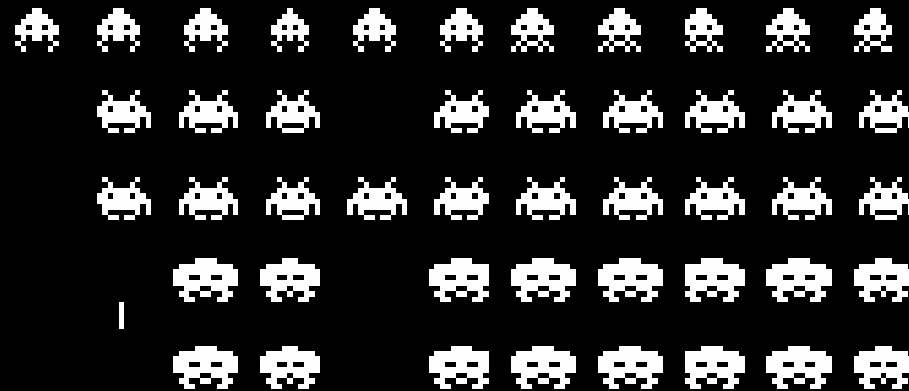
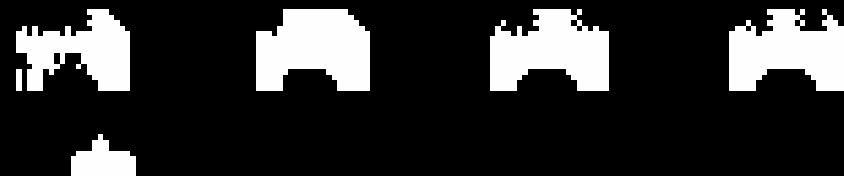


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Immersive Design: *lessons from game designers*



Raph Koster, President of  *area*



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You sick of hearing about games?

- Me too, honestly.
- But instead of giving you the obvious, I thought I would share some interesting lessons from game design
- Maybe these will inform your web design.
- Maybe not.

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Stuff everyone has heard of

- Ratings
- Rankings and ladders
- Positive feedback cycles
- Public profiles

I'm not going to talk about these.

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The average is below average

Skill is required for just about all tasks. Be sure to give scope for typical users in all competitive frameworks.

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Nobody reads the manual

*Co-opt existing muscle memory and habits to
make interfaces comprehensible.*

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Older men act like women

Consider the effect of age on your audience.

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Cozy worlds

Design for the right size, not for the biggest size; bigger is not better.

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Do it everywhere

Users build mental models based on what you present; they expect consistency in the model and regard anything else as a bug.

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Casual gamers can be hardcore

“Hardcore” is a term referring to investment in a hobby, and not the nature of the hobby. If you have no hardcore, you’re doomed. And if you treat everyone as casual, you’re also doomed.

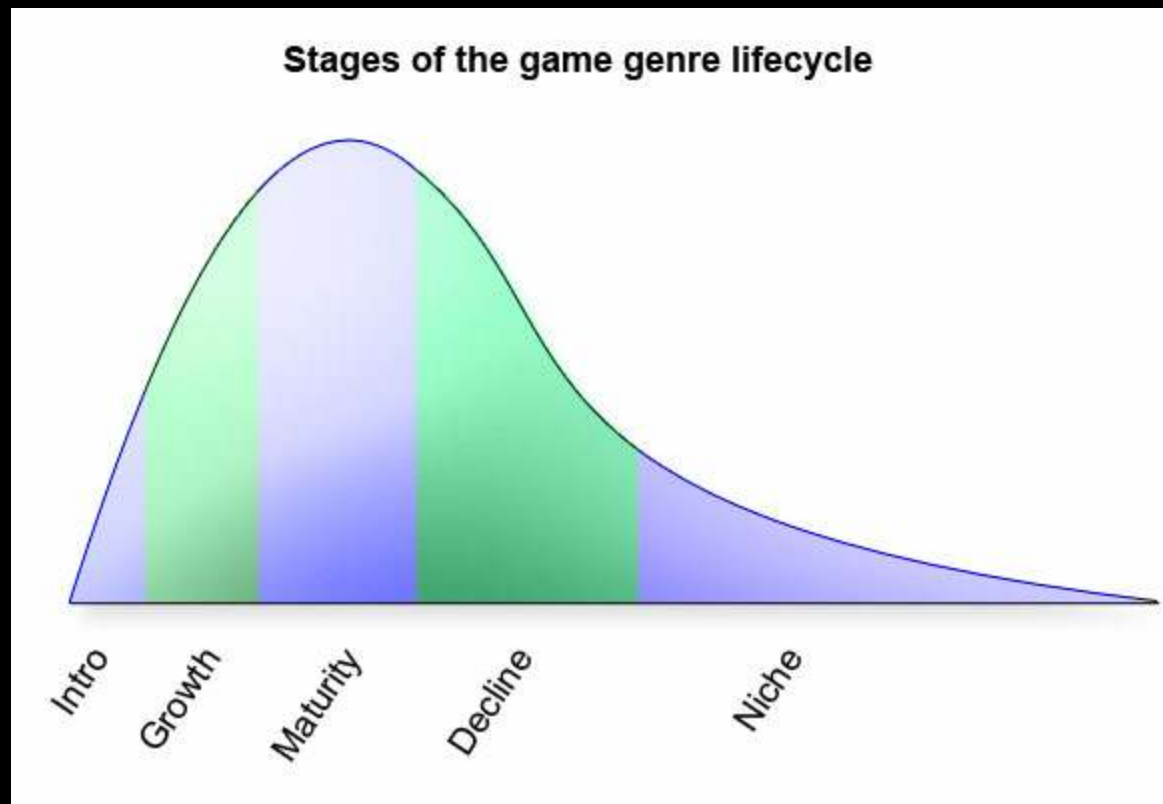
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Audiences kill genres



