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For The Kingdom

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For The Kingdom

by

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For The Kingdom is a tabletop board game that I have developed for my thesis. In my thesis, I would like to cover three areas that have been crucial to the development of the game- the guidebook created to support and facilitate the board game, the changes made due to player feedback and testing, and the potential paths to getting the game to the market. Before Talking about those three areas, however, I will first describe the games genre and a bit about my approach to developing it.

   The board game combines the mechanics of <u>Economic</u> and <u>City Builder</u> Games with objectives and mechanics of <u>Social Deduction</u> games. <u>Economic</u> games encourage players to manage a system of production, distribution, trade, and consumption of goods. The games usually simulate a market in some way. The term is often used interchangeably with resource management games. <u>City Building</u> games have players construct and manage a city in an efficient, powerful, or lucrative way by selectively choosing the makeup of their territory through said buildings. A <u>Social Deduction</u> game can be seen as a cooperative game with betrayal mechanics. The traitors typically win by triggering a failure condition for the players. For this mechanism, this game is characterized by hidden roles. Traitors begin the game with hidden identities or have received them during the game (Category: Economic #3: Bats Cave of Games).

   My approach to game development for this thesis was focused on player experience. I started with defining the gameplay I wanted to give players and some of the genres I was targeting. I would design game mechanics that I thought could be interesting for gameplay purposes. Still, to keep the game on a consistent path, I would ask how these design choices further develop the target experiences or genres I want to build? This practice aided me by guiding my effort in game design to achieve alignment and create the intended experience for players.

Background

  The King is dead, murdered by the traitor(s) on the cusp of war with a neighboring Kingdom. The players will have one year to prepare for the war and elect a new King to lead the region. Using limited resources, players will need to balance the development of their territory with the health of the Kingdom.

  The Kingdom is split into six equal Dutchies whose titles are held by the most trusted advisors of the royal court. Our players assume the identities of these dukes or duchesses. One or more of the Dukes/Duchesses have turned traitorous to the Kingdom and have had a significant part in his assassination. Their identity is secret amongst the group. Without an heir, one of the advisors will have to ascend the throne, but who can be trusted?

  The traitorous Dukes/Duchesses are working for the neighboring enemy Kingdom. They can remain hidden by masking the intention of their actions or be bold in the faces of others. Their goal is to destabilize the Kingdom's economy or seize the throne entirely; their strategy and tactics matter not.

Game Overview
Playing the game
For the Kingdom is played in 4 seasons: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. A Season consists of 3 rounds, and each round is composed of a turn by each player. There will be 12 player turns each in total. Players will use actions in their turn to utilize resources, build buildings, and achieve their objectives.

The Goal
At the end of the game, each player will vote on a single person to become the new monarch of the Kingdom. Your roles determine who needs to become the monarch for you to win the game. Each gold counts for one vote you may place; you may vote on yourself or split votes.

Win Conditions
Loyalists: A loyalist becomes the King, Reveal the Traitors,
Traitors: A Traitor becomes the King, Sending the Kingdom into turmoil
Usurper: Become the King

Voting In Events
Some event cards require a round of voting to be resolved. Players will have two cards, a yes card and a no card. Voting events are anonymous until the moment they are revealed simultaneously. Voting is majority rule, and in the event of a tie, the vote will fail.

Definitions/Quick Reference
Mainboard- Refers to the board in the center, not the player board
Player board- Refers to the individual boards in front of each player
Resources- refers to the small wooden blocks that represent the Kingdom's resources
Gold- yellow disks represent coins used to buy/sell, among other actions. Gold is what you will vote with at the end of the game, and it is a determining factor of the health of the Kingdom. It is valuable!
Building Slots- These refer to the empty spaces in your player board
Player Aid Card- this card lists out the actions and serves as a quick reference for other things in the game.

Turn Order, Seasons, and Rounds
Turn Order

Turn order will be decided by bidding. At the beginning of a season, each player will have the opportunity to bid gold to have their preferred placement in the turn order. Players who bid the most have the strategic advantage of choosing when they go, whether before or after a particular player or at a specific point in the round.

The player who bids the least will go First by placing their piece on the turn Track.
Example- 0

The player who bids the second least will then decide where to place their piece second.
Example- 00

Then third.
Example- 000

Fourth
Example- 0000

Fifth
Example- 00000

Finally, Sixth
Example- 000000

Turn order then resolves from left to right for the round. Another round of bidding will begin before the next season.

