

# Gameplay

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game design

# today's menu

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- A quick look back: games as systems, toyplay, mechanics, rules**
- Defining toyplay**
- Defining gameplay**
- Play, performance, play acts**
- Rhetorics of play**
- Rules?**
- Challenges**



**what have we done so far?**

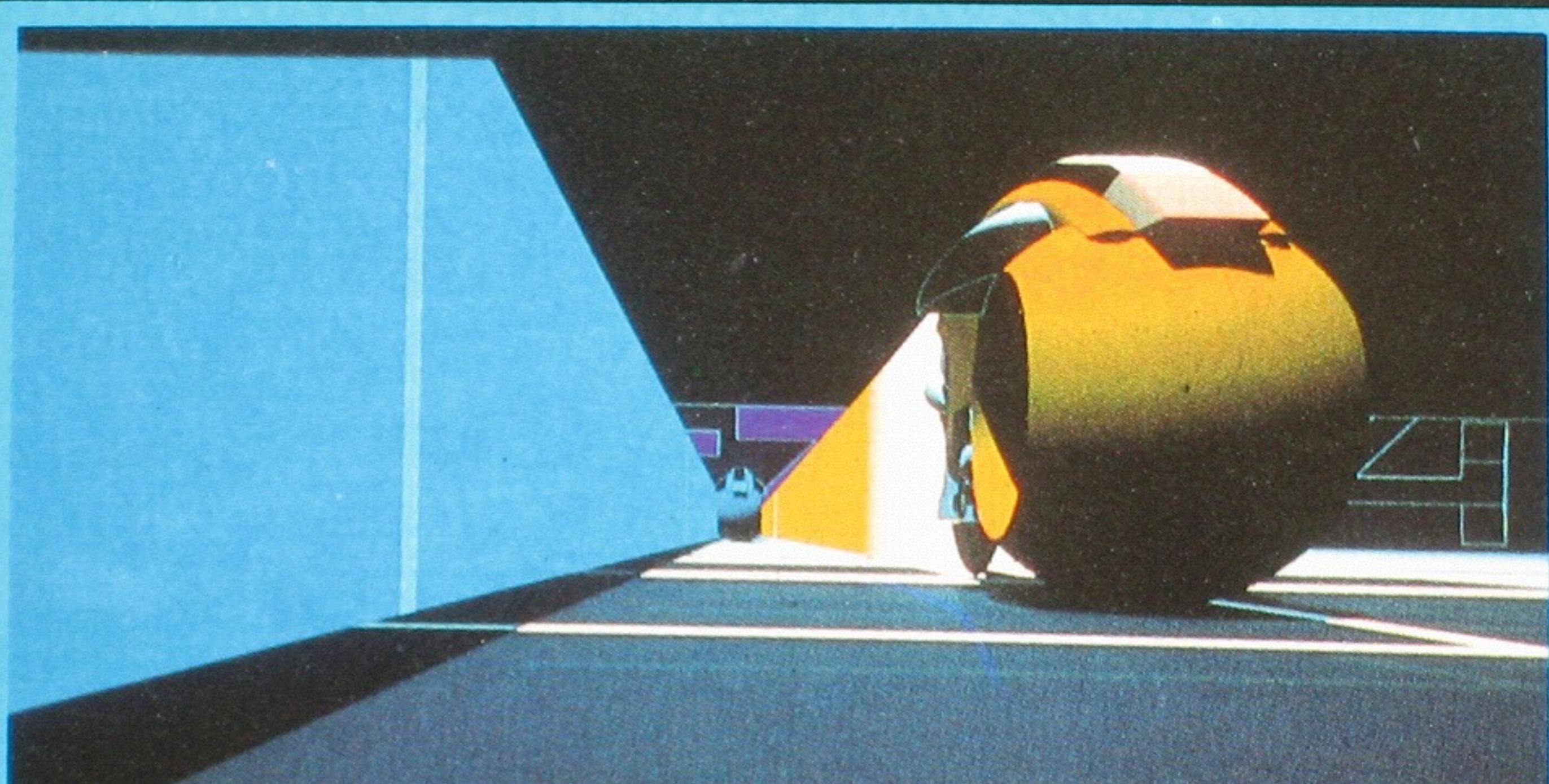
# Games as systems

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Any game is a system of rules and procedures for interactions - and as such can be created (design), described (criticism), or defined (theory)



Digital fallacy?



