

# THE LAYERED TETRAD

# Topics

- **The Layered Tetrad**
- **The Inscribed Layer**
- **The Dynamic Layer**
- **The Cultural Layer**
- **The Responsibility of the Designer**

# The Layered Tetrad

- **The last chapter presented several frameworks**
- **This Layered Tetrad is the framework of this class**
  - Expands upon those that came before it
  - Considers the cultural significance and impact of games
- **Does not define what a game is**
  - **Instead helps you understand and analyze**
    - The elements that are needed to make a game
    - The dynamic behavior of those elements during play
    - Both the impact of the game on culture and the affect of culture on the game
- **We use the term *game*, but this is applicable to any form of interactive media or experience**

# The Layered Tetrad

- **Presented in a tetrad (based on Schell's)**

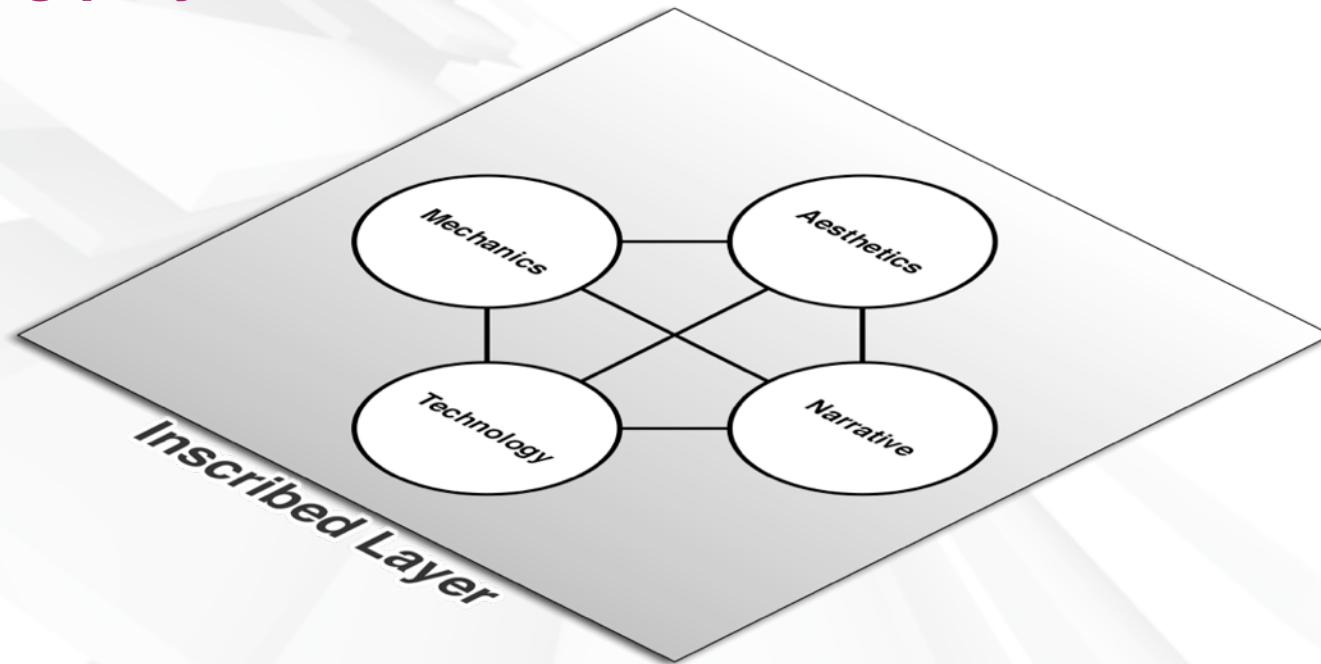
- **Mechanics:** The systems that define how the game will react to play. The elements that separate games from other media
- **Aesthetics:** The looks, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations of the game. Game art, sound, and more.
- **Technology:** The underlying tech that makes the game work.
- **Narrative:** The story, premise, characters, etc. of the game. Renamed from Schell's to show its breadth.

- **Presented in three layers**

- **Inscribed:** The game as created and encoded by the developers
- **Dynamic:** The game's behavior during play
- **Cultural:** The game's relationship to society

# The Inscribed Layer

- Game as created and encoded by developers
- Similar to Schell's Elemental Tetrad
- Limited to elements that exist when the game is not being played



# The Inscribed Layer

## ▪ **Mechanics**

- **Systems that define how the player and game will interact**
- **Includes:** Player interaction pattern, Objective, Rules, Resources, Boundaries

