

# MANAGING TO MANAGE

## COMMUNITY WORK: MANAGING MULTIPLAYER CULTURE

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### CULTURE?

- THE SUBTITLE OF THIS SYMPOSIUM IS **MANAGING MULTIPLAYER CULTURE**
- SO WHAT'S **CULTURE** ?
- "ANYTHING THAT IS BASED ON LEARNING AND THAT IS PASSED ON AMONG INDIVIDUALS"  
– *CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY*, DANIEL G. **BATES**
- WHAT'S **MULTIPLAYER CULTURE**?
- HMM, WELL, MANY ENDEAVOURS ARE MULTIPLAYER  
– FOOTBALL, *MONOPOLY*, QUIZ SHOWS, *COUNTERSTRIKE*...
- I'M GOING WITH THE CULTURE OF **VIRTUAL WORLDS**, THOUGH

#### WHAT I HOPE TO SHOW

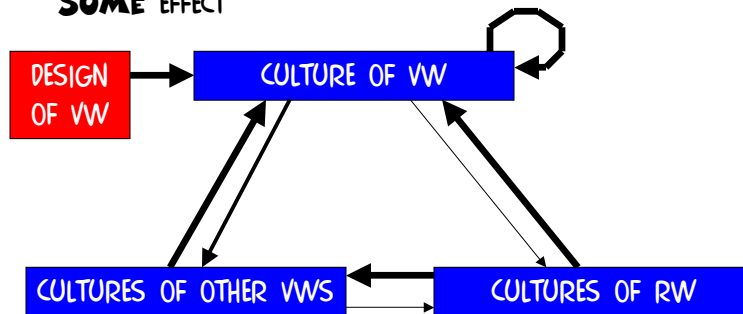
- A VW'S CULTURE AFFECTS ITS PLAYERS' **BEHAVIOUR**
- MUCH OF THE CULTURE IN ANY NEW VW COMES FROM THAT **IMPORTED** BY ITS EARLY PLAYERS
- DESIGNERS **DO** HAVE SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE ON THEIR VW'S CULTURE, THROUGH THE VW'S **DESIGN**
- DESIGNERS NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THEIR VW'S CULTURE WILL LOOK LIKE **WHILE** THEY ARE DESIGNING IT, GIVEN ITS LIKELY STARTING POPULATION
- DESIGNERS SHOULD THEREFORE KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT VW CULTURES **IN GENERAL**
- SOME OTHER DIAPHANOUS STUFF, TOO...

#### WHENCE CULTURE?

- THE CULTURE OF A VW IS SHAPED BY **3** FACTORS:
  - WHAT PLAYERS BRING WITH THEM FROM **ELSEWHERE**
    - THE REAL WORLD OR OTHER VWS
  - THE **DESIGN** OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD
    - LIZ REID: PEOPLE ARE MORE OPEN IN VWS BECAUSE OF THE **PSEUDONYMITY** THESE AFFORD, **NOT** BECAUSE THEY COME FROM SOME MORE OPEN PART OF REAL-WORLD SOCIETY
  - THE CULTURE OF THE VW **ITSELF**
    - GENERATION TO GENERATION - YES, IT'S A RECURSIVE DEFINITION
- **COULD** ADD A **4<sup>TH</sup>** FACTOR (LIMITS OF THE HUMAN **BODY**), BUT THAT'S PERHAPS GOING A BIT TOO FAR
  - UNTIL WE HAVE ARTIFICIALLY INTELLIGENT **BOTS**, ANYWAY...

## RW CULTURE

- **OUTSIDE** THE VW, CULTURE COMES FROM FACTORS **BEYOND** VW DESIGNERS' CONTROL
  - EXCEPT THAT VWS, AS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON, CAN HAVE **SOME** EFFECT



- ARROWS SUGGEST **MAXIMUM** POSSIBLE INFLUENCE

## TWO-WAY TRANSFER

- REAL-WORLD CULTURE **DOMINATES**, BUT TRANSFER **CAN** BE TWO-WAY
- EXAMPLE:
  - PLAYERS USE REAL-WORLD LANGUAGE (EG. ENGLISH)
  - REAL-WORLD LANGUAGE USES SOME VW TERMS (EG. NEWBIE)
- MOST EFFECTS ARE MUCH **HARDER** TO ASCERTAIN
  - HAS THE FACT THAT **CROSS-GENDER** PLAY IS ACCEPTED IN VWS HAD **ANY** EFFECT ON THE REAL WORLD?
    - IF **YES**, WHAT?
    - IF **NO**, HOW COME IT'S RESISTED **NEGATIVE** RW CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS FOR SO LONG, THEN?
- FAINT PROMISE OF **ART** WITH **POLITICAL** EFFECTS?