**TRON**

- **Toys: facilitators for playful activities**
- **Rules: Structures and frames for play**
- **Game Mechanics: rule-based methods for player agency in the gameworld, designed to overcome challenges in non-trivial ways**

A vintage photograph of four young people, two boys and two girls, dressed in matching red sweaters with white collars and dark pants. They are in a room with a piano and patterned curtains. One boy is seated on a stool, another boy is seated on a chair playing an accordion, one girl is standing playing an acoustic guitar, and another girl is standing playing a violin. The scene is decorated with a floral arrangement on the piano and potted plants.

**This is what we can say**

**but what can we design?**

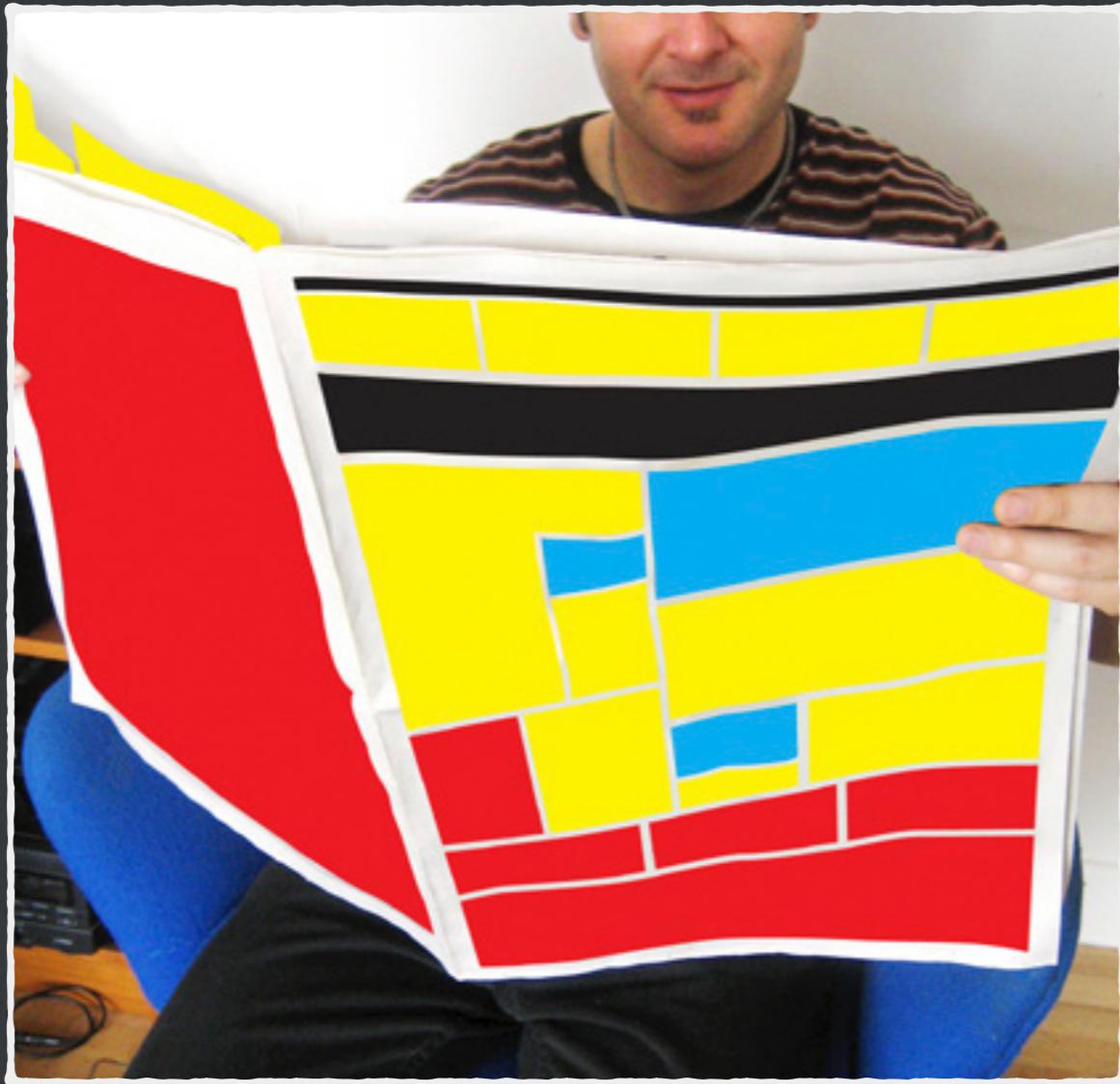
**That unforgettable  
moment**



**What is gameplay?**

# The Masters

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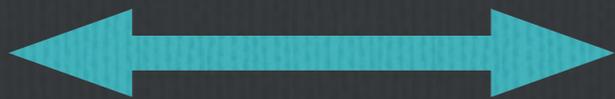


- Gameplay is players trying to overcome challenges (Juul).
- Gameplay is a consequence of the choices presented to players (Rollings and Adams).
- Gameplay is related to:
  - choices
  - challenges
  - players

# The Playground Continuum

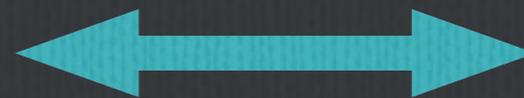
**Play**

Freeform ludic activity, with no goals predefined or external to the player and not depending on the use of mediators or instruments



**Toyplay**

Freeform ludic activity with no goals predefined or external to the player, and mediated (constrained) by toys.



**Gameplay**

Ludic activity regulated by game rules, mediated by game mechanics, and oriented to the satisfactory achievement of goals predetermined by rules agreed upon by the player or players

# Choices (yet again)

A game is a series of interesting choices (Sid Meier)

 *The Vital Stats of:* \_\_\_\_\_



*Hat Size:*

