

Megagames

Quick and dirty design analysis



Megagame working definition

A mega game is a collaborative and competitive 40+ player semi-formal game played in physical space. Its gameplay consists of information manipulation/ gathering, strategic and tactical decision making, roleplaying and improvisation framed in a cooperative and competitive structure.



Working document for design

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/10vXGWAuFUv6K5-OjWIBRIrfkZvKQS GVWWoQJJx-D1Jw/edit?usp=sharing>

Mega game definitions and resources

<https://ludogogy.professorgame.com/what-are-megagames/>

A megagame is an interesting combination of different game elements encountered in other places. They involve role-playing, simulation, and social interactions.

Megagames combine all of this and on a large scale and **[introduce aspects of economics and politics into play]**(<https://arstechnica.com/gaming/2016/09/the-explosive-growth-of-the-300-person-megagame/>)^{*} This is often represented in megagame **[components]**(<https://www.universityxp.com/blog/2020/2/20/game-components>) such as maps, charts interlocking games, **[and overarching stories that join together to create a larger narrative]**(<http://megagamesociety.com/#faq>). Players often take a large role in shaping the megagame experience through **[live action role-playing]**(<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/welcome-world-megagames-300-players-take-part-watch-skies-board-game-10213384.html>). As such the structure of the game is similar from play to play. But each new group of players **bring** a new narrative.

[A megagame is a large scale game that contains different elements found in other games](<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Megagame>). Those elements include (but are not limited to) role-playing, simulations, social interaction, economics, and politics, which are combined into an overarching narrative. This combination takes place through other, smaller, interlocking games that occur concurrently within the megagame.

<https://megagamemaker.com/2020/09/>

<https://www.beckybeckyblogs.com/game-design/megagame-design-3-scoping/>

https://youtu.be/hN71v9H_gg8?si=h1I2OnUKx24znqQY

<https://youtu.be/4u0fP25AtFg?si=iPPPhR07rJpFU-5U5>

https://youtu.be/polyBCoKAfM?si=xR_TT_ZMjQMkCjwB

<https://youtu.be/vLsv3cHNSE0?si=YN54cQm-aPXKy2-i>

Technology

Props, tokens, maps, rooms, spoken / written language, people and spaces and other real world tools are used as game pieces to guide and support the fiction and physicality of play.



Rules

There is a set of basic rules that guide play and define the basic actions, economy and structure of the game.

The game is real time round based. Each round takes a set amount of time where actions can be performed by players and teams that impacts the game system. When the round ends the game state is updated and a new round begins.

There is a basic method of actions to attain information and resources, spending them to bolster the strength of teams and players in conflict resolution, but more importantly the resources can be used in negotiations between players and / or teams.

These rules are leading but they allow for emergent actions from players. And how these actions are resolved and how actions impact the game can be made up on the fly by **control**.

INTERCEPTION

- An Advanced Interceptor can intercept an alien saucer anywhere in the world.
- An Advanced Assault Team cannot intercept saucers as it fights on the ground – it can only intercept alien activities such as Terror Raids and Abductions.
- Alien Infiltration can only be countered by pre-positioned Agents.

Advanced Interceptors

If there is an incoming Saucer, then Advanced Interceptors may be deployed to intercept it. They do this by moving the intercept to the saucer on the map and drawing an intercept card:

Look under 'INTERCEPT?'
Your interceptors will not be 'Enhanced' at the start – so ignore that.

If it says **YES**, then there is a successful intercept.

If the card says **DAMAGE** then **your** interceptor has been damaged in the action.
If the target was a decoy, you will be told.

If the Intercept of a saucer was successful then the aliens must take one of their own damage cards.
If there is a shoot down result then an assault team is required to recover it.

If it is not recovered in the same turn then the saucer is lost (mainly to treasure hunters, and private corporate scavengers). Any research card generated as a result is not recovered but instead goes into the Private Collectors Pool (which can be accessed via the Grey Market).

If the intercept was unsuccessful then the saucer moves on to its intended mission – which



Control

The game is run by a group of 'players' called **control** that function as the game's engine. The main task of control is to guide players in playing the game, process players' actions, aggregate results and change and update the game state. Also, they are there to translate player's actions into a mechanic that resolves the action that fits within the overall rules and process its impact to the system at large.

They also provide / improvise game prompts based on game state and / or player actions for players to react to.

