

## Lecture 28

# Game Analytics

# The Rise of Big Data

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- Big data is changing game design
  - Can gather data from a huge number of players
  - Can use that data to inform future content
- **What can we do with all that data?**
  - What types of questions can we answer?
  - How does it affect our business model?
- **How do we collect all of this data?**
  - What are the technical challenges?
  - What are the legal/ethical challenges?

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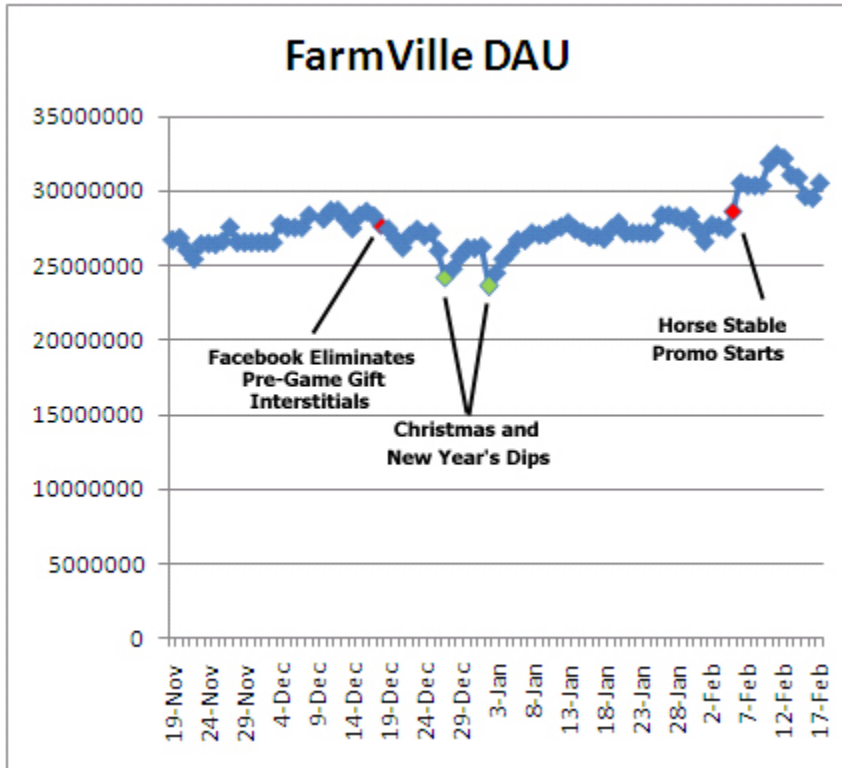
# The Role of Analytics

- Game development continues after you ship
  - Improvements to expand player base
  - Critical for DLC or in-game items
- Mixture of **business** and **game design**
  - How do you keep players playing the game?
  - What do they like? What makes them frustrated?
  - This is the **new direction of game design**
- Breaks down into **three categories**
  - Categories determined by data complexity



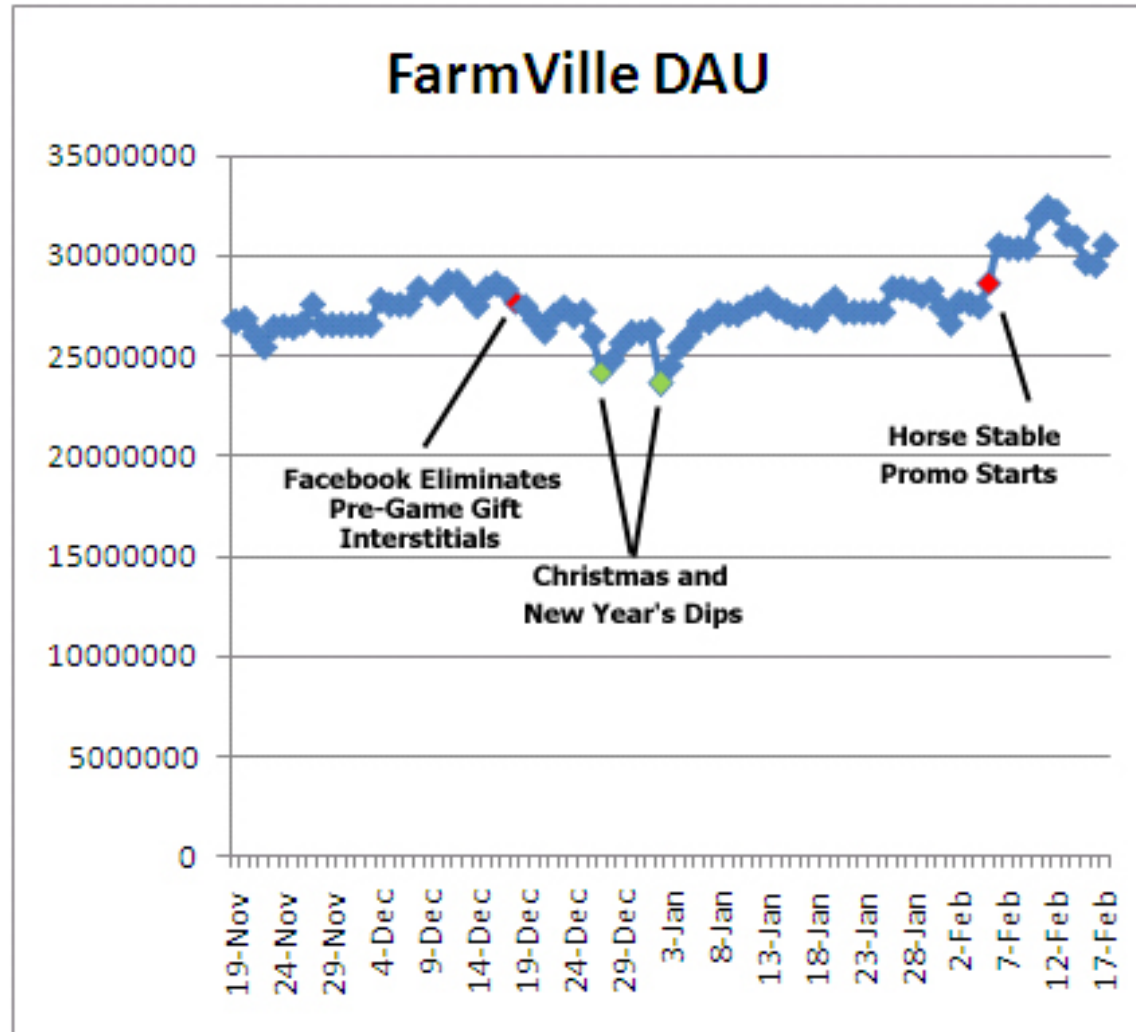


# Player Activity Analytics

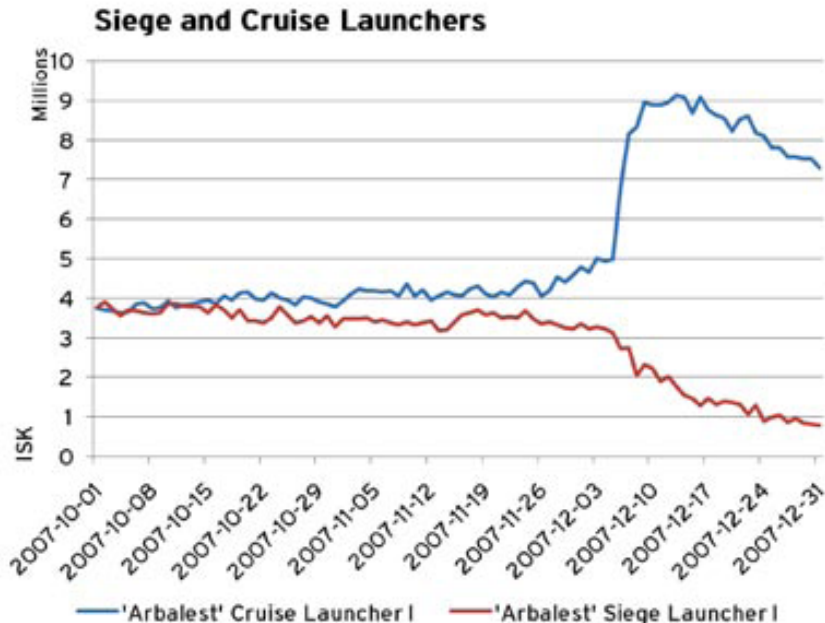


- **Data for a single player**
  - Or for a given player group
- **Examples:**
  - How often do they play?
  - When does the player quit?
  - Can we get the player back?
- Some support from platform
  - Generalities like play time
  - Found in Facebook, Steam
  - Custom solutions for more