S  M  L  XL

Head Diameter: \_\_\_\_\_



*Trouser Size:*

Waist: \_\_\_\_\_

Leg: \_\_\_\_\_



*Suit Jacket Size:*

\_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_



*Shorts Size:*

S  M  L  XL

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_



*Jumper Size:*

S  M  L  XL

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_



*Underwear Size:*

S  M  L  XL

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_



*Shirt Size:*

S  M  L  XL

Neck Size: \_\_\_\_\_



*Shoe Size:*

\_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_



*T-Shirt Size:*

S  M  L  XL

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

*Favourite Colours:*

White:  Red:  Brown:  Orange:

Yellow:  Green:  Blue:  Black:

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# Challenges

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We have seen this before ...

# More on challenges

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- What are you challenging?**
  - Players skills? (then think: with infinite time, what intrinsic level of skill is required?)**
  - Stress coping? (what is the minimum time to overcome this challenge?)**
- Absolute difficulty: intrinsic skill + time boundaries**
- But this is not the only way of thinking about challenges!**

**Why are these great  
games?**



Anna Navarre: You won't be able to hide it for long.



**Those damn players!**

# Food for thought

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- We need to re-think the idea of gameplay.
- Move away from system-centric, designer-oriented rhetoric and focus on:
- how to design for playful experiences.

# How to design play?

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- Main issue: understanding play, again.
- We play through play acts (Schechner).
- Play is flexible, performative, relational.

