Toys, Rules, Mechanics

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game design

today's menu

☐ toys, or why scandinavians got it right

☐ rules, or why scandinavians got it wrong

☐ mechanics, or formalism FTW!

☐ rhetoric, and back to square one

☐ the use of all this

So far?

SAND OCEAN SKY
AVAILABLE 7 DAYS
FREE OF CHARGE

IN CASE OF HEADCRAB INFESTATION
USE THIS CROWBAR

Let's Play!

embarrassing moment #1

in the beginning, there were toys ...

What is a toy?

☐ **Toys are tools for entertainment (Bateman)**

☐ **Toys are facilitators for playful activities**

☐ **Toys focus actions and turn them into play, facilitating the act of playing by means of their design:**

☐ **bears are meant to be loved,**

☐ **dolls are meant to simulate activities!**
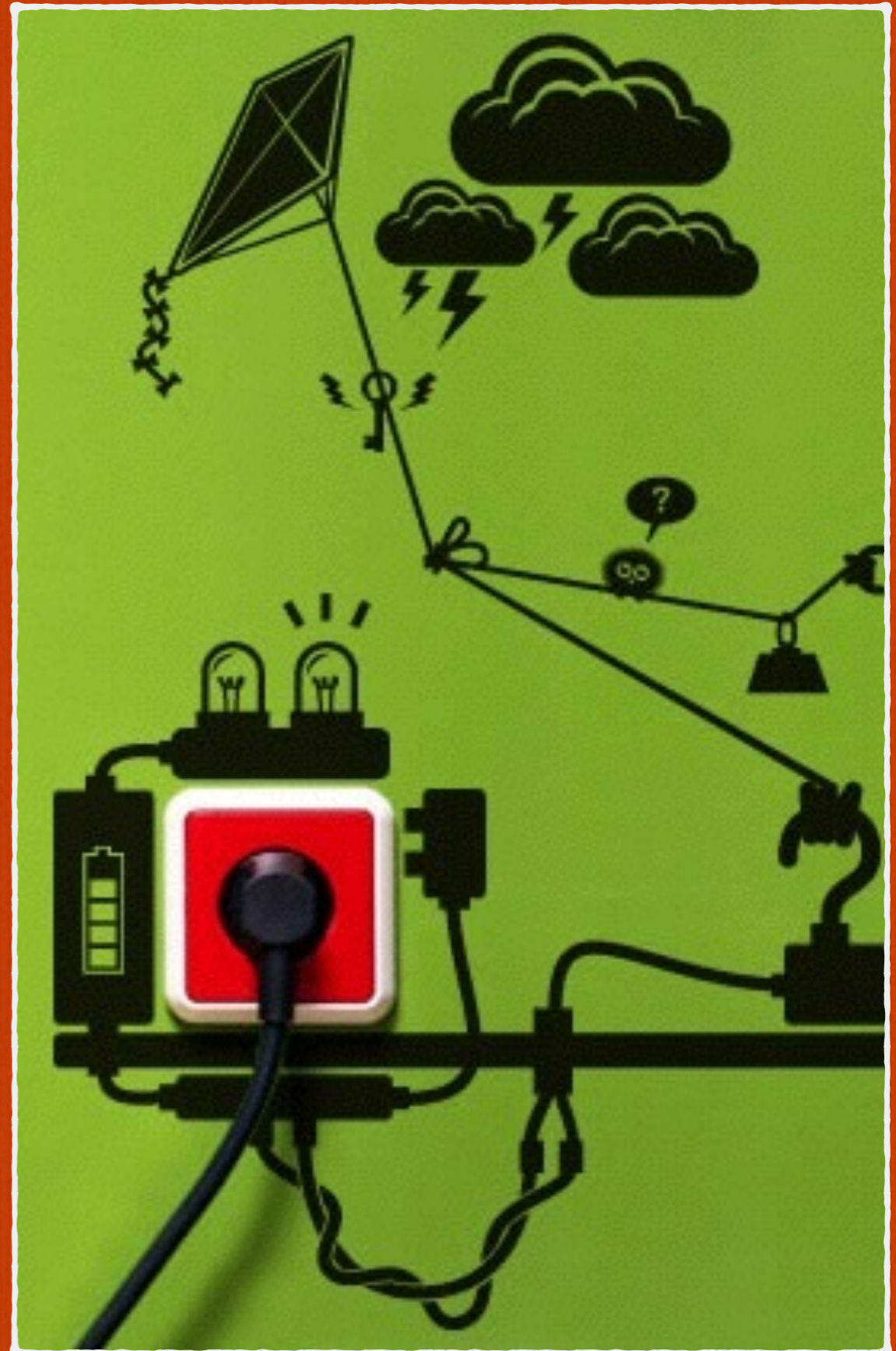
Back to play