# Player Activity Analytics



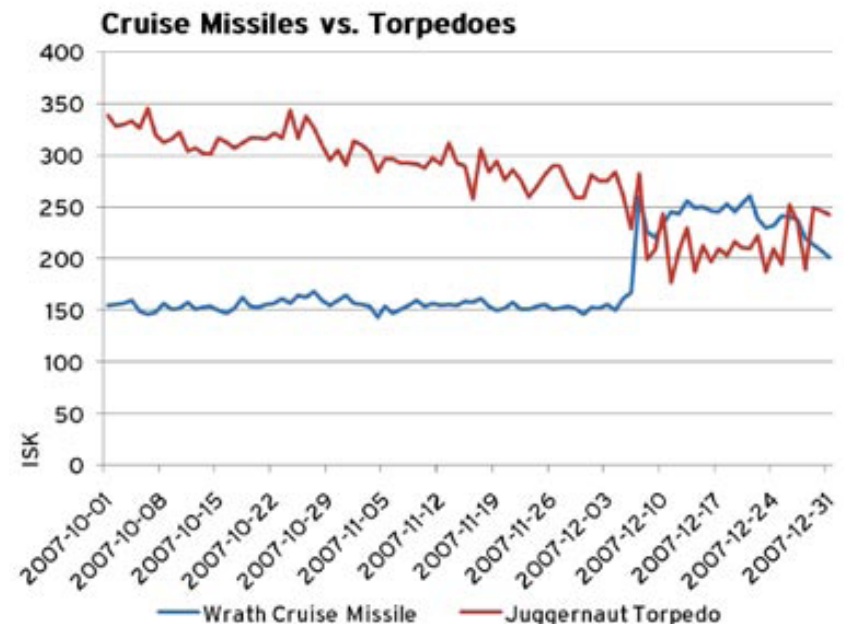
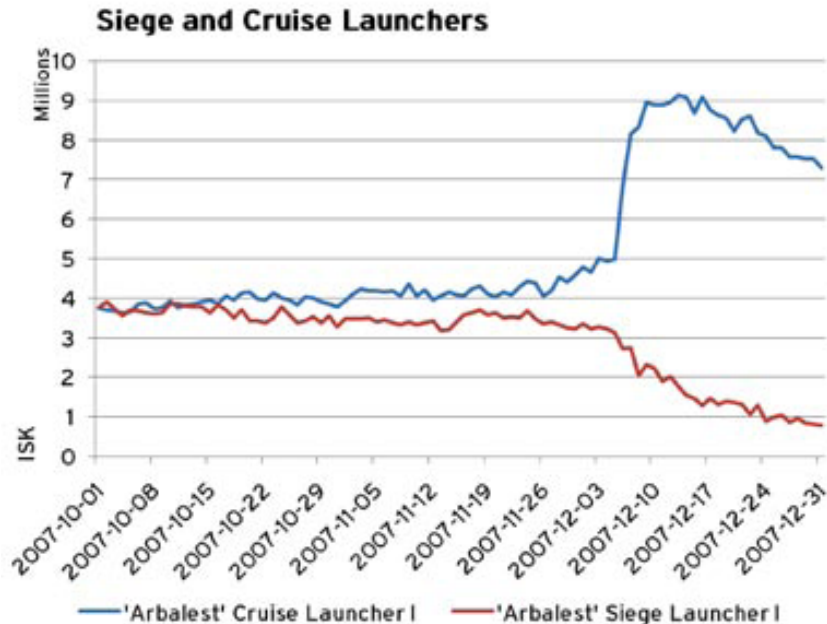
# Game System Analytics

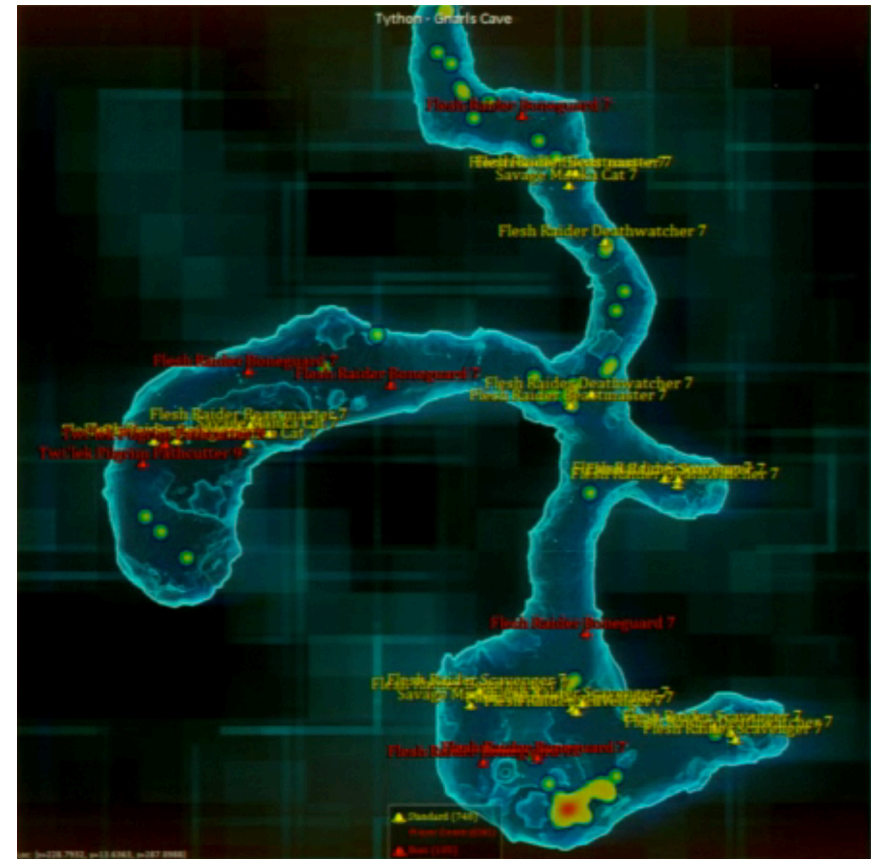


- **Non-spatial game data**
  - Behavior of many players
  - Often the game economy
  - Also issues of game balance
- Needs custom data gathering
  - Data tailored to your game
  - And so are the data queries
- But visualization is easy
  - Queries *format* is standard
  - Can use existing viz tools

