

Video Games as an Expressive Medium

Expressive Games Seminar

24. November 2014

Expressive Game

CfP: We propose to qualify as an **expressive game** a game that allows to explore psychological, social, cultural issues.

As a game, it will confront the player to choices and dilemmas that these issues create. This kind of games allows to express individual or social issues while opening back the opportunity to think about it.

Related Terms: Serious Games, Games with a Meaning, Meaningful Games, Games with a Purpose, Games with a Serious Purpose, Rhetorical Games, Persuasive Games, Games for Change, Personal Games, Biographical Games.

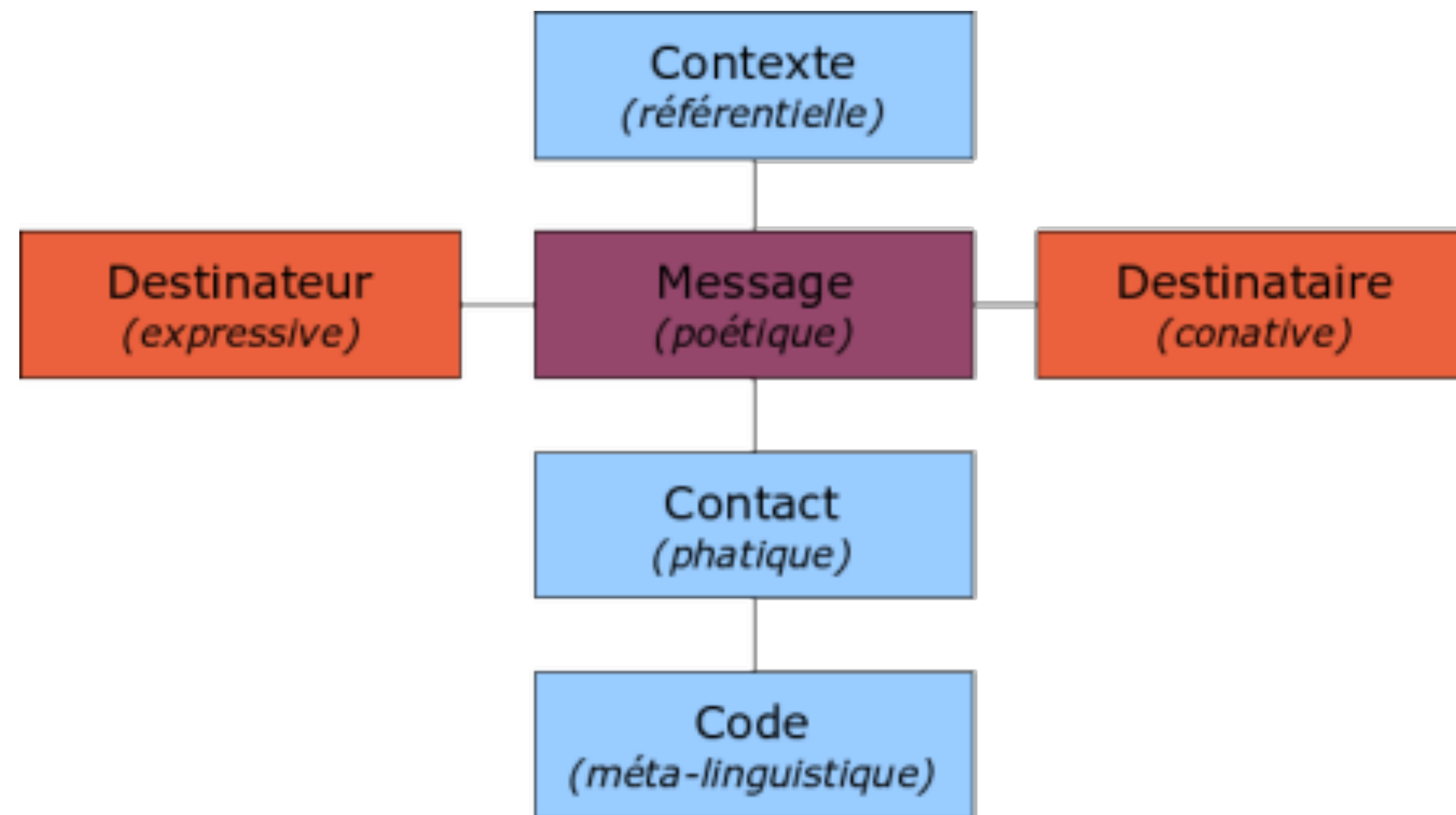
Virtual experiences, simulations, social impact games, practiceware, game-based learning, immersive learning environments, educational simulations, sims, epistemic games, edutainment, edugaming, simulation/gaming, simulators, virtual training environments

Aldrich 2009; Harteveld 2011

Expression (Utterance)

A thought, an idea, or a concept communicated by language

Functions of Language



Roman Jakobson

Referential Function (Context)



Fantasy Games

Shadow of Mordor

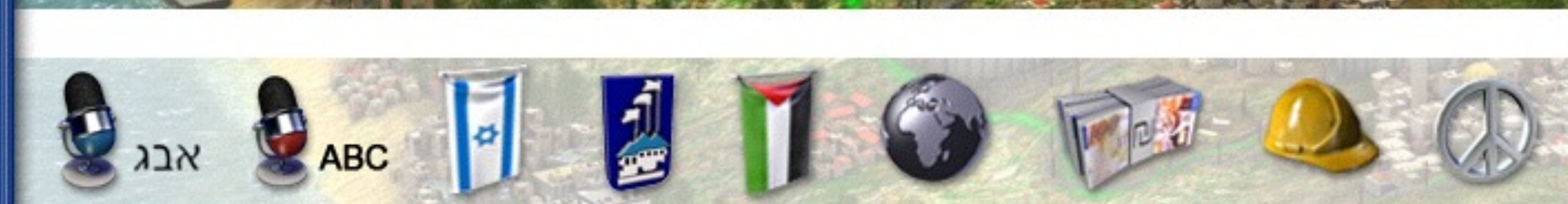


Economic Simulator



Farm Simulator 2015

Political Games



Peacemaker

Israeli Prime Minister 01 06,2007

	9/100		-60/100
ISRAELI APPROVAL		PALESTINIAN APPROVAL	

GROUPS AND LEADERS

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POLLS

Social Realism



Individual Context



Keys of a Gamespace

Expressive Function (Sender)

Autobiographical Games



That Dragon, Cancer

Conative Function (Receiver)

Procedural Literacy

»playing video games is [a] kind of literacy ...
not one that helps us read but ... that helps us
make or critique the systems we live in«
Ian Bogost

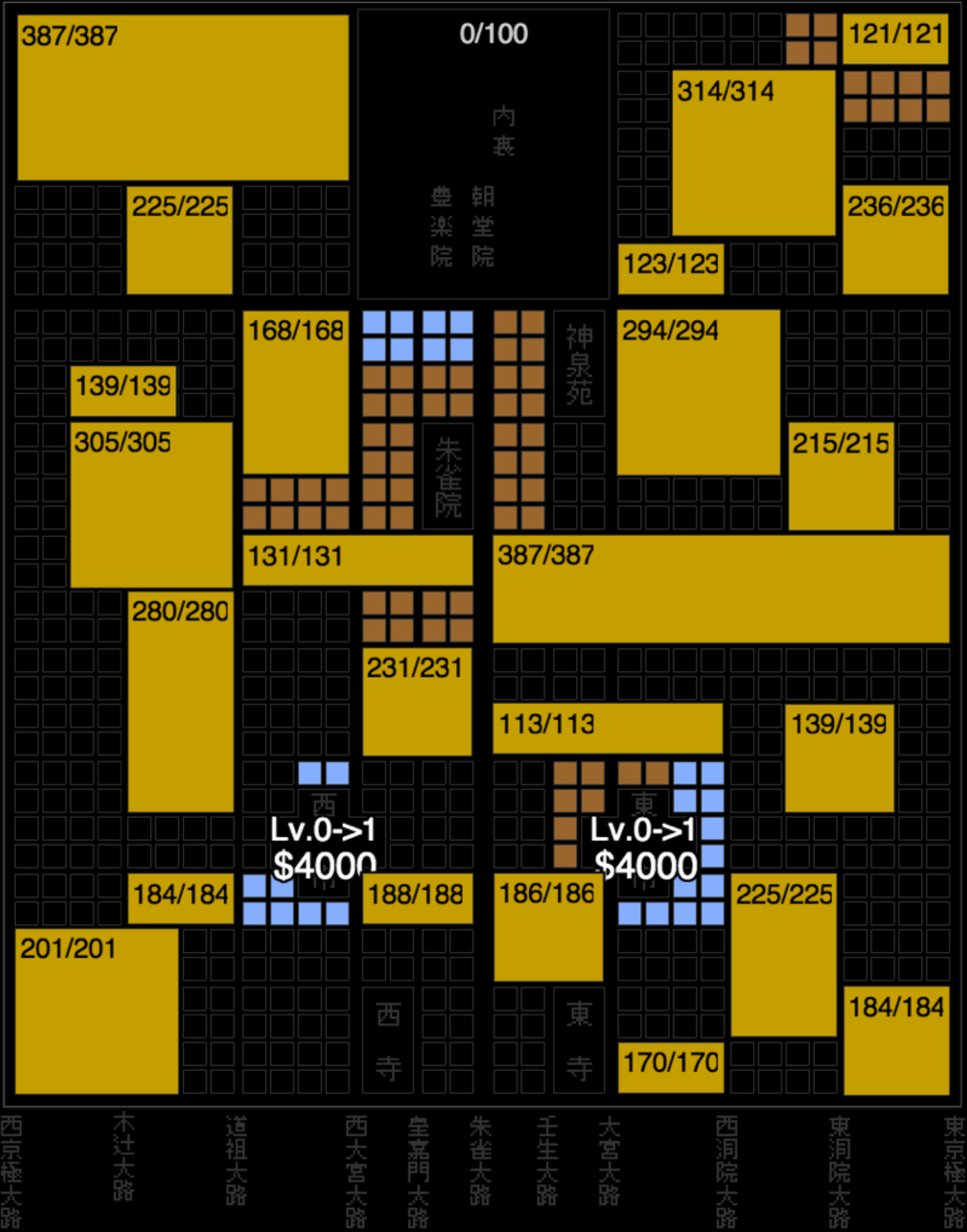
Sim City

Persuasive Games



Darfur is Dying

Poetic Function (Message)



一条大路
土御門大路
近衛御門大路
中御門大路
大炊御門大路
二条大路
三条大路
四条大路
五条大路
六条大路
七条大路
八条大路
九条大路

レベル 8 進捗率 5% 説明書

05:30:01 攻撃 > 敵に 28 ダメージ!
05:30:20 攻撃 > 敵に 28 ダメージ!
05:30:21 エイリアンに敗北
05:30:21 所持金が半減した。

