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**
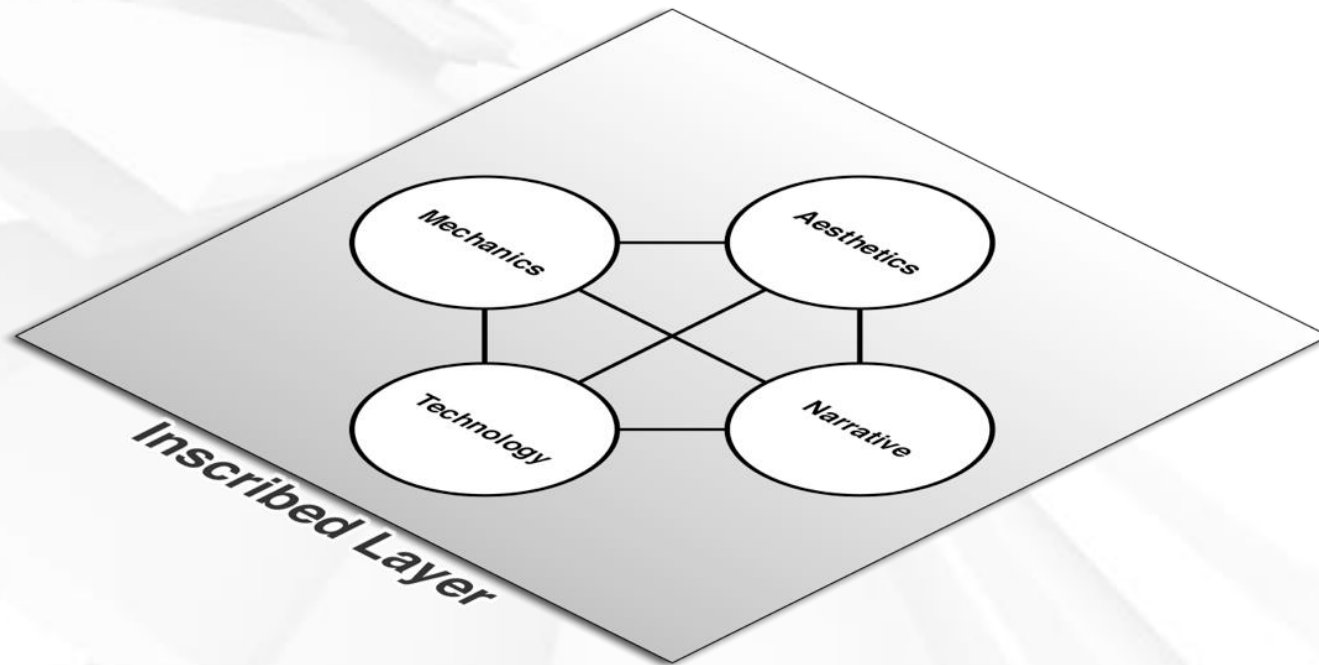
The Inscribed Layer

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

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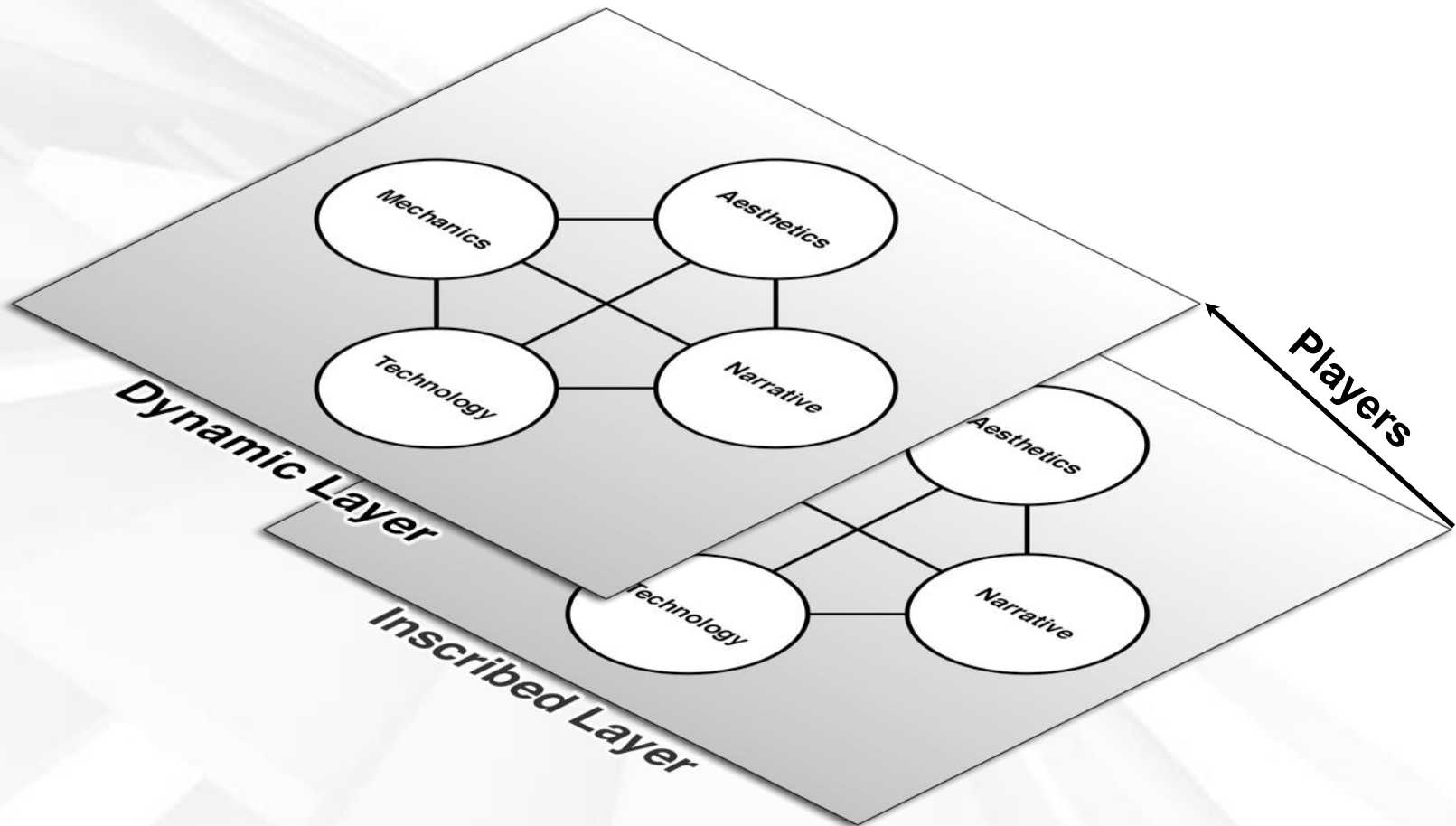 - **How the game looks, sounds, smells, tastes, and feels**

