

Game Analyze Paper

Monster Hunter : World is the game that is analyzed in the incoming paragraph, and here is a short introduction to it: The game and its series are known as Action RPGs. It was released in January 2018, and it took four years for Capcom to develop it. The game is one of the most popular versions in its series, and attracts lots of new players. I am analyzing a game mechanic design and a level design pattern in the following paragraphs.

First of all, the game, *Monster Hunter : World*, has a unique level system that functions through the series, and makes the game so different from other ARPG games, such as *Dark Souls III* and *Final Fantasy XV*. A regular ARPG game involves three important elements, that are ability points, different equipment or moves, and real time combats. Below is the further explanations:

- Real time combat is the most easy concept here, which basically means the game shall neither in a turn-based combat nor player can control many units at once like strategy games. In addition, the game normally would use a first person point of view or third person point of view only, because they got the best effect to make the players think they are controlling the character in front of them.
- Different equipment and moves are generally anything that allows players to have a diverse way of attacking, defending and healing. The combat system is one of the most important things for an ARPG game. Some moves, weapons or armor also have a level or ability points requirements. *Final Fantasy* series are known for their narrative and turn-based strategy combat. However, *Final Fantasy XV* is one of the ARPG that is doing a great job on providing different items and moves for players to attack and heal. (see Picture 1)
- Ability points is a stat table that allowing ARPG game players to know what exactly they are. How strong their attack is or which

armor they can put on without influencing other abilities. It is the most underlying laws of the game and it interacts with other systems and designs. For example, the level system. *Dark Souls III* is a game that builds connections between levels and ability points. It follows a simple rule of the higher level you are, the more ability points you have. (see Picture 2)

Monster Hunter : World is doing a great job on the real time combat design and the diversity of equipment and moves. However, it does something unique on ability points and level systems. Monster Hunter : World's unique level system is that it does not build connections to ability points, or players' stats. The level in MHW, which stands for Monster Hunter : World, is called "Hunter's Rank"(shortcut as "HR"). By leveling up the "HR", players won't get any ability points as rewards. Instead, it allows the player to produce some new equipment at the blacksmith and introduce new and stronger monsters to the game that are available for fights. This is because in MHW, the ability points of a player character are given by their weapons and armors. Different weapons and armors affect a character's health, stamina, defense level, and attack damage. Producing new equipment from the blacksmith needs monsters' elements dropped by killing the monsters. Thus we have a great and nice loop of players for getting positive feedback of : kill monsters—drop elements—level up—produce new equipment—kill new monsters.

One of the good examples of implementing the same system in another game would be the gunsmith system of Call of Duty 16 : Modern Warfare. They share the same underlying logic: shoot and kill—gain different kill records—level up—gain new aftermarket modified parts for weapons—shoot and kill. Such a system not only provides more game content for players, but is also good for the game industry because players have more things to do in the game. Even though in a PVP FPS game, there is nothing to drop and collect, as the game's core concept is to provide a battleground for players to kill each

other, the system's idea of gradually provide players with new content when they level up and get used to the game is definitely a smart way to reduce the difficulty of finding new players.

Secondly, I think the level design of MHW is unique in its differentiation on heights and layers. Before MHW was published, the gamers that play monster hunter series and others who never played it before, usually think that monster hunter series are basically putting players and monsters into a Roman colosseum and let them fight each other. There are some diversions on the environment map and level, but nobody actually thinks that is something important in the gameplay. However, for MHW, Capcom decided they want to do something big. They almost create an open world with different environment types. Here is a list of the levels it have:

- Ancient Forest — basically tropical rainforest environment.
- Wildspire Waste — wild west with rocks, sand, and mud.
- Coral Highland — Underwater coral reef. (Yes, and you see “fish” swimming above your head.)
- Rotten Vale — Karst cave with dead body everywhere
- Elder's Recess — Volcano, crystals, and lava.
- Hoarfrost Reach — Basically Antarctica. (this is a DLC map)