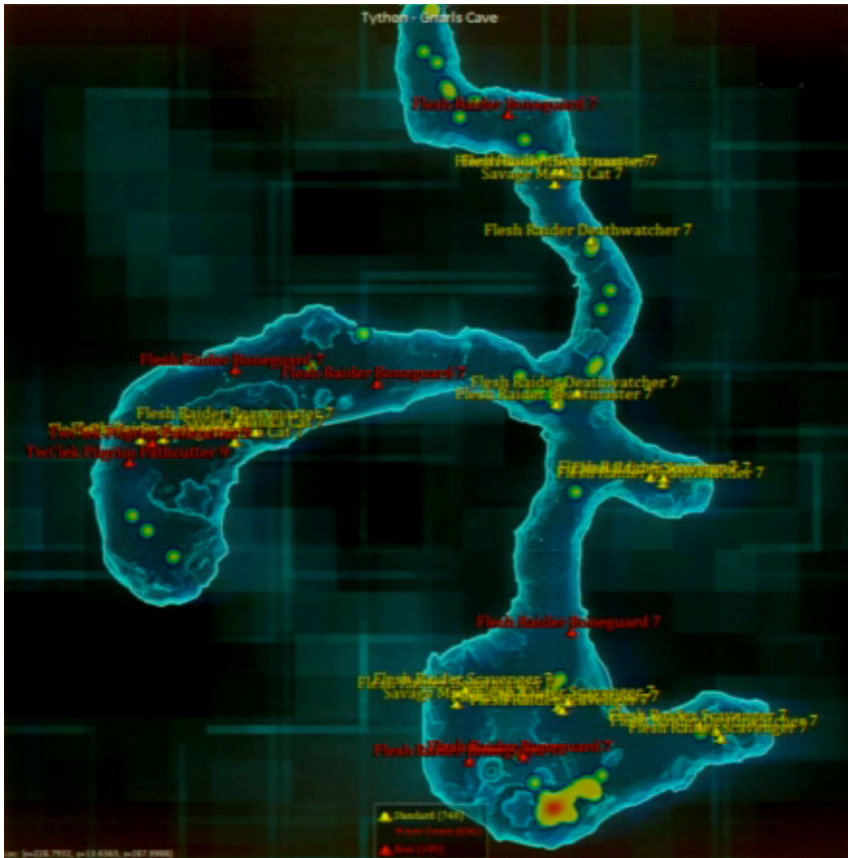
# Game System Analytics

- **Example:** Weapon economy in *Eve Online*





# Spatial Data Analytics

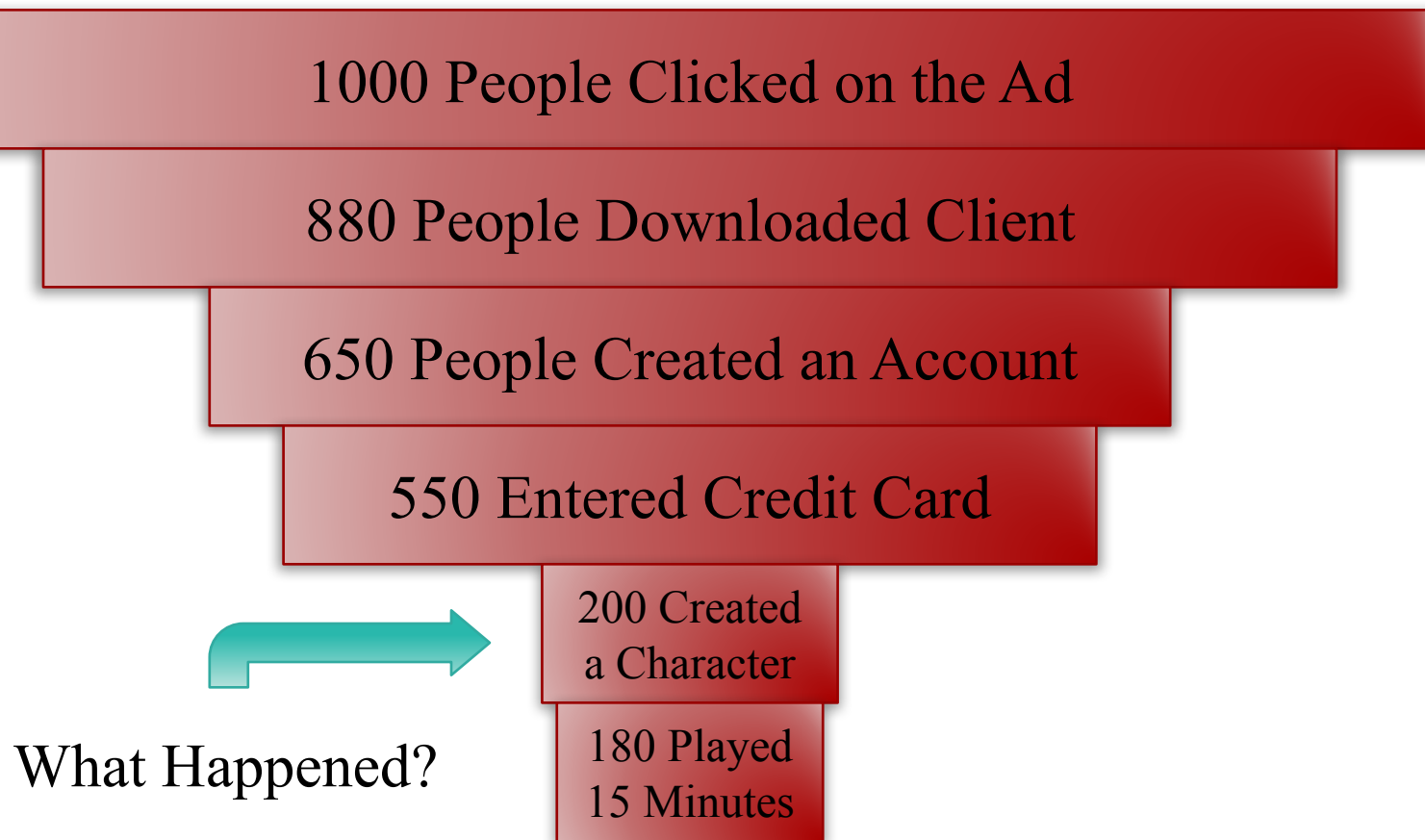


- **Spatial game data**
  - Where are things happening
  - Critical for big MMOs
  - Also useful in level design
- Requires custom solutions
  - Custom data collection
  - Custom data visualization
- Complex tools made in-house by the game studios
  - Only worth it for big games



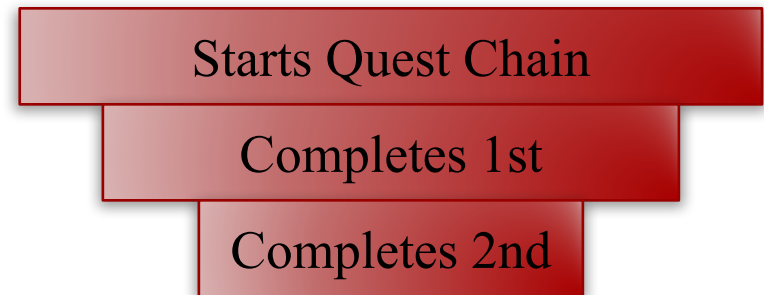
# Player Activity: Funnel Charts

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# Funnel Charts and Design

- **Goal:** find “pain points”
  - When does player quit X?
  - Why doesn’t player do Y?
  - Less pain = more accessible
- But do not necessarily want to eliminate them all
  - Easy game = casual game
  - Turns off hardcore players
  - Hardcore players are needed for almost any game (???)

