Can You Make A Good Game
Without Good Play Mechanics?

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FINAL FANTASY XV Lead Game Designer: Buddy System & AI

A game designer specialized in AI and
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LUMINOUS
PRODUCTIONS

SQUARE ENIX

FINAL FANTASY XV

Can we make a good game without good play mechanics?

Properties of good play mechanics

Clear goals & rules	Meaningful sets of Approaches	Appropriate Challenges	Appropriate Reward

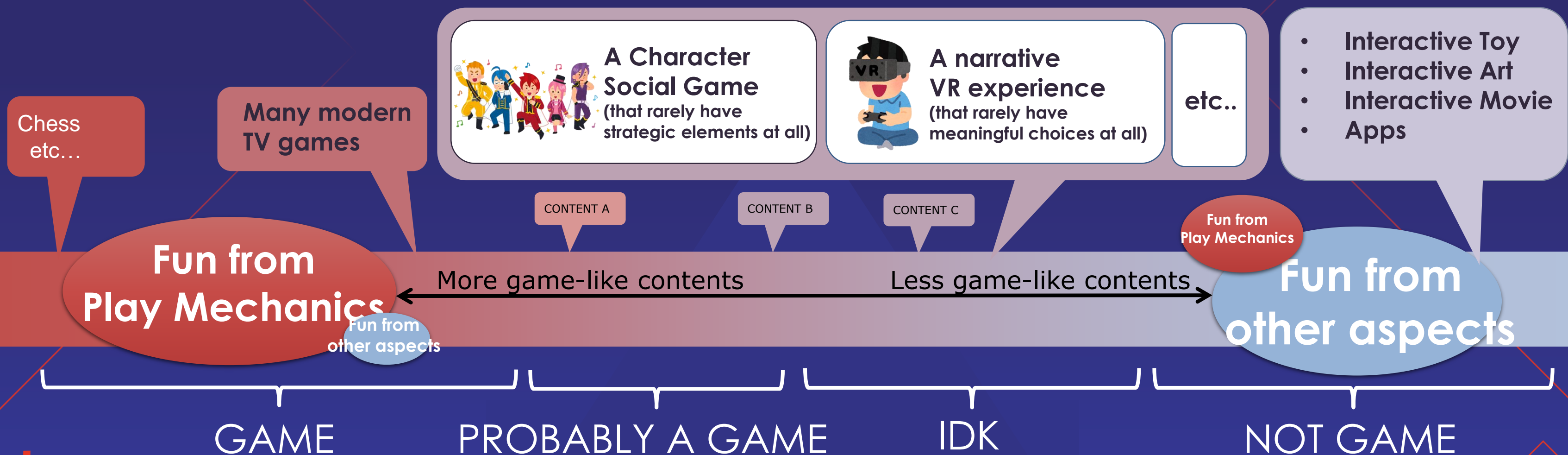# Play mechanics = A quality that makes a game a game

- **Interactive Toy**
- **Interactive Art**
- **Interactive Movie**
- **Apps**

**Fun from
Play Mechanics**

Fun from
other aspects

Boundaries between content genres have become vague

Chess etc…

Many modern TV games

A Character Social Game
(that rarely have strategic elements at all)

A narrative VR experience
(that rarely have meaningful choices at all)

etc..

- Interactive Toy
- Interactive Art
- Interactive Movie
- Apps

CONTENT A

CONTENT B

CONTENT C

Fun from Play Mechanics

Fun from Play Mechanics

Fun from other aspects

Fun from other aspects

More game-like contents
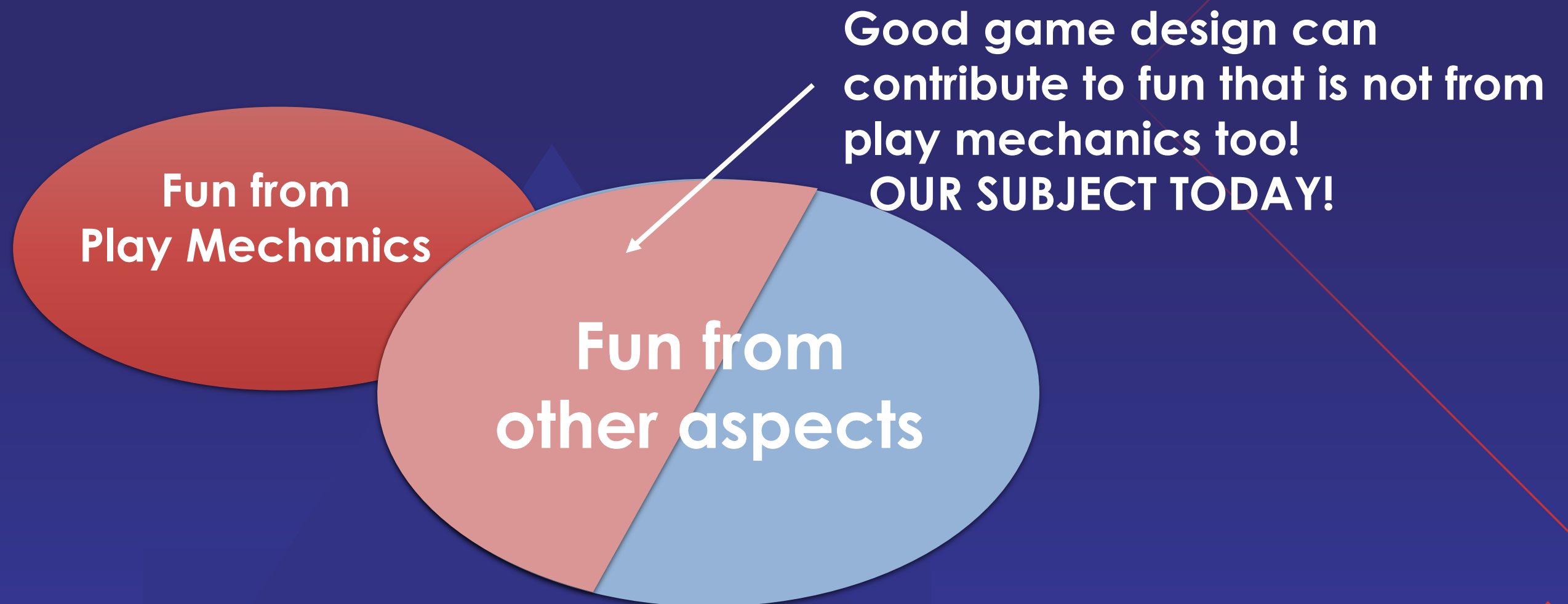
Less game-like contents

GAME

PROBABLY A GAME

IDK

NOT GAME

No matter if you call them "game" or not, It's a game designer's job to design them anyway!

