may deal e.g. with property trading or solving a murder case. Parlett says that “[c]arried to extremes, such games may amount to simulations of real-life events conducted for the purpose of experimentation, and thus pass beyond the normal meaning of the word ‘game’ as something practised for enjoyment and without regard to practical consequences” (7). This is obviously of interest for my own game design which clearly falls into this category of games. Parlett also points out that it is usual that in theme games the play largely takes place in the players’ minds and in the interactions between the players.

In his book, Parlett concentrates mostly on the traditional games which are characteristically positional but to some extent he also touches on modern theme games. Although my game design is overtly thematic, it is worth going through Parlett’s schema for distinguishing the various types of board games. Building on H. J. R. Murray’s (1868-1955) and R. C. Bell’s earlier classifications, Parlett divides board games into five classes: race games, space games, chase games, displace games and theme games. All of these classes typically make use of different sort of game mechanics or ‘ludemes’. Parlett also defines various terms used in connection with board games like piece, field of action, objective or aim, placement and interaction. Interaction in this context means the way in which pieces attack and oppose one another. It includes forms like capturing, ousting, blockading or paralyzing, demoting and converting pieces. Although I won’t elaborate on these terms here, I still try to use Parlett’s terms in this thesis when they are applicable.

So as to be able to discuss various game mechanical possibilities and variants, it pays to briefly investigate each of Parlett’s five game classes. Race

games typically consist of a linear track with one or more starting and finishing points. As the movement of the pieces on this track is usually dependent on dice etc. these games are characteristically games of imperfect information, i.e. luck is involved to some degree. Race games can be either simple or complex according to the number of pieces each player is trying to bring to the finish. Games with a large number of pieces, like *Backgammon*, Parlett calls multiplex race games. If a game does not make use of dice or other lots for the movement of the pieces, but rather depends solely on calculation and strategy, it is a strategic race game.

In space games, the goal is either to move pieces onto the board or move the pieces already on it into "a certain pattern, configuration or spatial position" (11). Thus these two-dimensional and free-moving space games can be games of placement, games of movement or a mixture of these options. Some games also include capture. Parlett specifies seven subcategories of space games: alignment games (the goal is to form a line of pieces), connection games (the goal is connecting opposite sides of the board), traversal games (the goal is to move all of one's pieces across the board), attainment games (the goal is to move a single piece across the board), configuration games (the goal is to form a certain pattern from one's pieces), restriction games (the goal is to block the opponent's possibilities for movement or placement of pieces) and occupation games (the goal is to occupy the largest amount of territory).

As Parlett categorizes the games into classes according to their fundamental mechanism, the class of chase games comprises all games that are bilaterally asymmetrical. These are typically 'hunt' or 'war' games in which one player controls a greater number of pieces than the other player, and the players have different aims and ways to win the game. It is noteworthy that all other board games are symmetrical, i.e. the players' starting positions and resources are equal as are their movement and interaction abilities and objectives.

The fourth of Parlett's game classes, displace games, is made of games that are most often played on reticular or areal grids. They are all movement games so the pieces are constantly moved during the game. The aim of these games is to defeat the opposing pieces either by capturing all of them or the most important piece (e.g. *Chess*). The pieces can be captured in various ways, e.g. enclosure, custodianship, leaping and replacement. However, instead of classifying the displace games further according to the method of capture, Parlett classifies them according to the degree of functional differentiation the playing pieces have from each other. He specifies the subgroups of linear (and undifferentiated), undifferentiated, semi-differentiated and differentiated displace games.

The fifth and the last of Parlett's board game classes is the aforementioned theme games, this is the category into which my own game design largely

falls. Theme games aim to represent or simulate some real-life, or fictional yet 'realistic', activity or phenomena. Parlett emphasizes the difference between simulations and representations. Simulations per se are not intended for fun, recreation and social interaction, and can't really be considered to be games in the strictest sense of the word. Actual simulations are usually used for training, experimentation and research purposes, often by the military, companies or scientists. In practice these war games, business scenarios and game theoretical mathematical studies differ greatly from the thematic board games that are said to have 'simulatory' aspects. Parlett points out that games of the recreational and thematic variety should be described as representational instead of simulatory. To be entertaining and good game experiences, theme games often tend towards the less realistic and more symbolic or even nominal end of the spectrum. Parlett states that over the years practically all possible subjects have been used as material for theme games, including questionable subjects like the Black Death and escaping from the Titanic. It is a pretty common practice for game companies to create "new" game products by recycling old game mechanics and pasting some fashionable theme on top with the redesign of the graphics, the pieces etc. These kind of formulaic games are often based on current films, TV shows, bands etc. In contrast to these all too general ossified business practices, there has been a number of masterful game designers who have been able to combine innovative and original game mechanics with meaningful, satisfying and timeless themes. These long-time game design adepts include e.g. Alex Randolph, Reiner Knizia, Sid Sackson, Klaus Teuber and Alan Moon. Moreover, there are also several promising newer faces on the game design scene like Wolfgang Kramer, Michael Kiesling and Bruno Faidutti.

Parlett divides theme games into ten groups by their themes as follows: business and trading, detection and deduction, crime, war, fantasy, alternative histories, politics, sports, word games, social interaction and quiz games (including 'trivia'). He explores travel games with the class of race games and deliberately refuses to delve into the world of sex games.

4. Cultural Significance and Objectives

4.1 The Role and Meaning of Games

To be able to study, understand and develop games and various game mechanisms, I believe one must first understand the role the games play in human lives. To this end there probably is no better source than the original trailblazing work on the study of human play and games playing (i.e. ludic) activity, Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* (1944). In this pioneering work Huizinga does not concentrate solely on games, but rather tries to discover the reasons why human beings generally engage in any play and playful behavior. Nevertheless, practically everything that he has to say about play in general can also be applied to just games.

Huizinga describes play as meaningful activity which in its uniqueness and eccentricity is strongly anchored in the field of aesthetics even though it may not necessarily strictly belong to this field. Play is not based on reason; it is irrational, yet it has spatio-temporal limits and clear rules. The rules of play can't be questioned or broken without simultaneously breaking the illusion of play. As it is founded on arbitrary rules, play is fragile – it doesn't withstand any scepticism about these rules without falling apart and becoming worthless. The playing site has an absolute order of its own. The play creates order, or rather, superimposes its own temporary order onto the imperfect chaotic world. Despite being based on clear-cut rules Huizinga defines play as freedom, it is essentially free by its nature. According to him the three distinctive characteristics of play are firstly, that it is free activity taken up willingly. Secondly, it is not mundane ordinary life but rather a separation from it to a temporary activity with its own meaning. Thirdly, it is characterized by being isolated and limited in space and time – its own advancement and purpose are contained within itself. Though people may be very earnest in it, play is not meant "for real". Play does not have the gathering of material wealth as its goal nor indeed the achievement of any profit or benefit.

An important part of play is its socializing aspect. A group easily gathers around play, the various play-induced gatherings may due to the extraordinary nature of play lead to the formation of various companies, societies or clubs which can even have mysterious and secretive overtones. Various initiative rites, cultural and political conventions as well as religious and sacral practices demonstrate play-like qualities. Huizinga sees various cults as play-like dramatization and symbolization – alternative, virtual reality or make-believe in which humans act out the order of nature as they understand it. Societal and political practices, structures and organizations have all evolved out of cult practices

and still evidence the embedded play-like qualities. Huizinga points out that one shouldn't understand play turning into culture with time. Culture is not directly born from play, rather in its early stages the culture is suffused with a play-like quality (67) and so resembles play greatly. Culture in its early forms is played and it develops from play and as play. Formally there are no differences between the separation from the ordinary life that is typical of play and games, and the 'holy circle' associated with magical and religious practices. A *Chess* board and a temple have fundamentally an equivalent function – one can't make a clear distinction between the agreed seriousness of play and the holy seriousness of religious instances etc. By its nature play is either holy or festive depending whether it is an act of consecration or just entertainment.

Huizinga considers competitions as part of play. Like play, competition is basically without meaning, i.e. it contains its meaning within itself and the end result doesn't directly affect the life processes of the playing group. Within preset limits and according to preset rules play is an agreement to achieve something out of the ordinary that releases tension – thus it is the driving force behind competition. In the form of competition play predates culture itself. The result of any play and competition becomes important only for those who have accepted its rules and stepped inside its circle. The concept of winning becomes only relevant when one plays against some other player or players, it is typical of winning that the success and status gained through it is easily transferred from the winning individual to the whole group. Huizinga states that the desire for power and social status is only a secondary consideration in winning, the main thing is the victory itself. As an example of this Huizinga mentions *Chess* where winning the game is a pure triumph that does not involve any other visible consequences.

It is interesting that Huizinga proposes that play in the modern culture (meaning the period of time that extends all the way back to the 19th century) has become too serious, sports and even board and card games have become saturated by the seriousness of the contemporary social technologies (270). Huizinga offers *Bridge* as an example of a too serious game that doesn't enrich the soul but requires fruitless skill and is really a waste of intellect. The problem with *Bridge* and other overly serious games is that they have strayed too far from the intrinsically child-like nature of play. In my own opinion Huizinga's view may be slightly too limited here. Although some contemporary games are certainly too complex for their own good, the child-like enjoyment may still be found from them if one digs deep enough. I feel that in its early forms my own game would probably fall into Huizinga's category of overly serious games because of its complexity and themes, but this is something I hope to correct by emphasizing its more playful features like the storytelling element, as well as by streamlining its

game mechanisms. Huizinga suggests that ever since people became aware of art and art became aware of itself, i.e. since the 18th century, it has lost a part of its inherent child-like playfulness. However, one must note that Huizinga wrote *Homo Ludens* before the postmodernist cultural paradigm shift which truly introduced the self-awareness of art, while also reintroducing a lot of the missed playfulness. Considering contemporary games, it is not easy to say whether they are too serious or not. At least board games have of late turned away from the over-complexity and long playing times typical of the 1980's games and attempted to return to quick and easy playability, while still remaining complex enough to be challenging and interesting. I believe that games must evolve with the consumers' tastes and growing game mechanical expertise. I certainly don't feel that the happy excitement, which according to Huizinga is the spirit, the atmosphere of real play, is missing from today's games.

Whatever one thinks of Johan Huizinga's theories, one can't really deny that they have established a foundation and provided a justification and a modicum of respect for the still relatively young science of ludology, the study and science of games. Although mathematics also has its own branch called game theory, these are usually just various studies of probability that may be hard to relate to the actual realm of games. According to my previous knowledge and research carried out for this paper, it seems that most of the available theoretical ludologic material has to do with the history, classification or review of games. Although there exist numerous 'how-to' guides for programming and design of computer and video games, I have only been able to find a few good books dedicated solely to the design of board games. In light of this slight shortage of theoretical authorities, I feel Huizinga serves best as my ludological starting point, the theoretical justification for designing and studying games. Games are invented and/or evolved systems with their own imposed rules, laws and limits. In my opinion researching them is valuable from both cultural and psychological point of view, and game playing is inherently human.

4.2 The Goals of My Game

The main idea of my game design project is to try to develop a game that would represent a human's life arc in an entertaining manner. If people feel the playing of the game reminds them of the real thing enough that they talk about the various experienced 'lives' after a gaming session, the game design is probably on the right tracks. The game should work as a form of good group interaction, the players should interact with each other and discuss their character's actions and feelings throughout the game. The game should be fun as a game, but it should also incite the players to keep the theme of the game always on their minds so that it doesn't just become a superficial exercise in following the game mechanics. Real life is intrinsically a very complex phenomenon – I feel that I shouldn't try to make the game too simple as this would probably distance the game playing experience from everyday life.

The game is supposed to work as a reasonable representation of contemporary (Western) life. It should be more a game than a simulation though because just an elaborate simulation of a person's life would probably prove boring. What would be the point of going through a character's life in too much mundane detail? What would be the incentive? The game tries to portray the most obvious choices available in modern world as well as many of the rarer but interesting, glamorous and desirable options possible like e.g. rock stardom. However, the vast majority of alternatives available for the player should be pretty commonplace. The game should offer the players a possibility to experience a different kind of life each time they play it, this should be one of the reasons why the players would play it again. The game should offer a chance to see how extremely different lives may be, yet it should also depict the universally shared common phenomena and reflect the insight that people experience during their lives. The players should be offered several different goals, 'life strategies' and philosophical options so that one can experience a 'life', i.e. a gaming session, that either largely matches the player's own values or totally deviates from them. One should be able to win the game by following a wide variety of different life strategies – however, I am interested in emphasizing and favoring a well-balanced life style. A balanced life should be the primary 'obvious' strategy to success in the game.

4.3 Story as a Game Goal: Narrative Structures

In her book *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, Janet H. Murray ponders among other things the famous computer simulation game *Sid Meier's Civilization*. Examining the game's victory goals she observes that,

[T]he basic competitive premise of the game is not emphasized as an interpretative choice. Why should global domination rather than, say, universal housing and education define the civilization that wins the game? Why not make the end to world hunger the winning condition? Why is the object of the game to compete with other leaders instead of to cooperate for the benefit of all the civilizations without jeopardizing any one country's security? (89)

Although *Sid Meier's Civilization* is often considered to be one the most advanced computer games made with multiple end and winning conditions, all these conditions still keep within the safe accepted parameters of cultural acceptance – no real surprises here. This is something that I would love to see changed in my own game design. Each player should be able to choose their own set of game goals which, if fulfilled, may advance them towards a better position in the final reckoning. Naturally, as it is all about human life, the ending is “rounded with a sleep”. Yes, death is unavoidable, but the interesting thing at the very end is not the obvious similarities but rather how the played lives differ from each other. Moreover, unlike in typical representatives of the life game genre, most of which are of Western, usually American origin, my game is not all about collecting money. Rather, I have wanted to turn away from the traditional gathering of economic wealth, though it is still included as an option of gameplay and life strategy.

Another important point that Murray emphasizes is the degree of agency that the player experiences. She points out that people often mistake agency for the amount of things that the players have to move and adjust. However, this is not necessarily true agency if the players actions are not meaningful – the actions should feel chosen and relate to the players' intentions. Instead of trying to get as many interactions per minute as possible, it is much better to ascertain that the included actions provide the pleasure of agency. As an example of a game with few actions but a high degree of agency Murray mentions *Chess*. Although infrequent, *Chess* moves have a high degree of agency as they are “highly autonomous, selected from a large range of possible choices, and wholly determine the course of the game” (128). In my own game design I should strive towards a high agency so that the players not only have something to do but that their actions are significant, substantial from the point of view of

their own goals.

Approaching games from a narrative point of view, Murray sees them as a kind of symbolic storytelling that compresses common experiences and phenomena in order to achieve an experience of a heightened reality. She views all games regardless of their format as symbolic dramas in which players operate as protagonists of the symbolic action. The plotlines of the symbolic narrative strands can be e.g. encountering and making sense of a confusing world, reassembling a broken world, taking a risk and being rewarded, encountering and triumphing over an antagonist, passing a test of skill and strategy, collecting enough of a valuable commodity or getting rid of problematic one, or being challenged by a world of constant surprises. Even if the game in question is purely aleatoric, i.e. based solely on the random turn of the dice, the players can still feel as participating in a meaningful drama as essentially "we are modeling our basic helplessness in the universe, our dependence on unpredictable factors, and also our sense of hopefulness" (143). Even losing in a game does not break down this sense of taking part in a drama, the games always offer us a chance to enact our most fundamental relationship to our environment and other elements of our lives. Like religious ceremonies, they offer us a way to symbolically enact the patterns that bring meaning to our lives. In my own game design I attempt to make use of this process of enactment so that the players may feel that they are actually experiencing various kinds of lives. I try to enhance this process with the storytelling elements. According to some modern views of human consciousness humans are greatly dependent on the innate storytelling function. For instance, consciousness scientist Daniel Dennett suggests that humans live in a "web of discourses" (*Consciousness Explained* 416) where our natural main "tactic of self-protection, self-control and self-definition" (418) is telling stories, presenting ourselves to others through narrative – our selves are then created as a result of these instinctively told tales. In Dennett's opinion human self is a handy abstraction, the center of narrative gravity of the narrative-producing human body. With the storytelling of my game design I try to coax the players to experience and share several kinds of possible lives different from the one that they are living. Even though all games don't offer as direct a possibility to live alternative lives, Murray points out that games "can be read as texts that offer interpretations of experience" (143) – one can regard e.g. *Monopoly* as an interpretation of capitalism, its allures and mechanisms or variously how life always results from the dueling forces of planning and chance. Thus *Monopoly* actually offers the players a drama where they can experience emotions and patterns of the capitalistic life itself. As another interesting example Murray offers the case of the extremely popular video game *Tetris*. Despite its high level of

abstraction she sees *Tetris* as “a perfect enactment of the overtasked lives of Americans in the 1990s – of the constant bombardment of tasks that demand our attention and that we must somehow fit into our overcrowded schedules and clear off our desks in order to make room for the next onslaught” (144). Even a simple gaming action of using falling blocks to complete lines that then vanish upon completion can thus be seen as reflecting the cultural zeitgeist and milieu of its times.

Although games don't have a direct bearing on our survival and are thus recreational, Murray, like Huizinga, nevertheless considers games and play as rehearsal of important life skills. For instance, hide-and-seek trains children in the traditionally valuable skills of hunting. The most typical game form is the *agon*, i.e. contest between opponents. Murray points out that contest, the conflict between opposing parties is also the earliest, the most basic form of narrative. The vast majority of games available nowadays from board games to video and computer games have the basic structure of skill-based contest or conflict. Most multiplayer games also pit the players against each other either in a straight conflict or at least in a contest for the winning of the game. Murray discusses Multi-User Dungeons, or MUDs, as a game format offering possibilities for constructive interaction between players that deviates from the basic contest-structure. As they are text-based, older MUDs provide a gaming environment composed solely of code and words that expert players can easily modify and personalize to suit their desires. The high level of malleability is the central factor that enables the MUDs to be based on other, more subtle varieties of interpersonal interaction than just the basic contest format. Instead of merely competing against each other, the MUDders can also practice various forms of cooperative interaction most of which are essentially players interacting with the textual environment created by other players, although various collective group activities can also be organized. There are limits to what can be achieved with the constructivist MUDs of today, yet Murray believes they will point the way for future group interaction games. As perhaps the closest contemporary 'spiritual' successor of early MUDs one could mention *Second Life* MMORPG which allows a high level of player freedom and structural malleability within an online 3D-world.

It is often hard in MUDs to sustain a sense of good story and coherent dramatic interaction and suspense over longer periods of time. Murray suggests that this is best achieved in well-run LARPs, i.e. live action role playing games. She sees this stemming largely from the fact that LARPs have a clear-cut division of narrative responsibility between the game master (GM) and the players. The game master takes care of inventing the world settings and the basic starting points of the game narrative which the players then flesh out by their actions in

a constructive and relatively free manner. Murray states that to be a successful game master one must initiate the world and the plot but then retreat and let the players take care of the unfolding of the plot. Proper cooperative gameplay in LARPs partly springs from the fact that the players meet each other and have social relationships beyond the game sessions. Murray observes that today there is a great demand for computer games that would maximize both dramatic structure and player freedom, i.e. to have a LARP- and MUD-like game running on a computer and online. I personally agree, games combining and making the most of these two approaches, traditionally the two ends of a continuum, might well turn out to be the best of both worlds as online gaming experiences go.

Talking of digital narratives, Janet Murray denies that an interactor in a digital story should also be seen as its author. According to her, claims like this arise from misunderstanding the nature of digital narratives and the differences between the interactor's and the author's creative roles. To put it shortly, interactor can only act and be creative within the constraints set by the author. The authorship in digital media is procedural; in addition to creating the actual content of the narrative, the rules driving the use of the content are also established. Instead of just writing a linear set of scenes, the procedural author creates narrative possibilities, the alternative ways the story can progress. In Murray's words, "[w]e could perhaps say that the interactor is the author of a particular performance within an electronic story system, or the architect of a particular part of the virtual world, but we must distinguish this derivative authorship from the originating authorship of the system itself" (153).

As my game design also incorporates a storytelling function, i.e. the players tell each other what happens to their character based on the received game materials and what this character does based on the game actions taken, I find that Murray's definition of procedural authorship may be applicable not only to electronic narratives and games but also to board games. As the designer or 'author' of the game I set limits within which the players can spin their narratives. For a large part, their creative task consists of interpretation of available game materials and game mechanisms and functions. Nevertheless, as the game mechanics of board games are necessarily more abstract than most means used in contemporary digital narratives and computer and video games, I believe that the players of my game may actually experience somewhat greater freedom than in digital formats to interpret and twist their narratives as they desire. In my opinion this is most welcome as long as the storytelling doesn't get out of control and spoil the immersion into the imagined lives of the players' characters. This is prevented with the self-policing function of the players voting for the best storytelling performance, the 'best' here meaning either the most

appropriate, the most entertaining or the most imaginative depending on the players' tastes.

My enthusiasm for producing a gaming environment that offers the players a chance to create within limits a new temporary life or life story for themselves (or actually the character they are playing) partly stems from my interest in the theories according to which all traditional stories share a set of common structures, a basic 'vocabulary' of narrative means and events. As Murray points out, Carl Jung took the similarities found between the mythical stories from different cultures as evidence of a collective subconscious, a set of archetypal tales and characters shared by every human that basically define what we are. The famous myth researcher Joseph Campbell studied the similarities in old folktales and theorized that all myths share the structure of 'monomyth'. He specified the basic structural stages in the mythic hero's journey and thus established a fundamental pattern for stories which to some extent is still used e.g. by story analysts like Christopher Vogler to investigate and evaluate Hollywood scripts for 'faults'. The hero's journey consists of several stages that need not be present in every story or slavishly follow the basic order. The fundamental Campbellian mythic narrative structure or story pattern is clear and often easy to apply and recognize in familiar stories. The pattern starts with the hero in the ordinary world receiving the call to adventure, refusing it at first but then accepting it with the help of a mentor figure. The hero then crosses the threshold to adventure, faces various tests, approaches his or her ordeal and ultimately passes it, receiving the reward. The final third act then consists of resurrection and returning home with the reward or the 'elixir'. Mythic pattern is not the only universal structure that can be discerned in stories. As Janet Murray points out several theorists have suggested that there is only a certain limited number of basic plots which depending on the theorist can vary from Borges's less than dozen to Kipling's sixty-nine story formulas. Murray alleges that these formulaic plot patterns correspond to "the basic patterns of desire, fulfillment, and loss in human life" (187). She goes on to list Ronald B. Tobias's twenty master plots which I believe are worth repeating here as an example of how one can map practically the whole range of human experience with stories. According to Tobias the basic narrative formulas are:

- Quest
- Adventure
- Pursuit
- Rescue
- Escape
- Revenge

- The Riddle
- Rivalry
- Underdog
- Temptation
- Metamorphosis
- Transformation
- Maturation
- Love
- Forbidden Love
- Sacrifice
- Discovery
- Wretched Excess
- Ascension
- Descension

Though these are meant to be story formulas, I believe that to a great degree they can also be applied to games. They can be thought of as a description of the gameplay experience or as an inspiration for game themes. In my opinion these basic narrative formulas might prove especially useful for my life game design because of its storytelling aspect. The challenge of a truly deep life game design would be to include all or most of these themes or at least the possibility of experiencing them in the course of playing the game. In games one probably shouldn't include the formulaic narrative patterns at such a high level but rather make use of smaller narrative structural units. A good way to approach game narrative structures on a more atomistic level might be to use Vladimir Propp's story "morphemes". Studying traditional Russian oral folktales, Propp discovered they all contained a core tale that could be further divided into twenty-five basic plot events or functions that could be thought to have a role essentially similar to morphemes in linguistics. Murray observes that adhering to certain fundamental narrative structures, patterns and combinations of story morphemes has been and still is valuable to the creators of folktales: "the formulaic underpinning makes folktales more intricate; it allows storytellers to weave together multiple different story sequences without becoming confused" (196). One could envision that games could also use comparable narrative morphemes to drive their storytelling elements. Every game has, or basically is, its rules which could also encompass such story morphological structures. Actually, some contemporary games already employ almost Proppian story morphemes, e.g. the card-based fairy tale-spinning game *Once Upon a Time* which has cards like "Prince", "Journey", "Treasure" and "A Death" to inspire storytelling. However, the applying of story morphemes into games needn't stick solely to the folk and fairy tale type of morphemes. To

my mind the used morphemes could equally well be based on narratives of other genres, within a game framework one can easily imagine e.g. some kind of film noir-type of storytelling. Actually this kind of use of story morphemes of various genres does to certain extent take place in role-playing games. Nevertheless, to my knowledge there are currently no board games that would do this consistently – thus I feel my game design may be somewhat of a pioneer in this field.

In his book *Cybertext – Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* Espen J. Aarseth introduces the eponymous concept of ergodic literature and storytelling. This is literature in which the reader must invest significant effort to traverse the text, i.e. the concept encompasses various forms of hypertext, digital multimedia narratives and games. Aarseth investigates early text adventures using an Infocom game *Deadline* as an example and finds the role of the interactor, the game player, somewhat lacking in its freedom to influence the story. The player determines how and how fast the adventure unfolds, but her freedom is largely an illusion since at every point there will be only a few narrative options to choose from if one wants the plot to advance properly. Noncooperation and failure to adapt to the requirements of the story results in the player character's death. Aarseth writes, "The model intriguee [the player character], in other words, is a good puppet, which indicates that the intrigant [the "narrator", the narrative voice of the program] of *Deadline* is not the autonomous ruler of the simulated world but something of an impostor and hypocrite, an old-fashioned author dressed up in the latest technology" (121-122). Also Aarseth seems to believe that the way to inject more freedom into the interactor's arsenal could possibly be found from MUD-type multiplayer games. The interaction between real people is a breeding ground wherein lie the dynamics for significantly more free narrative creation and gameplay. Another possible solution to achieving a more interactive game environment would naturally be true artificial intelligence – however, as technology is not yet advanced enough, this is something that can only be verified in the future. From the point of view of my game design project, it might be worthwhile to try to inspire storytelling and player interaction not only by the players telling about their own characters but also sharing in each other's character stories.