#### SEED CULTURES

- LATIN, *COLERE* – TO TILL – THENCE EG. HORTICULTURE
- A VW'S DESIGN CAN ONLY **SHAPE** THE CULTURE ITS **SEED** PLAYERS BRING WITH THEM
  - FROM THE **REAL** WORLD AND **OTHER** VIRTUAL WORLDS
- THERE IS SOME uniformity BECAUSE THERE'S A **CULTURAL FAMILY TREE** FOR VWS
  - HEARKENING BACK TO *MUDI*
- BUT **DIKUMUDS** AND **MOOS** (FOR EXAMPLE) DO HAVE NOTICEABLY **different** CULTURES
- THIS IS BECAUSE THE **CULTURAL** FAMILY TREE REFLECTS THE **CODEBASE** FAMILY TREE
  - DESIGN **MATTERS**

#### ARROW STRENGTH

- SEED PLAYERS ARE **IMPORTANT**, BUT THEY CAN BE **IRRELEVANT**
- *MUD2* HAD TWO INCARNATIONS WITH THE **SAME** SEED PLAYERS AND **SAME** PROGRAM CODE THAT NEVERTHELESS DEVELOPED **DIFFERENT** CULTURES
  - ONE DREW ITS PLAYERS FROM MAINLY U.S. PROFESSIONALS
  - THE OTHER DREW ITS PLAYERS FROM MAINLY U.K. TEENS
    - MAYBE I SHOULD **KEEP** THAT 4<sup>TH</sup> POINT ABOUT HUMAN HARDWARE?
- HOW MUCH OF *EVERQUESTS* DIKUMUDISH CULTURE IS DUE TO ITS HAVING DIKUMUD PLAYERS **SEED** IT, AND HOW MUCH IS DUE TO ITS IDENTICAL **GAMEPLAY**?

## NEW CULTURE

- WHEN REID WROTE HER *CULTURAL FORMATIONS* THESIS, **DISTINCT** CULTURES FOR NEW VWS COULD FORM **SPONTANEOUSLY**
- THIS IS MUCH **HARDER** NOW, AS LARGE SECTIONS OF ANY **NEW** VW'S POPULATION WILL LIKELY HAVE EXPERIENCED SOME **OTHER** VW PREVIOUSLY
  - IMMIGRATING PLAYERS BRINGING IN CULTURAL **BAGGAGE**
- TODAY'S VWS BEGIN WITH A **COMMON** CULTURAL HERITAGE AND HAVE TO **EVOLVE** FROM THERE
  - SHAPED MAINLY BY THE VW'S DESIGN
  - WHICH MAY MEAN A CULTURE SHOCK - EG. PD, BRANDING

## BOUNDARIES

- THE **MAIN** CULTURAL CRUCIBLES ARE THE VARIOUS **INSTANTIATIONS** OF VWS
  - INDIVIDUAL SHARDS HAVE DIFFERENT HISTORIES, ADMINS, ...
  - SUFFICIENTLY REMOTE FROM EACH OTHER TO BE INDEPENDENT
  - ENOUGH INTERACTION BETWEEN PLAYERS AT THIS LEVEL TO SUSTAIN CONTINUAL CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
- BUT SOME KUL+UR3Z **CROSS** VW BOUNDARIES
- THERE CAN ALSO BE SUB-CULTURES **WITHIN** INDIVIDUAL INSTANTIATIONS
  - CULTURALLY DISTINCT GUILDS, CLASSES, "RACES", ...
  - *MUD*'S INTERNALS AND EXTERNALS

#### CAUTION!

- NEED TO REMEMBER "CULTURE" EXISTS AT MANY LEVELS
  - MP, VW, CODEBASE, WORLD, INSTANTIATION, GROUP
- A CULTURE LOWER DOWN INHERITS **SOME** – BUT NOT **ALL** – ASPECTS OF THE CULTURE ABOVE IT
- HIGHER-UP CULTURES ARE ONLY APPROXIMATIONS OF THE **INTERSECTION** OF THE CULTURES BELOW THEM
- THIS IS STANDARD ANTHROPOLOGY STUFF
  - BUT IT DIDN'T STOP PEOPLE LUMPING THE **ENTIRE INTERNET** TOGETHER AS BEING "ADDICTIVE" OR "CYBERSPACE" OR "PAEDOPHILE HEAVEN"...
- WHEN WE TALK ABOUT "VW CULTURE", WE MUST ENSURE IT'S CLEAR WHICH CULTURAL **LEVEL** WE MEAN

