

# Transforming Community Through Pervasive Play

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**Jeff Watson**

**@remotedevice**

PhD Candidate, Interdivisional Media Arts and Practice

USC School of Cinematic Arts

March 16, 2012



## School of Cinematic Arts

interactive media

film/video  
production

critical studies

animation

screenwriting



## Broader USC Community

fine arts

communication

engineering



Reality Ends Here

Alternate Reality Game  
2011





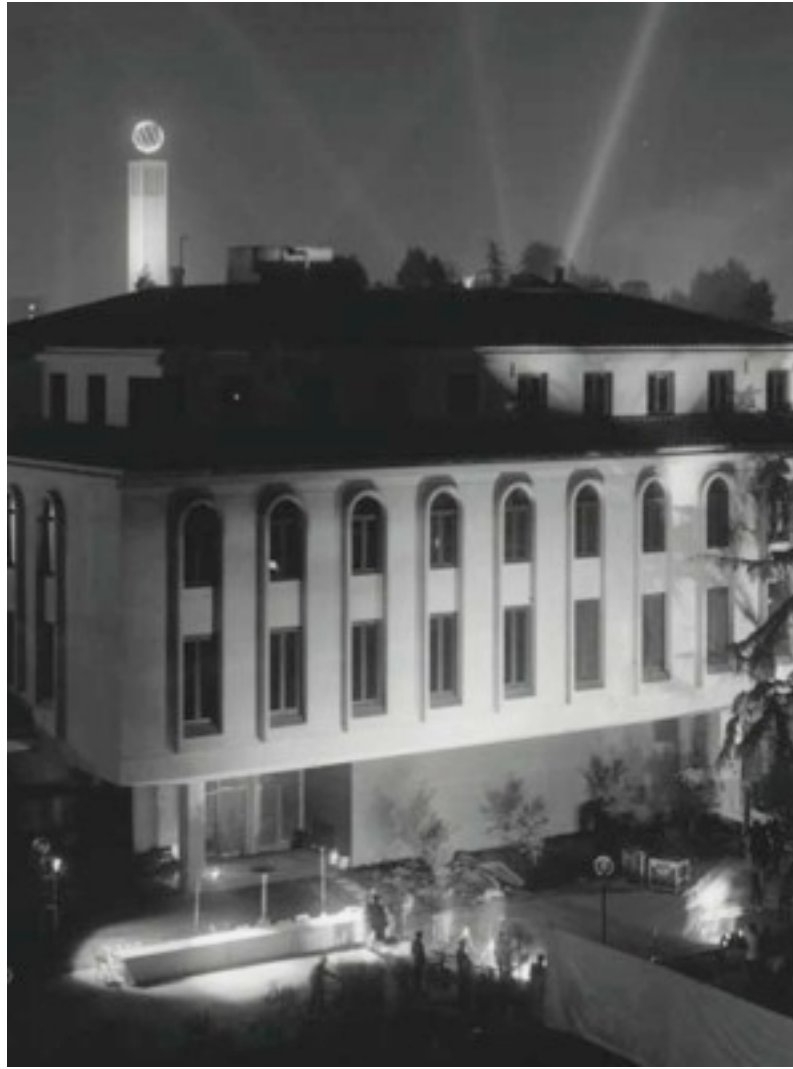
Graffiti, Old Lucas Building Walkway  
1980s











USC School of Cinematic Arts Buildings  
1930s, 1970s, 2000s

# Pervasive Games

**per·va·sive** adj \pər-ˈvā-siv, -ziv\ : existing in or spreading through every part of something

The transformative potential of pervasive games lies in the fact that they can be more than just a call to action -- they can be *the action itself*.

# March, 2011





# The Future Committee: Mandates

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- Jump-start **collaboration and discovery** among students across divisional and disciplinary boundaries (ie, break down the silos)
- Provide incoming students with an opportunity to **experiment with media making** across the range of practices represented at the SCA
- Connect students to faculty, resources, and the broader community, especially **alumni and industry mentors**



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[ARG 2.0 \(Part Two\) »](#)

JULY 7, 2010

## ARG 2.0 (Part One)

The Alternate Reality Game (ARG) remains a topic of great interest to me and to my students at MIT and USC. Through the years, we've discovered that the ARG falls at the intersection between our recurring interests in participatory culture, collective intelligence, new media literacies, transmedia entertainment, and civic engagement. In my Fandom, Participatory Culture, and Web 2.0 graduate seminar last spring, Jeff Watson wrote a provocative essay which reviewed and challenged the current state of ARG theory and design, proposing some of the limits of this still emerging genres, as well as identifying some experiments that stretch the ARG in new directions. I immediately knew that I wanted to share this essay with my readers, who have a range of different investments in this space, in hopes that it might serve as a catalyst for enlarging the conversation around ARGs and might give him useful feedback as he hopes to prepare this essay for publication.

Watson comes at this topic as a student in the USC's Cinema School's innovative iMAP program, which is designed to bring together students who are interested in both media design and theory. I am going to be teaching a seminar through the program this fall on Medium Specificity, and will be sharing the syllabus here shortly. Each of the students I have met through this program have impressed me with their creative insights and their willingness to test their ideas through experimental practice. The Cinema School as a whole is exploring how to break down the silos between theory and production and between the different craft specializations within production, because the media maker of the future will need to think and create across media platforms. This is yet another of the many reasons I am excited about being at USC right now.

**ARG 2.0**  
by Jeff Watson

### I. Abstract

As marketing instruments, alternate reality games (ARGs) are powerful tools for generating buzz and fostering audience engagement. Their capacity to initiate and maintain playful and creative dialogue between producers and fans signals the immanence of interactive and participatory transmedia entertainment. However, the established structure of the ARG as a time- and space-driven

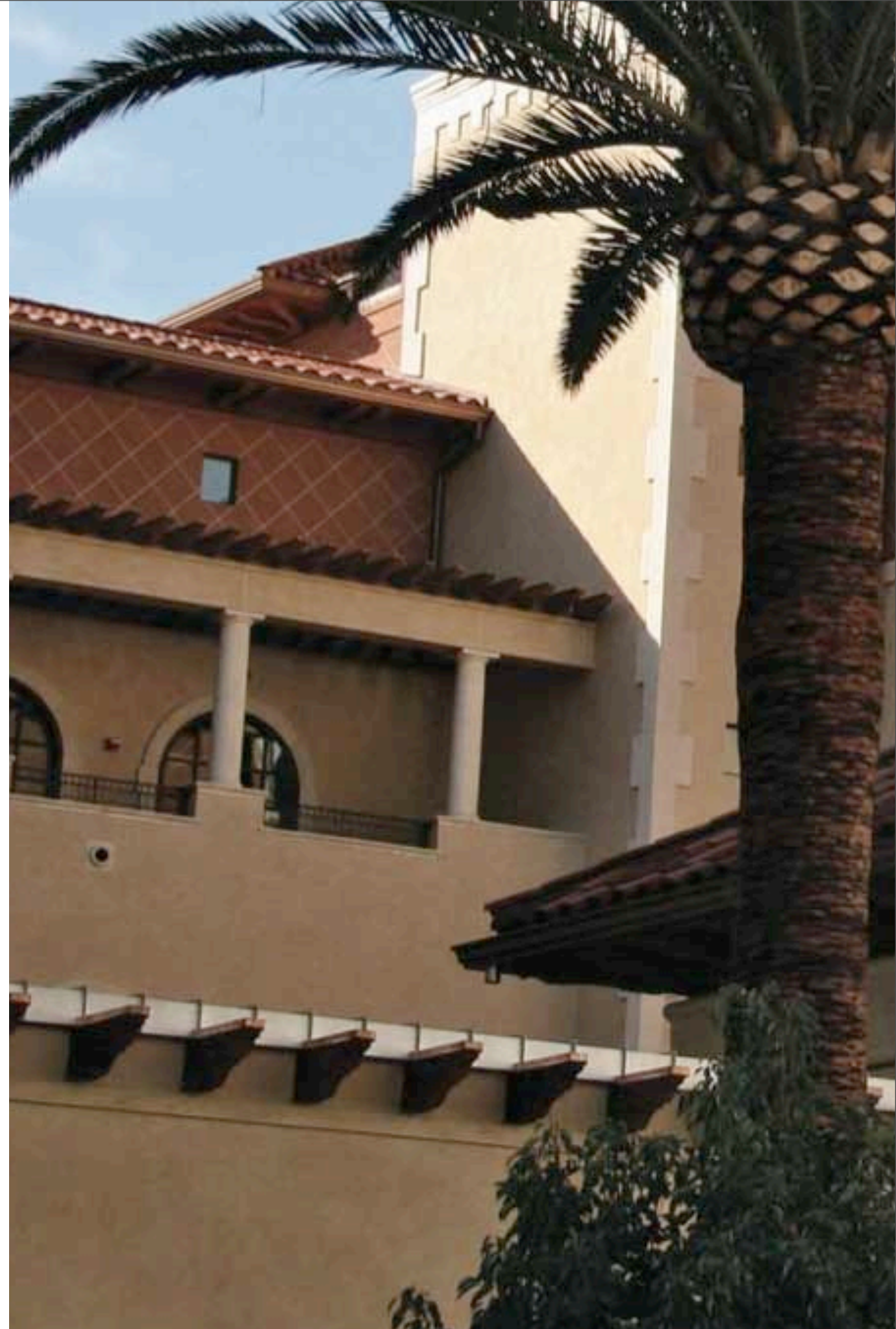
“ARG 2.0”



# Pitch to the Faculty

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May, 2011



# Pitch to the Faculty: The Game

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- A collaborative production game involving students making media representative of the 5 divisions of the SCA
- Played in students' spare time (not in class)
- Mechanics of the game will drive students to constantly explore new partnerships and ideas
- Encounters with alumni and other mentors will be integrated into play of the game

# Pitch to the Faculty: The Game

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- Mechanics of the game will drive students to constantly explore new partnerships and ideas
- Encounters with alumni and other mentors will be integrated into play of the game
- **Secret & underground**
- **Less Hollywood, more Godard**
- **No grades, no affiliation with class**
- **Completely optional**
- **No overt invitation to play**

A project like this is an intervention, and it needs **allies.**

# Reality Starts Here

CNTV-499

Symposium class for  
all freshmen

Institutional cover  
story

Overt

# Reality Ends Here

Secret collaborative production  
game

Institutional intervention

Covert



Summing up the formal characteristic of play, we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings that tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress the difference from the common world by disguise or other means.

J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*



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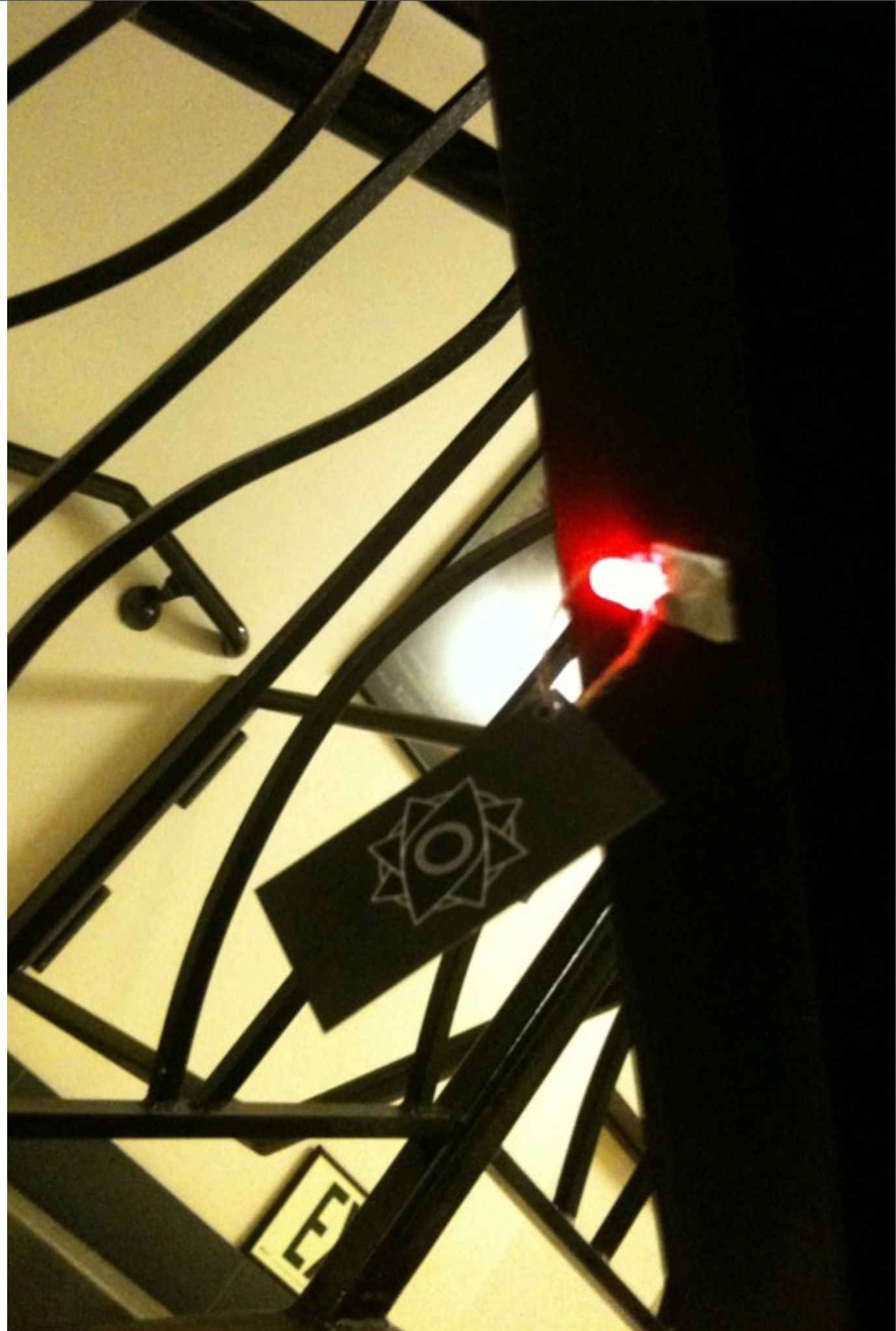
J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*

Pull instead of push.