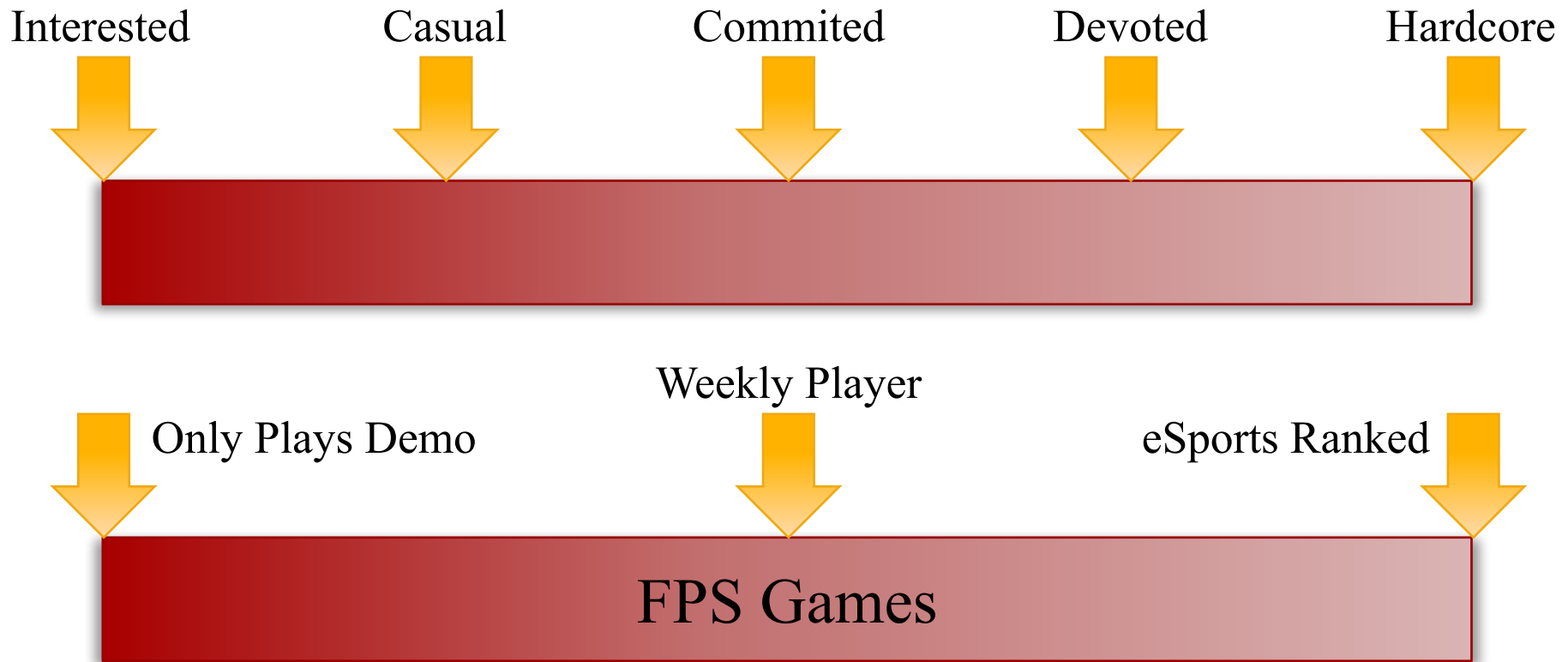




# Casual-Hardcore Spectrum

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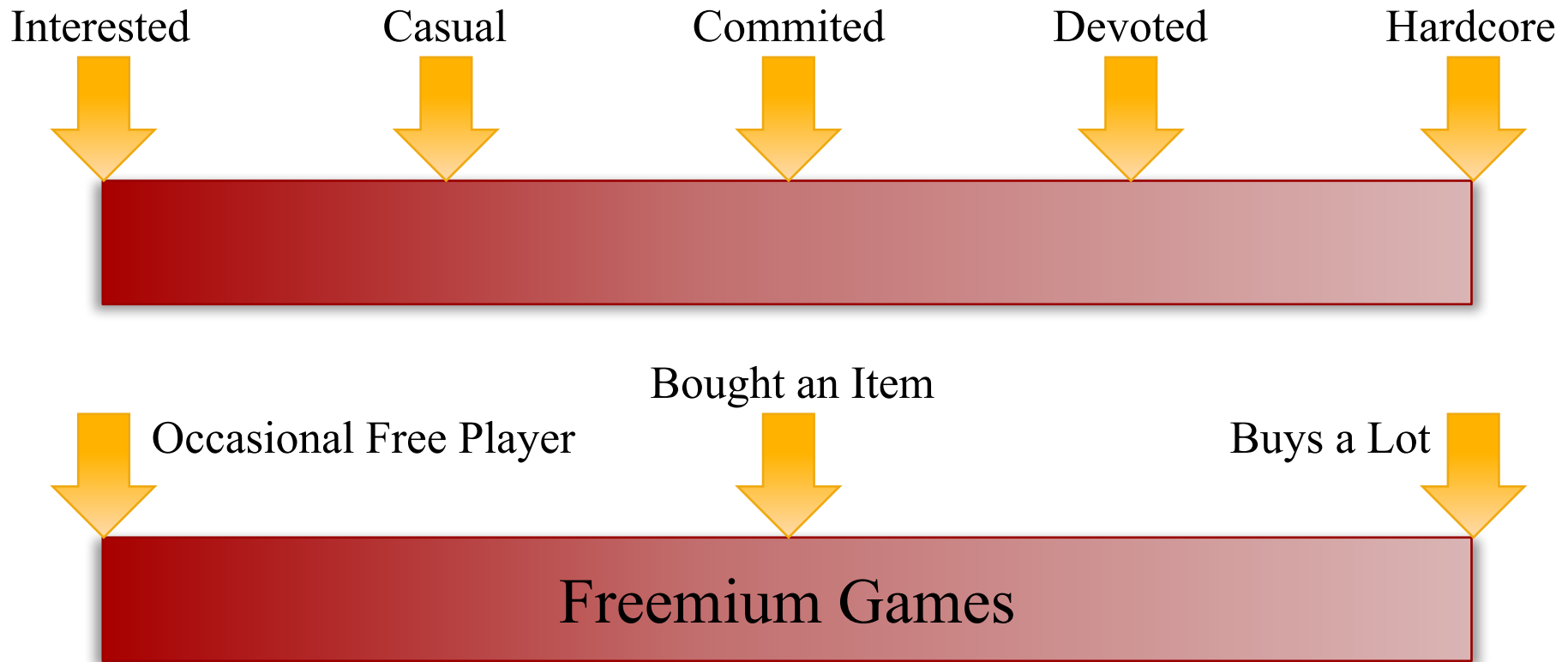
Casual and Core are property of **players**, not the **game**



# Casual-Hardcore Spectrum

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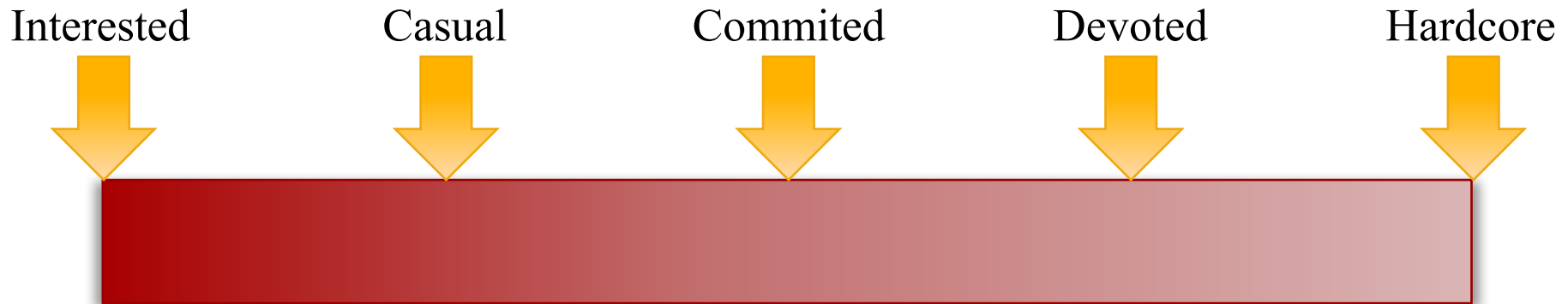


# Casual-Hardcore Spectrum

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Casual and Core are property of **players**, not the **game**

Goal of funnel is to find out how far apart these are



# Idea from Web Design: A/B Testing

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- Develop two versions of a page
- Randomly show different versions to users
- Track users interact with page
- Evaluate the result with statistics
- Choose the “better” version

# A/B Testing in Game Development

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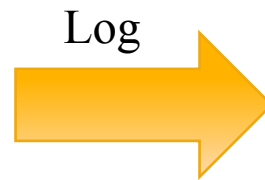
- Develop two versions of a **game mechanic**
- Randomly show different versions to users
- Track users interact with page
- Evaluate the result with statistics
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# Game Specific Data