5. Research Problems

5.1 Competition vs. Cooperation

When formulating the research problems of my final thesis, it is very much self-evident that in the contemporary cultural atmosphere that still largely trivializes all kinds of games, the most crucial question that needs to be answered is whether designing a board game can prove to be a useful approach for discovering mechanics for interactive media in general. My preconception naturally is that it will be useful. In addition to this obvious question there are a number of others that surface. One of these is whether it is feasible to design a board game that is a mixture of competition and co-operation. Board games are rarely based on co-operative play, the only recent examples that I have been able to find are Reiner Knizia's *Lord of the Rings*, in which all the players are competing together against the adversities posed by the game, and the recently published game *Break the Safe*. I intend to incorporate some cooperation into the game design in a somewhat different fashion. Although in my game the players' characters do face various adversities, they do so mostly individually. The cooperative element would emerge in negotiated teamplay situations when two or more players would work together for a while to achieve a common goal, e.g. turning the other player's character into a spouse. To a certain extent the game could in theory be played co-operatively also in other situations, but the shortage of valuable resources as well as the mechanism of the players playing negative 'life event' plates and cards (these represent accidents, diseases etc.) against each other will probably skew the game clearly towards competition. If the players were allowed to reveal the content of the played event plates, co-operative play would become more feasible. Another possibility for cooperation may arise in the storytelling where players are encouraged to help each other invent good life stories for their characters to make the gameplay more fulfilling.

Because of the complexity of the selected subject, the whole of a human life, it is pretty hard to make my game structurally reflect its theme. Investigating how one can make game mechanisms thematically reflect real life phenomena will be another research problem I shall tackle in this thesis. I will now briefly summarize what kind of game mechanisms I chose to mirror real life – my design choices will be elaborated more in the *Development of the Good Life Prototype* chapter below.

5.2 Thematic Verisimilitude – Imitation of Life

The underlying social logic of everyday life is sometimes referred to as “the law of the jungle” or “the survival of the fittest”. Although I wouldn’t go so far as to concede the bleakest views of everyday life, I do believe that each of us takes part in a continuous competition over limited resources, be they actual economic resources, social status or approval or conquests in human relationships. As people only have a limited amount of time and other means to devote on getting what they want, I have chosen the mechanism of an auction phase to represent this need to narrow one’s aspirations. By limiting the players’ choices the auctions force them to focus their playing strategies, they have to decide what they want their character to concentrate on in his or her “life”.

Auctions are the primary mechanism in the game to determine how cards are dealt to the players. These cards are mostly used to represent longer-time, more permanent phenomena like people, jobs etc, while short-time occurrences in life are represented with the life event plates. The player knows only the content of the plates that she lays down on the game board, the plates played by the other players remain hidden. The content of some plates is also hidden from all the players. This hiding represents the basic unpredictability of everyday life. One can set short-term goals and try to make them true but often they may not succeed. The plates thus offer a way to simulate how people plan their day-to-day life and succeed only partly because of the unforeseen surprises that life throws at them. The event plates also introduce a tactical element as the players may try to bluff others to pick up bad event plates, or optionally they may even try to help some players to even out the game situation or try to make the others more favorable towards them.

I want my game to reflect the fact that people have to balance their time between different occupations and tasks. I have divided the whole wealth of choices available into three parts: work career, human relationships and the category of all the other interests which includes things like religion and hobbies. The game mechanism that controls how a character spends her time between these three alternatives is the mode triangle whose three points represent the three occupations. The basic idea of the mode triangle is to force the player to select with which of the three options her character is occupied at any given time. By concentrating on one or two of these the character can be more devoted to the subjects than when trying to share her time equally with all three. This devotion to a given subject or subjects is interpreted game mechanically as the number of ‘location points’ the player character has at her use – these points vary according to where the character pieces are situated on the mode triangle. The

locations of the pieces on the mode triangle are also important when considering the characters' relationships with each other. If two players' characters want to get married to each other their pieces must be near enough to each other on the mode triangle. They must also keep on fulfilling this 'nearness requirement', or they risk getting hit with a relationship crisis card by another player. This need to keep close to each other on the mode triangle mirrors how in real life the spouses may drift apart if they are constantly interested in very different things. At worst a relationship crisis in the game may lead to a divorce between the characters.

While the mode triangle depicts how the characters have to divide their time between different major interests, the actual time in the game is simulated with the age phase track. Although the age phase does not totally correspond with the linear time of the game, it does so to the extent that each age phase field corresponds to a 10-year chunk of the character's life – the last phase, however, may represent more than 10 years. The degree of advancement within a single age phase field shows how far the character has been able to devote herself to the general goal of that period of her life.

The actual nitty-gritty of everyday decision-making, i.e. the micro-management level of character time, is encoded into the game with the help of action points – a fairly common game mechanism in contemporary games. The action points are used to move the pieces on the mode triangle and the age phase field grid as well as to turn over life event plates. Unused action points can be exploited by turning them directly into resource points.

The three points of the mode triangle roughly correspond to the three different varieties of points that are used as resources in the game: love (human relationships), success (material wealth, money as well as social status) and health (both physical and mental) points. These three forms of resource points can be turned into the happiness points at the end of each age phase. So as to bias the game playing strategies towards a balanced life, one can gain one happiness point with three points, i.e. one point of each resource, four points from two resources (either 2-2, or 3-1 points) or five points of any single resource. The happiness points are the final game mechanical resource the amount of which ultimately decides how well the characters lived their life and which player won the game.

When pondering how to make a board game closely reflect real life thematically, there is a temptation to go too far. When dealing with a subject that is inherently as complex as a human's life arc, it is probably best not to make the game too much like a simulation to keep it playable. I feel that the first completed version of my life game may already be as complex as it can be

without completely alienating the possible users. It may prove necessary to make the game mechanically simpler for inexperienced board game players – I will consider how the game could be streamlined in a later chapter.

My game incorporates a variety of different cards that stand for various life phenomena. To introduce more real variety and thus more realism, several cards feature the possibility of advancement from one level to another, e.g. a promotion from a lower-rank job to a higher-ranking one. The level-based cards serve to illustrate how a character's situation evolves in the course of her life. Nevertheless, the levels as well as the other mechanisms in the game are not enough to offer a thematically truly realistic portrayal of a human's life – this is one of the key reasons for the storytelling feature. By continually narrating the events of their characters' lives, the players themselves can make the portrayed/played lives as realistic or imaginative as they desire.

6. Thematic and Game Mechanical Resources and Inspiration

There really isn't a plethora of how-to-design-a-game books available, so I believe a board game designer must draw most of her inspiration from the end products themselves, i.e. the other games. Closely perusing the few creative source books that are available like Brian Tinsman's *The Game Inventor's Guidebook* and Richard C. Levy and Ronald O. Weingartner's *The Toy and Game Inventor's Handbook* is naturally worthwhile, but their use is severely limited if the game designer is not familiar with the classic games as well as the latest and the most innovative games in the market.

As my life game design originally sprang from my close personal observation of the available games and my frustration with their lacking content, for the purposes of this thesis I didn't need to delve too profoundly into the contemporary games market but just needed to find out about the few examples of life game with which I was not yet familiar. Since I here consider life game possibilities also beyond the limits of board games I additionally investigated computer and console games.

The most obvious and traditional example of life board game is the eponymous *The Game of Life* (1860, originally *The Checkered Game of Life*, republished at least 1866, 1959, 1961, 1978, 1985) which proves that basing a board game on real life isn't such a new idea. Despite several reprints and modifications to the original design, the game as it is sold today is extremely old-fashioned and thematically simple. The game mechanics really have little to do with actual day-to-day life, the winner is determined by typically American capitalist criteria, i.e. who gathers the most money, wins. Thematically as well as mechanically the game is lacking in many other respects, too. For instance, the players may get children during the game, but they actually have absolutely no effect on the gameplay.

Another old classic board game and one of the most famous is *Monopoly* (allegedly 1935, but in fact copied of *The Landlords Game* that was patented in 1904). Admittedly more of a business 'simulation' than a true life game *Monopoly* nevertheless has served as a basic template for life games over the decades. Like *The Game of Life*, *Monopoly* is mechanically pretty simple and old-fashioned and saturated with the capitalist 'from-rags-to-riches' ethos whose role I wanted to downplay in my own game design. In my opinion neither of these classic games really has much value for life game design anymore except as examples of what to avoid.

The best-known computer, and nowadays also online, life game is *The Sims* (2000) which in fact is currently the best-selling computer game of all time.

Rather than aiming to portray everyday life realistically *The Sims* can perhaps be described as 'a soap opera simulator' – in other words, it concentrates on the funny, cute and entertaining features of human lives and relationships. While I consider *The Sims* an entertaining 'playground', 'sandbox' or 'doll house' type of game, it doesn't meet the requirements that I set for my life game project. For instance, the characters in *The Sims*, i.e. the sims themselves, don't get older even after long periods of play. Instead of playing a character or several characters, the player has the role of a 'god' that influences her characters' lives more or less indirectly, usually by changing their living environment. Thus there is no direct identification with the characters, no matter how much sympathy they evoke they are still akin to pets. Despite obvious differences between *The Sims* and my *Good Life* project, I still consider *The Sims* and the online version of the basic game, *The Sims Online* (2002), the closest equivalents to my life game that is available on the computer game market today. Though somewhat flawed and limited, *The Sims Online* still demonstrates potential for engaging online interaction that may well pave way for something more exciting in the future. As an interesting aside I could mention that *The Sims Online* hasn't been as successful as the media predicted. A reason that has been offered for this is that female players, who have basically made *The Sims* the success it is, didn't like the reintroduction of the competition element and thus rejected the game.

To my mind currently the most accomplished life simulation game in video game format is not even online yet. *Animal Crossing* (2002) for Nintendo Gamecube game console has cute animals instead of humans for characters, but the illusion of interacting with 'real' characters is much stronger than in other video games. Also *Animal Crossing* is not really a full-fledged life simulation game – the characters don't age, they have no bodily needs etc. It is marketed as a "communication game" and as such it succeeds admirably. The interaction with the other characters is very entertaining and remarkably satisfying considering that the game doesn't have real-time interaction with other human players at all.

In *Animal Crossing* the player controls an animal character who moves into a small house in a small village populated by other animals each of whom lives in a small house of her own. The focus of the game is on making friends as well as investigating, taking care of and changing one's living environment. Although there can be found some mildly capitalist elements, like e.g. shopping and collecting stuff, the player is essentially free to create her own goals. The game has no set ending and winning conditions, the player can do whatever she pleases to entertain herself. One can decide whether to devote herself, for instance, to catching all the different fish or insect species found in the virtual village, decorating one's house or just writing letters to everybody. The freedom

and the total non-violence of the world of *Animal Crossing* serves as a great example for future life games – harsh conflict and violence are not really required for engaging gameplay.

The other well-known life game by Nintendo is the *Harvest Moon* series of games; *Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life* is the latest upcoming console update of the basic concept. In these games the player assumes the role of a farmer in the countryside tending to her own farm as the seasons roll by. The game allows the player to lead her character through decades of life, through stages of life like childhood, teenage, marriage, having and raising children while attending to the needs of her farm as well as personal needs like food and happiness. Like *Animal Crossing* *Harvest Moon* aims to provide the players with a virtual alternative 'life' that is close to paradise with its quaint and picturesque qualities. The appearance and overall aesthetics of the game are of typically Japanese 'kawaii' cuteness and like in *Animal Crossing* the general gameplay is relaxing and soothing instead of exciting.

Another console game aiming to provide players with a feeling of living in earthly paradise or at least spending a vacation there is *Dead of Alive Extreme Beach Volleyball* for Xbox. This game concentrates on a number of young good-looking and sexually appealing women enjoying their stay on a tropical paradise island playing beach volleyball and participating in various other activities. Before its release the game was heavily criticized for appearing to be just simple titillation for teenage boys, but the gameplay eventually surprised many of the critics. *Dead of Alive Extreme Beach Volleyball* actually focuses on the girls' social relationships, how they try to make friends with the other girls and recruit them as volleyball playing partners by giving them various gifts. Interpreting the girls' moods and directing their emotional responses, e.g. keeping one's playing partner happy, is a major part of the game. The environment and aesthetics of *Dead of Alive Extreme Beach Volleyball* may at first appear very adult and daring, but with time the initial appearances prove deceptive and one notices the game mechanical and thematic similarities with games like *Animal Crossing*.

Beyond these examples one can obviously find numerous other instances of various games that have some sort of bearing for my design project. For the storytelling element of *Good Life* the card game *Once Upon A Time* might prove to be a worthwhile inspiration. This is a game of shared fairy tale spinning that makes use of cards with very Proppian basic fairy tale elements or morphemes. The winner of the game is the player who can get rid of her cards by using them to tell a coherent and interesting fairy tale which also needs to end satisfactorily. The game is very flexible since the most important thing is to get the other players to accept the told tale – I believe that for most people the

main point of *Once Upon A Time* is not so much winning it but telling a great tale. One could possibly come up with a comparable game mechanic to aid the storytelling in *Good Life*.

Another game that could be used as an inspiration for the verbal interaction part of my game design is *The Big Idea* in which players use various basic elements to make up new products and then try to convince other players of their worth. The classic party game *Werewolf* (also known by several other names, e.g. *Mafia*) might be adopted as a basic template for parts of the social group interaction of *Good Life*. Ideas for the mechanisms of partner selection and checking for partners' compatibility could be drawn for instance from the German game *Punk sucht Lady*. *Good Life* could also be adapted to incorporate personalized elements e.g. characters, events etc. from the players' own lives – for this one might look for influences from contemporary party games like *FamilyLore* which focuses on sharing family stories. Naturally inspiration for the mechanics of *Good Life* needn't be solely derived from games which have something to do with everyday life but could as well be taken from games with a completely different theme and subject matter. In the contemporary board game boom traditional game mechanisms keep on evolving into something rich and strange with practically every major new game release on the market. There constantly appear novel mechanics that could be adapted for my design purposes.

7. Development of the *Good Life* Prototype

I started the long, still ongoing development process of the *Good Life* game approximately in the August of 2001. It is somewhat hard to give the exact starting date for the project since I have had an idea and a desire to develop a board game based on real life for a long time, several years, before that. Giving up my earlier idea for the final thesis, that of an interactive animation, I scribbled the first tentative drafts of game mechanisms during a final thesis seminar session in early September of 2001. Most of the game mechanisms used in the first draft of the game were invented within a period of just four to six weeks. However, these early ideas were just that, early ideas – trying to sift a multitude of possible solutions to discover the mechanisms I should use to solve the game mechanical problems and trying to gel the mechanisms into a coherent whole has taken up to this day in May of 2003. The game is still not finished but for a year there has been a working prototype version or a ‘beta’ that is playable. Nevertheless, I feel that this version still requires further development to be a truly working game. In this chapter I will describe the development of the still preliminary version of *Good Life* in detail, and I try to elaborate why I made the design choices I did.

Having decided to develop a life game, the first thing I thought about was to think how many and which variables I would like to include in my game. Time was one of these variables. As the game deals with the whole of human life from birth to death, there was a need to divide time into relatively large units, either five or ten year chunks as these ‘even’ numbers would probably be psychologically acceptable to most players. The other two variables I thought about at the very beginning of development were money and attention which included love and emotions. Already associated with each of these variables was a color scheme, blue or green for time, yellow (gold) for money and red (heart, blood) for attention. Likewise the idea of happiness and health points was thought of at this early stage, although I hadn’t yet decided to make the happiness points the ultimate ‘currency’ in the game. Issues and phenomena that I considered important enough to include in the game from the very beginning were e.g. studying, looking for work, work career, dating, partnership, family and sex. I already had the intention to make it possible for the player characters to date etc. with each other as well as with other characters. I also wanted to incorporate auction as a mechanism for competition. I had noticed with various games, like Reiner Knizia’s already classic *Modern Art*, that auction is a really engaging game mechanism that very naturally brings out interaction between all players. The exact bidding mechanics weren’t decided yet, I pondered whether to employ a method found e.g. in *Shipwrecked* game.

After the first design session I didn't yet have a clear vision of the layout of the game board. I visualized the board as a grid where one axis would be time and the other would be some other resource or a sum total, a combination of various resources. At the upper right corner of the game board there would be a winning zone, when a player's piece reaches it, the game would end.

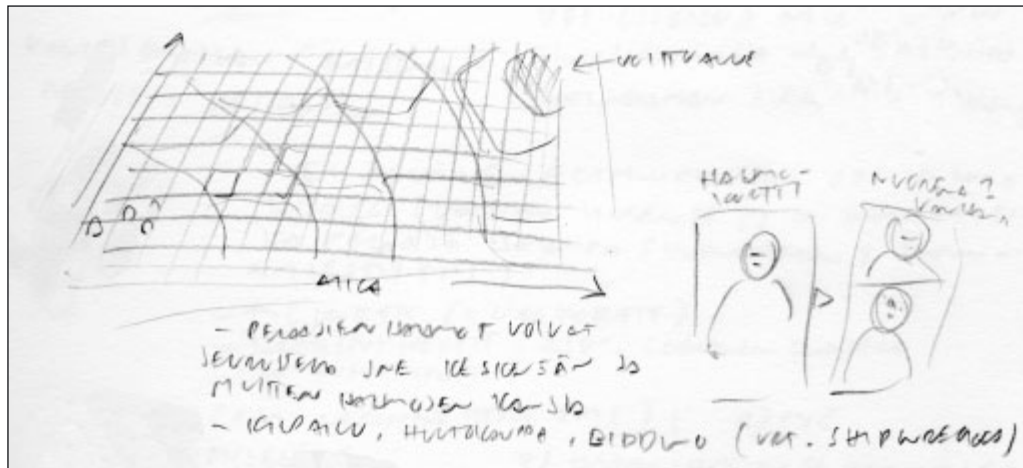


Fig. 3. How I originally visualized the game board and the character cards.

The character cards were also included in the design from the very beginning. I pondered whether these should be one- or two-sided, with one side of the card showing the character as a child and the other side showing the character as an adult. These images could also be combined on a one-sided version of the card in a traditional playing card style so that when the child image was right way up the adult image would be reversed and vice versa.

Immediately after coming up with the character cards, I concentrated on the auction mechanisms of *Good Life*. Cards would be drawn according to the age phase the players' characters were currently living. The players would compete for these by bidding some amount of resource points (time, attention or money) over the required minimum. The player who would bid the most for a card would get it and could then try to fulfill the requirements stated on the card. If she was successful, she would receive the amount of happiness or health stated on the card. The first ideas for cards I had were birth of a baby, boy- or girlfriend, marriage and job cards. I also toyed with the idea of players having only a limited number of bidding cards – if one used a lot of bidding cards to get a certain card she would have fewer of these left to bid for other cards. At this point I also attempted to find ways to encode a relatively large amount of information, like e.g. the tally of resource points, onto score cards or game boards and I tried to find a visual solution for an age phase itself. Here is an early tentative sketch of an age phase layout as it would appear on the game board. The horizontal axis corresponds to progress within certain quality or phenomenon while the vertical

axis corresponds to various alternatives, optional phenomena or qualities.

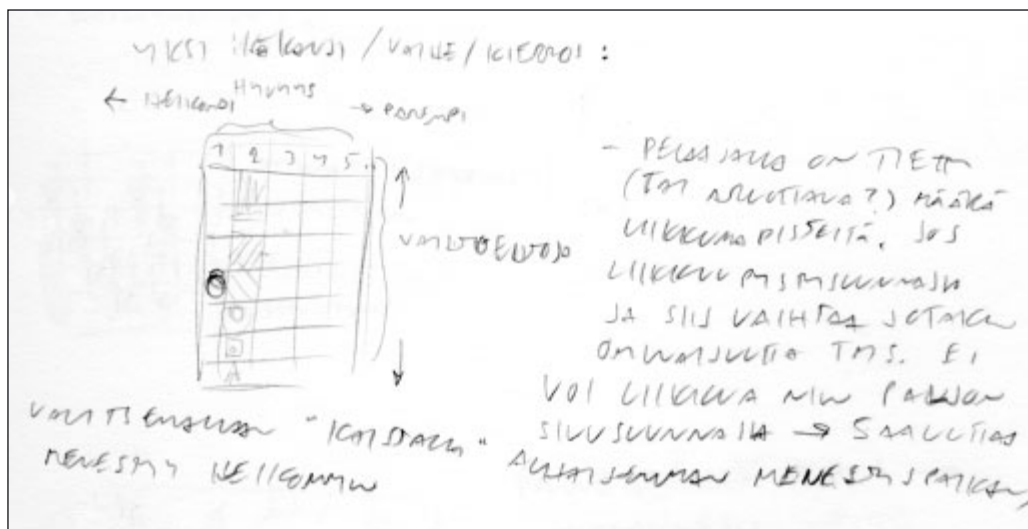


Fig. 4. An early sketch of an age phase layout.

I decided that each player would have either a fixed or a randomly set number of movement points (i.e. action points). If one would move vertically and thus choose a different quality, one's ability to move horizontally along a lane would correspondingly be reduced, i.e. one would reach a lower place, have less success in a selected quality. I didn't want to include player elimination i.e. the players having to stop playing in the middle of a game because their character died. I toyed with the idea that if a character died the player would just continue playing with another, slightly worse-off character that could be chosen randomly, or alternatively the player could go on playing as one of the dead character's children.

From the outset I thought that several real life phenomena could be best encoded into the game as cards. Character cards would make it possible to include a relatively large number of various characters that could function both as player characters as well as non-player-characters or NPCs. In addition to these, I envisioned event cards, role cards, personality cards, job or career cards as well as hobby cards like 'Environment protection'. At this point I did not yet have a clear vision whether to encode the three big fields of life, i.e. the job, the private life (social life, family, love, sex etc.) and the hobbies (and interests) with the help of cards, dice or some other mechanism. Nevertheless, the division of life into the three big fields was already a done deal. I further mulled over various alternative mechanisms for cards – for example, should the players be able to compete for the cards even after they had been dealt? Should some of the cards be negative so that having to take them would be bad? For instance, there could be a divorce card – if you got it you would have to split up with your spouse or partner unless you paid enough attention, time or money points. Naturally only those player characters who have a partner could be affected by the card. There could be a

bidding competition in which the player who offered the least would have to take the card, the bids could be kept hidden from the other players.

After this, I deliberated over the score keeping. I realized there would be a need to somehow balance the tally so that high points in any one resource would matter but not so much as to throw the game, the played 'life', off balance. One way to do this would be to take only the highest and the lowest point scores into consideration in the final scoring. Next I concentrated on the career card mechanics. To make the game careers resemble the real life more faithfully, I thought each career card should have e.g. five levels and the players would progress from lower job levels to higher, more advanced ones during the course of the game.

The competition over good and bad cards could be affected by where the players' pieces are situated on the game board. This ushered in the idea of a board that would be thematically differentiated so that different locations of the board would correspond to different qualities or different combinations of the three major fields. However, it took me some time before I was able to sort out how this could be done in practice.

In addition to arranging the three major fields of life onto the game board, I also considered another sort of thematic structuring for the game. As *Good Life* describes the whole of a human life from birth to death, I thought it might be a good idea to apply Campbellian myth structure to the phases of the game, the narrative flow of the game events. The events that take place when playing the game from start to end with a single character would structurally mirror Campbellian myth structure so that, for example, at an early point in the game there would be a shared event that would equate to the call to adventure, later on the characters would face various tests etc. I had no clear vision how to incorporate the myth structure in practice, one example that I mulled over was to use cards for various mythical functions. For instance, at a suitable point in the game a character or an event card could be selected for a 'threshold guardian' that the player character or characters would have to face and try to overcome. As regards the 'beta version' of *Good Life* described in this thesis, I have practically given up trying to integrate the basic mythological structure into the game since I feel it is over-complicated as is. Nevertheless, I still do think the basic idea of using Campbellian mythic structure in one form or another is an interesting and probably also a worthwhile idea. If it could be done successfully, the narrative arc, the overall 'plot' of game events might become more effective and psychologically more resonant.

At the same time that I started contemplating applying Campbellian myth structures I also began to think about how one could make a computer

version of *Good Life*. I imagined various completely preliminary ways to do this, like using a pressure sensitive pad as the game board so that the players' each move would automatically be shown and updated on a computer screen. Naturally this pad could also be replaced with a touch screen so that the game board would update in real time under and around the player pieces themselves. I also began to entertain the first preparatory thoughts about how I might use animation with my life game project. As to the game mechanics, at this point I thought about the players having to collect thematically unified series of cards. I also came up with the idea of including in the game questionable behaviour like cheating one's partner and 'stealing' another player's partner or spouse.