# Tone

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Activating curiosity



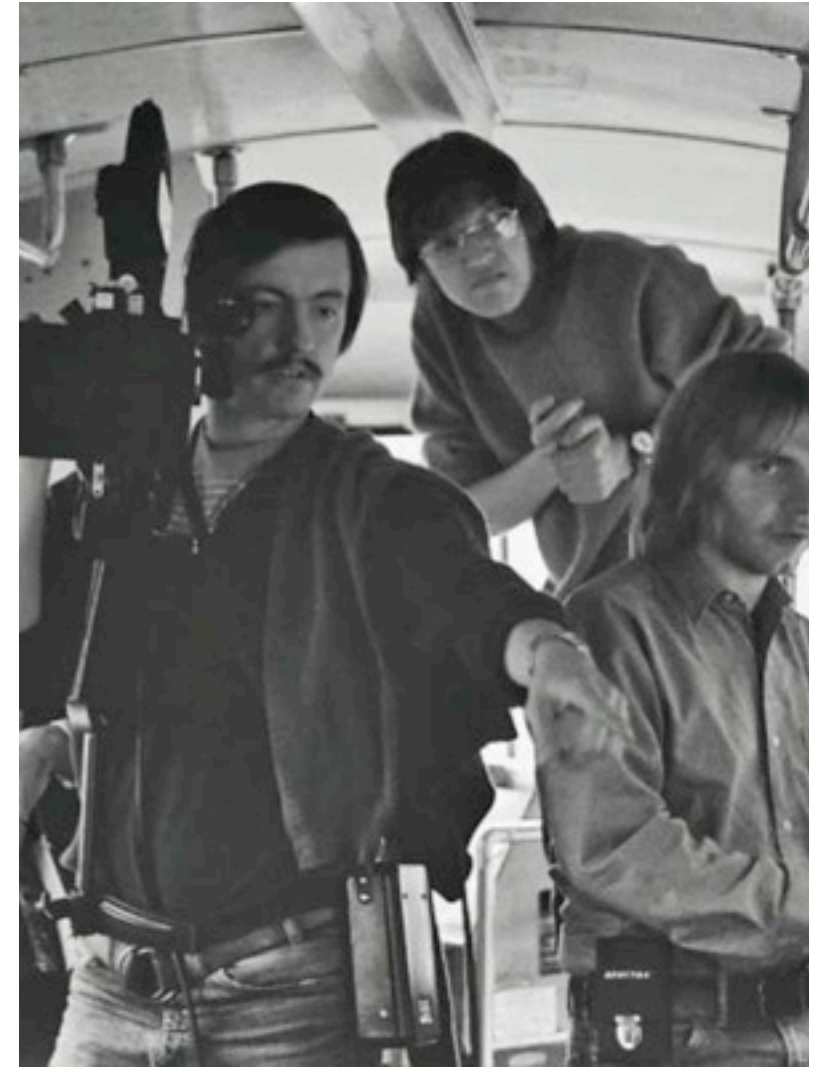


Worst. Colors. Ever.



Worst. Colors. Ever.





Tone touchstones: the 60s and 70s at USC cinema

# Tone: Contrasts

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## USC

- Hollywood
- Friendly
- Transparent
- Accessible

## Game

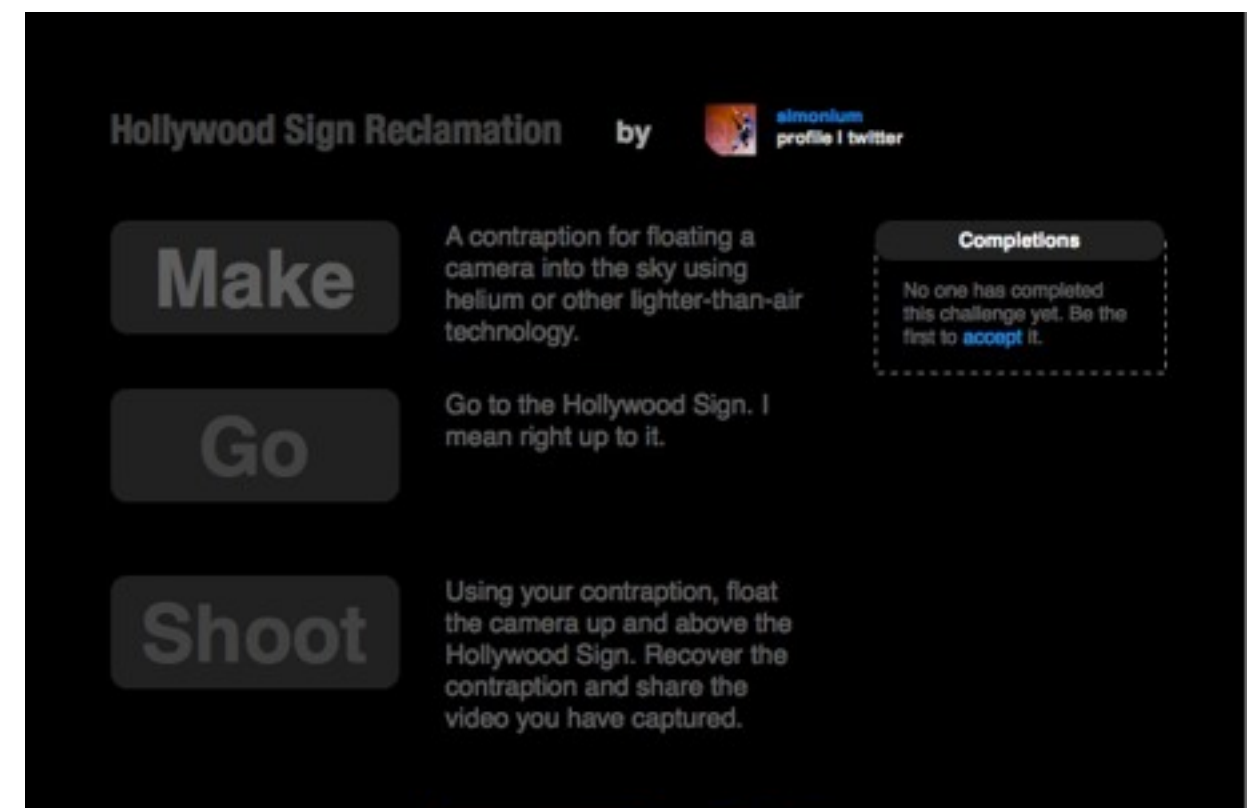
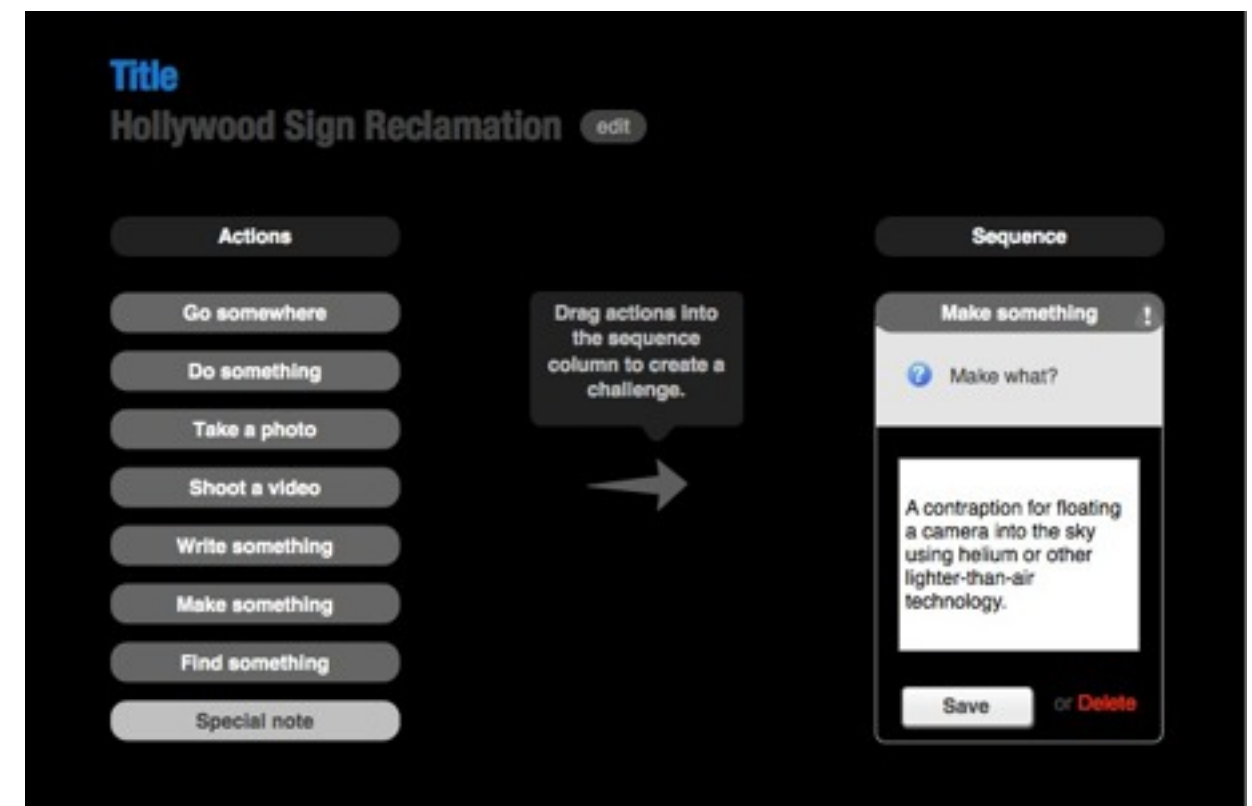
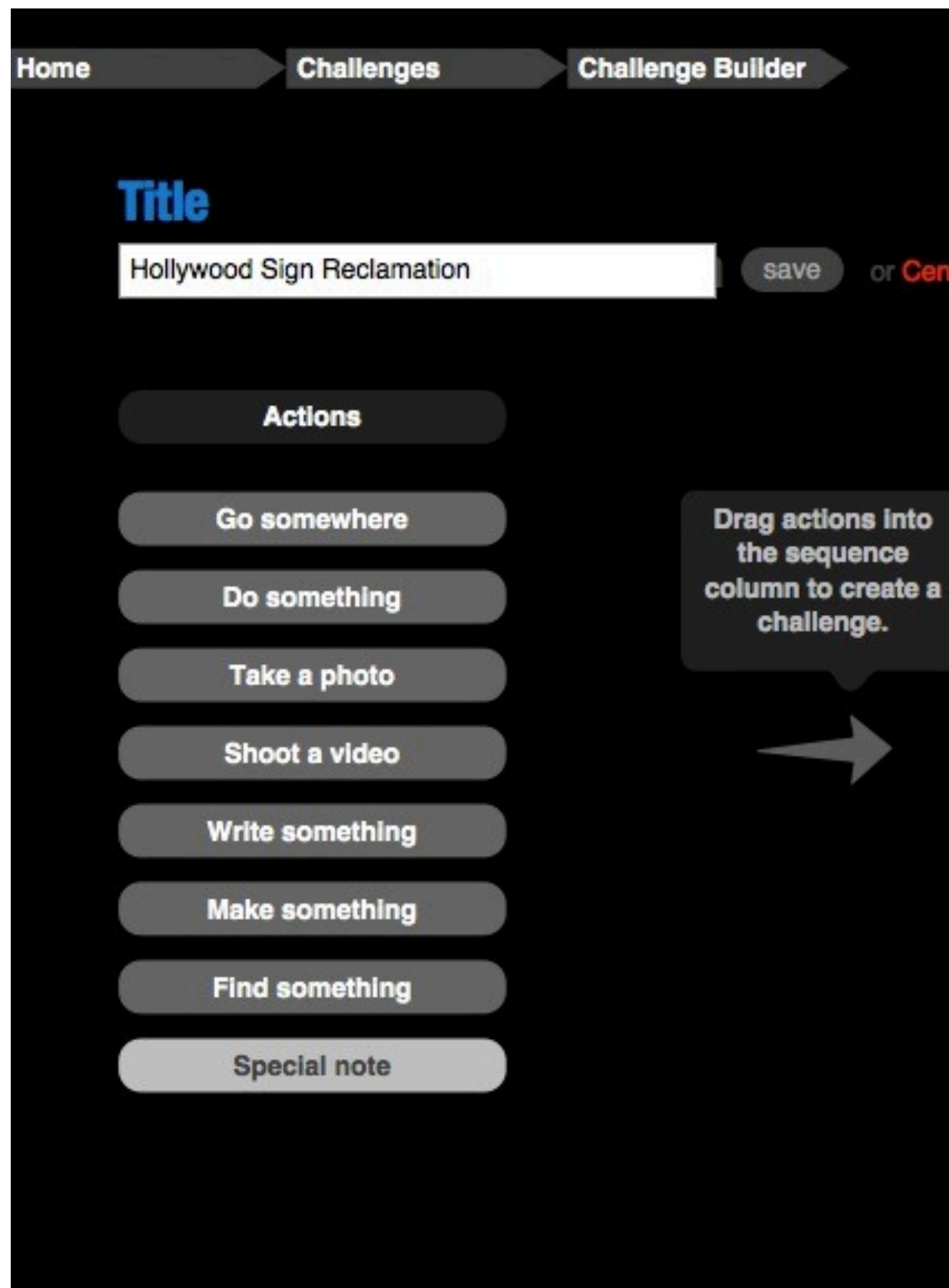
- Situationism
- Indifferent/menacing
- Opaque
- Hidden

# Mechanics

# Where the rubber hits the road

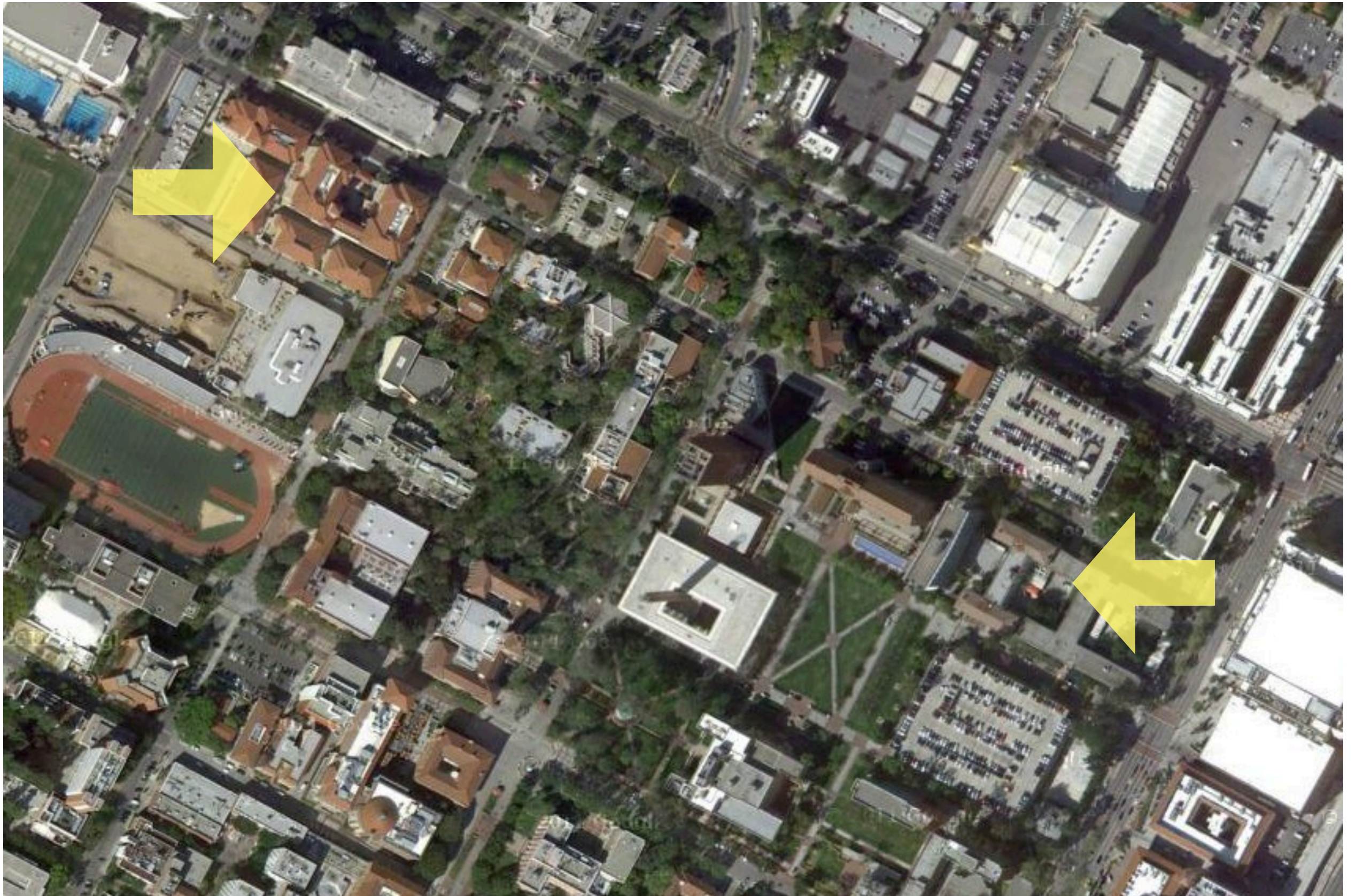






Wireframes for web-driven collaborative production game  
May 2011





Hyperlocal context: markers indicate SCA building (L) and student housing (R)