## ▪ **Aesthetics**

- **How the game looks, sounds, smells, tastes, and feels**

## ▪ **Technology**

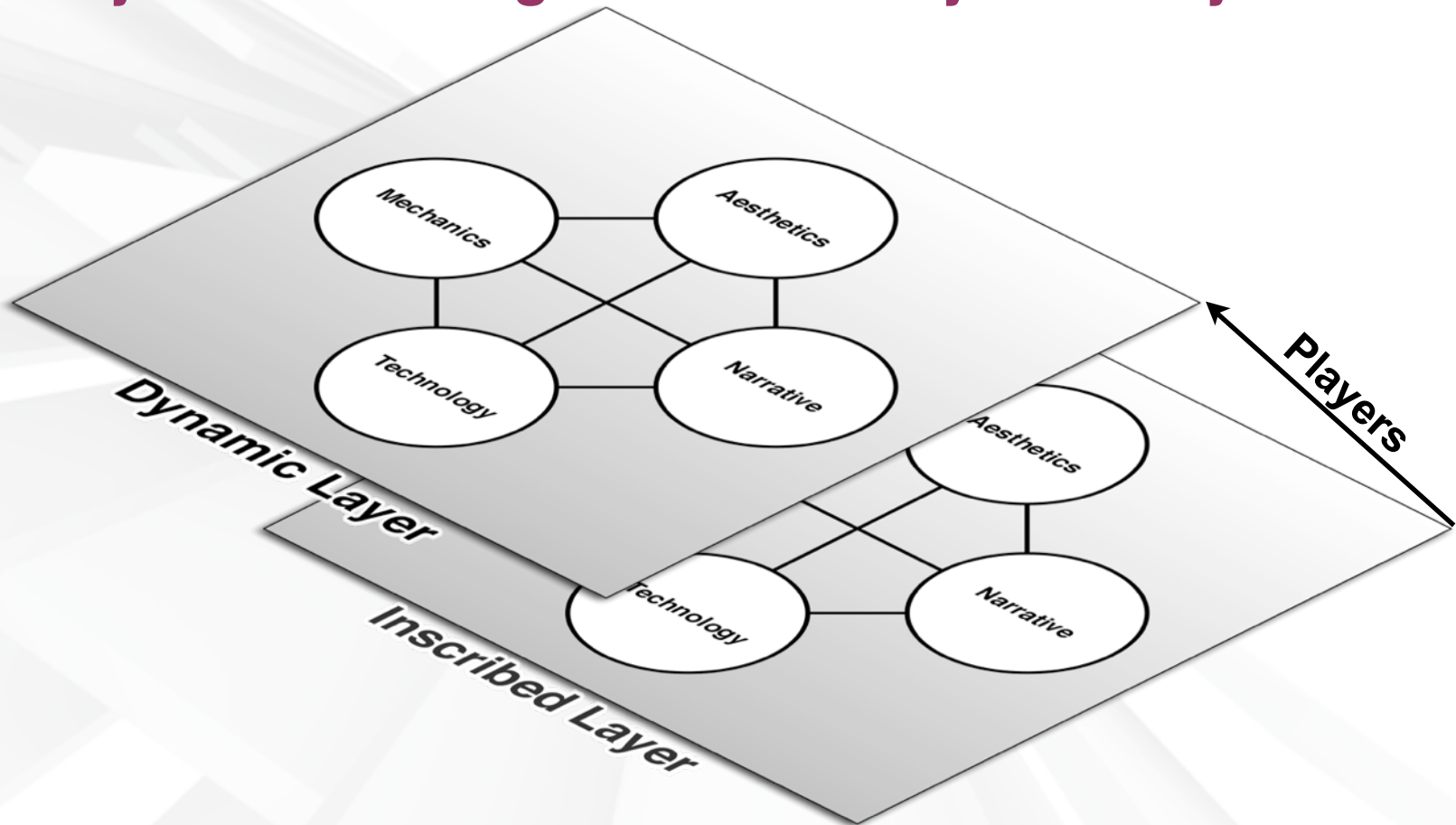
- **Paper and digital technology that enable gameplay**

## ▪ **Narrative**

- **Authored premise, characters, and plot**

# The Dynamic Layer

- The game as it is being played
- Players move the game into the dynamic layer



# The Dynamic Layer

- **Mechanics**

- **Players' interactions with inscribed mechanics**
- **Includes:** Procedures, Strategies, Emergent game behavior, Outcome