In the early fall of 2001 I attended a study workshop for a few weeks and had to take a short break from *Good Life* development. After the workshop I concentrated on the game board mechanics. To be able to imitate the richness of real life, I saw a need to make the game events variable enough so that the experience, the 'life' would be sufficiently different every time one would play it. A possible solution of how to introduce variety into the game board would be to compose the board or the path one traverses on it of interchangeable plates or counters. These plates would probably be square in shape and would have different symbols or patterns on them to stand for various game and life events.

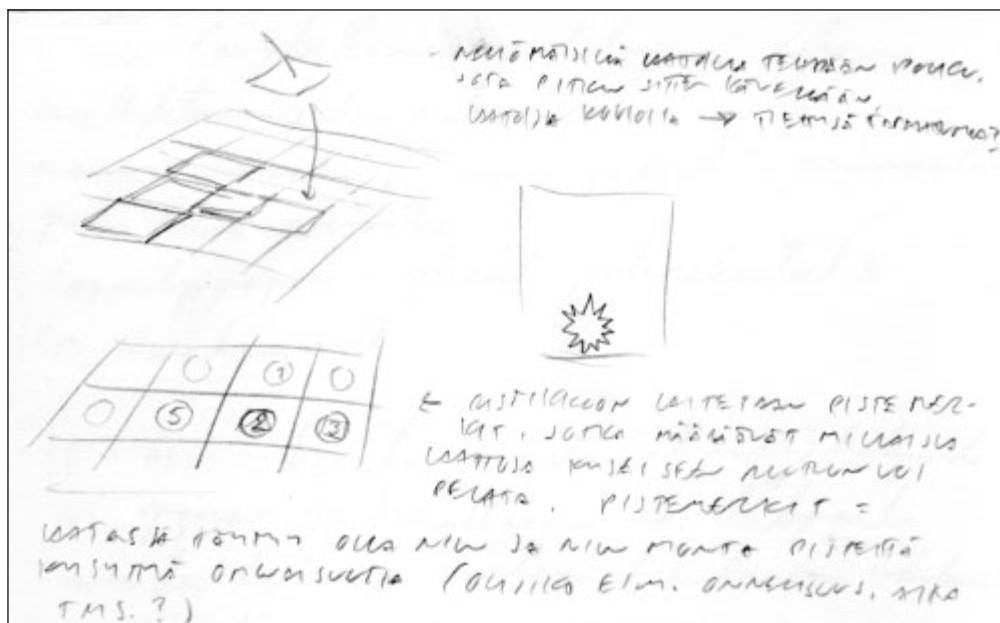


Fig. 5. The path of plates and the grid with resource point requirements.

On the game board there would be a grid of squares with different resource point amounts to indicate which kind of plates one could play on them. The plates would need to have the required resource point number on them for one to be able to play them on given grid squares. I even contemplated having the resource point requirements for the squares on separate plates or counters but having two kinds of plates on top of each other is probably a bad idea. Some

kind of point marking plates could also be used and they could at first be hidden and then turned over like in the Finnish game *Afrikan tähti*. However, this might well be too cumbersome, even if some sort of point marking plates could make it easier to keep a tally of different resource points.

Next I turned to designing the character cards for the game. More specifically, I reflected whether the character cards themselves should have empty places for three character qualities. At the beginning of the game each player would either randomly or by design put three number plates on these empty spaces to indicate their character's starting qualities – as in the character generation in role-playing games the sum of these starting points would always be the same, e.g. 25 points all in all. Thus each character could always be different for each play session. Another option would be to have these points marked on a separate points keeping grid where markers would be used to show the current situation with the character's qualities. This kind of grid could naturally be more complex than plates on the character card itself. The grid could for instance have unchangeable basic qualities as well as extra qualities that could change during the game.

At this point I made various preliminary sketches of the game board. I realized that if the game board were asymmetric along both the vertical and the horizontal axis it would be very hard to use event plates on it. I experimented with game board layouts that had seven and eight age phase 'blocks' and a

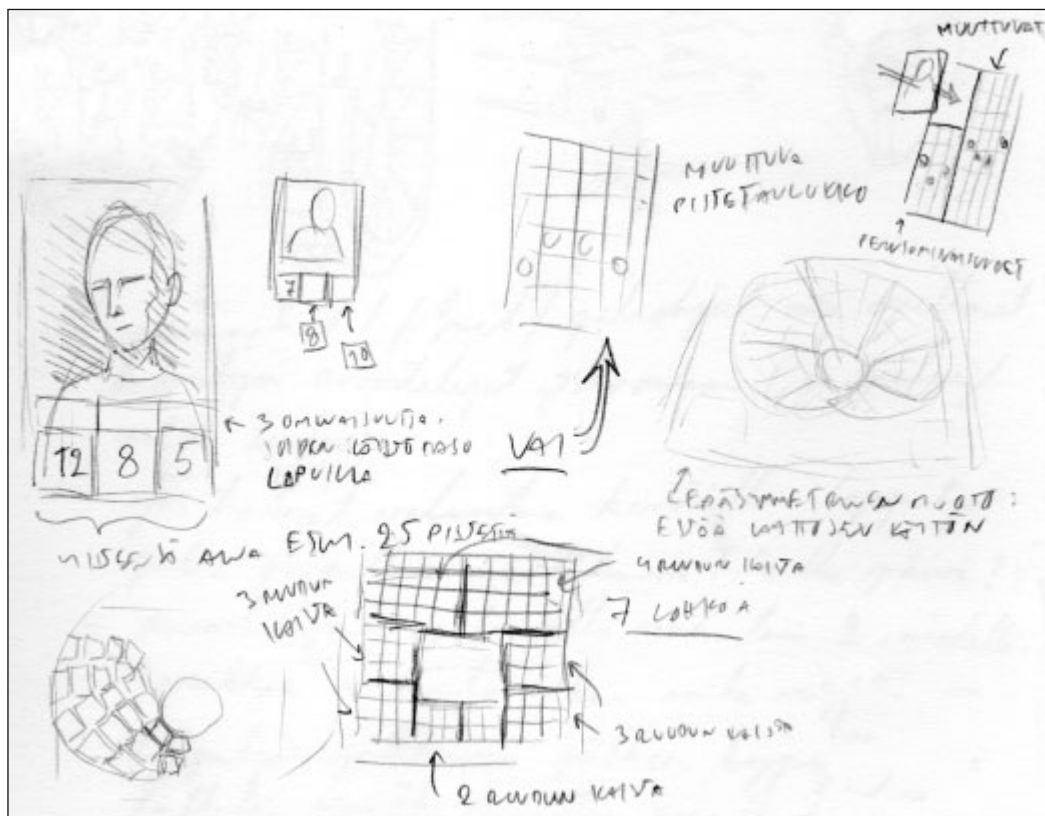


Fig. 6. Asymmetric board and character qualities on cards and a grid.

varying number of lanes, two to four, on each block. I was not satisfied with these early game board designs but the basic idea was already there, it just needed some more thought and experimentation.

I pondered some more about how I could use animation with my final thesis design. Several different possibilities presented themselves – I could e.g. make an animation that would serve as a short introduction into the game design and its themes, an ‘advertisement’ of my life game design project or a ‘how to play *Good Life*’ instructional animation. An excellent way to do an instructional animation would be to use the animation software developed in Media Lab by Perttu Hämäläinen which eventually evolved into the *Animaatiokone* project. The animation could be carried out mostly by just moving and shooting the game pieces on the game board frame by frame and adding either a voiceover or superimposed text and graphics. I still feel that an animation of this sort would be an excellent idea although I won’t have the time to prepare one for my final thesis.

Once again I thought more about whether and how I could incorporate mythic structures into the game mechanics and even whether I could and should include some kind of science fiction theme of the human evolution. However, I rejected these ideas at least for now as impractical and somewhat farfetched.

Next I concentrated on the different possible card mechanisms that could be used in the game. There was the general idea that cards would be laid on the table and the players could then try to get them for themselves. Some of these cards could be negative in nature (e.g. crisis cards) and one should try to avoid having to take them. Cards played on the table could have certain colored counters on them and there could be matching counters on the game board. This way the competition for the cards could take place at least partially on the game board. The colored counters or markers could be played e.g. at the very end of each age phase.

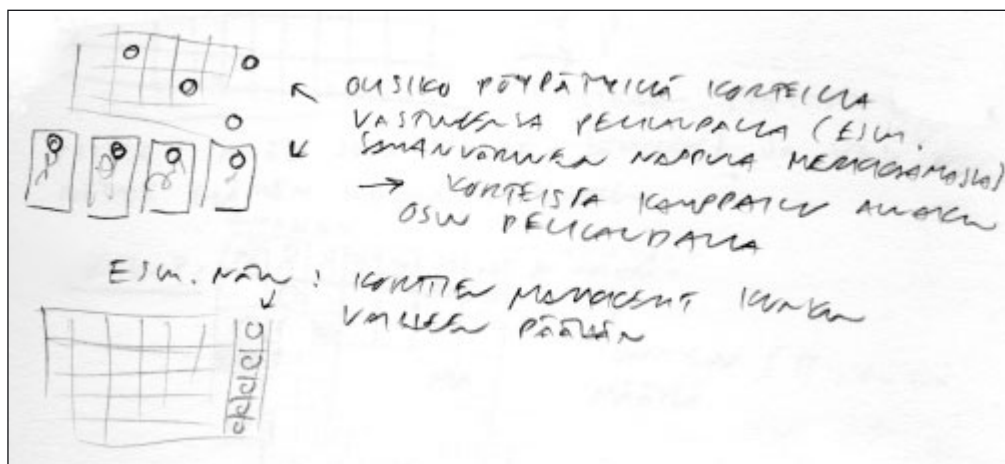


Fig. 7. Markers standing in for cards played on the game board.

At this stage in the development I began to concentrate on the thematic side, especially of the character relationships. It was crucial that the game mechanics and functions fit the themes of the game. I thought of the distance requirement between married or partnered characters' counters, i.e. these counters need to keep within a certain distance from each other or a crisis in the marriage or the relationship will ensue. The partners' need to stay close to each other mirrors the real-life need of couples having to devote a certain amount of time to common interests to keep the relationship healthy. In addition to increasing the thematic verisimilitude, the distance requirement forces the players to ponder whether it would be better to wait for the partner of one's character to follow her on the game board, risk a break-up with the said partner or even leave this partner. If a character were to try to change her partner to a new one without first breaking up with the old partner, it would equate cheating. It would also be cheating if a character had a short sexual relationship with some other character than one's spouse. Provided that one had some kind of 'keeping the relationship secret' card etc. then the character's spouse couldn't break up with the unfaithful character for a certain period of time or something equivalent. I envisioned that in the final scoring one would take into consideration how many crises the couples have had, i.e. how 'happy' the relationship has been. There could also be some kind of 'missing an old flame' card. It could work e.g. so that if one used to have a relationship with another player's character, one could directly move one's

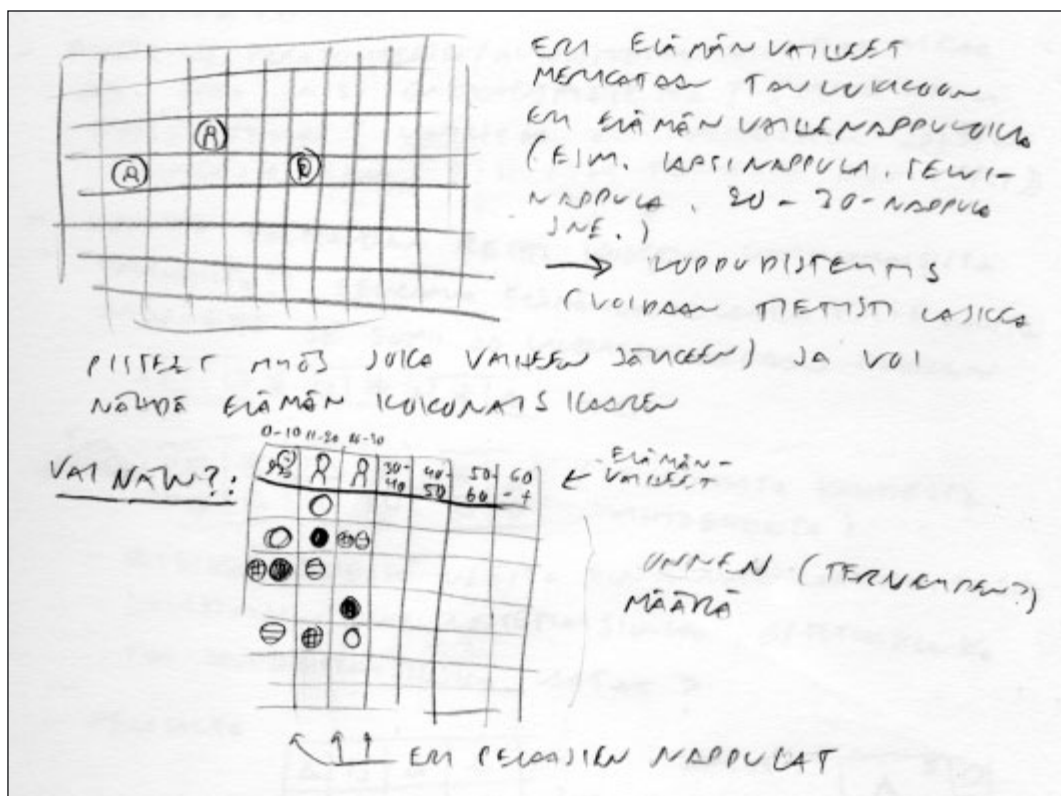


Fig. 8. Using counters to mark age phases on the game board grid.

character to the immediate vicinity of this old partner or vice versa. After a short or a long sexual relationship a competing player could play a child card on your character to represent an unwanted or at least an unplanned pregnancy. An even nastier option would be to play a venereal disease card on your character.

Turning once more to the game board mechanics, I ruminated on whether the various age phases of life could be marked on the game board grid with age phase counters. Thus there could be a child counter, a teenage counter, a counter for the age period from 20 to 30 years etc. These age phase counters could be used in the final scoring and they would help one to discern the big 'life arc', i.e. how the character has lived her life. Of course there needn't be just one final scoring. In fact, there could additionally be a scoring phase after each age phase.

The above sketch (Fig. 8) shows the two options I had at the time for marking the progress during each age phase. In the lower table the age phases are marked along the horizontal axis with the vertical axis showing how much happiness (or health) the characters have been able to garner. Each player has a counter that is easy to tell apart from the other players' counters.

I attempted to come up with a good solution for how to encode as game mechanisms the various phases of a relationship: dating, engagement, wedding, marriage and even divorce. I also contemplated how to incorporate various social phenomena and entities like friends, working companions, relatives and enemies. At this stage I mused over the final scoring mechanisms, i.e. should one include only the highest and lowest resource points into the final score, should these be multiplied etc. In addition to all this, I thought about using two somewhat stupid advertising slogans for my life game: "Life is a game" and "Life is the best game". Not too original, but with little massage and refinement they might even turn into something usable.

It was now the end of September 2001. I once more considered using Campbellian mythic influences, this time singling out the figure of Hero's Journey as a starting point for the layout of the game board. However, I gave this up since it felt too unconnected and demanding. I then thought I should emphasize the interaction between players more and consequently I turned to pondering how marriages and other relationships should be carried out. Specifically I tried to figure out whether the players should invest time or other resources in their characters' relationships to get love points and if so, what could these love points be used for. Could they be exchanged for happiness points or health points e.g. in 2:1 or 4:1 ratio?

As I didn't want to stick to the most ordinary game mechanics solutions, I started to look for innovative ways to make the game board. I

investigated the possibility of constituting the board, or actually it's age phase part, of domino-like plates. In constructing 'the life track' one would need to position each new life event plate so that it would fit the ones already on the table.

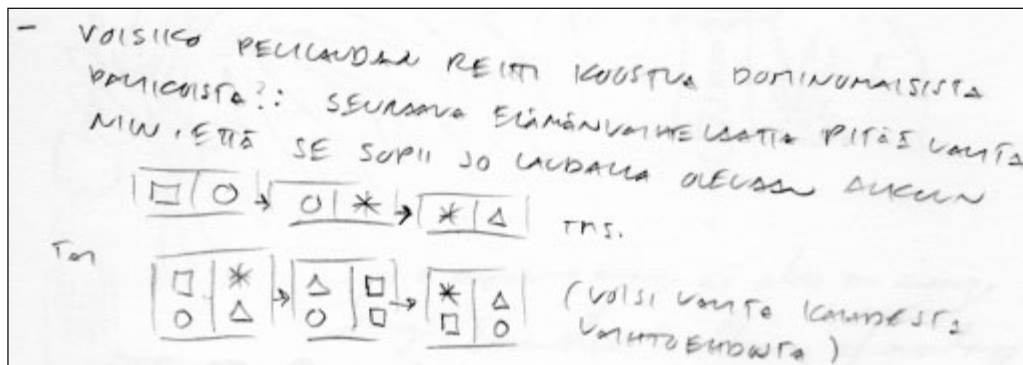


Fig. 9. Building the life track of domino-like plates.

If this kind of life event plates were to be used, it should be decided how the plates are distributed to the players – e.g. are they selected freely or picked blindly one at a time, are they bought, auctioned etc.? With event plates the actual game board could be a grid with symbols matching those on the plates.

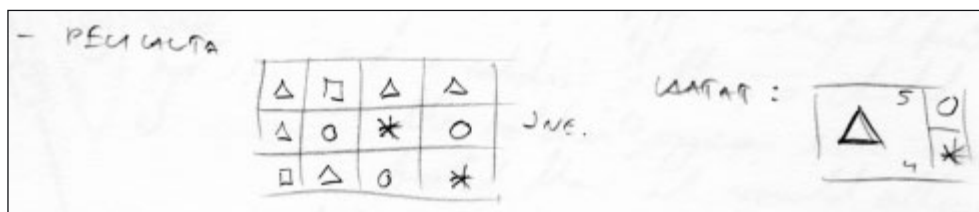


Fig. 10. The game board and plates with matching symbols.

The plates could have a single symbol, two symbols or one big symbol and two small symbols. With this last variant I had the idea that the big symbol would show the real 'value' of the plate and it could possibly have to match the symbol on the game board square. The small symbols would then indicate what kind of symbols one could play adjacent to this plate. The plates could also have two numbers, upper and lower one, telling how much action points one would need to pay to change lanes on the age phase grid thus altering the direction of the character's life.



Fig. 11. The payment for changing lanes on the age phase grid.

I developed the symbol-based plates and game board grids even further with different variants. For instance, I added values from one to four along

the horizontal axis of the game board grid. Having played a plate on the grid, one would pick a card that would have a symbol matching those on the plate and the board. The card would then tell what is happening, the number on the board indicating at what level the said event would take place.

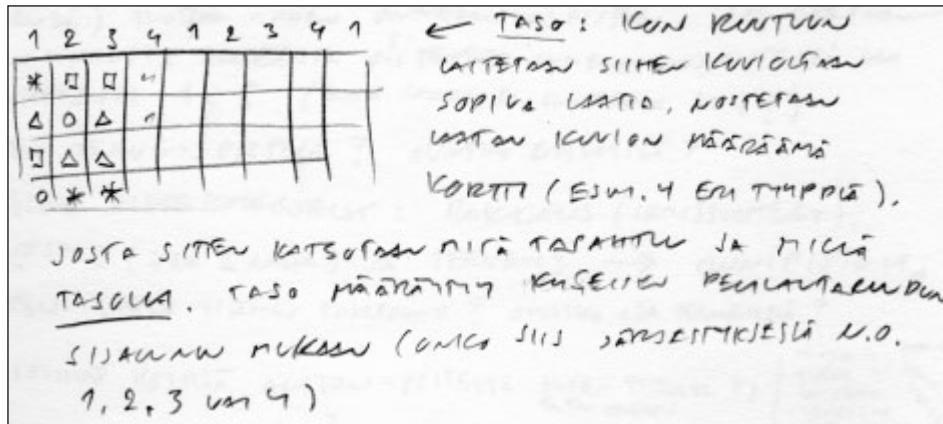


Fig. 12. A symbol-based event generation variant.

This may sound like too complex a system, and frankly, that's what it was for my needs. I saw the need to make the game design simpler and more streamlined, but at this stage I thought it best not to limit my thinking too much. I could always simplify the game later.

One element that I deemed necessary from the very start was the life (and game) goals. These should preferably be printed on cards so that they would be easy to change from game to game. At this point I began to ponder whether the life goal cards should be kept hidden from the other players. Additionally, some of the goal cards could be picked 'blindly' without first looking at them, or if one really wanted to have an advance peek at a goal card, one could pay for this privilege with resource points.

Struggling to incorporate the three big thematic fields into the game design I thought of using a symbol for each field: work, private life, hobbies and as fourth possibly a mixture of all of these. Each symbol would have a distinctive shape and also include a roman number or a number of pips to indicate its level.

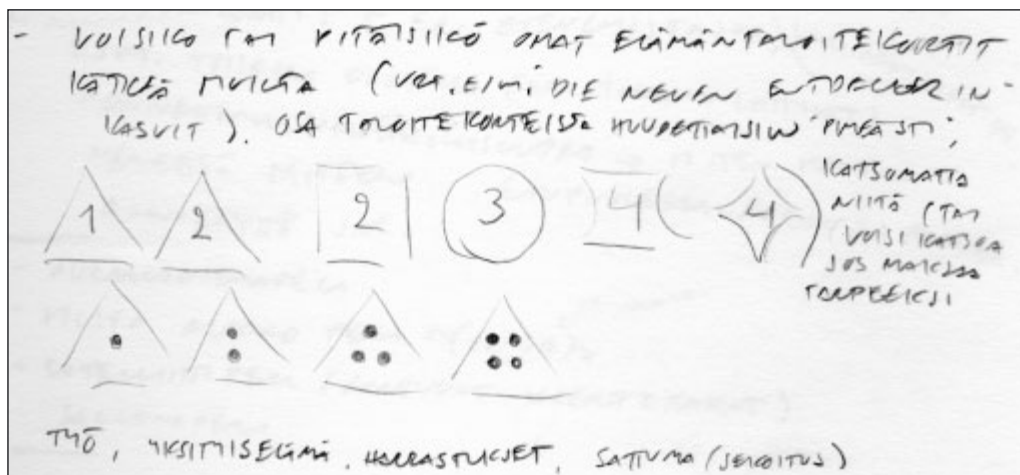


Fig. 13. Thematic field symbols.

Coming up with a natural, evocative shape for each of the field symbols turned out to be pretty difficult, which is ultimately the main reason why I didn't use the symbols in the beta version of *Good Life*.

Exploring the resources of the game further, I pondered whether at each age phase of the game the players should have a certain amount of time and attention points (and possibly money) at their use. One could use these resources to purchase or bid for cards or fulfill various requirements stated on these cards. Moreover, I thought whether they could also be used for movement but finally rejected this because if movement in the game was used to show the progress of the characters lives, it would be thematically awkward for them to have differing amounts of movement. However, as changing lanes on the age phase grid or track would also decrease the amount the characters are able to move 'horizontally' along the age phase track, it would probably be best to have the horizontal movement only indicate how far along her selected lane the character has been able to progress. Thus the age phase track would be used to indicate progress in some thematic value and not the progress of game time except very coarsely showing which ten-year-chunk of life the characters are currently living.

At this stage I came up with the final point score mechanism according to which one can get one happiness point for one point of each of the envisioned three resources, i.e. resources derived from work, human relationships and other. One can also get one happiness point for two points of two resources (four resource points in total) and for five points of any single resource. I tried to decide conclusively how to divide the human life thematically into three fields and invent the final names for these fields. During this process I noticed for the first time that the resource points from work, human relationships and other could correspondingly be success, love and health points. Health points were the hardest of these to situate thematically and game mechanically within the game – I wondered whether they should be a totally separate category. Another troublesome question was how the spiritual, the psychological health should be encoded. Should it just be considered a part of a larger concept, health, in general? This is how I finally ended up making it. Despite discovering at this stage the three resources that I finally used, it took a while for me to 'establish' them and limit the overall number of different resource point types to three (plus the action and the happiness points). As is detailed below, I toyed with a number of other possible resource point solutions as well.

Delving further into the game mechanical details I envisioned that profession cards could have e.g. five progress levels and on the opposite side there could be various 'disaster' or 'crisis' event possibilities that could perhaps be tied with certain profession progress levels. If they came to pass, these disaster

references would state e.g. how much the character would lose in resource points due to the featured crisis. Along with the progress levels, the front side of the card would state the wages, time requirements etc. associated with each progress level. I additionally researched whether rotatable dice, like in the *Chess*-based game *Proteus*, could be used as counters in the game. The top of the dice would show which mode they are in. I speculated that there could be modes like time usage mode, attention mode or, probably more usefully, the modes for work, human relationships and other (hobbies etc.). The modes could be marked e.g. with numbers on six-sided dice. If there were only three modes, one for each of the large thematic fields, each die could have a face for each mode and the remaining three faces could be used for different combinations of modes (1&2, 1&3, 2&3). These modes could easily be marked also without any special dice e.g. by having on each character card a table with three numbers. One would mark the current mode on these numbers with the help of counters.

