

A photograph of a public gaming station. A black game controller with a joystick and buttons is resting on a white table. Several black cables are plugged into the controller and are tangled on the table. The background shows a concrete curb and a gravel area, suggesting an outdoor public space. The image is dimly lit and has a dark overlay.

# Games for public spaces

Building cohesive communities

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# Being social

Moulding humans into functioning members of the society.

Introduces individuals to the norms, beliefs and behaviours of a society.

Influences the behaviour of people and helps to attain a socio-cultural continuity.

Culture or a society cannot exist in the absence of socialization.

Expressions of a culture are found in individuals socialized by their family, friends and other social networks.

# Connected, yet lonely.

Conversations have become editable texts and hyperlinks.

Emotions reduced to a set of ambiguous emoticons or emojis.

Findings of 72 studies, over a 30-year period shows a 40% decline in empathy among college students, since 2000.

82% of adults felt that, phones in social settings hurt the conversation.

I just found out today that that emoji is "A High Five" not a person praying



*Photo: 9gag.com*

## I share, therefore I am

No one is listening. We turn to social robots like Twitter and Facebook, which are automatic listeners and beg for acknowledgement from people.

Digital cannot empathize. Illusion of companionship.

Open ended, spontaneous conversations helps in self reflection – allows to be fully present and vulnerable.

Aware of another person's posture and tone, to comfort one another and respectfully challenge one another — how empathy and intimacy flourish.

# Plugged-in life

Public spaces provide exposure to diverse people and help recognize commonalities.

Public space interactions have changed into disembodied private space with the invasion of technology into daily routine.

Social life of public spaces now competes with technology, which shifts interaction inwards.

People are having a “Plugged-in life”.



Apart from face-to-face conversations, even call rates dropped. *Photo: The Guardian*

# What could be done?

A device-free outdoor camp for children, after five days without phones or tablets, were able to read facial emotions and correctly identify the emotions of actors.

Redesign technology to make room for face-to-face conversations.

Germany Installs Traffic Lights In Sidewalks So That Smartphone Users Don't Have To Look Up



Photo: metro.co.uk

# Primary research

Eight residential societies spanning across five major cities (Mumbai, Pune, Chennai, Bengaluru and Kochi).

Two evening parks.

## Method

Observations, semi-structured interviews.

## Key questions

What is the current level of social interaction in societies?

Do people consider their community to be tightly knit? Why?

Does a tight-knit community help its people in any manner?



Elita, Bengaluru



Olive, Kochi



Nirvana, Mumbai

# Insights

Social gatherings less than 10 times a year, with a very low level of participation.

Residents know at-most 2 neighbours in the same floor.

Relationships are on a functional level.

*"I know my neighbour, in case of any emergency, I will need his contact"*

Migrants or non-permanent residents suffers the most.

# Insights

Park areas dominated by peer pocket groups, immersed in their digital private world.

Even children are taken care by maids or servants.

People are interested in learning and sharing new things.

Language workshops conducted, WhatsApp games.

Need to socialize to find common interest, emotional support, business networking and more.

# Existing games



Train IT



Figure 1: Screen shot when sailing the open sea in Pirates!



Pirates!