Spil vs. Leg

Why the Scandinavians got it right
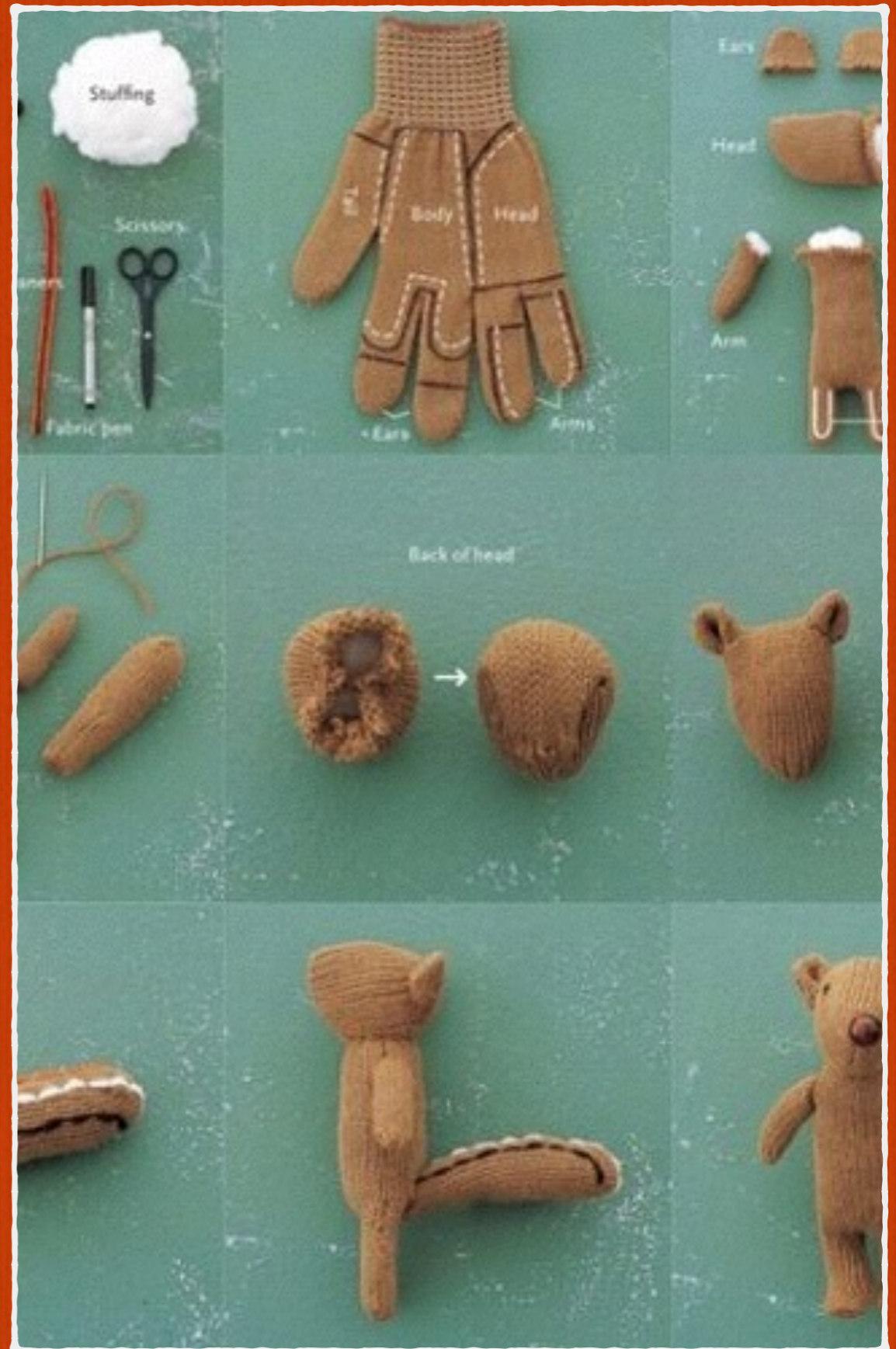
How do toys facilitate play?

