

# GETTING WHAT YOU WANT *VERSUS* WANTING WHAT YOU GET

**WORKSHOP ON CREATIVE BROADBAND  
POTENTIALS**

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## VIRTUAL WORLDS

- THIS TALK IS A **DESIGNER'S TAKE ON COMMUNITY IN VIRTUAL WORLDS**
  - ALSO KNOWN AS:
    - MMORPGS
    - MMOGS
    - PERSISTENT WORLDS
    - MUDS
    - ABOUT A DOZEN MORE...
- DO YOU WANT A QUICK **INTRODUCTION** TO VIRTUAL WORLDS, OR DO YOU ALREADY **KNOW** WHAT THEY ARE?

## COMMUNITY

- IF VIRTUAL WORLDS HAVE **PLAYERS**, THEY HAVE **COMMUNITY**
- COMMUNITIES ARE NOT MERE **RANDOM**, AMORPHOUS BLOBS, THOUGH!
  - THEY HAVE **SHAPE**
  - THEY HAVE **DIRECTION**
- THIS TALK CONSIDERS THE INFLUENCE THAT **DESIGNERS** OF VIRTUAL WORLDS CAN HAVE ON THE COMMUNITIES THAT **ARISE** IN THEM
  - AND THAT'S **ARISE**, NOT **EMERGE**...

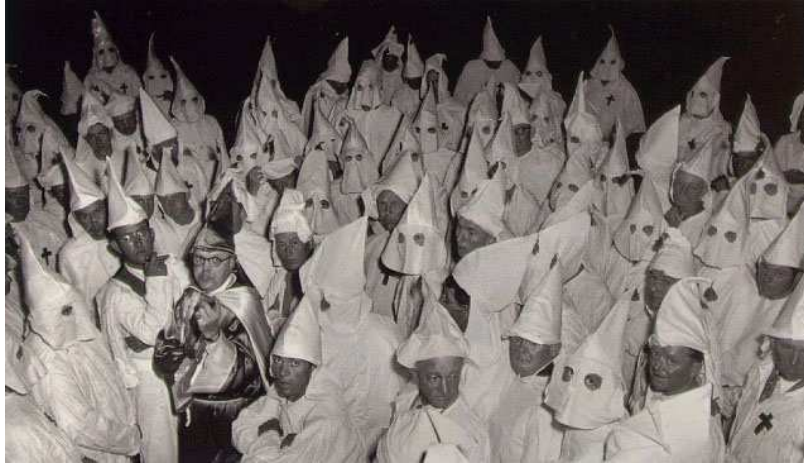
## WHY (1)

- WHY WOULD A DESIGNER **WANT** TO INFLUENCE THEIR PLAYER COMMUNITY?
- OK, WELL HERE'S A REAL-LIFE COMMUNITY:



## WHY (2)

- HERE'S ANOTHER:



## DIFFERENCES

- COMMUNITIES ALL HAVE **SOME** THINGS IN **COMMON**
  - THEY'RE ALL MADE UP OF **PEOPLE**
  - THERE ARE RECURRENT **LEVELS** OF COMMUNITY
- HOWEVER, THEY **DO** HAVE **DIFFERENCES**
  - SOME TYPES OF COMMUNITY ARE **BETTER** FOR A GIVEN VIRTUAL WORLD THAN ARE **OTHERS**
- WHAT'S MORE, DESIGNERS **GET A SAY** REGARDING WHAT KINDS OF COMMUNITY ARISE
  - THIS IS WHETHER THEY **WANT** IT OR NOT

#### WHENCE COMMUNITY

- DESIGNERS **INFLUENCE** THEIR COMMUNITIES IN **THREE** WAYS:
  - THROUGH THE **PHYSICS** OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD
  - THROUGH THE **METAPHYSICS** OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD
  - THROUGH THE **CULTURE** OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD
- I'M GOING TO GO THROUGH THESE IN TURN
  - BUT FIRST...
- **IMPORTANT:** DESIGNERS CAN'T **DESIGN** COMMUNITIES!

#### A METAPHOR

- WHAT DESIGNERS **CAN** DO IS A BIT LIKE **LIGHTING A FIRE**
  - YOU **HOPE** IT'LL BURN HOW YOU **THINK** IT WILL BURN, BUT YOU CAN'T **TELL** IT HOW TO BURN
- DESIGNERS CREATE THE **INITIAL** CONDITIONS
  - THESE DEFINE THE **BOUNDARIES** OF THE **POSSIBLE**
- THEY CAN ALSO CREATE **CONSTRAINTS**
  - THESE MAKE SOME OF THE **OTHERWISE** POSSIBLE **IMPOSSIBLE**

INITIAL CONDITIONS

- **WITHOUT** CONSTRAINTS, YOU HOPE TO BE HAPPY **HOWEVER** THINGS TURN OUT



- YOU **WANT** WHAT YOU **GET**

CONSTRAINTS

- **WITH** CONSTRAINTS, YOU HOPE TO BE HAPPY BECAUSE THINGS TURNED OUT AS **PLANNED**



- YOU **GET** WHAT YOU **WANT**

## DIALECTIC

- THERE'S AN ONGOING **DIALECTIC** AMONG VIRTUAL WORLD DESIGNERS HERE
- DO YOU HAVE **NO** CONSTRAINTS, CONFIDENT THAT **WHATEVER** COMMUNITIES ARISE AS A RESULT OF THE INITIAL CONDITIONS WILL BE ONES OF WHICH YOU **APPROVE?**
  - EVEN IF YOU CAN'T **FORESEE** THEM?
- DO YOU **HAVE** CONSTRAINTS SO YOU ONLY GET THE COMMUNITIES YOU'RE **EXPECTING?**
  - EVEN THOUGH THE **UNFORESEEN** ONES MIGHT BE **BETTER?**

