October 8, 2021: Paralives Developer Weekly Chat

This weekly chat is held on Discord for Hero and Legend tier patrons every Friday for an hour. Visit www.patreon.com/alexmasse/ for details. Thank you to the editors: Simfan923 and TheElusiveFemaleAssassin on Discord.

@Spooky Ent: Hello everyone! Hope you're all having an amazing Friday! It's a beautiful autumn day here! How is Montreal?
Anna: Hi Ent! Montréal is super nice!! This autumn time is perfect: it's not too hot, not too cold, you can wear a sweater, drink hot beverages, but it's still sunny and the leaves are colorful.

@Gui: Hi Alice! How are you? How was your week?
Alice: Bonjour! I am great, thank you very much! The trees are turning yellow around the apartment and it is sooo pretty. How are YOU?

@SpoopySeasonsBear: Since Sunday is mental health day, are you guys ok? Really ok?
Jérémie: I didn't know that! It's hard to say, would I know? I hope I am.

@RipRap: Hey everyone! Happy Friday!! I'm going to ask today, what's everyone's plan for this Thanksgiving weekend? Haha
Andrei Cast: Hey Rip Rap! I'm planning a loooong chill day with maybe some ramen and movies.

@CatchyVirus: Happy Friday! I hope everyone had an excellent week! I just got engaged this week, so it got me wondering about the proposal process and how weddings will work in Paralives. Can Parafolk independently propose and then we get to choose whether or not our Paras will accept the proposal?

Jérémie: Congratulations on your engagement! I'm not 100% sure about how it'll work in the game, but for important life events such as this, player action will be required. I'm not sure if other random paras will propose to yours on their own will, that could be interesting, but also pretty tough to balance (you don't want to get one proposal every two hours, for instance!)

@Riza: Hello everyone, I hope you had a great week! I saw that Jérémie is a fan of Ace Attorney (I hope I remember correctly) so I wanted to ask whether Andrei has been introduced to this amazing soundtrack yet?

Jérémie: Haha no, I should try to introduce everyone to ace attorney, then maybe we'll have good lawyer gameplay in the game haha (this is a joke)

@Dei: Helo helo and happy Friday!! So far we've seen how trees move in the wind, but could there be other things too? Maybe flags, hanging plants, or even lights/décor that you could "attach" to trees like in this picture? In any case I'm still happy to move things up into trees for aesthetics regardless if it sways or not

Jérémie: We could probably have other things moving in the wind, but attaching things to trees might be rough at the moment based on the way we do tree movement.

@Gui: Hi Anna! How is my favourite Bear person? How was your week?

Anna: Hi Gui! Hope you're doing well. My favourite Bear person is, huh, I'm not sure I have one! This week Otis won the Fat Bear Week contest though and I'm pretty proud of this big chonk of a bear.

@SpoopySeasonsBear: Hey do you guys have questions for us?

Jérémie: How spoopy are we talking about?

@Spooky Ent: I had a thought about paras who are authors maybe being able to choose their book cover (maybe similar to picture designs), title, and if the player wanted, write a short description, like a website review or the blurb on the back of the book. Of course, I don't even know if paras will be writing their own books, but it's still fun to brainstorm!

Jérémie: That could be neat, it really depends on how much granularity we want to give to books in the game, maybe at launch they'll only have titles and barely more data, it depends on how important they are in the game, it's a fun thing to brainstorm for sure yeah!

@TheElusiveFemaleAssassin: Can we set things up so that it snows all year? Or so that it doesn't snow at all?

Anna: It should be possible! As always, we're going to use our mod tools to tweak these settings (weather, seasons), so it should be possible for you to have them too.

@Ernest: Hi everyone ! It's my first dev chat and I'm so glad to be here. I'll start with a not very joyful but important question : How death will be managed (rituals, mourning, ghosts...) ?

Alice: Hello Ernest, and welcome!! Thank you very much for joining us today! Nothing is set in stone as of now, as we are still busy focusing on our Paramaker. One thing we know for sure is that it should be interesting gameplay wise and impact your parafolks' lives. However, we don't plan ghosts or any supernatural events/apparitions for the release of the game. Hopefully we will let you know more about that soon!