# Play, for designers

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- Performative
- Festive
- Serious
- Subversive
- Critical

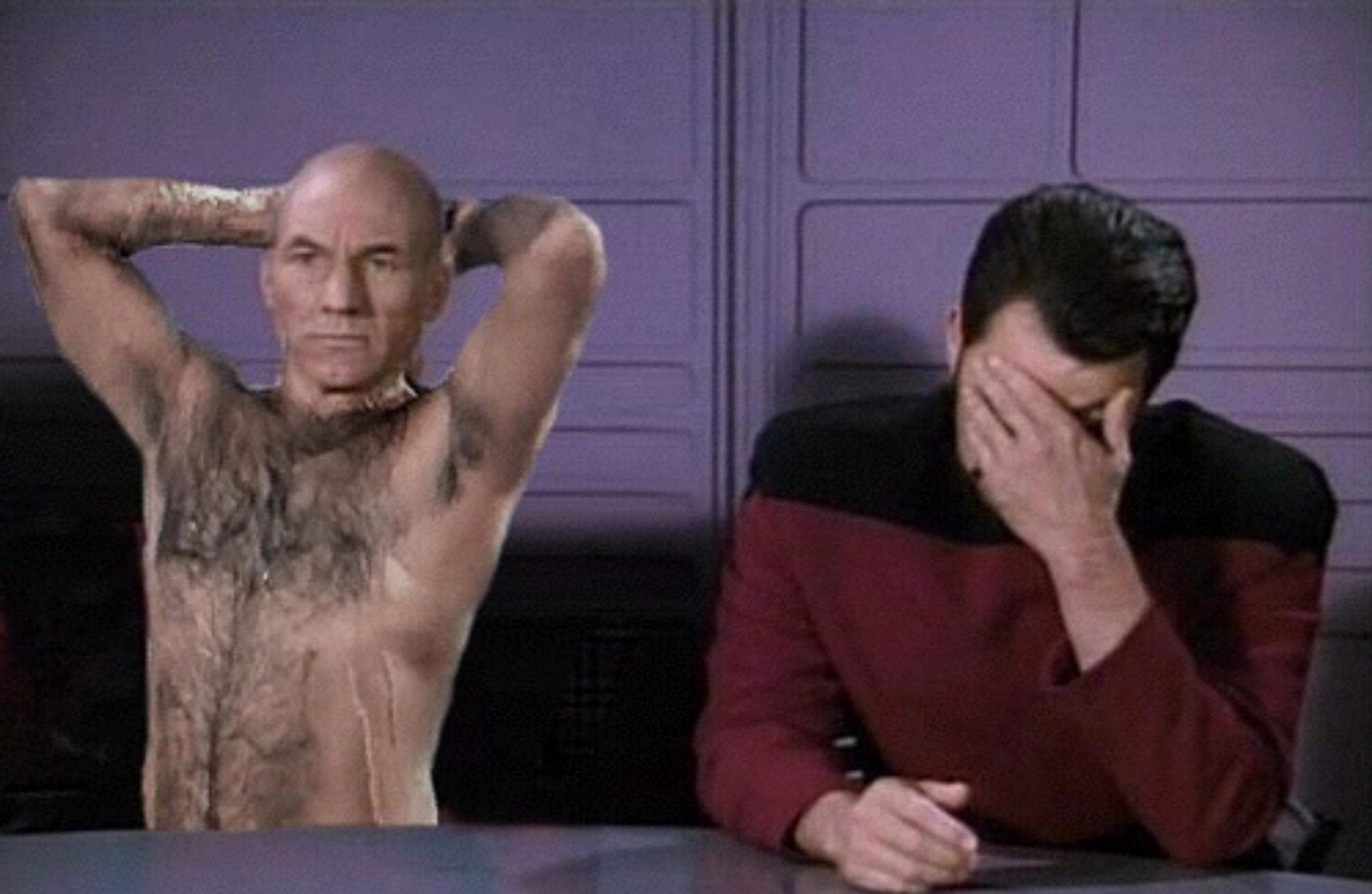
**How to harness this?**

# Final nail in the coffin

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- “Being playful is an activity of people, not rules. Understanding the rules does not mean understanding the event”
- “Games aren’t much fun when rules, not relationships, dominate the activity”



**so how do we do this?**

# *Gameplay through play*

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- A game designer creates a context.
- A space open for interpretation.
- A range of possibilities, and possibilities for appropriation.
- A system that is relatively unstable