Signifiers

designed elements that cue users to act, but also that involve them emotionally.

Affordances

(or perceived affordances)
action possibilities readily perceived by an actor.

Constraints
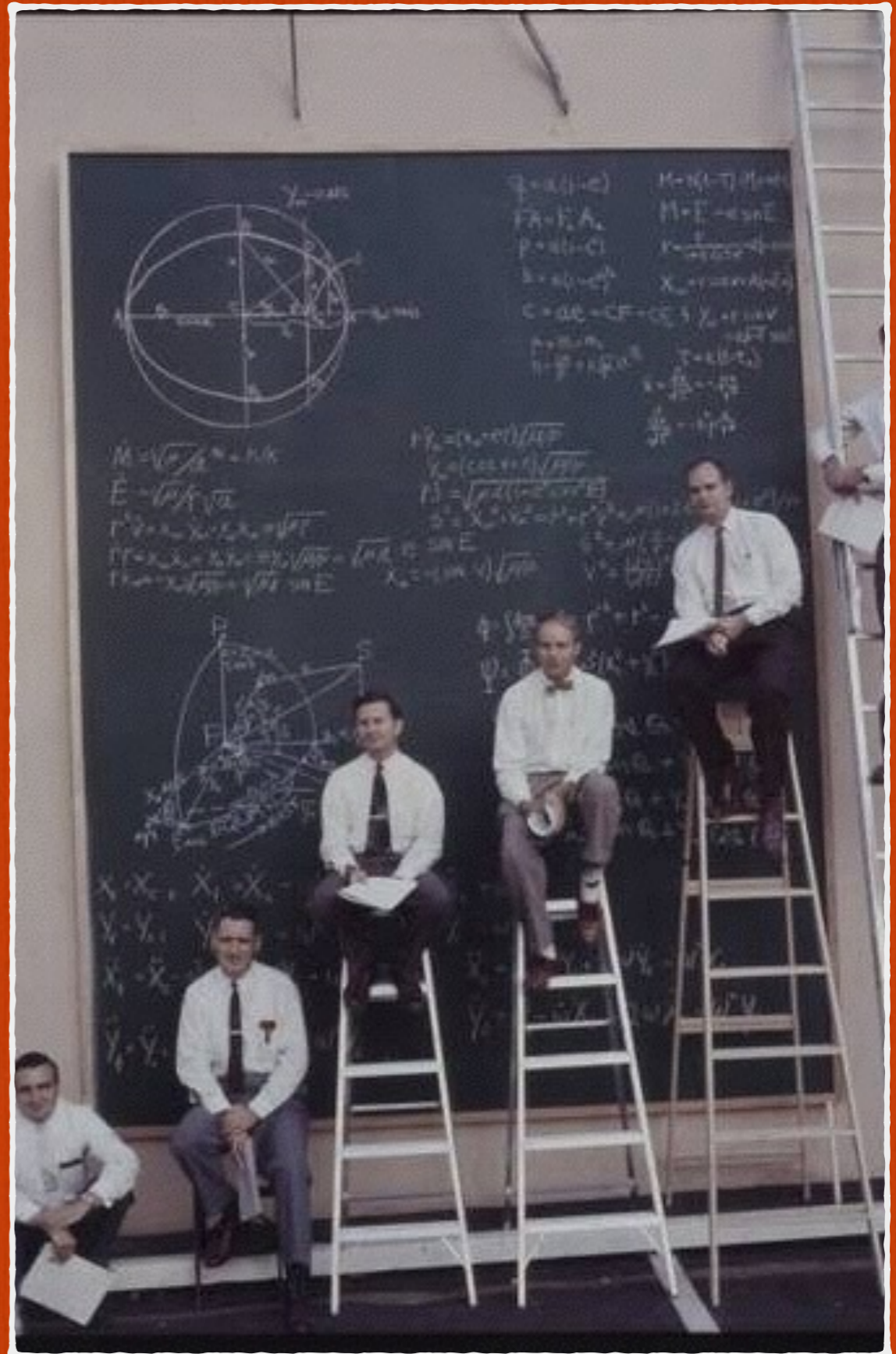
Designed limits for user agency
Physical
Logical
Cultural