@CatchyVirus: Thank you! After a wedding will we be able to send our newlyweds on a honeymoon? I'd be cool with it being a rabbit hole, I just think it'd be a pretty cute option!

Andrei Cast: That would be a really cute feature! I'd personally like to see my paras go on their honeymoon and then maybe get back all sunburned and happy. It will be something we'll definitely consider once we get to design more the Live mode

@Riza: Dei told me to ask Jérémie more Ace Attorney questions bc I'm a huge fan... Did you play The great ace attorney yet?

Jérémie: I bought the game the second it came out and just played it nonstop over a few weeks and beat both games and oh boy what a ride! Now I'm watching a friend of mine go through it and it's great!

@Spooky Ent: Asking for a friend who wishes not to be named: "Will lumberjacks be a profession in game?"
Alice: Hi Ent! I'd love that! I don't think this is one of the main careers we will focus on creating at first, but later this could definitely be considered!

@SpoopySeasonsBear: How do you guys cultivate your mental health (may be looking for tips but also want to make sure you guys are truly okay)
Andrei Cast: I personally try to vary my day as much as possible while still trying to be productive. Going out to get some air with someone also helps and having genuine fun conversations. Give some time for yourself too by playing a game, watching a movie or something that's really fun for you. Lastly, I always try to eat healthy not boring food like fruits or others stuff (a looot of ramen)

@Parrrno: Does the modding system allow changing the very core elements, like charlie for example? Or will there be things that we can't modify with it (for game stability purpose)?
Anna: There will surely be things that we don't want modders to change with our mod system. Yes, it's hard to precisely tell you which things.
　　About changing Charlie, it depends what you mean. It's already possible to mod your own model or species and your deformations (body features). You could also mod your own rig and animations and whatnot. So, theoretically, it's possible. However, if you want the animations to work with a new model you just created and the model is too different, it's probably going to "break" (at least visually) if you don't also tweak the animations and body features for example.

@Ernest: Do you plan to create steps for pregnancy? Like having the possibility to consult a doctor, discovering the baby's gender, etc.?
Jérémie: That could happen, but since time works in a compressed kind of way in life simulation games, the pregnancy will go by super quickly, so it's not certain that we would have a lot of opportunities for special gameplay during that time, it's not set in stone tho, thank you for the question!

@Dei: Hey team! Since a few people pointed out that the job openings on the website are now closed, how happy are you with the way that's all going so far?
Jérémie: N O C O M M E N T

@Spooky Ent: Do you guys remember how in TS3 you could start a game, and maybe all the plumbing in the house was broken and you could either fix it yourself or a plumber would come for discount/free, or you could just ignore the event and nothing would be broken... is this something you'd consider, not just for a new game, but maybe for how events could happen and the player could choose if it's part of the story they want to play or not?
Alice: Not at all, I never knew this was a thing! It would be great if we could add "traits" to a lot to make these kinds of events to happen. :) (Yes, we are considering them.)

@TheElusiveFemaleAssassin: In cold weather, will Paras see their breath?
Alice: Hiiii! That'd be a very cute touch, ACNH-like We're not thinking about these details yet, but I'll keep it in mind for later

@Zahlea: In the November 13th 2020 dev chat, the topic of having collections of items as one mod to download came up. The answer was that it would be possible to group multiple items into one mod/download. Now, my question is the opposite - if I get a mod that contains a lot of items but there are items I don't want, can I disable individual items from a mod?
Jérémie: That's a good question! We're still not there yet, but I would hope so? Maybe when you take a mod you would see everything in it and could choose what you want, but it's too early to tell!

@SpoopySeasonsBear: How will paras take care of their mental health?
Jérémie: Things we consider at the moment are actions like paras being able to go to support groups, do journaling, meet with a health professional, etc. They wouldn't be targeted at specific real-life mental health issues, of course, I'm not 100% sure how big the 'mental health gameplay' will be in the game too.