#### MANAGING

- AS MENTIONED EARLIER, THE SUBTITLE OF THIS SYMPOSIUM IS **MANAGING MULTIPLAYER CULTURE**
- WHAT SENSE OF THE WORD "MANAGE" IS THIS?
- THERE ARE **2** BASIC MEANINGS:
  - TO **SUPERVISE** OR CONTROL. "I MANAGED A COMPANY"
  - TO **COPE**. "I MANAGED THE SHEEP'S EYEBALL SOUP"
- DOES "I MANAGED THE MEETING" MEAN YOU SUPERVISED IT OR CONTRIVED AGAINST THE ODDS TO ATTEND IT?
- I'LL DEAL WITH **BOTH** MEANINGS HERE

#### WHO MANAGES?

- IN ADDITION TO THIS, THERE'S ALSO THE QUESTION OF **WHO** IT IS DOING THE MANAGING
  - THE **DEVELOPERS**?
  - THE **PLAYERS**?
  - **OBSERVERS**?
- I ONLY HAVE TIME FOR **ONE** OF THESE HERE, SO I'M GOING TO FOCUS ON **DEVELOPERS**
- THE OTHERS **ARE** INTERESTING, THOUGH!
  - EXAMPLE: RL CULTURAL GROUPS MAY NOT BE ABLE TO REPRESENT THEMSELVES IN VWS - BAD NEWS IF THE WAY THEY LOOK IS A BIG PART OF THEIR SENSE OF IDENTITY?

#### WHAT ARCHITECTS KNOW

- THE **REAL** ENVIRONMENT SHAPES **REAL** CULTURE
  - "WHY ARE THE BRITISH SO TOLERANT?"
  - "WHY ARE TOWER BLOCKS SUCH SOULLESS PLACES?"
- WHEN ARCHITECTS DESIGN NEW ESTATES, THEY CONSIDER WHAT KIND OF **COMMUNITY** TO FOSTER
  - NOWADAYS, IT'S **INCONCEIVABLE** THAT THEY WOULDN'T
- THE **SAME** STRICTURES APPLY TO DESIGNERS OF VWS
- A **VIRTUAL** ENVIRONMENT SHAPES **VIRTUAL** CULTURE
- ASIDE: I'M EQUATING COMMUNITY WITH CULTURE HERE, WHICH ISN'T **QUITE** CORRECT BUT IT'S CLOSE ENOUGH

## DEVELOPERS

- A VW'S CULTURE IS **ALWAYS** SHAPED BY ITS DESIGN, THEREFORE IT IS **IMPOSSIBLE** TO DESIGN A VW AND **NOT** MANAGE (IN BOTH SENSES OF THE WORD) THE CULTURAL BEHAVIOUR IT EFFECTS
  - BECAUSE DANIEL PARGMAN: *CODE BEGETS COMMUNITY*
    - SUBTITLE: *ON SOCIAL AND TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF **MANAGING** A VIRTUAL **COMMUNITY*** (MY EMPHASIS)
- THIS MEANS THAT MANAGEMENT IS **PART** OF WHAT A DESIGNER DESIGNS
  - YOU HAVE TO DESIGN **MANAGEMENT**
- IMPORTANT: YOU **CAN'T** DESIGN **COMMUNITY**, YOU CAN JUST DEFINE THE BOX INTO WHICH IT POURS

## PAUSE FOR BREATH...

- I'M NOW GOING TO LOOK AT THE **WHY** AND THE **WHAT** OF MANAGING VW CULTURE
- I'LL BE USING **BOTH** SENSES OF "MANAGE", BECAUSE PEOPLE USUALLY ONLY FOCUS ON THE "CONTROL" ONE
  - YOU HAVE TO BRING A FIRE **UNDER** CONTROL FIRST; ONLY **THEN** CAN YOU CONTROL IT
- SO THIS MEANS I'LL BE DISCUSSING:
  - WHY DEVELOPERS WOULD WANT TO COPE WITH VW CULTURE
  - WHY DEVELOPERS WOULD WANT TO SUPERVISE VW CULTURE
  - WHAT SORT OF THINGS DEVELOPERS HAVE TO COPE WITH
  - WHAT SORT OF THINGS DEVELOPERS HAVE TO SUPERVISE