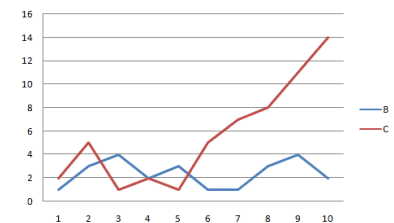
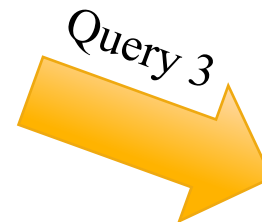
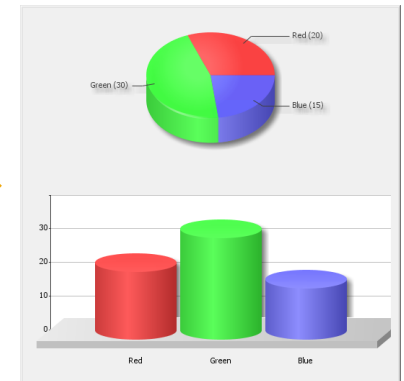
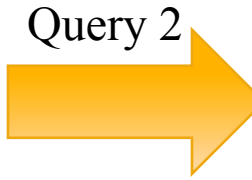
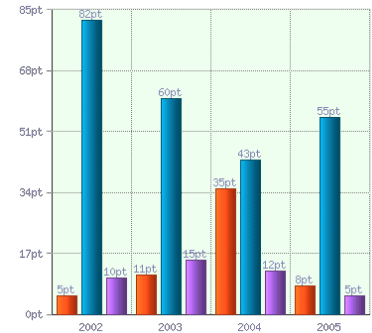
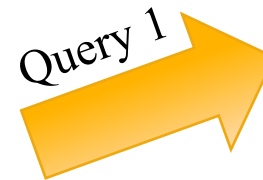
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- Funnel charts are typically game specific
  - **What** distinguishes casual from core?
  - Cannot get this from platform specific tools
- This requires **custom instrumentation**
  - Functions called at specific activity
  - Record result of activity ... *somewhere*
  - Almost exactly the same as profiling
  - Except that there are no pre-made tools

# Logging Game Data



Data Store



# Player Logging: Other Benefits

- **Helping players**
  - Restoring lost items
  - Fixing data corruption
- **Finding cheaters**
  - Did they use an exploit?
  - Is their skill plausible?
- **In-game advertising**
  - But beware selling user data
  - Most states have data laws
- Game is run as a **service**





# Gameplay Activity

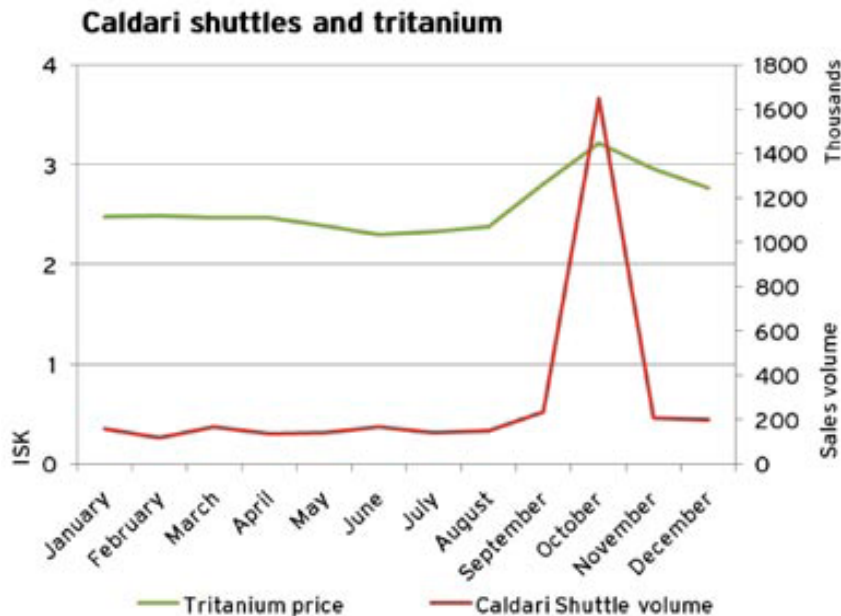
- Very similar to player activity
  - Custom instrumentation code
  - Put in datastore and queried
  - Only difference is what looking for
- Focusing on game mechanics, not individuals
  - But focus on **non-spatial** game systems
  - Want systems that can be visualized numerically
  - Generally means **resources** and **game economies**

QUARTERLY ECONOMIC NEWSLETTER



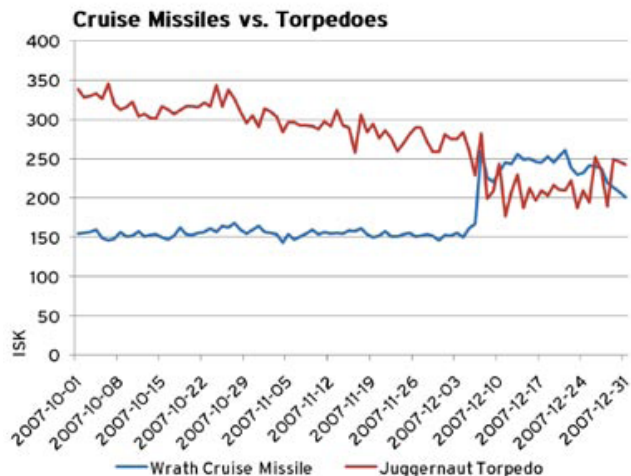
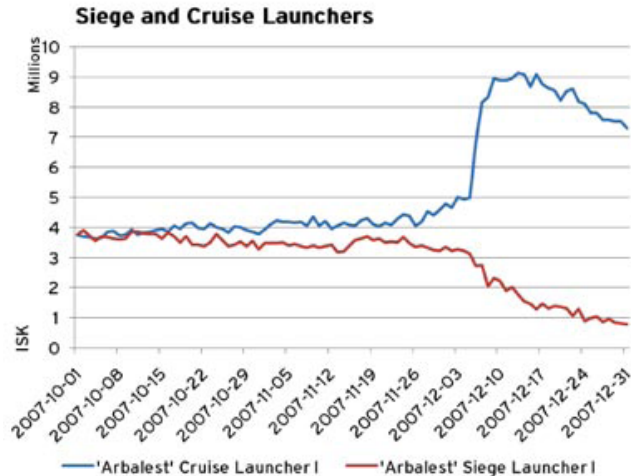
EVE ONLINE  
4th QUARTER 2007

# EVE Examples: Titanium



- Shuttles can be reprocessed
  - Can turn back into minerals
  - Can use (for building) or resell these minerals
- Shuttles have a fixed cost
  - What if player is bankrupt?
  - Gives players a fallback
- Puts price cap on Titanium
  - If too much, buy shuttles
  - Do we like this design?