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Adaptive difficulty has pitfalls

You want people working at the margin of ability, not in comfort. Fun comes from the risk of failure. If you scale difficulty to a user, don't scale it to where they cannot make a mistake.

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Bottomfeeding

*Repetitive tasks for fixed reward always suck.
Anything that you use a "macro" for needs to
be examined.*

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Cameras convey psychology

3rd person conveys objectification of tokens; 1st person conveys sense of self. Angles up and down also matter.

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Avatars are filters

Nobody likes being only one person. We are large, we contain multitudes.

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Never ramp smoothly

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They chase the carrot

Choose your incentive structures very carefully; be sure to incentivize all desired behaviors.

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Democracy fails in small groups

Your ideals may not have any place here. Pay attention to the lessons of anthropology and choose the governance model that matches your scale.

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Free assignment of guild roles

Create a permissions-based system for maximum flexibility, rather than assuming what structures users want.

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There's three kinds of rules

The ones you document, the ones that they use, and the ones that there's a social contract for. As a developer, you design all three.

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The map is not the territory

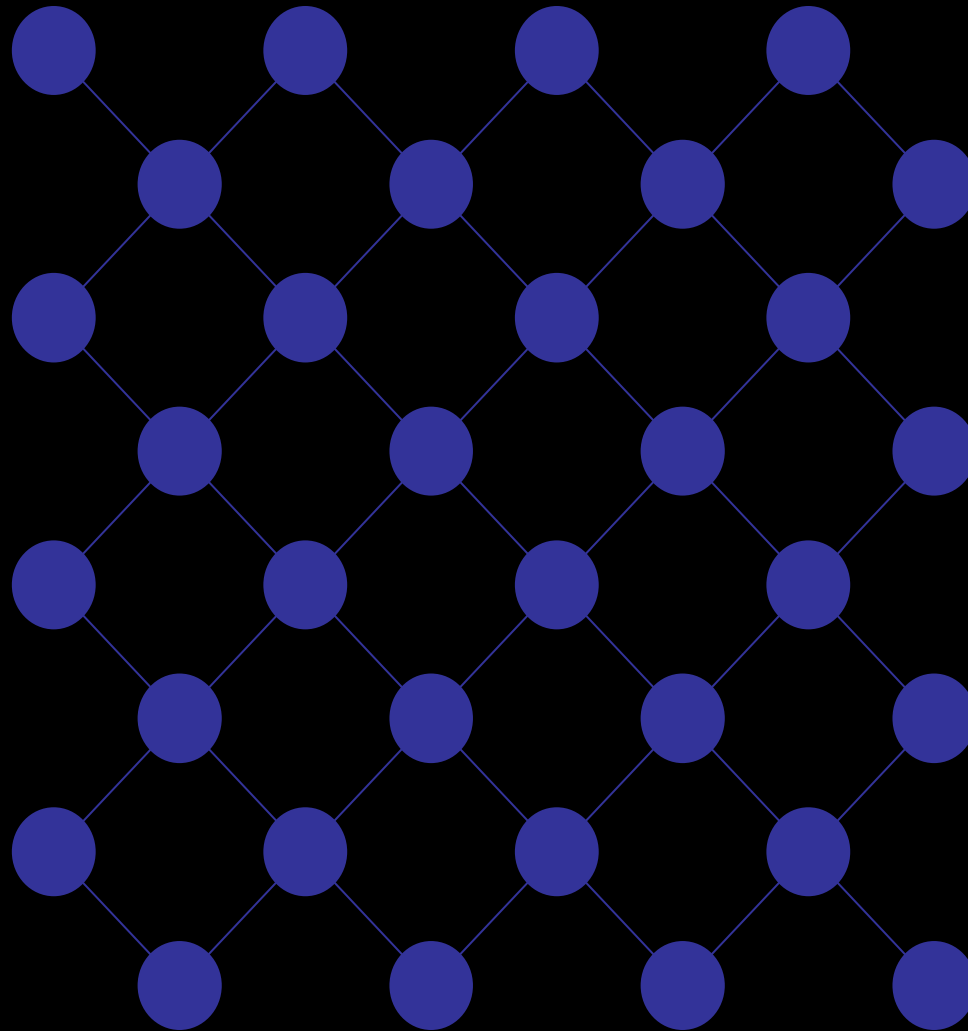
In fact, often it's not even the map.

