

The Other White Meat: Design Architecture for Sandbox Games

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Hi.



AKA: a high-level overview of
things that are important for
a good sandbox game

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Foreword

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- I'm a mechanist



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- I'm a mechanist
- This is mostly high-level



Foreword

- I'm a mechanist
- This is mostly high-level
- I'm British



In this session:

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- Foundations

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- What is a sandbox?

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- What is a sandbox?
- A sandbox philosophy in three pillars

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- What is a sandbox?
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- A sandbox architecture that works
- Pros and cons of a sandbox approach

Foundations



Foundations

- Creative good => business good



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- Three intrinsic motivators model



(<http://gdcvault.com/play/1011921/Finding-The-Right-Rewards-To>)

Foundations

- Creative good => business good
- Three intrinsic motivators model
- Players will optimize towards boredom



What is a sandbox?

What is a sandbox?



Counterstrike is 13 years old



This is a sandbox:



A philosophy of sandboxes in three pillars



Social



Social: not just friends!



Social:
“But I want to play with my friend”



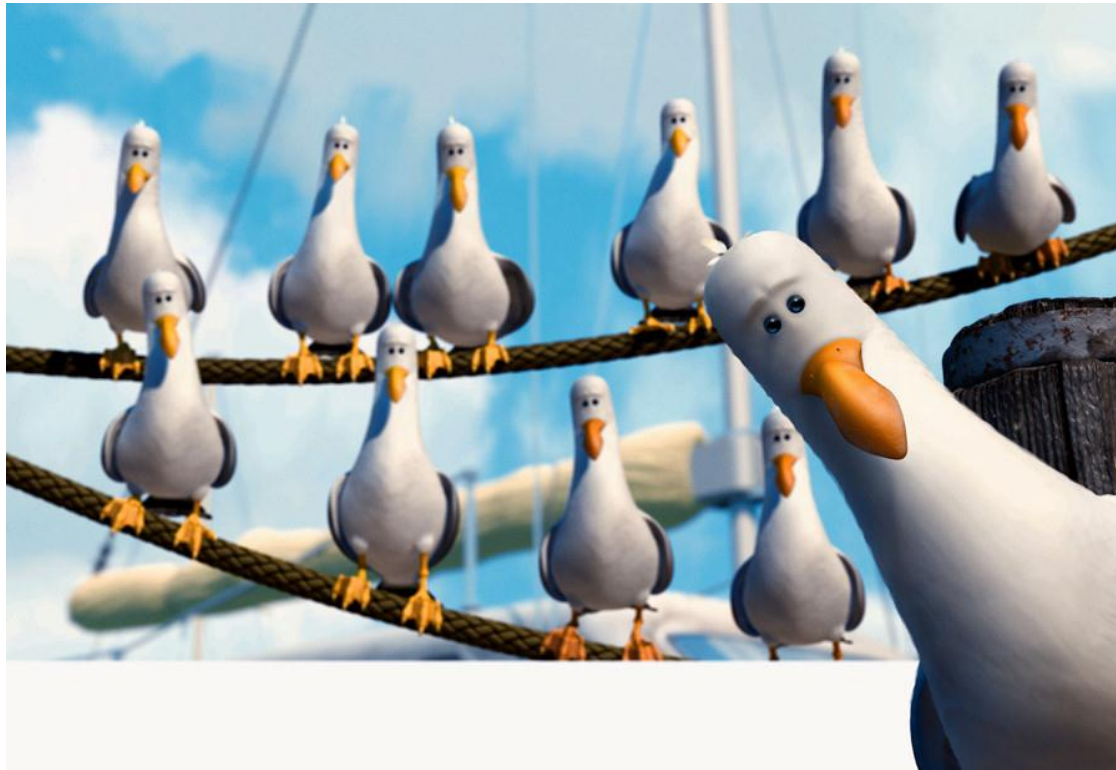
Social: time and space



Goal-driven



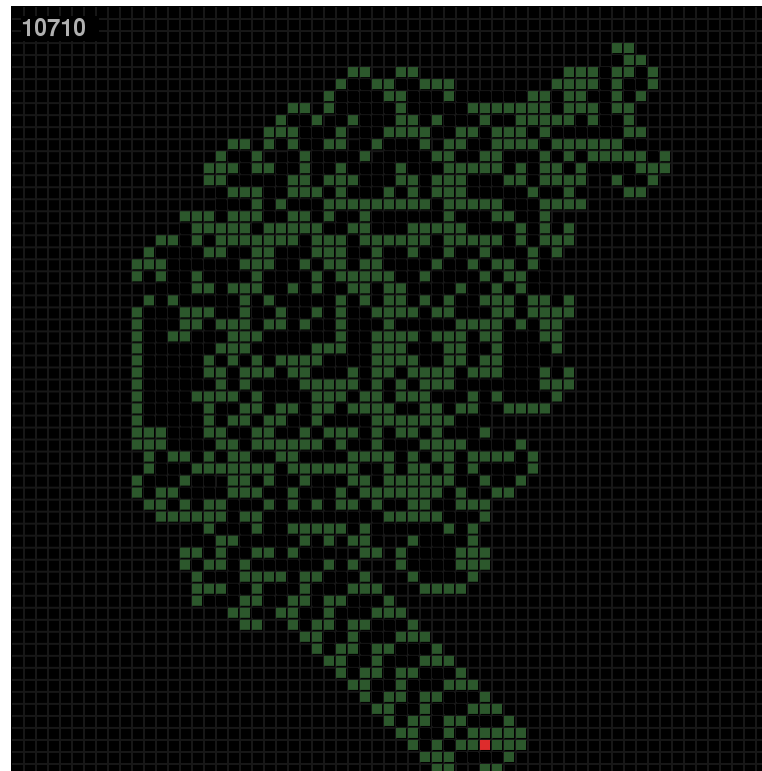
Goal-driven: ownership



Goal-driven: long-term



Emergent



Emergent: CHEAP



Emergent: possibility space



Emergent: needs to be good



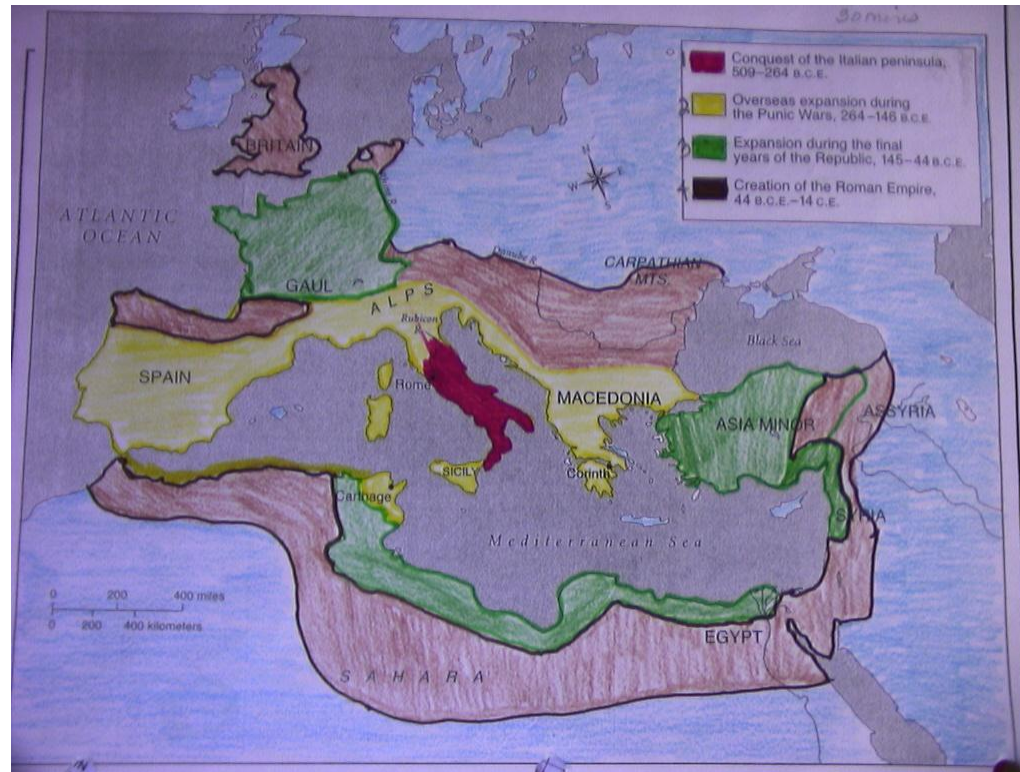
Emergent: needs to get used



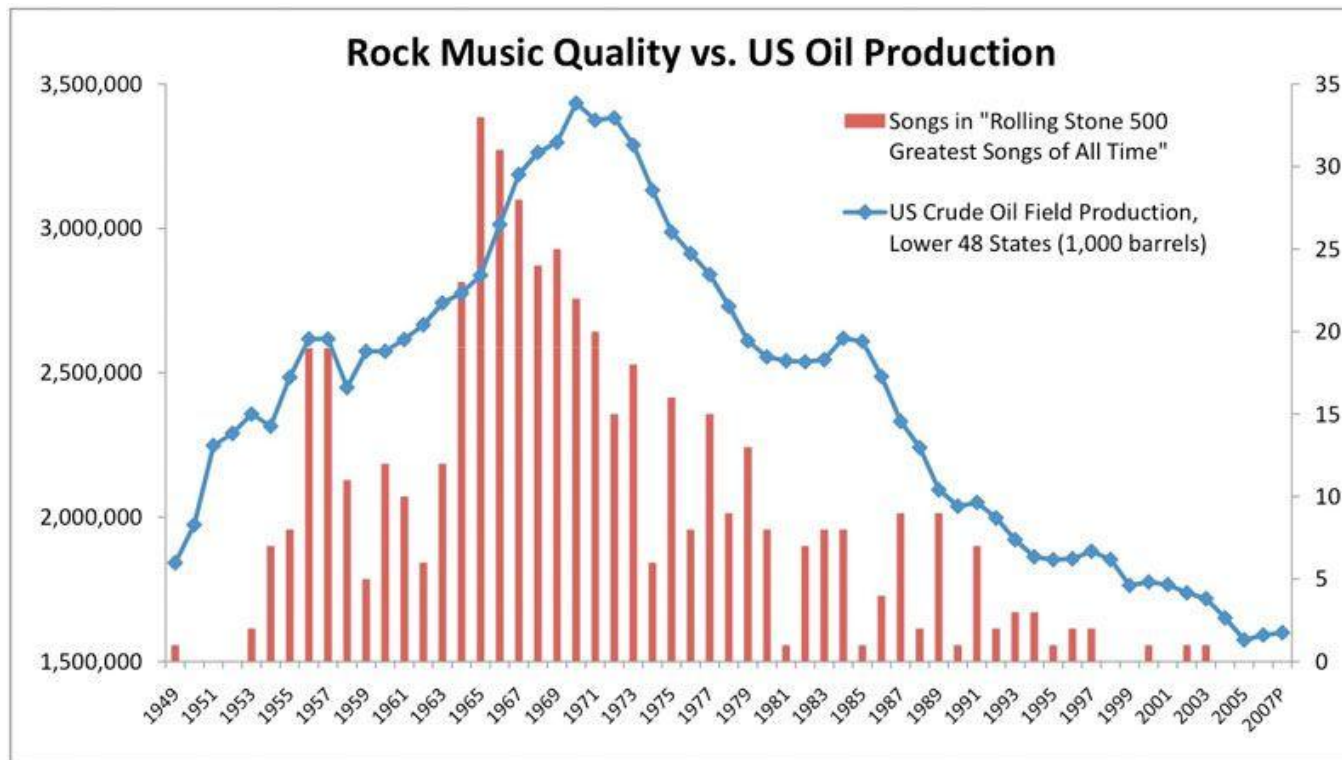
Three pillars redux



The Roman Empire (as a mechanic)



Graph unrelated



Pros of sandboxes

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- If it's done well, people will pay for it forever.

Cons of sandboxes



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- Not fully proven



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- Not proven to scale well



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- Not proven to scale as well as WoW-like games



Cons of sandboxes

- ~~Not fully proven~~
- ~~Not proven to scale well~~
- ~~Not proven to scale as well as WoW-like games~~
- WoW is not a sandbox



Pros of sandboxes

- If it's done well, people will play it forever.
- If it's done well, people will pay for it forever.
- It's not trying to be WoW

Trying to be WoW does not work

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Summary

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- Intrinsic motivators are good



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- Social, goal-driven, emergent



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- Intrinsic motivators are good
- Social, goal-driven, emergent
- Use optimization to drive high-value gameplay



Questions!