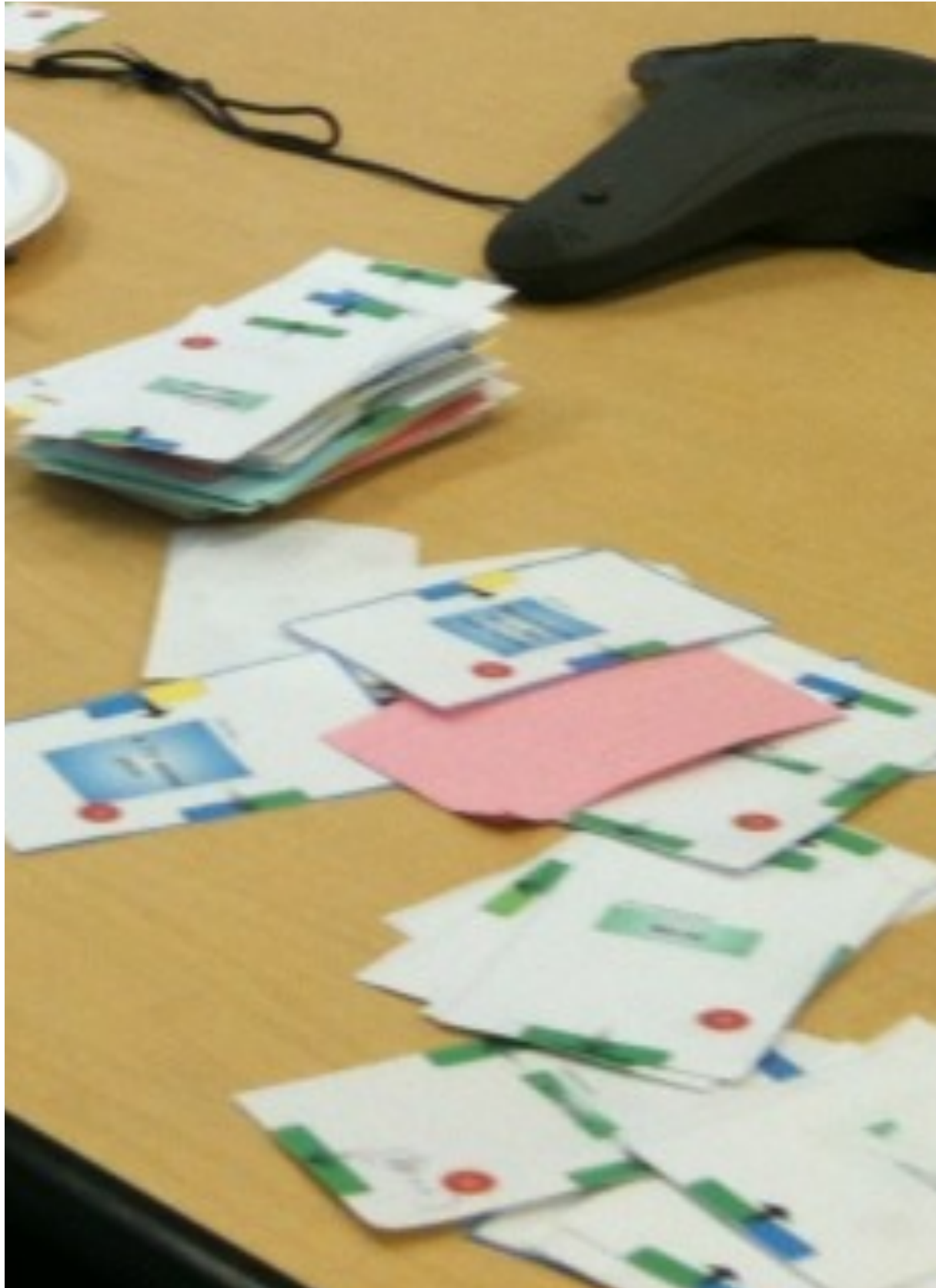
Illuminati  
Steve Jackson Games, 1980s





Card interaction prototyping and testing  
June 2011





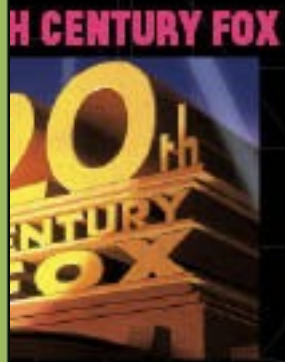
Card interaction design mockups  
June 2011



## CLARA BOW



Clara Bow was an American silent film star. The film, It, brought her global fame and the nickname "The It Girl." She came to personify the roaring twenties, and is remembered as its leading sex symbol.



Century Fox was formed in the 1935 merger of Fox and Twentieth Century Pictures. One of the six major American studios, 20th Century Fox commands a large share of box office revenue.

## EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE



## JOHN MILIUS



## THE TWILIGHT ZONE



## SHIGERU MIYAMOTO



Shigeru Miyamoto is a Japanese video game designer and producer known for his work at Nintendo, where he created Mario, Donkey Kong, The Legend of Zelda, Star Fox, F-Zero, and Pikmin.

## PICKFORD



Porter Mary Pickford was a Canadian-born motion picture actress, co-founder of the United Artists and one of the original 36 founders of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

## ELIZABETH DALEY



Elizabeth Daley was appointed Dean of the USC School of Cinematic Arts in May 1991.

## CAROL BURNETT



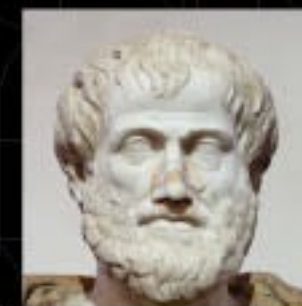
Carol Burnett is an American actress, comedian, singer, dancer and writer known for her work on the Emmy-winning The Carol Burnett Show, which aired on CBS for eleven years.

## THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL



The Day the Earth Stood Still is a 1951 American science fiction film directed by Robert Wise and written by Edmund H. North based on the short story "Farewell to the Master" by Harry Bates.

## POETICS



Aristotle's Poetics is the earliest-surviving work of dramatic theory. In it, Aristotle examines the "first principles" of dramatic storytelling and identifies its genres and basic elements.

## WILLIAM FRAKER



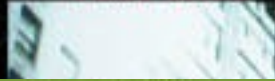
SCA alumnus William Fraker was a cinematographer, director, producer, and five-time Academy Award nominee. As cinematographer, his films include Rosemary's Baby and Irreconcilable Differences.

## CHROMA KEY



Chroma key compositing (or chroma keying) is a technique for compositing two images or frames together in which a color (or a small color range) from one image is removed (made transparent), revealing another image behind it.

## VERY NICE, VERY NICE



## HERB FARMER

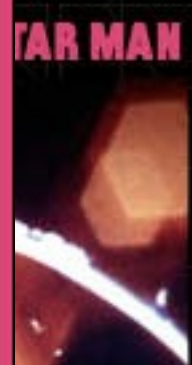


SCA Alumnus and Professor Herb Farmer began his lifelong association with USC in 1938, only nine years after the founding of the program. Farmer brought

## THE JERK



The Jerk is a 1979 American comedy film directed by Carl Reiner and starring Steve Martin. This was Martin's first role in a feature film.



Star Man is recognized as a monument of avant-garde cinema. Dog Star Man, Stan Brakhage, is a compendium of unorthodox filmmaking techniques.

## CONRAD



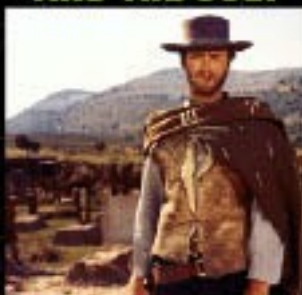
SCA alumnus best known for films such as Cool Hand Luke.

## ISENSTEIN



Directors 5/6

## THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY



## HIS GIRL FRIDAY



## ANNIE HALL



Annie Hall is a 1977 American romantic comedy directed by Woody Allen and co-starring Diane Keaton. One of Allen's most popular and honored films, it won four Academy Awards.

## PERSISTENCE OF VISION



## INGRID BERGMAN



## WOODY OMEN



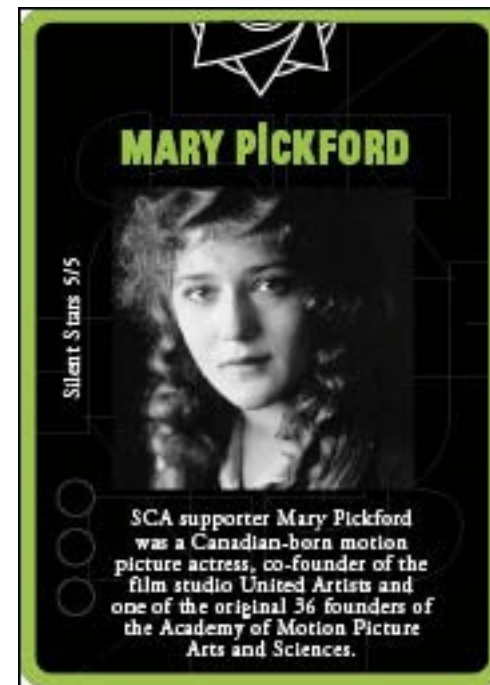
SCA professor and alumnus Woody Omen is a notable figure in the program.

The Unholy Five 1/5

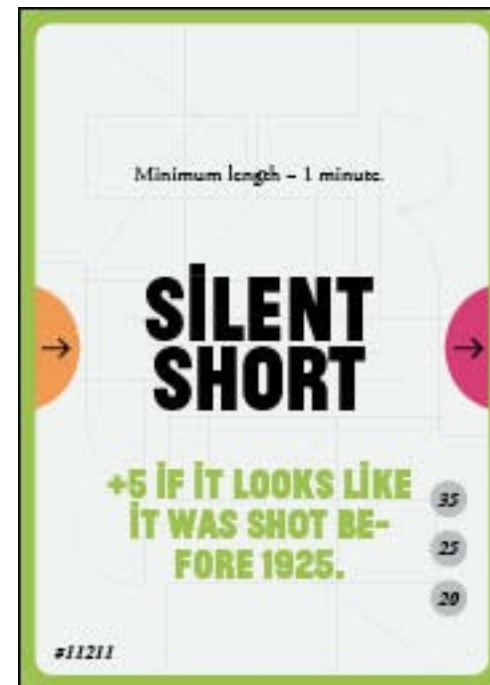


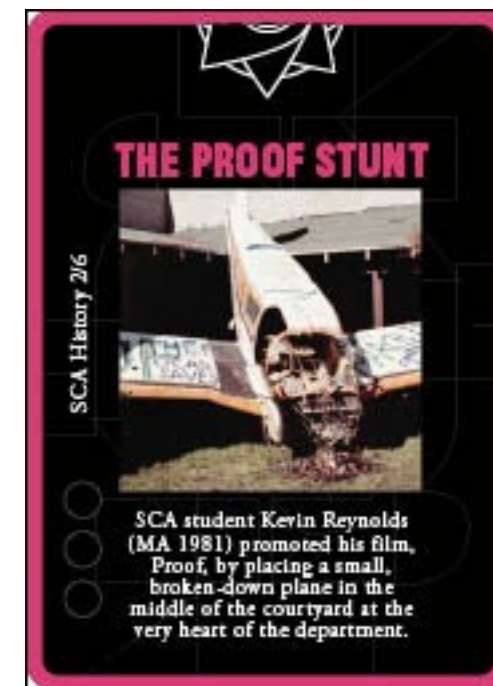
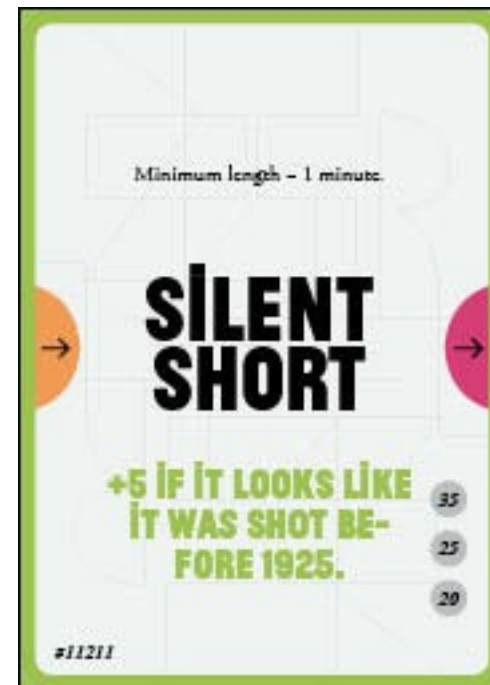