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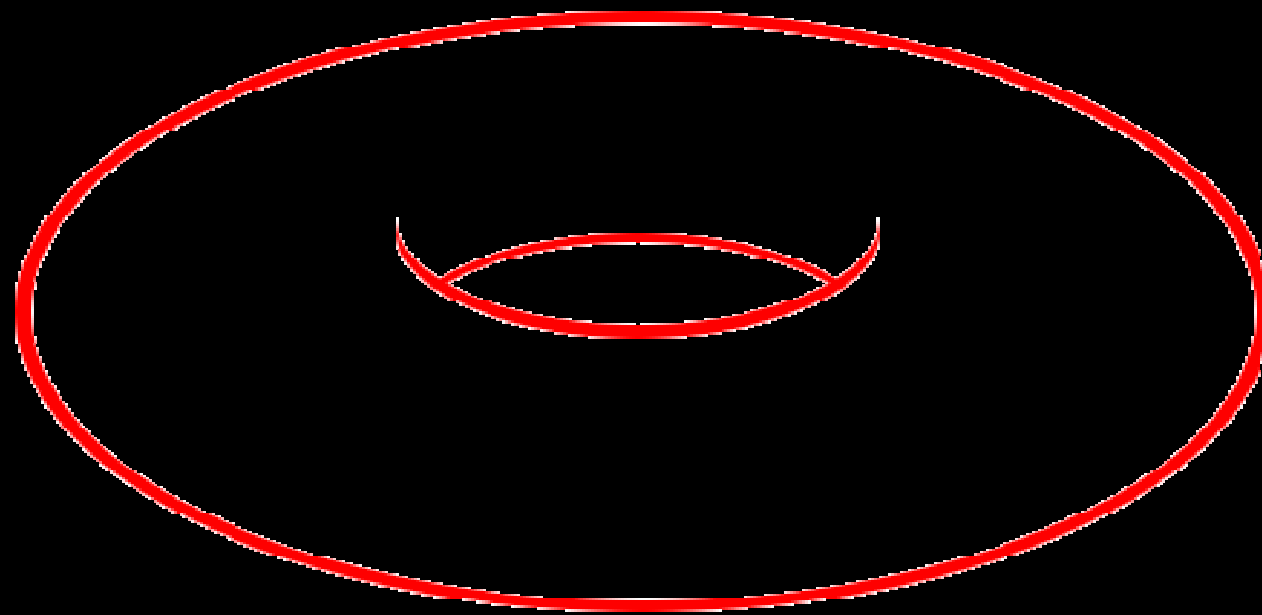


