Cyber Wave
Game Design Document

I) General idea

1) Description

Cyber Wave is a card game and action rpg, in a dystopian future.
It talks about society and its current path.

2) Genre/Similar Titles

As said above, it's an A-rpg x Card game.
The only games that looks like it are the Megaman Battle Network series, and One Step From Eden.

3) Machines

The game would focus on PC, due to the access to developing tools.
Considering a good launch, a switch version could be though of, to get a larger audience.
A Plasytation/Xbox release don't seem really useful, given their respective audience and market.
A mobile version doesn't seem fitting for the gameplay.

4) Economic model

The game would follow a traditionnal premium model. This means a single buying with a permanent access to the game. I think a good price would be 20-30€ if the game has everything I want, along with the public's habit to wait for sales.

There may be a possibility for dlcs later, that may be sold for money if they have enough content. On the other hand small updates would be free dlc.

II) Design Pillars

1) What should the player feel

The main feeling while playing should be fun.
Mostly during the fights, this would com from the power surge, the joy of having a well functionning build, or even the adrenaline of a hard brawl. The main gameplay should bring immediate pleasure.

In addition to this, there is an objective to sensibilize the player to the game's themes.

Besides those two main points, it's a project that would have a lot of narration. This means playing with the whole emotion specter. Make the player feel joy, sadness, surprise, etc...
Though there would be a need to switch between them and not only focus on a type of emotion, in

order to keep the game fresh and not have the player unreceptive to new sensations.

2) Atmosphere/Tone

The typical atmosphere would focus on the dystopia and how it mirrors our reality.
The general morale is low, future looks bleak, companies are getting more and more power, etc...

However, even a bad reality like this one can have some good sides.
There would still be some happiness and light heartedness among the bad. Along with the hope that the player's actions may help bringing social progress and a better future.

All in all, a somber and miserable tone, except in some moments, but gettings lighter.

## III) Main Gameplay

1) General explanation
The game is made of two phases :
On the overworld, the player walks around and talks to people, interact with items, complete quests, and can use the menu to manage their decks.

In combat, the player and enemies are on a grid, made of two times 4x4 tiles. They can only move on their half of the field. The player must chose what attacks they'll use, following some rules and using a random hand, taken from their deck. Then, the game goes real time. The player has to dodge and time their attacks, using the chosen list, in the order they wanted.
Once some times has passed, the player can go back to the menu, stopping time, and chosing a new array of weapons before going back into it.