# Existing games

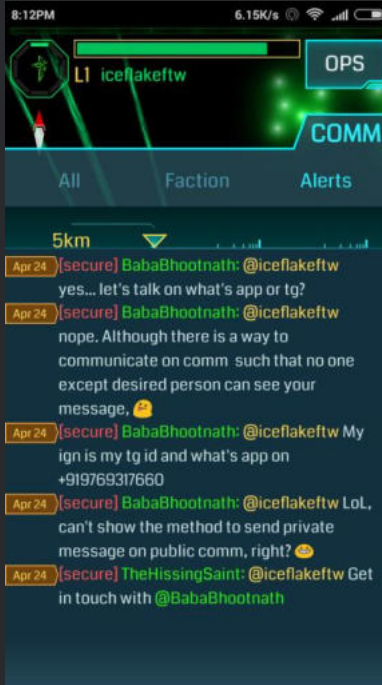


Red nose

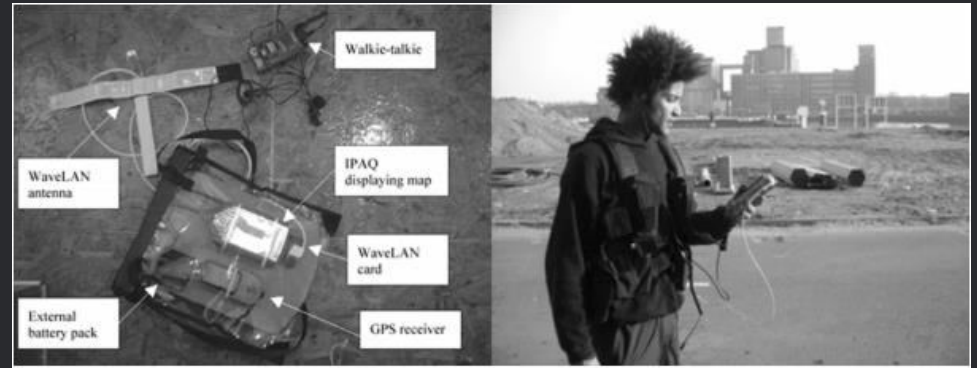


Martians from  
outer space

# Existing games



Ingress



Can you see  
me now?

# Project brief

## Initial scope

Provide opportunities to initiate social interactions through games, thereby reducing inhibitions due to communal/regional differences.

Focus on migrants aged between 25-35 years.

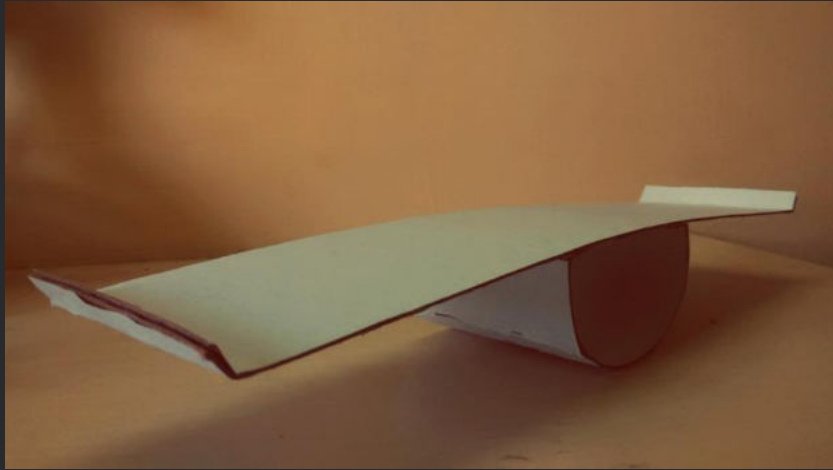
## Target scope

Span the gameplay across multiple contexts (public spaces).