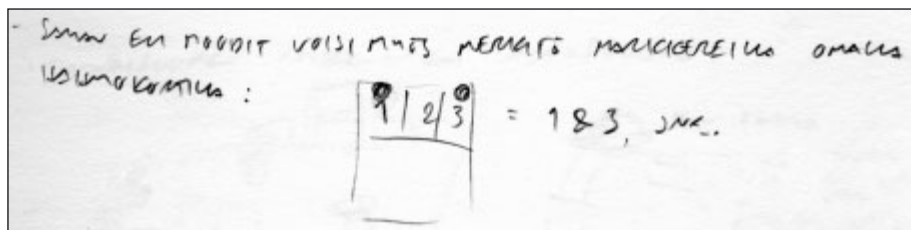


Fig. 14. Marking modes with counters on the character cards.

Inspired by the board games *Torres* and *Tikal*, I determined that *Good Life* could definitely use an action point system as a part of its game mechanics. If every player had e.g. five action points to spend each turn, they could use these to move on the game board but also possibly for purchasing new cards. As at this point the game design already had time, attention and money resource or 'mode' points, action points might lead to a slight problem: how should all of these different points relate to each other? I came up with the answer that each of the existing three point types could be used as sort of action points, each would be used for their own ends. Time points would be used for movement and 'purchasing' various resources, attention points would let one purchase relationships, cards etc. and money would be used for buying material possessions like a house or a car. Additionally, it could be used to pay for medical expenses, study expenses, expenses of child upbringing or possibly even for sex. At this stage I also reflected whether one should be able to exchange money back into time in some ratio. In the final design time, attention and money points as such were destined to be scrapped.

As should already be quite evident, many game mechanical ideas arose from my recent experiences with a new game with an innovative mechanism. E.g. playing the game *San Marco* made me wonder if it would be a

good idea to adopt its' 'I deal, you choose'-technique and take it even further. Another relatively novel idea partly inspired by contemporary board games like *The Princes of Florence* was that each of the players could have a game board of her own. These individual game boards could include point counting tracks and spaces e.g. for the characters' house and family. At this point in the design process I still hadn't pinned down the final number of age phases. I thought there might be seven age phases all in all, each corresponding to ten years of age, except for the last phase which could be played for as long as one is able so as to enable lives of varying length for the characters.

Along with the game mechanical development I also carried on with the visual development of the game components. I wanted to do something slightly out of the ordinary with the graphical design of *Good Life* and practically instantly at the very beginning of development I came up with the idea of using glass paintings as the visual theme in the character imagery. I liked the idea of representing contemporary characters, professions etc. as something quasi-eternal, outside of time. Naturally the obvious hazard here is that people might interpret glass painting images as containing religious overtones even when these are not intended.

Contemplating how I could make the character cards more thematically realistic I devised a somewhat complex system according to which the characters would inherit some of their traits from their parents. This 'DNA' mechanism would work so that at the beginning of the game the players would pick or be dealt two character cards (or character quality cards) as their character's parents. The character's starting quality points would then be reckoned based on the parents' points. An equivalent hereditary 'DNA mechanism' could also be used whenever the characters have children to establish their inherent character qualities.



Fig. 15. Glass paintings as the visual style.

Another idea associated with the characters' development was to include negative professions like 'a criminal', 'a thief' etc. If certain points were to sink low enough, the character could become 'a bum' and would need 'rehabilitation' to regain her social acceptability. I also deliberated whether the individuals' growth and development could be marked directly on the game board at the end

of every age phase – and if so, should there be seven (i.e. the number of the age phases at this point) differently sized markers for it?

At this stage in the development I discussed my life game project at the Final thesis seminar as well as privately with Heidi Tikka. Most of the feedback I got at the seminar had to do with the practical side of producing a final thesis design and paper while Tikka provided me with some ideas for the theoretical background of the thesis as well as suggesting Lasse Seppänen for my thesis instructor. Inspired by my discussion with Heidi Tikka I still once more tried to incorporate Campbellian mythic structure into the game mechanics. I went through a number of alternative ways to implement it, like e.g. having each of the age phases correspond to a Campbellian narrative phase. Each of the age phases could also have its own final goal that could possibly refer to Campbell's structures. Alternatively the mythic phases could be encoded on cards. I pondered if the players should accrue points marked onto a special table according to how well they have succeeded in fulfilling the mythic structural goal of the age phase or perhaps it should just be a question of passing or failing each age phase goal.

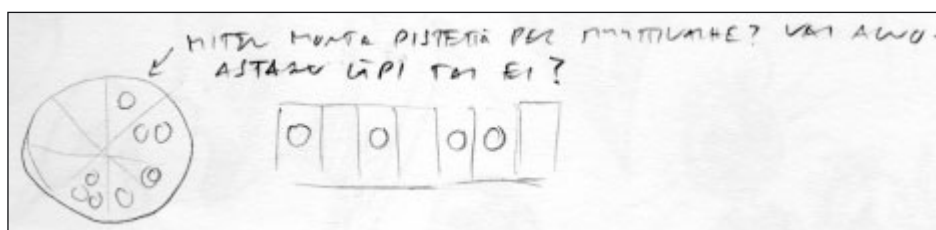


Fig. 16. Table for keeping score of the success in mythic structural goals.

Next I thought some more about the profession cards. In particular, I contemplated whether it would be advantageous to combine profession cards with hobby or interest cards e.g. in such a way that the first two professional levels on the cards would actually be considered as hobbies while the three or four levels after that would then be real professional levels with proper wages etc. I also reflected if a character should be able to have several professions and hobbies simultaneously if she can pay for their demands in time or other required resource points.

On October 26, 2001 game designer Greg Roach gave a public lecture about game development in the University of Art and Design Helsinki. I found many of Roach's notions very interesting although not all of them could be directly applied to my game design, mainly because he focused on computer and video game development. What I found especially useful in Roach's lecture was e.g. the notion that the intuitive interface is a myth (the affordance theory), that the most successful forms of interactivity are found in games, yet 99% of them fail in dramatic or emotional terms because of poor storytelling aspect. Also enlightening

was how he boiled down the complex subject to the basics, the common core of all games – that there is a fixed playing field, they are governed by rules and one or more players seek to achieve a goal by overcoming obstacles. At least for me this once more evoked the Campbellian mythic structures. When Roach discussed various narrative structures, I found the idea of a ‘storyworld’ engaging – here the user/player dwells inside a story structure. I believe many concepts that Roach brought up in connection with computer and video games could partly be applied to board game environment. At least notions like persona, agency, virtuality, granularity and dimensionality can be used up to a point also in board game development process. Likewise Roach’s idea about the law of dramatic necessity holds water also in board game context, i.e. one has to remove all the unnecessary parts of the narrative. Hitchcock said, “Movies are life with all the boring parts edited out”. Likewise in games it is central to present the right interactivity options to the user/player. Lastly, I also found it enlightening when Roach emphasized the necessity of achieving the easiest level of communication – the game product must be as easy to obtain and use as a toaster to get the man in the street interested. All in all, I found Roach’s lecture pretty stimulating although it didn’t really focus on board games.

After the lecture I concentrated for a while on the possibilities of external interactivity and expandability. For instance, I speculated whether it would be a good idea to offer new scenarios, cards (that the players would naturally have to print by themselves), variations etc. for download on the net. An interesting form of Internet-based interactivity would be to provide some sort of real-time solutions on the web which the players, if they so wanted, could use while they are actually playing *Good Life*.

In the Final thesis seminar on October 31, 2001 I presented my rough preliminary ideas for a final thesis to other Media Lab people. The presentation spurred some useful feedback and a handy mind map type of mapping of thematic key words associated with my final thesis. To some degree this may have helped me analyze and dissect the complex field in question.

In the next few weeks during the lectures I doodled, as is my habit, some more sketches of characters and their different professions in the glass painting style (Fig. 17, below).

Concentrating on the characters then led me to ponder if the game should partly be based on the characters’ and consequently the players’ cooperation. At this point the only contemporary board game with true cooperative game mechanics that I knew was Reiner Knizia’s *Lord of the Rings* game. According to my vision for the cooperative elements of my game I wanted that the players’ characters would be punished if they were too nasty towards



Fig. 17. Sketches of characters and professions in glass painting style.

the other characters. In my opinion, as worthwhile life is usually about striving towards balance and harmony, the characters should generally take other players into consideration – up to a point, that is. The actual trick would be winning even while to a certain extent helping the others. The selected personal goal (or ‘agenda’) would dictate whether one could be inconsiderate or even cruel and vicious towards the other players’ characters. I hoped that in the game there would be a contrasting of true altruism and superficial ‘selfish’ altruism. I also wished to show polarizations like true selfless religious faith and rigid religious fundamentalism. In most cases helping other characters in need, taking them generally into consideration and showing solidarity should lead to increased sense of community and a greater number of friendships.

After thinking about the characters, I once more concentrated on the design of the game board, especially the age phase grid. I thought it might be psychologically the easiest to have a square per each year, but then again,

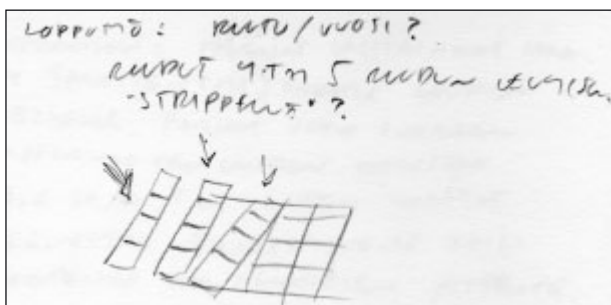


Fig. 18. Age phase grid built of strips.

there needn't be a one-to-one correspondence between the squares and the years. I concluded that a rough, a decade per each age phase, correspondence is thematically quite sufficient. I also examined the option of building the age phase grid out of vertical strips of four or five squares.

For a while I entertained the idea of having as many as nine age phases and doing away with the squares altogether. Then I came up with the thought of having empty spaces at the end of every lane (i.e. row) on the age phase grid. On these places one could play plates that would dictate the qualities of the said row. They might e.g. force the markers on the lanes to move in a certain fashion or indicate on which fields the characters are progressing. The 'lane plates' could either remain the same throughout the game or the players could exchange them.

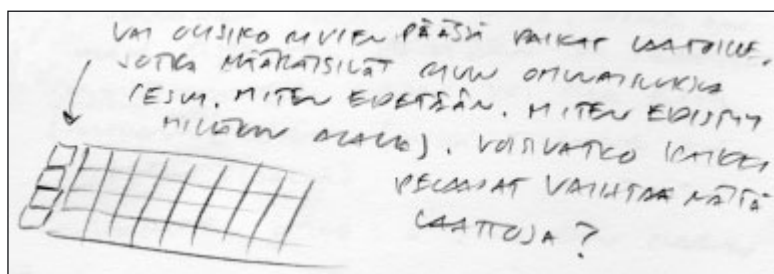


Fig. 19. Plates played at the end of the lanes could affect the qualities of these lanes.

Expanding on the idea of the age phases I started to speculate if the counters' movement within the age phases (i.e. within 10 year chunks of life) should take place on a field (i.e. a board) whose poles would correspond to various optional aspirations. I imagined different possible varieties of this kind of game boards.

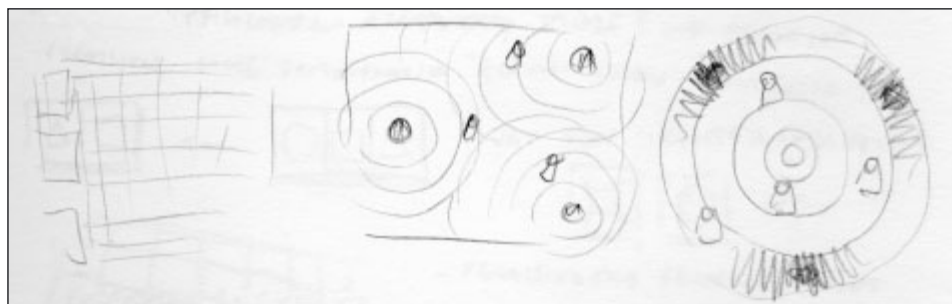


Fig. 20. Age phase field/board variants.

One intriguing possibility that presented itself was the ability to change the locations of the thematic poles on these boards. The players might even be able to move poles during the game.

Another design option that I had was that the players would play the goal plates on the board and then try to reach and get them with their counter. The other players could naturally snatch a desired plate right before the player who played it has a chance to obtain it, thus making things more difficult and

more interesting.

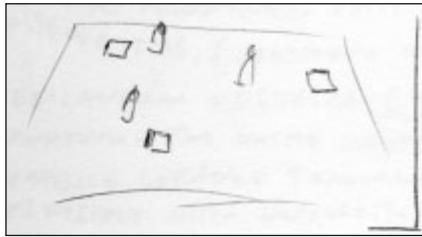


Fig. 21. Goal plates played on the board.

A possible variant for realizing goals I thought about was to have people play goal cards or plates on the board and then invest their own 'potential points' on them. If one would then reach the goal, one's own potential points as well as those any other players had played on it would be gained as actual points. Additionally, there could be longer-term 'agenda' or 'plan' cards whose goals one could try to realize by reaching goal cards (or plates).

I also considered a variant which I didn't pursue very far. In it the players would play maximum four goal or other cards in the middle of the game board. The positions of these cards (A, B, C, D) would either correspond to the lanes on the age phase grid, or there could be some sort of vote on which card matches which lane. The voting for the order of the cards could take place by playing resource point counters on the cards, the player who has played the most resources on a card could swap its place with a card on which has been played less resources. This system felt too complex and I dropped it soon after the initial conception.

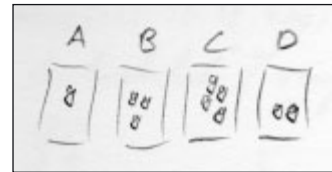


Fig. 22. Voting for the order of cards with resource point counters.

I returned to contemplating forming the life track on the empty age phase grid by constructing it of domino-like plates with symbols or variously just simple square counters with single symbols.

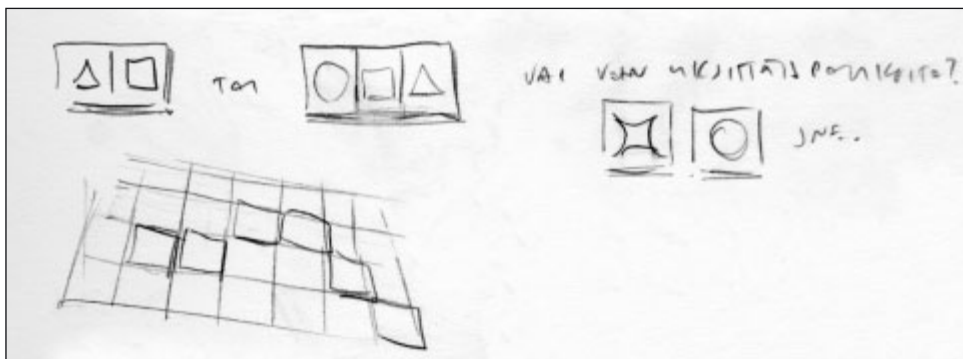


Fig. 23. Domino-like plates and square counters with symbols.

At this point I considered whether the players would play the life event plates on the age phase grid before each age phase. Some of the plates could be played face up and some face down. A face-down plate would be turned over

when a player reaches it and possibly pays a fee in resource points to inspect the plate. I tried to come up with a thematic explanation for this kind of plate inspection but the ones I invented were a bit unsatisfactory. Playing the plates on the age phase grid at least could be explained thematically as the players' characters planning their future. I rejected playing goal cards in the center of the main board, but I devised yet another variant according to which various event or phase cards played on the center of the board would determine what would happen to the player characters. The event cards would be played on places with various symbols, and the card events would occur to those characters whose markers were on places with symbols matching those of the card places.

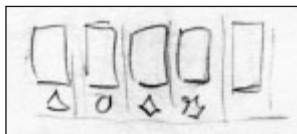


Fig. 24. Event cards on places with various symbols.

Next I began to examine whether it would be better to turn the time track, i.e. the age phase track, into a single file that is wide enough for just one counter, the marker for keeping track of time. Nevertheless, one could play plates on this time track. Each age phase would be played on the grid in the center of the board.

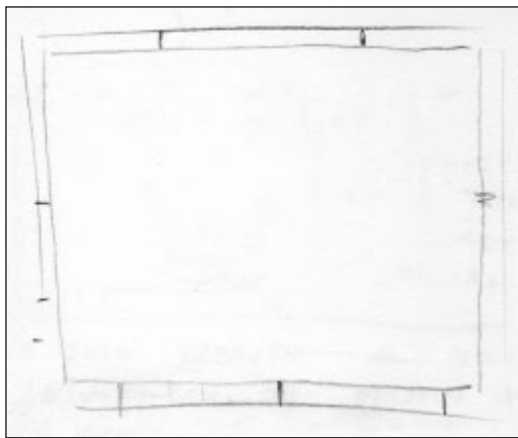


Fig. 25. A single file age phase or time track.

The short-term goals would be played in the middle of the board while the long-term ones, i.e. the goals that can be achieved after each age phase, would be played on the time track. The long-term goals could be dealt to the players e.g. according to who has received the largest number of certain points during an age phase. In the middle of the board the gameplay could be based

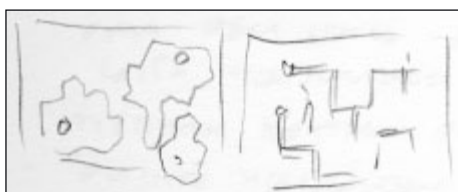


Fig. 26. Sketches of influence areas and domino-like plates.

either on using domino-like plates or moving on areas of influence.

Probably the biggest advantage of having a single file time track instead of a grid of several lanes would be that more players could play the game at the same time. However, if the time marker were to advance one place at a time along the single file track, it would be pointless to play plates on the track. I came up with yet another option, that there could as many lanes as there are different modes – additionally, there could be 'inbetween lanes' of two simultaneous modes. The lanes would actually dictate the mode the player's marker is in. The other ways to decide the current modes would be to use a rotatable die or three cards which would be turned over to show the required modes.

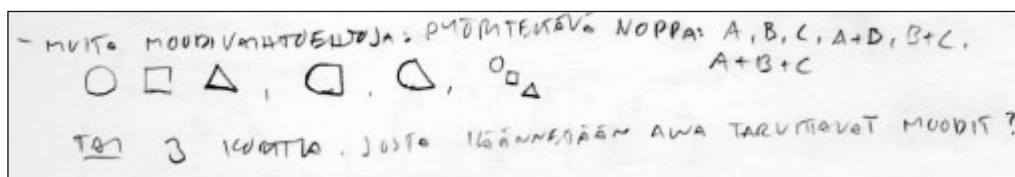


Fig. 27. Mode indication variants.

The modes would represent the main themes like job or career, other interests (hobbies, religion etc.) and human relationships.

Then I developed a variant in which the modes were mapped on the game board as areas made up of squares. On entering a square the players would draw a card that would tell which kind of struggle (i.e. life event) the square in question would contain. These card events needn't be random, each square (A1, D4 etc.) could have an equivalent card to go with it. Each conquered square would bring the player character an amount of resource points as a reward.

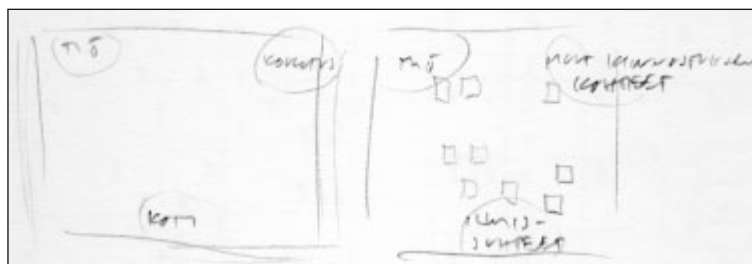


Fig. 28. The modes mapped on the game board as areas.

I next reflected whether there could be more than one counter on these squares, whether the counters should remain connected with each other, and whether one could try to remove the other players' counters. I wondered if the age phase grid played on every age phase, on every game round, should somehow match with the players' own game boards. For example, a certain number of counters on the general board could move a counter to a certain position on the own game board etc. I began to think that the difference between the main game board and the players' own boards could be that the main board

might be more abstract and on a more general level (e.g. 'human relationships') than the players' own boards. These could conversely be more detailed and on a more material level (e.g. 'spouse', 'house'). I also contemplated several other details regarding the main and the individual boards, like on which squares of the main board the players could play their counters. Then I proceeded to designing the overall graphical layout of the main board. I particularly concentrated on the number and arrangement of the 'quality poles' on the board as well as the numbering of the board squares.

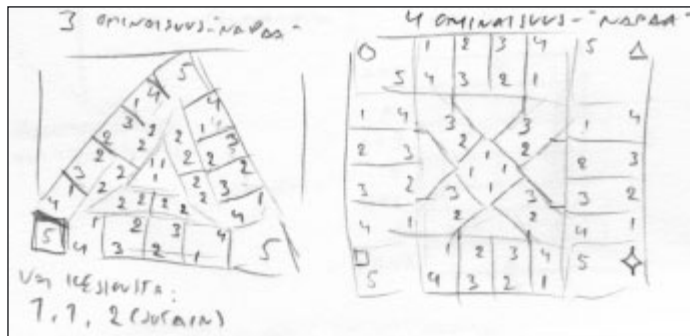


Fig. 29. Main board sketches with different number of quality/mode poles and varying numbering.

I imagined it would be useful to assign a specific color to each pole, and on the squares between the poles there could be a gradient from one pole color to another. The specific colors could also be used on cards to signify which qualities are associated with the card. Drawing various sketches of the boards as well as other graphical figures really advanced my game design process. Even preliminary visualizations helped me to design the game more holistically, instead of just seeing various separate mechanisms and details.

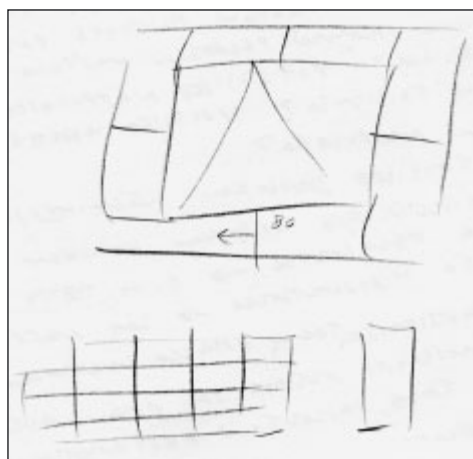


Fig. 30. Game board sketches.

At this point I returned to thinking about the dependencies between the three major themes (work, human relationships and other) and the three associated resources (money, love and health). Later on, I changed 'money' into 'success' that includes both the material and the social forms of value or 'currency'. All the other resource point variants I had toyed with along the course of the development had by now been whittled away from the design, leaving these

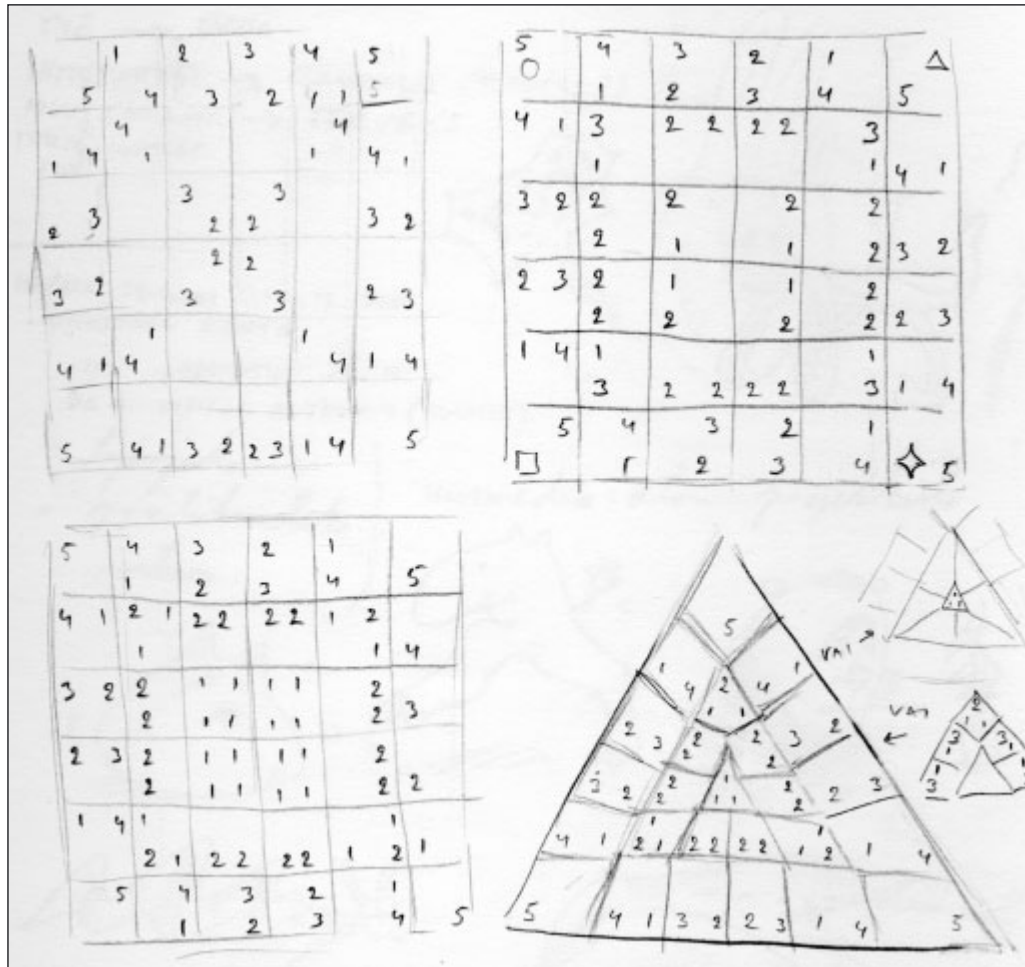


Fig. 31. Variants of the mode triangle (or square) area of the main game board.

three and action and happiness points. Other issues I thought about were whether to allow players to swap cards with each other and whether to include a life event phase during which players could play to themselves and to each other both good and bad events. I pondered how the nearness requirement of the character markers could be realized and whether a counter's movement on the inner parts of the main board should somehow affect the movement of the same player's counters on the outer parts of the board, i.e. the age phase track. Beyond this, I further investigated the possibility of using video or animation clips or even interactive animation as part of my final thesis. Moreover, I began to formulate a rough initial structure for this final thesis and make preliminary plans about its schedule. I wondered whether I should try to come up with some kind of interactive digital version of *Good Life*, but in the end I decided it isn't necessary and might actually hamper the development of the board game design.