2) Loop
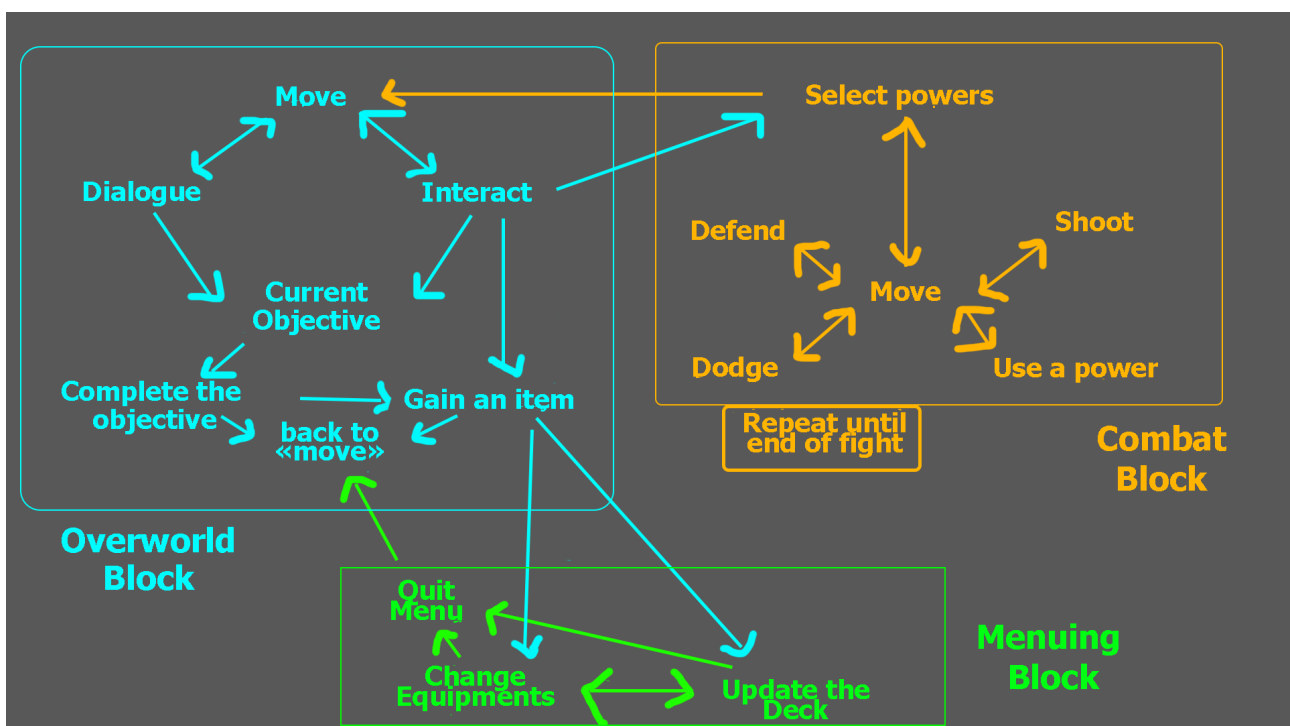
IV) Main actions

1) What will the player do, overwall

-Fighting
--> Selecting options in a list
--> Moving and attacking (manage a situation)
-Modify their possibilities --> Menuing and thinking.
-Explore
-Read and answer dialogues --> Narration.

2) Most often met mechanics.

Due to the main gameplay being focused on the fights, the most common mechanics are :
-The power selection system.
-The movement/Aiming with tiles
-Dodging
-The deckbuilding.

3) Changes on the main gameplay loop

The main gameplay loop will evolve along the way.
Depending on the place and time in the story, there will be some modifiers or limits to how the game is played. The encounters' level designs will also change how the player has to apprehend the game.
For instance, let's imagine a sequence with a "glass canon rule", where enemies and the player both take double damages. This would need a more agressive gameplay, and make healing weaker, which is already a particular way to see the game.
As for the Level Design, the choice of enemies (and their patterns), the objects on the grid, or even the types of tiles will change the way the game is played. As an example, let's say a fight in which most of the floor is broken, forming a S instead of the full grid, with enemies that move in front of the player to attack. Then, dodging becomes bad and there is no real need to aim, which means that the game focuses on defense and timing. The loop is the same but not how it's used.

Finally, the last modification of the loop is made by the player themselves. By adapting their deck, they have to view the game differently with each build. A player focusing on parries and timing will not have the same game than on that's playing with all out attacks and no defence. The first one will be more static and counting on their knowledge of the enemies' patterns, whereas the second one will have to be swift and effective, with quick victories.

4) System and economy's general structure

The system is made for fluid progress in small increments. Due to the absence of shops, everything is balanced using the level and quest design.
During a "vanilla" playthrough, in which the player would only do what's needed to progress, they would mostly get simple effects for their attacks. They would be powerful enough to continue playing, but their gameplay would be rather basic and "jack of all trades".
As such, running through the game would be doable but not the most fun thing to do.

The economy comes in with the rest of the content. The secondary quests, exploration rewards, and

optional fights would give some rewards that match with the position in the plot.
They would be overall more powerful, but also more complex, with the elemental weaknesses, new gimmicks, weird patterns, and the like. As such, by exploring the game, a player would get new types of gameplays, for which a straight line would only give them a small taste.
In the same way, the equipments would be more diverse, and helping the player creating a focused build, like the two players mentioned above.

In addition to this, there would be two other balancing factors, for the rewards, besides the power level.
First, giving the player's informations on what they can get (clues about the quests, sub area theme, enemies gimmicks, etc...), as a way to motivate them when they'll get something that helps their preferred gameplay.
On the other hand, the rewards must be varied, and not completely focused on a theme. The main reason for this is that it's better to often find a new power or equipment that makes the strategy better, and then reevaluate the point, than finding a full suite that looks like a premade strategy that won't change until getting another batch that's strictly better.
With incremental changes, there is more feeling of progression instead of being stagnant while waiting for an bunch of upgrades. It may even helps having the player change strategies, by sometimes having a gimmick that's better than what they do until they find some other upgrades, instead of having a complacent gaming syndrome around "it's the latest batch so it's better than the last".

5) Narration

The narration needs a mix of storytelling and worldbuilding.
The player mostly discover the world with the art direction and the gameplay.
The futuristic and dystopic reality must be quickly visible. The first point is made through the colours and designs. Whereas the dystopia part is mostly made through the backgrounds (filled with ads and logos), the characters (a lot of cops, starting in a poor neighbourood, said logos on some characters, etc...)