# Initial concepts

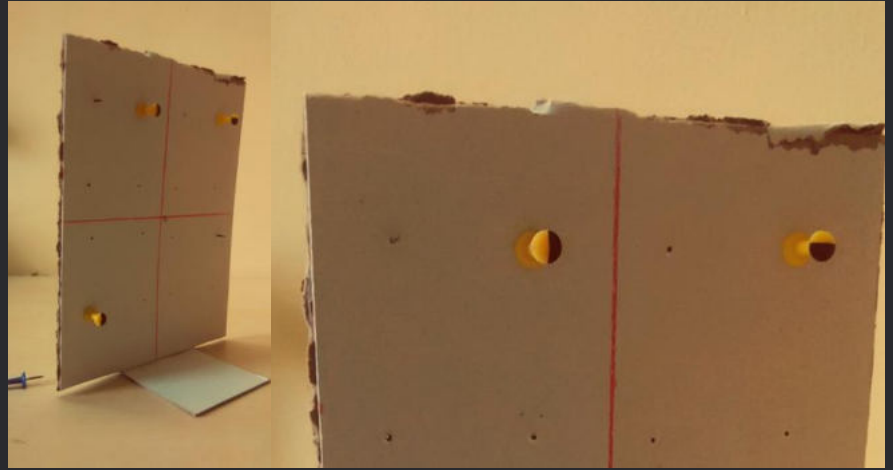
## Sync

Two player co-op game. Players have to place five different weights without toppling the balance.



## Plug & Play

Two player game. Each player has four pegs that they should place in one quadrant and align to clockwise or anticlockwise direction.



# Playtest insights

Intuitive gameplay is crucial.

No encouragement to participate.

Context independence created an initial curiosity, but added more effort to participate.

Visual appeal of installation is critical for triggering.

Social bragging and celebration of win is a good incentive.

No dedicated mechanics that facilitates social interaction.

# Fame a name

150 cups labelled with alphabet stickers. Players have to make the longest word ever. If there are any letters missing to make the word, they can borrow from others.



# Playtest insights

Emergent gameplay brings playful persuasion.

Integrated to the environment and context motivated participation.

Spectator to participant by drop in - drop out.

Collaboration triggers interaction.

“Easy to learn, difficult to master” (Repeat play) is important for retention which may bring more players.

Requires players to be in the location when the context and installation is valid (time and space).

# Revised brief

## Objective

A game that can be played anytime, anywhere (public spaces) to discover new people and start a conversation.

## Goals

Discover people nearby with similar interest.

Break the ice between them.

Get to know each other.

# Caught red!

Gameplay  
Mechanic  
Incentive  
Trigger

Deductive, survival  
Conversation  
Priority in service  
Moderator

Each player makes a card with pre-decided parameters such as family, profession, places they visited etc. They can lie on one parameter at a time, till they are caught by other players. The player with the least number of permanent truths is the winner.

Family

Profession

Native of

Favourite sport

Profession

Native of

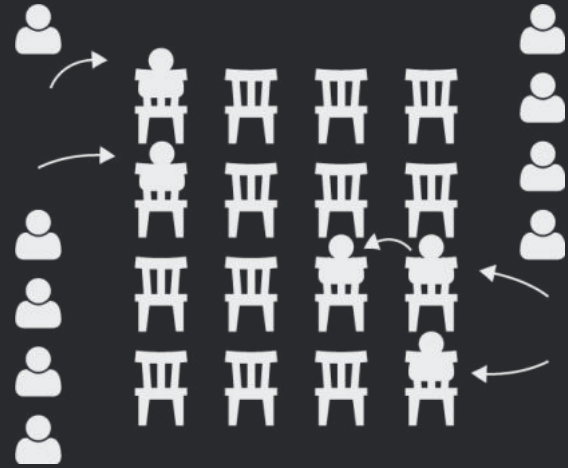
Favourite sport

# Sails up!

Gameplay  
Mechanic  
Incentive  
Trigger

Strategy, guess  
Conversation  
Discover commonalities  
Moderator

Players are divided into two groups. Captain of each time shouts a parameter that they think will be common to most - "Who knows Unity for Android". The goal is to reach the other side.



# Pop!

Gameplay

Mechanic

Incentive

Trigger

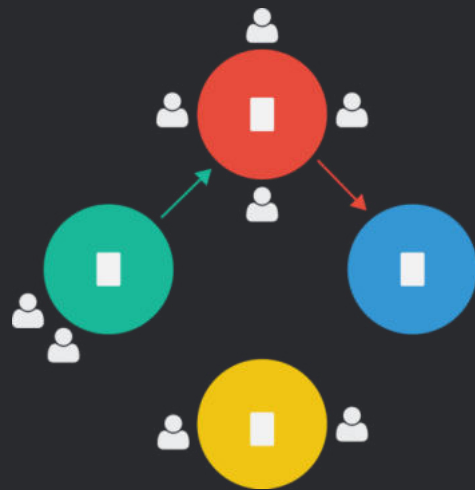
Strategy, arcade

Common task

Service discounts

Self, Pervasive

Each table will have a color. A color bubble will be generated every 5 seconds. Players can flick and burst their table's color to other tables. At the end of 3min, whichever color dominates, wins.