# Thinking play

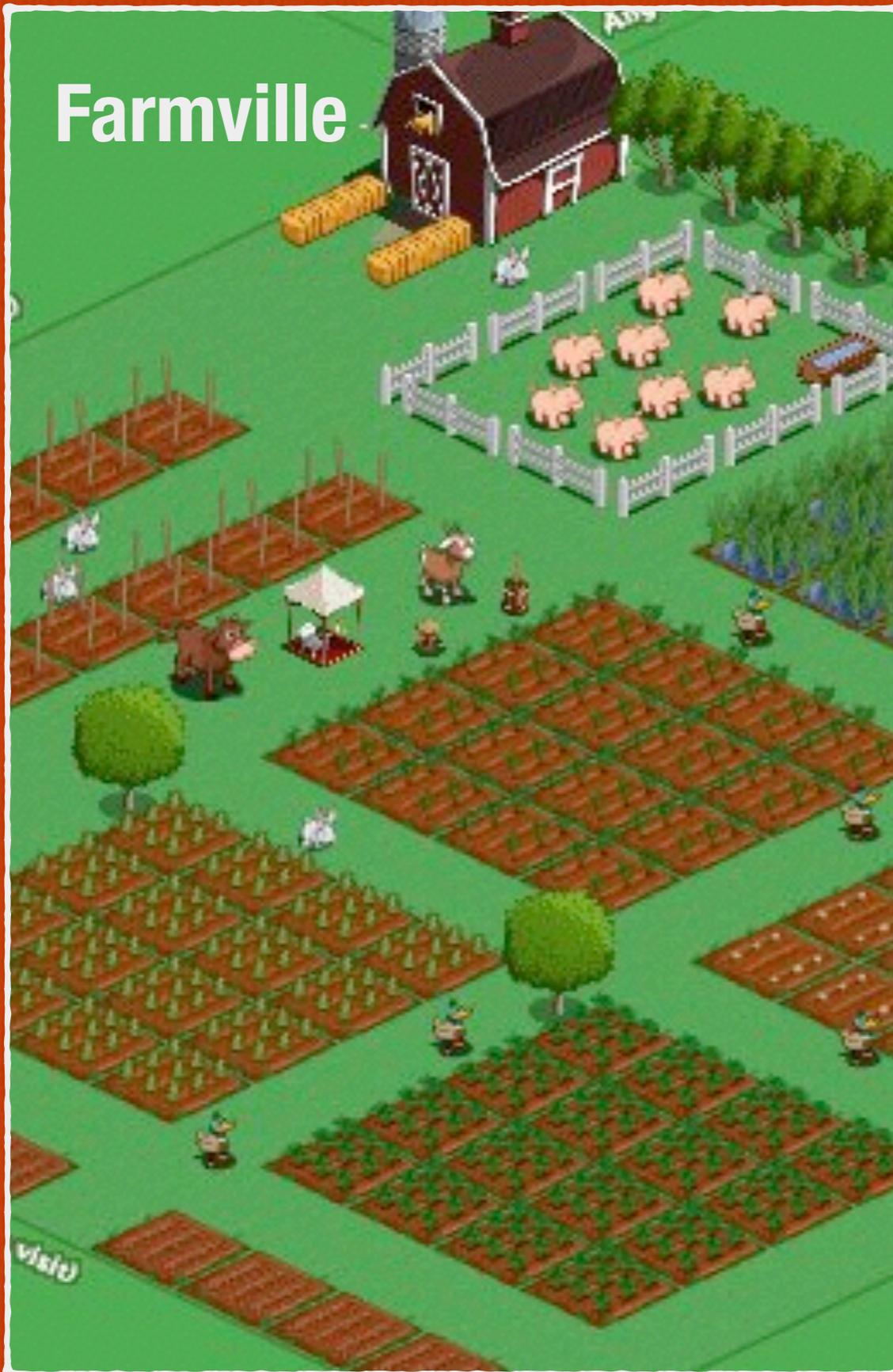


- How do you allow players to play?
- Can they be creative?
- Where do you cut their freedom?
- How can they be playful?
- How can they be competitive?
- How can they express themselves?



**how interesting is it to do what we have to do (to play the game)**

**Farmville**



**Grand Theft Auto**



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



**next time you think about what  
games you want to create,**



**think about how you  
want others to play**

# Summarizing

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