Seasons
1. The season card takes resources from the kingdom markets every turn. If the resources are not in the market, the Kingdom spends the highest amount of gold in the market from the treasury to import the resource.
2. At the end of a season, players may spend ten gold to collect one piece of evidence. Three pieces can be used to peek at another player's role. Gold Spent this way does not return to the Kingdom.

Rounds
1. At the beginning of each round, one player flips over a card from the season deck and places it in the middle for everyone to see.
2. Next, begin with the players' turns as voted on by the end of the last round.
3. Flip over the next round card at the end of the last player's turn/end and continue with the first player in the turn order.

Mainboard

Kingdom Board	
Gold Storage	**Grain Storage** 10 ☐☐☐☐ 8 ☐☐☐☐☐ 6 ☐☐☐☐☐☐ 4 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ 2☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
Wood Supply 12 ☐☐☐ 9 ☐☐☐☐ 6 ☐☐☐☐☐ 3 ☐☐☐☐☐	**Stone Supply** 20 ☐☐ 15 ☐☐ 10 ☐☐ 5 ☐☐

Buildings

Buildings are a significant gameplay component of For the Kingdom. They can give players free actions, allow them to produce more goods, and help them put pressure on other players.

Farms- Small farms produce 2 food each for the Kingdom. Large farms produce 2 more food for a total of 4
Cost:2 wood, 5 gold
Upgrade cost: 1 stone, 2 wood, 5 gold

Sawmills- Small sawmills produce 2 wood each for the Kingdom. Large sawmills produce 2 more food for a total of 4
Cost:15 gold
Upgrade cost: 1 stone, 4 wood, 10 gold

Quarries- Small queries produce 1 stone each and can be upgraded to large quarries to produce 1 more stone for a total of 2.
Cost: 4 wood, 15 gold
Upgrade cost: 2 stone, 6 wood, 15 gold

Warehouse- A structure that adds more resource storage space and gives the player a free *move resource action* to its location at the beginning of their turn.
Cost: 2 wood
Upgraded version: Gives a player a *move from* action then a *move to* action. Increases storage amount by 2.
Upgrade cost: 5 gold, 1 stone, 3 wood

Church- A structure that allows plays to put financial pressure on others and gives them an alternate source of income by siphoning off other players' economies. Players who have a church will be allowed to put a tithe on another player. Tithes can be coordinated to drain a player's economy exponentially. Tithe formula: where x is the number of tithes and y is the gold upkeep on the tithed player's turn. $x*x=y$
Upgraded version: gives the player the ability to place an extra tithe and remove tithes on themselves.
Cost: 2 wood
Upgrade Cost:5 gold, 2 stone

Market- Gives a player a free *buy/sell* action for resources between the tile and the Kingdom's market. The upgraded version gives a player the ability to trade between player markets.
Cost 1 stone, 3 wood, 10 gold
Upgrade cost: 20 gold, 4 wood, 2 stone

Bandit Den- can only be built on a plot where a building was destroyed. It allows the player to hire bandits for (X gold related to the cost of iron) to demolish another player's building. After it is used, the plot becomes available for building again. Upgraded, the Bandit Den becomes an impoverished area. Requires 2 food to upkeep.
Upgrade cost: 15 food, 5 gold

Prison- A building that can only be gained from the "Building a Prison" Event. Has an upkeep of 4 food. If not kept, remove the prison and two of the player's buildings.

Resources & Resource Tiles
Resources
Gold: Defines the Health of the Kingdom, influences turn order, and voting power.
It will be stored loosely on the board within a boxed area.

Food: A constant need for stability in the Kingdom and an upkeep mechanic for players that increases based on the seasons and buildings. It will have a triangular (tiered) structure for its economy that increases costs as food becomes scarcer.
Example of market structure:

10	☐☐☐☐
8	☐☐☐☐☐
6	☐☐☐☐☐☐
4	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
2	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Wood: A replenishable resource used in land development. It will be used for building/upgrading buildings and a more costly upkeep cost for advanced structures. Its economy is tiered but will have a square shape.
Example of market structure:

12	☐☐☐
9	☐☐☐☐
6	☐☐☐☐☐
3	☐☐☐☐☐

Stone: A resource for advanced buildings and actions. It is more costly to source than wood
Example of market structure:

20	☐☐
15	☐☐
10	☐☐
5	☐☐

Iron: A non-renewable and scarce resource used for more specialized buildings and particular actions. Players will have to source iron from events (iron would be bought from the Kingdom) or from trade buildings.
Example of market structure:

20	☐
15	☐
10	☐
5	☐

Time: Players will not be able to do everything they want in a turn because they will be limited on actions. They will have to optimize and prioritize their gameplay based on having 2 actions per turn plus any *free actions* they have based on buildings or card events.