# EVE Examples: Weapons



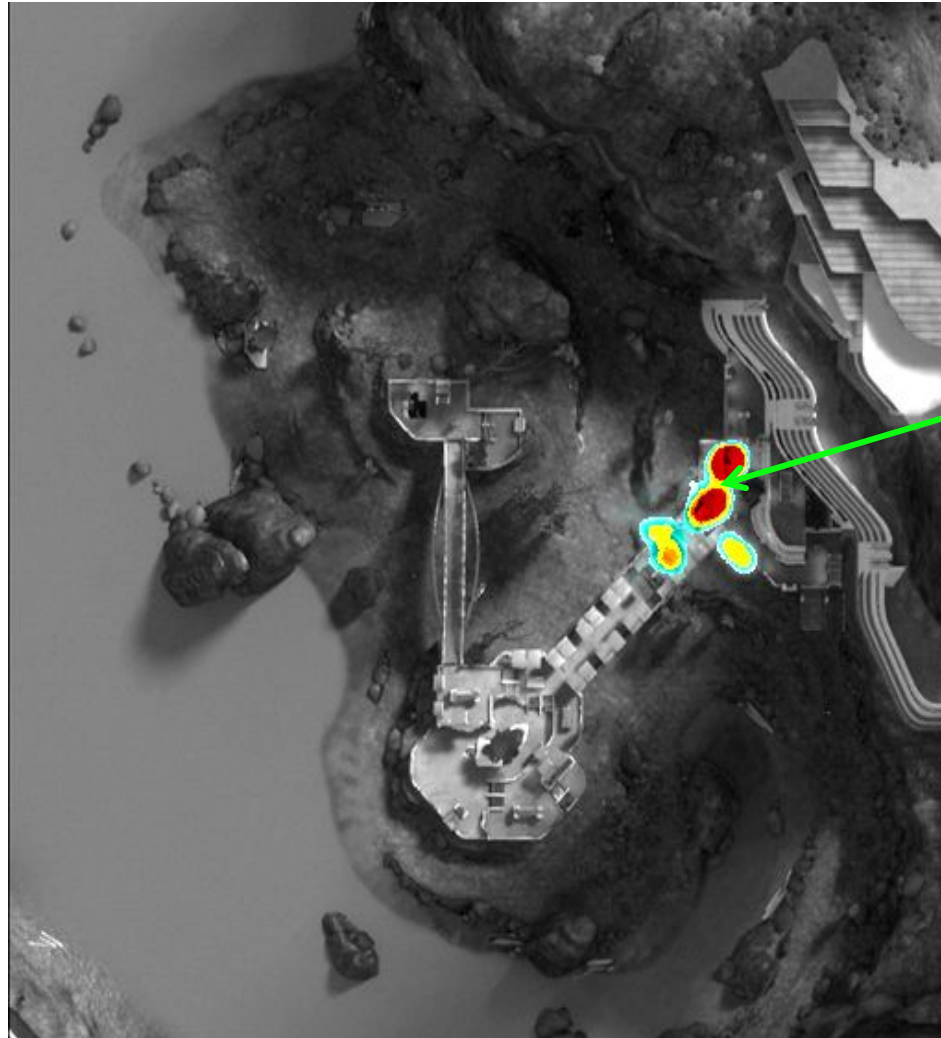
- *Trinity* altered gameplay
  - Changed torpedo mechanics
  - Range was made shorter
  - But rate of fire increased
- But players valued range
  - Torpedos volume dropped
  - Cruise Missiles spiked
  - Similar chart for launchers
- But this not mean that the redesign was a bad idea

# Spatial Game Data

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- Needed for anything that depends on **location**
  - Identify where players are having difficulty
  - Critical for MMOs, large and persistent worlds
  - **Example:** player death heat maps
- Visualization is much, much harder
  - Spatial representation is particular to your game
  - There are no simple, existing solutions
  - Companies create their own custom tools

# Spatial Data: Heatmaps



Zone of  
Death!

