

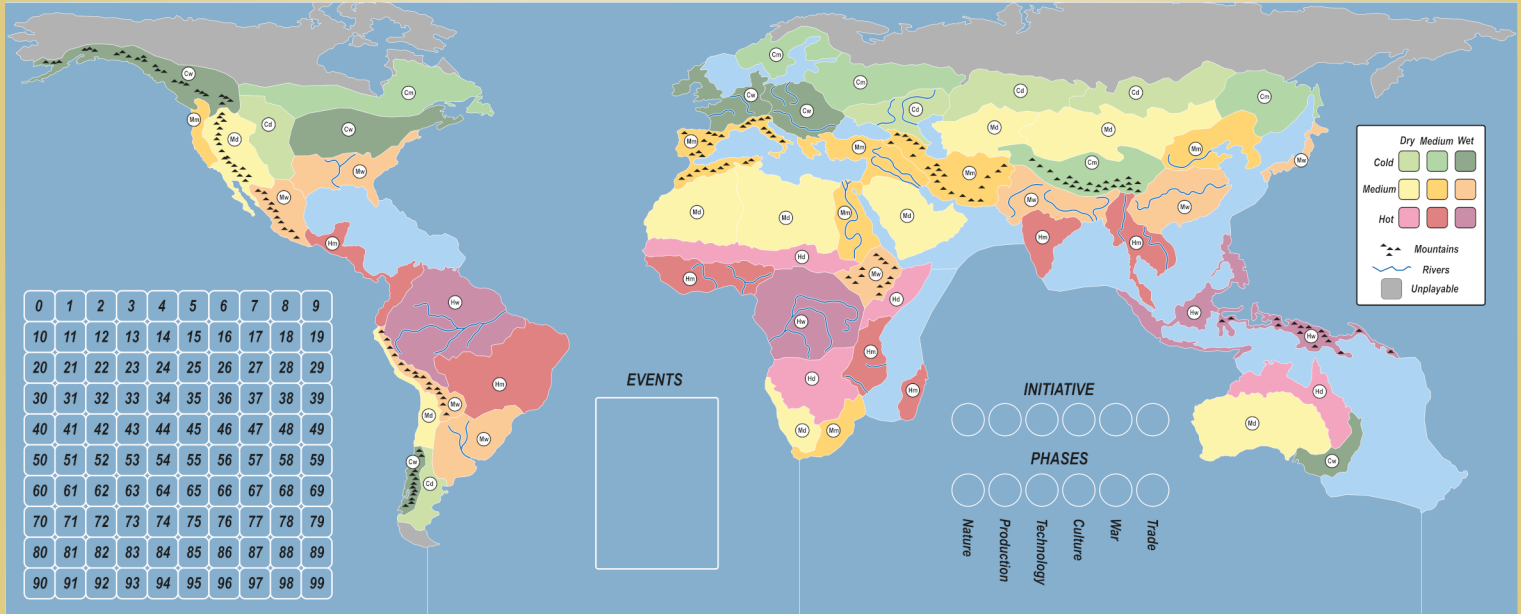
Human and Environment

A game of Climate, Crops and Civilisation

Introduction

I created this game 2012 when I was studying history at university as a model of global history from a structural, environmental perspective. Now, I work as a teacher and often encounter students who have learnt history from games, as I have. Perhaps the most played game about world history is Sid Meier's Civilization. It is an excellent series of games but the model of history in them is old. Civilization implies that great men/women directly rule a single "people" with some inherent traits for millennia.

I want to create something new, a game focused on how the environment shapes structures and mentalities underlying a civilisation. The game spans the end of the Agricultural Revolution to the start of the Industrial Revolution and every turn represents centuries. At that scale individuals are like foam cresting the long waves of historical change and states come and go. In my view history is not predetermined so it is up to players where to start and with what crops, animal and technologies. They are free to tell their own stories where the first metropolis might be found in Guinea or the New World might invade the old if they play their cards right. As a simulation of history, the game's systems are weighted towards historical outcomes but there is a large amount of variation between games.



Core Gameplay

The first central mechanic is double area control. Each player is a civilisation that influences areas to get cultural control of them. This determines the production of that area through a combination of technology, climate and domesticated crops/animals. In these areas there are states who have political control which determines how the resources generated is spent. There may be multiple states in a civilisation and they may fight each other. The game is scored through victory points. Cultural control of areas gives 1 vp/turn and political control of monuments and trade routes gives variable vp. Certain technologies and events also provide victory points.

The second central mechanic is card driven action selection inspired by Race for the Galaxy. At the start of each turn, each player secretly chooses a card that determines: 1) their initiative 2) which of the phases are to be played this turn and 3) an event providing them a bonus and historical flavour. After that, you go through the phase chosen for that turn with every player acting in that phase in initiative order. The cards also have a dual use as crops/animals needed for production. As the only source of randomness and hidden information in the game it is important that they have multiple uses to ensure that players can find something useful in every hand and surprise each other. Choosing the right card for the turn is crucial so the choice is made secretly to save time and provide tension.

Development and Target Audience

I have developed the game over years with around 50 playtests and 10 versions and am now at a point where the basic rules do not change. At the moment I am finishing the balance of specific cards, technologies, and crops. I am also tracking game length to see if set-up or end-game conditions need to be adjusted. The target game length is 3 hours for 4 experienced players and 4 hours for 4 new players with +/- 30 min if you go to 3/5 players. The most important area of development at the moment is improving the graphics and user interface through feedback from play testers and the help of a map designer.

From my 15 tests at board game conventions the target audience seems to be eurogamers who appreciate theme and player interaction as well as war gamers who like more abstract simulations. The common thread is an interest in history. The aspect of the game that the players enjoy the most is the how the game simulates history and the storytelling moments that the game creates. My dream would be to get the game accepted by a game publisher like GMT and my goal for this year is to have a polished pitch and a prototype. A second option is to kick-start or self-publish the game. A third option is to do an online implementation of the game for VASSAL, Rally the Troops or Tabletop Simulator.