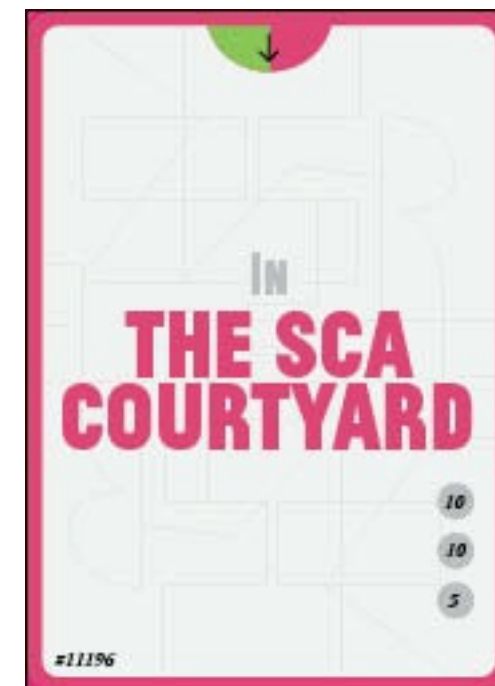
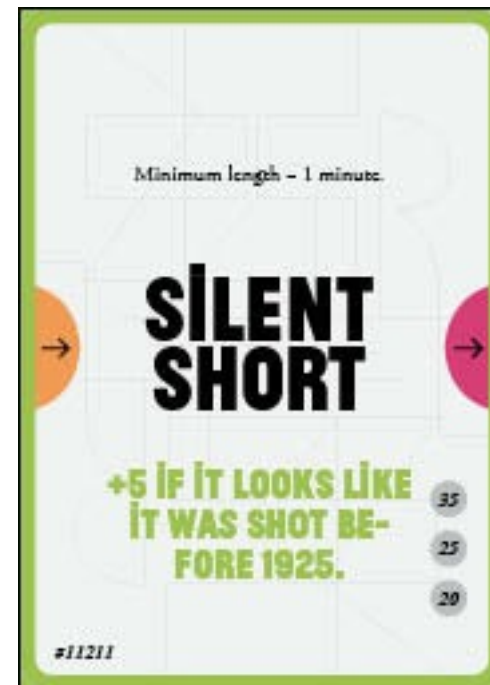
Reality card pack - 10 playable cards + instructions