Early January of 2002 I was at a point where I could start to devote myself more to the details of the game design. I contemplated adding a card or a plate mechanism like the ports in *Settlers of Catan* with which one could exchange any resource for another at a certain ratio, e.g. at 3:1. I also thought

of having crime events that would decrease success (money) and/or health. For characters I came up with various quality or trait cards like e.g. Brave, Energetic, Survivor, Boheme and Activist nature. Similarly a number of profession cards were introduced like a Farmer, a Musician, an Artist and an Author card. Several goal cards were also conceived at this time like Ecological life style, Nature preservation, Art and Self fulfillment, Communality, Homebuilding, A lot of descendants, Professional success, Justice/Rightfulness and Intellectualism. With several phenomena it was not yet evident to me whether they would be best incorporated into the game for instance as quality or goal cards. Generally it was quite hard to decide how to encode e.g. values, attitudes and beliefs. I also pondered if changes in this kind of phenomena should be realized with separate cards like e.g. a 'Professional change of direction' card. I also had some fairly obvious yet crucial flashes of insight regarding the game mechanics. Among other things I realized that the life event plates could be played on the board face down so as to make the game more exciting and varied.

I began to design the actual preliminary game board and pieces with Freehand around February of 2002. In early April I attended Maureen Thomas's workshop and dedicated the whole of it to working on my game design. During this very useful workshop I concentrated on thinking about my final thesis and game design from novel angles. For example, more elaborately than before, I pondered the color schemes of the board and pieces and what I want to express with them. Likewise, I contemplated the illustrations and thematic side of the game mechanics in detail. The question of competition vs. cooperation surfaced again, and there also emerged new questions, mainly inspired by Thomas's movie-based approach to narrative structures. I reflected on questions of point-of-view in my game, various inherent characteristics of the board game medium as well as the hook, the pitch, the marketability of my game – how to make people like and care about my game, how to get them to play it and keep coming back. I mulled over the performative, philosophical and interactive aspects of my game design. On the whole, Maureen Thomas's workshop was very beneficial, helpful and effective in giving constructive feedback and inspiration for my project. An especially useful thing was Thomas's encouraging me to sketch loosely and do things that aren't perfect.

After the workshop I concentrated on writing the first versions of the game rules, the various cards and plates as well as preparing the first play-testable versions of the game boards and the game pieces. I printed the game board in one piece with the big inkjet sheet printer in Media Lab. The gamers' own boards were just A4 laser printouts. When I had written enough game pieces, I printed them with a laser printer on adhesive sheets, glued them on color coded

sheets of card board and cut them into separate cards. The plates were harder to prepare as they needed to have writing on both sides of the cards. I solved this by printing the writing of one side on transparent adhesive sheets and gluing these in careful registration with preprinted sheets.

During this design and printing period in the summer of 2002 I needed to finalize the structure for all the card types, albeit preliminarily. Among other things I decided how many and which levels each card (e.g. profession cards) would have, how much each card would cost, what would be the content of each card and each plate etc. Moreover, at this point I needed to decide in detail at which stages the various plates and cards would be available so that they would mirror real life as well as possible. For this I needed to make elaborate lists and tables of various phenomena of human life, categorizing each phenomenon into their proper niches. I also came up with the age phase goals for each age phase, i.e. which cards one would obtain by doing well and proceeding far enough along each phase. I discovered that realizing my initially coarse, undetailed sketches into working game pieces demanded a great deal more effort than I anticipated. I certainly never expected it to be easy but seeing to all the minuscule details and deciding each aspect of the game mechanisms was harder than I could foresee. The final prototype didn't include the graphical design chrome and polish of a finished product – I expect this would introduce another layer of complexity into the development. For the prototype I mainly stuck to a very basic and functional look and design, for a commercial version this would need to be radically overhauled. With the prototype the main graphical issues were deciding what information to include on each game piece and how to make everything as clear and intuitive as possible. After the summer and fall of 2002 the prototype of *Good Life* was finally at a stage where it could be play-tested properly – it was the stage where I meant to leave it for the purposes of this final thesis.

Below there are some more examples of my sketches before and after the initial development “lockdown” and finalizing of the prototype design of *Good Life*. I believe these illustrations don't need to be accompanied by long passages of text to be understandable so I will describe their content using captions only.

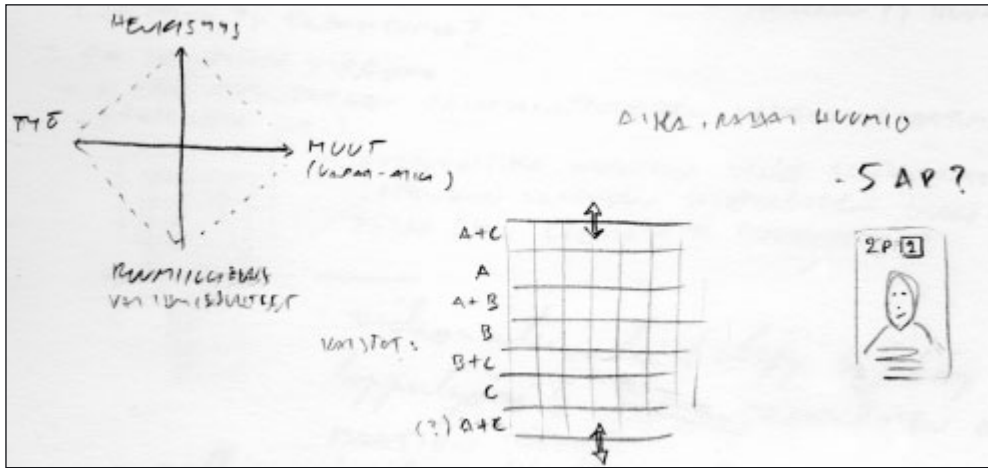


Fig. 32. Various sketches: life field/mode diagram, mode grid and a character card.

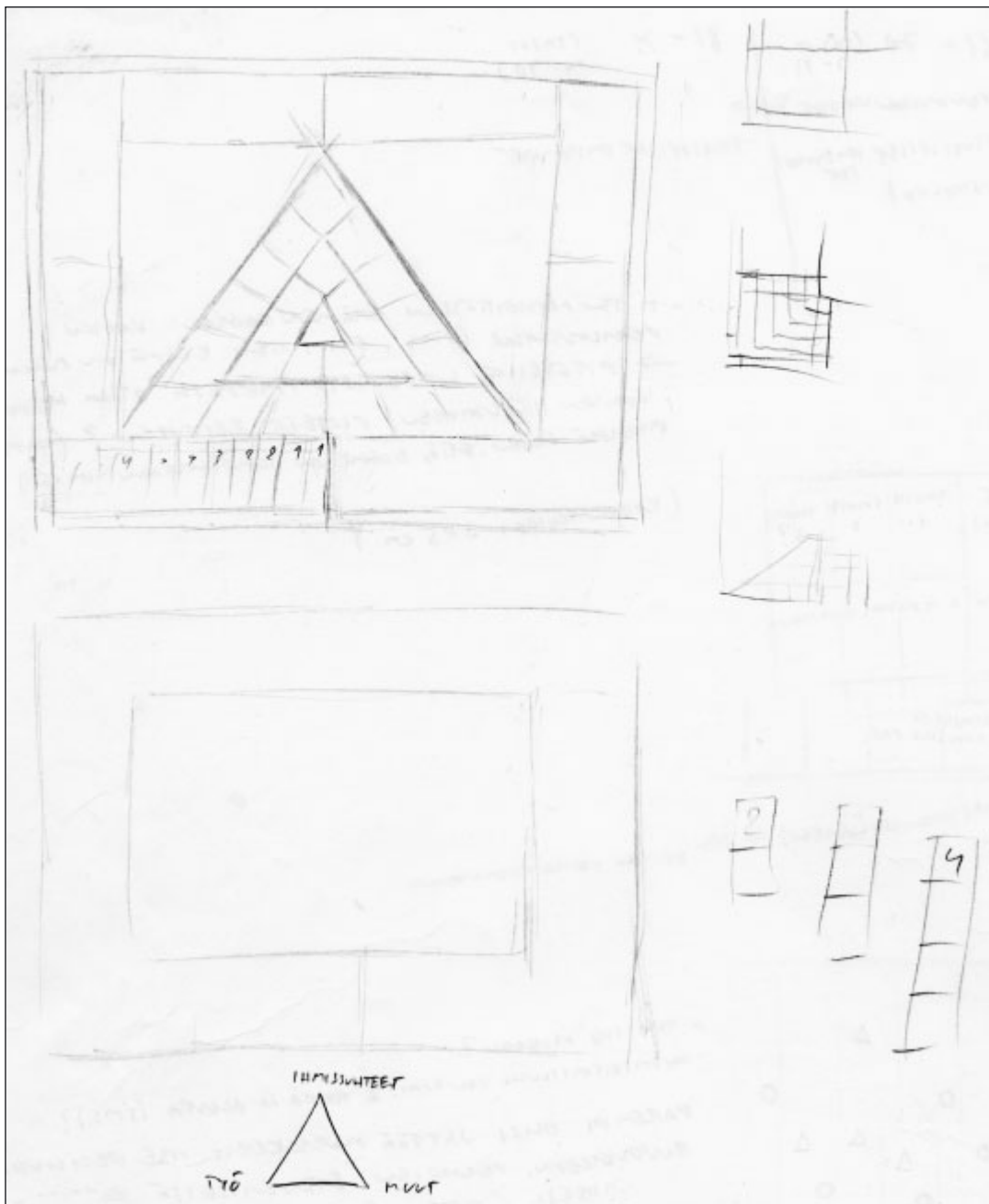


Fig. 33. Main board sketches.

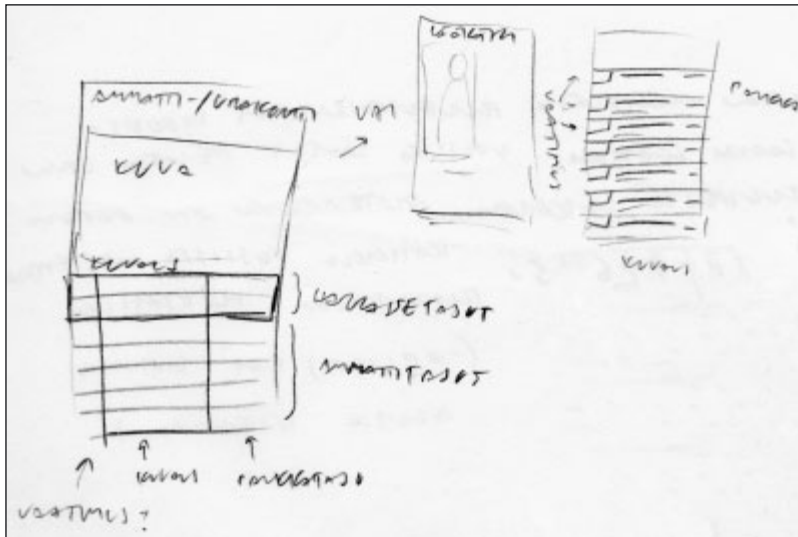


Fig. 37. A profession card with several levels of hobby and career advancement.

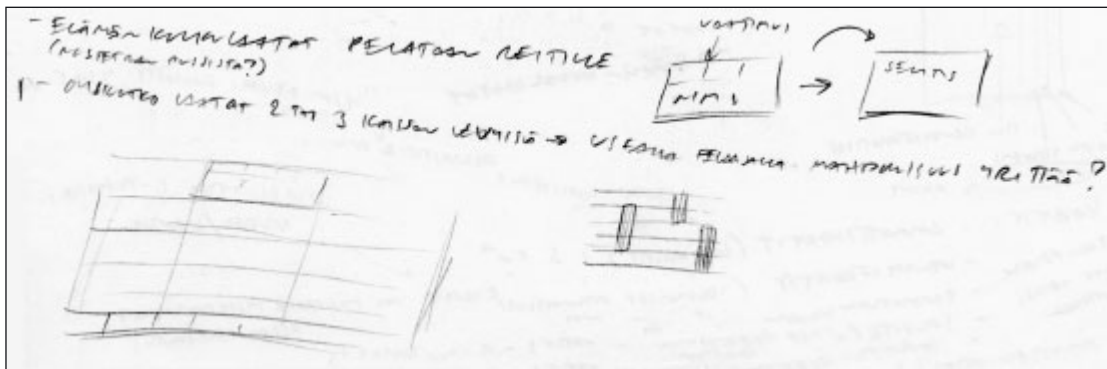


Fig. 38. A sketch of the event plates and the age phase grid.

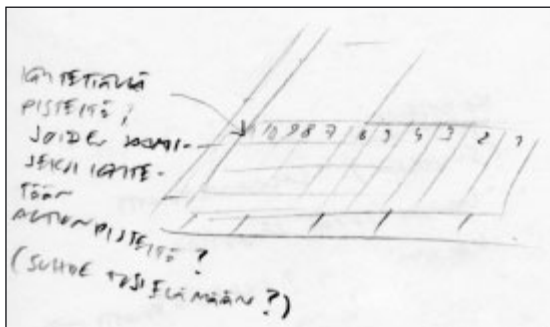


Fig. 39. Here I pondered whether a player could get resource points by advancing on the age phase grid with the help of action points.

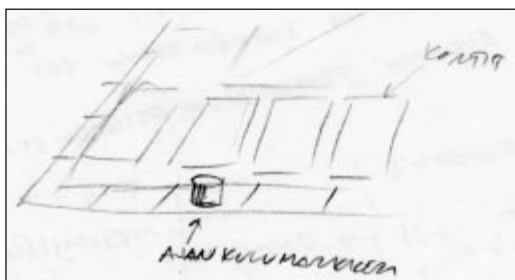


Fig. 40. The time track marker.

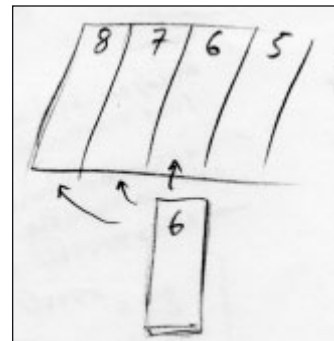


Fig. 41. An event plate can be played only on a column with an equal or larger number than on the plate.

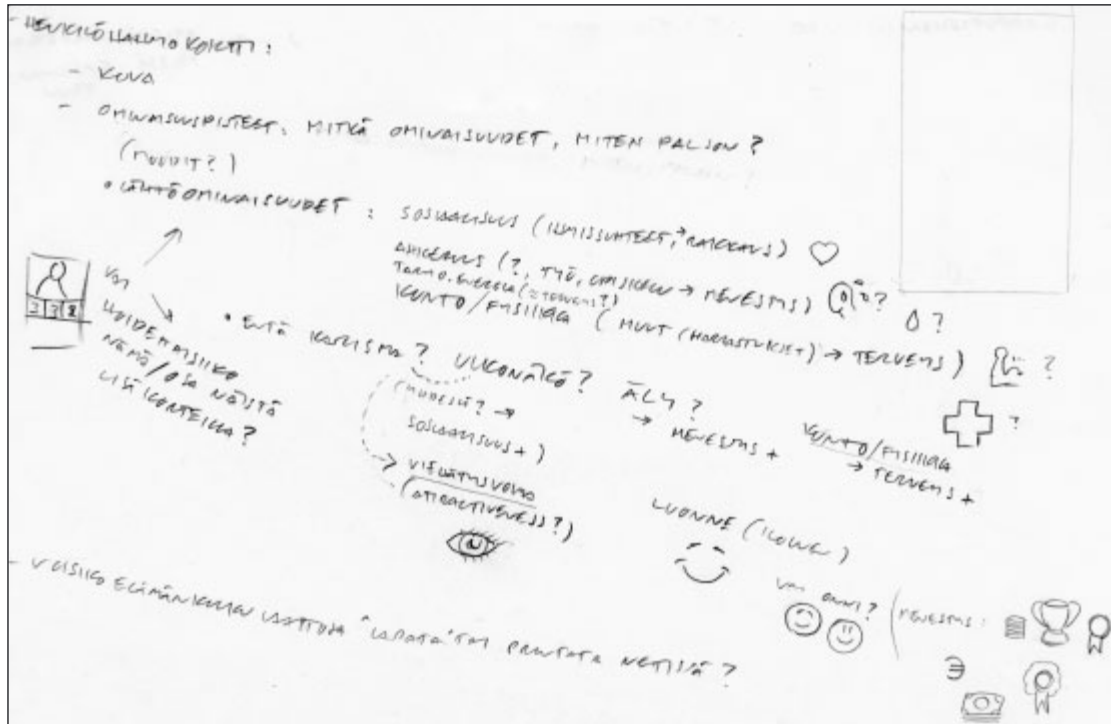


Fig. 42. Brainstorming the character cards, their starting qualities and possible symbols for each quality.

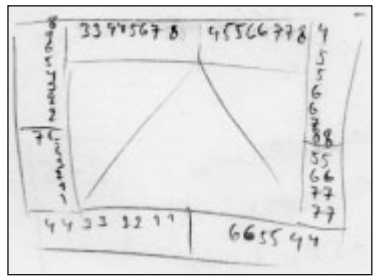


Fig. 43. A plan for the distribution of event card numbers on the age phases of the main game board.

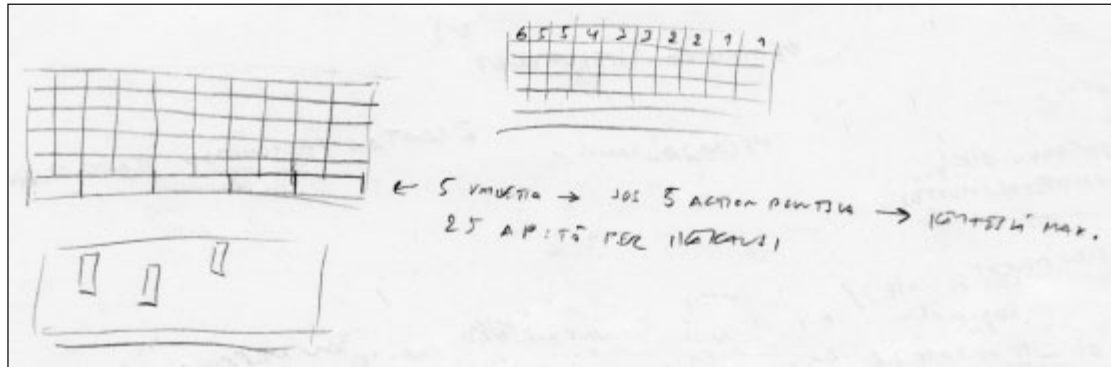


Fig. 44. I considered having as many as five turns on each age phase, and five action points per turn.

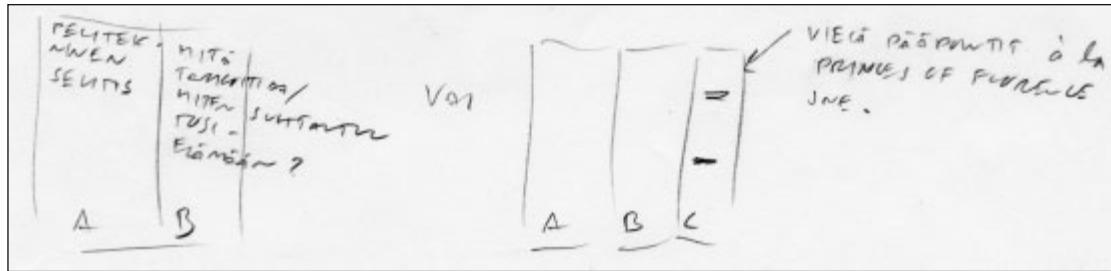


Fig. 45. Design for the layout of the final rules. I thought about how to explain what various game mechanics symbolize or refer to in real life and how to make the rules as easy to learn as possible.

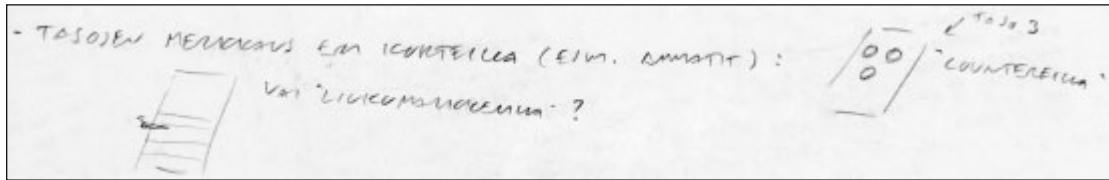


Fig. 50. The current level on each card could be marked using either counters or slidable clips.

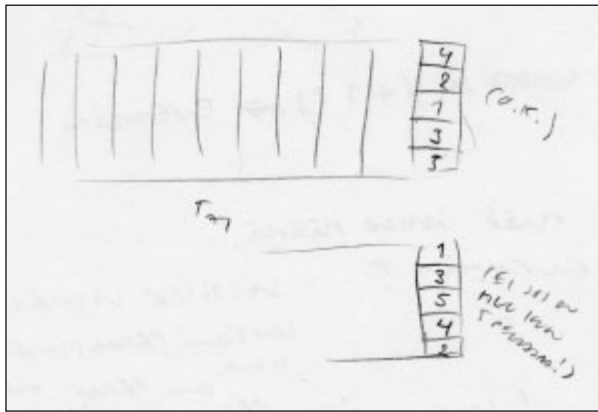


Fig. 51. Deciding how the players should place their counters on the age phase grid lanes according to player order.

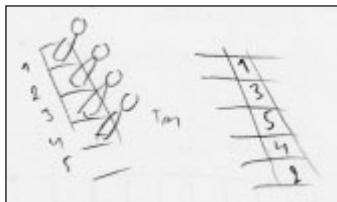


Fig. 52. Auctions could be held according to the order of the counters.

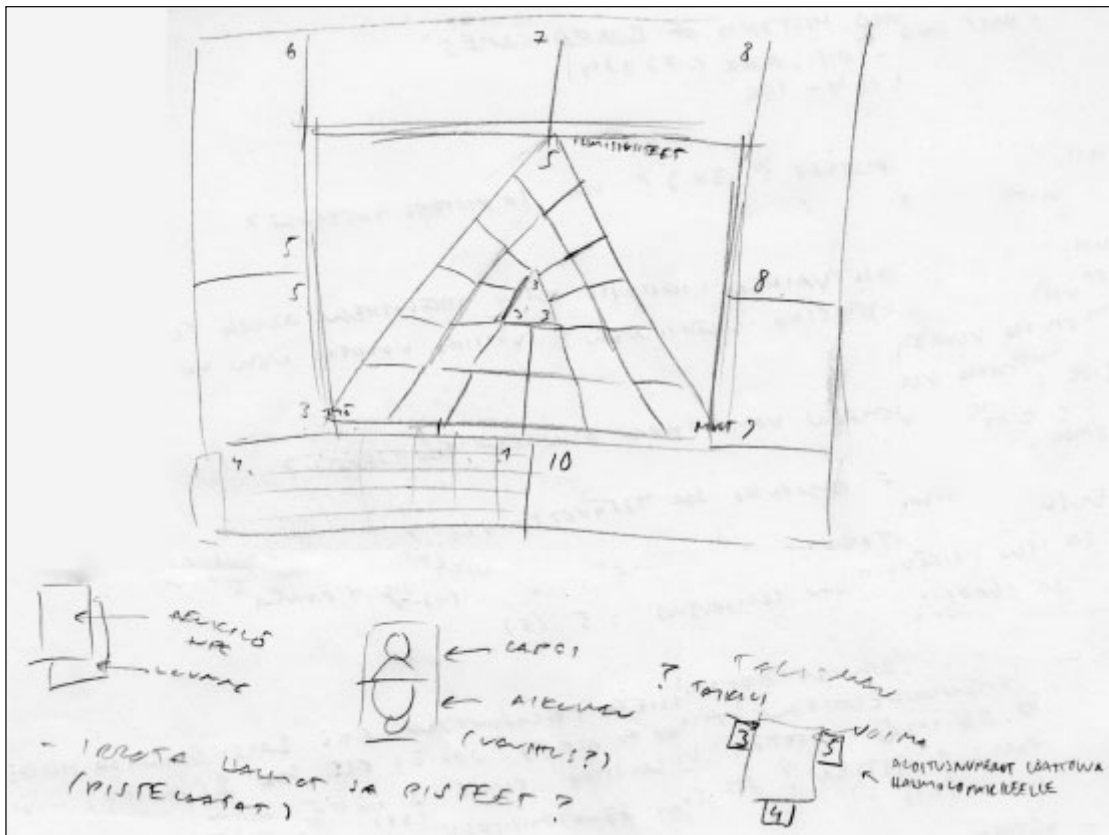


Fig. 53. Here I contemplated the point distribution on the main game board, the layout of the character cards and how to associate characters with their basic personality as well as their starting quality points.