人口 西 160人 東 128人

所持金 \$570
経験値 975/1150
行動力 59/59
アップグレード 0

+ 体力 50/50
+ 攻撃力 59/59
+ 防御力 53/53
+ 回復力 16
+ 施工力 13

検非違使 \$20000 0/1

地頭 \$10000 0/1

鉾 \$400 0/9 胴丸 \$200 0/9

太刀 \$1200 0/9 星兜 \$1000 0/9

薙刀 \$9600 0/9 大鎧 \$10000 0/9

Heiankyo
Parameters

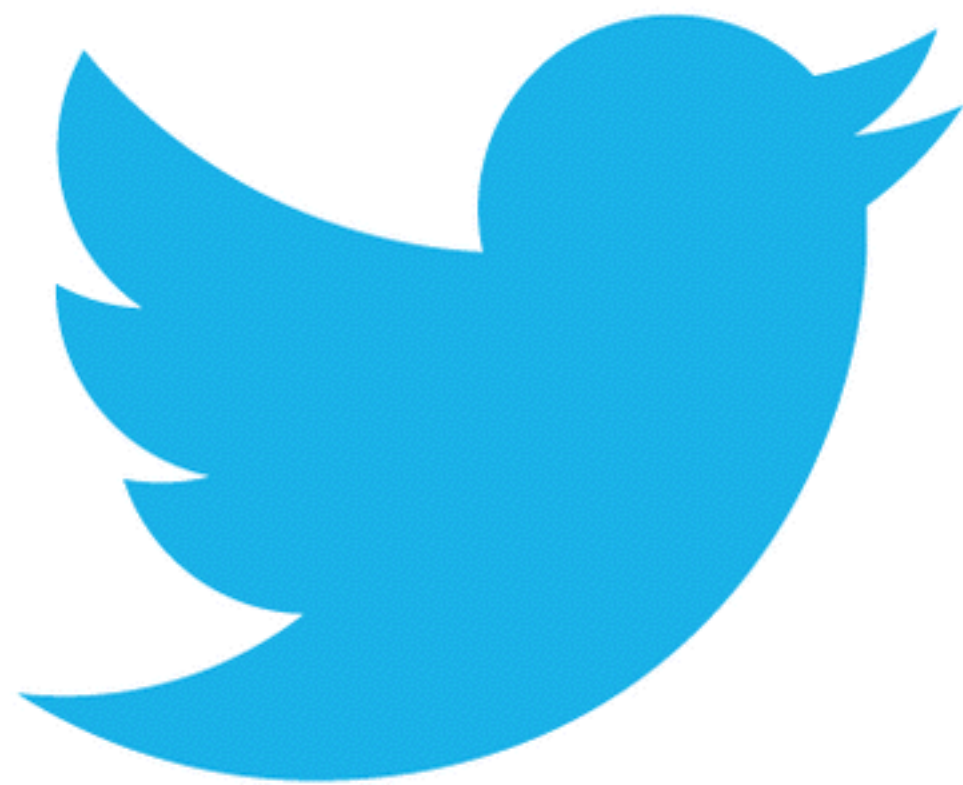
Phatic Function (Channel)

Social Gaming



Journey (Fan Art)

Social Networks



„Twitter is a massively multiplayer online RPG in which you choose an interesting avatar and roleplay a persona loosely based on your own, attempting to accrue followers by repeatedly pressing lettered buttons to form interesting sentences.“

— Charlie Brooker

Metalingual Function (Code)

4th Wall Game

THE STANLEY

↓ THIS YOUR SUPERIOR ↓

9327th



A dead rat
is offline

3:29:22

A dead rat is objectively ranked...

9327th out of 9328 players worldwide.

↓ THIS IS YOU ↓

9328th

?

Stanley[427]
is online.

7:37:33

You are objectively ranked...

9328th out of 9328 players worldwide.

PARABLE WORLDWIDE LEADERBOARD

How long does it take **YOU**
to get to the correct door?

Compete against others
to improve your **Stanley
Parable Career!**

The Stanley Parable

Expressions and Video Games

Every video game is expressive (meaningful).

Broad definition: Every speech act is an expression (utterance).

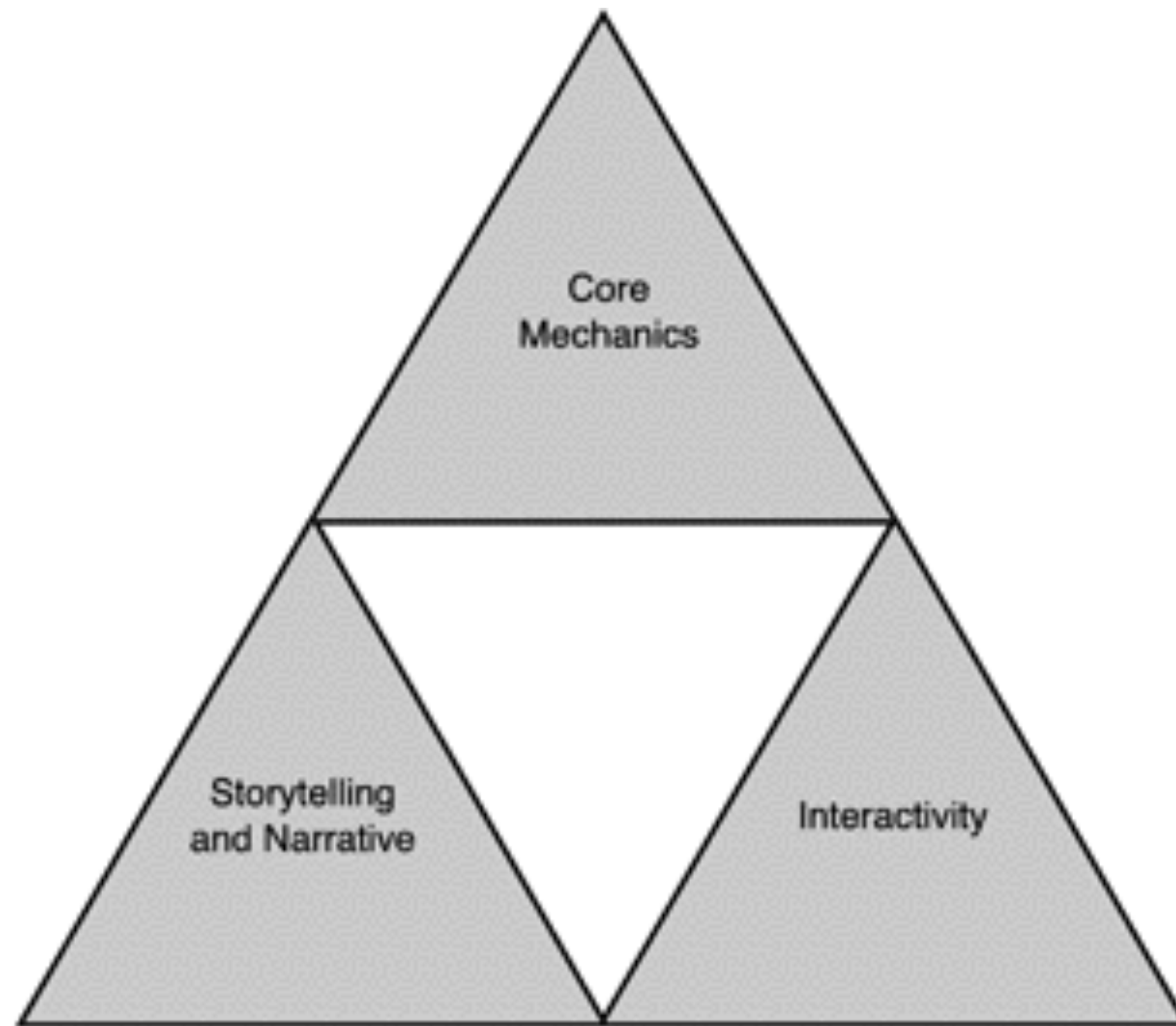
Narrow definition: Assuming the terminology of Jakobson (and sociolinguistics), every speech act has an expressive (emotive, affective) function.

Video Game Analysis

There is no language of video games but a superposition of several codes

Key Elements

Andrew Rolling; Ernest Adams (2003)



Core Mechanics

Interactivity

Storytelling and Narrative

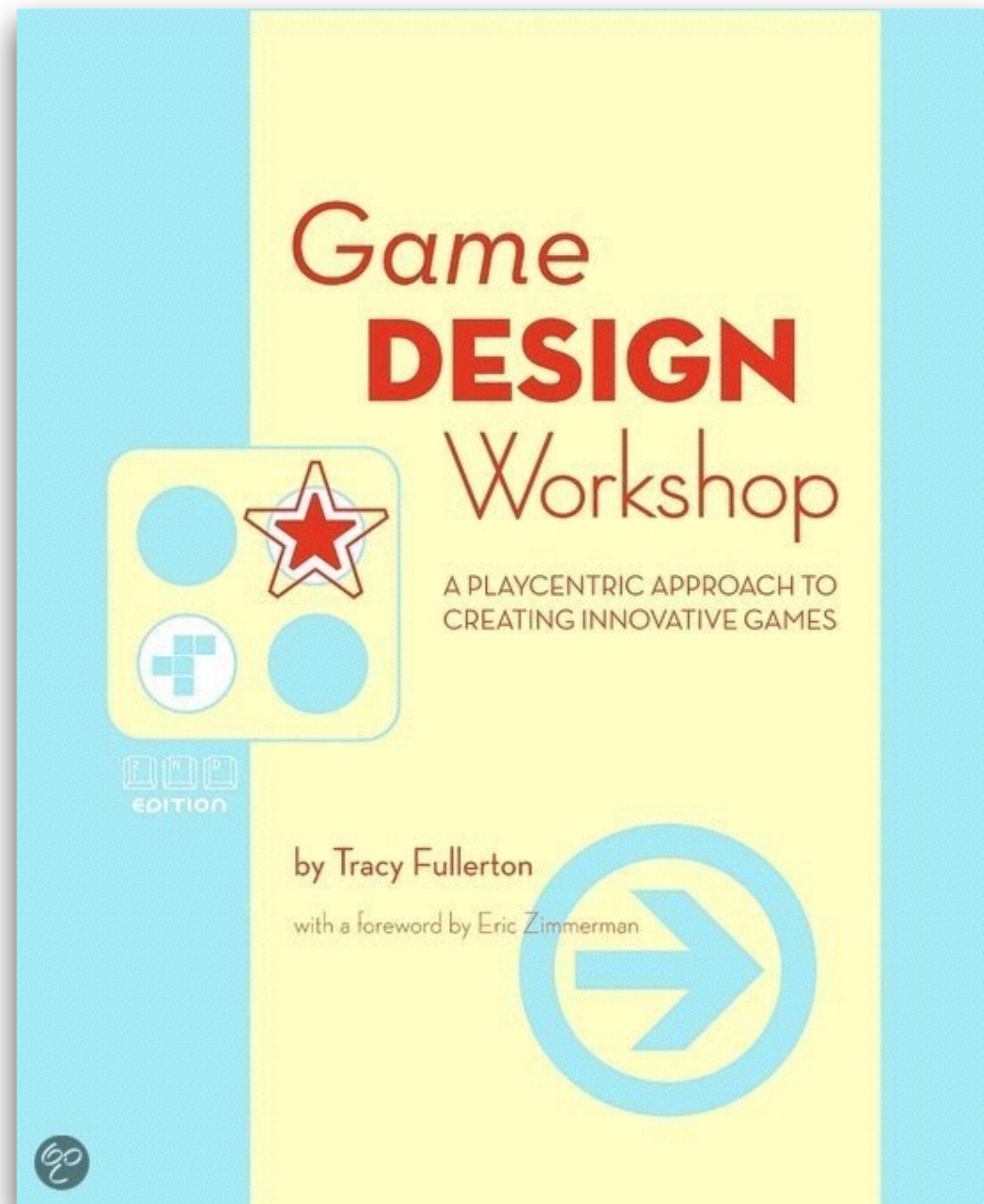
Rules | Play | Culture

Katie Salen/Eric Zimmerman (2004)