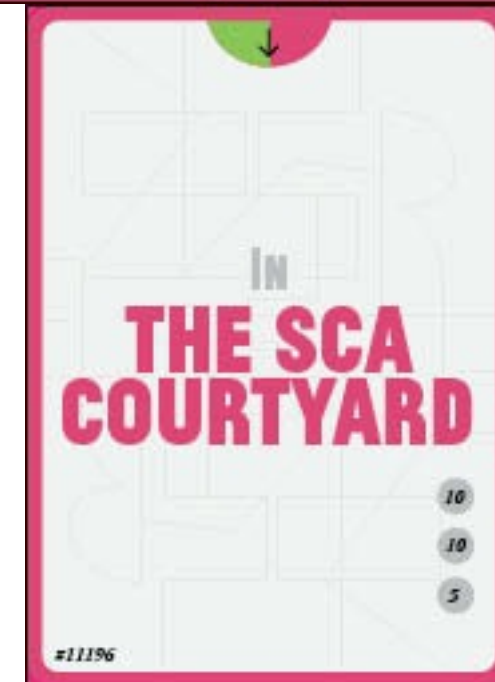






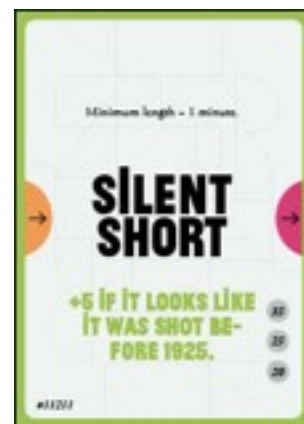














generate prompt



Schematic: complete play cycle



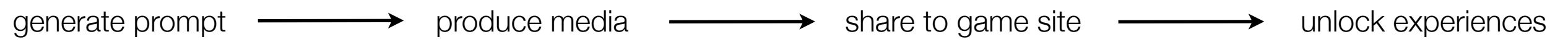
generate prompt → produce media



Schematic: complete play cycle



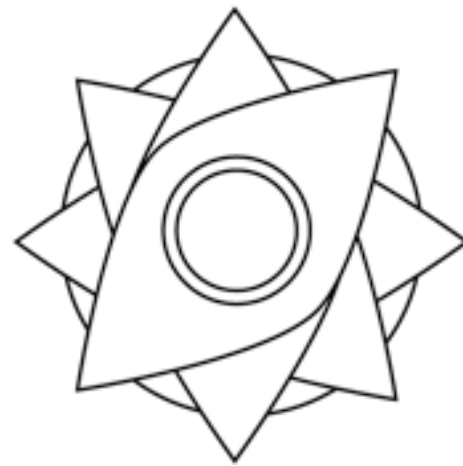
Monday, April 2, 12



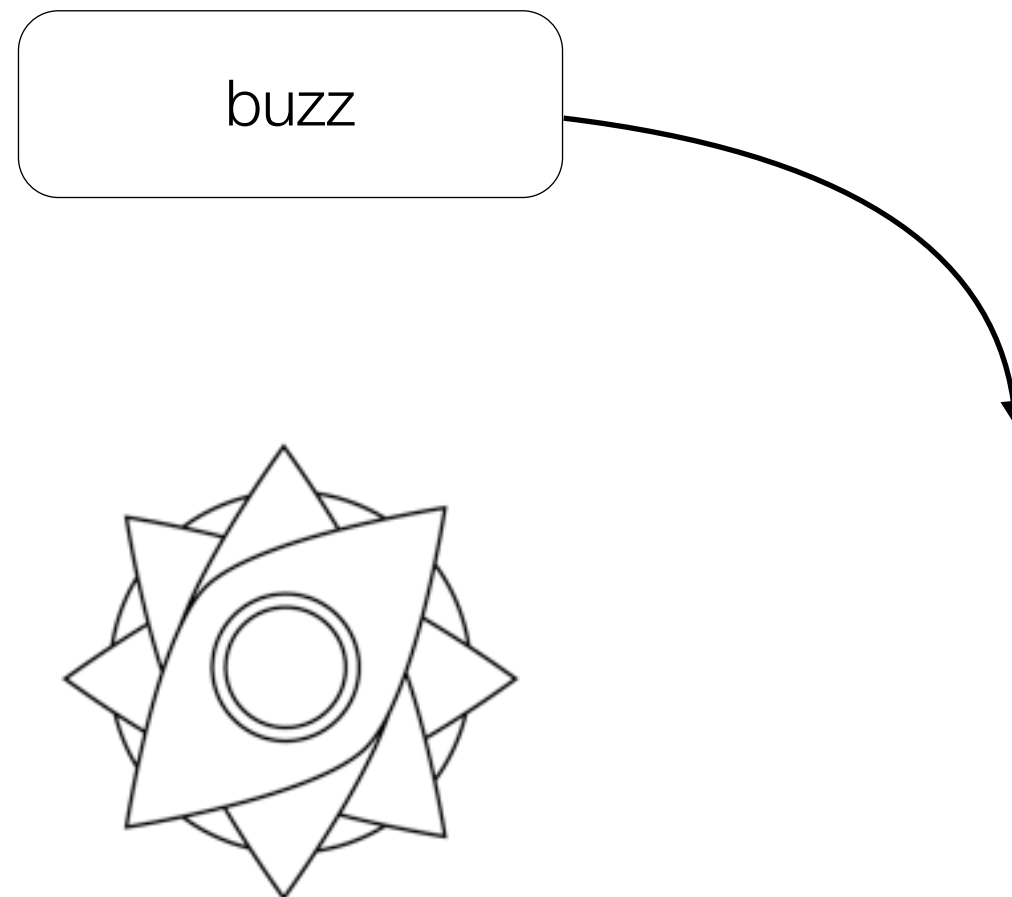
## Schematic: complete play cycle



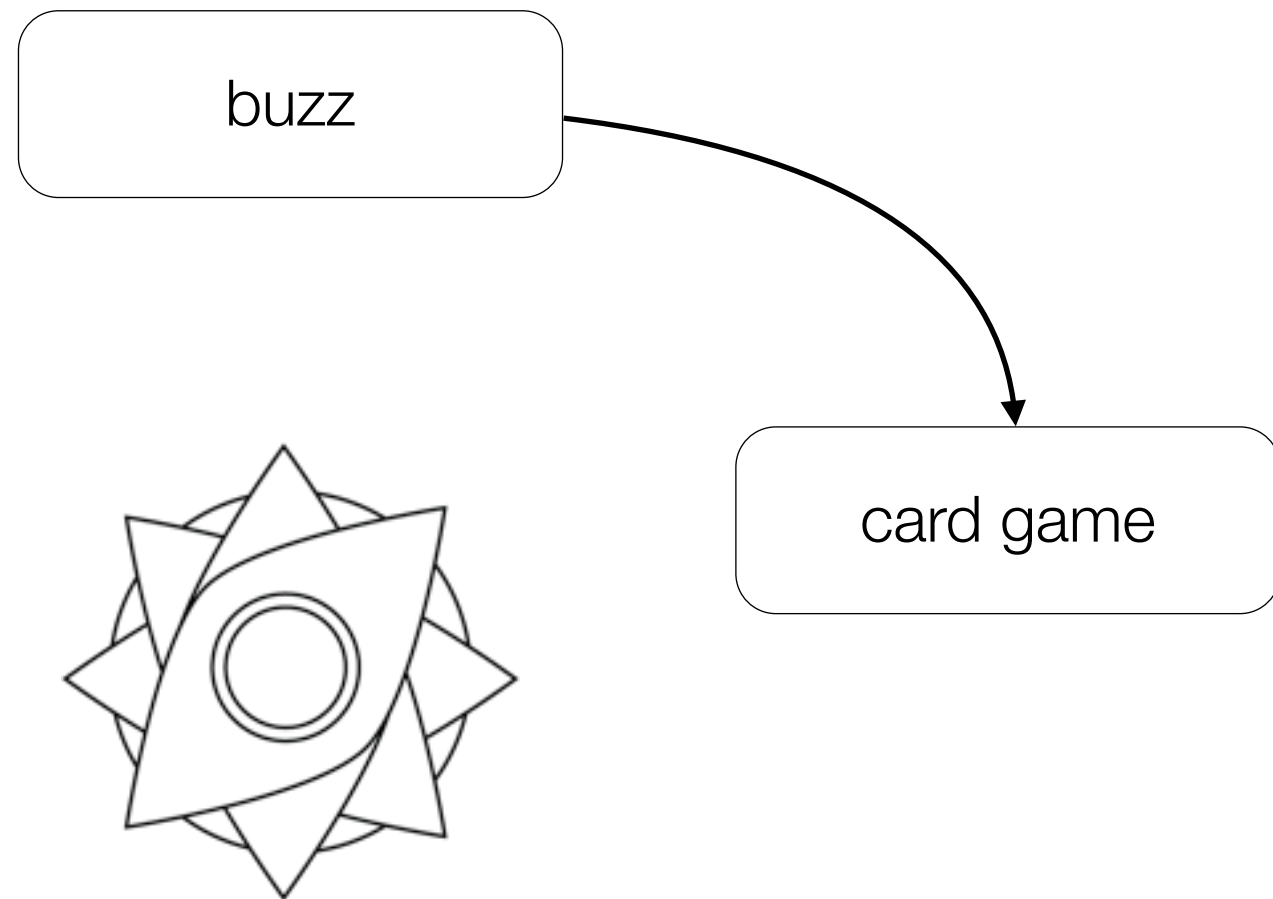
buzz



Schematic: pervasive play dynamo

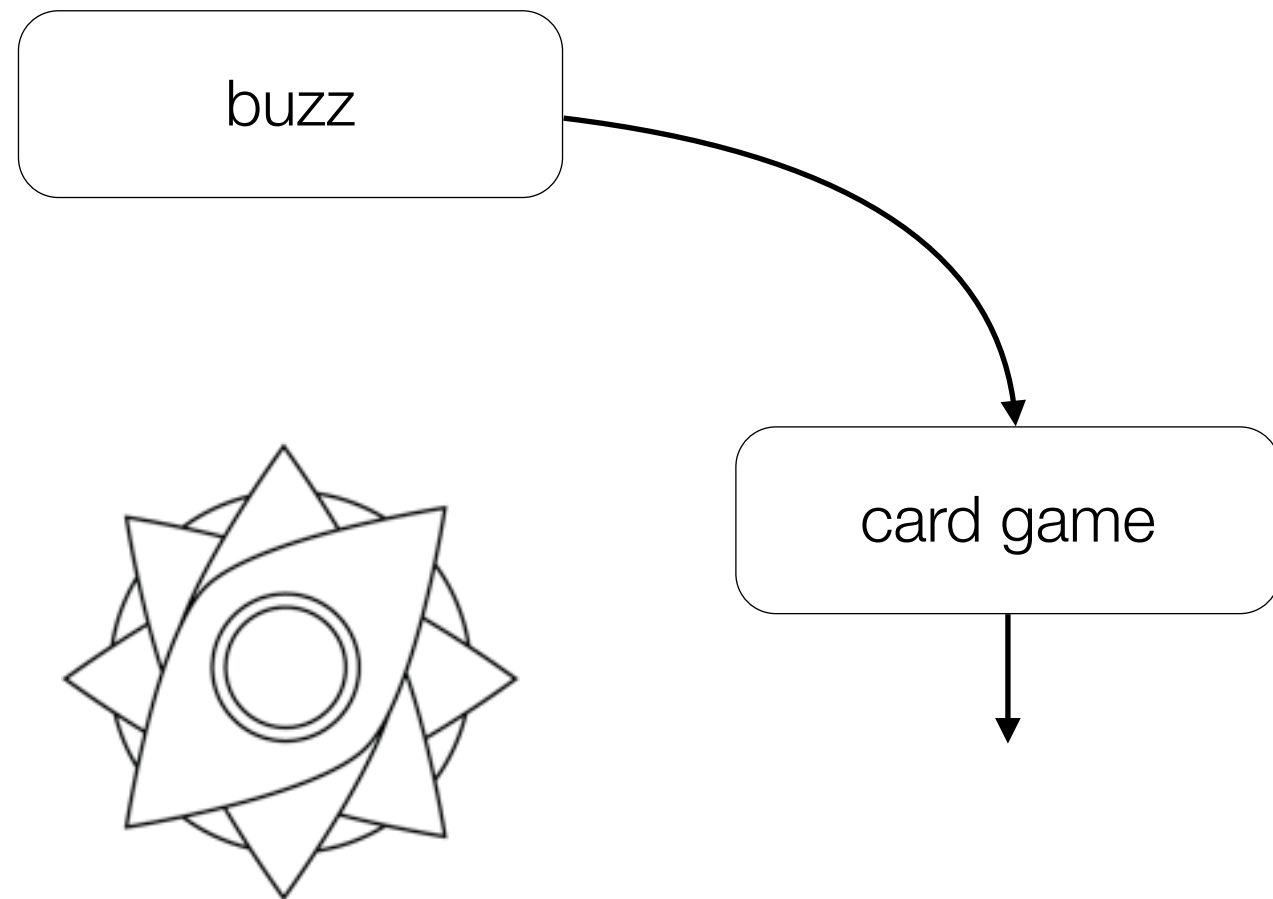


Schematic: pervasive play dynamo

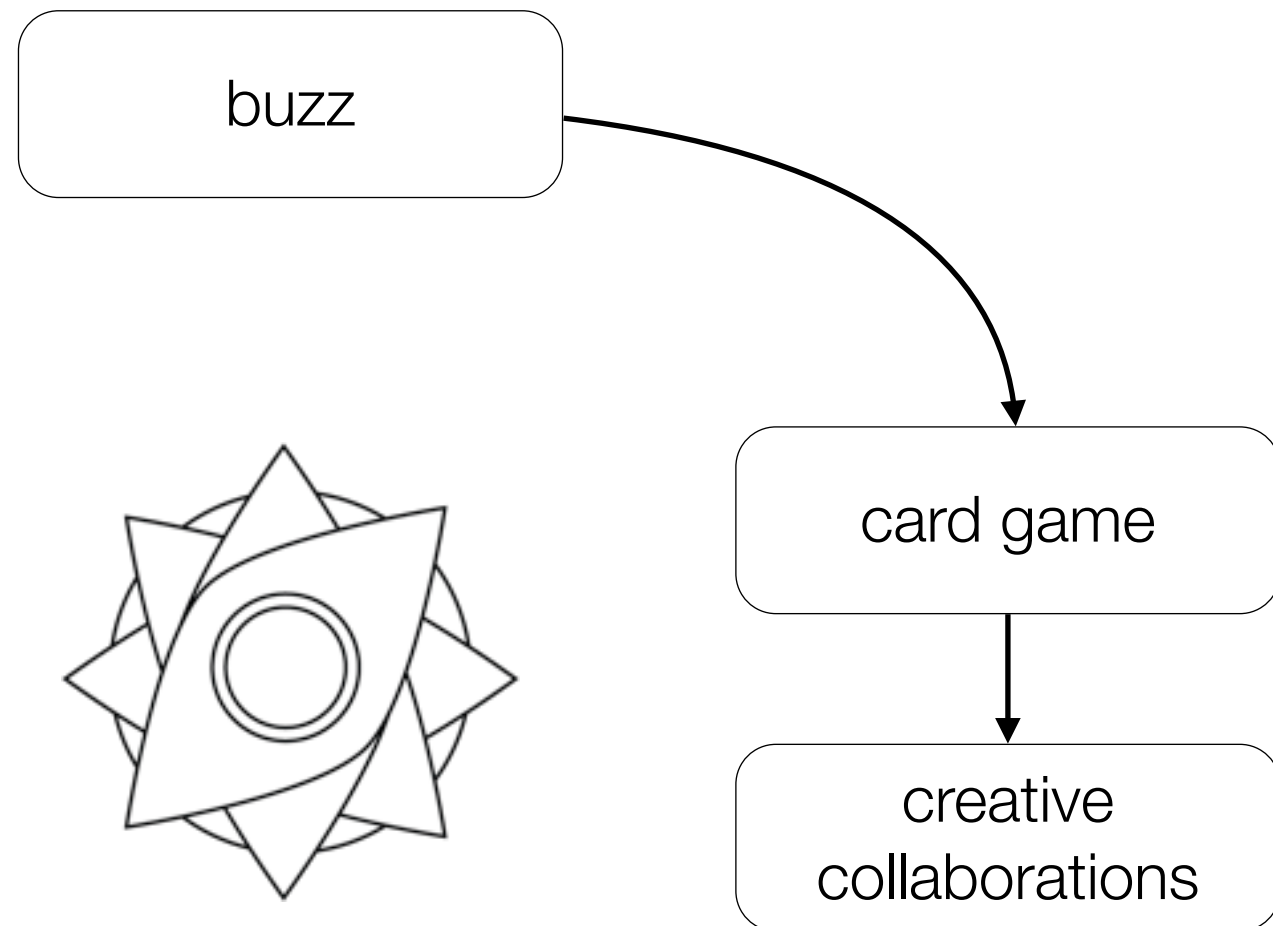


Schematic: pervasive play dynamo

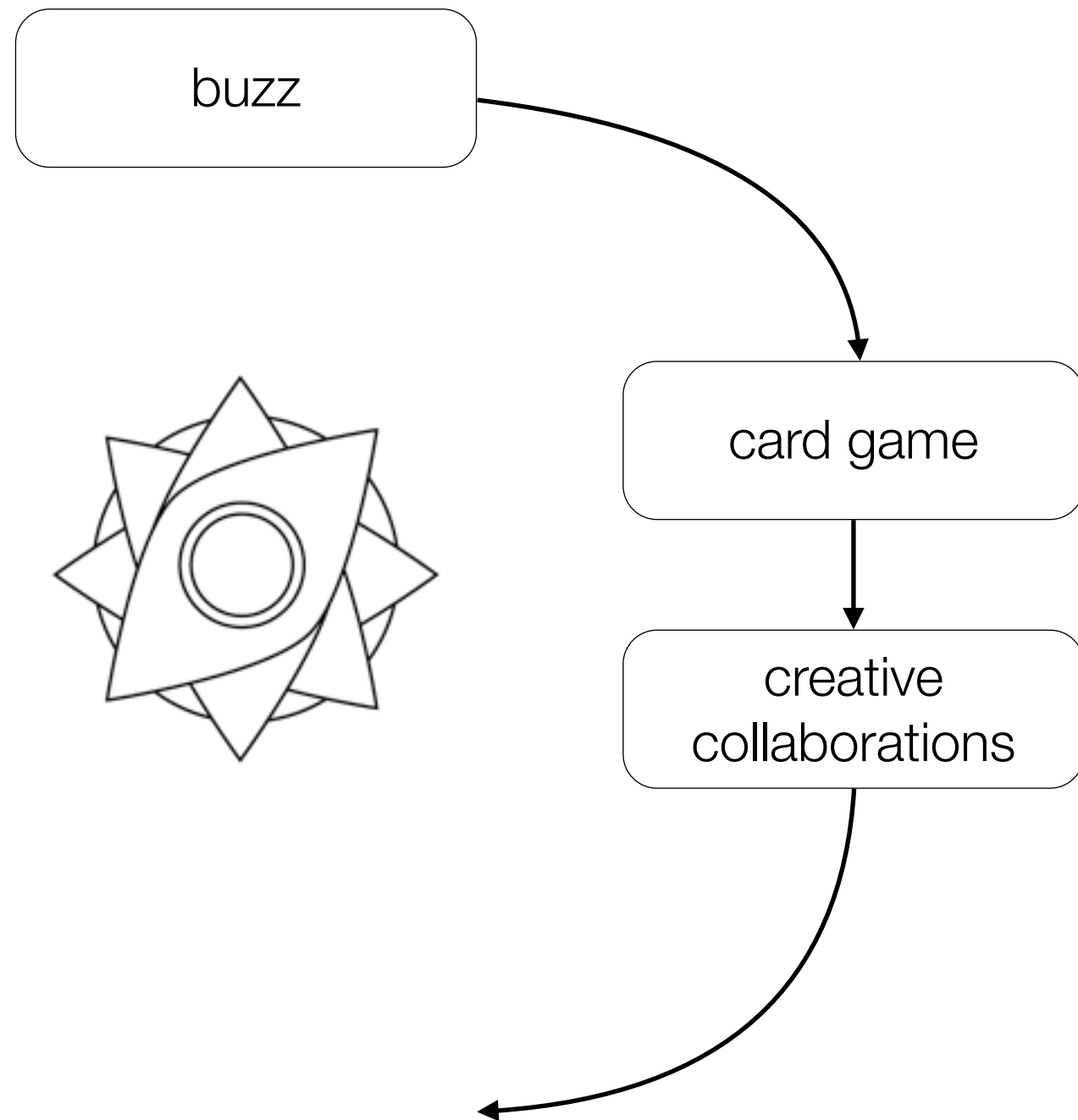




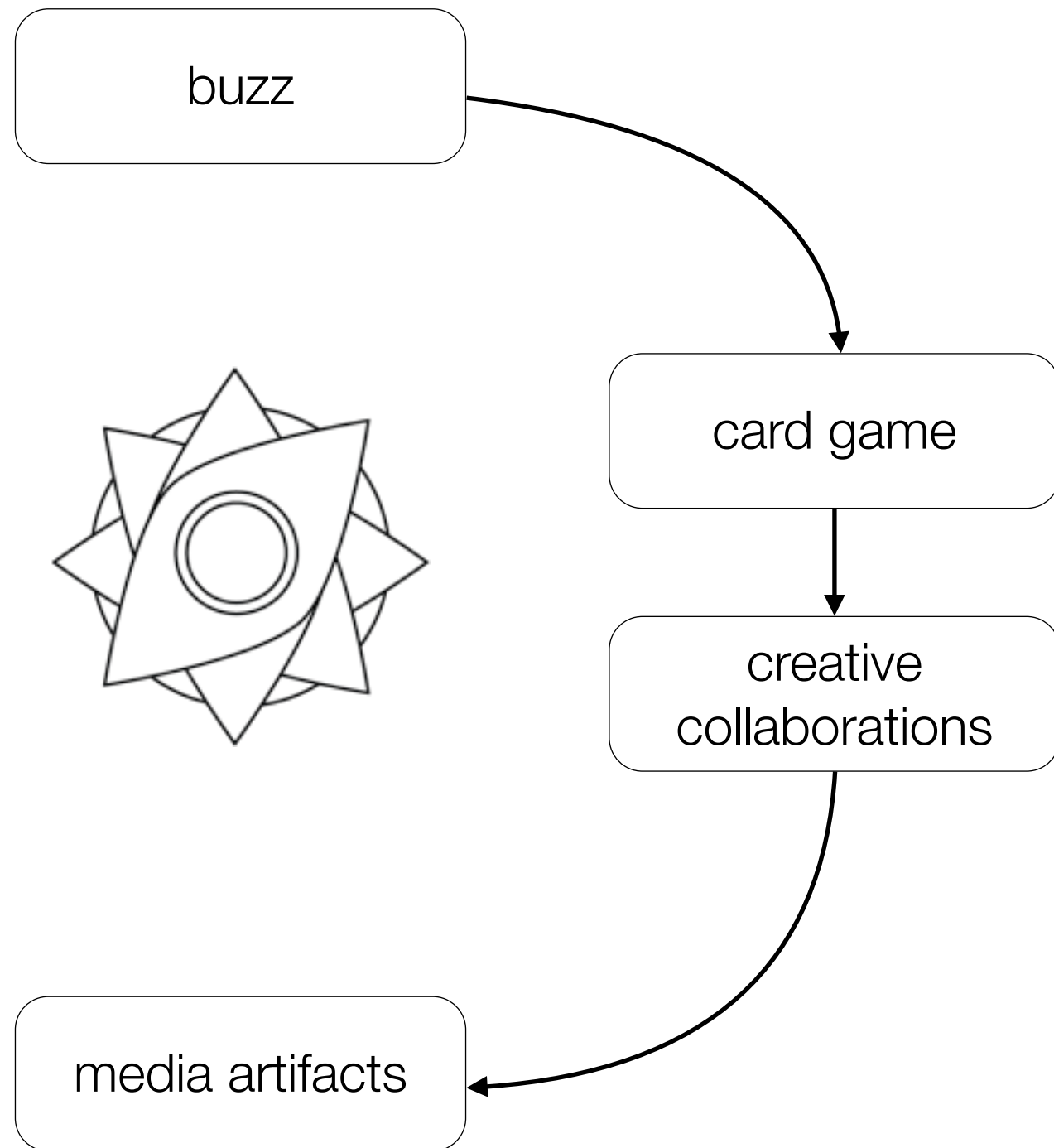
Schematic: pervasive play dynamo



Schematic: pervasive play dynamo

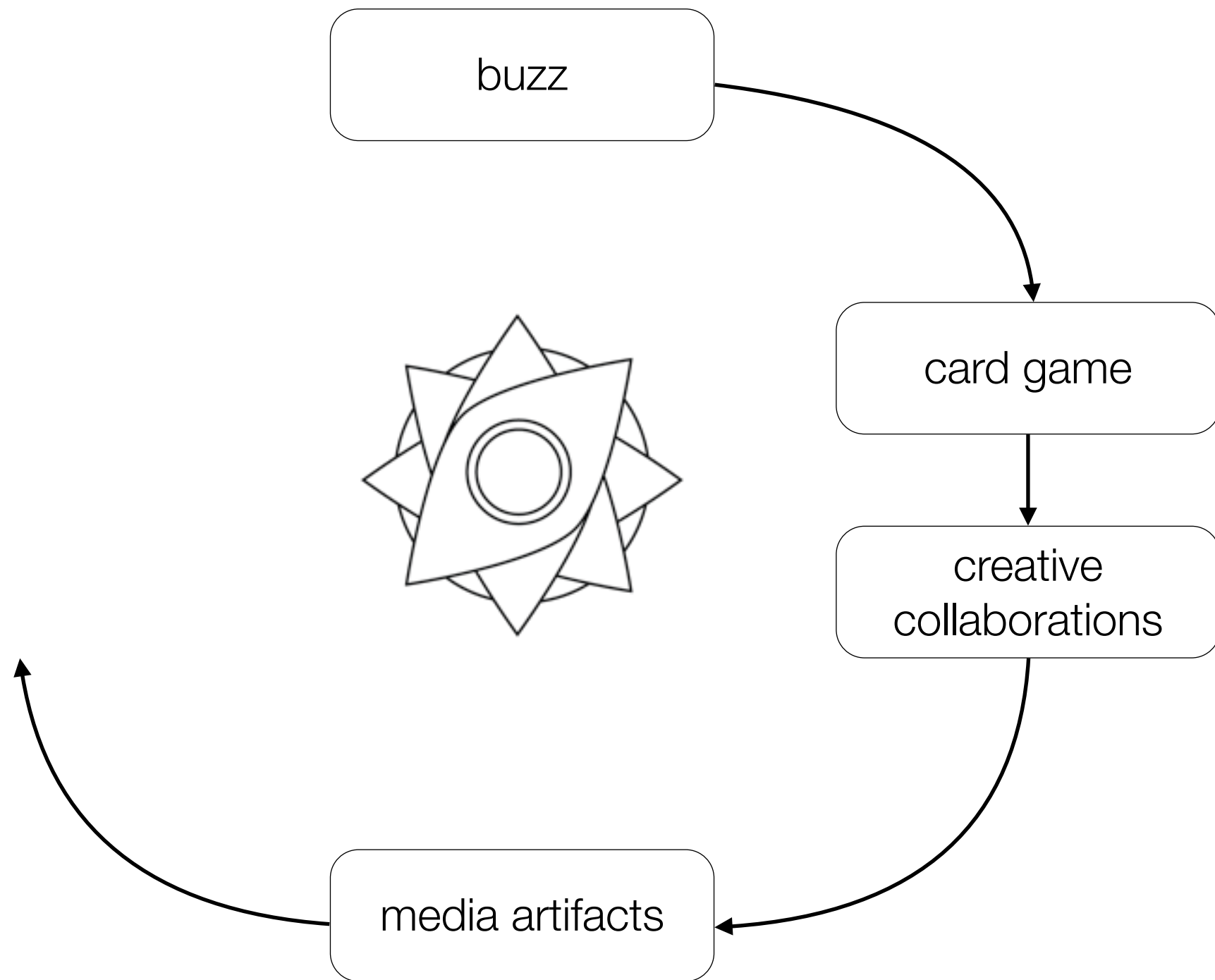


Schematic: pervasive play dynamo