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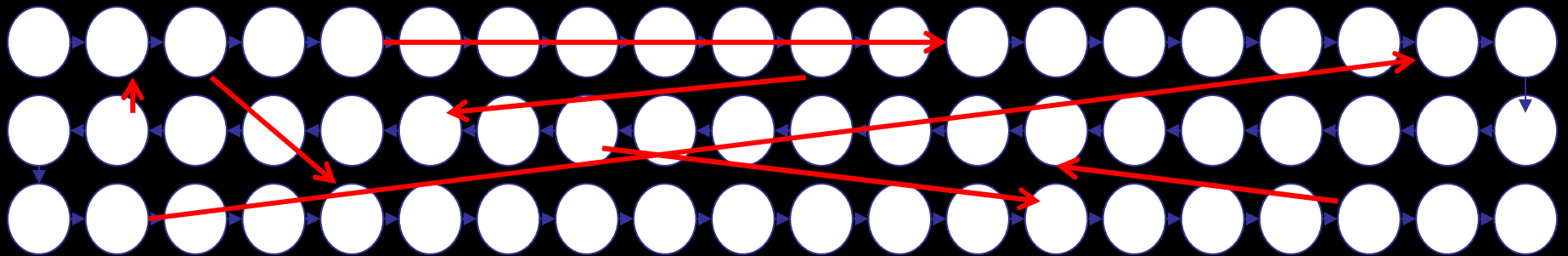
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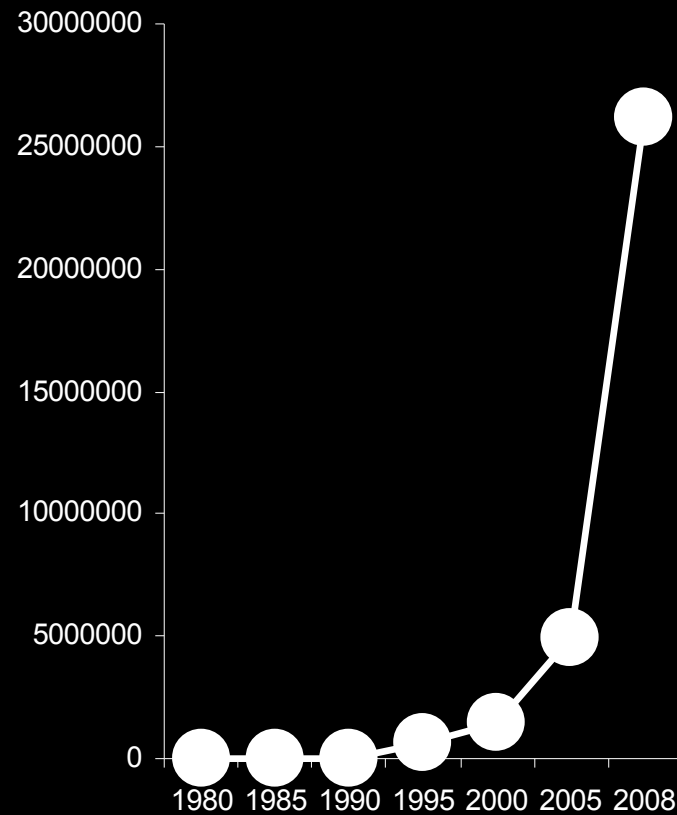
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Content will kill you