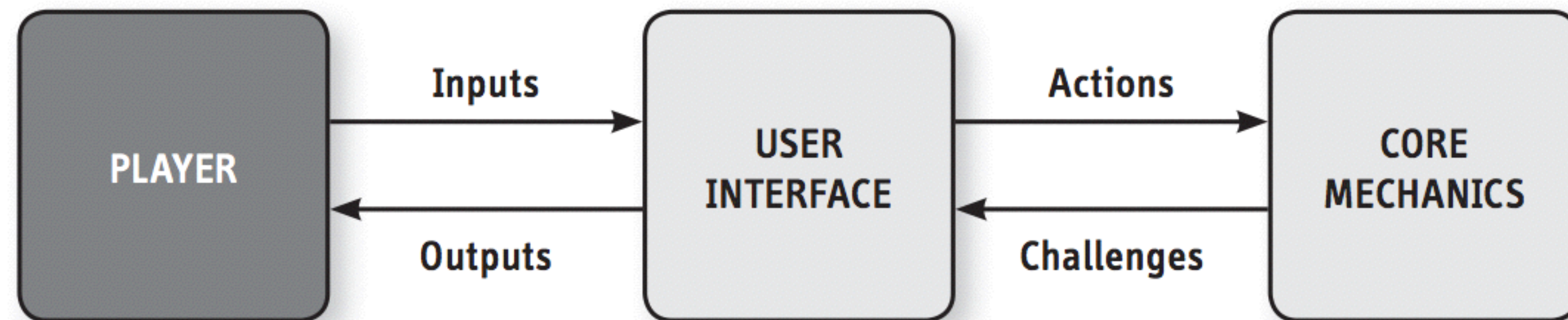
Form | Drama | Dynamic

Tracy Fullerton (2004, 2008)



Key Components

Ernest Adams (2006, 2010)



Core Mechanics

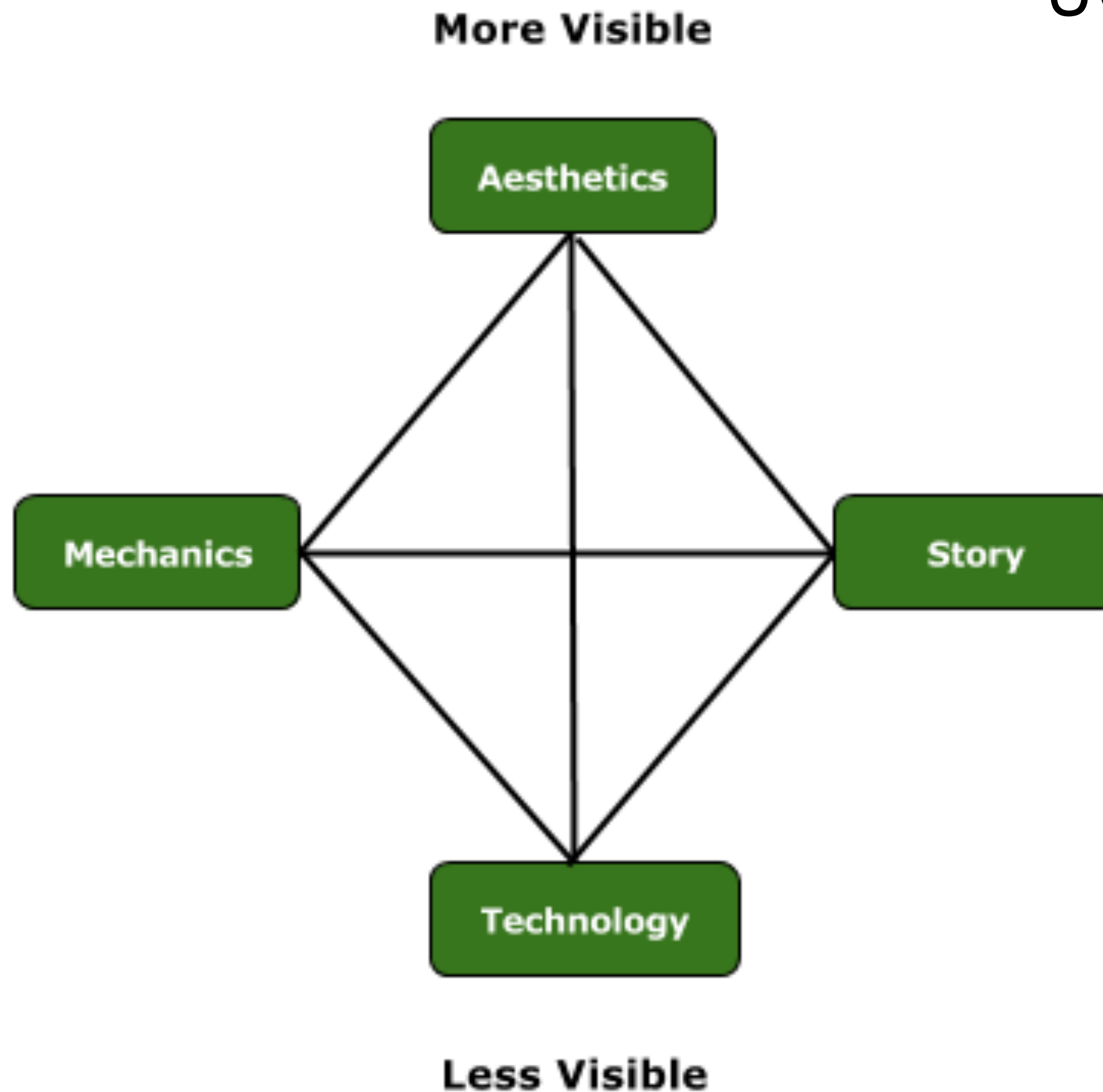
User Interface

Player

(Storytelling)

Elemental Tetrad Model

Jesse Schell (2008)



Aesthetics

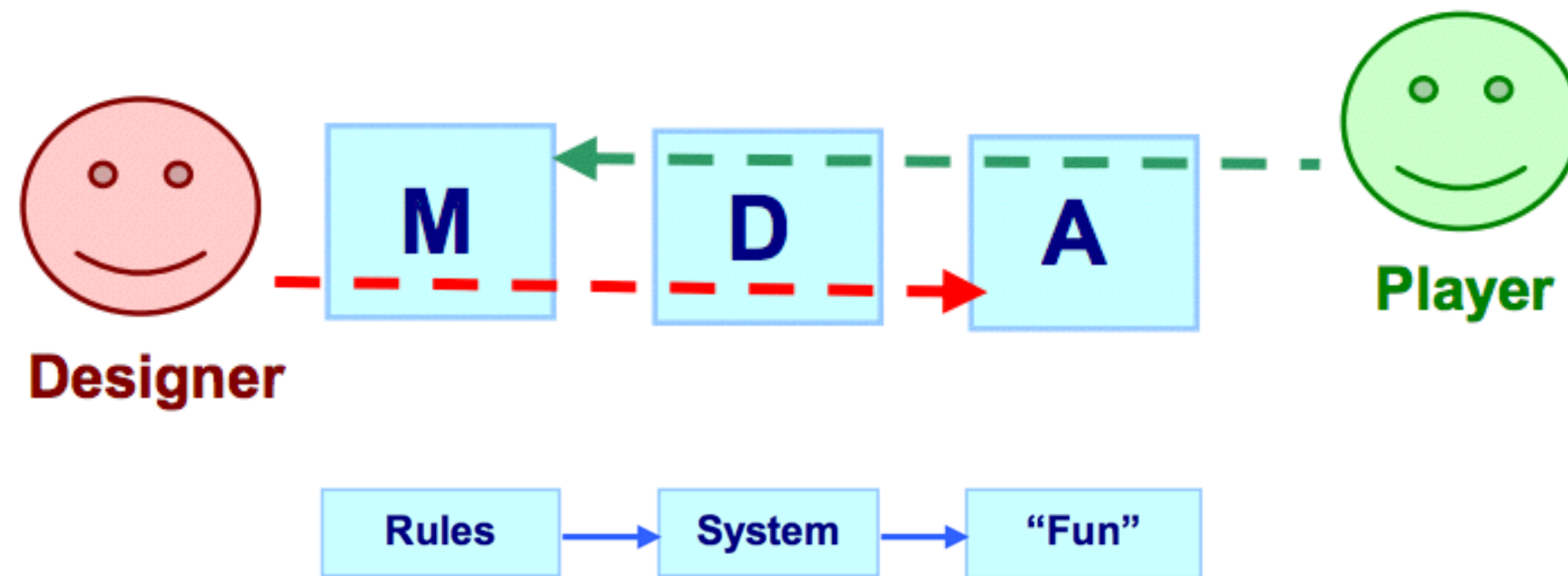
Mechanics

Story

Technology

Mechanics | Dynamics | Aesthetics

Robin Hunicke; Marc Le Blanc; Robert Zubek (2009)



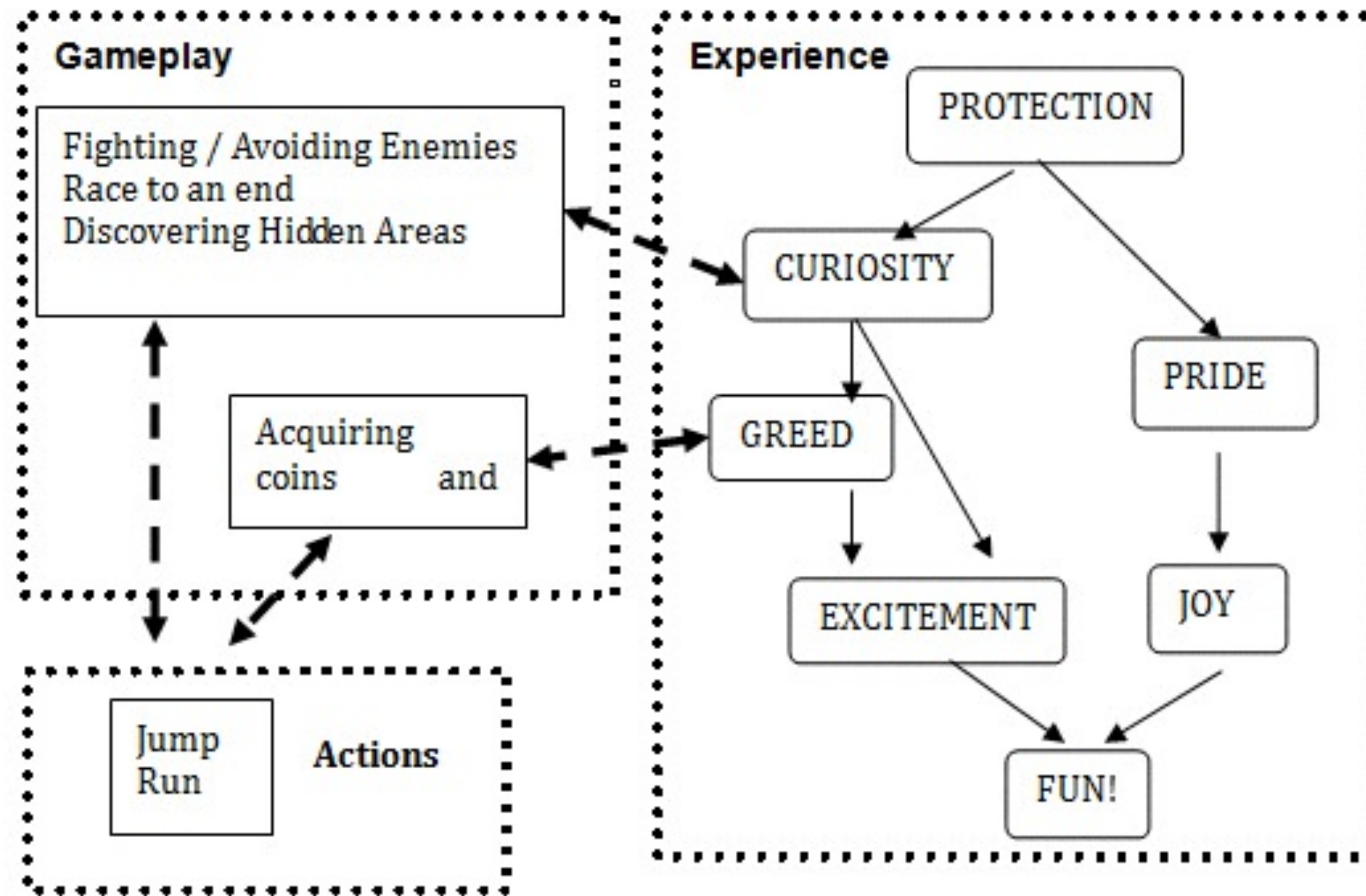
Mechanics describes the particular components of the game, at the level of data representation and algorithms.