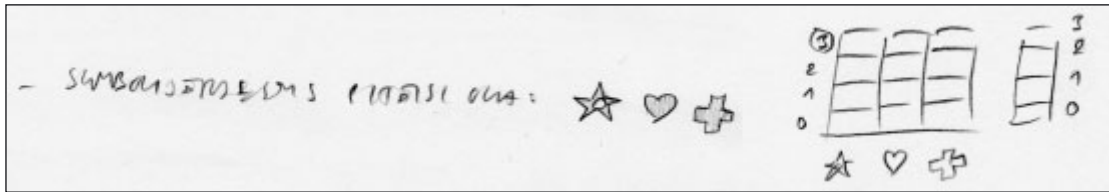


Fig. 54. Deciding the final resource symbols and their order on the players' own game board.



Fig. 55. Contemplating which font symbols to use to signify the various resources of *Good Life*.

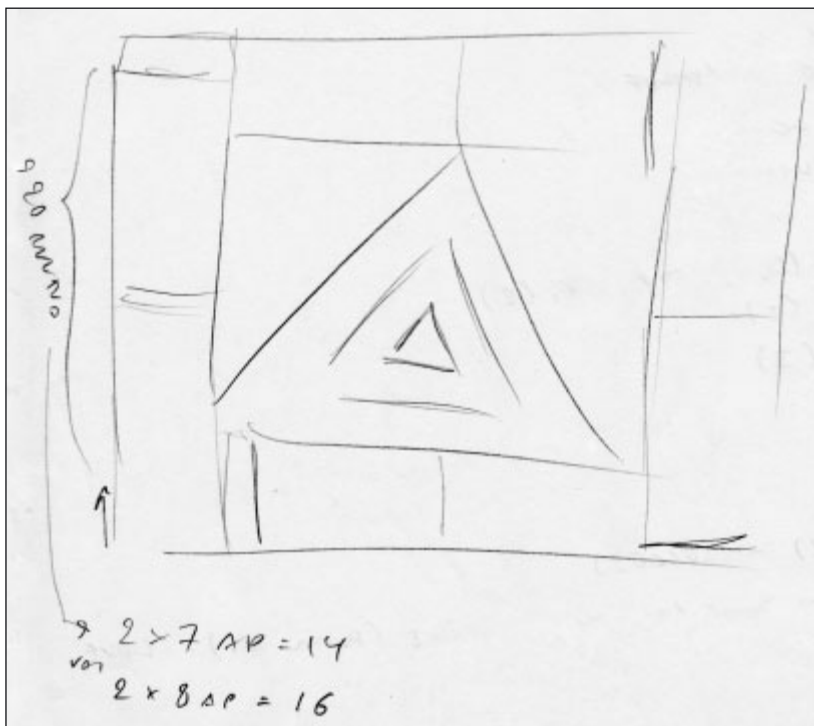


Fig. 56. Bringing the design period of the prototype game to a close, I fine-tuned the main game board, the number of age phases and game turns as well as the number of action points per turn.

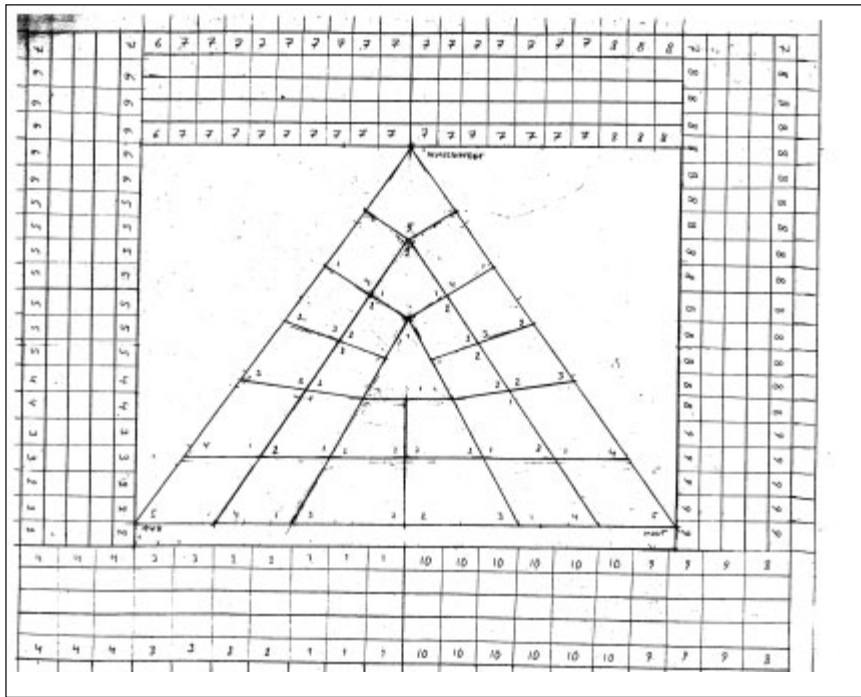


Fig. 57. The pencil sketch used as the basis for the vector graphic version of the prototype game board.

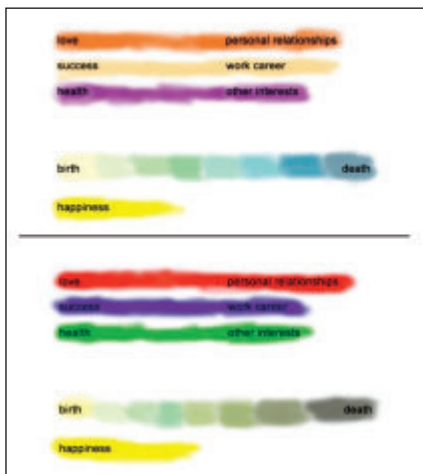
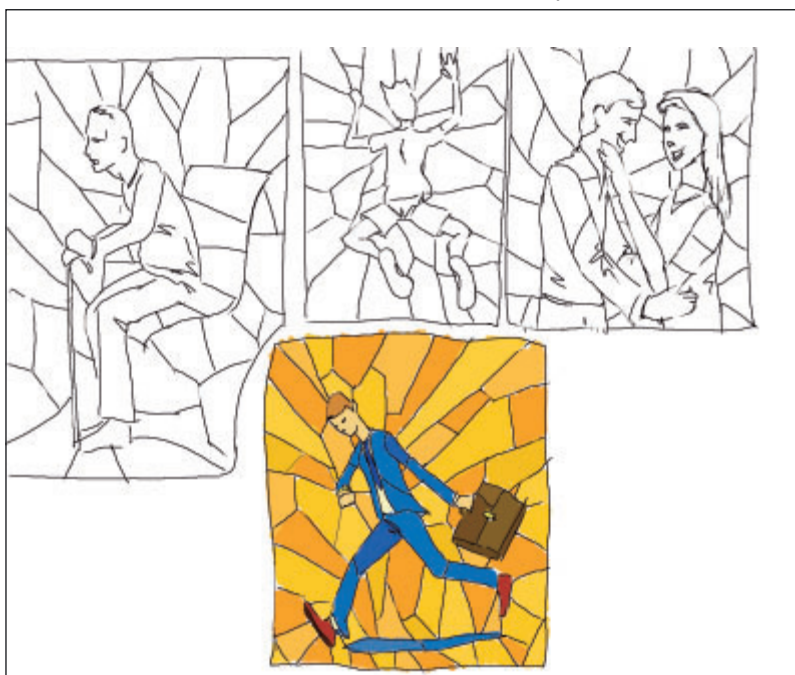


Fig. 58. In Maureen Thomas's workshop I thought of two possible sets of colors to symbolize the various resources and phenomena of *Good Life*.

Fig. 59. Another product of Thomas's workshop. I tried to pin down the visual style of the game with these quick sketches in the 'fake glasspainting' style.



8. Playtesting

Like in all games development the testing of my game has had several distinct phases. The first phase of the testing process naturally consisted of just me trying out various game mechanics by myself, playing multiple characters against each other. I found this kind of playtesting quite demanding and not very satisfactory as it is hard not to be influenced by what one knows about the “different players” strategies. Nevertheless, even this kind of testing revealed several shortcomings and faults in the mechanics. I believe it is practically impossible to design a complex game properly without some amount of playtesting. My playtesting helped me discover e.g. awkward gameplay situations, combinations of cards, counter positions and point amounts that I had not foreseen.

After playtesting the early versions of the game during its development as well as playtesting the first complete prototype by myself, I felt it was necessary to test it with another person to be able to make headway. The obvious choice for the second playtester was my final thesis supervisor Lasse Seppänen. I playtested the *Good Life* prototype with him on two separate occasions, in both sessions a lot of crucial information was garnered. As an experienced game designer, Lasse provided several useful observations, found several flaws and inadequacies and suggested ways to fix them. The testing didn't only bring out flaws but also inspired possibilities for future changes, game variations and expansions.

After some fiddling with various game details I arranged the first multi-player playtest session on November 11, 2002 with four participants: Petri Kola, Mikko Lindholm, Juhana Kokkonen and myself – Kola and Lindholm are also Media Lab students. The prototype game was played for a few hours at Petri Kola's home. In this time we managed to play through three age phases but had to stop then because the playtesters had urgent business to attend to. Nevertheless, the playtesting session was quite successful in exposing several flaws in the game. Although the general atmosphere was nice, the gameplay itself, as expected, did not go too smoothly because of the complexity of the rules and the difficulty I had with them. It was revealed that I still didn't have a really good grasp of the rules myself and I hadn't thought about every possible occurrence and combination of factors in the game. I found it very hard to concentrate on the storytelling side since I had to try to keep the others aware of the rules. Juhana Kokkonen had to leave after playing two age phases while the others played three age phases. For a score after three phases Mikko Lindholm had five happiness points (HPs) and one resource point, I and Petri Kola both had four happiness points and two resource points. Thus Mikko was the winner of this short game.

This multi-player play certainly put some validity on the old adage that one shouldn't playtest a game solely with one's friends or relatives. The immediate feedback I received from all the players was predominantly positive, and it was only after a couple of days that the players finally gave some harsher criticism. Also during and immediately after the play session I myself came up with a number of necessary changes to the game. For instance, the identity of the players' characters should be decided at the very beginning of the game. During the first round friends should be obtainable very cheaply so that each player's character could make childhood friends if they so desired. Generally, acquiring characters should be easier in the game and getting married with other players' characters should also be cheaper than I originally estimated. I decided that a good minimum cost for professions was two love points and the minimum cost for hobbies was two success points. The players complained about the two separate education cards so perhaps there should be only one education card with different levels or types of education. I noticed that for good gameplay the players needed to get more cards than they were getting and then I pondered how to fix it so they could receive more of them. Perhaps each round everybody should receive two cards instead of just one? Moreover, contemplating the storytelling aspect, I speculated whether it would be good to have a separate 'personal relationships narrative phase' between all the players – or should each player have a right of speech only on her own turn? It might be best if the players wouldn't be narrating their character's actions all the time during their turn but only during a certain phase of it. I mulled whether the drawn/dealt characters, i.e. character cards, should be left waiting on the game board if the players' characters at first can't successfully befriend them or get them for partners or spouses. Maybe the character cards should be kept as a totally separate category from the other cards and not be auctioned at all? It might be even better to let the players themselves decide on each turn which of the drawn, exposed cards would be auctioned on each turn and which would not. Nevertheless, in addition to the auctioned cards other cards could be dealt, too. As extra cards one could deal for instance action cards.

A few days after the playtesting session the players thankfully gave me more fundamental observations about the flaws and shortcomings of the *Good Life* prototype. In their opinion the game is too complicated, it needs more interaction between the players and the role of storytelling must either be emphasized more or dropped out completely. Based on my own experience of this and the other playtesting sessions I mainly agreed with most of these comments – basically the thematic side of *Good Life* was fine but the game should be improved as a game. Such criticism naturally got me thinking how the game

could be made simpler and more interactive without its theme suffering too much. I came up with a number of feasible changes to the game that might improve it. Mostly these were attempts to simplify the game mechanics by getting rid of some elements.

The first possible element that could be disposed of is the plates. As there are already cards in the game, it would seem logical that they could take care of the operations of both the plates and the cards. Granted, in the prototype the plates are meant to encode short-term events while the cards are involved with longer-term phenomena, but the change probably wouldn't be too severe if the cards provided the players with even more resources than they currently do. However, if the plates were left out there would arise the problem of how to make age-dependent events take place during the game? Perhaps the cards could be played on the age phase track instead of the plates? These could be played face up on the track and the players would pick their cards by using action points to walk onto them. To fully replace the plates with the cards, there could perhaps be yet another type of card, an event card, to take over the duties of the plates. Alternatively the event cards could be set out in a separate deck from which one would turn over a card to see what will happen to her character. Each player could draw event cards by paying APs, one event card per phase could be free to ensure a random element of life events in the 'lives' of the characters. If the cards were nevertheless played on the age phase track, it could have places suitable only for certain cards. In other words, if a player goes to a 'character card place', she can try to buy a character card. The order of card places should probably be different in different age phases to bring some variety and thematically reflect life in its various stages.

Another possible element that could be eliminated from the game is the age phase track surrounding the mode triangle. The general game board would consequently consist only of the mode triangle and the time phase marker track. There would still be eight age phases but these would be played without the age phase track. Winning of the age phase goals could be determined by how many unused APs the players have left, or variously how many cards the players have purchased with their resources.

An optional way to simplify the game could be to change the method of providing the players with new cards. The auction phase could be dropped and the players could perhaps buy cards with their resources without bidding. On the game board, there could always be a certain number of character and other cards available for purchase. Additionally the players could possibly also exchange cards among themselves and haggle for them. Removing the auction phase might have a less than desirable effect on the game by lessening the already too meagre

player interaction. However, bartering cards might compensate for this.

Yet another possible way of making the game more engaging and increasing the group interaction could be lessening the downtime between the player turns or even completely eliminating it. This could be done by changing the game mechanics from alternating single player game rounds to shared rounds, i.e. every player would play a turn simultaneously. This would naturally require massive changes to the playing mechanics and the resulting game might have to veer quite far from the original *Good Life* prototype.

Along with the above options I imagined other possible improvements to the game. For instance, to increase interaction there could be more action cards that the players could play whenever they like. Game mechanisms could be loaned more directly from role-playing games, e.g. some kind of game mastering system might enliven things up, at least the character narratives might become more interesting. Each of the players could even function as a game master on her own turn. Finally, I contemplated how to simplify and streamline the resource point mathematics involved. Perhaps some or even all cards should have numbers on them that could be used when determining resource point costs etc. These random numbers might prove versatile and useful elements if applied to the game and the group interaction mechanics of *Good Life*.

I found it is not very hard to conceive ways to simplify a game design once it has been designed in all (or at least most) of its complexity. Nevertheless, it is significantly harder trying to discover which of all the possible options is the best way to streamline the game design. I believe the only way to do it would probably be to make a change to the game and then playtest it first by oneself and then with other people. Since at the time of writing this final thesis I don't yet know the final form of *Good Life*, it naturally can't be fully described here.

9. Results of the Design Project

As I haven't yet finished the development of *Good Life* and the game only exists as a prototype version, it is difficult to say whether the game is a successful design. The most crucial questions about the game design, like is it solid, entertaining, challenging etc., can't be answered except in a very preliminary fashion. Nonetheless, I can try to elaborate whether the direction in which the game design is progressing seems promising and whether my approach to board games and game design in general has paid off. I will also try to contemplate whether it has been worthwhile to attempt to base my final thesis on such a subject.

In his article *Is It Really About Theme vs. Mechanism?* for The Games Journal WWW-site Andrew Hardin crystallizes the evaluation of a game design into eight distinct questions:

1. Does everyone have the same chance of winning?
2. Does the game play in a reasonable amount of time?
3. Does the pace of the game seem right?
4. Can I change the outcome of the game by the choices I make?
5. Is there only one perfect way to play?
6. Did the best player win?
7. Do the rules make sense?
8. Is the game fun?

While there are certainly a number of other criteria that affect the evaluation of a game, I believe these questions are good a starting point into the problem. As *Good Life* is still in development, it isn't possible to offer a clear-cut answer to all these questions but I will at least try. In the *Good Life* prototype I believe everyone has the same chance to win the game. The game currently takes too long by contemporary standards but this is naturally highly relative. Due to the complexity of the rules the pace is a bit on the slow side but it could be improved by streamlining the design, and obviously repeated playings are also bound to help as people familiarize themselves with the rules. The players can affect the outcome of the game with their choices and by initial observations there doesn't seem to be just one perfect way to play the game. It is yet impossible to say whether the best player usually wins the game, but I would estimate this to be case. The rules of *Good Life* are still too complex and need to be refined. It is too early to say whether the game is fun, but as in any game the entertainment value is strongly dependent whether the players are willing to immerse themselves into

the game and its themes and identify with the characters. It would seem that a significant portion of the immersiveness of the game depends on the players' oral storytelling, how inspired it is.

In his *Game Theory 1.1* –article for The Games Journal Jonathan Degann proposes that introducing a proper story arc into a board game is done with different mechanics taking hold at different times during a gameplay session. My game design as a presentation of the arc of a human life already does this to a degree, but the story arc could certainly be made even more pronounced. Even more diverse age and game phase dependent mechanics could be incorporated e.g. by having different cards available at different phases of life. In his following *Game Theory* –article Degann investigates how game designs can be made more exciting if instead of using 'incrementalist' mechanics (i.e. small changes in actions bringing proportionate rewards) one prefers "The Bomb" mechanics (i.e. a big payoff through small but crucial investment, all or nothing). I believe the *Good Life* prototype currently veers too much to the side of incrementalism and would benefit from having one or two "The Bomb"-type mechanisms.

In spite of being far from finished, I consider my *Good Life* game development project somewhat of a success. During the development I have come up with lots of different game mechanics variants, many of these I wouldn't have thought of if I hadn't had a concrete problem to solve. Although the game prototype is too complex and not unified enough, I feel that with continued development and polishing, it can be turned into a functioning and entertaining game. Since I chose to approach the game development from a thematic angle, e.g. how to turn the whole of human life into a game, I believe the design method I selected was a good one. Instead of starting by creating an engaging and simple enough game mechanism that I could try to embellish with thematic details, I preferred to start with the whole complex range of the themes that can later be selectively whittled into a good game without the thematic aspects hopefully suffering too much. I believe doing it like this, the complex and hard way, is more instructive from a research point of view. Even though the playtesters have not yet been able to enjoy a totally coherent, unified and engaging whole, the very baroque nature of my approach has probably lent me a better understanding of the game mechanical possibilities involved. One of the greatest difficulties in trying to make a game of the human life is how to categorize and classify the whole of human experience. Preparing the *Good Life* prototype for playtesting forced me to minutely ponder the plethora of possibilities and choose the most apposite from the spectrum of options. I feel that going through this selective process has been very useful and would be a great help if I were to create another version of the game or even a totally different take on the life game genre

in another medium. It would be relatively easy to transfer the basic contents, the inherent classification logic and the game mechanics into, say, a computer or a video game or an online game application. When one chooses to start the development of a game from the thematic angle, the psychological reality, the veracity and the substance of the content becomes the most significant thing – slicing the thematic cake of human life once is bound to bring insight into how to do it again, perhaps emphasizing some other aspects of the whole than before.

In the previous chapter I described how I responded to the initial play-testing feedback by trying to find ways to simplify the game. This kind of response however may be slightly short-sighted because the preference for short and easily digested, highly streamlined games is a relatively recent phenomenon of distinctly European, mainly German origin. This is what game designer Bruno Faidutti observes in his web review of *Wallenstein* game:

Though it's a great simplification, I use to sort the modern board and card games in two cultural categories, two different traditions. The German tradition emphasizes one (sic.) the mechanisms, the game systems, the theme being often pasted up afterwards, with the risk of coldness and abstraction. On the opposite, the american (sic.) tradition emphasizes on (sic.) the setting, the theme, the story, the rules being only a way to make it live, with the risk of unplayability and simulation. It is with games as with most cultural creations: cultural-cross fertilization often produces masterpieces.

I agree with Faidutti's statement. My starting point for *Good Life* development was very much akin to the design philosophy of traditional American hobby game companies like Avalon Hill. As the current downhill of this kind of game publishers shows, at least from a commercial point of view it would be wise to inject some degree of 'European' quality, i.e. smooth mechanics, easy approachability and shorter playing time, to make it more of a crowd-pleaser. However, my goals are more in researching various game mechanical possibilities so I feel that to a certain extent I should ignore the playtesting feedback and march to a different drummer. Instead of trying to please everybody, it is more important to me to enable a proper identification with the played characters, to create a believable simulation of personal relationships and an immersive storytelling environment. Undoubtedly, with further development I will end up simplifying the game, but it is crucial that I won't remove elements vital to my goals. Intelligent streamlining of the game would probably also enhance the crucial group interaction.

10. Possible Changes and Improvements

For me, an essential factor in designing a board game based on human life has been to investigate how game mechanics intrinsic for board games could be applied to online or video/computer game platforms. If one were to port *Good Life* itself to digital format, there would basically be two possibilities – it could either be a strict and straight board game conversion or a reworking of the game mechanics into more of computer game type of mechanics. In the straight conversion computer could take care of the setting up of the game pieces as well as the resource management during the game. The adding and subtracting of resource points could be made automatic and even run invisibly in the background. This version would retain the aesthetics and feel of a board game while the other alternative, i.e. reworking the game towards a more usual computer or video game format, would remove most of the board game trappings and enhance the visuals of the game with various computer graphics, animation, sound effects and music. The animation and sound could be used in connection with the events, characters etc. of the game. Even speech could be introduced as an element in the game, either to increase the atmosphere or to provide the players with information. The speech could somehow be part of the storytelling element, the various non-player characters or NPCs could also to some extent exhibit artificially intelligent behavior that would aid the players in their oral narrative performance. In an online environment the storytelling between players at different locations could take place by typing on keyboards, but undoubtedly a more effective way of communicating the life narrative between the different players would be to use real-time voice communication like in *Xbox Live* service.

In the reworked variant most of the game board could be depicted differently or partly totally eliminated, likewise the cards and plates could be replaced with other kinds of game mechanical elements. In online play artificial intelligence might be used to replace possibly missing human players. Like with other Internet games various online leagues and tournaments could be organized. The results of such online games could be saved into ranking lists to let people see how good they are at the game and how they have developed over time. Ranking lists would naturally require the inclusion of some sort of point scoring system in the game that would allow the rating of players at a particular position. The tracking and recording of players' performance could be taken further than just ranking them. For instance, the players could be allowed to play each following game as a child of their previous playing character. Thus, some kind of a feeling of progression of generations could perhaps be achieved.

Another way to enrich the online play could be to implement roleplay-

like mechanisms, e.g. game mastering, over the Internet or a local network. The game master would then take care of various decisions concerning the lives of the played characters like e.g. the 'random' events. Alternatively a person or persons could play the parts of the NPCs over the Internet, maybe even taking part in several games simultaneously. The possibilities for porting *Good Life* into an online environment are practically limitless, depending on the technology and the features involved. Beyond the two most obvious approaches for making a computer version of the board game, the computer could also be used in various other ways to achieve an enhanced game playing experience. The computer could be used as an external aid to the actual physical board game, it could be used e.g. just to keep score of the game resources or even function as an communication device to allow limited online games between parties at different locations. This online communication could naturally be typed in real time like in Internet chats or it could be based on sending e-mail messages. The communication could also be voice-based and possibly make use of a separate program specifically written for the purpose of playing the game online. At its most extreme the computer could be incorporated as a part of the board game design itself. The game board could e.g. have a small computer of its own like in Reiner Knizia's *King Arthur* game, or alternatively the game could even be played on a computer screen that could have touch screen and tracking functionality with various physical game pieces – perhaps something resembling the *Tangible Viewpoints* system



Fig. 60. *King Arthur* game by Reiner Knizia has a small computer as a part of its game board. (Image: Ravensburger)

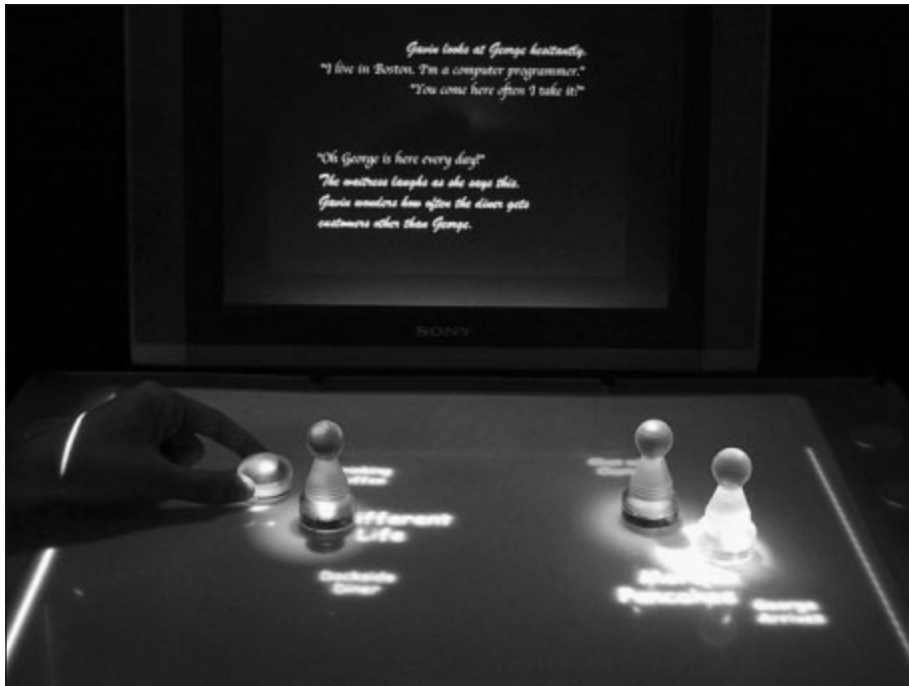


Fig. 61. *Tangible Viewpoints* by the MIT Media Laboratory uses glass pawns and counters with image projection and computer screen to tell interactive character-driven narratives. (image: MIT Media Laboratory)



Fig. 62. Due to the strips at their base the pawns of *Tangible Viewpoints* can be sensed by the augmented 'playing' surface, thus enabling the projection of interactive images on the surface around the pawn. (image: MIT Image Laboratory)

developed by the MIT Media Laboratory. Of all the options of how to use the computer with *Good Life* it seems to me the actual incorporation of the computer in the physical game itself is the only variant in which the amount of group interaction would not decrease compared to the plain vanilla board game. I estimate that in all the other cases this would be to some extent unavoidable

as the persons playing the game would not be gathered in the same space. Nevertheless, I believe that with proper attention paid to the game mechanical workings when converting the game into a digital format, a satisfactory degree of group interaction could be achieved online.