@CatchyVirus: Will we be able to set a gender preference for our Paras? So if you wanted your Para to be gay they could automatically turn down unwanted flirty interactions

Anna: A preference system regarding sexual/romantic orientations is considered, though we don't know the specifics yet. In general I'm not sure we should have too many autonomous flirty interactions going on and leave this to the player, but on the other hand it's nice to have some surprising events happening (an uncontrolled para wanting to flirt with yours for example). Also, if you want to flirt with an uncontrolled Para or townie, I agree they should turn it down automatically if they don't like girls/boys, but we need to make sure it's not too restrictive either. Preferences could also help a "crush system" similar to what the Sims 2 did. As you can see, all of this is really not final yet!

@Gui: Hi Jérémie! How are you? How was your week?
Jérémie: I'm good, thanks!

@CatchyVirus: Will high heels make the Para taller? This is something that throws me off in Sims 4 when you put them in heels but they're still the same height as everyone else
Alice: This is something we talked about recently and Sonia & Léa will probably have more details for you, but we're testing different techniques right now. This is a technical challenge, as it will break the animations if we don't find a solid workaround. More on this soon!

@TheElusiveFemaleAssassin: Will there be a system similar to the "whims" or "wishes" system in The Sims, where---for example---your Para wants or doesn't want another child?
Anna: We don't know yet! Personally I loved the wish system from the Sims 2 and 3, but I don't play that much with TS4's whims. For a long time I even never knew they were there

@IngeJones: What's happening about the voices for the paras? Voice actors? Vague mumblings? Computer-generated? Intelligible words? Has it been decided yet how they will talk and whether we can customise their voices?
Andrei Cast: Its crazy that you just asked about that cause we literally just had an audio meeting addressing that topic! I made a huge research to see what voice-over design approach would suit us best. I found many different options such as using a

made-up language like in Sims), emotion-based sounds such as Breath of the wild's NPC interactions, dialogue remixing like in Animal Crossing or just plain old English. All of them have their PROS and CONS and I think we reached a conclusion during the meeting regarding which approach to take but I'm not giving any spoilers yet. I can just say that I'm going to test the heck out of it and show you all the results if it's good!

Regarding voice actors and voice customization, I also did a lot of research on that but we first gotta decide our language approach before addressing that.

@Ernest: Will teenagers be able to drive? ^^
Jérémie: That's a good question, it depends on the kind of rules we decide to have in our world, if you need a permit and all that, car interactions aren't defined yet so it's too early to say, but it is an interesting thing to think about, thanks!

@indi.a: If you could have a dev chat where you get to chat with the devs of any video game of your choice, what game would you want to talk to the devs of?
Anna: Indi striking with the hard questions   I'd say Night in the Woods or Bear & Breakfast (yes mostly for the bear puns, their discord server is already full of them)
For real I don't know if I would participate cause I'd be super shy and intimidated

@Dei: Helo! Favourite hot drink for the cold weather? I'm loving cinnamon vanilla coffee right now
Alice: Hi Dei!   Well sameee, and I love a good pumpkin spice latte too!

@Gui: Hi Andrei! Sorry, got side-tracked by Alice. How are you? How was your week?
Andrei Cast: Hey Gui! I've actually been really good and busy! Thanks for asking. I got to do a big piano show last weekend, I did a lot of research on the Paras voices and on other stuff and I got to finish Squid Games!!! Crazy week...

@Zahlea: Any chance you might consider balancing around a slightly longer life span where there would be time to do things like that? Say if pregnancy was a week long or something?
Jérémie: It's not just a question of balancing lifespans, it's a question of thinking about what we want from pregnancy gameplay, and then if we decide we really need enough time for pregnant paras to do a bunch of things, everything else in the game should be

balanced around having longer lifespans, which is its own can of worms, but yeah if we decide to have a lot of things to do during a pregnancy, we'll have to figure everything else around it!

@Riza: If you could go blind again into any game you've already played, which would it be?
Jérémie: Ghost trick!

**@Gui:** Anything fun to share?
Jérémie: The new Metroid game is pretty good!

@IngeJones: A word of warning: don't release this game in Early Access unless you really need the funding from it that early. The hotel game I am playing had loads of bad reviews from people who didn't take into account it was nowhere near finished - cos they funded initially from kickstarter and then ran out of money so had to do early access selling.
Anna: Early access has a lot of risks, I agree! For us it would not only be a way to have more funding, but more to put our game out there. As we're showing you the game development process since the beginning, theoretically the community waits for it longer than if we announced it after hitting the alpha version or so. It's also a risk to have a community before the product is even there yet. But we'll see! There's no final plans made about that decision.