Dynamics describes the run-time behavior of the mechanics acting on player inputs and each others' outputs over time.

Aesthetics describes the desirable emotional responses evoked in the player, when she interacts with the game system.

Actions | Gameplay | Experience

Roberto Dillon (2010)



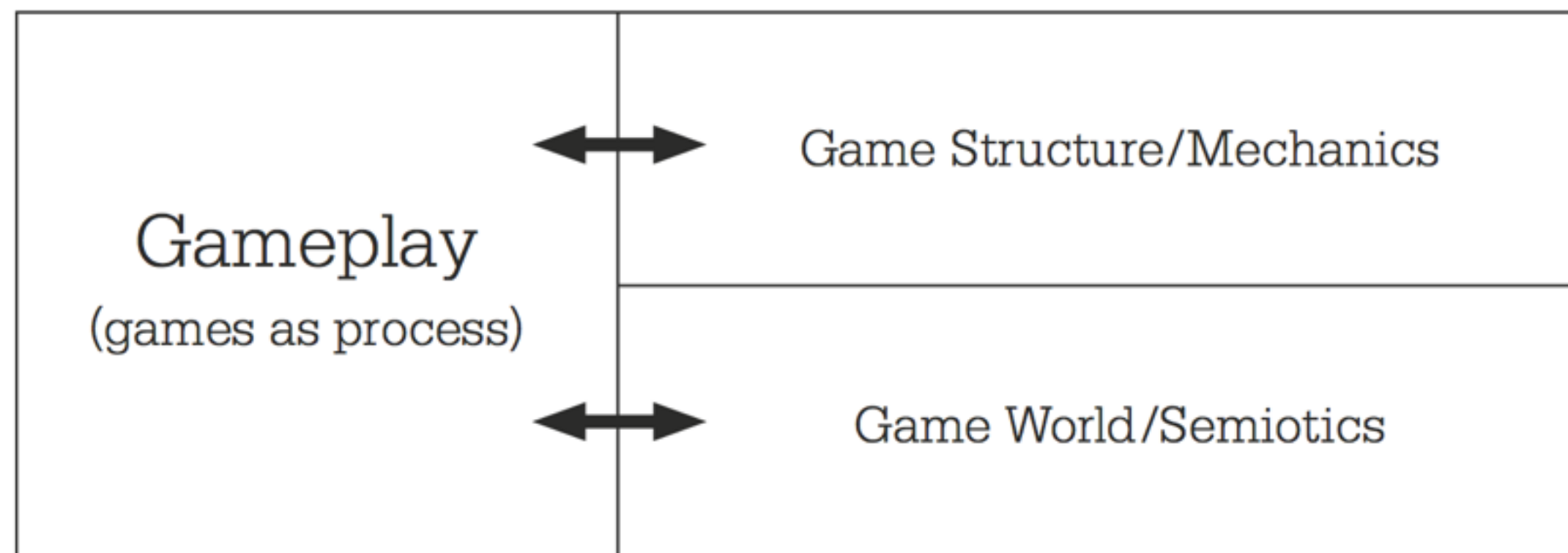
Actions: the core, atomic actions that a player can perform in a game, usually described in terms of verbs. Examples are moving, jumping, kicking a ball, punching, shooting, taking cover etc.

Gameplay: the resulting play that players achieve by combining and using the available "actions". These can be either verbs or higher level concepts, for example: fighting, race to an end, territorial acquisition etc.

Experience: the emotional experience that players perceive while playing.

Play | Structure | World

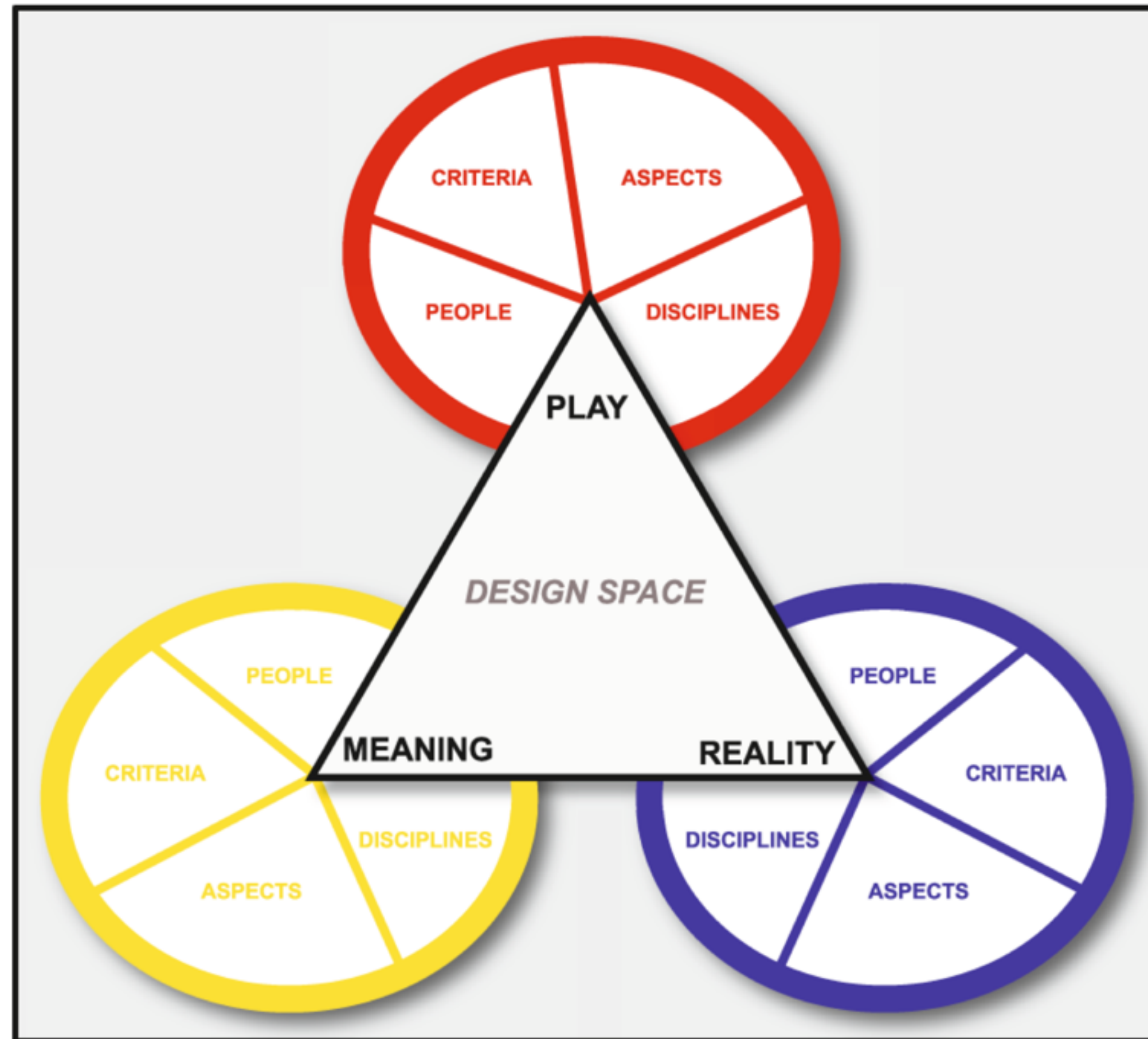
Espen Aarseth: Game Ontologies (2011)



The **mechanical layer** of the game object (its game mechanics) is the engine that drives the game action, allows the players to make their moves, and changes the game state.

The **semiotic layer** of the Game Object is the part of the game that informs the player about the game world and the game state through visual, auditory, textual and sometimes haptic feed- back.

Triadic Game Design



Casper Harteveld (2011)

Citing: Aldrich (2004), De Freitas/Oliver (2006), Frank (2007), Hall (2009), Winn (2009)

Reality

Simulation, Context, Realism, Content

Meaning

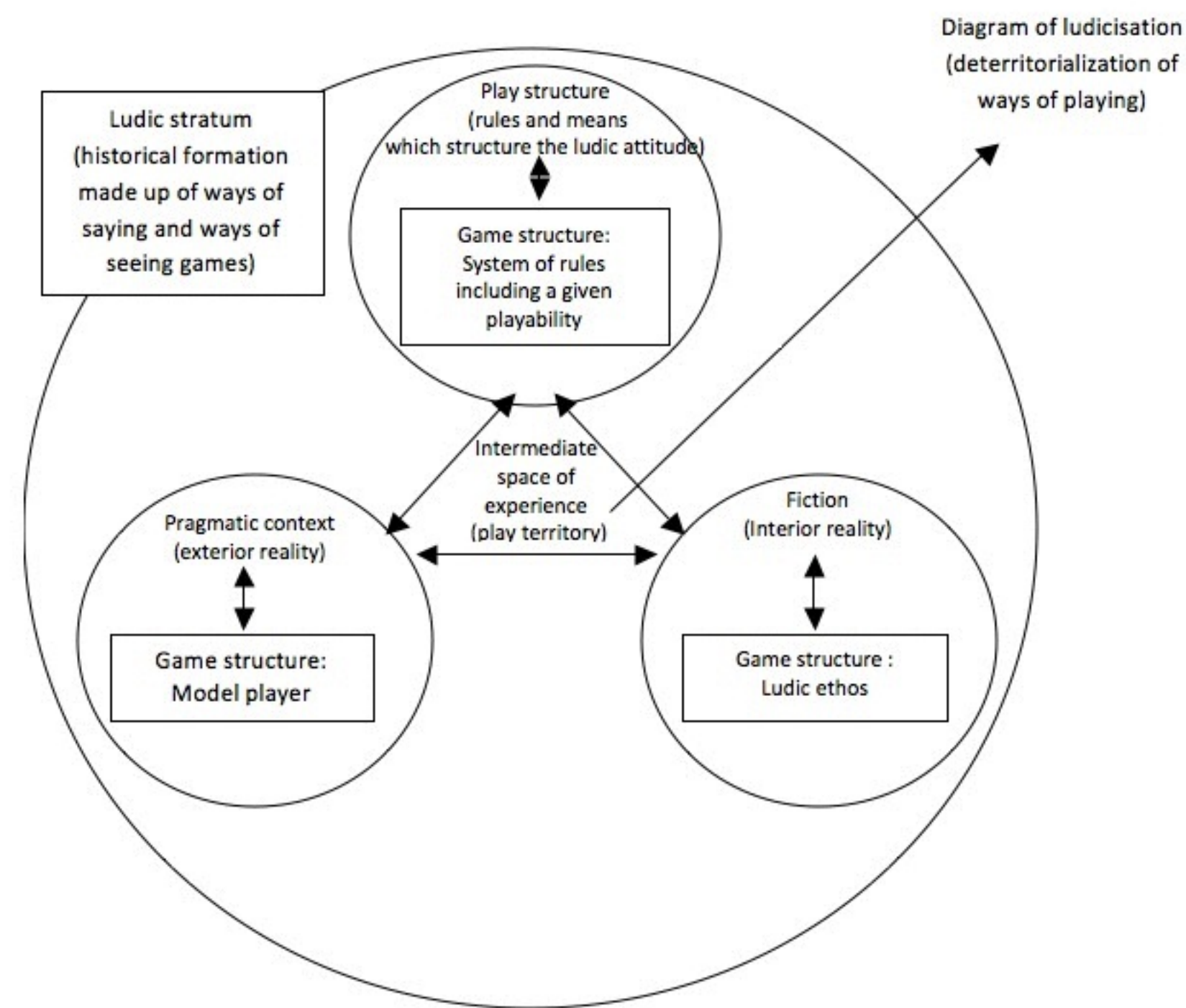
Pedagogy, Training objective, Functionalism, Theory