Along with designing a board game and thinking of how my game design could be converted and refined, one of my goals for this project was to try and learn through the design process how online games could be improved in regard to their group and communal interaction. While I certainly can't really claim to have discovered revolutionary new approaches to online interaction, I feel the game design process did give me some valuable insight into the matter. For instance, instead of a complex collection of minute rules with numerous exceptions, the game mechanisms should generally be economical, streamlined and versatile so that players can grasp them easily and quickly. They need to be thematically pertinent so that they feel natural and soon become 'automated', i.e. players don't have to think about them all the time but can concentrate on their game strategy decisions as well as interacting with other players. I believe that in an online environment the narrative element should be emphasized even more to create a feeling of shared experience, a feeling of community.

As I wish to maintain a believable thematic relationship between the mechanics of my game and the actual everyday life, it is not a good idea in the name of streamlining the game to simplify it too much. Instead of stripping all the interesting mechanisms from the game, I think it would be better to investigate how the necessarily complex rules and workings could be best introduced to new players. In an online environment the rules could be taught to the players gradually with the help of some sort of an introductory tutorial. The original board game could be made more easily accessible and easier to learn by offering rookie players a chance to play their first game or games with a simplified introductory set of rules. These would later be embellished to include all the rules and mechanisms of the full advanced game. A good practice in both the original board game and some sort of online version might be to have beginning players first play through a number a scenarios each of which would teach them a part of the game in as easy and interesting a fashion as possible. It is worth emphasizing that although I want to keep the game realistically complex and relatively open-ended by including a lot of various real life phenomena, I believe each of these game mechanical elements should in itself be as simple and as 'natural' as possible.

So far in this final thesis I have dealt with the theoretical background of game development and the actual process of developing a life game. Two aspects that are often discussed in connection with all design projects are still

absent from my thesis, mainly the commercial and the artistic points of view. Hence I will touch on both of these, albeit briefly.

Although my starting point for the *Good Life* project was not to come up with an actual product, I do believe a well-designed board game based on real life might become a commercial success. However, as Brian Tinsman points out in his worthy book *The Game Inventor's Guidebook*, a good game design does not guarantee success in contemporary markets. The game needs to be targeted to a certain focus group or groups by its design – both its mechanics and graphics need to compel the people of the target group to buy the finished product. An important decision is whether to make the game for traditional 'American' hobby gamers, i.e. people who like complex and overtly thematic games like e.g. old Avalon Hill or Yaquinto games, or for 'German' gamers who prefer games that are more accessible and faster to play but still rich – albeit more abstract in their mechanics and more serious and adult-oriented by their themes. One need not choose solely between these two alternatives but can also target e.g. the family market with a simple yet entertaining game emphasizing social interaction. Whichever focus group one chooses, the product should clearly show its intended user group with its outward appearance. As Tinsman observes, when a person picks up a game package in a store, the first few seconds, i.e. the front and back covers, are the most important. Studies indicate that most people really make up their mind about buying a product in a very short time after picking it up. Along with a proper design, success in the game market requires competent marketing and distribution. Tinsman basically suggests budding game developers would do wisely to leave the whole business side of game selling to experts – i.e. submitting the game to a good publisher in the hope of royalties. Choosing the way of self-publishing is often extremely risky and only very rarely does it lead to great financial success.

To judge whether the *Good Life* prototype is artistically and aesthetically satisfying and successful is like judging any artifact for its artistic merit – a highly subjective task. In addition to the more easily appraisable graphical design elements of the game boards, the cards etc. one could perhaps attempt to evaluate the game holistically for its overall ambiance as well as the distinctive 'feel' of its game mechanisms. It is significant that the game playing experience as a whole evokes feelings and a general mood suitable to its subject of everyday human life. The involved emotions should mirror the events and occurrences in the game, e.g. when your character loses a friend you should at least to some extent feel sad for the game to be an emotional and artistic success. Closely tied with the emotional authenticity of the game is whether playing it could be mentally advantageous, whether the game could function as a therapeutic aid. If

playing *Good Life* were emotionally cathartic, the game could perhaps be applied for therapeutic uses with children or mentally disturbed adults. At its best *Good Life* or an equivalent life game might be able to bring insight into one's own life and other people's lives.

11. Further Potential for Future Development

After completing the prototype of *Good Life*, it is evident to me that my solution is far from the only possible approach to creating a life game, be it in a board game or some sort of electronic format. The most obvious alternative for my approach might be not trying to deal with the whole arc of human life but just a part of it. For instance, the game could encompass just the characters' childhood. Another way to concentrate temporally on a shorter span of time would be to concentrate on a predefined diachronic period. This temporal variant would describe the events of a day, a week, a month, a year or even a decade. To take the process of temporal variation to its logical end, one could even design a game based on human generations evolving through the ages. This kind of game could naturally be played one generation at a time, each play session taking up where the preceding one left off. With very small modifications *Good Life* could already be played in this generations-spanning way.

Instead of temporal modifications, the game mechanical control of the life game design could be altered. For instance, each player could directly play or at least indirectly control more than one character. By indirect control in this context I mean that instead of deciding the characters' every action, the players would control only their circumstances and thus indirectly influence the direction their life would take. The game design variation could also focus more on characters by limiting the kinds of people the players could play. Only certain sectors of people could be offered as playable characters, e.g. people of certain age, gender or ethnical background. The game could actually become more interesting with introduction of intentional conflict of interests by forcing the players to take on as different characters as possible. The game mechanics could then be made to aim either for conflict situations or avoiding conflict. This intentional culmination could be increased by moving the emphasis of the game more toward the characters' ideologies, i.e. by making the game more political in nature.

Instead or in addition to characters' conflicting ideologies the focus of the game could be shifted to include a historical factor. The played characters needn't be rooted in contemporary framework but could be characters of some distinct historical period or even an imagined possible future. If one wants to take this imaginative trend to its extreme, one could even play characters of alternative worlds or histories – or perhaps go as far as play extraterrestrial beings, mythical or fantastical figures or creatures. However, it would seem that here one has finally strayed too far from the original idea to call it a proper 'life game' any more. The played lives would be based more on imagination and

speculation instead of being rooted in real life. Obviously a science fiction and fantasy based life game might still be as interesting and satisfying as one based on realistic contemporary life, but the overall mood and experience would still probably be too different from *Good Life* to warrant closer inspection here. A more appropriate character-based life game variant might be to have all the players playing the life of a single character cooperatively. This kind of collaboration could also be partial so as to have e.g. two separate competing teams with one controlled character per team.

Naturally the design of a life game could be altered more fundamentally than just changing the temporal framework or character control. The play mechanics could be expanded by incorporating elements of live action role-play. The players could physically act out the character interaction parts. Moreover, other dramatic elements could be included so that ultimately the character narratives would grow into something very much akin to a real drama. The narrative interaction could be given greater emphasis, even precedence over the game rules. The rules and game mechanics would thus function only as suggestions that can be bent or even wholly rejected to create as satisfying dramatic narrative as possible.

Other radical alteration possibilities might include changes to the platform of the game. Instead of an ordinary board game or a typical online game, the life game could be adapted to run on personal digital assistants, i.e. PDAs, or in the near future their proposed, highly developed descendants like various electronic 'slate' platforms or perhaps some sort of physical game boards reminiscent of *Tangible Viewpoints* system. Obviously a life game application could already be designed to run on fast-evolving multimedia cell phones or laptops. This kind of portable platforms might enable all the players to play the game wirelessly from wherever they happen to be. Of course this kind of gameplay would require that all the players own or at least have access to the platform in question, and unless the players would be gathered in the same place to share a game, the group interaction would be subject to the same problems as contemporary online gaming over the Internet.

All in all, I consider my project of designing the *Good Life* prototype a reasonable success. Although it isn't yet a finished product, I believe it has a lot of potential to be refined into an attractive game that is different enough from the ones already available to justify its introduction into the market. While I don't really harbor any excessive illusions of turning *Good Life* into a lucrative and successful product, I do hope to keep on developing it until it can be considered finished. Rather than expecting a financial success, my foremost motives for this

are to realize the possibilities that I see inherent in the concept and the game mechanics and to learn as much as I can by doing so. Even more important than these reasons is that personally I really would like to play a life game like my vision of *Good Life*. In the best of worlds I would also love to see my life game concept extended to the realm of online gaming, possibly bridging the gap between the two varieties of interaction – the close-knit group interaction of traditional board games and the more distant and intangible variant of web entertainment.

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Durch Die Wüste

Dvonn

Elfenland (& Elfengold expansion)

El Grande

Euftrat & Tigris

FamilyLore
Game of Life, The
Giganten
Gipf
Hare & Tortoise
Her Damit
Hera and Zeus
High Society
Inkognito
Ivanhoe
Krieg und Freuden
Lord of the Rings
Lost Cities
Löwenherz
Magellan
Magic the Gathering
Manhattan
Mare Nostrum
Modern Art
Monopoly
Mythology
Netrunner
Octi
Once upon a Time
Princes of Florence, The
Proteus
Puerto Rico
Punk Sucht Lady
Rage
San Marco
Schotten-Totten
Settlers of Catan, The
Seafarers of Catan, The
Shipwrecked
Tamsk
Tikal
Tile Chess
Tile Chess 2
Titan

Titan the Arena
Torres
Traders of Genoa, The
TransAmerica
Twixt
Warrior Knights
Werewolf (aka Mafia)
Wizard Kings
Yinsh
Zertz

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Appendices

1. The Rules of *Good Life*

[As these rules describe the prototype version of *Good Life*, several variant rules are presented at certain points. This preliminary set of rules also does not yet cover all the mechanics and content of the game.]

Before the Game

The game board is laid between the players, each player is given her own game board. Each player chooses her own gaming pieces, getting all the pieces of the chosen color. The black time round marker is put on the first square of the timeline.

The starting player is chosen (the youngest player could start the first time). Everybody creates or chooses their character. The starting player begins, then the other players follow in clockwise order. The character cards are laid on the players' own game boards. The rest of the cards and plates are shuffled and arranged into suitable piles.

Each player then puts three of their game pieces in the starting positions, i.e. the fourth square (corresponding to three resource points) of their resource tracks (i.e. love, success and health tracks). The players put one of their pieces on the center triangular place of the mode triangle (the one with numbers 1, 1, 1). Then each player puts one of their pieces on the first square of the first age phase field, the starting player (i.e. 'A') selects her square (and horizontal lane) first, then the other players select their starting squares in clockwise order (thus the order of players is A, B, C, D, E).

Each player is randomly given two life event plates that are suitable for the first age phase field [before the game the plates could be prearranged into piles according to age phase or some other method]. Additionally, two suitable random event plates are laid on the grid of the first age phase field. The position of the first plate is selected by the player who in clockwise order comes after the starting player (i.e. B), and the position of the second plate is selected by the next player in clockwise order (i.e. C).

The Start of the Game

[Below, there are three variants of how the Auction phase could be played. I consider the third variant the best one, the other two might also work with some refinement]

Auction Phase:

Variant 1 (8 rounds):

The game begins with an Auction phase that is held at the start of every turn. A number of cards corresponding to twice the number of players [or possibly just the number of players?] (e.g. with three players six cards, with five players ten cards) are taken from the top of the first pile and laid face up on the middle of the board so that all players can see them. The last player (i.e. 'E' when there are five players, always the player sitting immediately counterclockwise from the starting player) chooses a card that she wants to bid for. This equals offering for it the minimum price that is written on the card. The next player then decides whether she wants to bid higher for the card or passes. The minimum allowed raise is one resource point (i.e. one point of love, success or happiness), there is no upper limit for the bids. The bids must include the minimum price written on the card, the raise part of the bid can be a combination of any resource points.

(Example: If the minimum price is 2 love, then all the bids must include 2 love. All the other resource points are interchangeable: the first raise can thus be 2 love and 1 success, while the next player could top this by offering e.g. 4 love.)

The other players then follow in clockwise order either bidding higher or passing on their turn. After a full round, the player who chose the card for bidding (i.e. the last player) has one more chance to either raise his or her offer for the card or pass.

The player who offered the most for the card then gets it. The player then puts the bid card either on a suitable square on her own board or takes it in his or her hand, depending on the card. After this the player who got the card chooses one of her life event plates and puts it face down on a suitable place in the age phase field grid. This is not mandatory, one can also save a plate for the following rounds. If there is no more suitable space left for a plate that plate cannot be put on the grid, instead it must be saved for later rounds. A player who has already got two cards in the auction can't participate in the bidding for the other cards during the rest of this Auction phase.

The players who have not yet received a card this Auction phase then hold similar bidding rounds for the rest of the cards until each player except for one has got a card. [If there are cards twice the number of players, there must be two rounds of card selecting.] The last player without a card can purchase the remaining card by paying the minimum price for it or as much of the price as she can.

(If the minimum price is 2 love and the player only has 1 love she can buy the card by paying the 1 love point. If the player has 1 success and

2 health, she can pay any 2 points for the card. If the player has 1 love point and 2 health points, he or she can buy the card by paying the one love point and one health point. The one love point must be paid as it is part of the stated minimum price, i.e. one must always meet the minimum price to the extent that one is able.)

If there are two or more players unable to meet the minimum prices of the cards they get to purchase a card each [or two cards if there are two rounds of card selection].

Variant 2 (16 rounds):

The game begins with an Auction phase that is held at the start of every turn. A number of cards corresponding to the number of players are taken from the top of the first pile and laid face up on the middle of the board so that all players can see them. The starting player chooses a card that he or she wants to bid for, this equals offering for it the minimum price that is written on the card. The next player then decides whether she wants to bid higher for the card or passes. The minimum allowed raise is one resource point (i.e. one point of love, success or happiness), there is no upper limit for the bids. The bids must include the minimum price written on the card, the raise part of the bid can be a combination of any resource points.

(Example: If the minimum price is 2 love, then all the bids must include 2 love. All the other resource points are interchangeable: the first raise can thus be 2 love and 1 success, while the next player could top this by offering e.g. 4 love.)

The other players then follow in clockwise order either bidding higher or passing on their turn. After a full round, the starting player has one more chance to either raise his or her offer for the card or pass. The player who offered the most for the card then gets it, this player can't participate in the bidding for the other cards during the rest of this Auction phase. The player then puts the bid card either on a suitable square on his or her own board or takes it his or her hand, depending on the card. After this the player who got the card chooses one of her life event plates and puts it face down on a suitable place in the age phase field grid. This is not mandatory, one can also save a plate for the following rounds. If there is no more suitable space left for a plate that plate cannot be put on the grid, instead it must be saved for later rounds. A player who has already got two cards in the auction can't participate in the bidding for the other cards during the rest of this Auction phase.

The players who have not yet received a card this Auction phase then hold similar bidding rounds for the rest of the cards until each player except one

has got a card. The last player without a card can purchase the remaining card by paying the minimum price for it or as much of the price as she can.

(If the minimum price is 2 love and the player only has 1 love she can buy the card by paying the 1 love point. If the player has 1 success and 2 health, she can pay any 2 points for the card. If the player has 1 love point and 2 health points, she can buy the card by paying the one love point and one health point. The one love point must be paid as it is part of the stated minimum price, i.e. one must always meet the minimum price to the extent that one is able.)

If there are two or more players unable to meet the minimum prices of the cards, they get to purchase a card each

Variant 3 (8 rounds):

[This is probably the best variant. As a possible improvement, more cards should be made available with the help of event plates. Another possibility would be to have the card auction twice in a row – it might be enough because the players get more cards through age phase end goals.]

The game begins with an Auction phase that is held at the start of every turn. As many cards as there are players (plus possibly one or two more) are taken from the top of the first pile and laid face up on the middle of the board so that all players can see them. The last player (i.e. 'E' when there are five players, always the player sitting immediately counterclockwise from the starting player) chooses a card that she wants to bid for, this equals offering for it the minimum price that is written on the card. The next player then decides whether she wants to bid higher for the card or passes. The minimum allowed raise is one resource point (i.e. one point of love, success or happiness), there is no upper limit for the bids. The bids must include the minimum price written on the card, the raise part of the bid can be a combination of any resource points.

(Example: If the minimum price is 2 love, then all the bids must include 2 love. All the other resource points are interchangeable: the first raise can thus be 2 love and 1 success, while the next player could top this by offering e.g. 4 love.)

The other players then follow in clockwise order either bidding higher or passing on their turn. After a full round, the player who chose the card for bidding (i.e. the last player) has one more chance to either raise her offer for the card or pass.

The player who offered the most for the card then gets it, this player can't participate in the bidding for the other cards during the rest of this Auction phase. The player then puts the bid card either on a suitable square on her own board or takes it in her hand, depending on the card. After this the player who got the

card then chooses one or two of her life event plates and puts it or them face down on a suitable place in the age phase field grid. This is not mandatory, one can also save one or two plates for the following rounds. If there is no more suitable space left for a plate that plate cannot be put on the grid, instead it must be saved for later rounds.

The players who have not yet received a card this Auction phase then hold similar bidding rounds for the rest of the cards until each player except one has got a card. The last player without a card can purchase the remaining card [or one of the remaining cards, depending on the number of cards initially made available] by paying the minimum price for it or as much of the price as she can.

(If the minimum price is 2 love and the player only has 1 love he or she can buy the card by paying the 1 love point. If the player has 1 success and 2 health, she can pay any 2 points for the card. If the player has 1 love point and 2 health points, he or she can buy the card by paying the one love point and one health point. The one love point must be paid as it is part of the stated minimum price, i.e. one must always meet the minimum price to the extent that one is able.)

If there are two or more players unable to meet the minimum prices of the cards, they get to purchase a card each. If two players can only offer the same price for a card, the player who in counterclockwise order is closer to the last player (i.e. 'E') gets to purchase the card. If the price of the card is 2 health, the player with 1 health wins over a player who can only offer 1 love, because 1 health is closer to the asked price than 1 love.)

The First Round:

The starting player (i.e. the player 'A') begins her first round. She has 7 action points (APs) to use. With one AP you can:

- Move your piece one place in the mode triangle. You can only move orthogonally in the mode triangle, i.e. you must always move your piece over a side, not over a corner (point) of a square or a triangle.
- Move your piece one place forward in the age phase field grid. If there is another piece or several pieces blocking the way, your piece will jump over them to the next vacant place in the lane. This jumping only works horizontally, you can't jump vertically over other players' pieces.
- Change lanes in the age phase grid, i.e. move one place up or down in the grid, but only if the way is not blocked by another player's piece (i.e. you cannot jump up or down over another player's piece).

- Turn over the life event plate that your piece is standing on. Each player can turn over only two plates maximum per round.
- Move any one of the resource track markers (i.e. the marker for love, success or health) one place up on a resource track, i.e. you can exchange APs for resource points

If the player wants to move further along the age phase field than his action points allow, he can continue moving if he pays one resource point [perhaps two?] for each place advanced. Any resource points (love, success or health) can be used for this (but not happiness points, nor resource points from the mode triangle). One cannot move in the mode triangle with any other points than actual action points. The extra points can only be used for moving along the age phase field and not e.g. turning over life event plates.

After the first player has used all her action points and finished her turn, each of the other players then carries out her turn in clockwise order. During other players' turns each player can interrupt the play by playing a suitable action card if they happen to have such a card. The player whose turn it is must then immediately fulfill the requirements of the played card. If the player who played the card so wishes (and the card allows it) the player whose turn it is (the target player) must take back an action or even several actions. For example, if the played card says that the target player can't move her piece in the mode triangle this turn, and the player has already moved her piece in the triangle, she must then move it back to where it originally was.

After every player has taken her turn, the final goal of the age phase is won by the player who has proceeded the furthest on the age phase field. If two or more players are tied in this regard, they will all get the 'first prize' of that age phase. For example, if the final goal of the age phase is choosing a goal card and two players are tied for the first place, the player closest to the starting player (in clockwise order) takes four goal cards and keeps one. Then, the other tied player does the same. Then, the third player takes three goal cards and keeps one etc.

Mode Triangle

The numbers on the mode triangle indicate how many career, personal relationship or other points the players have at their use. These "location points" are checked when a wanted card has a minimum requirement (e.g. to get a "minimum 3 relationships" card one's piece needs to be on a mode triangle place with at least 3 personal relationships points). Another use for the mode triangle location points is paying for card costs. For example, if in an auction a card costs

3 love points, one can pay for this with relationship points acquired from the mode triangle. The relationship points correspond to love, career points correspond to success and other points correspond to health on a one to one basis. However, when one uses the location points for paying costs, one must move one's piece on the mode triangle. The piece must be moved to a place with a number that corresponds to how many of the location points in question the player has left. For instance, if one is on 4 relationships and pays 2 love, she must move to 2 relationships.

Another Possible Variant:

If one uses location points for paying costs, one must move one's piece on the mode triangle inwards the corresponding number of steps. E.g. if you are on the outer five point band and use two location points for paying, you must move your piece to the very center of the triangle (i.e. the three point place). You must always move your piece to the closest possible inward place or square; if two places are equally close, you can choose either one.

If two players' characters are married to each other, they need to keep their pieces close enough to each other on the mode triangle [Exactly how close is still open – probably maximum of two places from each other, i.e there can only be one empty place between the pieces], otherwise another player may play a relationship crisis card. Two players' characters married to each other can receive the 'spouse' benefit after each turn without needing to fulfill the location, i.e. the relationship point requirement stated on the Character card. They get this spouse benefit only if they are close enough to each other.

Winning the Goal of the Age Phase

At the end of each round, the player whose piece has advanced the furthest along the current age phase track is the winner of the goal of the age phase. She takes four cards of the type mentioned on the current age phase goal square of the main game board. These four cards can be any mixture of allowed cards, but they must be picked from the top of their decks without looking at them. The player then looks at the cards and chooses one of them to keep and puts it on her own game board or variously takes it in her hand if the card in question is an action card. The other, unchosen cards are put away face down in discard piles. The player who came second on the current age phase track then picks three allowed cards, looks at them, chooses one to keep and discards the others. All the other players in clockwise order then pick two cards, choose one to keep and discard the other one. If two or more players are tied for the first place and the win of the age phase goal, both (or all) the leading players can each choose their card from

among four cards. In such a case, all the other players can only choose their cards from among two cards. If the second place is tied, all the tied players in question can choose their card from among three cards.

Storytelling vote

Variant 1:

After the age phase goal cards have been dealt, the vote for the best storyteller or narrator takes place. During gameplay, the players should on their turn narrate their game actions from their characters' point of view, i.e. tell the other players what their character is going through in her life. At the end of each phase the best storyteller is chosen. Each player in clockwise order must choose one other player (i.e. one can't vote for oneself). If one player gets more votes than the others she will win the award for best storytelling of the current phase. The same player can't win the award on two successive phases. There must be at least one phase between the wins.

Variant 2:

This is the same as Variant 1, but narration votes occur only after phases 2, 4, 6 and 8 (when the votes are destined to be held should be marked on the game board).

The winner could possibly gain one of the following advantages [this is still open]:

- She could be the starter of the next phase? (this can only happen after phases 2, 4 and 6)
- She could be the last one to bid for a card.
- She could get some amount of resource points. The amount could be random, rolled with a die or possibly checked from a card or the mode triangle. I.e. resource points could be awarded according to where one's piece is on the mode triangle

The End of the Game And the Final Scoring

In the last age phase the characters are supposed to live a variable number of years. How to implement this in terms of game mechanics has not yet been decided. Nevertheless, basically how far a player's counter is able to proceed on the final age phase grid determines how old the character is when she dies.

After the last player completes her last turn, the final scoring takes place. First all the players reveal their hidden goal cards which are scored in clockwise player order. Then all the players convert their remaining resource points into happiness points as they see fit. One point of each three resources (i.e. three points in total) equals one happiness point. Likewise two points of

two resources (i.e. four points in total) and five points of one resource can be exchanged for one happiness point. All players' final happiness point scores are compared, the player (and the character) with the most happiness points wins the game. If there is a tie, both the tied characters have lived an equally happy life. If the players are tied on happiness points, but one of them still has unused (i.e. unconverted into happiness points) resource points left, that player (and her character) is the winner of the game.