What's your game/content's fun balance like?

Fun from Play Mechanics | Fun from other aspects

Fun From Play Mechanics | Fun from other aspects

Fun From Play Mechanics | Fun from other aspects

A Character Social Game (that rarely have strategic elements at all)

A narrative VR experience (that rarely have meaningful choices at all)

etc..

CONTENT A

CONTENT B

CONTENT C

- Interactive Toy
- Interactive Art
- Interactive Movie
- Apps

Chess etc…

Many modern TV games

Fun from Play Mechanics

Fun from Play Mechanics | Fun from other aspects

More game-like contents ⟷ Less game-like contents

Fun from Play Mechanics | Fun from other aspects

Game Design is more than Play Mechanics Design

Fun from Play Mechanics

Good game design can contribute to fun that is not from play mechanics too!
OUR SUBJECT TODAY!

Fun from other aspects

Our Goals Today

Our goals are **not** to learn that we don't need good play mechanics
but to learn how to see other values games could possess and learn how to enhance them,

because you will need it someday.

What do people do with ice cream?

to Eat

"to eat" means we should design ice cream that maximize taste.

to Eat

"to eat" means we should design ice cream that maximize taste.

What if we define another VERB
that people would do with ice cream?

Let's say… to Instagram!

To Instagram...?

To Instagram…?

VERB

Good designer can balance visual and flavor… however…

What if we put all we have for the VERB to Instagram?

What if we care about the appearance more or equal to its flavor?

To Instagram

This what you can get
when you focus to one value.
In this case "to Instagram"

Note: we are not discussing whether ice-cream should prioritize
looks than tastes. It's just a process for a new perspective.

New VERB = New Value

New Value = New Design Approach

What do people do with game?

To play?

Then you need good mechanics of play!

What if there are verbs other than to PLAY that people do with games?

VERBS

What you can do with a game

Relatively
high awareness
to designers

| to PLAY |

Requires good
play mechanics

| ???? |
| ???? |
| ???? |
| ???? |
| ???? |
| ???? |

Doesn't always
require
good game
mechanics.

Relatively
low awareness
to designers

to EXPLORE

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE
MARCH 18–22, 2019 | #GDC19

Make it countable!

Itemization & Visualization
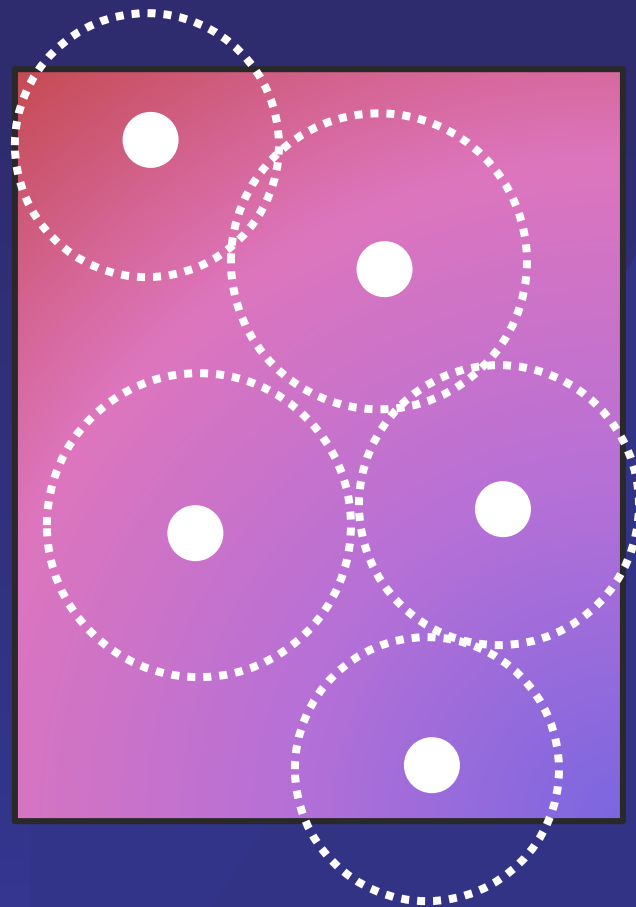
Motivation might change
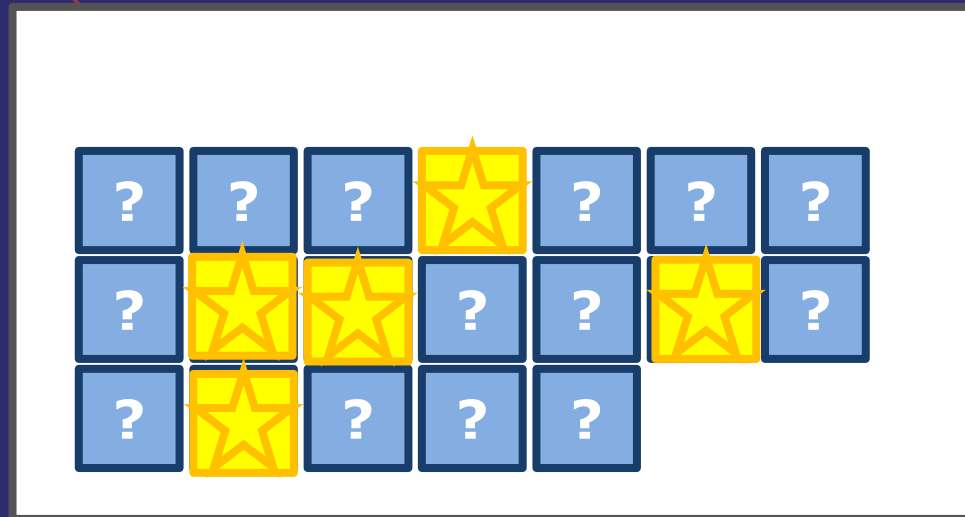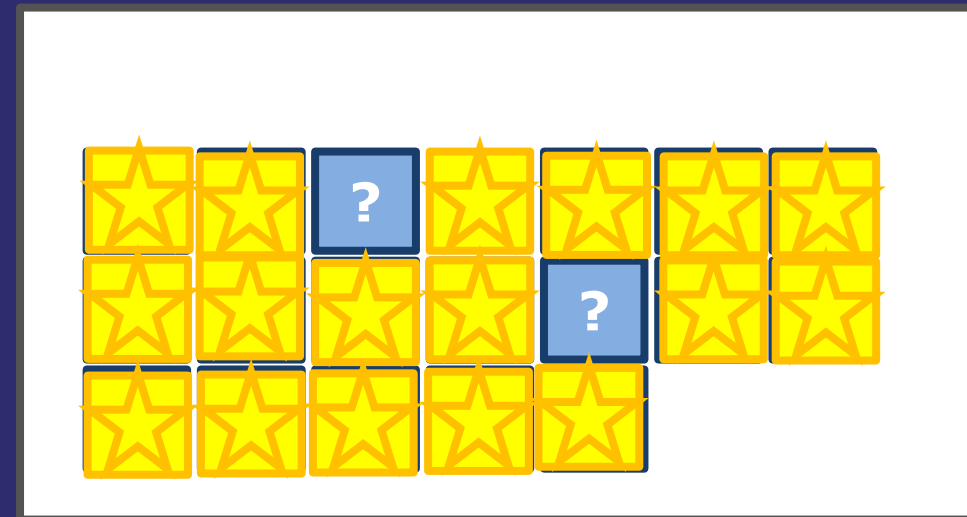
**Exploration for
the sake of exploration**