Resource Tiles
Trees- Can be turned into sawmill for 15 gold or demolished for 3 wood.
Boulders- Can be removed for 1 stone for 15 gold.
Swamps- Can be removed for 10 gold.

Player Boards

Player Board		Tithes: X X X X	
Gold Storage			

Setup

Board Setup
1. Place the Kingdom Board
2. For a player count of less than 6, remove all cards and tiles that show a player count greater than your number of players represented
3. Separate and shuffle Season cards, Event cards, and Role cards into their respective decks (6 in total, distinguishable by the backs of the cards), and place the decks face down.
4. Fill resources in the market up to but exclude the last tier.
5. Place 75 gold coins in the Kingdom's market.

Player Setup
1. Take a player mat
2. Take 20 gold and place it into the gold area marked on your board.
3. Take 5 natural resource tiles and place them randomly on any space on the board face down. Once all players are done placing the tiles, they all flip the tiles to see their beginning states.
4. Each player must draw from the role deck; you may look at the card at this time.

Phases of a Turn
Player Turn
Each turn consists of 3 phases, the beginning phase, the action phase, and the end phase.
1. During the beginning phase, resolve the season card for the Kingdom by taking the numbered resources from it, then resolve any free actions given to you by owned buildings and replenish empty tiles on farms.
2. In the Action phase, you may perform up to 2 actions listed on the player aid card.
3. For the end phase, resolve the upkeep of your buildings. Draw an event card now if it was listed on the season card.

Player Actions

In the action phase on their turn, players have 2 actions listed here. You must complete each action before choosing another.

- Buy - Players may transfer resources out of the Kingdom's market in exchange for the current value level for each item displayed next to the stockpile.
- Sell- Players may transfer resources to the Kingdom's market in exchange for gold at the current level for each item.
- Move- can move all resources to different spaces.
- Build- Players may place a building tile on their building slots in exchange for prices listed on the building price section of the card.
- Upgrade- Players may flip over their building tile in exchange for the upgrade price listed on the building card.
- Demolish- Destroy a building for resources- Spend an action to remove a building and return half of the resources rounded down to player warehouses.

End Game

After the final round in winter, players will begin voting on their new King. A player's voting power equals to the amount of gold they have in their treasury; one gold equals one "vote." The gold can be split up however a player sees fit or stacked onto one player, including themselves. Voting can happen in any order, but if no one is willing to go, the player with the highest gold must vote. In the event of a tie, players will hold a runoff election where each player has three gold to vote with, will vote in turn order, and the only candidates are the players who tied. At the end of the vote, the new King will reveal their role and announce the victory for their faction.

Guided Example Round

Setting Up the Main Board

1. Players will begin by distributing the player boards, 5 nature tiles each, and starting buildings. Each player should have a farm, sawmill, and 5 random nature tiles. Each of them will be marked with a small S at the top corner to signify that they are the starting pieces. Place these aside for now.
2. Fill up the Kingdom's market with their respective resources, 22 food, 12 wood, 6 stone, 3 iron. Then, distribute 20 gold to each player and put the rest of it into the Kingdom's reserve, which should be indicated on the mainboard.
3. Shuffle all the event cards together, and Each player will draw 2 event cards and pick from them. These cards will go into the event deck. The card not chosen can return to the box. Shuffle the newly formed event deck and place it on the mainboard.
4. Next, shuffle all the season cards separately, and draw 4 of them for each season. Stack these with winter at the bottom, Autumn on top of winter, summer on top of Autumn, and spring on top.
5. Draw 1 card from the season deck; this will represent resources taken from the market at the start of each turn. This should conclude with setting up the mainboard.

Setting Up the Player Board

1. Now, take each of the nature tiles set aside, and mix them up in a way you no longer know which are which.
2. Place these tiles somewhere in each of the building slots. These represent natural phenomena that a noble would have to deal with when building their land. Afterward, flip them up, and place the other starting tiles wherever you want in the building slots. Place 1 food into the player's storage.
3. Players will vote with their gold to choose when they wish to go in the round. The turn order will be represented on the mainboard with circles where you place your character tile. The player who paid the most will choose last, and you may shift other tiles to place your tile between others as you please. This should conclude with setting up the player board.