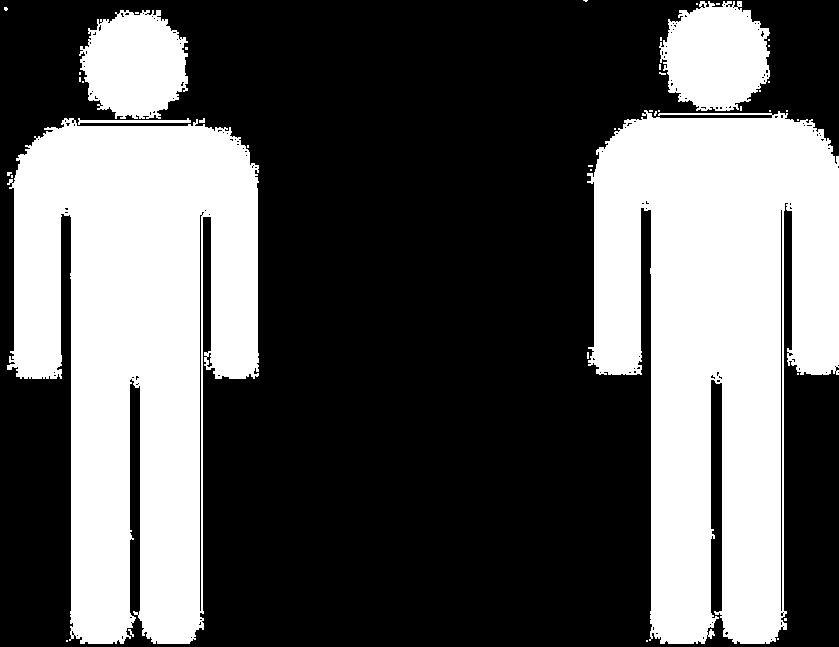


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Content will kill you



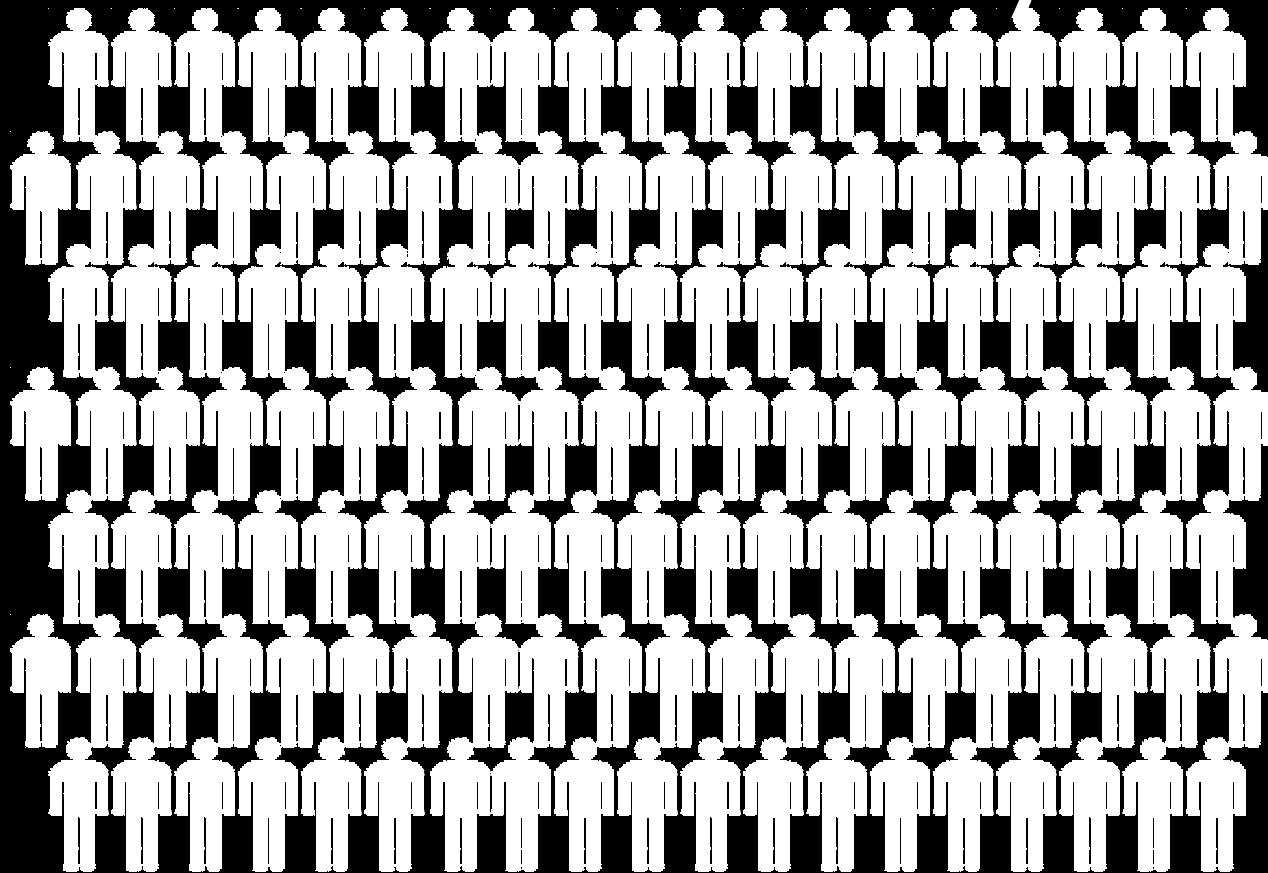
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Content will kill you



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Dunbar's Number applies

*Partition on 150. Support groups that size.
Provide group subdivision tools. Optimal size
may be 30-60.*

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Unpredictable policing

It's more effective to randomly ban large swaths of folks, and appear capricious, than it is to be measured.

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People are lemmings

The copycat effect is very powerful; only publicize behavior that you want imitated.