# SWTOR Example: Chat Logs

**Filter on:**  
How do I...





# SWTOR Example: Chat Logs

**Filter on:**  
Bug, Broken

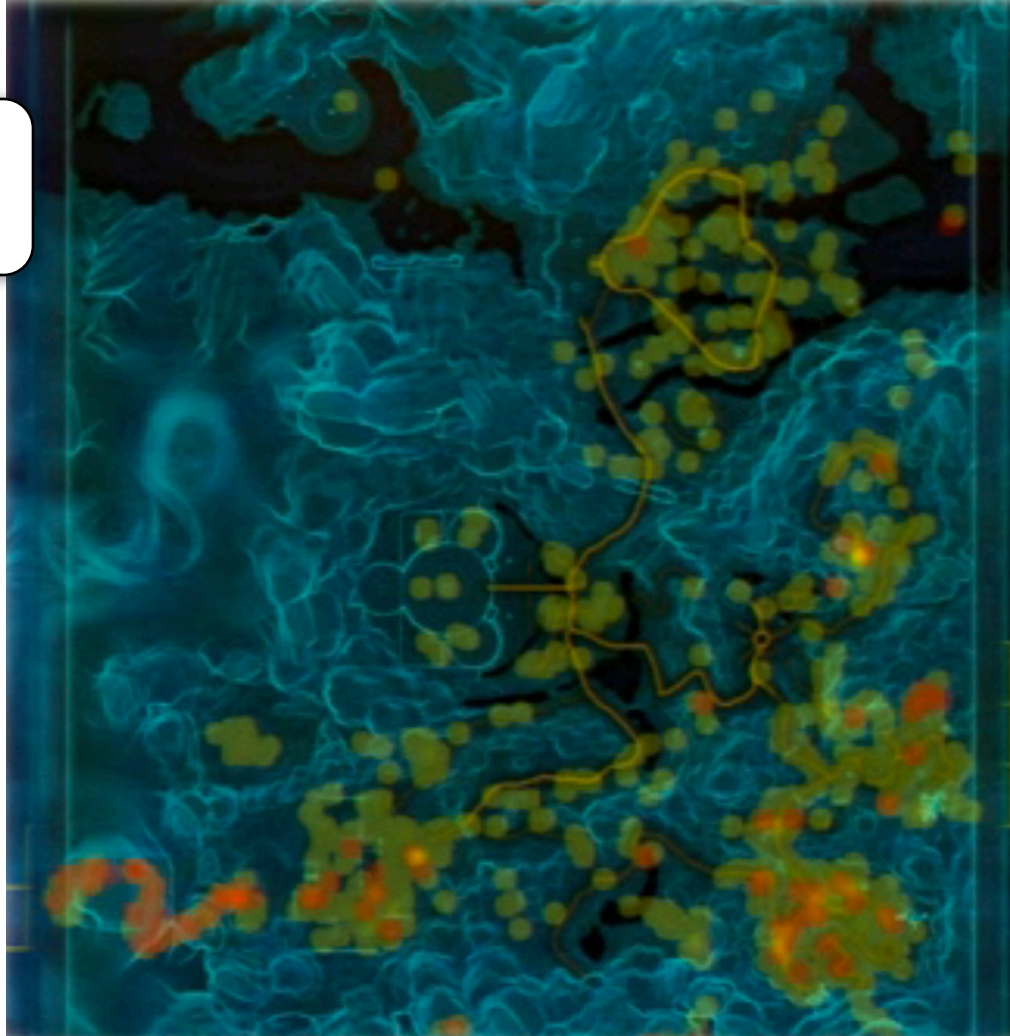


# SWTOR Example: Player Deaths

**Legend:**

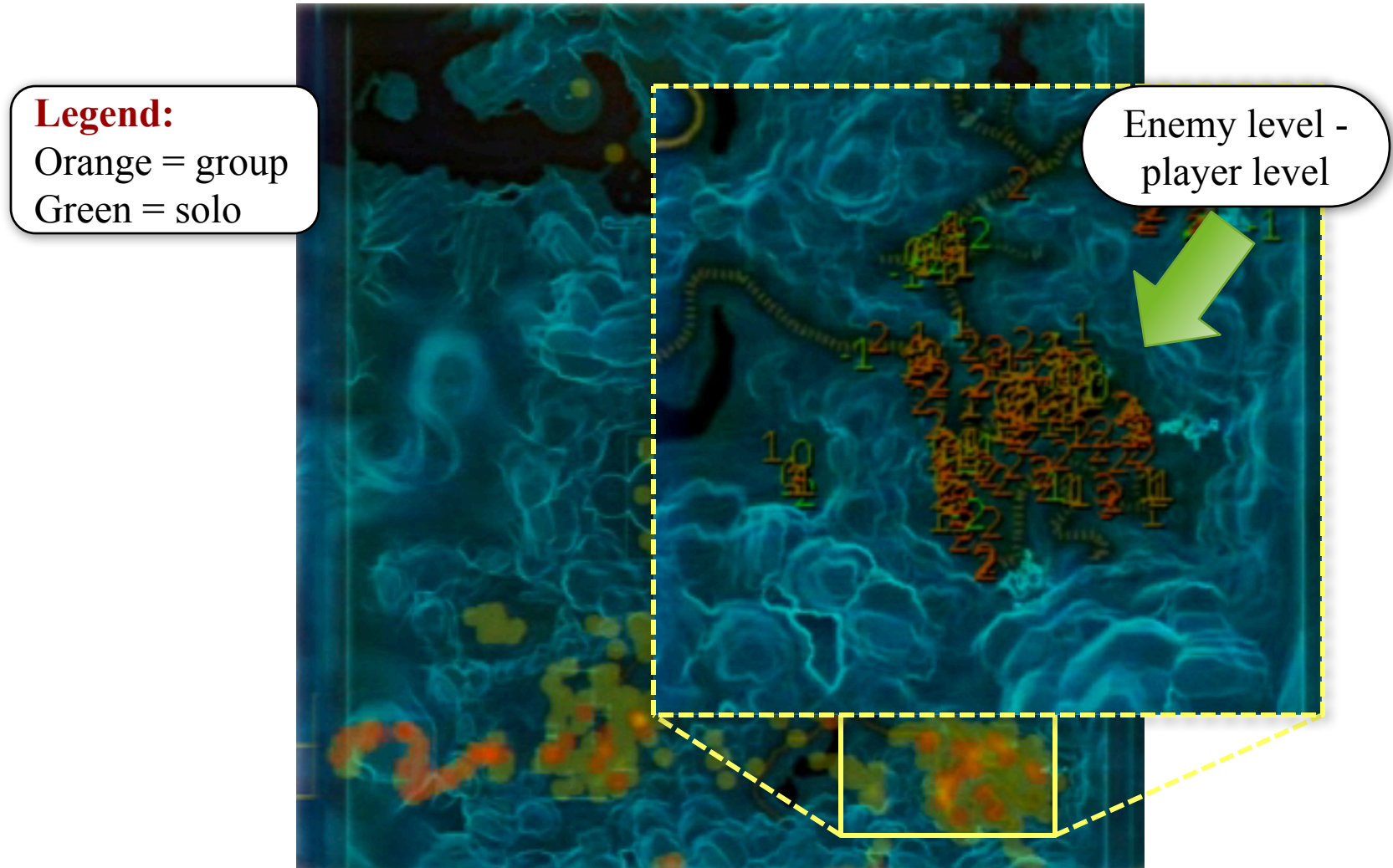
Orange = group

Green = solo

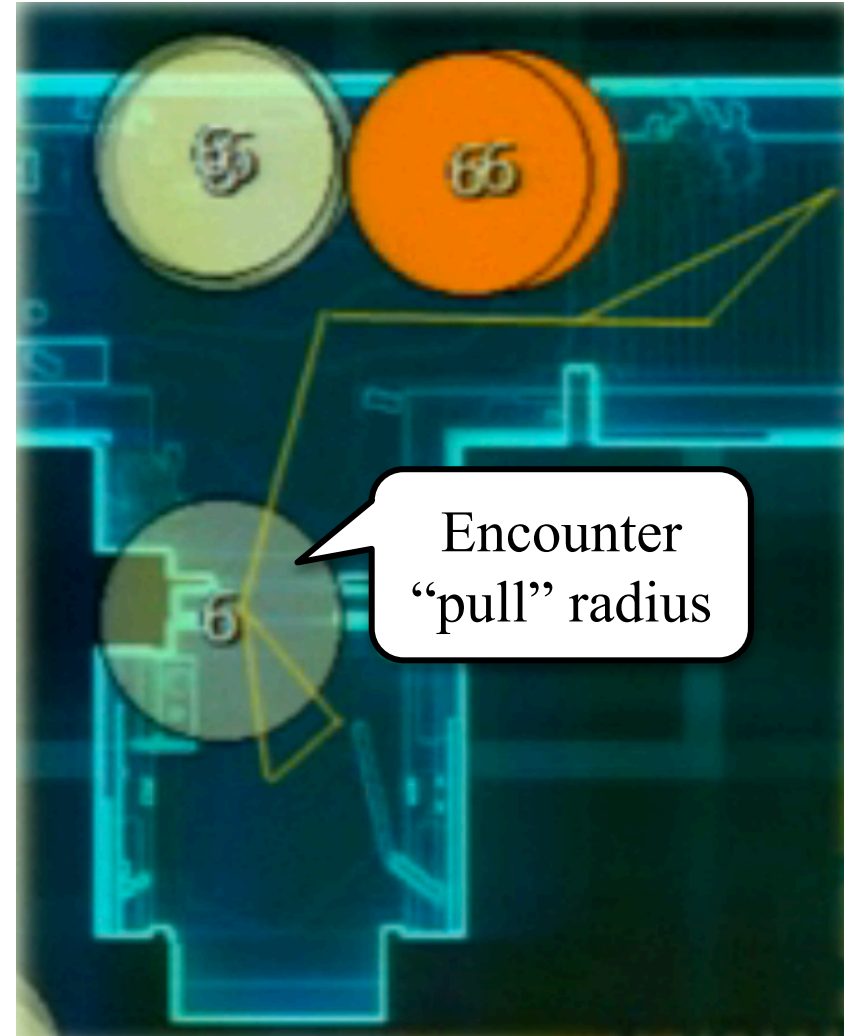
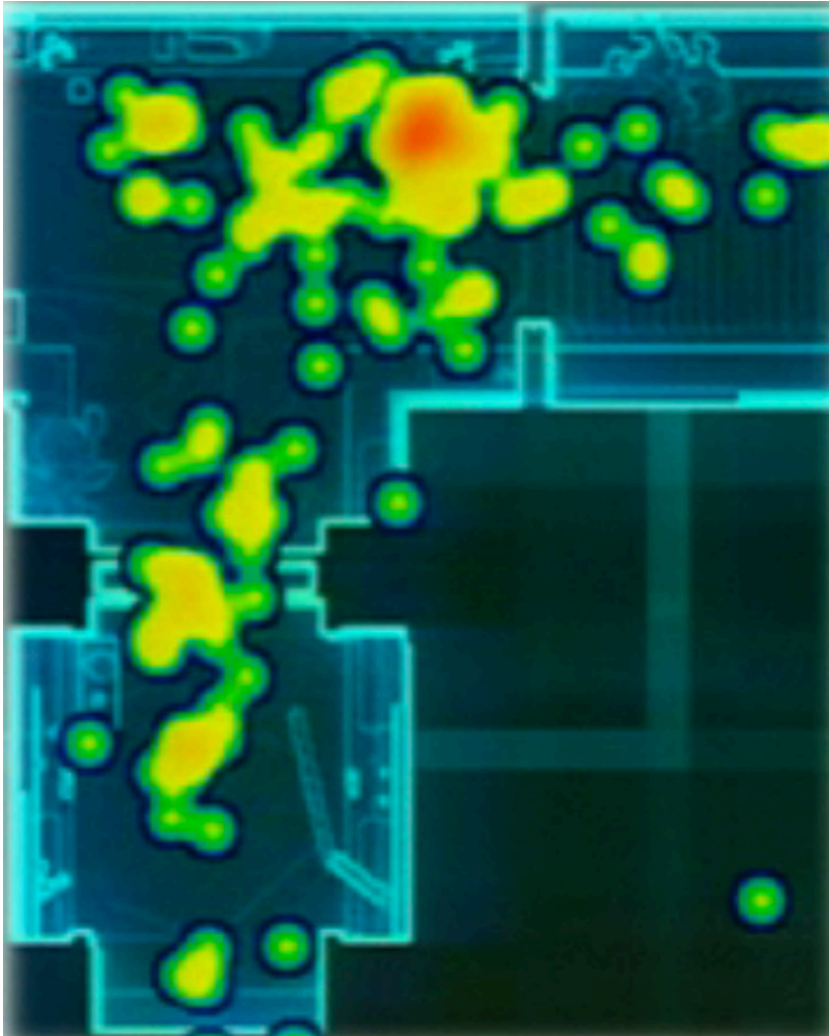