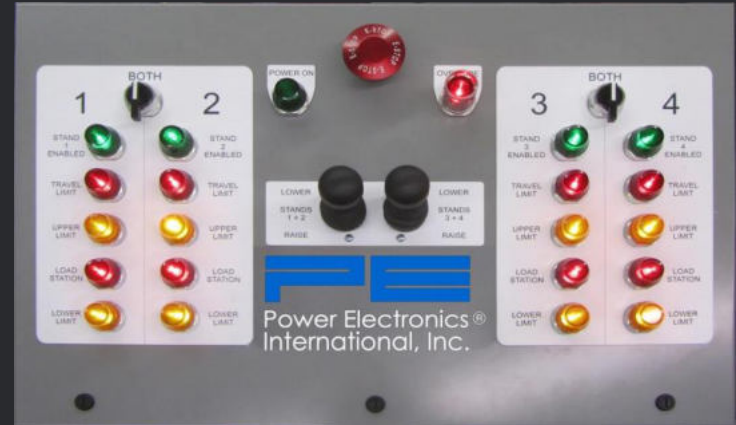


# The Hunt

Gameplay  
Mechanic  
Incentive  
Trigger

Adventure  
Common task  
Discovering new people  
Self, Pervasive

Ubiquitous game where each player will be assigned a target player to find in 25m radius. Players have to coordinate and complete a randomly generated common task - like shutting down a console system with the right sequence of buttons.



# Evaluation insights

Moderator requires motivation.

Privacy was a major concern, hesitant to talk about their life.

Conversation must be facilitated, but not as how the game is to be played.

Prompting the user to play grabbed player's attention.

Awkward moments are good ice-breakers.

Collaborative tasks can initiate discussions, facilitating interaction.



THE  
HUNT





PLAYER 1  
PRINCE POP

95

95

PLAYER 2  
LUKE SKY

PLAYER 1  
PRINCE POP

PLAYER 3  
VANILLA

PLAYER 2  
LUKE SKY

PLAYER 1  
PRINCE POP

PLAYER 3  
VANILLA



# Tasks

## Riddles

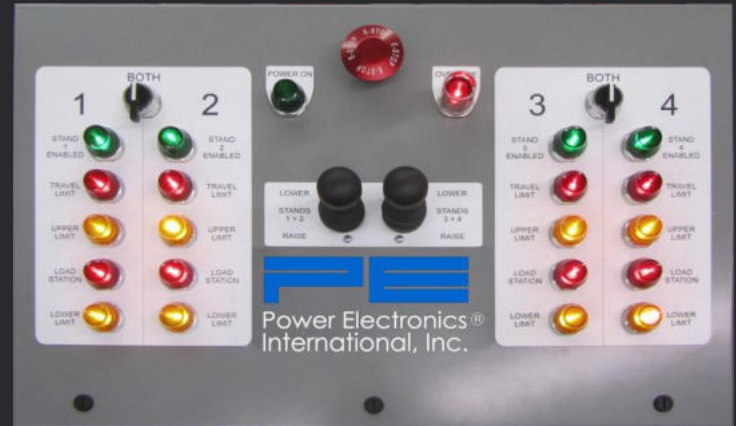
Solve the connected riddles to win exclusive items. Difficulty increases with player levels.