- **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**
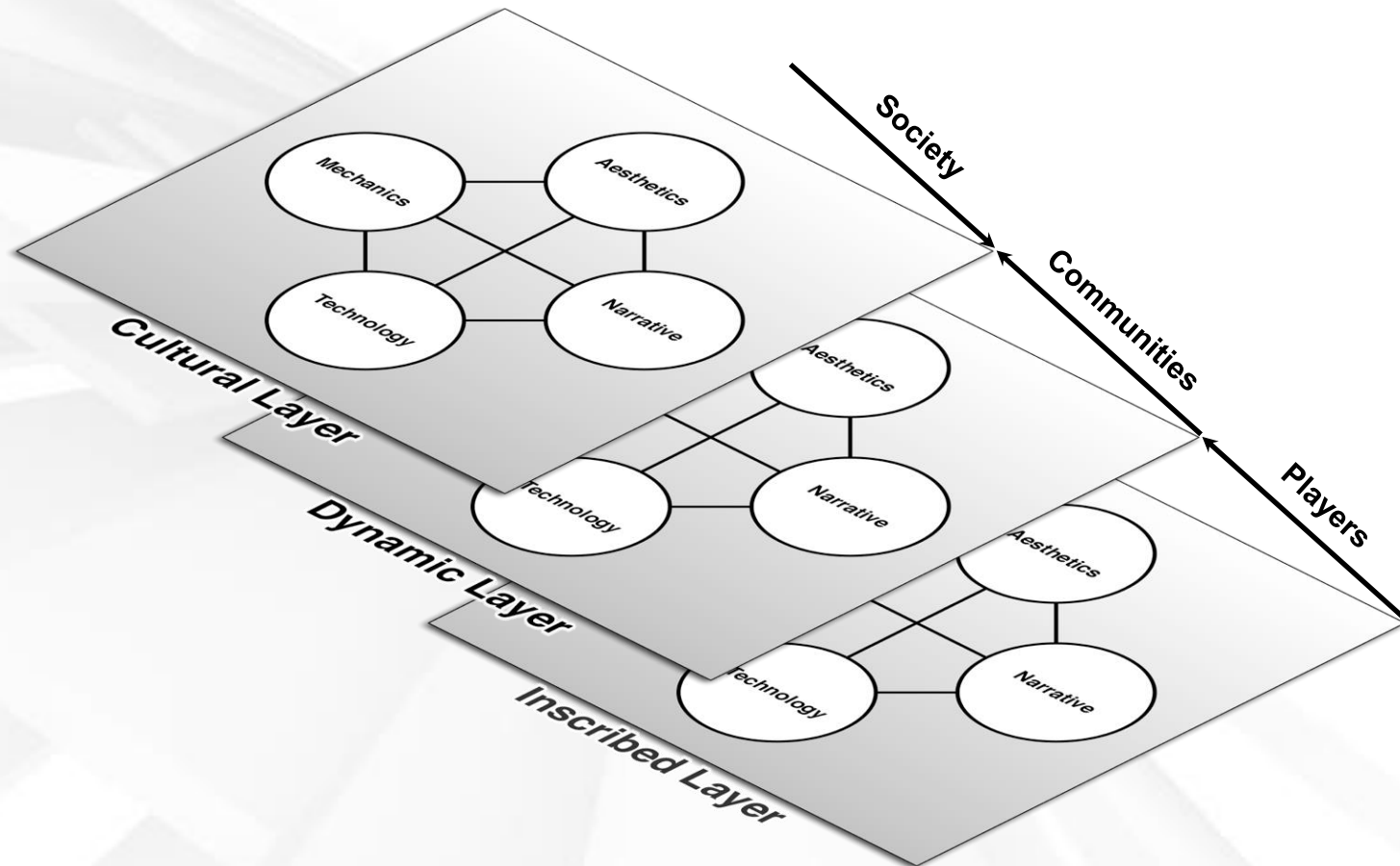 - **Play environment**

- **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**