SpoopySeasonsBear: Can we have pet pics (for science)?

Jérémie:
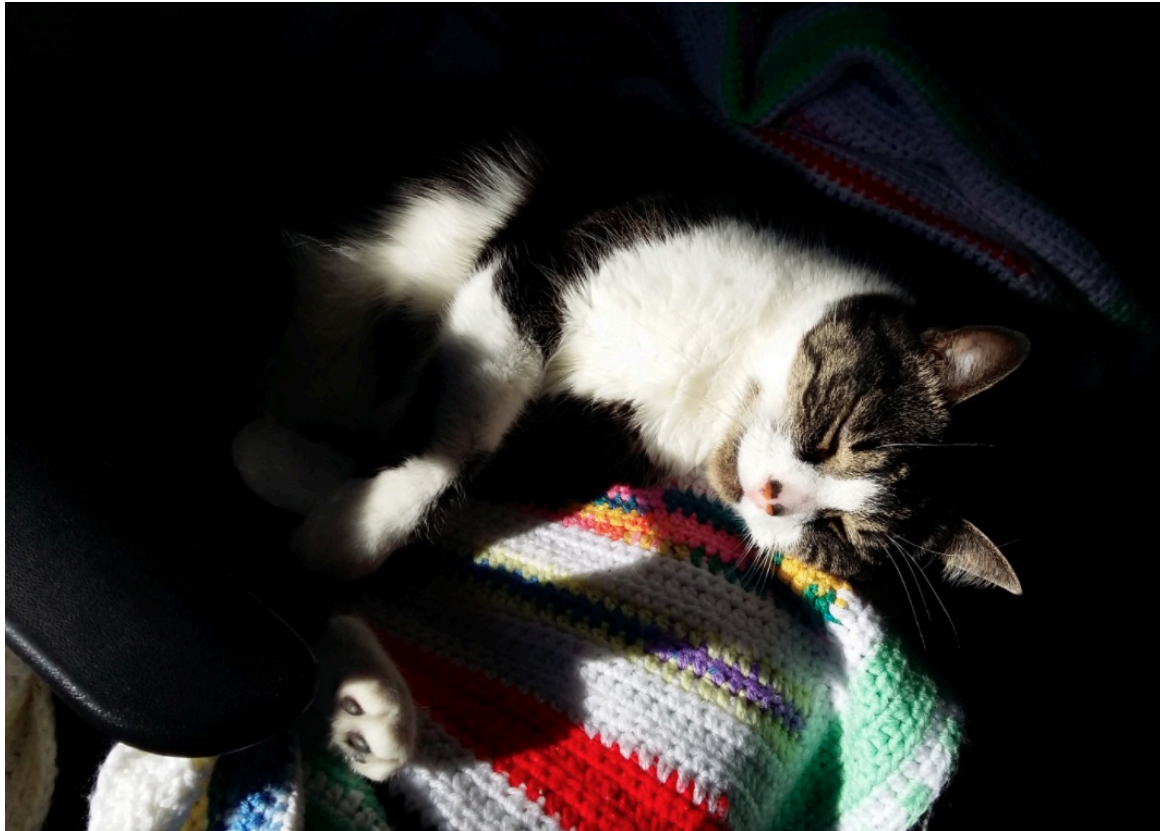
@TheElusiveFemaleAssassin: Why isn't the Build Mode getting any love? :c
Jérémie: Because the Paramaker and Live Mode need a lot of basic systems before other people on the team can ramp up production on their end. If we cannot support having clothes, artists cannot start making clothes, etc. And since we are a small team and the systems are hella big, we need everybody to focus on the same part at once.