- **Aesthetics**

- **Aesthetics that are generated during play**
- **Play environment**

- **Technology**

- **Execution of inscribed technology and code**

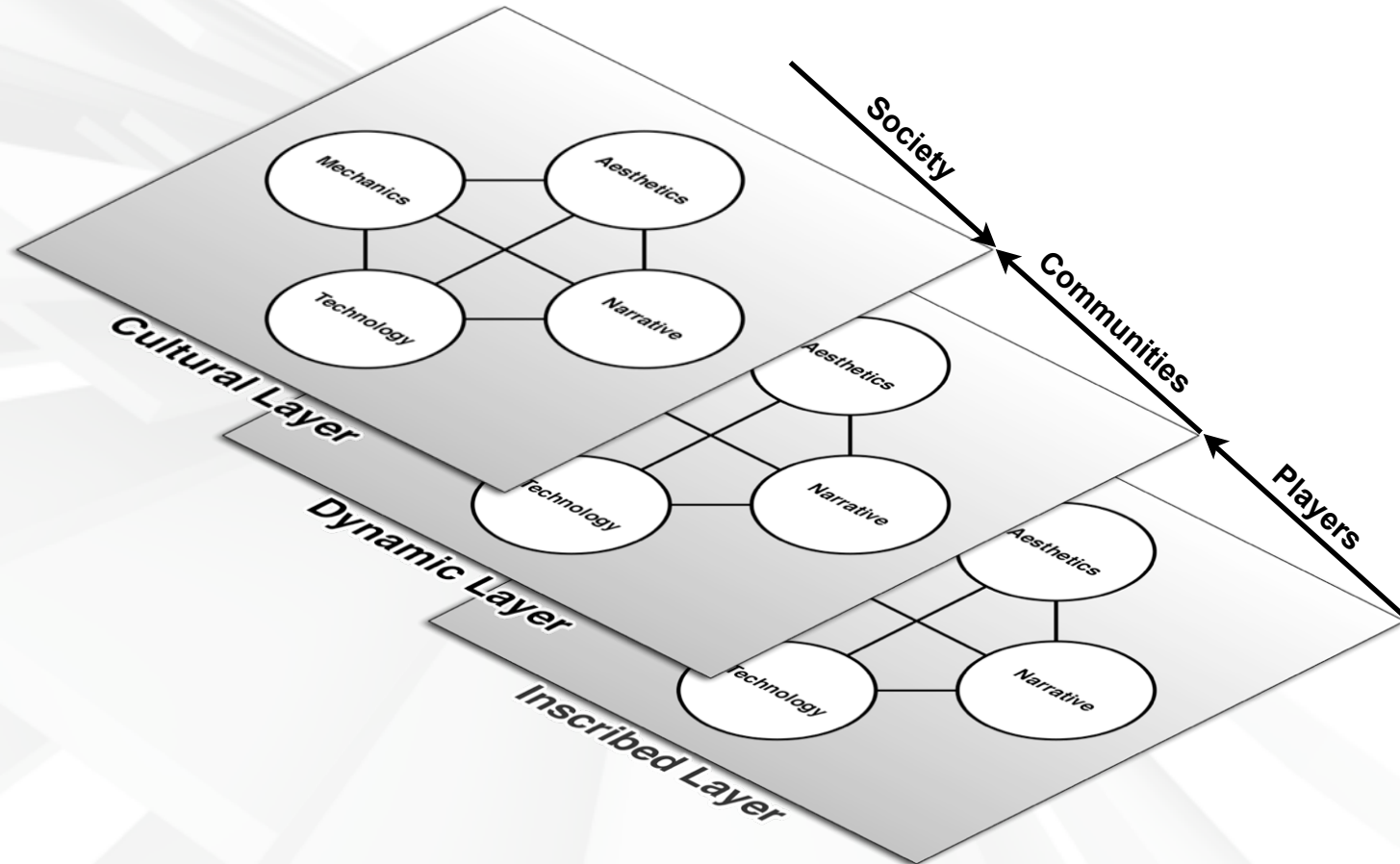
- **Narrative**

- **Narrative created as a part or result of gameplay**



# The Cultural Layer

- The game beyond play
- Intersection of game community and society



# The Cultural Layer

## ▪ **Mechanics**

- Game mods created by players that alter the Inscribed Layer
- Impact of emergent play on society

## ▪ **Aesthetics**

- Fan art, remixes, cosplay
- Does not include authorized transmedia

## ▪ **Technology**

- Game tech used for non-game purposes
- Effect of external cheating technology on game

## ▪ **Narrative**

- Fan-made narratives

# The Cultural Layer

- **The divisions between the four elements are less crisp in the Cultural Layer**
  - The four elements intermingle in several of the examples from the last slide
- **The Cultural Layer is also the only layer of a game that non-players will ever see**
  - People who don't play a game experience it through the stories told by those who have
  - The collision of the community of players and larger society
- **What messages are our games sending into society?**

# The Responsibility of the Designer

- **All designers understand their responsibility for the Inscribed Layer**
  - **Most understand their responsibility for the Dynamic Layer**
    - Example of Team Fortress 2 hat behavior
- **Responsibility at the Cultural Layer?**
  - **The common perception of games**
    - Puerile, Vulgar, Violent, Misogynistic
  - **Does it have to be this way?**
  - **Games can be...**
    - Prosocial
    - Educational
    - Meaningful
    - What else?

# The Responsibility of the Designer

- **What can interactive media become?**
  - How can you as designers push the term *game* beyond what it means now?
  - How can you make your families and friends proud that you're entering this industry?
  - How can you respect your players and treat them well?
- **I believe that it is our responsibility as designers to**
  - Promote pro-social, thoughtful behavior through our games
  - Respect our players and the time that they dedicate to experiencing what we create.

# Chapter 3 – Summary

- **The three layers represent a transition of agency from the developers to the players of a game**
  - The Inscribed Layer is entirely controlled by developers
  - The Dynamic Layer is controlled by both developers and players
  - The Cultural Layer is influenced by developers but ultimately controlled by players and society at large
- **Next Chapter: The next three chapters will each tackle one of the three layers**
  - Chapter 4: The Inscribed Layer
  - Chapter 5: The Dynamic Layer
  - Chapter 6: The Cultural Layer