Their goal is to provide an engaging and immersive and satisfying game experience driven by player creativity.



Players

Players are usually part of a team with a specific assigned / chosen role. Each role has their own set of game privileges and fictional role description and are related in an asymmetrical manner.

Each team has their own specific goals they try to meet and their own set of limited resources. Usually teams are also related in an asymmetric and dynamic manner creating a complex system of dynamic agents.



Game ending

The game ends after the maximum time has passed and / or a specific end state is reached. This is called out by control.

When the game is over, a debrief is held to explain what really happened and reveal how the end state came to be.

Achieving the goals of the team is a small part of the experience. It's more about discovering what each other's roles are in the bigger system that provides satisfaction.

THE GAME

GAME TIMETABLE

Each turn lasts for 40 minutes and represents a quarter-year of in-game time.

09:30	10:00	Players arrive and register	OOO
10:00	10:10	Briefing	OOO
10:10	10:30	Mechanics demo	OOO
10:30	11:10	Turn 1	First quarter 281 AC
11:10	11:50	Turn 2	Second quarter 281 AC
11:50	12:30	Turn 3	Third quarter 281 AC
12:30	13:20	Turn 4†	Fourth quarter 281 AC
13:20	14:00	Turn 5	First quarter 282 AC
14:00	14:40	Turn 6	Second quarter 282 AC
14:40	15:20	Turn 7*	Third quarter 282 AC
15:20	16:00	Turn 8*	Fourth quarter 282 AC
16:00	16:30	Debrief	OOO
16:30	17:00	Cleanup and pub	OOO

†Phase 1 during turn 4 is extended for lunch.

*Either turn 7 or 8 will be the last turn.

Mega game Checklist

- **Teams.** There are teams of players
- **Hierarchy.** The teams of players exist in some sort of hierarchy
- **Conflict.** There is some sort of conflict, rivalry or adversarial situation
- **Open Possibilities.** The game is open-ended and allows a wide range of possibilities through emerging gameplay and player-determined narrative. We often say that the game should accommodate anything that could be done in real life.
- **Meaningfulness.** There are relevant and meaningful interactions both within teams and between teams.
- **Urgency.** There is time pressure and a sense of urgency. Players cannot have unlimited time to make decisions and the game moves at a pace that is not determined by the players.

Mega game design/development timeline

6 months to go: Venue booked. Major mechanics decided. Cast list planned. Turn structure planned. Initial marketing set up.

3 months to go: Major mechanics playtested and nailed down. Start taking payments.

2 months to go: Casting finalised and publicised. Sub mechanics playtested and nailed down. Game material designs finished. Map ordered.

1 month to go: Game handbook finished and sent to players.

2 weeks to go: All game materials designed and production well underway. Pre-game briefing with control team.

1 week to go: All game materials produced. Personal briefings sent to players. Final details fitting into place.

Megagame Design Costs

Venue: 600+ Euro

Material Cost: 400+ Euro

Production time: 40h

Designer time: 150h+

Administration (inc. fees): 150+ Euro

Conclusions

1. Megagames are very compelling form of game where players are a part of a hyper reality.
2. It leans heavily on players finding and taking roles, player interactions and emergent situations.
3. The game rules have the complexity of a typical complex board game and roleplaying game
4. It has a huge logistical component.
5. Control needs to lean on improvisational skills to keep the game running.
6. Most games developed within the mega game space have been organically grown over time.
7. Although overall systems are not complicated perse, but finding out what works at scale is a challenging time consuming process.
8. Building up the expertise to understand well what could work is gained through experience. (e.g. playtests at various scales and running games)

Project implications

- What can we actually do within our budget?
- We can and should definitely experience one / two games to find out how all these elements work in play.
- I'm unsure in what way we can provide meaningful recommendations / insights regarding designing these type of games within an educational context.
 - It requires game (design) expertise / experience
 - lots of hours, manpower and money to design / produce and run

Kilogames could be more in scope

- kilo games are smaller scoped games with the same megagame 'feel'
- can be played from 20+ players
- only take a few hours instead of a 6+ hours
- smaller control team needed to run
- less complex to run / design?

TO DO: investigate this further



Action points

- Look into Kilogames
- Analyse ruleset megagame rulebooks.
 - everybody dies
 - watch the skies
- Discuss scope / ambitions further