@CatchyVirus: I'd love to be able to build an apartment building and have several households move into different units. Do you think that might be possible in Paralives?
@Alice: SAME!!! I'd love to have this kind of gameplay, but it's too early to say if we will be able to. Probably not for release at least, but no worries, I'll ask for it.

indi.a: What are you most excited to work on when you start working on live mode?
Anna: The nerdy answer: implementing for real the actions system and making a lot of graphs (graphs of possible transitions between interactions and locomotion steps, graphs for AI, every sort of graphs gimme graphs)

The simfan answer: psychology of the Paras! That's already something I already work on a bit (through design and brainstorming only) and it's not going to be the focus of our first "live mode boost" but I can't wait to see the first tests and ideas being implemented!

@Zahlea: Don't worry, developers are people just like you and me. How is the UI coming along?
Jérémie: The UI is being built feature by feature as we need it, so it's coming along nicely

@SpoopySeasonsBear: Jeremie will you dress up your cats for Halloween?
Jérémie: Yes, I will dress up as my cats for halloween, can confirm

@Zahlea: What's the thing you're most looking forward to doing Andrei? Music, sound effects, ambient, etc.
Andrei Cast: I honestly was looking forward to doing the music when I first got in the team since that's all I've been doing. However, right now after seeing all the possibilities of sound design in its immersion and player rewarding, I think I'm more excited about bringing a whole audio experience of both sound and music to make them feel as a whole. I still have a lot to discover but so far that's it

@Gui: Super Smash Bros music start playing
CHOOSE YOUR CHARACTER
which character do you choose?
Anna: Lucina!! I always take a character with a counter-attack and I spam it to annoy everyone. Falcon would be my 2d favourite
Alice: I am way too bad at that game, but I always go with Marth.

@indi.a: I'm running session 2 of a new D&D campaign tomorrow! Help me name the bandits that my players are going to fight?
Jérémie: Bart, Bort and Bert

Spooky Ent: Any fun and exciting plans for the weekend?

Jérémie: Cooking a whole turkey and eating nothing but turkey for days! And playing Metroid

@Riza: I will adopt two little kitties by the end of October. Do you guys have any good tips or cute stories for a first time cat mom?

Alice: Hi Riza! Awwww, hope we'll see pictures! I'm more of a dog person (but I love kittens, who doesn't?) sadly I don't have any tips, Jérémie however could be of more help than I am

@Parrrno: Have you stress tested your items/clothing catalogs? I mean I can imagine some people having a lot of mods, so are you building the catalogue to support hundreds or even thousands of items?

Jérémie: Now that's a good question! There are many things we could do to make sure we could support that many items, we haven't stress tested it yet because it's not completely done and optimization can come at the end, but I have a few ideas of things we could do if it ever becomes a problem, thank you for the question!

@TheElusiveFemaleAssassin: Pics of cat Halloween costumes, Jeremie?

Jérémie: It was a joke, there is no halloween costume for jérémie

@IngeJones: And to the point is what age are teenagers in the game. In TS2 they were like pubescent - the boys voices were just breaking, they were not fully grown. In TS3 and 4 the teens were older teens.   Perhaps we need two teen stages, 12-15 and 16-19

Jérémie: It's a good question as well! We still haven't decided about anything related to ages and stuff yet, we'll have to think about teens when we get there!

@indi.a: If you are suddenly in the world of the last video game you played… how screwed are you? (Paralives doesn't count)

Jérémie: I am extremely dead, that evil robot does NOT mess around.

@Zahlea: In the November 20th 2020 dev chat, SmallestPolarBear asked about how big we can make items and still interact with them. The answer was that we could make them as big as we want but at some point animations will start looking weird. My question is - will there be an indication of the recommended maximum size (and the same for minimum size)? So that if we stick to recommendations, we know that animations will still work, but we're free to go outside of that if we want?

Anna: For regular items, we'll cap the size of items so it doesn't look too broken (so we'll do the work of stress testing it to make sure the animations and interactions are ok).

For items to resize with the mod system (whether you want to raise this size limit or put in your own resizable item), the absolute dream would be to have some sort of a test scene to test directly the animations you want in this mod system, so that you can test it for real. We're not there yet though.

@Gui: Dad jokes or no dad jokes, that is the question?

Andrei Cast: Dad jokes all the wayyyy! Anytime I feel like hearing one, I ask Alexa for genuine jokes.