Play

Game, Representation, Engagement, Game Design

Ludicisation

Sébastien Genvo (2014)



Play Structure

Pragmatic Context

Fiction

Game Industry Job Categories

<http://www.games-career.com/de/Fachrichtungen/>
<http://www.gamesindustry.biz/jobs>
http://creativeskillset.org/creative_industries/games/job_roles

Producer

QA / Localisation
Business / Analysis / Metrics
Controlling / Payment / Finance
HR / Recruitment
Marketing / PR
Sales
Editor / Journalism
Education / Training

Technology

Developer
IT / Technical Support
Technical Artist

Audiovision

Sound / Music
Art / Animation
Web Development / Design

Narration

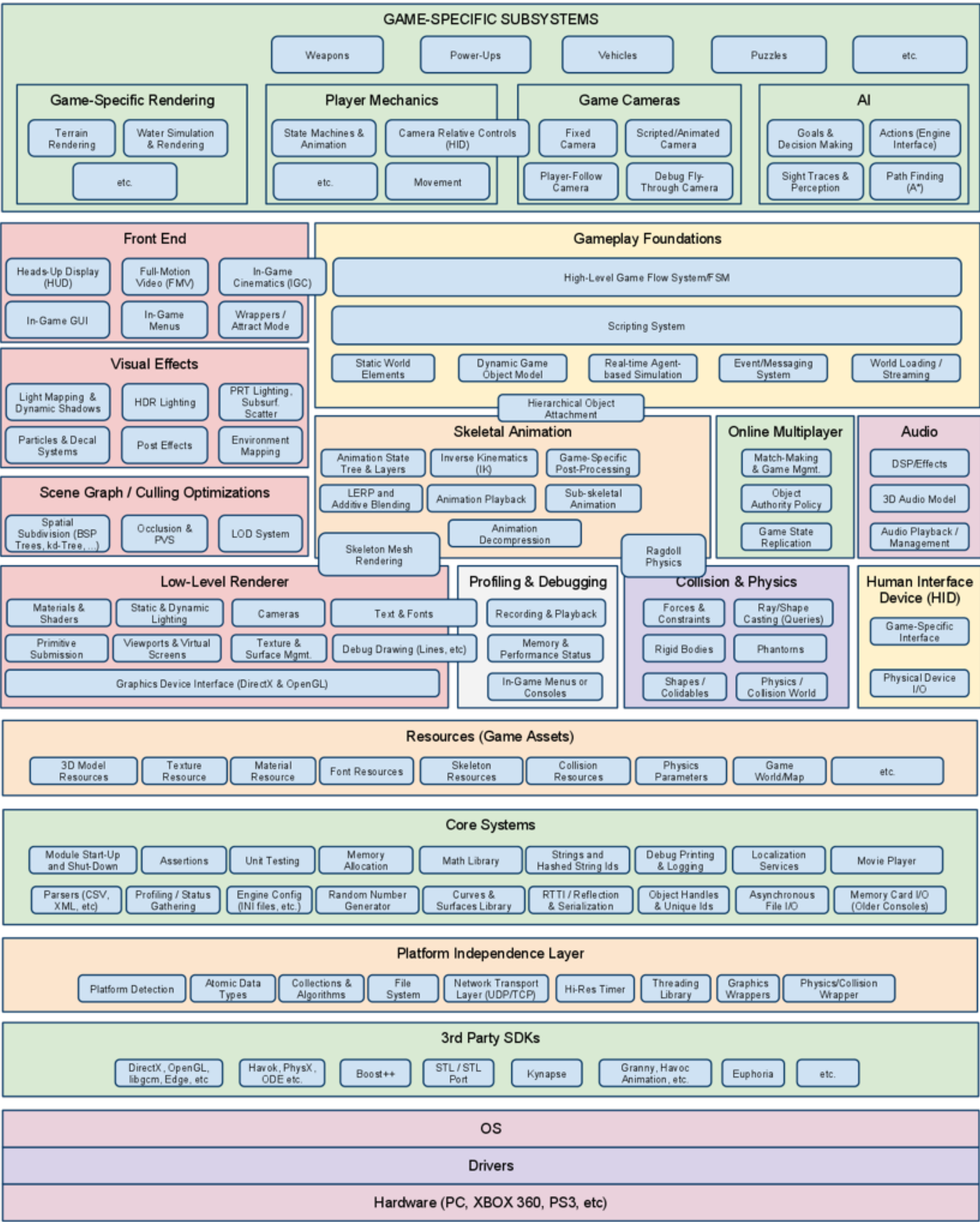
Writing
Localization

Mechanics

Game Design / Level Design
Programming

Play

Interaction Design
Community Management



Technology (Platform, Dispositiv)

Audio-Visuals (Art, Aesthetics, Interface)

Narration (Story, Drama)

Ludition (Form, Mechanics, Dynamics)

Performance (Play, Experience)

Context (Culture, Discourse)