# SWTOR Example: Player Deaths



# SWOTOR Example: Patrol Paths

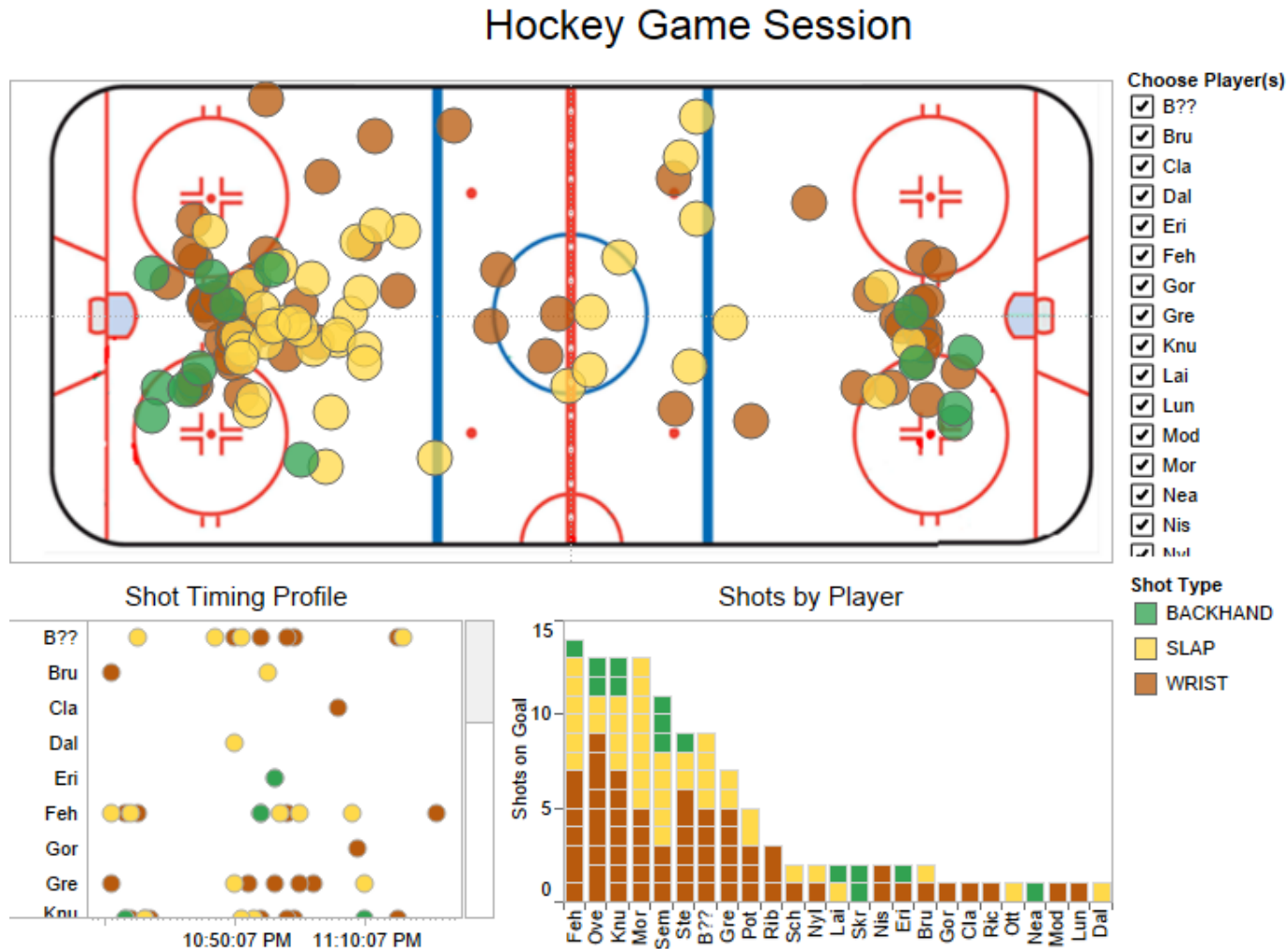


# Challenges of Spatial Data

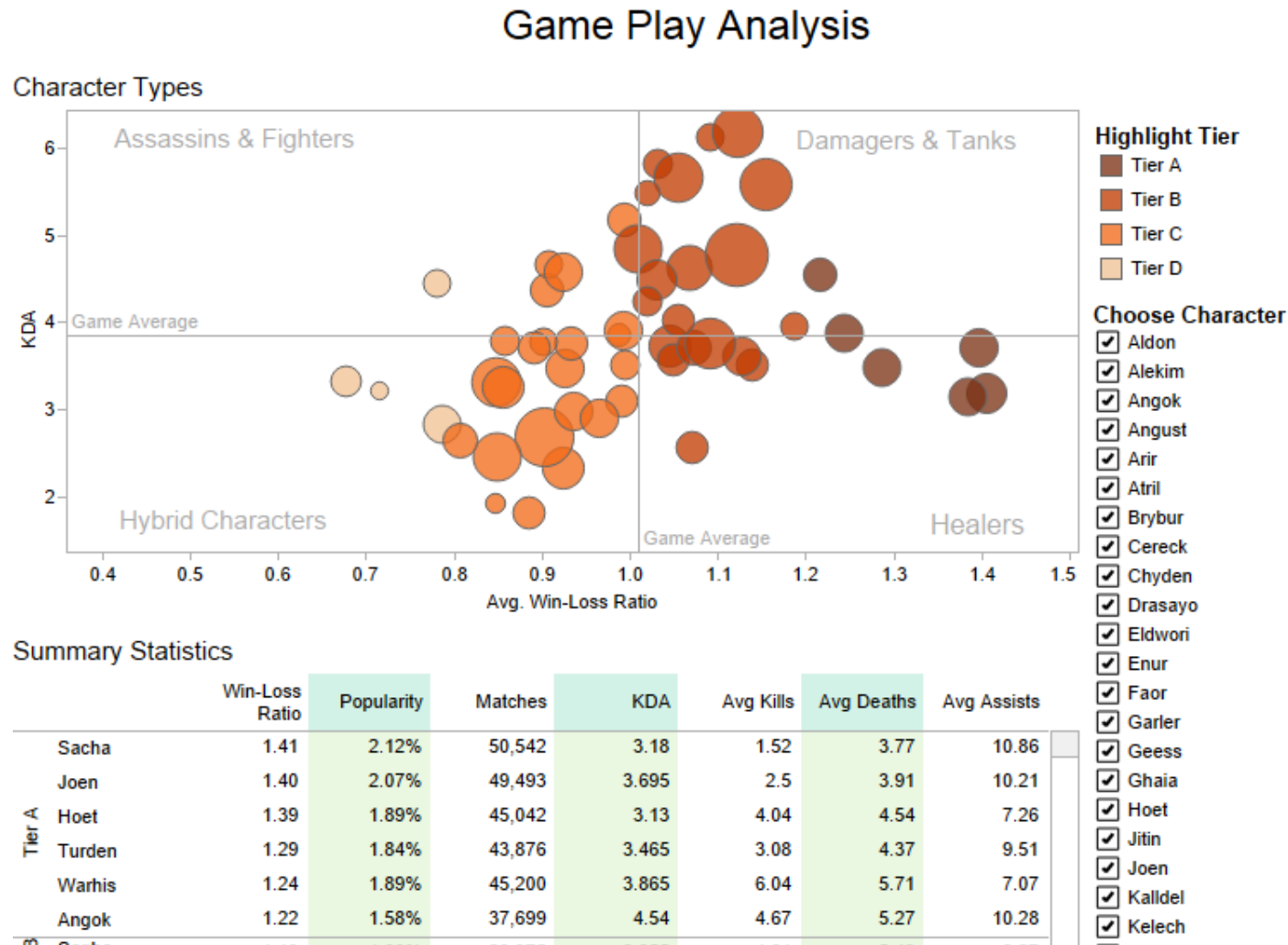
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- There are many 3<sup>rd</sup> party data analysis tools
  - Data analysis is a major part of running a business
  - Business tools work well for player analysis
- But spatial data is very *game specific*
  - Superimposed onto your game visuals
  - Must integrate into your rendering engine
  - Limited to high-end game companies
- What can an **Indie developer** do?

# External Tool Support: *Tableau*



# Tableau is Better at Gameplay Data



# Summary

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- Gameplay analytics are increasingly important
  - Often driven by your business model
  - Crucial for monetized/free-to-play games
- Often break data into different types
  - **Player analytics**: activity of a player over time
  - **Gameplay analytics**: game economy and balance
  - **Spatial analytics**: Locality of behavior in game
- **Want to learn more?** Take Erik's class