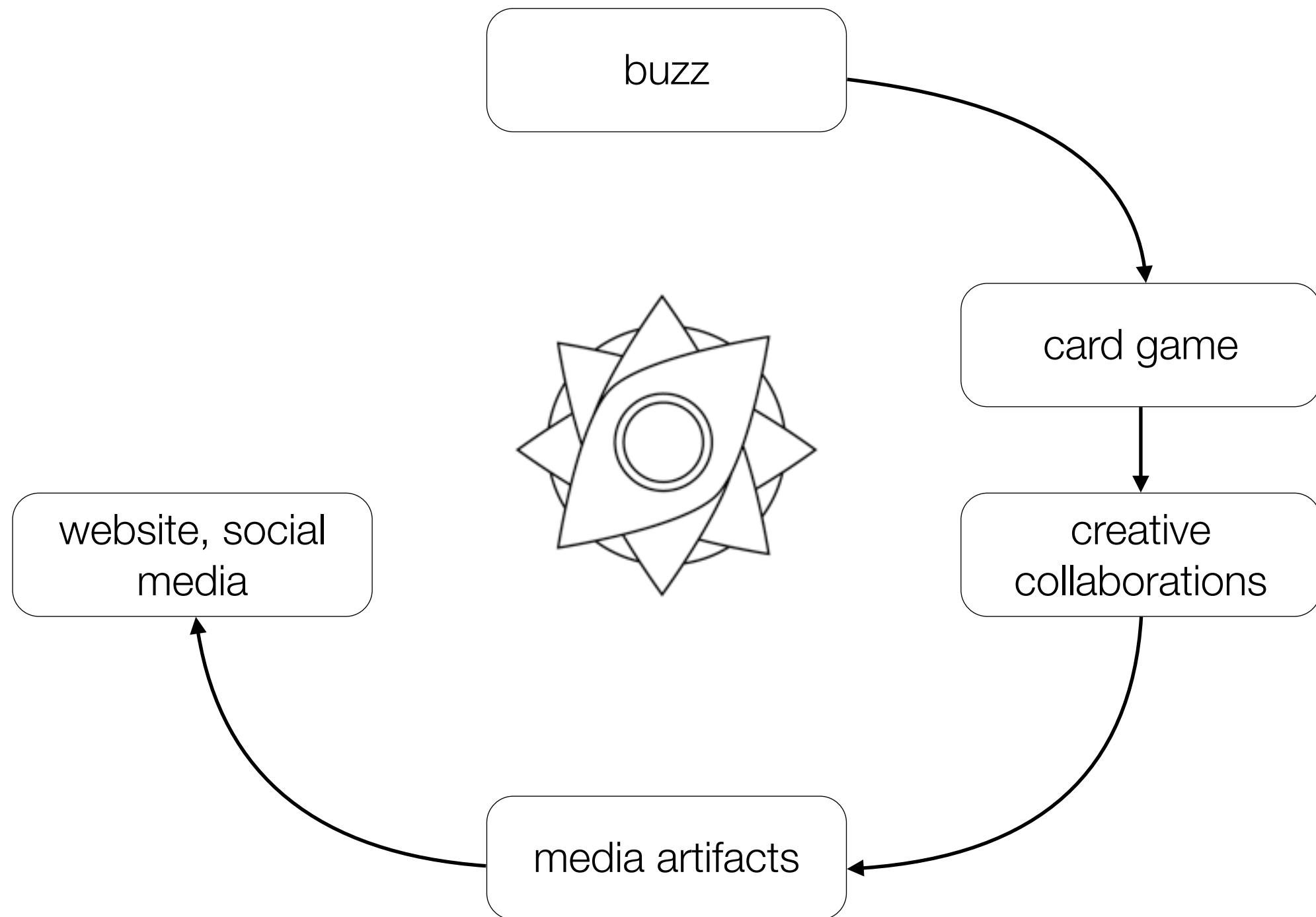


Schematic: pervasive play dynamo

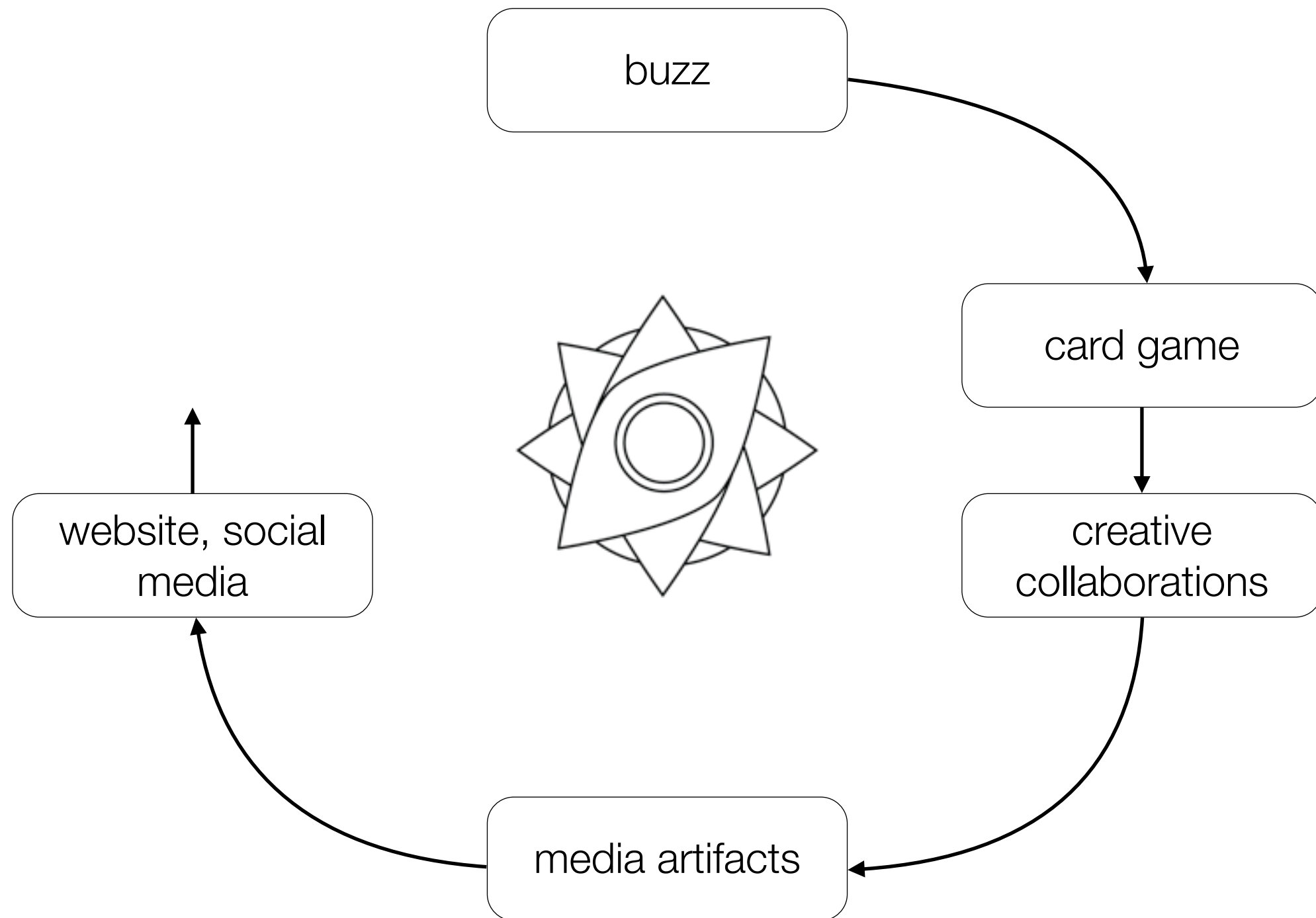




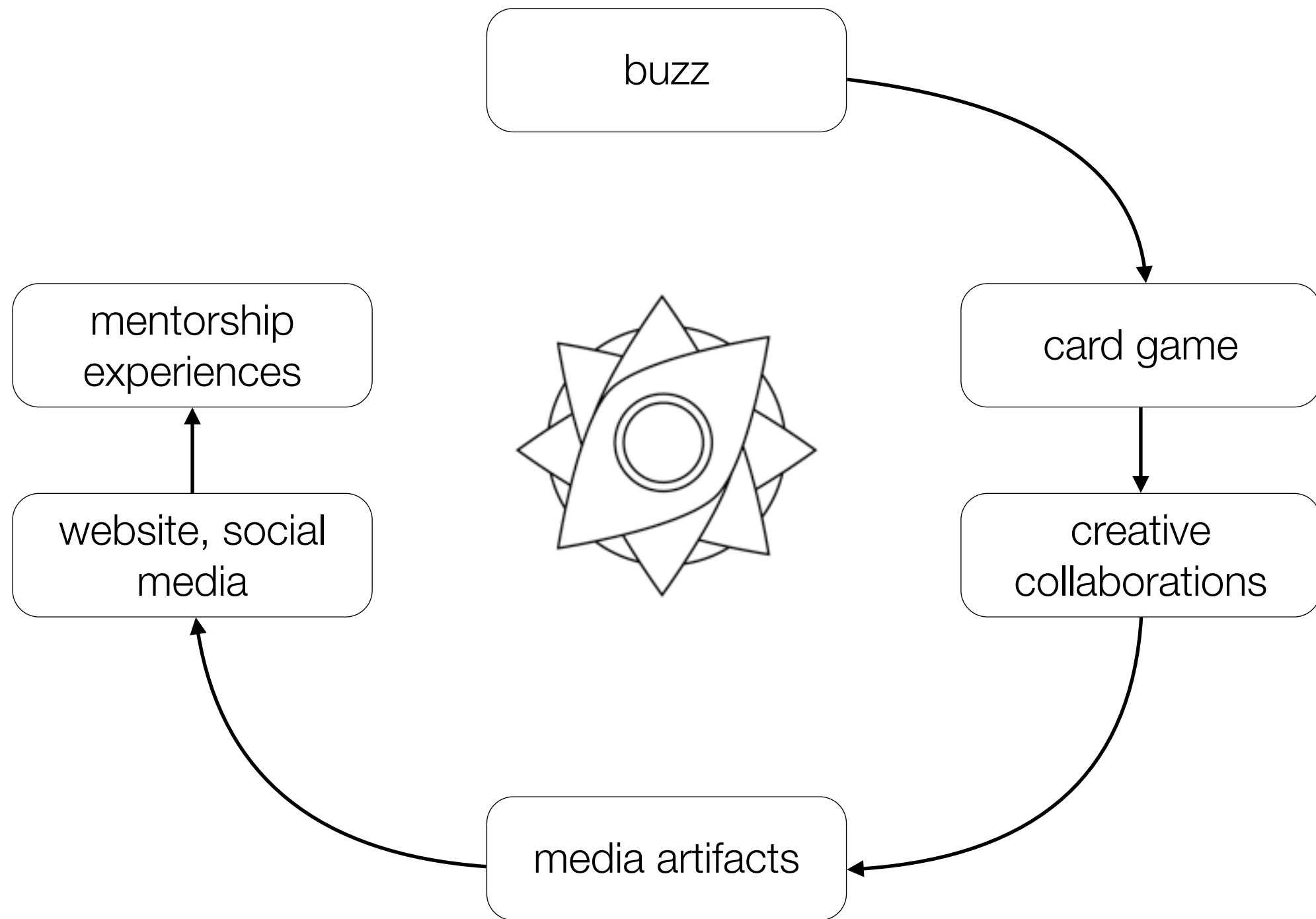
Schematic: pervasive play dynamo



Schematic: pervasive play dynamo

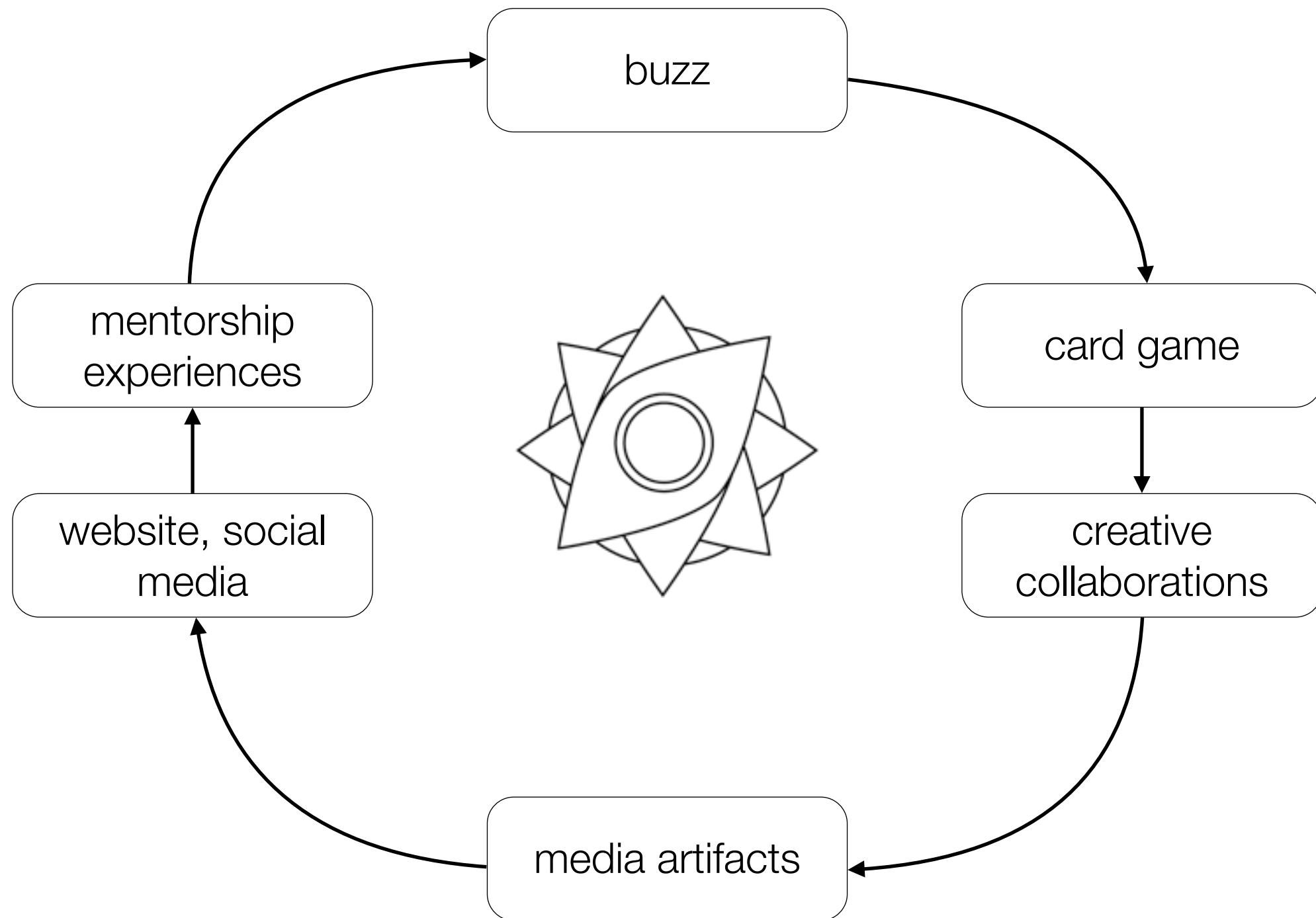


Schematic: pervasive play dynamo



Schematic: pervasive play dynamo





Schematic: pervasive play dynamo

# Implementation

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August - December 2011







**CARRY YOUR  
CARDS WITH  
YOU AT ALL  
TIMES.**



**EXPOSURE.USC.EDU**

Mystery Postcards  
July 2011





Courtyard flag





8mm Camera/Puzzle Box



# WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU SEE THE FLAG:

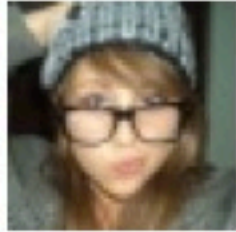


1. DO NOT PANIC.
2. APPROACH THE FLAG. GO IN A GROUP FOR BEST RESULTS.
3. SEARCH THE AREA FOR OUR COMMUNICATIONS.
4. STAY TOGETHER AND FOLLOW DIRECTIONS.