VS

**Exploration for
the sake of completion**

= to PLAY
(requires good play mechanics)

Takeaways

Exploring is fun in itself.

- **Can we use itemization and visualization to add value to the exploration?**

- **How do we use the sense of completion to urge the players to explore more?**

What you can do with a game

Relatively
high awareness
to designers

Relatively
low awareness
to designers

to PLAY	Requires good play mechanics
to EXPLORE	• Exploring experience is fun in itself. • Can we use itemization and visualization to add value to the exploration? • How do we use the sense of completion to urge the players to explore more?
????	
????	
????	
????	
????	

Doesn't always require good game mechanics.

The value of role-playing

Through being a character,

You savor the characters and their interactions, also the world and the story itself.

Two Types of Role-Playing

Being You
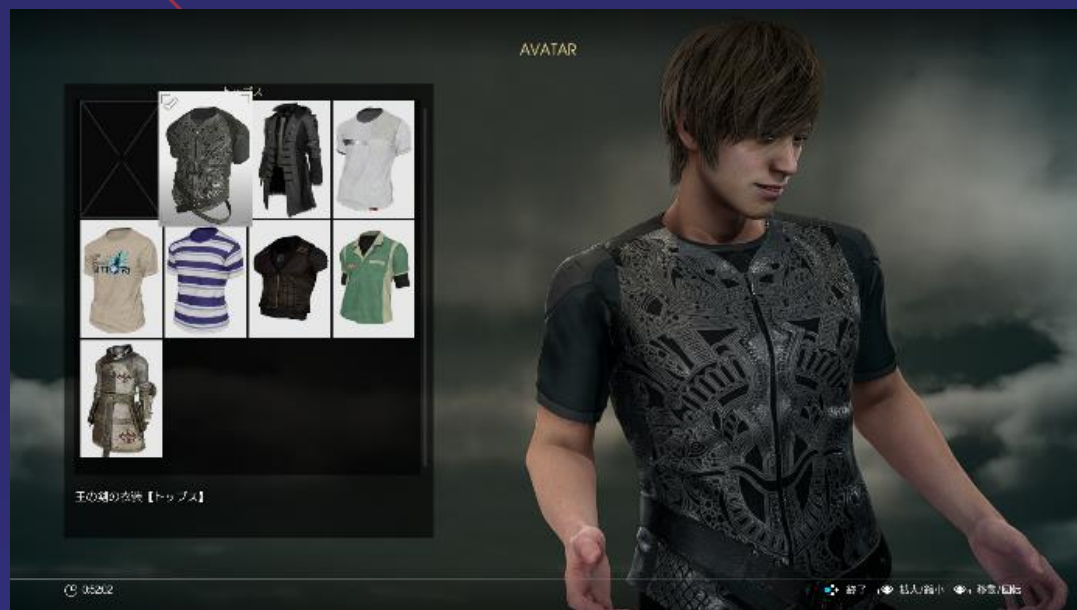
UNNAMED CHARACTER ROLE PLAYING

Being Him/Her

NAMED CHARACTER ROLE PLAYING

Be very clear about that in the design!

"Being You" Role-playing Design

Leaving room & allow chances for player to **express** their thoughts/personality

