

Workshop:

Social Believability in Games 2014

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1. WORKSHOP HISTORY AND RATIONALE

In 2013 we organized two workshops organized with the theme of Social Believable NPCs, one at DiGRA 2013 and one at ACE 2013. We aim these to be the start of a workgroup series to be organized on a yearly basis together with appropriate leading game conferences.

Social believability is of key interest to computer game studies, development, and believable game characters are of essence for player enjoyment and immersion. Thus, discussing elements of immersion from a research and a design perspective may contribute to developing more entertaining computer games.

The purpose of this workshop is to allow discussion on the theories and models for NPC social behavior and social affordances in industry as well as between different but related academic disciplines. The expected outcome is a better understanding of the overlaps and differences within and between these communities.

2. SOCIAL BELIEVABILITY IN GAMES

The Social Believability in Games Workshop is a point of interaction for researchers and game developers interested in different aspects of modeling, discussing, and developing believable social agents and Non-Player Characters (NPC). This includes discussions around behavior based on social and behavioral science theories and models, social affordances when interacting with game worlds and more.

From the beginning of digital games, AI has been part of the main idea of games containing acting entities, which is to provide the player with “worthy” opponents (NPCs). The development of multiplayer games has increased the demands put on the NPCs as believable characters, especially if they are to cooperate with human players. However, the social aspect of intelligent behavior has been neglected compared to the development and use AI for other domains (e.g. route planning). In particular, the interplay between intelligent behavior that is task-related, the emotions that may be attached to the events in the game world, and the social positioning and interaction of deliberating entities is underdeveloped. This workshop aims to address this deficiency by putting forward demonstrations of work in the integration of these three aspects of intelligent behavior, as well as models and

theories that can be used for the emotional and social aspects, and for the integration between the three aspects.

Topics of interest include:

- NPC design created to explore hypotheses
- realized prototypes, demos, and applications
- social science reaction to modeled social behavior
- philosophical approaches to sociality, NPCs, and believable agents
- trade-off between autonomous NPCs and control over story lines
- provocative ideas
- authoring social behavior for NPCs and agents

3. ORGANIZERS

Mirjam Palosaari Eladhari (PhD) is Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Digital games at Malta University. Her main area of research is AI based game design. The research approach she has adopted includes exploration of the social multi-player game-design space through experimental implementations of prototypes.

Harko Verhagen (PhD) is an associate professor at the Department of Computer and Systems Sciences at Stockholm University. His research has focused on the use of sociological theories in multi-agent systems research and social ontology concerning the balancing of individual and collective modes of decision making. Recently he has applied these models to computer games and more in particular NPC behaviours to create more interesting hybrid social spaces.

Josh McCoy (PhD) has received his Ph.D. in Computer Science at the Expressive Intelligence Studio at U.C. Santa Cruz and currently holds a postdoctoral scholar position in the Center for Games and Playable Media. He researches new ways to create and improve the state of the art of video games, interactive experiences and their design through the application of existing and the creation of novel artificial intelligence (AI) systems. As the latest product of this research, Josh initiated and was a lead developer for Prom Week, a game featuring an AI system that enables playable social interactions.

Magnus Johansson (PhD) is an associate professor at the Department of Computer and Systems Sciences, Stockholm University. He received his doctorate in Computer and systems

Sciences from Stockholm University in June 2013. His research interest can be divided into three main directions; firstly, player rules and norms in online games with focus on understanding cooperation between players and how norms and rules are maintained and communicated within the group.

Secondly, how to create socially believable non-player characters in computer games. The third direction deals with evaluation of games usability from a HCI (Human Computer Interaction) perspective.