2.3 Cards and Plates: Distribution

Card distribution

Card distribution
15 profession cards (/pension cards) -3 (i.e. 18 at the moment)
? 10 hobby cards (less than this because hobby/profession cards also count as hobbies, say 6-8?) - (8 at the moment)
? 5 hobby/profession cards (/pension cards) -2 (i.e. 7 at the moment)
20 goal cards - (more?)
30-35 character cards - (32 at the moment)
10 (?) quality (characteristic, trait) cards -1 (i.e. 11 at the moment), or scrap personality cards and replace with quality cards
? 5-10 personality cards (should these be combined with trait cards?)
25 (?) action/event cards ? (less than 40 because these can be reused. If combined with event cards: +5) -1
[5? ***event*** cards (or should these be combined with action cards?) +4?]
? 10 education cards: 5 academic & 5 professional education -
10 (11?) pet cards - (+1?)
15 (?) property cards -1 (i.e. 16 at the moment)
20 (?) relationship cards, if the same ones are used again and again (i.e. used when trying to establish or change a relationship and then discarded) -
- too many cards at the moment?

Plate distribution

level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
success	-2,2	3,3,2 -3,	4, 2(+2L) -4	4,-4	4,-4				-2,3	6
love	-2,2	-2,2	-3,3 2(+2S)*	-4,4	2(+1H) 3(+1H) 4,-4	3(+1H)		3,-3	-2	
health	-2,-2,2	-4,-3, -2,2	-5,-4 3	4,-4	1(+2L)* 1(+3L)* 4,-4	1H(+3L)*		-3,-3	-3,-4 2	-5,-3
card		friend friend pet	friend	friend lover	pet friend lover lover lover job job	friend lover lover job job	friend lover	friend	friend	

2.4 Cards



A character card sketch in the glass painting style. The image above is larger than the intended size, the image below is close to the intended final size. The text as well as the whole style and design of the card may change with further development.

GOAL: Balanced life
 If at the end your love, success and health points are no more than 2 points from each other (but not 0), you get +4 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Ecological way of life
 If at the end you have max 1 property card and your health points are at least 3 higher than your success points, you get +3 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Wealth (Prosperity)**
 If at the end you have success at least twice the amount of love (or health?)(min 2 success), you get +4 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Faithfulness
 If for the whole of his or her life (game), your character is married only to a single person, you get +4 happiness at the end. There can be lapses in the relationship as long as you are together again at the end of the game. You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Lots of children
 If at the end you have 3 children, you get +5 happiness. For each child beyond 5, you get +1. If at the end you have only 1 child or none, you lose 3 happiness points.
 You get or lose these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Healthy way of life**
 If at the end you have health at least twice the amount of success (or love?)(min 2 health), you get +4 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Modest way of life (humble**)**
 If at the end of the game you have attained no higher profession level than 3, you get +3 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: To be loved
 If at the end you have love at least twice the amount of success (min 2 love), you get +4 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Mental balance **healthstability****
 If at the end your love and health points are higher than your success points by at least 2 points each, you get +3 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Sexual pleasure!(Hedonism**)**
 If your character has at least 4 relationships during the game and at the end your love points are higher than your success and health points, you get +5 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Fame
 If at the end both your success and love points are at least 3 higher than your health, you get +4 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Knowledge/ education**
 If at the end you are at least on level 3 of academic education and have been at least on level 4 of your job, you get +4 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Having seen a lot/ Being experienced
 If your character has at least 2 relationships, 2 spouses and 2 jobs during the game, you get +4 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Spiritual enlightenment
 If at the end your health points are higher than your love and success points by at least 4 points each, and you are on at least 4 other points on the mode triangle, you get +4 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Material possessions
 If at the end you have at least 3 property cards on level 3 OR 4 property cards on level 2, you get +3 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Long life
 If your piece is on 10 on the phase track when your character dies, and your health points ****, you get +3 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

** how does one die?

**can you use the mode triangle?

GOAL: To have lots of pets**
 If at the end you have at least 3 pets OR you have had at least 6 pets all in all during your life (game), you get +3 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

GOAL: Realizing your artistic potential
 If at the end your character has reached the highest level of his hobby/profession card (i.e. highest pension) and your success points are the highest of your resource points (at least equal to the 2nd highest resource), you get +4 happiness.
 You get these points before you change your resource points into happiness points.

EDUCATION: Academic education
 Progress: -3 success per level**3 career at end of the phase
LEVEL GAIN
 1 student 1 success
 2 Master of Arts academic wages + 2 success
 3 doctor

EDUCATION: Professional education
 Progress: -2 success per level**3 career at end of the phase
LEVEL GAIN
 1 new student -
 2 graduated & employed success
 3 postgraduate wages +4 studies

EDUCATION: Academic education
 Progress: -3 success per level**3 career at end of the phase
LEVEL GAIN
 1 student 1 success
 2 Master of Arts academic wages + 2 success
 3 doctor academic wages X 2

EDUCATION: Professional education
 Progress: -2 success per level**3 career at end of the phase
LEVEL GAIN
 1 new student -
 2 graduated & employed success
 3 postgraduate wages +4 studies

EDUCATION: Academic education
 Progress: -3 success per level**3 career at end of the phase
LEVEL GAIN
 1 student 1 success
 2 Master of Arts academic wages + 2 success
 3 doctor academic wages X 2

EDUCATION: Professional education
 Progress: -2 success per level**3 career at end of the phase
LEVEL GAIN
 1 new student -
 2 graduated & employed success
 3 postgraduate wages +4 studies

PROFESSION: Teacher - academic Progress: minimum 3 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES 1 apprentice success 2 substitute 2 3 class teacher 2 4 special teacher 3 5 headmaster 4	PENSION: Teacher Levels 1-2: 2 success Levels 3-4: 2 success & 1 love Level 5: 3 success	PROFESSION: Doctor - academic Progress: minimum 3 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES 1 trainee** 1 2 beginning doctor 2 3 doctor 3 4 specialist 4 5 medical superintendent** 5	PENSION: Doctor Levels 1-3: 1 success Level 4: 2 success Level 5: 3 success	PROFESSION: Police - professional Progress: minimum 3 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES 1 younger constable* 1 2 older constable* 2 3 officer** 3 4 inspector** 3 5 police chief 4	PENSION: Police Levels 1-3: 1 success Level 4: 2 success Level 5: 3 success	PROFESSION: office worker - acad. Progress: minimum 2 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES 1 receptionist success 1 2 secretary 1 3 cubicle worker 2 4 team leader** 3 5 CO** boss** 5	PENSION: Office worker Levels 1-3: 1 success Level 4: 2 success Level 5: 4 success
PROFESSION: Construction worker - professional Progress: minimum 3 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES 1 temporary worker success 1 2 beginner* trainee 2 3 steady* worker 3 4 foreman** specialist** 4	PENSION: Construction worker Levels 1-3: 1 success Level 4: 2 success	PROFESSION: Trading - academic* Progress: minimum 3 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES 1 trainee** 1 2 intern** 1 3 stock broker 3 4 CO 4 5 investor mogul 5	PENSION: Trading Levels 1-2: 1 success Level 3-4: 2 success Level 5: 3 success	PROFESSION: Fireman - professional Progress: minimum 3 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES 1 fireman trainee success 1 2 younger fireman* 2 3 older fireman** 3 4 fire inspector** 3 5 fire chief 4	PENSION: Fireman Levels 1-3: 1 success Level 4: 2 success Level 5: 3 success	PROFESSION: Cleaner - professional Progress: minimum 3 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES 1 temporary worker success 1 2 beginner* cleaner 2 3 steady cleaner 3 4 foreman** specialist** 4	PENSION: Cleaner Levels 1-3: 1 success Level 4: 2 success
PROFESSION: business - academic* Progress: minimum 4 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES 1 assistant*** success 1 2 scriptwriter 2 3 production designer 3 4 director 4 5 director & producer 6	PENSION: Movie business Levels 1-2: 1 success Level 3: 2 success Level 4: 3 success Level 5: 4 success	PROFESSION: Writer - academic* Progress: minimum 4 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES 1 free lancer success 1 2 beginning writer 2 3 writer 3 4 bestselling author 5	PENSION: Writer Levels 1-2: 1 success Level 3: 2 success Level 4: 3 success	EDUCATION: Academic education Progress: -3 success per level**3 career at end of the phase LEVEL GAIN 1 student 1 success 2 Master of Arts + 2 success 3 doctor academic wages X 2	EDUCATION: Professional education Progress: -2 success per level**3 career at end of the phase LEVEL GAIN 1 new student - 2 graduated & employed success 1 3 postgraduate wages studies +4		

same as police

<p>PET: a dog</p> <p>Minimum payment 3 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 love and 2 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for two age phases.</p>	<p>PET: a cat</p> <p>Minimum payment 2 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 love and 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for two age phases.</p>	<p>PET: a lizard</p> <p>(**same values as fish tank**)</p> <p>Minimum payment 1 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for one age phase.</p>	<p>PET: a snake</p> <p>Minimum payment 2** success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for two** age phases.</p>	<p>PET: a parrot</p> <p>Minimum payment 2 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for four age phases.</p>	<p>PET: a fish tank**</p> <p>Minimum payment 1 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for one** age phase.</p>	<p>PET: a cat</p> <p>Minimum payment 2 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 love and 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for two age phases.</p>	<p>PET: a dog</p> <p>Minimum payment 3 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 love and 2 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for two age phases.</p>	<p>PET: a cat</p> <p>Minimum payment 2 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 love and 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for two age phases.</p>			
<p>HOBBY/PROF.: Team sport (no edu.)</p> <p>Progress: levels 1-3: min 3 other points at the end of the phase.</p> <p>Levels 4-5: 3 other & 2 health points.</p> <p>LEVEL GAIN</p> <p>1 kuntolijja health 1 *****</p> <p>2 advanced kuntolijja*** 2</p> <p>3 serious harrasteija*** 3</p> <p>4 pro 2 health & 2 success</p> <p>5 star player 4 success</p>	<p>HOBBY/PROF.: Art (professional**)</p> <p>Progress: levels 1-2: min 3 other points at the end of the phase.</p> <p>Levels 3-5: 3 career points.</p> <p>LEVEL GAIN</p> <p>1 amateur** 1 health</p> <p>2 advanced 1 health & 1 amateur 1 success</p> <p>3 beginning 2 success</p> <p>4 artist 4 success</p> <p>5 master 5 success</p>	<p>HOBBY/PROF.: Photography (prof.**)</p> <p>Progress: levels 1-2: min 3 other points at the end of the phase.</p> <p>Levels 3-5: 3 career points.</p> <p>LEVEL GAIN</p> <p>1 amateur** 1 health</p> <p>2 advanced 1 health & 1 amateur 1 success</p> <p>3 beginning 2 success</p> <p>4 photographer 4 success</p> <p>5 master 5 success</p>	<p>HOBBY/PROF.: Drama (prof.**)</p> <p>Progress: levels 1-2: min 3 other points at the end of the phase.</p> <p>Levels 3-5: 3 career points.</p> <p>LEVEL GAIN</p> <p>1 amateur** 1 health</p> <p>2 advanced 1 health & 1 amateur 1 success</p> <p>3 beginning 2 success</p> <p>4 pro 4 success</p> <p>5 star 5 success</p>	<p>HOBBY/PROF.: Music</p> <p>Progress: levels 1-3: min 3 other points at the end of the phase.</p> <p>Levels 4-5: 3 career points.</p> <p>LEVEL GAIN</p> <p>1 shower singer health 1</p> <p>2 karäke 2</p> <p>3 advanced singer 2 health.</p> <p>4 enthusiast** 1 success</p> <p>5 star singer 3 success</p>	<p>HOBBY/PROF.: Music</p> <p>Progress: levels 1-3: min 3 other points at the end of the phase.</p> <p>Levels 4-5: 3 career points.</p> <p>LEVEL GAIN</p> <p>1 shower singer health 1</p> <p>2 karäke 2</p> <p>3 advanced singer 2 health.</p> <p>4 enthusiast** 1 success</p> <p>5 star singer 3 success</p>	<p>PENSION: Pro player</p> <p>Levels 1-3: 0</p> <p>Level 4: 2 success</p> <p>Level 5: 3 success (4?***)</p>	<p>PENSION: Music</p> <p>Levels 1-3: 0</p> <p>Level 4: 2 success</p> <p>Level 5: 3 success</p>	<p>PENSION: Art</p> <p>Levels 1-2: 0</p> <p>Level 3: 1 success</p> <p>Level 4: 2 success</p> <p>Level 5: 3 success</p>	<p>PENSION: Photography</p> <p>Levels 1-2: 0</p> <p>Level 3: 1 success</p> <p>Level 4: 2 success</p> <p>Level 5: 3 success</p>	<p>PENSION: Drama</p> <p>Levels 1-2: 0</p> <p>Level 3: 1 success</p> <p>Level 4: 2 success</p> <p>Level 5: 3 success</p>	
<p>** same as Art</p>	<p>** same as Art</p>	<p>** same as Art</p>	<p>** same as Art</p>	<p>or a rat?***</p>	<p>** same as Art</p>	<p>** same as Art</p>	<p>** same as Art</p>	<p>** same as Art</p>	<p>** same as Art</p>	<p>** same as Art</p>	<p>** same as Art</p>
<p>HOBBY/PROF.: Dance (prof.**)</p> <p>Progress: levels 1-2: min 3 other points at the end of the phase.</p> <p>Levels 3-5: 3 success points.</p> <p>LEVEL GAIN</p> <p>1 amateur** 1 health</p> <p>2 advanced 1 health & 1 amateur 1 success</p> <p>3 beginning dancer 2 success</p> <p>4 dancer 4 success</p> <p>5 star dancer 5 success</p>	<p>HOBBY/PROF.: Dance</p> <p>Progress: levels 1-2: min 3 other points at the end of the phase.</p> <p>Levels 3-5: 3 success points.</p> <p>LEVEL GAIN</p> <p>1 amateur** 1 health</p> <p>2 advanced 1 health & 1 amateur 1 success</p> <p>3 beginning dancer 2 success</p> <p>4 dancer 4 success</p> <p>5 star dancer 5 success</p>	<p>PENSION: Dance</p> <p>Levels 1-2: 0</p> <p>Level 3: 1 success</p> <p>Level 4: 2 success</p> <p>Level 5: 3 success</p>	<p>PENSION: Dance</p> <p>Levels 1-2: 0</p> <p>Level 3: 1 success</p> <p>Level 4: 2 success</p> <p>Level 5: 3 success</p>	<p>PET: a bird</p> <p>Minimum payment 1 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 love and 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for one age phase.</p>	<p>PET: a hamster</p> <p>Minimum payment 1 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 love and 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for one age phases.</p>	<p>PET: a bird</p> <p>Minimum payment 1 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 love and 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for one age phase.</p>	<p>PET: a hamster</p> <p>Minimum payment 1 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 love and 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for one age phases.</p>	<p>PET: a bird</p> <p>Minimum payment 1 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 love and 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for one age phase.</p>	<p>PET: a hamster</p> <p>Minimum payment 1 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 love and 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for one age phases.</p>	<p>PET: a bird</p> <p>Minimum payment 1 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 love and 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for one age phase.</p>	<p>PET: a hamster</p> <p>Minimum payment 1 success.</p> <p>At the beginning of each round you get 1 love and 1 health.</p> <p>The player has the card for one age phases.</p>

<p>QUALITY: --Läheisriippuvuus** Dependency on people***</p> <p>You lose 1 love now and at the end of each round. You can get rid of this quality by paying 3 health.</p>	<p>QUALITY: Stubbornness**</p> <p>You get +1 extra success to use for free in all auctions**. You lose 1 extra love when paying any cost. You MAY remove this quality by moving to 5 other.</p>	<p>QUALITY: Shyness</p> <p>You must pay 1 extra success for any relationship cost. You may remove this quality by moving to 5 other.</p>	<p>QUALITY: Sexiness</p> <p>You pay 1 resource less (any resource) for any relationship cost. You must remove this quality if you move to 5 other*** (or career?**)</p>	<p>QUALITY: Charismatic</p> <p>You can be on 1 less personal relationships for any relationship card requirement. You must remove this quality if you move to 5 other*** (or career?**)</p>	<p>QUALITY: Gullibility</p> <p>You must pay 1 extra resource for any card that you buy in an auction (this is in addition to the bid you offered). You may remove this quality by moving to 5 career** (or other?****).</p>	<p>QUALITY: Good looks</p> <p>You can be on 1 less personal relationships for any relationship card requirement, and 1 less work for profession progress (promotion). You must remove this quality if you move to at least 3 other.</p>	<p>QUALITY: Unattractiveness</p> <p>You must be on 1 more personal relationships for any relationship card requirement. (max 5 PR). You can remove this quality if you move to 5 other*** (or career?**)</p>
<p>ACTION: Therapy</p> <p>Cost: 2 success (**& 2 AP if on own turn***?)</p> <p>Target player gets 3 health.</p>	<p>ACTION: Addiction</p> <p>Cost: 2 success</p> <p>Target player pays immediately and at the end of each turn 1 love and 1 health. He can remove addiction by paying 4 APs. He then receives 1 happiness.</p>	<p>ACTION: Psycho-analysis</p> <p>Cost: 3 success</p> <p>Target player immediately reveals his hidden goal (if owned). He can then swap the revealed goal with the topmost goal card in the deck if he pays 3 health. The new goal card is also hidden from the other players.</p>	<p>ACTION: Change of mind</p> <p>Cost: 2 love</p> <p>You can move your or another player's piece to another place on the mode triangle. The total point value of this new place must be equal or greater than that of the earlier place.</p>	<p>ACTION: Private investigation</p> <p>Cost: 2 success</p> <p>All players immediately reveal their hidden goals. All players who want can swap their revealed goals to new ones (the topmost card of the goal card deck) if they pay 2 success and 2 health. This swapping cannot be done later.</p>	<p>ACTION: Making a friend</p> <p>Cost: 2 love</p> <p>The target player befriends the topmost character in the deck without any costs or mode triangle requirements.</p>	<p>QUALITY: Stupidity</p> <p>You must be on 1 more career for profession progress (promotion). You can remove this quality if you move to 5 other.</p>	<p>QUALITY: Indecision*** (change!)</p> <p>You must pay 1 extra success for any pet or property card that you buy in an auction (this is in addition to the bid you offered). You may remove this quality by moving to 5 other (or?***).</p>
<p>ACTION: Twist of Fate</p> <p>Cost: 0</p> <p>You can move one plate on the phase track** of the board to another suitable place (must be within the same phase). If the new place is occupied by another plate, the plates change places with each other.</p>	<p>ACTION: Depression</p> <p>Cost: 2 success**</p> <p>Target player loses 3 APs on each turn. He can pay 4 health to remove depression.</p>	<p>ACTION: Indecision</p> <p>Cost: 2 success**</p> <p>Target player cannot change his or her place in the mode triangle for the next 2 turns unless he/she pays 3 resource points per place.</p>	<p>ACTION: Stress</p> <p>This card can only be played on a character whose piece is either on career or other peak (i.e. 5 points). The target loses 2 health now and 1 more at the end of each turn. Stress is removed by visiting the center of the triangle or personal relationships peak (5 points).</p>	<p>ACTION: "Vanha suola janottaa"****</p> <p>Cost: 2 love</p> <p>Target player can re-establish a relationship he/she had and lost. Can be used to counter a relationship crisis.</p>	<p>ACTION: A clever business move</p> <p>Cost: 1 health**</p> <p>Target player gets 5 success points.****</p>	<p>QUALITY: Emotional coldness**aloofness**</p> <p>You must be on 1 more personal relationships to get the gain from any character card relationship that you have. You can remove this quality if you move to 5 other*** (or personal relationships?****).</p>	

<p>PROFESSION: Politician - academic Progress: minimum 4 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES success</p> <p>1 party official** 1 2 local politician 1 3 city/regional leader** 3 4 member of parliament 4 5 international politician/negotiator</p>	<p>PENSION: Politician Levels 1-2: 1 success Levels 3-4: 2 success Level 5: 4 success</p>	<p>PROFESSION: Consultant - academic Progress: minimum 3 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES success</p> <p>1 a 2 b 3 c 4 d</p>	<p>PENSION: Consultant Levels 1-3: 1 success Level 4: 2 success</p>	<p>PROFESSION: Bus/ Taxi/Truck driver - prof. Progress: minimum 3 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES success</p> <p>1 driver 1 2 driver 2 3 own car 3 4 boss 3 5 firm owner 4</p>	<p>PENSION: Bus/ Taxi/Truck driver Levels 1-3: 1 success Level 4: 2 success Level 5: 3 success</p>	<p>HOBBY/PROF: Rock/Pop (prof.) Progress: levels 1-2: min 3 other points at the end of the phase. Levels 3-5: 3 success points. LEVEL WAGES success</p> <p>1 amateur 1 2 hobbyist 2 3 part time 3 4 pro musician 3 5 a star 4</p>	<p>PENSION: Rock/Pop Levels 1-2: 0 Level 3: 1 success Level 4: 2 success Level 5: 3 success</p>
<p>PROFESSION: Farmer - professional Progress: minimum 3 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES success</p> <p>1 helper** 1 2 worker 2 3 own farm 3 4 big farm 4</p>	<p>PENSION: Farmer Levels 1-3: 1 success Level 4: 2** success</p>	<p>PROFESSION: Fisherman/Hunter - professional Progress: minimum 3 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES success</p> <p>1 beginner 1 2 part time 2 3 primary job 3 4 safari etc. organizer** 4</p>	<p>PENSION: Fisherman/ Hunter Levels 1-3: 1 success Level 4: 2 success</p>	<p>PROFESSION: Sailor - prof. Progress: minimum 3 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES success</p> <p>1 trainee** 1 2 sailor 2 3 first*** mate 3 4 sea captain 3 5 ship owner** 4</p>	<p>PENSION: Sailor Levels 1-2: 1 success Level 3-4: 2 success Level 5: 3 success</p>	<p>PROFESSION: Salesman - prof. Progress: minimum 3 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES success</p> <p>1 temporary worker 1 2 phone salesman 2 3 salesman 3 4 department head** 3 5 shop owner 4</p>	<p>PENSION: Salesman Levels 1-3: 1 success Level 4: 2 success Level 5: 3 success</p>
<p>PROFESSION: Scientist - academic Progress: minimum 3 career points at the end of the phase LEVEL WAGES success</p> <p>1 trainee 1 2 beginner** 2 3 researcher 3 4 head of department 4 5 renowned scientist 5</p>	<p>PENSION: Scientist Levels 1-3: 1 success Level 4: 2 success Level 5: 3 success</p>	<p>researcher</p>					



ACTION: Venereal disease
 Cost: 2 health
 The target player loses 2 health and one relationship/ partner card. If the character is married, a relationship crisis ensues if the married characters are more than 2 places from each other on the mode triangle.

ACTION: Sexual relationship
 Cost: 2 love
 The target player gets a relationship/ partner with the topmost character in the deck without any costs or mode triangle requirements.

ACTION: Making a friend
 Cost: 2 love
 The target player befriends the topmost character in the deck without any costs or mode triangle requirements.

ACTION: Relationship crisis
 Cost: 0
 If married characters are more than 2 places from each other on the mode triangle, they must either have a divorce or move to the required distance from each other by BOTH paying 1 happiness per moved place. The player who had his turn more recently moves.

ACTION: Relationship crisis
 Cost: 0
 If married characters are more than 2 places from each other on the mode triangle, they must either have a divorce or move to the required distance from each other by BOTH paying 1 happiness per moved place. The player who had his turn more recently moves.

ACTION: Relationship crisis
 Cost: 0
 If married characters are more than 2 places from each other on the mode triangle, they must either have a divorce or move to the required distance from each other by BOTH paying 1 happiness per moved place. The player who had his turn more recently moves.

ACTION: Venereal disease
 Cost: 2 health
 The target player loses 2 health and one relationship/ partner card. If the character is married, a relationship crisis ensues if the married characters are more than 2 places from each other on the mode triangle.

ACTION: Sexual relationship
 Cost: 2 love
 The target player gets a relationship/ partner with the topmost character in the deck without any costs or mode triangle requirements.



ACTION: Visiting a retreat***
 Cost: 1 success**
 Target player gets 5 health points.****

ACTION: A secret admirer
 Cost: 1 success
 Target player gets 5 love points.***

ACTION: Illness
 Cost: 1 success
 The target player loses 2 health immediately and after each turn. This illness can be removed by visiting Other peak (i.e. 5).

ACTION: Change of mind
 Cost: 2 love
 You can move your or another player's piece to another place on the mode triangle. The total point value of this new place must be equal or greater than that of the earlier place.

ACTION: Stress
 This card can only be played on a character whose piece is either on Career or Other peak (i.e. 5 points). The target loses 2 health now and 1 more at the end of each turn. Stress is removed by visiting the center of the triangle or Personal relationships peak (5 points).

ACTION: Illegitimate child
 Cost: 2 love
 The target player picks the topmost character card from the deck for a child. This card can only be played if the target player has a relationship/partner relationship at the moment.

2.6 Plate Backs

2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
7	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
8	8	8	8	8	8	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7

9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	9	9	9	9	9	9