Flag advisory and courtyard flag





**Samantha LaFontaine**

Did anyone else notice that weird flag in the courtyard today?



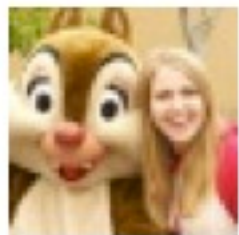
Like · Comment · Follow Post · August 22, 2011 at 3:16pm



Game Office

August 22, 2011





**Kassidy Testut**

WHAT THE HECK IS THIS FLAG THING?? Someone please explain. Before I go crazy.

 Like · Comment · Follow Post · August 26, 2011 at 12:10am via mobile



Monday, April 2, 12





C	P	O	A	M	S	E
S	T	W	O	O	P	R
L	D	A	I	Y	S	S
H	C	A	A	R	2	R
0	Y	1	H	T	A	E
U	N	S	T	E	O	N
F	X	O	X	U	X	R
X	M	X	-	X	F	X

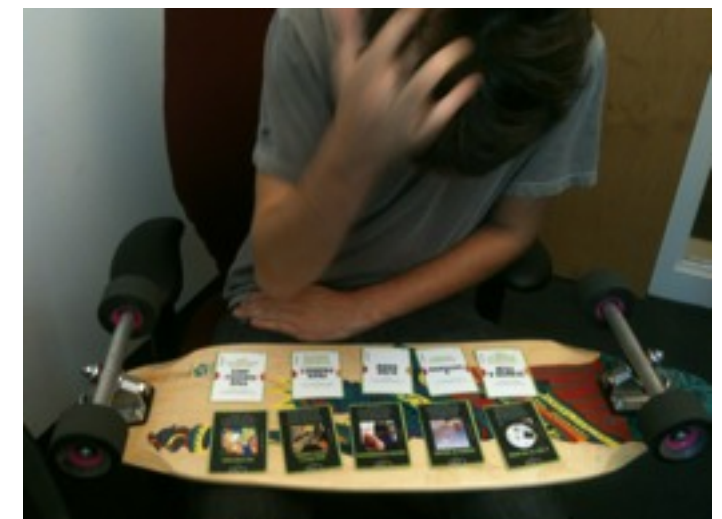
Call and response



C	P	O	A	M	S	E
S	T	W	O	O	P	R
L	D	A	I	Y	S	S
H	C	A	A	R	2	R
O	Y	1	H	T	A	E
U	N	S	T	E	O	N
F	X	O	X	U	X	R
X	M	X	-	X	F	X

S	S	O	I	U	N	N
C	D	E	S	R	G	E
O	L	O	Y	D	,	,
C	S	H	E	R	E	I
Y	S	O	V	U	.	S
A	O	N	O	D	N	R
.	I	X	L	X	E	X
Y	X	P	X	.	X	X

Call and response



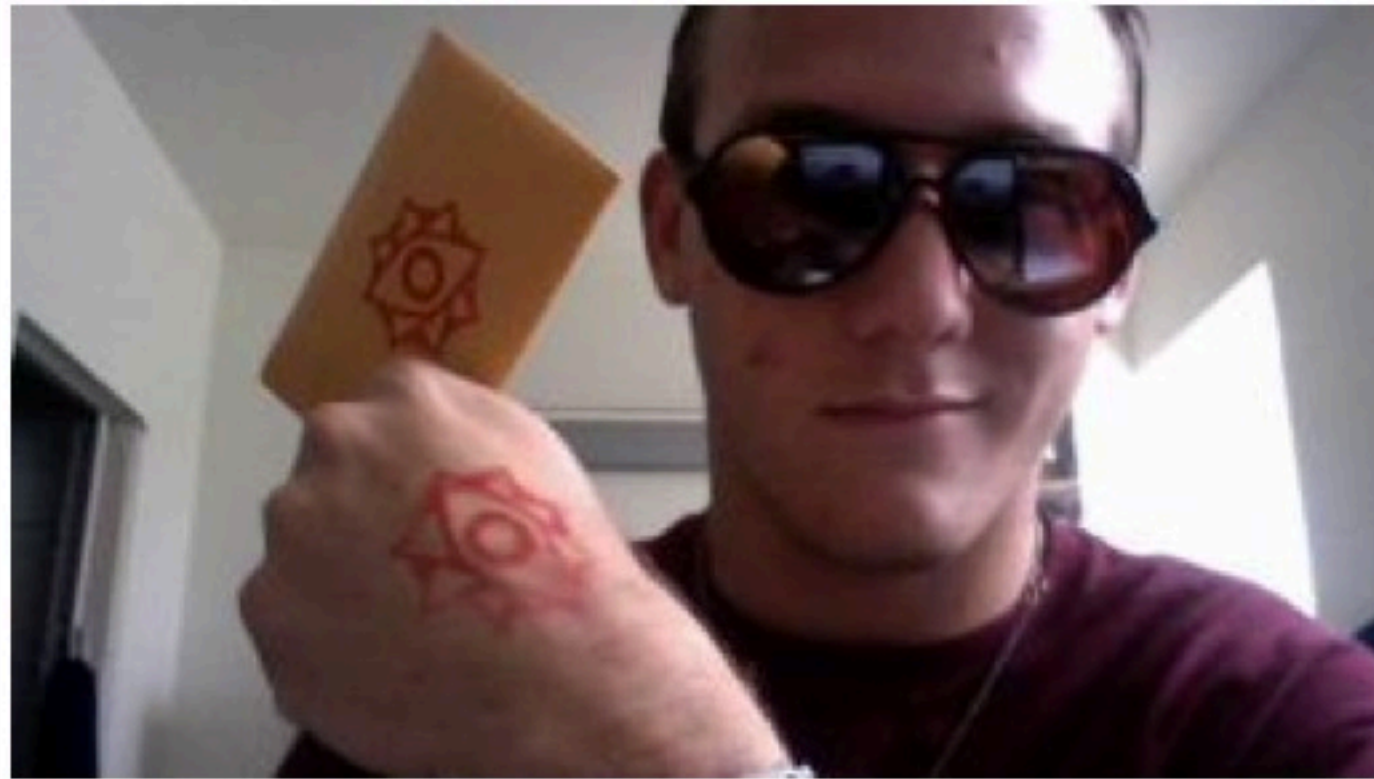
The floodgates open





**Will Cherry**

The game has begun! Anyone wanna make a deal? ;)




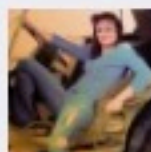
 Like · [Comment](#) · [Follow Post](#) · August 26, 2011 at 12:34pm

 Sam Sandweiss, Maddie Renov and 2 others like this.



**Eric Parra** Well someone's not very secretive...but anyone interested in designing and programming a fighting game, contact me please

August 26, 2011 at 12:53pm · [Like](#) ·  1



**Sydney Ralston** Hey, it's all going to let loose today anyway.

August 26, 2011 at 12:54pm · [Like](#) ·  3



The secret mark: Game logo on bodies  
August/September 2011





PROFILE BULLPEN MEMBERS CARD LOOKUP DEAL ARCHIVE LEADERBOARD ABOUT PHOTOLOG SUBMIT

← PREVIOUS DEAL NEXT DEAL →

## LETTERS OF MY LAI

360 points  
★★★★★  
Rating: 7.0/10 (16 votes cast)

CHARACTER ARTIFACTS BY AMIR MOJARRADI, MIKE ROMA, BEN CHANCE, DJ DJ, RIKKE HEINECKE, MADELINE BERGER, ALTHEA CAPRA, WILL CHERRY, ALLISON TATE-CORTESE AND RACHEL SCOTT

EVIDENCE DEAL INFO

### THE STORY OF A YOUNG WAR REPORTER TOLD THROUGH LETTERS BETWEEN LOVERS AND LIARS.

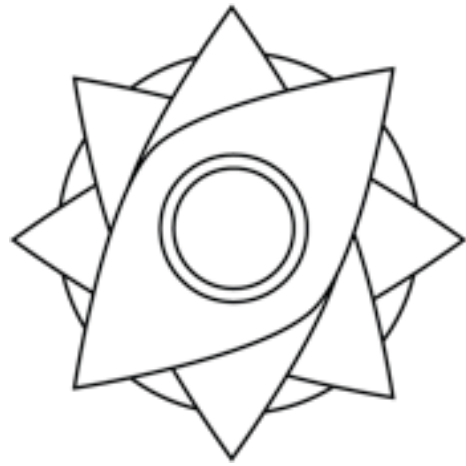
Two People Cards were also played in this Deal (not pictured).





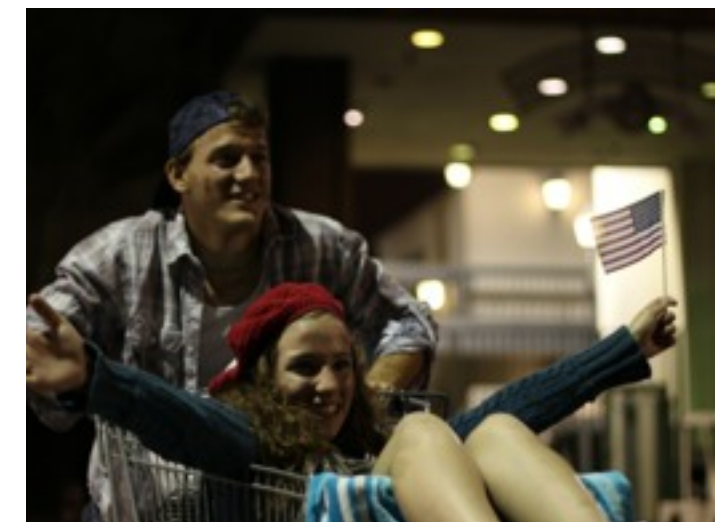
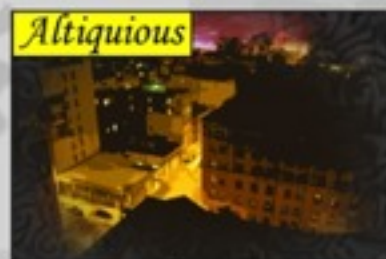
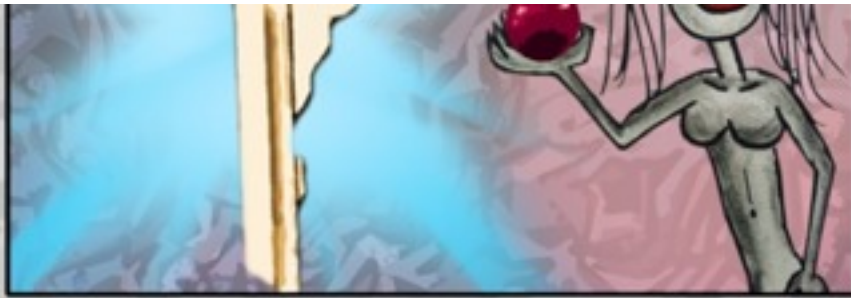


Mentorship experiences and serendipitous encounters



<http://reality.usc.edu>









## Two T's and One Elle

You are [Attending](#) - [Share](#) - Public Event

Time Wednesday, September 7 at 12:00pm – September 11 at 3:00pm

Location University of Southern California

Created By Elle Ghibertini

More Info Hey guys! I have to do this project for my psych class and I was hoping you might be able to help me out.

Here's the deal, I'm writing a paper on fact and fiction and it's affect on human interaction. I was thinking we could play that camp game 2 truths and a lie. If you don't remember the game, it basically consists of one person posting two truths and a lie, and then we all try and figure out which one is the lie. It should be really ffun!

What do you think? Wanna play?

-xoxo Elle

[+ Select Guests to Invite](#)

8 Attending [See All](#)

 Stephanie Fong

 Brianna Williams

 Nick Harvester

Share: [Post](#) [Link](#) [Photo](#) [Video](#)



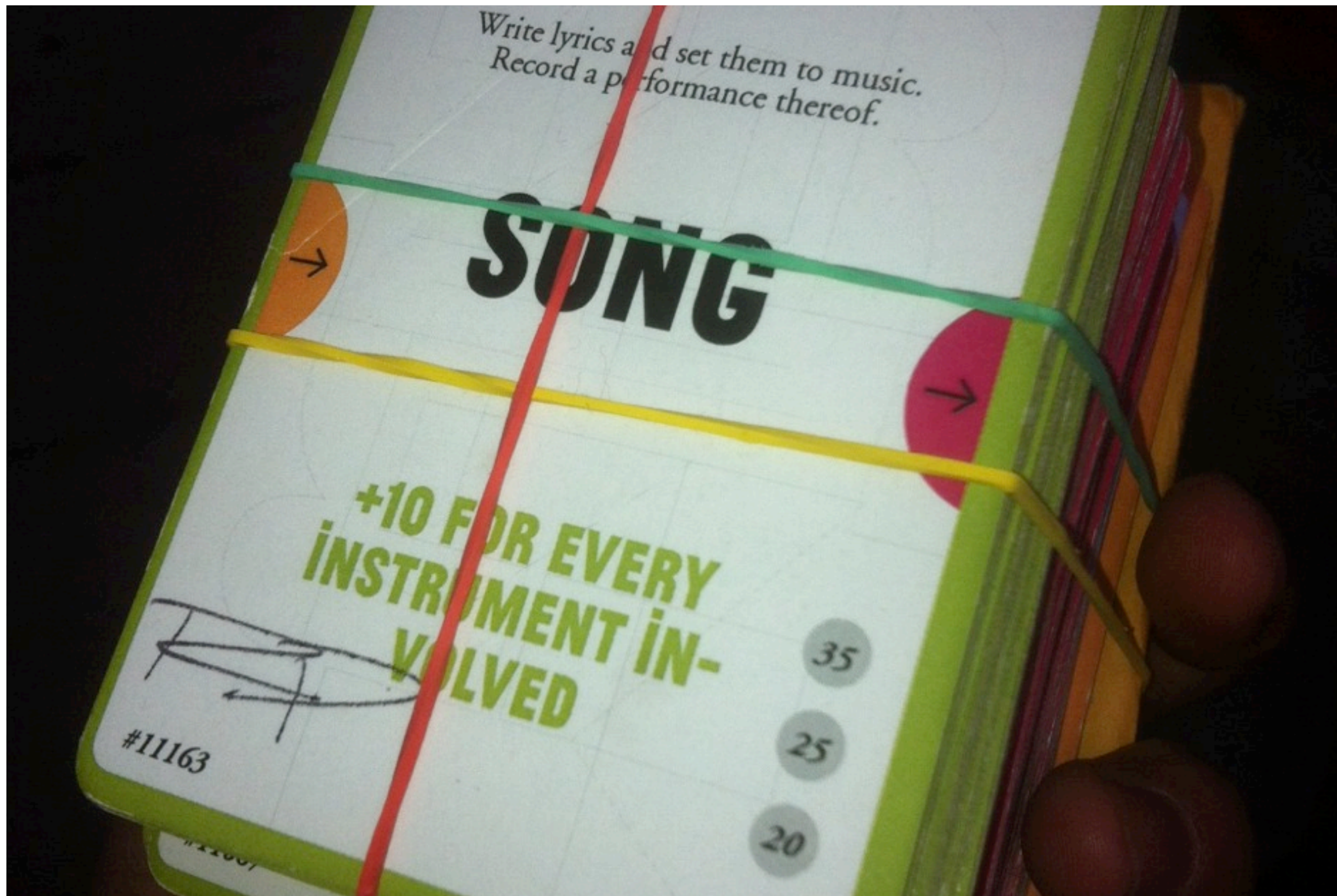
# “A productive chaos”

---

Tribalism, card banks  
gamejackers, and other signs of  
life







Card banks and credit unions

















THEMED EVENT

TRIBE MEMBERS  
ONLY!