THIS IS A WELL KNOWN CHILDREN'S  
MUSICAL PIECE, THE VOWELS HAVE BEEN  
REMOVED AND THE REMAINING LETTERS  
HAVE BEEN GROUPED TOGETHER. CAN  
YOU DETERMINE THE CORRECT WORDS?

HMPT YDMP TYST NTHW LLHM PTYD  
MPTY HDGR TFLL LLTH KNKS HRSS NDLL  
THKN GSMN CLDN TPTH MPTY TGTH RGN

## Shutdown the console

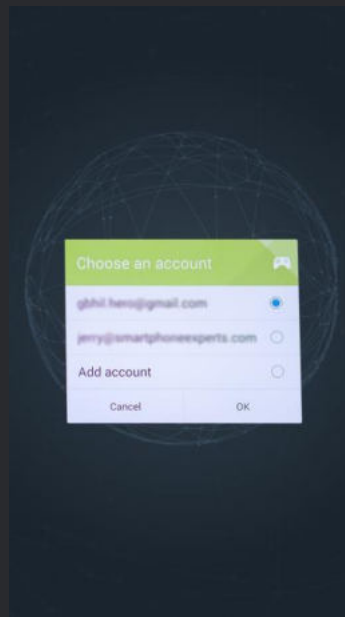
Sequence of switches to shutdown the console.