In the same vein, the design for the different places must give some infos. For instance, having a clear difference between the slums, the bourgeois districts, or the corporate buildings. The player also visits some electronic environments, that should look linked to their physical anchor, but also the personality of their creator.

To conclude on the design-based worldbuilding, the players equipments and powers should give some infos on the context, with their themes. But above all, the enemies, their pattern, where they are found, the level design of their fights, etc... represents a place and a world.

As for the storytelling, it should be somewhat classic. The progression would be linear, with a pre established scenario in which the player progresses.
Choices would be minors, and the interesting part should come from the dialogues and how pertinent the writing is, to make the plot go forward and not see too unreal.

In parallel of this, the storytelling also focuses on the secondary characters and their quests.
In these cases, it's best to be able to tell their story with the least amount of words, and have some personnality quirks to detail who they are. There may a more detailed lore/explanation for places and people, that can be looked up, but it shouldn't be necessary, except for some quests/puzzles, since the average player doesn't want long bios. The worldbuilding also comes back, since another way to define a character would be with the content of their sidequest(s), even more for the long

ones. The objective, places to visit, and all the likes can tell a lot about the world and the character.

Due to having some heavy themes (anticapitalism, revolution, the myth of "merit", for instance), the biggest difficulty would be to manage tese subjects without making it look forced.

The player should be made to think about these subjects, and the game should give some basis on which this thinking would be built. But it would be necessary to be somewhat sneaky and not "anvilicious", since it would annoy the players and make it counterproductive. As such, the themes must come from the world and the storytelling, without being named every time.

V) Motivation mechanics

1) Short, medium, and long term objectives.

For short term, the motivation is mainly linked to the fun from the main gameplay loop.
The player goes somewhere, starts a fight, and have fun. This would be reinforced with the different types of fights, depending on the area, or a different terrain, or a creative way to group enemies.
In the best situation, the player should be anticipating the next fight and be motivated by the discovery of what it'll be.

Mid term, the motivation would come from the changes in the gameplay loop.
The player would have fun testing a new strategy, or their new equipment. The main interest to keep playing is to see how the game will evolve.
In addition to this, the mid term progression would be helped by the narration. If the plot is good, the player will want to see how it'll go, what will happen to that character they like after this dungeon or quest. Or even learning about the world as a whole. Yes, it doesn't work on every player, but there is at least a target in the narration inclined players, that would get an intrinsic motivation through it.

As for long term, it's more complex. For the gameplay, a player may be interested by the late game challenges, and as such their preparation and optimization for the ultimate fights. This would work with the mid term objective, by incitating the player to explore and do quests, which they would get invested in, besides getting the stuff they wanted.
Meanwhile, for the narration, the long term means having the player hooked to the whole plot and the game's world. Here again, this would need having a cohesive world, with good writing, and have the player interested in how this'll get resolved, the finality of the themes, and the likes.
There may be a point in adding a 1v1 multiplayer mode, to create a motivation of getting better at the multiplayer, in order to showcase a superior strategy and mastery. However, it would be more of a bonus, because only counting on the multiplayer for long term interest is pretty risky.

2) Ressource management.

The two main ressources are the Powers (active) and the Equipment (passive).
Powers are regularly obtained, after a new fight, by exploring (hidden or with dialogues), or as rewards. It's important that the player gets them often, since they are the main way to upgrade a strategy, with progressive increments, or by getting duplicates, that makes the deck less random.
As for the equipments, they would be rarer. They can be obtained the same way as the powers, but only in special cases. For instance, after fighting a boss instead of regular enemies. Or at the end of a long questline. They are made to always be useful instead of being tied to the difficulty at a certain point in time. They are also pushing the player towards a type of strategy, which means that they won't change a lot, except if they want to try a new approach of the game.

3) Replayability

As of now, I think the game would only be replayable if the gameplay and level design are good enough to warrant a new game, with a different strategy.
Narration is a good hooking tool, but does not help with replayability, unless it's a game with a branching plot.
As such, trying the game again would probably be interesting for playing new builds, being more agressive, use some mechanics that the player overlooked the first time, etc...
Due to being an action game, and as such not completely stats driver, there may be an incentive for "challenge runs", for some people. Things like finishing the game by playing the starting deck, or only using a single element. If the gameplay is deep enough, people will want to replay it, to experience it in a new way.