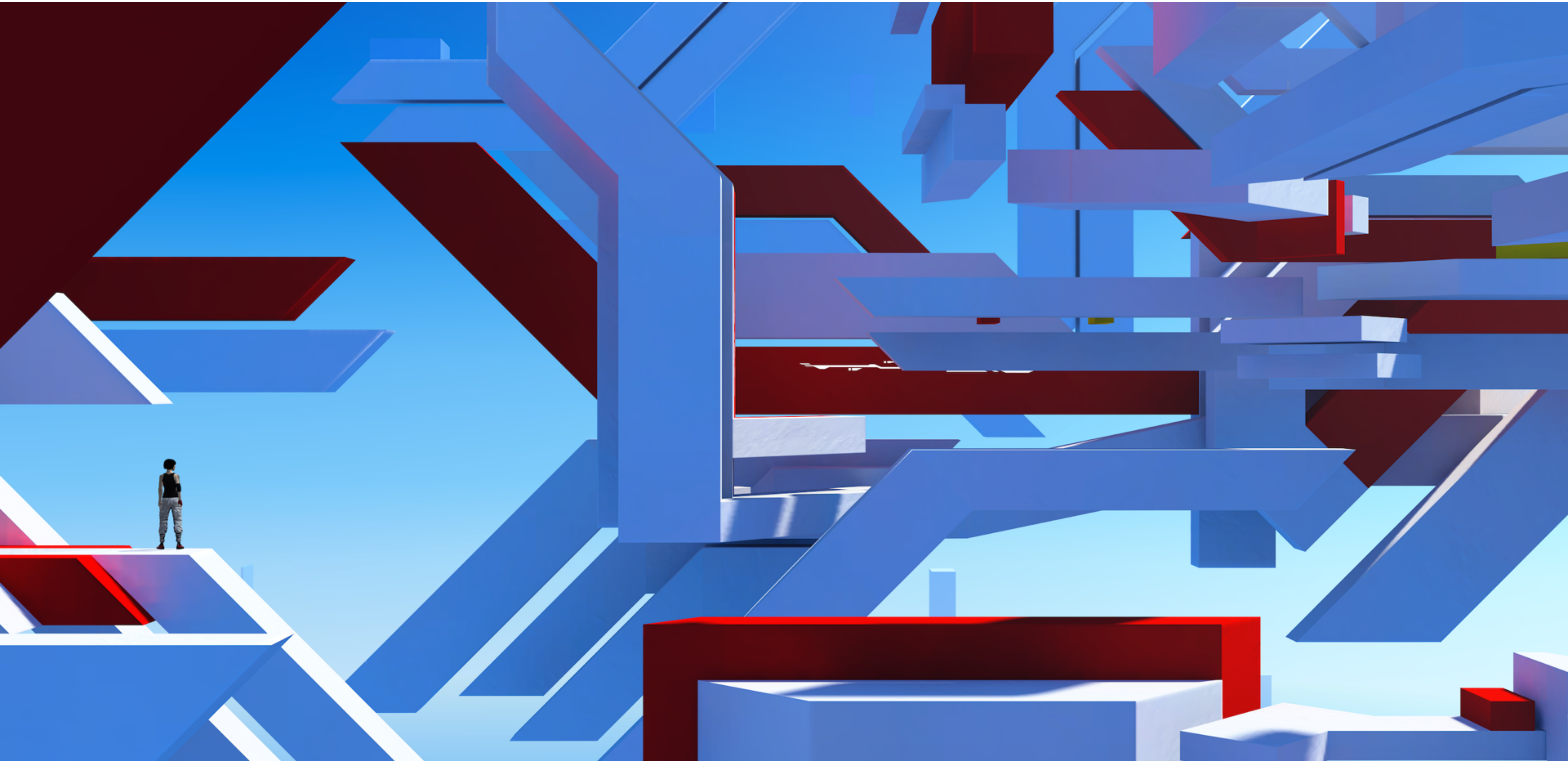
Video Game Expressions

Audiovisuals

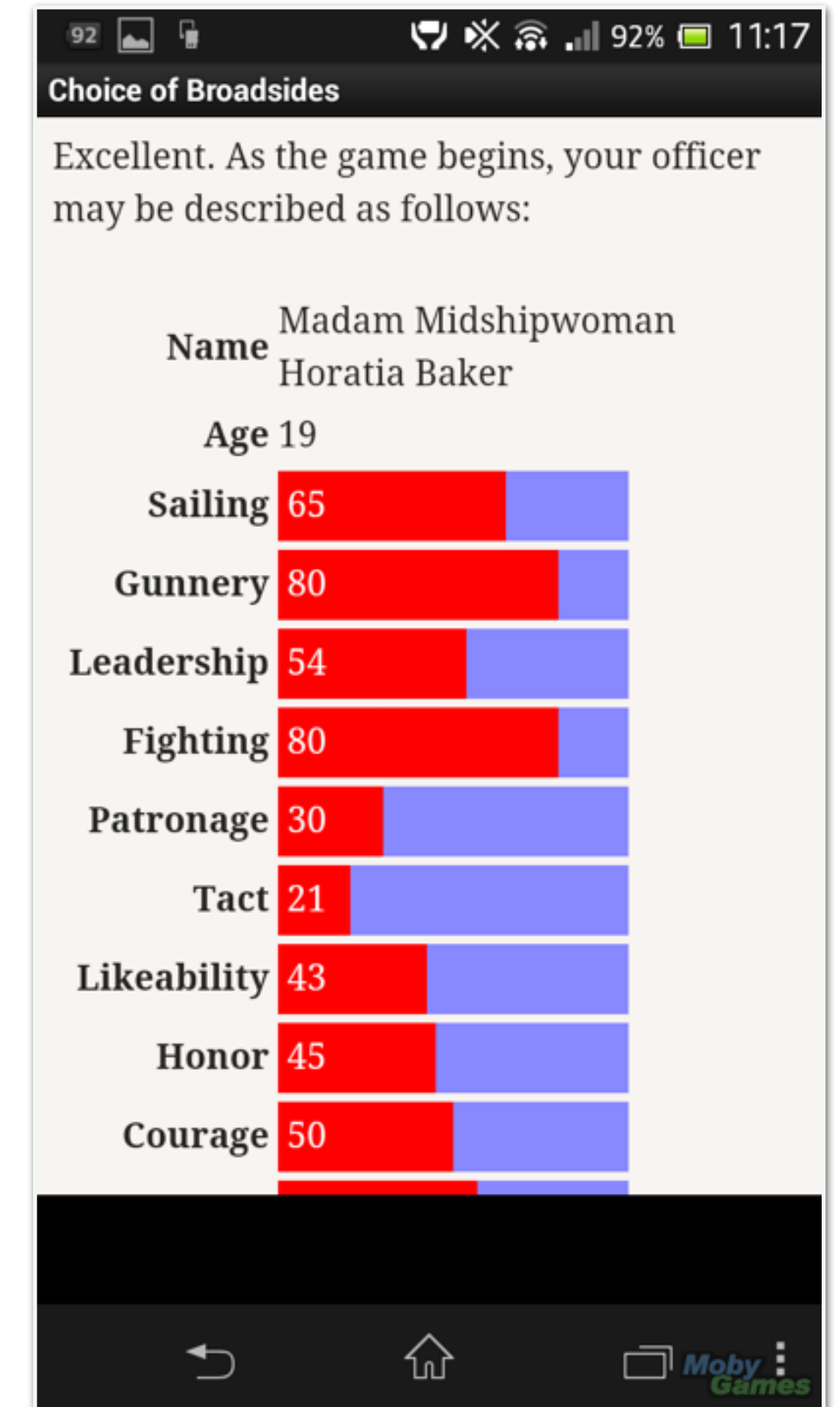
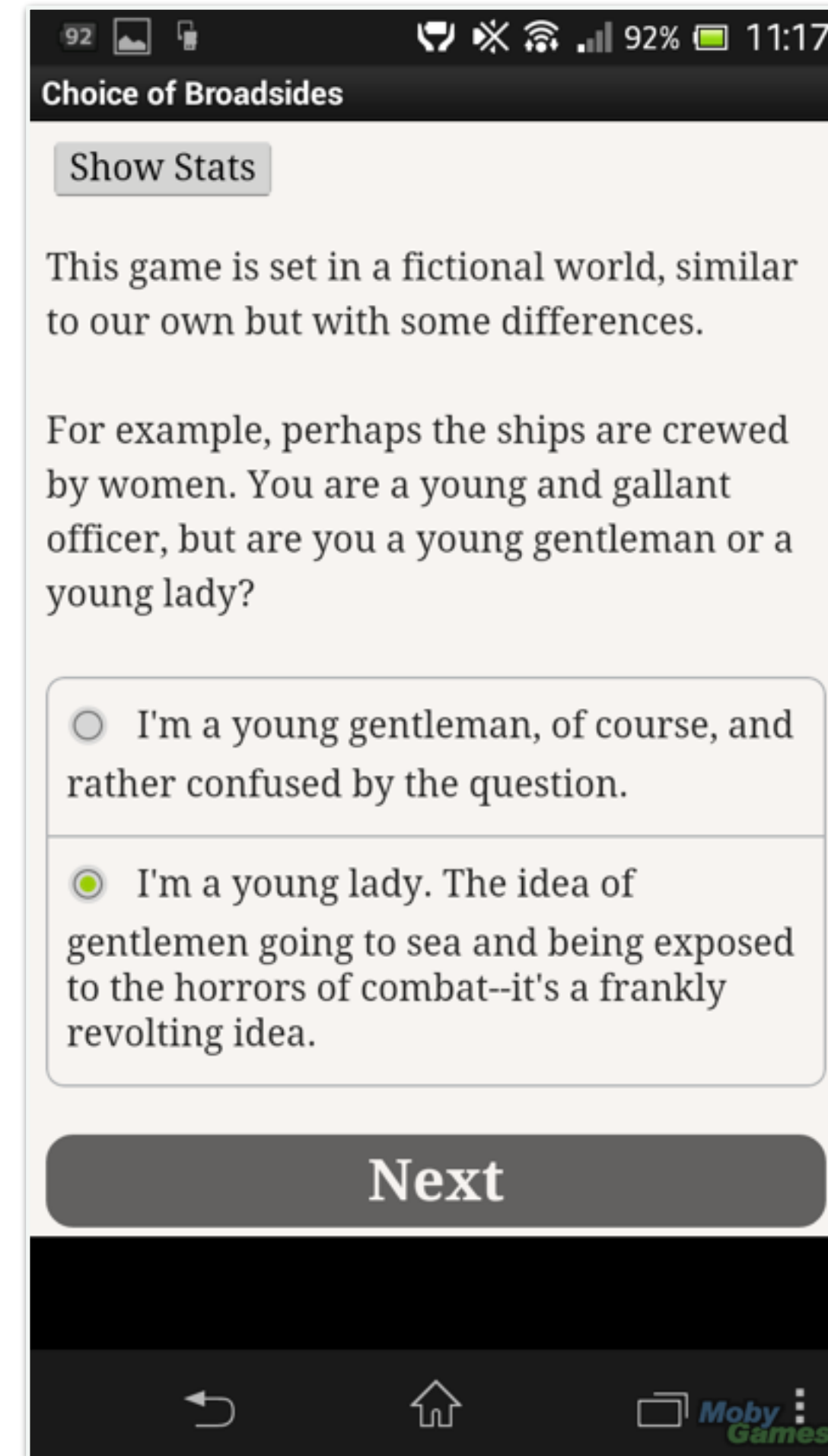
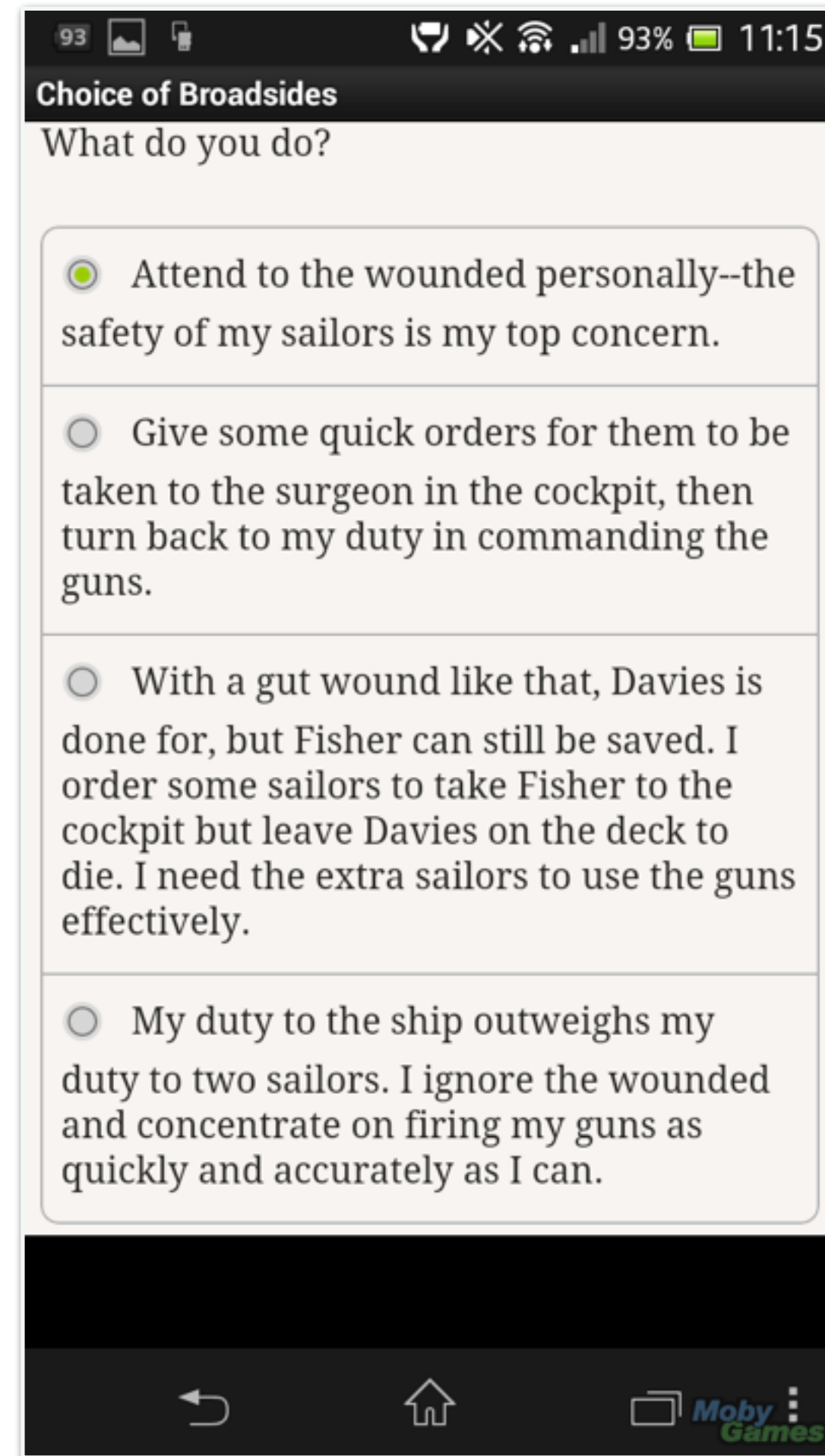
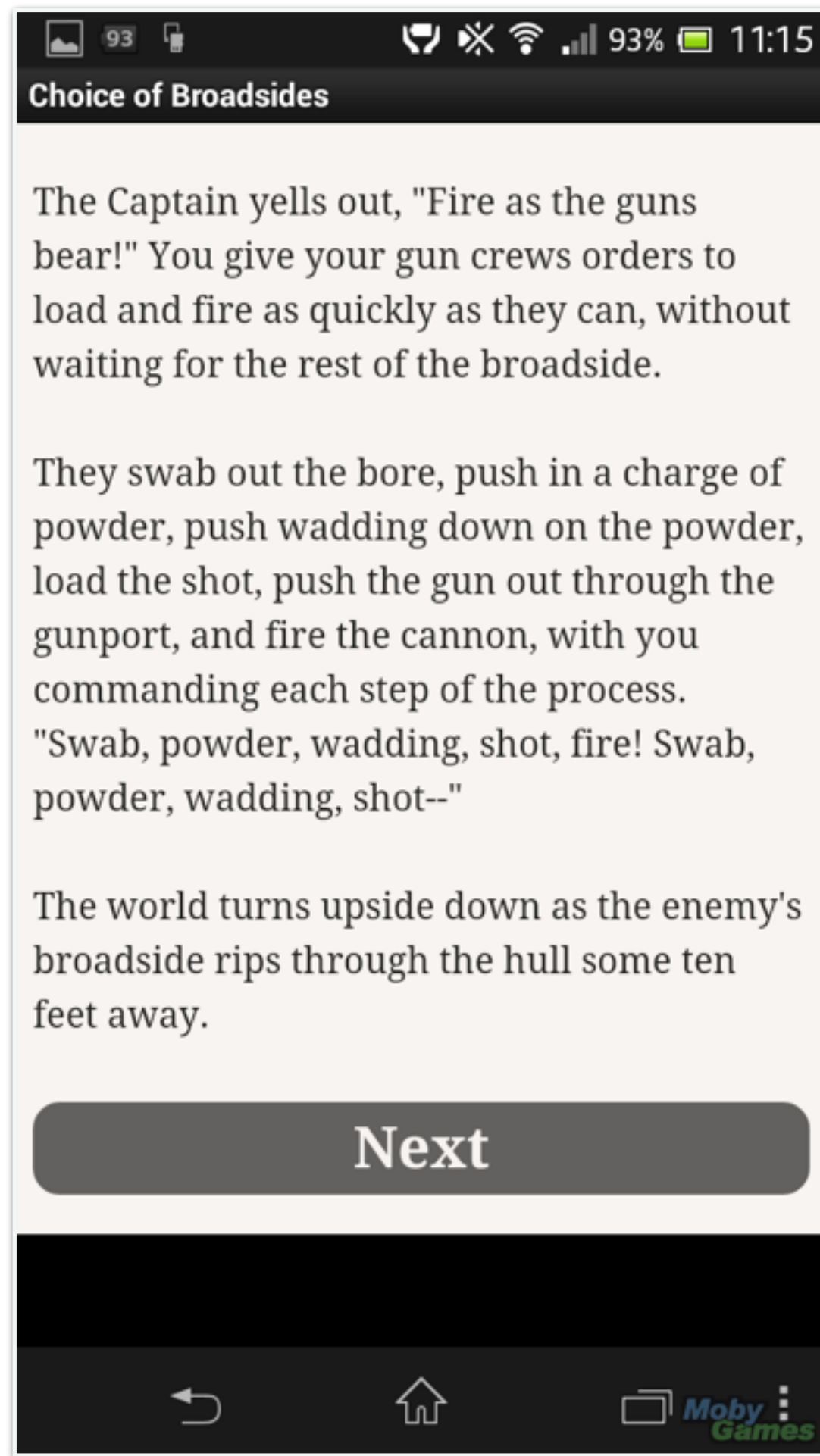


Proteus

Video Game Tourism



Narration



Choice of the Broadside

Late Thursday night. You've had a hard day and the last thing you need is this: shopping. Luckily, the place is pretty empty and you're progressing rapidly.