#### COPING WITH CULTURE

- WHY WOULD A DEVELOPER WANT TO **COPE** WITH THEIR VW'S CULTURE?
  - THEY COULD TAKE A **Laissez-faire** ATTITUDE INSTEAD
  - WHATEVER EVOLVED WOULD BE STRONGER AS A RESULT!
- WELL, ANY VW WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY GO **BELLY-UP** IF LEFT TO ITS OWN DEVICES
- THERE'S A **POWER** DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN THE **PLAYERS** AND THE **DEVELOPERS**. DEVELOPERS HAVE RESPONSIBILITY WHETHER THEY **WANT** IT OR NOT
  - *LAMB DAMOO*, ANYONE?
- WHEN DEVELOPERS ARE **BLAMED**, PLAYERS **LEAVE**

#### STANDARDS

- NOT ALL VW ISSUES CAN BE HANDLED **INTERNALLY**
  - *EG.* SOMEONE MAY HAVE A **RL** PROBLEM FOR WHICH THE VW IS MERELY A VEHICLE OF **EXPRESSION**
- DESIGNERS MUST **ANTICIPATE** SUCH PROBLEMS AND HAVE **SYSTEMS** IN PLACE READY FOR THEM
- MOST SUCH SYSTEMS HAVE DEVELOPED OVER MANY YEARS IN SMALL-SCALE textual WORLDS
- LARGE-SCALE ☞☞☞☞☞☞☞☞☞ WORLDS BRING **NEW** ISSUES
  - *EG.* COMMODIFICATION - A TAKE ON THE OLD SOCIAL V/ GAMEPLAY DICHOTOMY THAT ATTACKS THE MAGIC CIRCLE WHICH PREVIOUSLY DEFENDED THE LATTER FROM THE FORMER

#### SUPERVISING CULTURE

- WHY WOULD A DEVELOPER WANT TO **SUPERVISE** THEIR VW'S CULTURE?
- TO ENSURE THINGS HAPPEN THAT THEY **WANT** TO HAPPEN
  - AND THAT THINGS **DON'T** HAPPEN THAT THEY **DON'T** WANT TO HAPPEN
- **OTHER** POSSIBILITIES, TOO:
  - THE DESIGNER IS A **CONTROL FREAK**
  - THE DESIGNER WANTS PROMOTION TO **CCO**
  - AS A **SOCIAL EXPERIMENT**
  - TO MAKE EVERYONE **HAPPY**
    - OOPS, YES, THOSE ARE MY **PLAYER** TYPES...

#### DESIGN GOALS

- DESIGNERS SUPERVISE THEIR VW'S CULTURE **INDIRECTLY**, THROUGH THEIR DESIGNS
- THE DESIGNER'S **MAIN** GOALS HERE ARE ESSENTIALLY **PRACTICAL**:
  - MAKING THE VW **SOCIALLY APPEALING** TO NEWBIES
  - MINIMISING THE NUMBER OF DIRECT CONTACTS THE PLAYERS NEED WITH **CUSTOMER SERVICE**
- HOWEVER, THERE IS **ALSO** THE POINT THAT BY CONTROLLING THE **CULTURE** OF A VIRTUAL WORLD DESIGNERS ARE CONTROLLING ITS **PERSONALITY**
  - /E THEIR OWN **SELF-IMAGE**
    - MORE ON THIS SHORTLY...