# Prototype

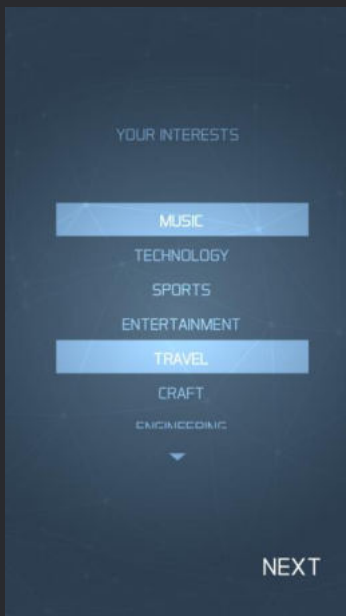


Splash



Login with Google  
Play services

# Prototype

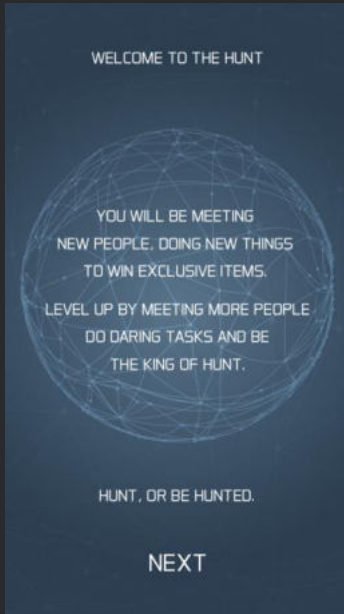


Select interest



Main menu

# Prototype



About the game

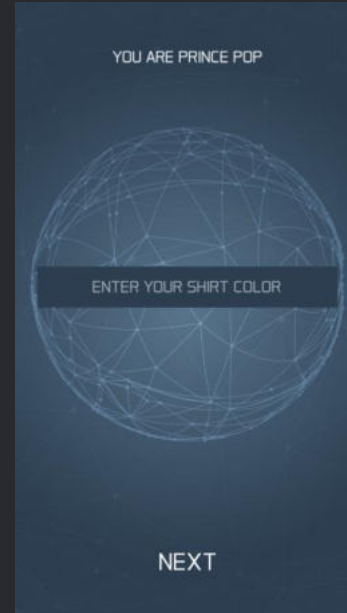


Tutorial series

# Prototype



Tips on how to approach  
a stranger



Shirt color for hints

# Prototype



Warm & cold mechanic

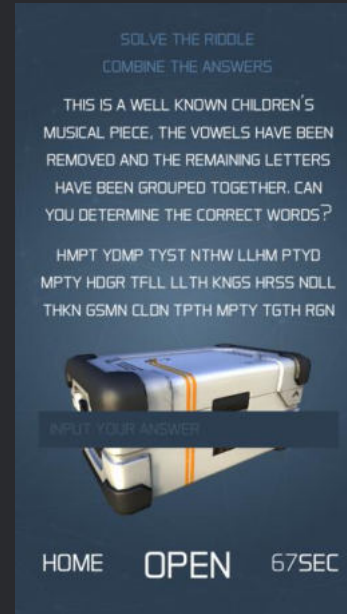


Clues to aid in searching

# Prototype



Hints about the target

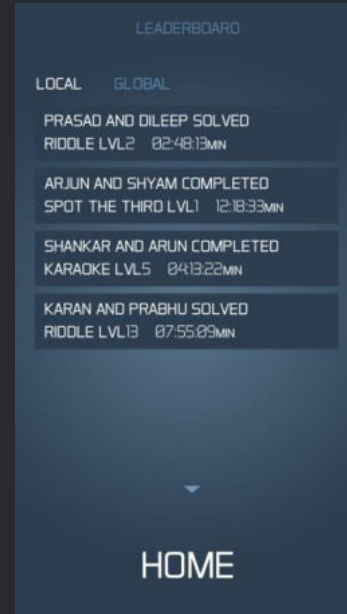


Collaborative tasks

# Prototype



Souvenir items

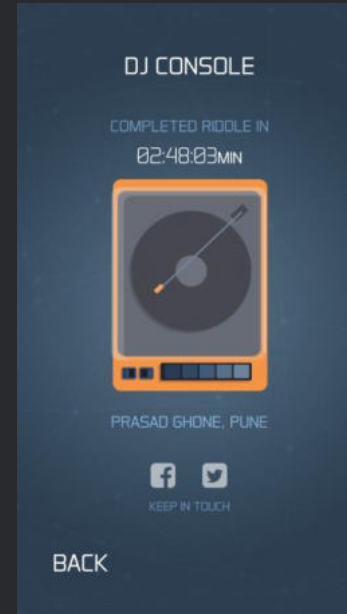


Leaderboard

# Prototype

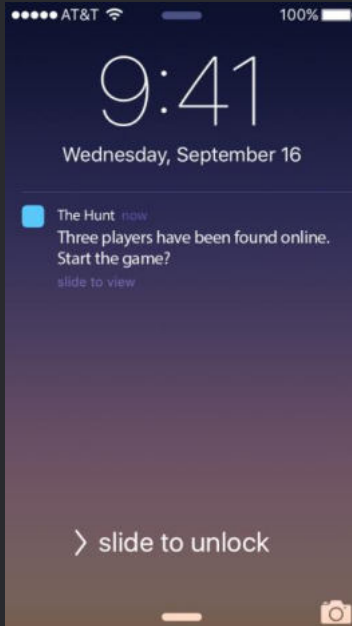


Profile



Keep in touch

# Prototype



Push notifications



Short and long-term goals

# Evaluation insights

4 game sessions, 8 (6M, 2F) players, 2 game designers  
Engagement, usability and Heuristic Evaluation of playability

31% felt that gameplay is different and unique.

Distractions due to the environment, immersive experience is less.

Easy to learn and no confusions. Does not require a lot of effort to play.

Privacy concerns (game modes like F-F).

24% agree that the game enabled players to interact with others.

Tutorials, intuitive UI added after evaluation.

## Evaluation insights

“Could implement the game in the field of HR for understanding personality of people.”

“Wider the network, more safer is your stay in the city”

“There should be something exciting to do after finding your target”

# Future scope

## Team tasks

Factions, persistent war, team cooperation and competitive games.

## Dynamic challenges

Include passive players as well as the environment in game dynamics.

## User generated content

Levelled up players can create tasks or challenges which will be peer reviewed by players.

## Advanced privacy control

Exclusive game modes – play with mutual friends, moderator verified.

Thank you.



A man was caught watching the real world...