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They also make shit up

Provide partially submerged material that users can hang myth on.

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Don't make your bounties a high score table

Negative reputation always trends towards chaos, particularly with the ability to reset via a new account. Positive rep system start chaotic, then stabilize.

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Players need to know they will see each other tomorrow

Properly socialized behavior relies on “iterative tit for tat” interaction strategies. This requires that the opponent be human, and that there be an expectation of future interaction.

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Make games gamers like

The mass market lies through the hardcore.

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Topple your kings

You have to reset games of persistent accumulation, because the rich get richer.

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Play when not there

Social complexity increases based on economic participation.

You need people to be economic participants even when not actively present.

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Guildies are less important

Weak ties maintain overall community cohesion better than strong ties; tight groups migrate en masse.

Find things that bridge cultural gaps, or create weak interdependencies.



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Guild initiation ceremonies

*Users value rituals: scheduled info release,
community rituals, holidays, ceremonies,
etc.*

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Balance is overrated

Finding flaws or rough edges in systems makes users feel clever; you need to plan to include minor advantages in order to delight them.

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Rails are good

Do linear first, and expressive later. You must give on-ramps to higher-end stuff; and you're always wrong about how sophisticated the user is.

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PvP is always an elder game

Do collaborative activity first, and provide an on-ramp to competitive activity. It's an important feature for devotees but new users will feel inadequate.

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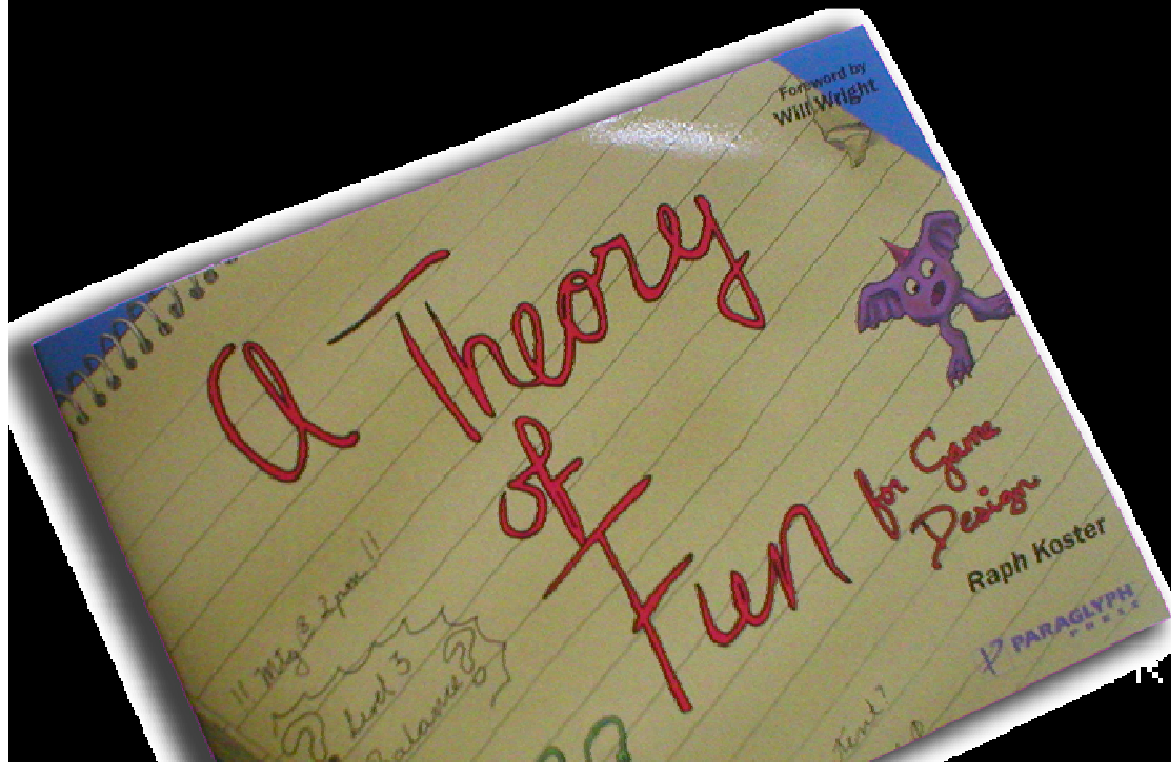


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<http://www.raphkoster.com>

<http://www.areae.net>



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