#### CULTURE TO COPE WITH

- WITH WHAT **SORT** OF CULTURALLY-DEFINED THINGS WILL A DEVELOPER TYPICALLY WANT TO **COPE**?
- OH, THE **USUAL**... THE EFFECTS OF:
  - BUGS, ILL-JUDGED STATEMENTS BY THE DEV TEAM, RUMOURS, BAD PATCHES, PERCEIVED UNFAIRNESS, HACKERS, CRACKERS, COMPETING VWS, THICK PLAYERS, SPAMMERS, EXPLOITERS, GRIEF PLAYERS, JOURNALISTS, GENERIC WHINGING, UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS, USE OF [BAD LANGUAGE, FOREIGN LANGUAGE, SCRIPTS, HACKED CLIENTS], HABITUAL TOS VIOLATIONS, ACCIDENTS, HORDES OF CLUELESS NEWBIES, RW EVENTS, INTER-PLAYER RIVALRY, INTER-PLAYER DISPUTES, RIVALRIES AND DISPUTES BETWEEN GROUPS OF PLAYERS, RIVALRIES AND DISPUTES BETWEEN CS REPS, RIVALRIES AND DISPUTES BETWEEN GROUPS OF CS REPS, DIFFERENT IDEAS CONCERNING WHAT THE VW IS ABOUT, PLAYERS CHEATING EACH OTHER, PLAYERS CHEATING YOU, PLAYERS CHEATING THEMSELVES (AKA COMMODIFICATION), BETRAYALS (ESPECIALLY CROSS-GENDER), NON-ACCEPTANCE OF YOUR AUTHORITY, RL PSYCHOPATHS, THE BIZARRE AND UNPREDICTABLE...
- AS FOR **HOW** TO COPE WITH THEM, THAT'S ANOTHER TALK...

#### CULTURE TO SUPERVISE

- WHAT SORT OF CULTURALLY-DEFINED THINGS WILL A DEVELOPER TYPICALLY WANT TO **SUPERVISE**?
- THIS IS RATHER MORE NEBULOUS...
- DESIGNERS WANT TO **RECONFIGURE** THE PLAYERS' OPINIONS, ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, VALUES, CUSTOMS, ...
  - IN OTHER WORDS, THEIR VW'S **CULTURE**
- NOTE: THIS WILL USUALLY BE A **RELAXATION** RATHER THAN A **TIGHTENING-UP**
  - DESIGNERS SEEK TO OFFER THE PLAYERS SOMETHING THEY **DON'T** HAVE IN RL, WHICH MEANS **BROADENING HORIZONS** - GRANTING **FREEDOMS**
  - DIFFERENT DESIGNERS HAVE DIFFERENT IDEAS WHAT THIS "SOMETHING" IS, THOUGH - ARTISTIC **DIALECTICS** EXIST

#### DESIGNER AS ARTIST

- THIS NOTION OF USING VIRTUAL WORLDS TO MAKE A **STATEMENT** IS GENERALLY REGARDED AS **AT BEST** AN INDULGENCE
  - AT **WORST**, AS AN EXPERIMENT IN **MANIPULATION**
- THERE'S SO MUCH DESIGNERS **HAVE** TO COVER, SO MUCH THEY **HAVE** TO DEAL WITH, SO MUCH THEY **MUST** DO, AND SO LITTLE TIME TO **DO** IT, THAT THE STUFF THEY **DON'T** HAVE TO DO TAKES A VERY DISTANT SECOND PLACE
- YET THIS CULTURAL "OPTIONAL EXTRA" IS CENTRAL TO THE NOTION OF WHAT VIRTUAL WORLDS ARE **ABOUT**

#### DESIGN FOR..?

- ARE DESIGNERS DESIGNING THE VW FOR THE COMMUNITY, OR THE COMMUNITY FOR THE VW?
  - THAT'S LIKE FOR **FRIENDS** OR FOR **HACKERS** IN MY NEW PLAYER TYPE SYSTEM
- **NEITHER**: DESIGNERS ARE DESIGNING THE VW **AND** THE COMMUNITY TO REFLECT ASPECTS OF **THEMSELVES**
- IF DESIGNERS ARE **PREVENTED** FROM DOING THIS, THEIR VW WILL HAVE NO **SOUL**
- PRIMING THEIR VW'S CULTURE ALLOWS DESIGNERS TO **SPEAK** TO THEIR PLAYERS, THENCE TO THE WORLD, THENCE TO THEMSELVES

## CONCLUSION

- I ASSERTED IN MY BOOK THAT PLAYERS PLAY VIRTUAL WORLDS TO UNDERTAKE A **HERO'S JOURNEY**
- I ALSO ASSERTED THAT DESIGNERS DESIGN VWS FOR THE **SAME** REASON
  - TO FIND OUT **WHO THEY ARE**
- AND ONCE THEY **KNOW?**
  - THE DESIGNER **IS** THE VIRTUAL WORLD
- THROUGH THIS **IDENTITY**, THE DESIGNER CAN AFFECT THE **REAL** WORLD
  - REMEMBER THIS?
- DESIGN VIRTUAL WORLDS AND MAKE A **DIFFERENCE!**