"I am sorry, Dave." said Hal.
'I am afraid that I can not do tha

Why is this important?

With toys, we don't have the noise of games: rules, challenges, ...

In design terms (more or less), toys are more generative than prescriptive.

Growing up: from toys to games?

Avedon

- ☐ **purpose**

- ☐ **procedures (≈ mechanics)**

- ☐ **rules**

- ☐ **number of players**

- ☐ **roles**

- ☐ **participant interaction patterns (≈ challenges?)**

- ☐ **results (≈ goals)**

Rules

- Instructions on how to play (Rollings and Adams)

- Definitions and instructions that have to be accepted by players (Rollings and Adams)

- Rules create a state machine with a game tree of possibilities (Jesper Juul)

- Structures and frames for play

- ☐ **(Game) Rules define (according to Rollings and Adams):**

  - ☐ **Semiotics of the game**

  - ☐ **Gameplay**

  - ☐ **Sequence of Play**

  - ☐ **Goals and the victory/loss conditions**

  - ☐ **Termination condition**

  - ☐ **Metarules**

Is Gravity a Rule?

IRL: found rules

Videogames: it depends

World/Simulation Rules
(parameters that give consistency to
the gameworld; not necessarily
attached to game rules)

Toys, Rules, and the next step

- [ ] When we apply rules to playing with a toy, we are creating a game.

- [ ] Rules, as designed, can also present affordances and constraints.

- [ ] Rules by themselves are mostly uninteresting, but they are:

  - [ ] one of the building blocks of games

  - [ ] structures for game design and player behavior (formal analysis/playtesting)

Game Mechanics

Defining!

□ Mechanics are the various actions, behaviors, and control mechanisms afforded to the player within a game context (MDA)

□ Game mechanics are rule-based systems/simulations that facilitate and encourage a user to explore and learn the properties of their possibility space through the use of feedback mechanisms (Lost Garden)

**Game mechanics:
rule-based methods for player agency in
the gameworld, designed for overcoming
challenges in non-trivial ways**

Verbs

Challenges!

Any action that requires an effort to accomplish.

Not all challenges are rule-based: behaviors of the system, behaviors of other players.

Challenges are overcome by the use of game mechanics

The Function of Mechanics

Game Mechanics are the discrete units that define player interaction and relate the player with the world, the challenges, and the overall rules.

For a designer, game mechanics are the essential grammar of her craft: the different formal elements from a tradition that can be formulated, communicated and modified for solving specific design problems

Game Idea (verbs, nouns, adjectives)

↓

Rules

↓

Challenges

↕

Game Mechanics

For game design, rules, mechanics and challenges are the essential grammar

- ☐ **Toyplay vs. Gameplay**

- ☐ **Prototyping**

- ☐ **Game Design Grammar**

Summary

☐

☐

☐

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Homework

- [ ] **Design a Playground (groups of max. 6)**

- [ ] **Deliver: next Monday**

- [ ] **Focus on:**

  - [ ] **space and context**

  - [ ] **materials and props**

  - [ ] **pace and flow**