Every map listed above is even much bigger than the overall map size of the last monster hunter series, not to mention that they are all in the same game now. Here I will use the Ancient Forest as my example of the unique heights and layering level design of MHW. The Ancient Forest is the first map that every player will encounter when they start the game, and to be honest, it looks amazing. The center of the map is a giant ancient tree. It is so huge that even fire dragons are willing to live at the top of it. The whole map is separated in nearly four layers:

- Plains — Edge zone of the map, not much ups and downs. Monsters living here are friendly for those who have never played the game.

- Hills — Closer to the center of the map, but still not in the center. There are obviously hills and climbs, but not too steep. The monsters living here are general still safe
- Climbs — The most interesting layer of the map. Located at the center of the map. Most of them are on the tree or inside the tree. As it is called, the player needs to climb a lot to move. Monsters appear to be harsh and dangerous.
- Hilltop — The highest layer of the map. Only about ten percent of the walkable areas. Players can jump from the waterfall to get back to Plains quickly. Fire Dragon, the king of the monsters living in Ancient Forest lives here. (see picture 4)

As I mentioned above, the level design of Ancient Forest follows a decent and logical rule that the higher the layer, the stronger the monster. It also benefits players for not facing inevitable fights with enemies that they can not win at the time. In addition, such layering creates depth for the map that makes players wonder what they will face in the center or higher. Note that the map is wide open and players are allowed to climb to the Hilltop at the very beginning of the game. After the tutorial, of course. The level design is organized, unique, freshman friendly, and fun. Such design ideas are also used in the creation of other maps, except for Wildspire Waste and Rotten Vale. Wildspire Waste is designed to show the empty desert, the map is larger on areas than other maps, but not doing great on layering and heights differentiation. Rotten Vale, on the other hand, actually uses a similar design idea of Ancient Forest, but in a opposite direction: Since the map is a giant cave, Capcom decides that the deeper player goes, the dangerous monster lives there.

I believed the level design idea of this can be used in PVP FPS, players versus players first person shooter game. But not in Call of Duty this time, but Battlefields I. Battlefields I was first published in October 2016, the game series is famous for its big battle ground, lots of players in the same game, and plenty

of war vehicles. The vehicles include tanks, air crafts, and war ships. However, only the real pro gamers of it can handle air crafts and war ships right. Tanks and other motorcycles are also meant for experienced players, not because they can change the situation on the battleground, but also they really need strategy while playing. For a new player who just downloaded the game, it is best to learn the game by being an infantryman. As you can see, the game has different types of arms that require different proficiency at the game. So we could also implement the level design idea of MHW to this game's level:

1. There should be enough areas and paths specialized for infantry and needs enough cover to protect them from air crafts and tanks. These should be the majority of the map.
2. After finishing all the infantry areas, which fall on the whole map here and there. There should be roads wide enough for tanks to pass through all the main combat zones or defending objective positions. There could also be some wild lands for cross-country driving.
3. For air crafts, there is not too much need to be done since there are no roads in the air. However, we could use anti-air cannons to set "safe zones" for them. Adding some tall buildings that players can climb on, and placing some anti-air minigun stations at some important locations.

Note that anti-air cannons are meant to be used by infantry, so make these cannons a resource that needs to be fought for.

There it is the map created after implementing the level design idea of MHW. By looking over all the maps of it, I think Amiens (see picture 5) is the map that shows similar design ideas. The map is designed to happen in a city called Amiens, and there are lots of tiny paths that only allow for infantry. Besides these tiny trails are the main roads, which are used for tanks and other motorcycles. The aircrafts in the sky are blocked by some tall buildings and being threatened by anti-air cannons around the map. Perfectly balanced and an act of similar design idea of MHW.