On to the next aisle.

Interesting... fresh Gnocchi--you haven't had any of that since... Rome.

The aisle stretches to the north, and back to the south. The shelves on either side of you block your view of the rest of the supermarket, with only the brightly coloured aisle markers visible.

You have stopped your trolley next to the pasta section, bright plastic bags full of pale skin-tone shapes.

There is a brunette woman a few metres ahead, filling her trolley with sauces.

>|

Ludition

ANNUAL STATE OF THE KINGDOM REPORT
For year 1 of your most royal rule

There were 0 people who starved.
Over 5 new people moved to the city.
The population is now 100.
The city now owns 1000 acres.
You harvested 3 bushels per acre.
You have 2800 bushels stored.
The rats ate 200 bushels.

Land is trading at 25 bushels per
acre, how many acres do you wish to
buy?

Hamurabi

[illegible]

shard 1 - now playing as jack - [click here to log out](#) - [discuss](#) - [contact us](#) - [wiki](#) - [sqldump](#)
Your rows will become vulnerable to deletion if you stay logged out for 92 days (based on row upgrades)

Your Rows				
Refresh				
row_id	4	14	24	34
name	testy	test2	test3	test4
owner	jack	jack	jack	jack
money_factories	10	10	10	9
money	3550	4180	3470	3105
fuel_factories	5	2	1	3
fuel	1775	714	347	1035
attackers	0	0	0	0
attack_multiplier	10.0	3.0	1.0	6.0
defenders	3	3	3	3
defense_multiplier	10.0	5.0	3.0	4.0
row_creators	1	0	0	0

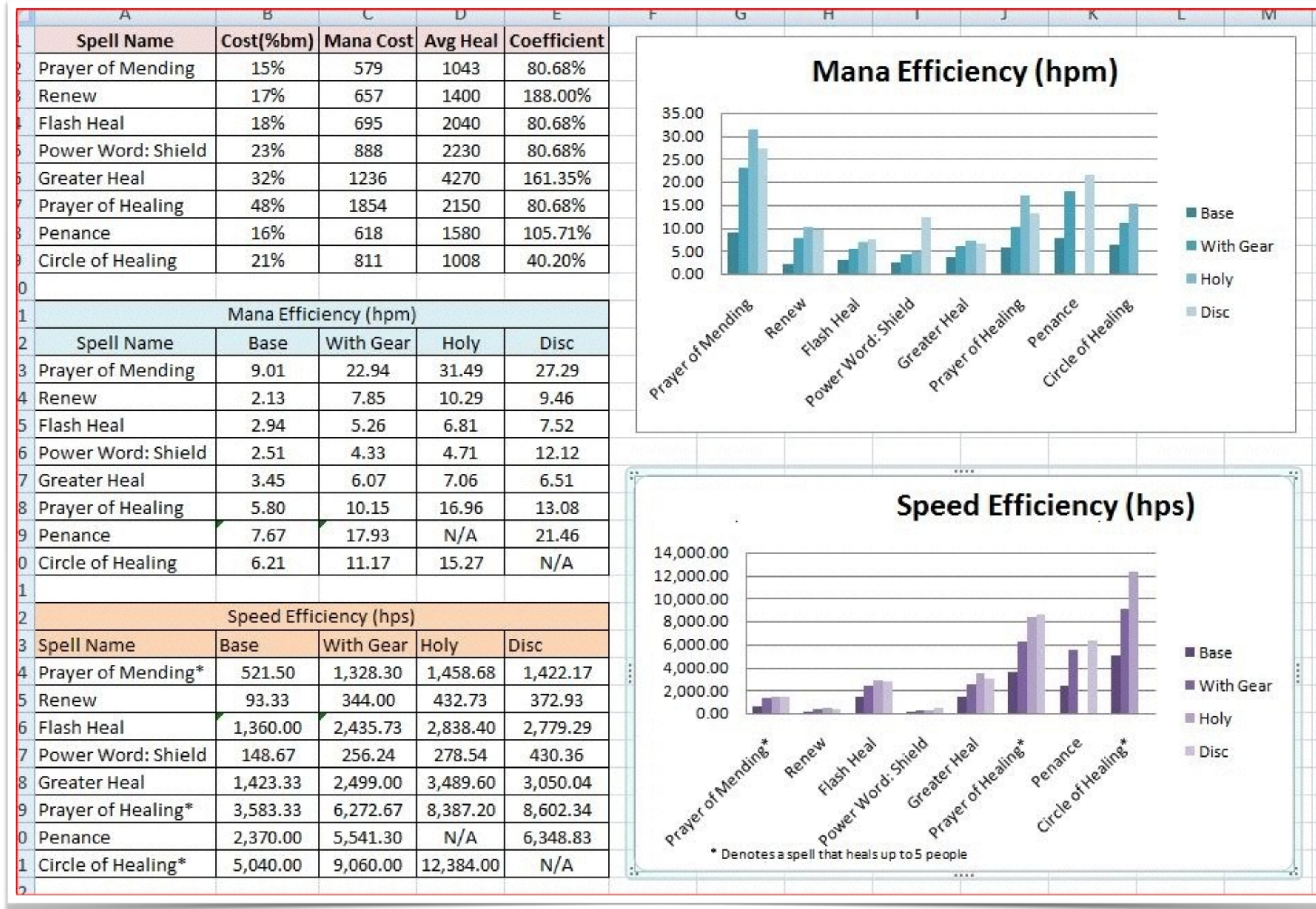
Queries For Row 4 ("testy"):				
Scanning Upgrades Units Transfers Rows Cliques Chat Prefs				
Units				
cost	query			
0.25 fuel per attacker * distance	ATTACK rows WHERE row_id= FROM row_id=4 WITH attackers=0;		go	2
next: 20 money	UPDATE rows SET attackers = attackers+1 WHERE row_id = 4;		go	2
next: 10 money	UPDATE rows SET defenders = defenders+1 WHERE row_id = 4;		go	2

Browse Rows				
SELECT * FROM rows WHERE row_id>=0 and row_id<10; [cost 1 fuel - refresh] rows 10 to 19 >>				
row_id	name	owner	money_factories	money_fuel_factories
0	First!	Stevo (Root)	15	442343 12
1	Mostly Harmle	ProcessBlue	18	1948581 15
2	Indigo	nailbunny	10	3520 15
3	egg	diego (NV)[S/	12	4212 10
4	testy	jack	10	3560 5
5	row your boat	Jackanapes	14	123466 11
6	my other row	diego (NV)[S/	11	4551 10
7	internetexpl	Adrian	10	3540 5
8	Row 13	ifoundthetao	12	644750 9
9	lower	borkencode	10	3530 10

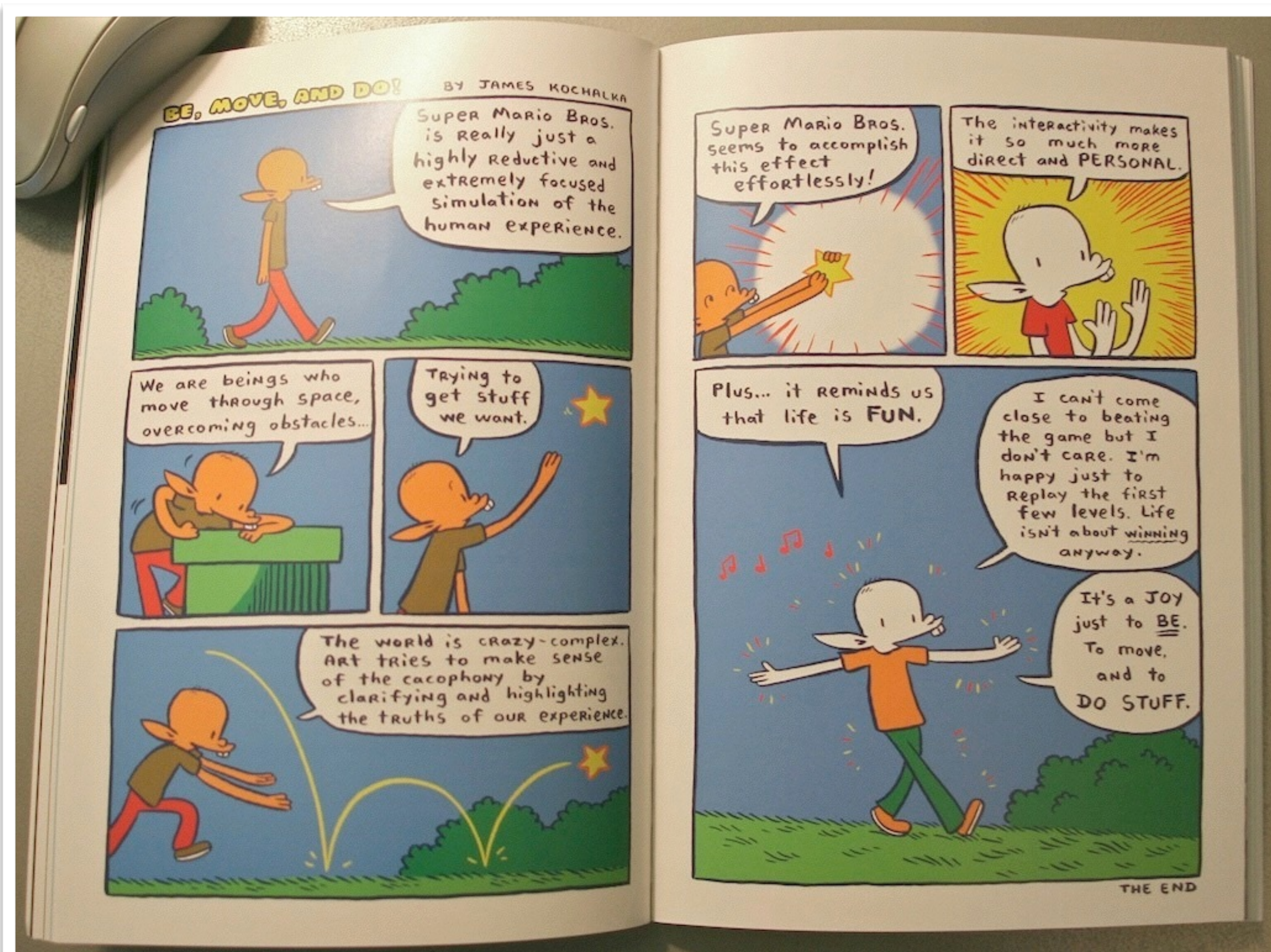
Query Log		
Refresh Global Personal		
Today	run by Dorkvader:	0.123
21:17:52	UPDATE rows SET attackers=attackers-4+0, money=money+18848, fuel=fuel+6267-13300 WHERE row_id=27;	
	UPDATE rows SET attackers=attackers+0, defenders=defenders+0, money=money-18848, fuel=fuel-6267 WHERE row_id=34;	
Today	run by Dorkvader:	0.128
21:17:36	UPDATE rows SET attackers=attackers-2+0, money=money+20910, fuel=fuel+2088-6300 WHERE row_id=27;	
	UPDATE rows SET attackers=attackers+0, defenders=defenders+0, money=money-20910, fuel=fuel-2088 WHERE row_id=24;	
Today	run by Dorkvader:	0.169
21:16:16	UPDATE rows SET attackers=attackers-4+0.	