@Sebastian's Ransomed Glowup: Hi! I'm in Illinois right now on a trip, so I'm stopping by real quick: What's your favorite body part to customize in PAM?

Alice: Hi! I just love tweaking the face. Be safe!

@TheElusiveFemaleAssassin: Can Paras play video games?

Jérémie: At the moment? No, they can only stare and MAYBE animate if we tell them to. In the future? I hope so! Videogames are pretty cool, ya'a'all.

@Zahlea: Any of those ideas you can share?

Jérémie: Well at one of my previous jobs they had huge lists of items in one of the games, and what they did was instead of having like, 20 items visible with the whole list of 5000 hidden behind the UI they would only have maybe 50 items loaded and would pool them so as you scrolled it would seem like you were going forever but they were the same items being reused and moved up/down of the list to seem like you were scrolling the whole list at once sorry if its not clear sometimes im not good at explainin'.

@Spooku Ent: What do you think would be your favourite part of weather to play in Paralives?
Alice: Wiiiinterrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr (and probably summer too)

@CatchyVirus: One of the things that frustrate me about the Sims 4 would be how long everything takes to complete. To have your teen or child Sim ready for school it feels like you need to wake them up at like 4 am or earlier just so they can use the bathroom, shower, and eat before going to school. Will activities in Paralives take a similar amount of time as they do in TS4 or do you think the animations will be faster? This is probably not an easy question to answer rn
Anna: It's a hard question indeed! I don't know precisely how we will time things, and I agree with you that time management in Sims 4 can be stressful at times. I think that it's also influenced by what kind of gameplay we want: do we want to focus on the challenge to do well in life? the challenge to do well on a day-to-day basis? Do we want to leave more space to enjoy the little things of life more? Do we want to be realistic? These are not simple yes or no questions! I feel like in the Sims, I'm always stressed about filling the needs because these bars decrease so quickly. If needs didn't have such a critical impact on my Sims, this wouldn't be a problem anymore, but we'd also need to have other challenges to keep it interesting.

@Spooky Ent: What do you think would be your favourite part of weather to play in Paralives?
Andrei Cast: Whenever there'll be a soft breeze to hear it on the grass

@Spooky Ent: Anyway, with respect to the example from TS3, I was thinking of a similar system where a storm comes up and the house gets damaged, but if the player really, really doesn't want to play that scenario out, they could always ignore the event.. It could maybe work for chance cards too.
Jérémie: That could be a solution, yeah, we'll see! It's certainly a balance between having events that meaningfully impact the game being unavoidable and them being always avoidable if you want. Like in the "house gets damaged" scenario, I'm not sure what kind of player would willingly want that to happen, haha

@HoopsieO22: Quick. Favorite candy if you have any, go!
Jérémie: The little candy peaches!
Anna: Haribo's Car-en-sac.

@Zahlea: Have you made a decision on a "duck" animation? E.g. for paras walking through a doorway that's too low for them to walk through straight.

Alice: Hey Zah, not yet no! That will require a bit of testing later depending on the height and the path the para wants to take. At first I thought you were asking about animating ducks... (I hope we will, cause I am obsessed with them)

@TheElusiveFemaleAssassin: What's your favorite and least-favorite Pokemon, and why?

Anna: Favourites are Unown (Zarbi in French) and Zigzagoon (Zigzaton in French). First one because I liked to collect their cards when I was a kid, there is as many Unown cards as letters of the alphabet!! Second one because he's just adorable

Least favourite would be Zubat (Nosferapti in French) because it reminds me the stressful times of playing Pokémon's cave levels.

@TheElusiveFemaleAssassin: Can Paras sit on their porch and watch lightning storms as entertainment?

Anna: I'd love that!! I love to watch storms. Maybe some of them could fear them though (especially pets).

@Zahlea: This will be my last question, so I want to thank you all. As usual, I'm so very grateful for you allowing us this time to ask questions. I hope you all have an amazing weekend! Thank you for that reply Alice! For my last question - what are you most excited to work on?

Alice: Thanks for your support and your great great concepts. I'm super excited about animating pets and animals in general!

@indi.a: Have a wonderful weekend!! Thank you all for dev chatting! Any fun plans this weekend?

Jérémie: Something something turkey, videogames