In contrary, provide **a concrete role** and situation for player to act.
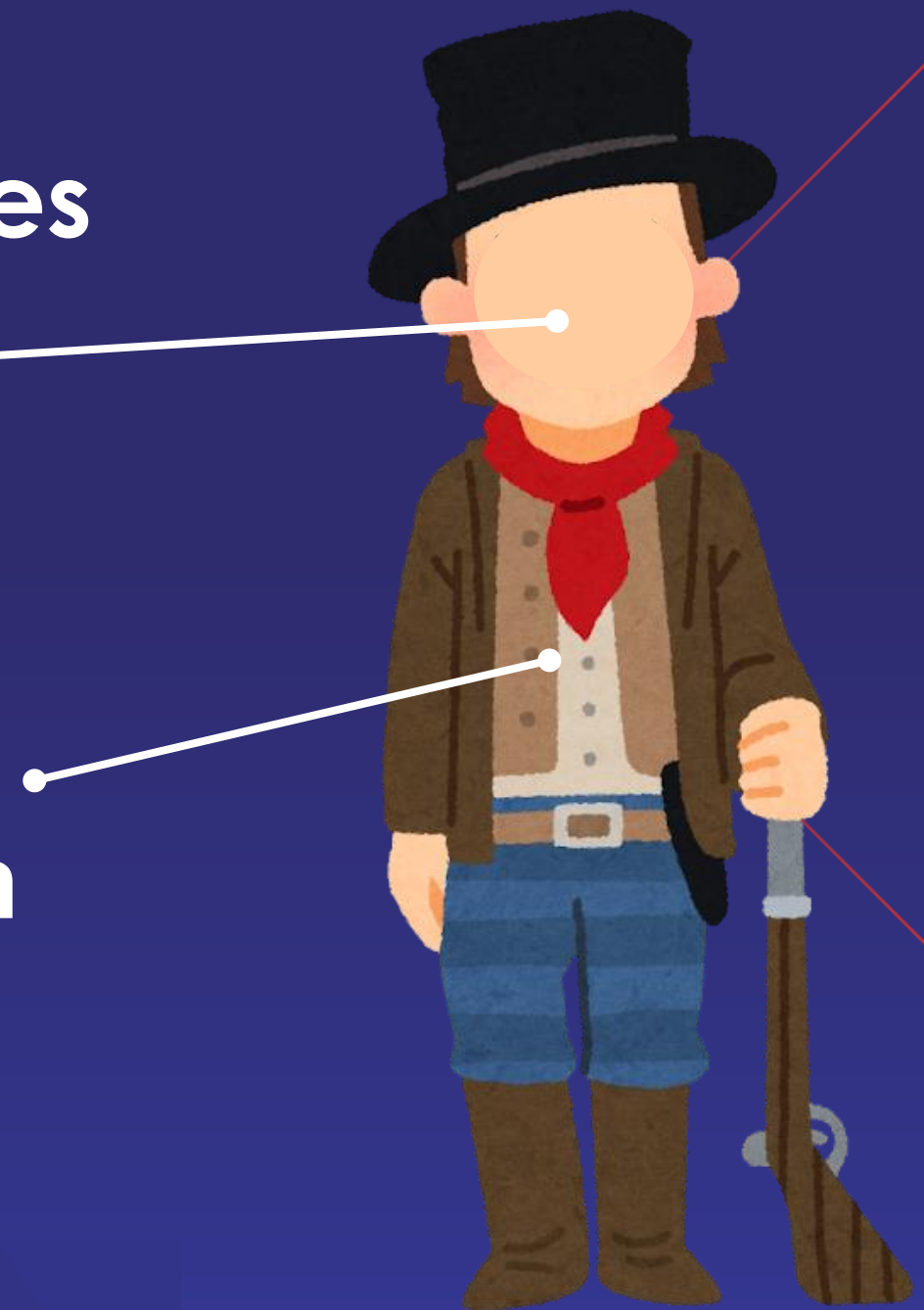
"Being Him/Her" Role-Playing Design

For the player to be able to act as a character, make sure the users know what the character would do

Start with stereotype.
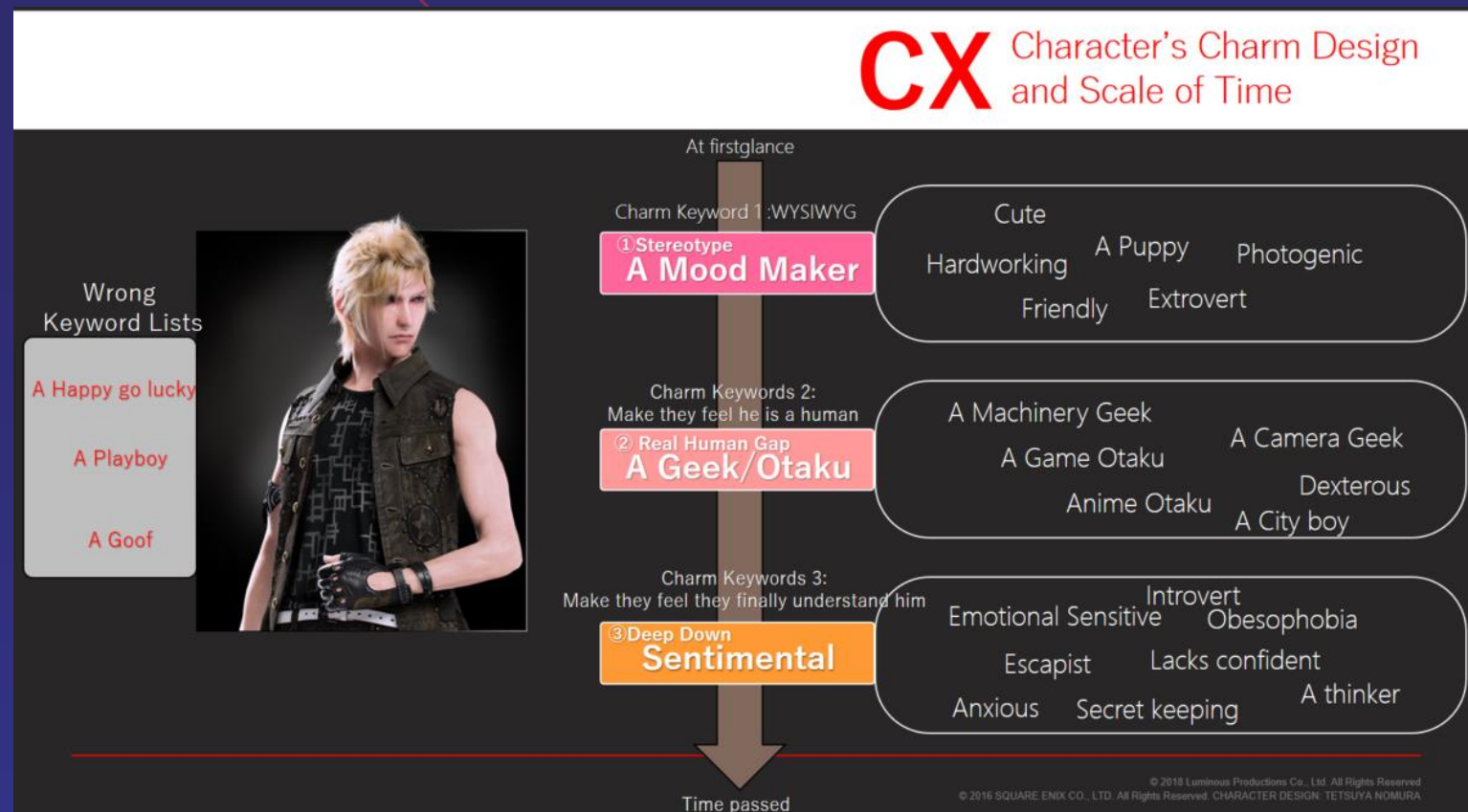
See more in my talk about
CX (Character Exp) Based Game Design
in GDC 2018 lecture:

WALK TALL MY FRIENDS
Giving Life to AI-Buddies in FINAL FANTASY XV

Available in GDC Vault

Projection Switching

Don't allow unnecessary freedom to let the player be what the character wouldn't be

Projection switching

Narrative-oriented part: tends to be the character

Parts with more freedom: tends to be themselves
(or the director)

Takeaways

Role-playing is fun in itself.

- How do we define a concrete role for the player to act?

- How do we make a game
  that allow users to express themselves
  without making conflict with the given character settings?

What you can do with a game

Relatively **high awareness** to designers

Relatively **low awareness** to designers

to PLAY — Requires good play mechanics

to EXPLORE
- Exploring experience is fun in itself.
- Can we use itemization and visualization to add value to the exploration?
- How do we use the sense of completion to urge the players to explore more?

to ROLE-PLAY
- Role-playing is fun in itself.
- How do we make a game that allow users to express themselves without making conflict with the given character settings, while make sure it is special than their every day's life?

????

????

????

????

Doesn't always require good game mechanics.

Turn users into creators

≠

Turn users into designer

Method of Creation

Creation could be simple

To customize a character
To customize an environment
To customize a scene

...
To take a picture
To draw a picture
To write something
To name something
To dance etc.
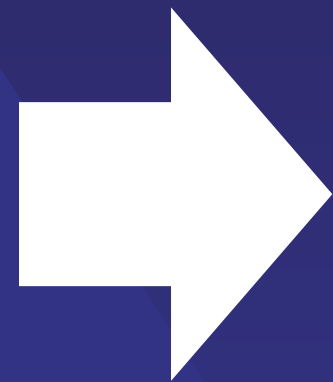
And to share

The TRAP

"Hey, I've added
a screenshot + selfie system
into the game, so that's it, right?"

Player's Greatest Creation

to CREATE

Turn play experience
into something the player could share.

Prompto's Facebook:
How A Buddy-AI
Auto-snapshots
your Adventure in FFXV

Available in GDC Vault

Takeaways

Creation is fun in itself.

- Can we find the way to allow player to have that fun in our game?

- Can we have the way for them to share their creations?

- For those players that do not care about creations, can we change their game experience into creation for them to share?

What you can do with a game

VERBS

Relatively **high awareness** to designers

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to CREATE
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Doesn't always require good game mechanics.

to COMMUNICATE

The TRAP

To talk and to socialize is fun in itself!

…is it?

The TRAP

No, communication is sometimes fun,
But most of the time, a pain, when it is forced.

Nurturing & Prank

**Instead of verbal communication
make good use of instinctive communication urges**

Nurturing Encouragement

It's in the nature of people to help others.

How do we design the game to make sure that they have the right situation and right grammar to do so?

Prank Inducement

People love to prank people.

Can we propose systems that allow player to prank each other without being too obvious or painful?
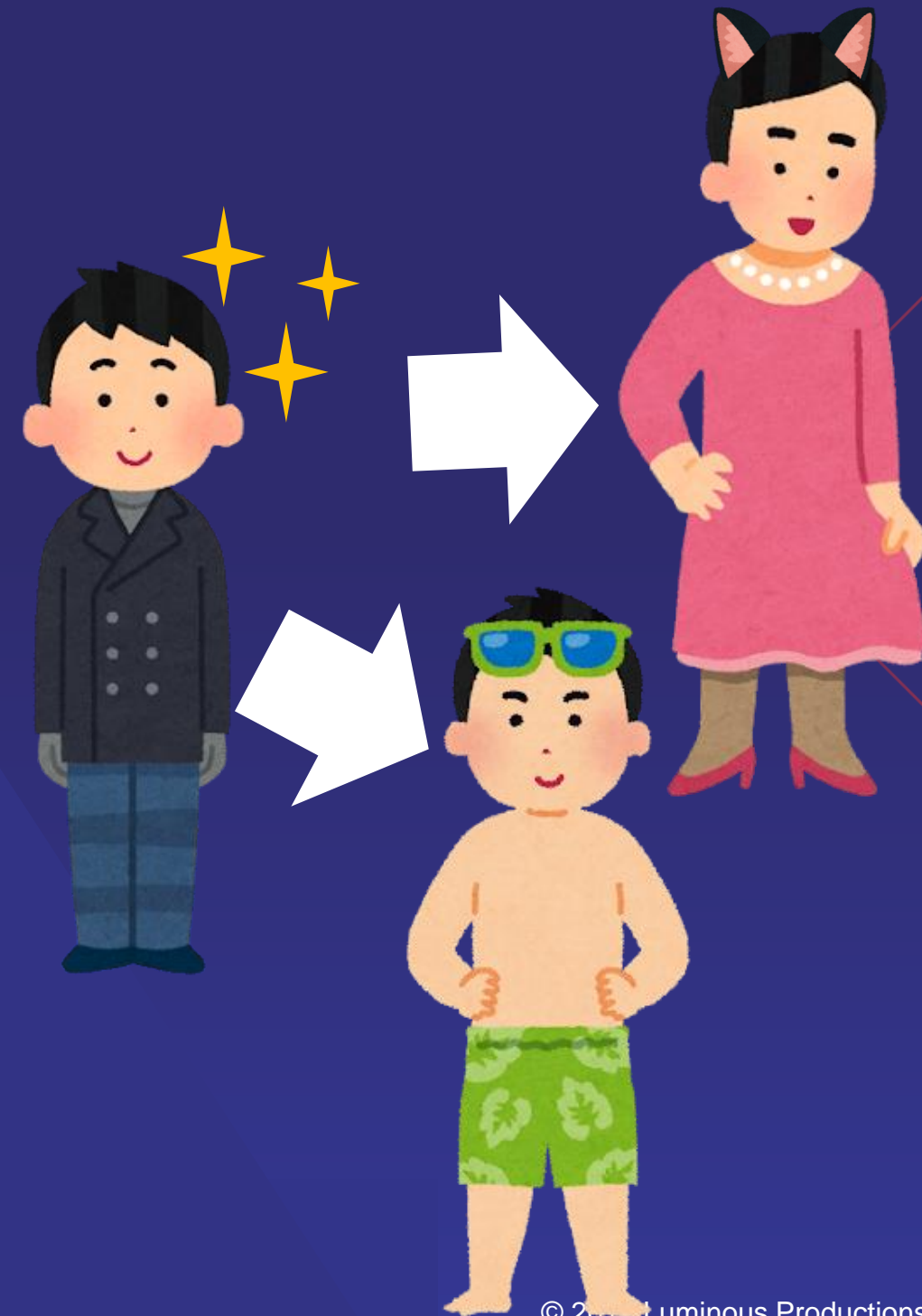
Takeaways

Communication is fun, when it's not forced.

- Can we give the right situation and the right grammar?

- Can we encourage nurturing?

- Can we subtly suggest pranking?

What you can do with a game

VERBS

Relatively **high awareness** to designers

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Relatively **low awareness** to designers

Game as a sport

A game that is not only fun to play but game that is fun to watch.

The TRAP

"I don't make an esports game so this does not concern me!"

Takeaways

Live streaming has become
a new standard for users
to enjoy the game in general,
not only for esports.

- Can we turn users into streamers?

- How do we make a game that is
fun to stream and watch?

What you can do with a game

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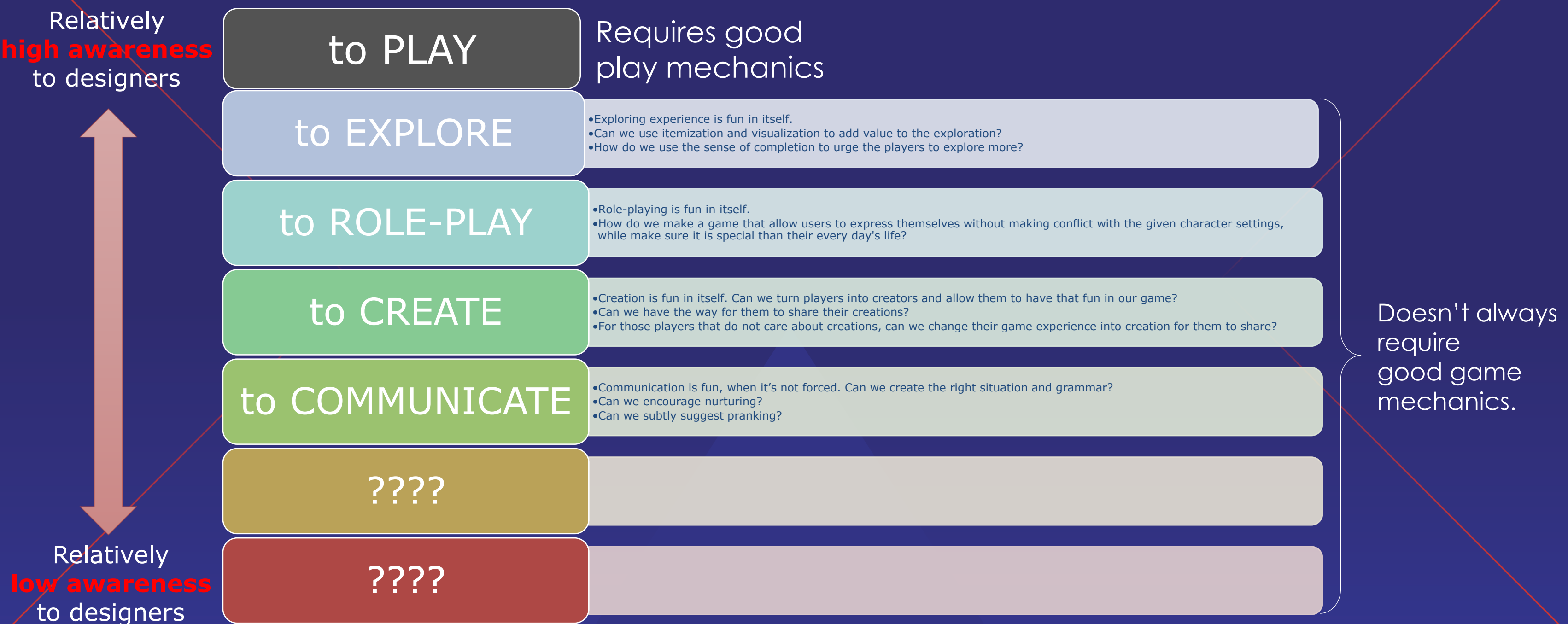
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to BROADCAST
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- Can we turn users into streamer?
- How do we make a game that is fun to stream and watch?

????

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Face the Fandom

Fanfiction, Fanart, Doujinshi, Fangame,
these are the creations created by fandom of the game.
And the fan creation process is fun in itself.

Game that
has many fans

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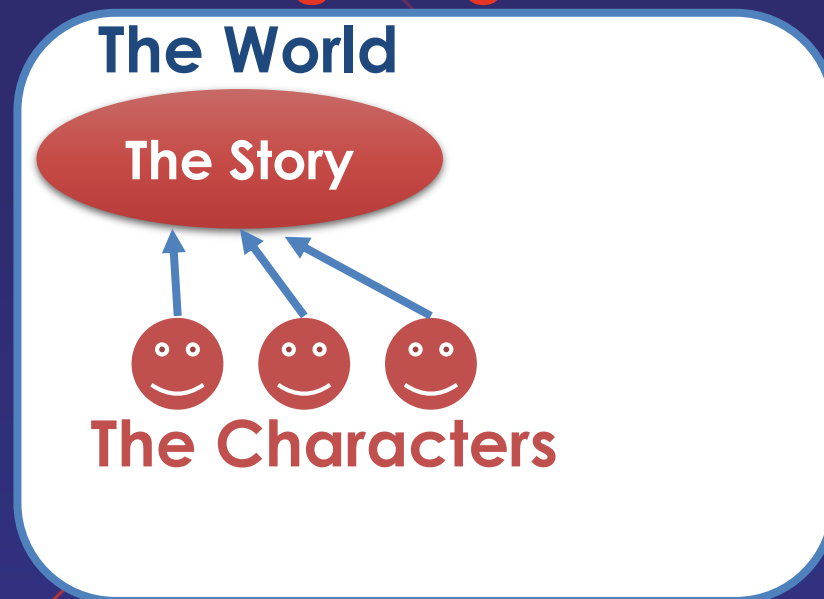
Game that
has many fan creation

What do fans create?

Characters are a story machine!

The original game
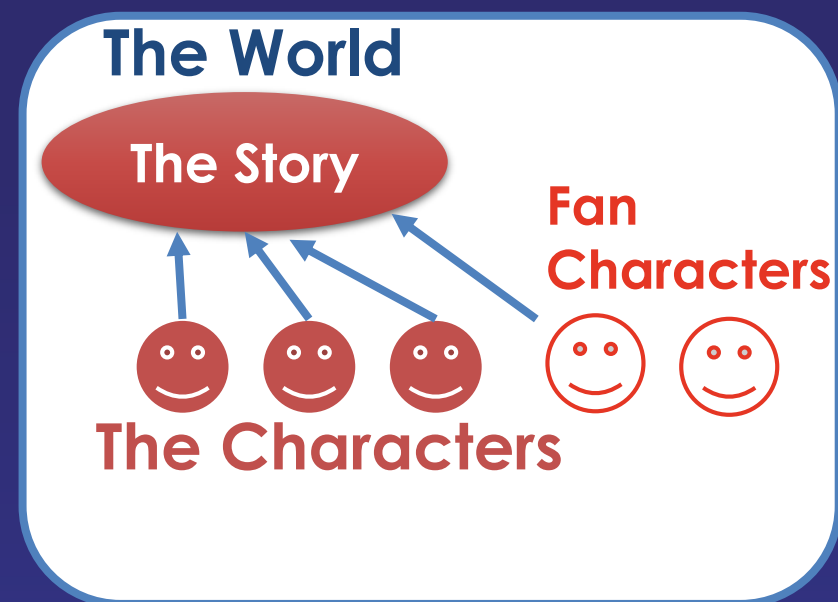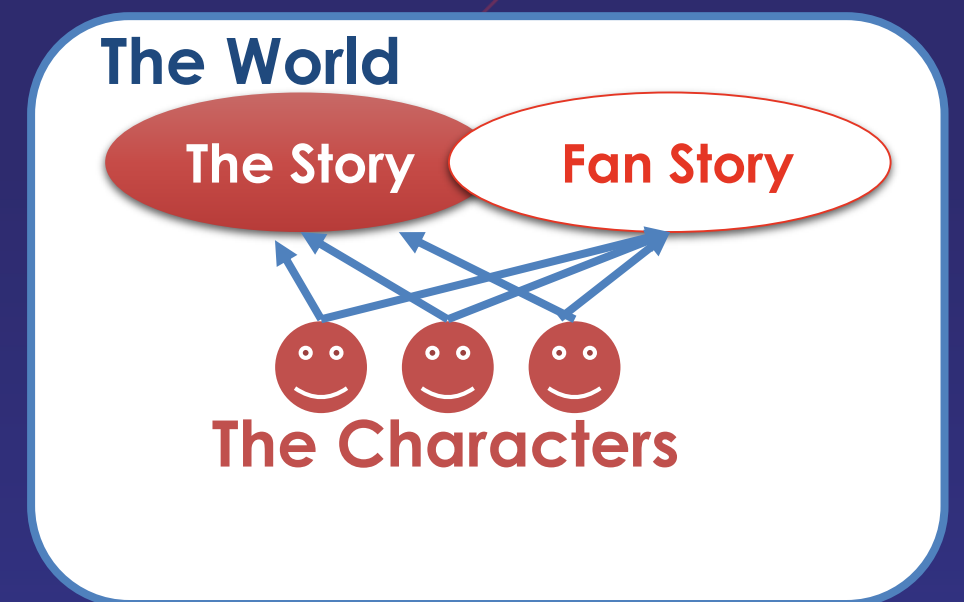
The World

The Story

The Characters

UNLIKELY TO HAPPEN

The World

The Story

Fan Characters

The Characters

LIKELY TO HAPPEN

The World

The Story   Fan Story

The Characters

Make sure you create
the character they care about

Caring creates wish
Wish creates inspriration

to FAN CREATE

Feeling:

Wish:

| Love | | Wish for his/her happiness | Wish others love him/her too |

The character they care about →

| Hate | → | Wish for his/her unhappiness | Wish others hate him/her too | → | Inspiration |

| Curiosity | | Wish to learn Wish for analysis | Wish to spread what they learned |

↓
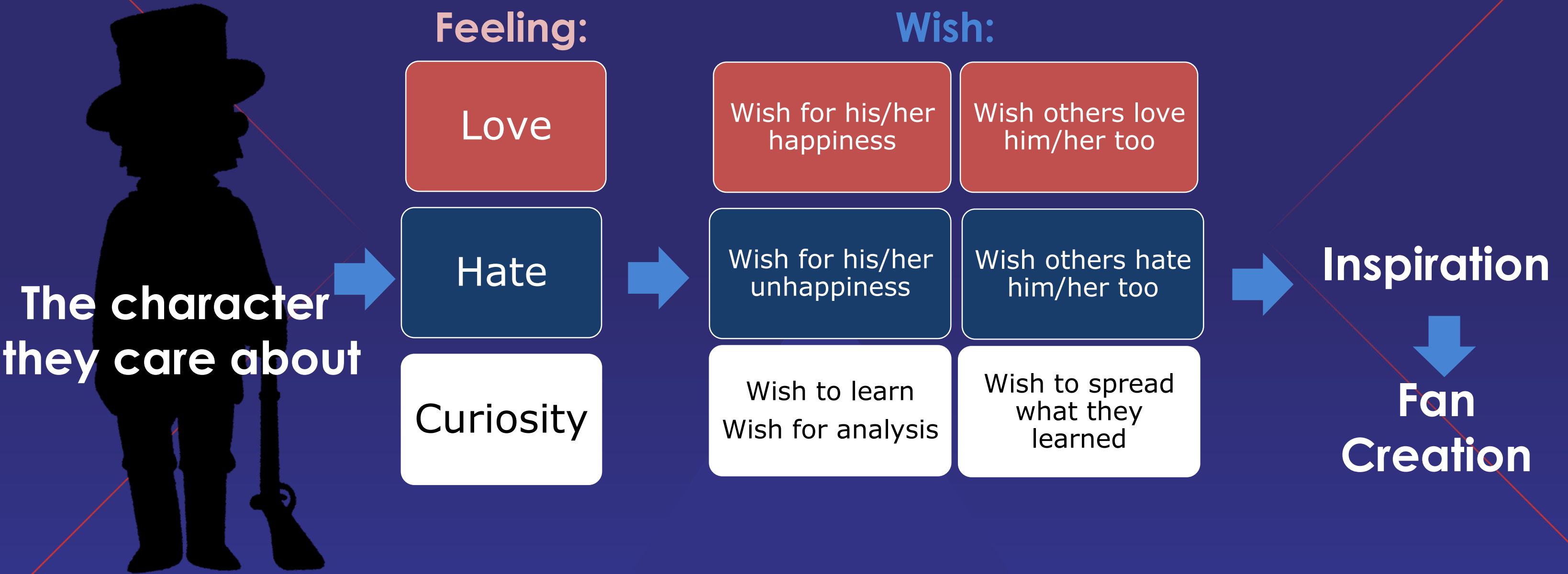
Fan Creation

"WISH" is the best inspiration for fan creation.

Takeaways

Being a fan itself is fun.
And it is even more fun to create a new thing inspired by the game.

- Since characters are the energy source for the fandom;
  can we make sure we create the characters the users will care?

- Can we create their wishes for the characters?

VERBS

other than to PLAY

What you can do with a game

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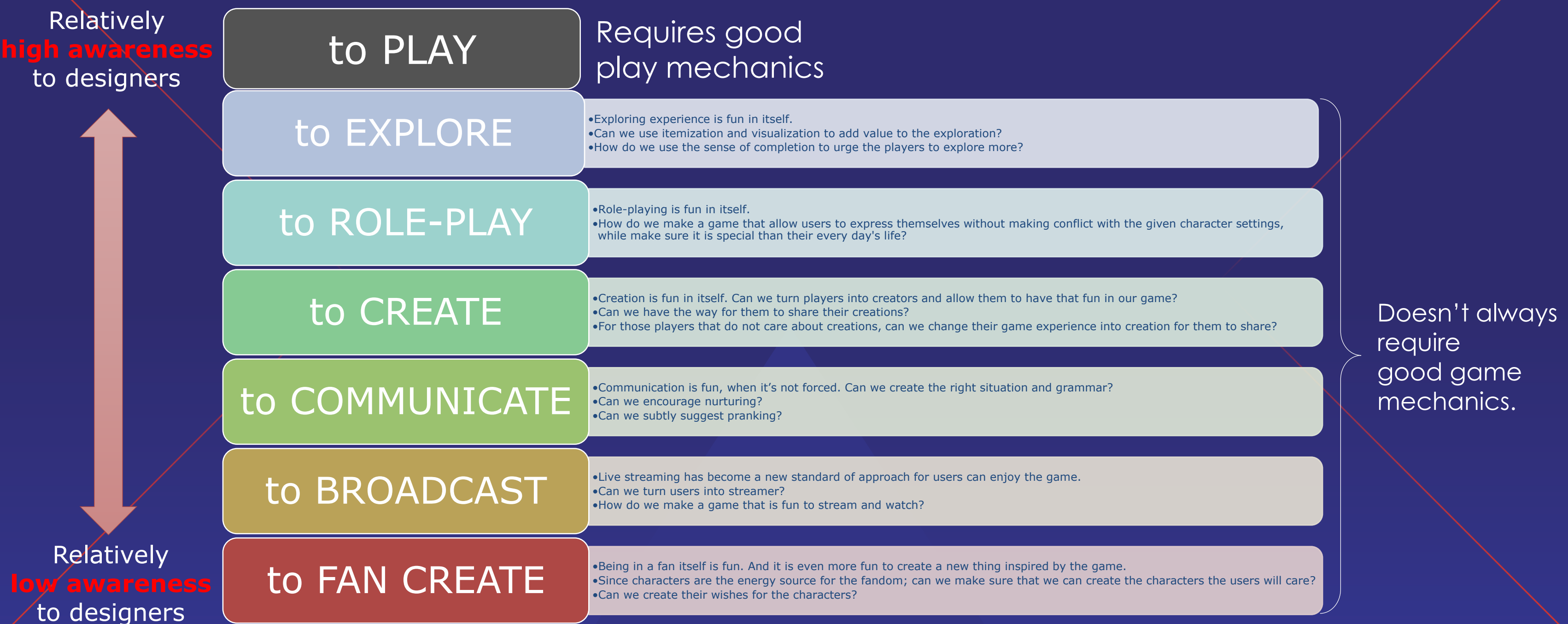|	
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to FAN CREATE	•Being in a fan itself is fun. And it is even more fun to create a new thing inspired by the game. •Since characters are the energy source for the fandom; can we make sure that we can create the characters the users will care? •Can we create their wishes for the characters?

Doesn't always require good game mechanics.

The Last Trap

The Last TRAP

The Last TRAP

You can't possibly please everyone with one content!

Focus on your target audience, Maximize their game experience!

Sell the right game to the right people!

Users' Expectations Control

Don't let the user expect and be disappointed by what we can't give them.

What's your game/content's fun balance like?

Fun from Play Mechanics
Fun from other aspects

Fun From Play Mechanic *other aspects*

Fun From Play Mechanics
Fun from other aspects

What's the fun balance your users expect your game/content's to be?

Fun from Play Mechanics
Fun from other aspects

Fun From Play Mechanic *other aspects*

Fun From Play Mechanics
Fun from other aspects

Can we make a good game without good play mechanics?

YES,

depends on the content you make and your users' expectations too.

Play mechanic is a super powerful tool, but to rely only on it will limit the possibilities of what your game could be.

Let's be a game creator who knows how to make good games with both good play mechanics and other approaches too.

GDC

Can We Make A Good Game
Without Good Play Mechanics?

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And your users' expectations too.

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