MySQL Game

TheoryCraft



Procedural Metaphors



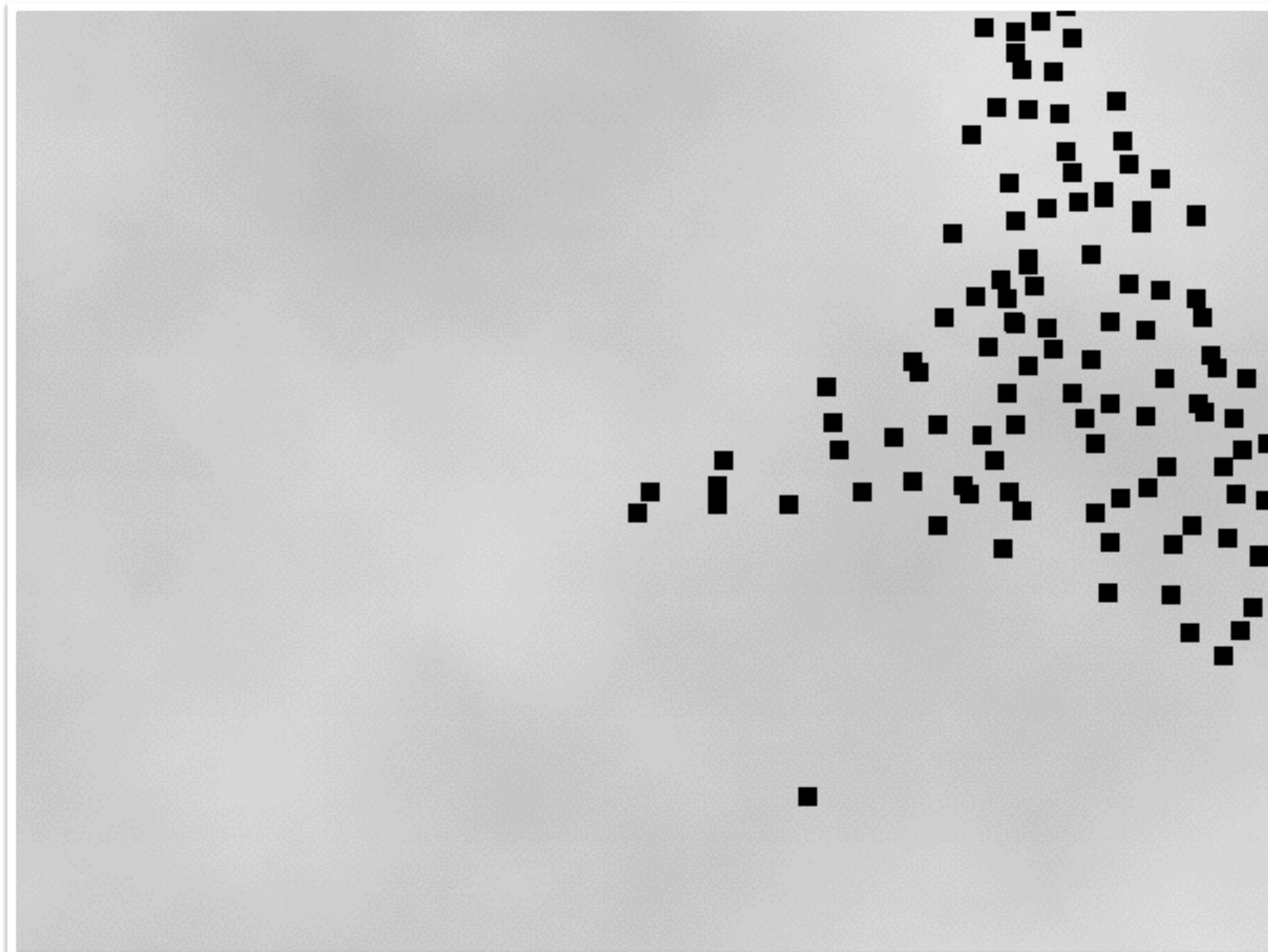
Play Is Metaphorical

»All play in some sense represents something from the non-play universe. [...]

Good games do not simulate physical reality; they mirror emotional reality.«

— Chris Crawford

Procedural Rhetoric



Loneliness

Performance



B.U.T.T.O.N.

Game Experience

Batches (purity is *Unhealthy*)
20,261.1
6.5 per second (net)

COOK!

Cash Money (\$3.5 ea)
\$2,109.7
\$92.8 per second

SELL!

You have purchased a Drug Mule
You have purchased a Drug Mule
Game saved!
You have purchased a Drug Mule
You have unlocked Industrial HVAC
Game saved!
Game saved!
You have purchased a Storage Shed
You have purchased a Used RV
Game saved!
You have purchased a Small House
Game saved!
Game saved!
You have purchased a Storage Shed
You have purchased a Dealer

Manufacturing

Abandoned Warehouse
\$55,000 — A large abandoned warehouse with vaulted ceilings
Purchase

Cooks 150 per second (base)

0

Small House
\$13,500 — A small house in a bad neighborhood
Purchase

Cooks 10 per second (base)

2

Used RV
\$3,600 — A low cost RV, perfect for remote cooking
Purchase

Cooks 1.5 per second (base)

5

Storage Shed
\$4,410 — A cheap shed with electricity
Purchase

Cooks 0.5 per second (base)

6

Distribution

Drug Cartel
\$55,000 — Drug cartels can move a lot of product, but they cost so damn much
Purchase

Sells 150 per second (base)

0

Night Club
\$6,000 — Purchase a run down night club and sell your classy product to the patrons
Purchase

Sells 15 per second (base)

1

Drug Mule
\$3,600 — Someone to stuff drugs in their rectum and distribute them
Purchase

Sells 1.5 per second (base)

5

Dealer
\$720 — A common street thug to sell your goods
Purchase

Sells 0.5 per second (base)

5

Upgrades

Hardened Glass Boilers
Further improves meth purity by 3 IPU's
Purchase

\$15,000

Glass Flasks
Further improves meth purity by 1 IPU

✓

Stainless Steel Cookware
Improves meth purity by 0.5 IPU

✓

Cheap Cookware
Used to cook stuff

✓

Titanium Burners
Spaceship-grade burners improve meth purity by 7 IPU's
Purchase

\$35,550

Steel Burners
Improves meth purity by 1 IPU

✓

Gas Stove
Improves meth purity by 0.5 IPU

✓

Electric Hotplate
Used for cooking

✓

Hazmat Suit
Now you can cook without regard for personal safety! Make an additional 100 batches at a time
Purchase

\$15,000

Portable Power Generator
Provides extra power to your RVs - adding 0.5 production per second

✓

Spinnin' Rims
Roll with style! Improves the sale rate of your dealers by .2/s

✓

Clicking Bad

Allegoric Performance



Augmenting Anger Control Therapy with a Videogame Requiring Emotional Control: A Pilot Study on an Inpatient Psychiatric Unit

http://www.benthamdirect.org/pages/b_viewarticle.php?articleID=3182314

Rage Control

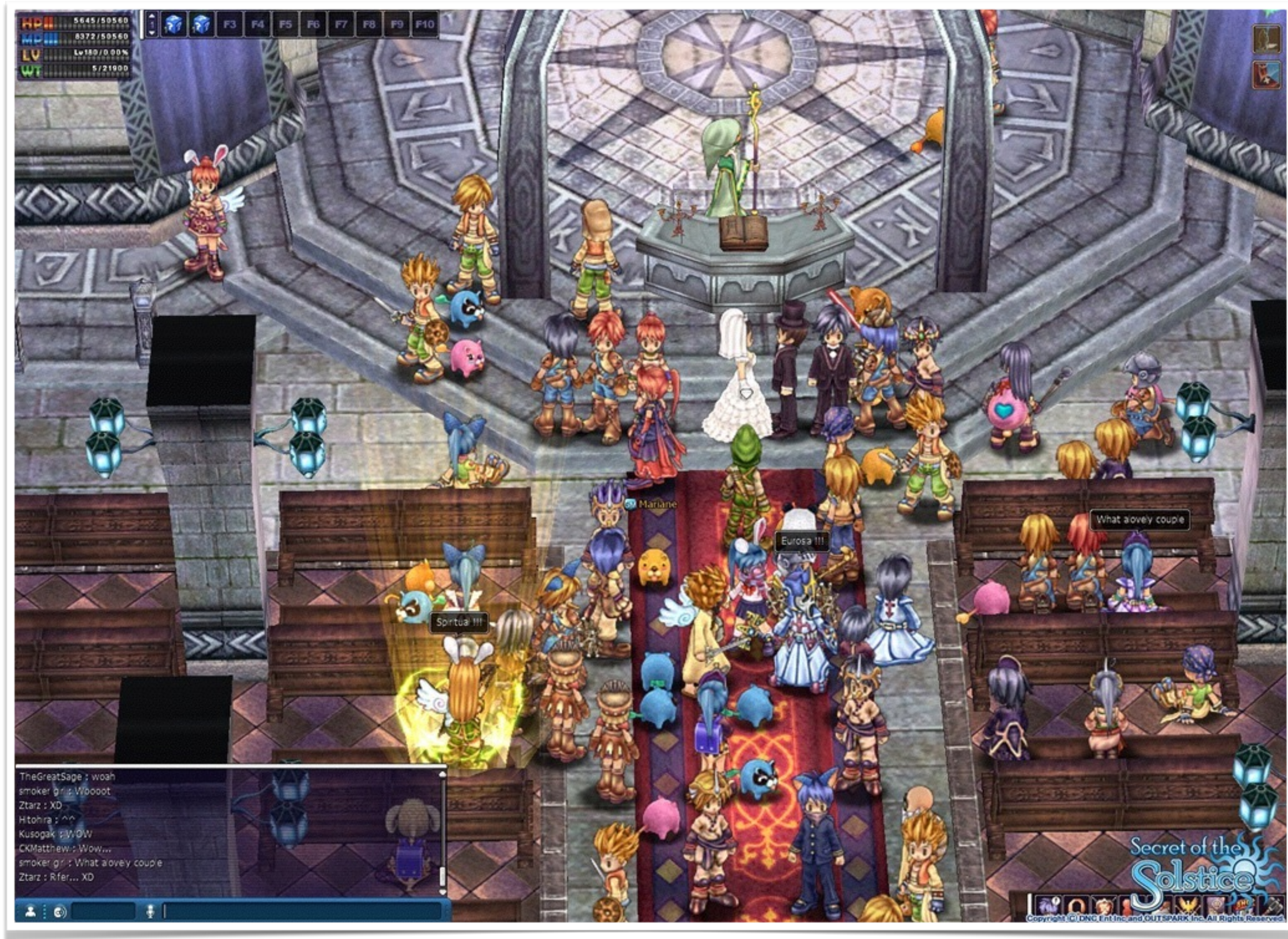


Re-Mission 2

A Video Game Improves Behavioral Outcomes in Adolescents and Young Adults With Cancer: A Randomized Trial

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/122/2/e305.full>

Expressive Performance



Secret of the Solstice

Interpreting Performance



<http://themessagebehindthescreen.blogspot.de/2013/03/how-tomb-raider-saved-my-life-in-one.html>

Expressive Games: Revisited

CfP: We propose to qualify as an **expressive game** a game that allows to explore psychological, social, cultural issues.

[Referential function: Real world contexts]

As a game, it will confront the player to choices and dilemmas *[mechanics]* that these issues create *[narration]*. This kind of games allows to express *[expressive function?]* individual or social issues *[context]* while opening back the opportunity to think about it *[conative function]*.

Conclusion

Every video game is expressive.

The expressive-ness of a game can be analyzed in audiovisual, narrative, ludic and performative categories.

The term ,Expressive Game‘ refers to games with constraints to its referential, expressive and conative functions.

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