Playing the First Round.

1. Starting with the player first on the player track, we will begin the first turn. Players start with the beginning phase, in which the number of resources in the season card will be taken from the market.
2. Then we start the Action phase, in which you may take 2 actions on the player action card. It is recommended to use one of the actions to build on the first turn.
3. You will also perform upkeep of your buildings, so on the first turn, place food resources in the empty spaces on the farm, then similarly, place wood in the empty spaces on the sawmill. These resources are now yours to use.
4. Repeat this process for every player, then draw a new season card to begin the next round.

Components

1x Board
1x Plater Track
6x Player boards
6x Role cards
6x Character tiles
12x Season
6x Event cards
6x Player aids
60x Gold coins
100x Food Tokens
50x Wood Tokens
25x Stone Tokens
15x Iron Tokens
130x Building Tiles
35x Resource tiles

Gameplay Changes from Player Testing

When testing the game, I encountered many issues and design flaws. Most changes with the game involve tweaks with number values, especially with the markets and building values. Those changes are frequent and can be discussed generally. For this section of the paper, I would like to discuss the significant gameplay design changes that have been made directly from player feedback.

Increasing Resource Types

When playing the game with 5 people, it became clear that the number of resource types needed to be increased. Players were attempting to produce all types of goods to be independent of the Kingdom's market. This made player interaction and interdependence much lower than needed for a social deduction game from a gameplay perspective. By increasing the number of resource types, we are making players focus on fewer resources and depend on the market more.

Increasing Interaction

Traitors needed a stronger ability to exploit/hinder the market to sabotage the Kingdom. One of the intended ways to do this was to monopolize a resource and control its scarcity in the market. Players who received the traitor role felt that they did not have enough control over the Kingdom's economy. To fix this and give, we are looking to develop more player-to-player mechanics. I hope to create more maliciousness, defensiveness, and retaliation to keep players on edge and proactive in thwarting other players.

Market Prices

Balancing for 3-6 players has been challenging. I am currently experimenting with alternative market costs based on 3-4 player games and 5-6 player games. These costs would be easy to switch out with a simple flat piece of carboard with numbers. The result of lowering costs would increase market trade while higher costs will restrict trade, but more testing will be needed to see how market activity is truly affected.

Self-Publishing vs. Publishing
Development

Self-publishing gives the developer complete creative control over their work. Developers can experiment with game mechanics, art, and the form of their product more readily. In self-publishing, you are allowed to take more significant risks with your work.

A publisher may restrict a game developer to conform to genre standards and eliminate elements of a game that may not have broad appeal or be deemed risky. Publishers have years of industry knowledge and research, and as a publisher, they are looking for games that can have broad appeal or can be easily picked up by a wider audience. Publishers will have the final say on the art and the game's direction.

Finance

Self-publishers may struggle to find financing or will have to finance the game out of their pocket. Organizations like Kickstarter, GoFundMe, and the like have opened the way for many people to start publishing their games. While it is true that funds may be less accessible, the product will have a higher profit margin per unit.

Publishers will help with financing a game, but they will take a large portion of the profits. Developers are usually paid royalties equaling 3-8% of the profits. By giving up profits to the publisher, the developer decreases the financial risk since they will no longer put up their own money to produce their product or pay promoters.

Marketing and Sales

Social media has played a prominent role in helping self-publishers get the word out about their game. They can more effectively and efficiently target their audience by paying the most relevant influences to their target users. Social media made it possible, not easy. Many self-publishers will struggle to get their games in stores, and their games can go into obscurity quickly. Their work may never see the recognition or appease that they wanted.

Publishers are essential in this aspect. Having the connections, finances, and industry knowledge, they have an easier time getting the game in stores and driving sales. The game is much more likely to be noticed and spread by word of mouth with a punisher's backing. The developer will receive more money likely from this route due to a larger volume in sales, even if the publisher takes most of the profits.

Manufacturing and Supply Chains

Self-publishing will require sourcing components for the game, such as boards, resource tiles, cards, boxes, and organizational items like bags. These components make up a large majority of the per-unit cost of the board game and tie up finances until the unit is sold.

Publishers will already have relationships with manufacturers and have access to higher volume discounts. This will make the per-unit cost of the board game much cheaper and make it much easier to keep the product in stock.

Works Cited

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