OPERATION  
TAKE DOWN  
MARRA





**Jery Kinesh** @JeryKinesh

← Reply ↻

UNMASK [pic.twitter.com/hUm3Ai9](https://pic.twitter.com/hUm3Ai9)

🖼️ [View photo](#)



**Jery Kinesh** @JeryKinesh

I AM COMING [pic.twitter.com/X85VCUJ](https://pic.twitter.com/X85VCUJ)

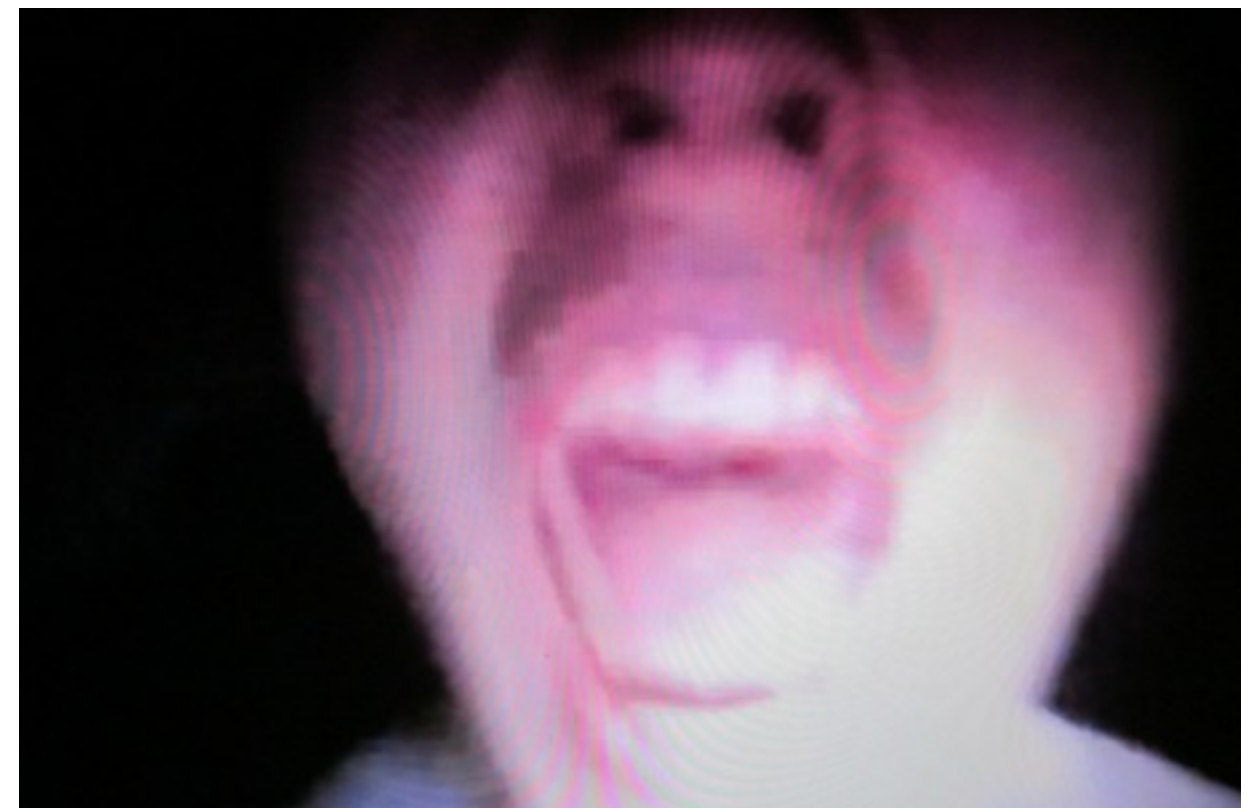
🖼️ [View photo](#)



**Jery Kinesh** @JeryKinesh

TODAY [pic.twitter.com/1T6T7Nd](https://pic.twitter.com/1T6T7Nd)

🖼️ [View photo](#)



Danger and Menace: Echoes of the Reality Committee



Player-designed poster for film project about the game -- one of 10 such projects submitted.





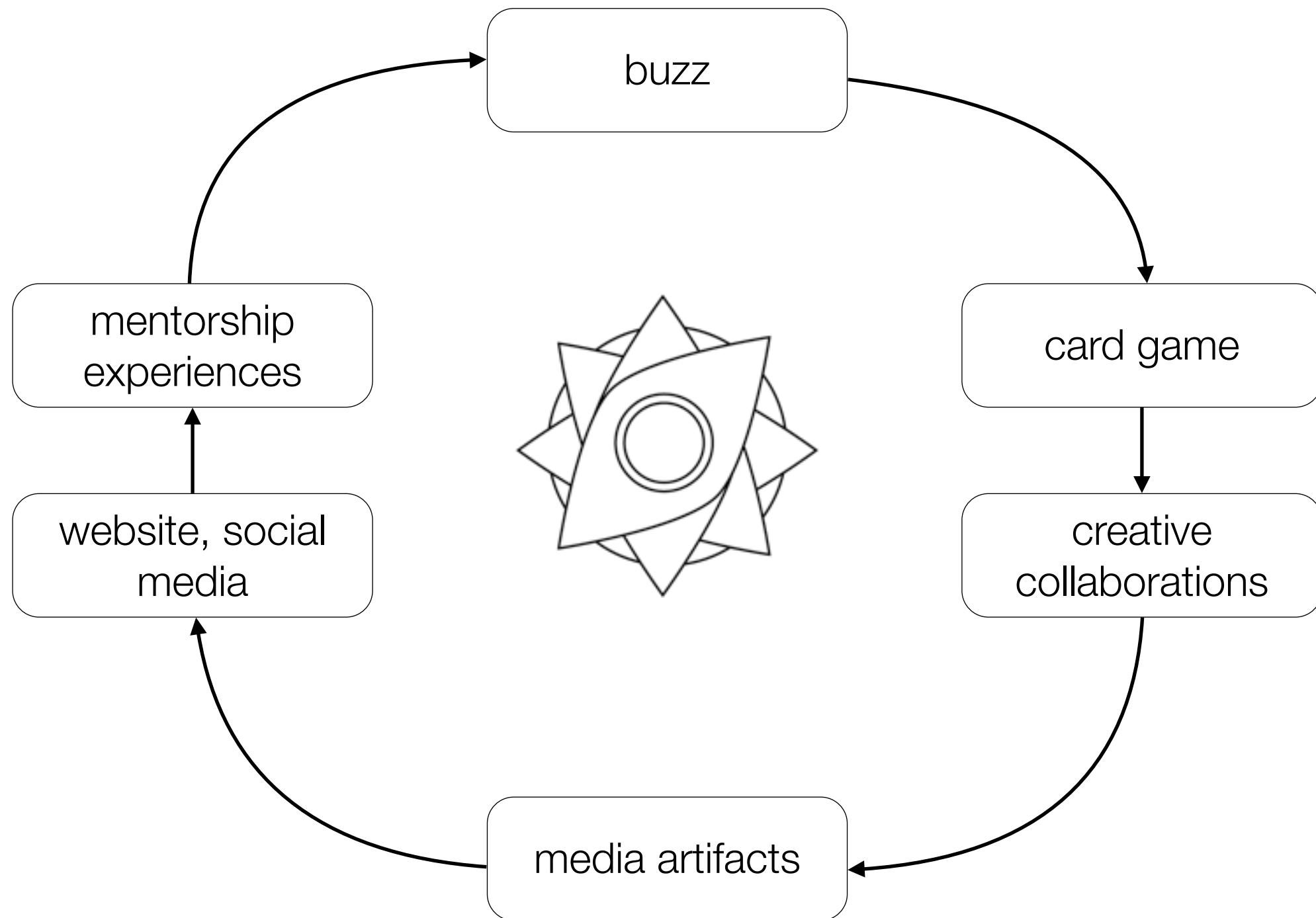
Wrap party  
December, 2011



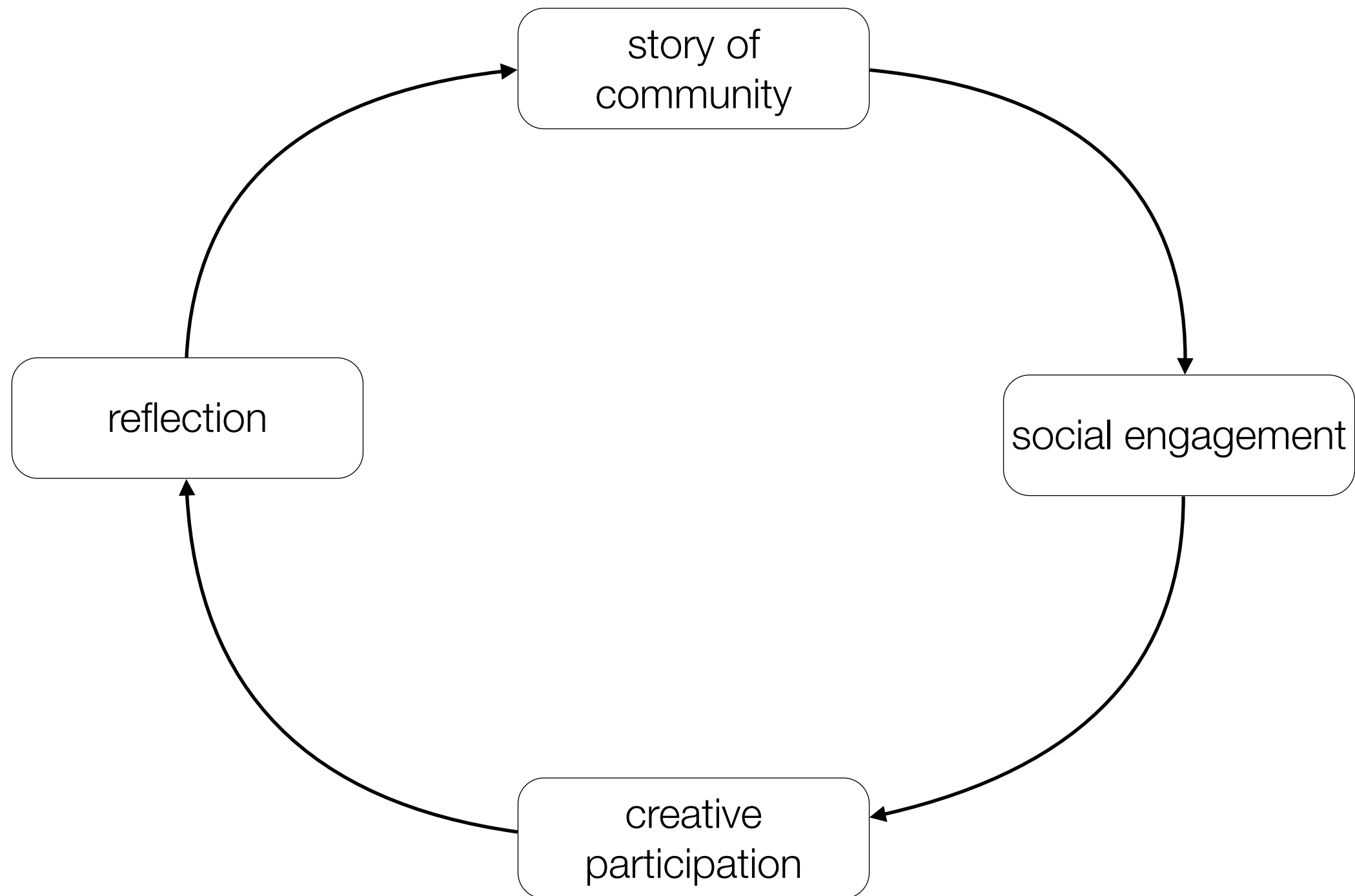


USC School of Cinematic Arts  
2011





Schematic: pervasive play dynamo



Schematic: narrative placemaking dynamo - a virtuous cycle





GAME OVER

Special thanks to Simon Wiscombe, Tracy Fullerton, Tara McPherson, Anna Lotko, Gabriel Peters-Lazaro, Elizabeth Daley, Michael Renov, and Holly Willis.

More info: <http://reality.usc.edu>



Jeff Watson:  
@remotedevice  
<http://remotedevice.net>





PROFILE BULLPEN MEMBERS CARD LOOKUP DEAL ARCHIVE LEADERBOARD ABOUT PHOTOBLOG SUBMIT

scareality Log Out

## KAYLA CARLISLE

2170 points Rank - Revolutionary

"Hey, I'm Kayla Carlisle, and I'm an Animation student. Does anyone out there have the Comic card? If you have the comic card and need an illustrator, I would be thrilled to collaborate with you! I am also looking for [...]" - View

Kayla Carlisle's Bullpen activity  
Send Private Message

Awards

### DEMOGRAFIK

Name	Kayla Carlisle
Llama or Alpaca?	Alpaca
Bond or Indy?	Indy
Emergency response	Children and the elderly first
Skills	Animation, animating, poster, flipbook, drawing, comic, illustration, cartoonist, cartooning, photoshop, illustrator, flash, actress, illustrating, acting,
Other	I like the dark stuff, I like the artsy stuff, I want to work with you! My site: <a href="http://impatientobserver.blogspot.com/">http://impatientobserver.blogspot.com/</a>



## CHRONOPHOTOGRAPHY

Precursors to the Cinema 4/5

Chronophotography is defined as "a set of photographs of a moving object, taken for the purpose of recording and exhibiting successive phases of motion."

"We all have our time machines, don't we. Those that take us back are memories... And those that carry us forward are dreams."  
- Uber-Morlock, The Time Machine

## ABOUT TIME

#11172

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