However, there are also problems with MHW. A big problem while designing the level and the game is that Capcom didn't think about how slow the player moves. Or better ask, How many minutes can the character run through the whole level? Let's use Ancient Forest again as an example, the answer is, 30 minutes. The problem is that players are here for a mission to kill certain monsters. Players are not traveling in the map, take a picture and check and leave. They are here for missions to kill certain monsters. The monsters usually flee away when their Health drops to a certain level, or spend too much time at the same area. Players then have to run through the map again to find the monsters. This normally happens about three to four times in one mission.

To solve that, I have a suggestion. The game can provide a horse, or other transportation that self-guided to the target of the mission. Meanwhile, players can take a rest or go to the bathroom, or any other things to relax themselves from the exciting combat with monsters. For those players who don't rest and relax at all during the mission. I think it is good to implement some functions on the transportation so that players can get ready for their upcoming fights. These functions might include, refilling items used already, refilling ammos and arrows, refreshing melee weapons, having special buff meals, changing loadouts or weapons, etc. The idea is to make the time between two combats more useful, no matter in game or out of game.

In my opinion, MHW is a great game of a great game series. Its developer, Capcom, tries many new and experimental elements on this game and makes it so popular. The level design is unique, friendly, and organized. Even though players are complaining about the boring time chasing monsters to different locations, I believe it can be fixed next time or in the incoming product. Not a big deal for overall gameplay and the fun always rises when players fight new monsters they meet!

Pictures for References

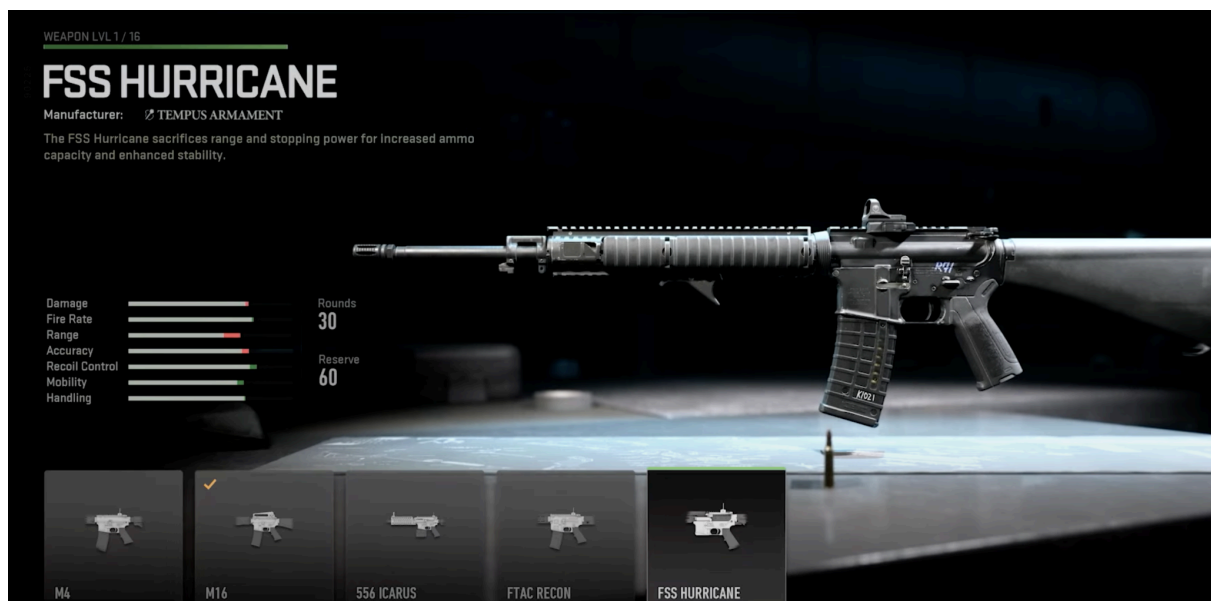
Picture 1:



Picture 2:



Picture 3:



Picture 4:



Picture 5:

