



March 20-24, 2023
San Francisco, CA

Caring for Togetherness: Nurturing **Hybridity** in Game Communities

Bingjie Yu

UX Researcher, ThunderFire UX

#GDC23



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exclusive events!

38,845 Online 210,200 Members

▼ Outline

Background

Dimensions

Hybridising

Nurturing

Takeaway

Hello! I am Bingjie Yu

UX Researcher in Communities @ThunderFireUX

Previously

Academia

HCI

UK

Currently

Industry

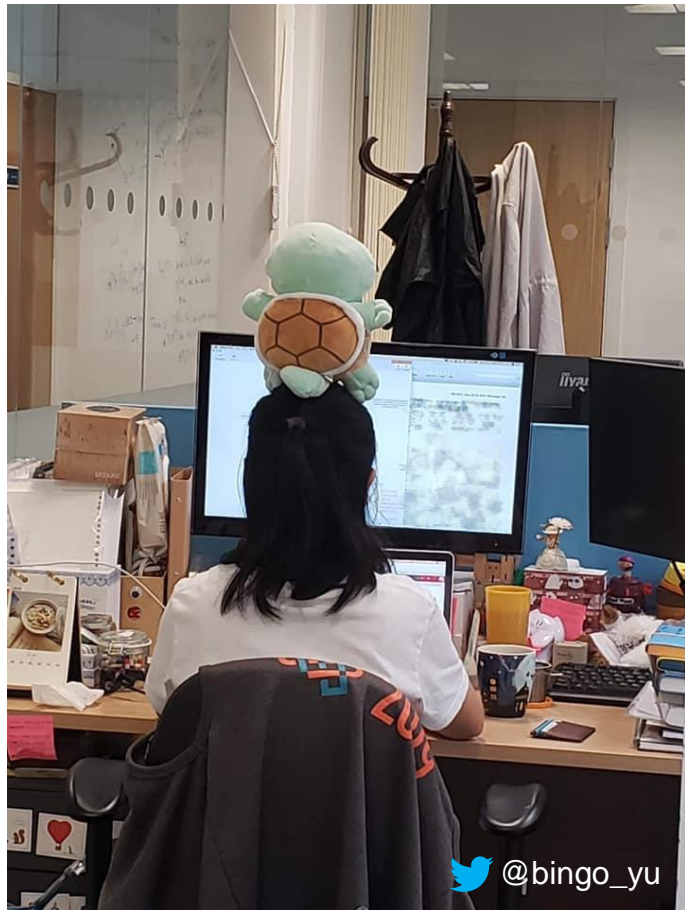
Games

China

CARE as a lens to investigate normative processes in

Online Communities

Game Communities



@bingo_yu

The first time we participated in an online community?

A 14yo moderator me

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My 1st online community – **VaeCN** (2006)

- Fan-based BBS (*Discuz!* generation)

“Because of one person, start loving one group of people”

Fan Club Admin	Moderator
Organize events	Announcements/events
Group buys	Moderate BBS/IMs
Handle benefits/budgets	Curate the space

It's hybrid from the first beginning!!





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ThunderFire UX: Player Community Research

Working with the NARAKA:BLADEPOINT Community

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Objective(s)

- Bring in players together and form a better community

NARAKA: BLADEPOINT

- PC Release: August 2021
- Xbox Series X/S: Jun 23, 2022
- Xbox One: Dec 22, 2022 🎄



Yongcheng Liu @yongcheng_liu · Jun 13, 2022

Thanks for Microsoft and XBOX !

NARAKA: BLADEPOINT launch on June 23, 2022

Our team developed this for 173 days! Great job!



14



Yongcheng Liu @yongcheng_liu · Dec 14, 2022

December 22nd! 🎄

The Xbox One you've all been waiting for is almost here! Our team is working overtime to test the Xbox One version and hope to bring it to you soon! 🎄



16 49 281

Outline

1. Dimensions of Hybridity

1.1 Cross-Culture

1.2 Cross-Line: Fuzzy Boundary between Online and Offline

1.3 Cross-Platform: Bringing Players Together from Various Platforms

2. Hybridising Community: Doors, Corridors and Tables

3. Nurturing Diversity and Sustainability in Hybrid Game Communities

3.1 Seek for Common Ground while Reserving Differences

3.2 Micro/Meta Management for Hybrid Communities

3.3 Tools and Technologies with Hybridity in Mind

4. Summary and Takeaway



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Wdym hybrid community?

Communities with hybrid elements

Online Community is a group of people who interact in a virtual environment. They have a **purpose**, are supported by **technology**, and are guided by **norms** and **policies** (Preece, 2000).

Hybrid communities are communities that support **mixed attributes** crossing various dimensions

- online/offline
- video/voice/text
- Cultures
- Platforms
- Games

Metaphors

*“Let's say like almost like a **study group** where like you study stuff together, but you also play together. right?”*

*“It is like when you had your **first sleep over**. The joy and relief you feel when you enter that room. ”*

*“It feels like a **circle of friends**. It's like belonging to an **insider club** or something like that. ”*

Metaverse?





Togetherness



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Togetherness?

the feeling of being **friendly** and **close** with other people





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Togetherhness!

the feeling of being friendly and close with other people

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▲ Crossplay NARAKA Community Tournament cast by @dakuvt & @ImSavier



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Caring for Togetherness

Questions about togetherness in hybrid game communities



Q1: What are the **dimensions** hybrid game communities could expand to?



Q2: As community carers, how can we support building more **inclusive**, **transparent**, and **sustainable** hybrid game communities?



Q3: What does hybridizing game communities mean for both players and developers? What challenges will it bring to the game industry?



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X-Culture

X-Line

X-Platform

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Takeaway



Cross-Culture

Players from different culture background in the same community, they may also speak different languages.



Cross-Line

Communities with social activities online and offline, or, hybrid.



Cross-Platform

Communities with players from different platforms.





▼ Outline

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★ X-Culture

X-Line

X-Platform

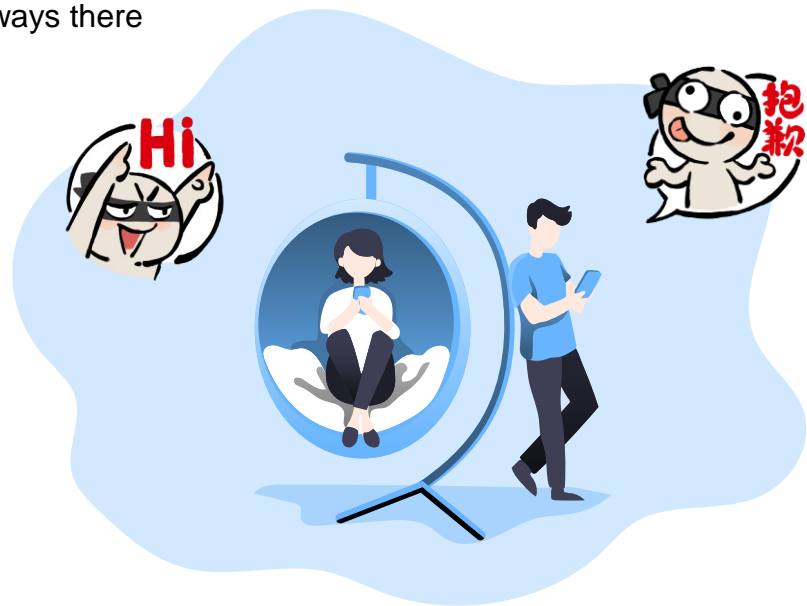
Hybridising

Nurturing

Takeaway

Cross Culture: Challenges

Language barrier is always there



*We were always looking for a third person to play with, because it was just me and P32. So every time we play trios and teammate was like an **English speaking player** who was also someone that we felt like we could play well with we would just invite them to the server.*

——P31, Founder of an NA NARAKA Clan



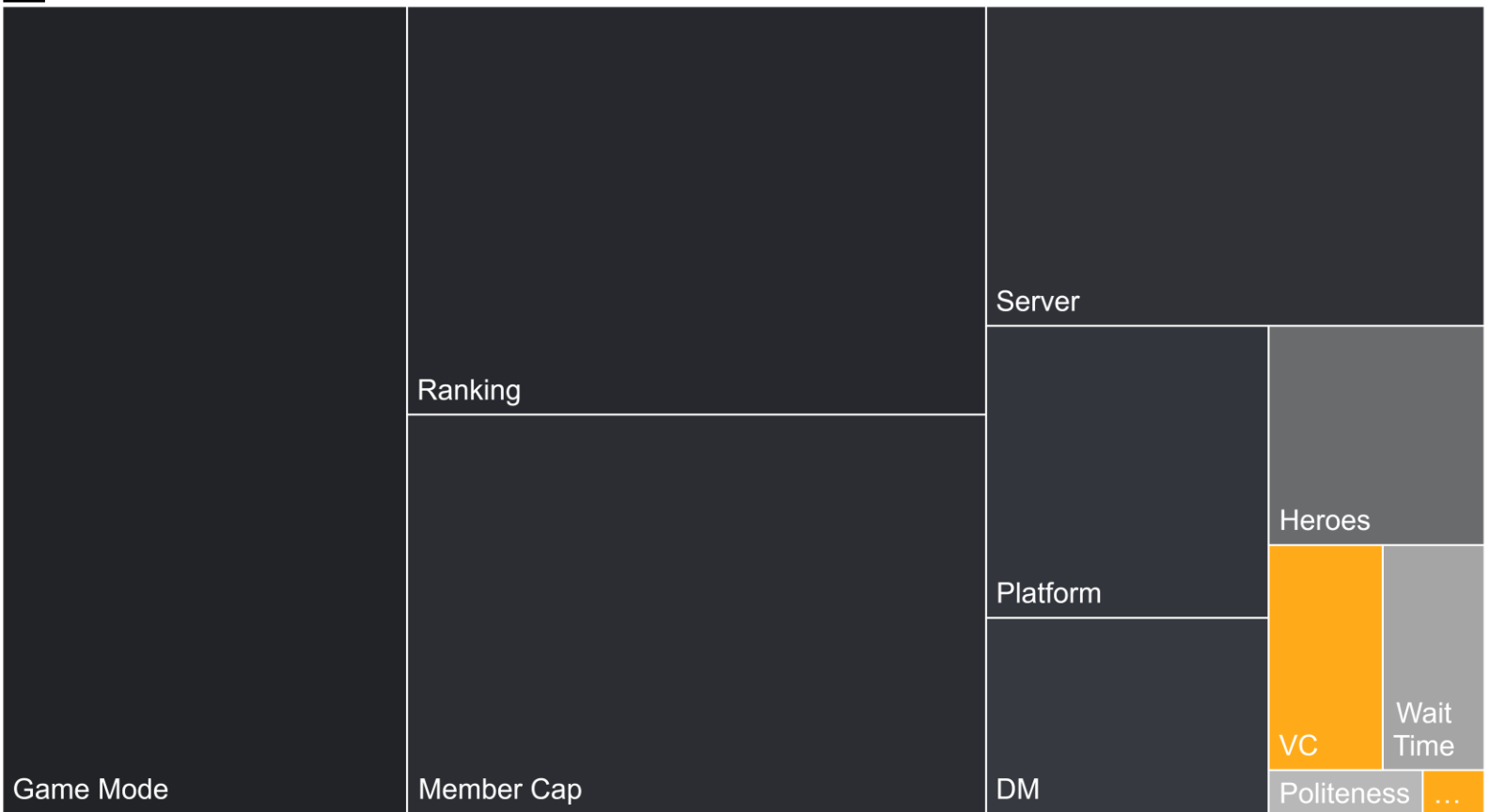
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Cross Culture: Challenges

LFG Requests from Xbox Players in our Discord





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Cross Culture: Challenges

Language barrier, and more



▲ A Submission for our Discord Meme Contest

*Most of the time I was playing the game alone, so sometimes I'd rather not communicate with random teammates (because of **language problem** and **noisiness**).*

——P52, Malaysian player, speaks both English & Chinese



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Cross Culture

Bringing Players with Different Culture Backgrounds Together

1. Please try to keep your message in the correct channel, so as to avoid the confusion from other players.
2. Use ENGLISH ONLY, except for channels that are stated for other languages.
3. Do not share others personal information or pictures without consent.
4. Do not share information about account



Naraka Bladepoint [JP] 公式



NARAKA:BLADEPOINT for Xbox @NarakaXbox · 14 Sep 2022

★ Das my 🙌🏻



Yongcheng Liu @yongcheng_liu · 8 Sep 2022

When your cat 🐱 grab your controller and try to play your game #NarakaXbox

1 2 18 11 1



One Language

- Support one language only.
- Identified by rules, names, or norms

Prime Language

- A primary language is picked
- Other languages also welcome
- Usually managed by norms

Multi-Languages

- General + language specific space
- Staffs for prime + each language



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Community w/ **One Language Enforced**

Raising the entering bar but less management burden

Support one language only

- Identified in group names or community rules
- Other language players mostly blocked at the “searching and filtering” stage

Entering Bar



Management Cost



有人玩吗，这不是
永劫无间吗
我很菜
等我去个厕所
好家伙

Thought this server
is **English only**?
#rules

English only plz

Okok
I use Google Translate
jajajajaja



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Takeaway

Community w/ **Primary Language Encouraged**

“You may also speak the other languages, but we appreciate this one.”

- Pick one primary language, other languages are also welcome
- Usually managed by community norms

*I will Cast **in German**, but **if someone have question in English** i answer them in English , so everyone is Welcome*

—— *A Partner Streamer of NARAKA: BLADEPOINT*



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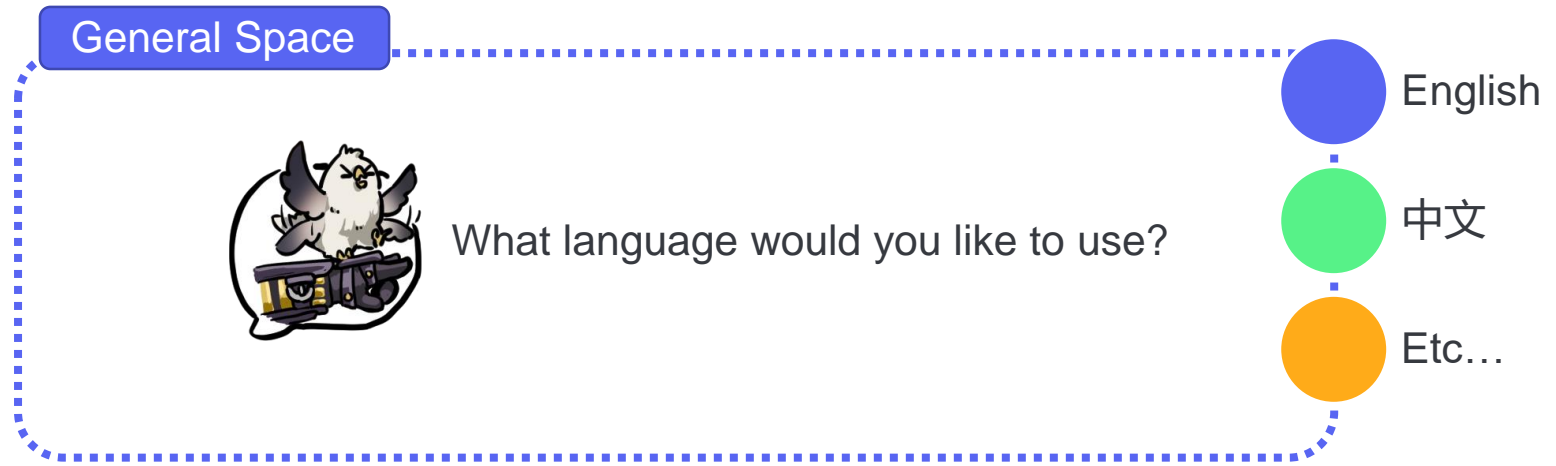
Nurturing

Takeaway

Community w/ **Multi-Languages Supported**

1+N languages

- General space + language-specific channels
- Usually have more than 1 side-language communities
- Activities highly depending on the moderation or local community





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Cross-Line

Online VS. Offline

- Fuzzy boundary between online and offline
- Moderation arena expand to offline



I am going to visit your site one day.

——someone random

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Cross-Line

Varies between platforms

PID	Group type	Member size	Time with the group
PLT-Frodo+	card games	>2,000	1+ years
PLT-007+	student society*	250	3 years
PLT-JS+	card games	2,500	4 years
PLT-Fred+	academics*	75	11 months
PLT-Biscuit+	politics*	150	1 month
PLT-KC+	games	200	?
P01	research & conference*	3,000	1 year
P02	buying & selling	3,500	4 years
P03+	culture	26,000	>5 years
P04+	sports group*	2,000	8-9 years
P05	pet	5,000	3 weeks
P06+	sports*	2,000	2-4 years
P07	food & recipes	13,000	2-3 years
P08	courses	200*	1.5 years
Chris+	political discussions*	350	3-4 years
P10 ^{PLT-Biscuit}	politics*	300	8 months
P11	guide dogs & health	5,000 & 14,000	2-3 years
P12+	university sports club*	133	3 years
P13+ ^{PLT-Fred}	cultural and musical*	50	8 years
P14	memes	660K	1.5 years
Charlotte	running*	hundreds	1 year
Frigg+	student movie club*	500	5+ years

Group information mentioned by participants during a Facebook Group study(2020, Spring), + indicates the participant is either a moderator or admin of the group; * indicates that the group associated with some off-line organizations or groups

People who are **in the committee** of the society will become moderators automatically.

——PLT-007

I don't know whether not count as official. Definitely. I think that if we started posting offensive things in there, **the university would be on it** quite quickly... We've had that just before.

——P04



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Cross-Line in NARAKA Communities

Examples with NARAKA Communities

Player communities expanding to/from offline

- Real life friends started game clan together
- Console player communities
- Esport watch parties
- Etc.

*We've **known each other for almost 10 years**, we went to college together, which is a long time now.*

——P31&P32

*Some of us are in same state so when we can we **go out to eat and go to car event/car meets**. We just started this last year that every 2 years we would go on a trip we went to edc event last year. We try to do what we can when not busy.*

——Textbook

Cross-Line

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★ X-Line

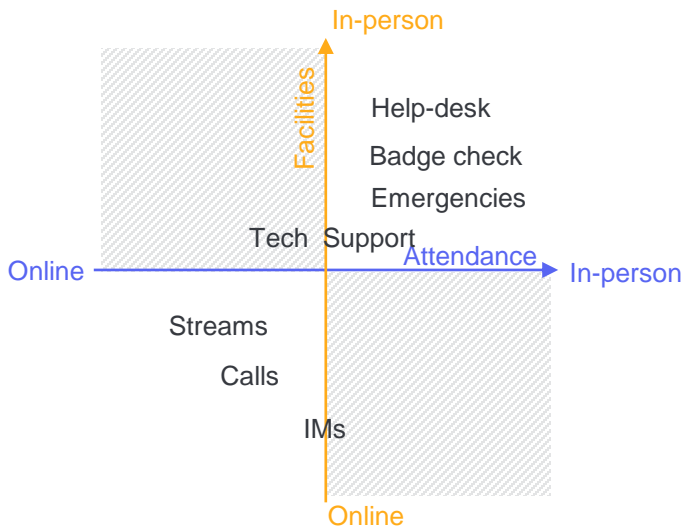
X-Platform

Hybridising

Nurturing

Takeaway

- Hybrid Community Events
- In person vs. online settings
- Management & Coordination



24 Entertainment | Chiovo 03/10/2022 17:37

Attention London and Coventry Naraka Fans 🌟!

Come and join our Viewing Party for the Shadowjade Cup Grand Finals on October 8th & 9th and win massive gifts 🎁
 At least one copy of the game as the entry rewards 🎮

More details click the links below:

October 8th Event

<https://sidequesthub.com/matchesDetail?id=446>

October 9th Event

<https://sidequesthub.com/matchesDetail?id=449>





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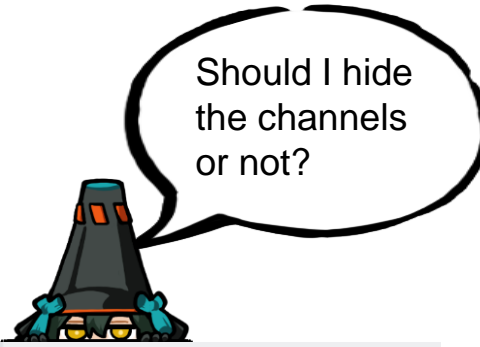
Takeaway



Cross-Platform

Bringing players together from various platforms

Member Size	Server Type	Platforms Supported				Mobile & Others
		PC	Xbox	PS	Switch	
710,245	Partner	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
282,375	Verified	✓	✓	✓		
575,528	Verified	✓	✓	✓		✓
844,845	Verified	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
266,648	Partner	✓	✓	✓	✓	
110,565	Partner	✓	✓	✓		
158,493	Partner	✓			✓	
147,197	Partner	✓	✓	✓		
61,998	Partner				✓	✓
1,000,000	Verified	✓	✓	✓		✓
270,528	Verified-ish	✓	✓	✓		✓
85,996	Partner		✓			
6,933	Partner					



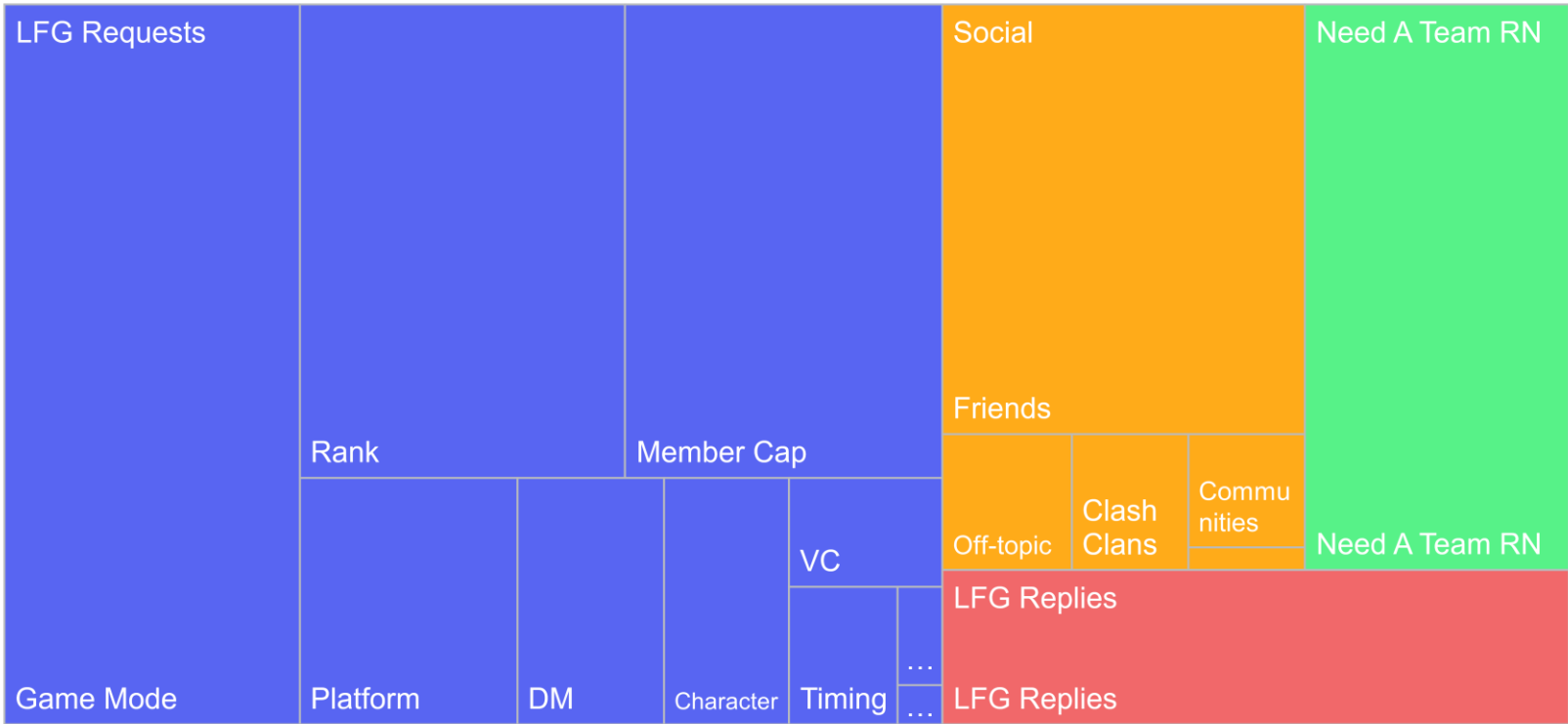
- ▼ LFG
- # showdown-lfg
 - # xbox-lfg
 - # na-server
 - # na-sa-node
 - # eu-server
 - # sea-server
 - # sea-oce-node
 - # cn-server



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Cross-Platform: Coordinating LFG Features

How to coordinate cross-platform LFG?



■ LFG Requests ■ Social ■ Need A Team RN ■ LFG Replies



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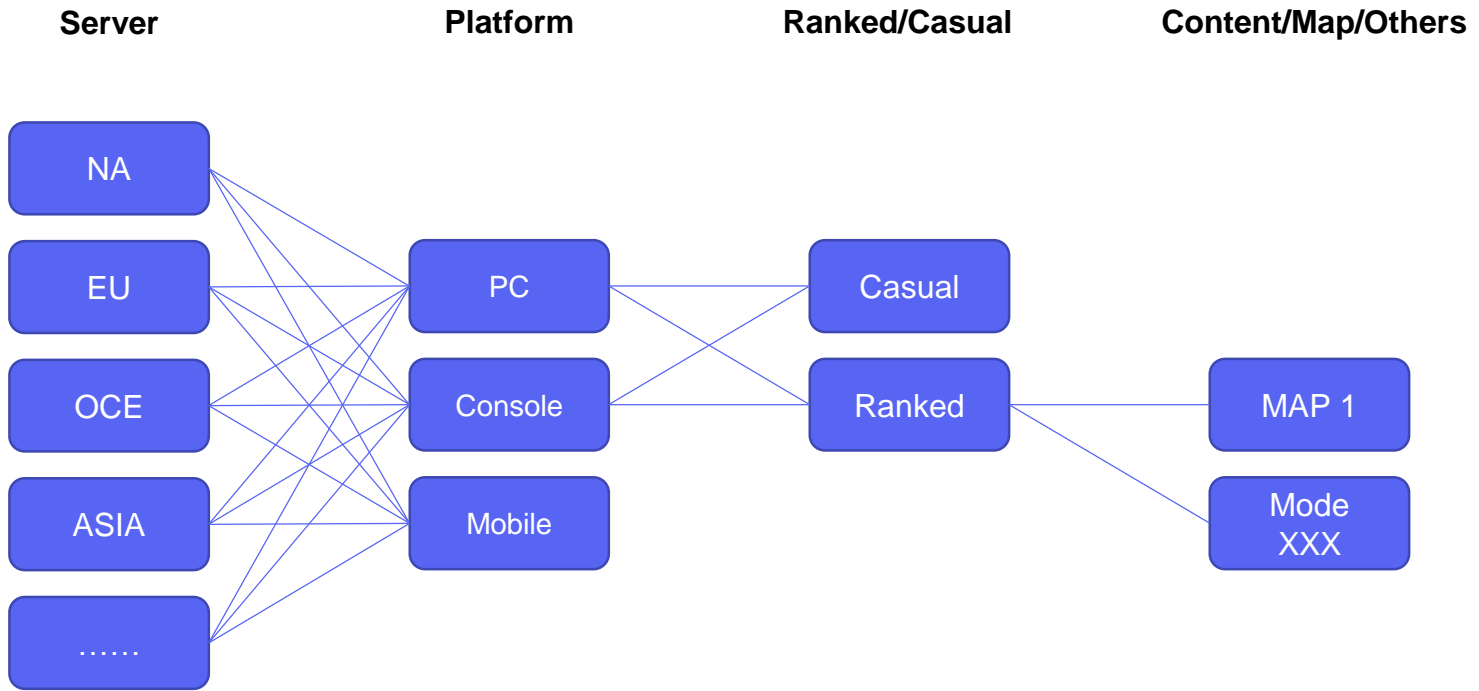
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Cross-Platform: Coordinating LFG Features

(Trying to) organize the disorganized LFG





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Doors

Corridors

Tables

Nurturing

Takeaway

Hybridizing Community

Components to consider in your community space





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Hybridizing Community

Experiences from NARAKA Xbox release

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Take NARAKA: BLADEPOINT Xbox Release as a case

- PC Release: August 2021
- **Xbox Series X/S: Jun 23, 2022**

How to welcome the Xbox players in our official Discord
ONE YEAR AFTER the community has been built?



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Hybridizing Community

Components to consider in your community



Doors

When/where to open?



Corridors

Which ones to connect?



Tables

What to reserve for?



▼ Outline

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★ Doors

Corridors

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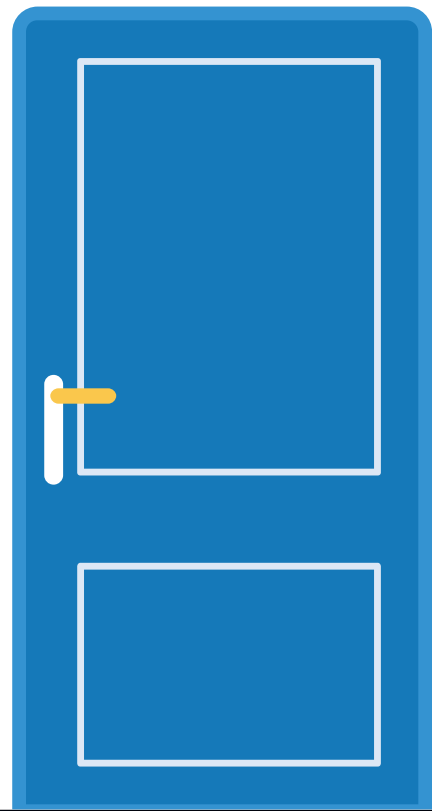
Takeaway

Hybridizing Community

Open the door and welcome the new comers



Xbox
Players



Community Members
(PC Players)

- Getting the community prepared for newcomers
- Creating a specific welcome space
- Developing and testing the norms of cross-platform game communities



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- Doors
- Corridors
- Tables
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Hybridizing Community

The corridor: make connections between spaces

General Space



Xbox Space but **NOT** hidden



Corridor

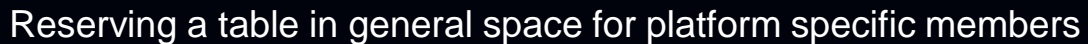


Connect the general space and the platform-specific space
Norm: Everyone is welcome to join the whole space



The table: what topic to reserve for

Takeaway



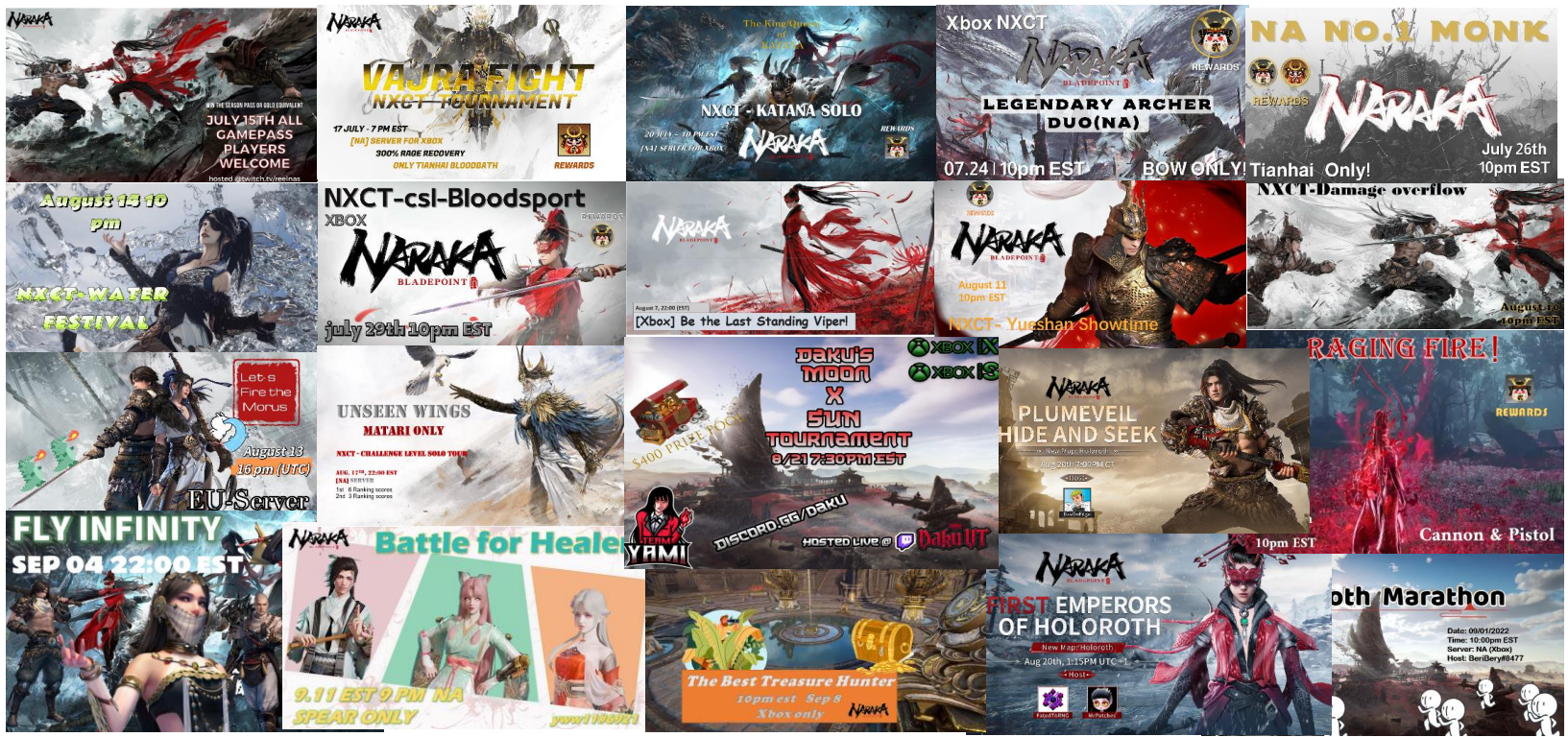


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Hybridizing Community

(NARAKA Xbox Community Tournaments) NXCT as an example





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Nurturing Sustainability and Diversity in Hybrid Communities

Wdym sustainability & diversity

Sustainability

Assist hybrid communities with their evolvments

Diversity

Hybrid levels/dimensions





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Seek for Common Ground while Reserving Differences



Common Ground

- **In-game:** gameplay, updates, events, news
- **Out-game:** seasons/festivals, other game news

Space for Evolvment

- Opinions from different perspectives
- e.g. KBM vs. Controller



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Reserving Differences

CN Players in other lobbies



“CN players in EU lobbies is what ruins this game. Game gonna die soon.”

“You do know Chinese people live in EU/NA right? Most of the CN players are Chinese like myself. We live in NA/EU/other parts of the world. High ping could be bad connections like the uni dorm WiFi, or living on the west coast away from the server”





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Micro/Meta Management for Hybrid Communities

Reserving/clearing out space:

- Do we need those channels
- Do we need a mod in every single language sections?

Collaborate with communities/clans/guilds

- Community events
- Tournaments
- Streamer partnership
- User research
- Etc.

ABOUT ME

pron. she/her/hers

NARAKA: BLADEPOINT

UX (User Experience) Research Team

DM about

👉 NARAKA Player Clans Study 👈

▼ PORTUGUÊS

regras

anuncios

chat-geral

imagens

prints-de-partidas

videos-brasil

livestream-br

fanarts

reporta-bugs

criar-canal-de-voice

Designing tools and technologies with hybridity in mind

▼ Outline

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Takeaway

- Roles/Tags/Badges as identifications
- Cross-platform verifications



ACCOUNT VERIFICATION BOT 23/06/2022 03:59

Verify your account here to get:
Limited dynamic avatar and access to Discord events and rewards!

Account Verification

 6249	 1993	 1092	 2782
 1967	 790	 761	 1031
 873	 680	 632	 632
 612	 697	 1102	 633
 1195	 643	 727	 664

1 September 2022



Namecard Generator BOT 01/09/2022 02:29

Get Your Match Detail

How

- Step 1. Select 3 most played heroes
- Step 2. Select your regular online time
- Step 3. Click submit button





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Summary and Takeaway

- Three dimensions: culture, online/offline, gaming platforms
- Building hybridity for communities: Doors - Corridors - Tables
- Nurturing sustainability and diversity
 - Seek for common ground while reserving differences
 - Meta/Micro managements
 - Designing tools with hybridity in mind



THANK YOU

- ❑ Questions?
- ❑ Evaluation form
- ❑ Or just connect!

@bingo_yu
@ThunderFireUX
@NarakaXbox

** All quotes used in this talk have been rephrased from their original messages to make sure they're not trackable and properly anonymised*