## PHYSICS

- OK, WELL LET'S EXPLORE HOW DESIGNERS CAN AFFECT COMMUNITY THROUGH THEIR **DESIGN**
- THE **FIRST** WAY THEY CAN DO IT IS THROUGH **PHYSICS**
- THE PHYSICS OF A VIRTUAL WORLD DEFINES WHAT THE "LAWS OF NATURE" ARE
  - **NOT** THE "LAWS OF THE LAND"!
- EXAMPLE: IF YOU CAN **COMMUNICATE** WITH OTHER PLAYERS IN-GAME, THAT WOULD USE THE GAME'S **PHYSICS**

### COMMUNICATION (1)

- COMMUNICATION IS THE **BASIS** OF COMMUNITY
- BEST IS **FREEFORM**, WHERE YOU CAN SAY WHATEVER YOU LIKE WITH NO RESTRICTIONS
- NOT **ALL** VIRTUAL WORLDS **ALLOW** THIS



- *TOONTOWN*

### COMMUNICATION (2)

- COMMUNICATION'S **PROPERTIES** AFFECT WHAT COMMUNITY **DEVELOPS**
  - **RANGE** OF COMMUNICATION
  - DEGREE OF **PRIVACY**
  - **BROADCAST** VERSUS **POINT-TO-POINT**
  - COMMUNICATION **CHANNELS**
    - SPEECH
    - EMOTES
    - BEATING PEOPLE WITH SHARP, HEAVY OBJECTS...
- MORE ON THIS SHORTLY!

#### LEVELS OF COMMUNITY

- THERE ARE DIFFERENT **LEVELS** OF COMMUNITY
- GAMES DESIGNERS USE THE FOLLOWING:
  - **COMMUNICATION**
  - COMMUNITY OF **INTEREST**
  - COMMUNITY OF **PRACTICE**
  - COMMUNITY OF **COMMITMENT**
  - **SPIRITUAL** COMMUNITY
- A COMMUNITY CAN ONLY **DEEPEN** IF ITS MEMBERS CAN **ACT** TOGETHER
  - LUCKILY, VIRTUAL WORLDS HAVE **LOTS** OF ACTION!

#### ACTIONS

- DESIGNERS CAN THEREFORE AFFECT THE **KIND** OF COMMUNITY THEY GET BY PROVIDING **CONTENT** THAT CAN MORE **EASILY** BE SOLVED BY COMMUNITIES POSSESSING CERTAIN (DESIRABLE) **FEATURES**
- THIS IS A FORM OF **EVOLUTION**
  - SURVIVAL OF THE **FITTEST**
- THE **DESIGNER** GETS TO DEFINE WHAT "FITTEST" MEANS
  - THAT WHICH FITS THE DESIGN!



#### DEMO TIME

- DO WE HAVE TIME FOR A DEMONSTRATION OF COMMUNITY IN ACTION?
- THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR:
  - HIGH USE OF **JARGON**
  - STRONG DEGREE OF **CO-OPERATION**
  - THE DEGREE OF **PLANNING** INVOLVED
  - WHERE AN OVER-DEVELOPED SENSE OF COMMUNITY CAN GET YOU...

#### WHAT ARCHITECTS KNOW

- THE **REAL** ENVIRONMENT SHAPES **REAL** COMMUNITY
  - “WHY ARE THE BRITISH SO TOLERANT?”
  - “WHY ARE TOWER BLOCKS SUCH SOULLESS PLACES?”
- WHEN ARCHITECTS DESIGN NEW ESTATES, THEY **ALWAYS** CONSIDER WHAT KIND OF **COMMUNITY** TO FOSTER
  - NOWADAYS, IT'S **INCONCEIVABLE** THAT THEY WOULDN'T
- THE **SAME** STRUCTURES APPLY TO DESIGNERS OF VIRTUAL WORLDS
- A **VIRTUAL** ENVIRONMENT SHAPES **VIRTUAL** COMMUNITY

#### PASSIVE AND ACTIVE

- SO, DESIGNERS CAN INFLUENCE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BY:
  - PROVIDING **COMMANDS** THAT CAN BE USED IN COMMUNITY-BUILDING WAYS
  - PROVISION OF GOALS AND **ACTIVITIES** THAT **SELECT** SOME COMMUNITY FORMS OVER OTHERS
- THIS IS CALLED **PASSIVE** PHYSICS
  - COMMUNITY ARISES CONSEQUENT ON IT
- WE ALSO HAVE **ACTIVE** PHYSICS
  - ALSO KNOWN AS **METAPHYSICS**

#### METAPHYSICS

- ACTIVE PHYSICS CODES COMMUNITY-BUILDING TOOLS **DIRECTLY** INTO THE VIRTUAL WORLD
- EXAMPLE: **GUILDS**
  - PRIVATE COMMUNICATION **CHANNEL**
  - GUILD **HOUSE**
  - OWNERSHIP OF **PROPERTY**
  - MANAGEMENT **STRUCTURE**
  - MANAGEMENT **TOOLS**
- **BUILT IN** TO THE **PHYSICS**
  - UNLIKE WITH THE REAL WORLD!

#### METAPHYSICS

- DIFFERENT APPROACHES GIVE DIFFERENT RESULTS
- EXAMPLE: IF A **FIREBALL** CAN KILL MEMBERS OF YOUR **OWN** SIDE, THAT RAISES THE LEVEL OF **TRUST** MEMBERS MUST HAVE IN EACH OTHER
- DESIGNERS CAN DECIDE HOW **MUCH** OF THIS STUFF TO IMPLEMENT OR LEAVE OUT
  - ALTHOUGH THERE **ARE** SOME GENERIC, INDEPENDENT TOOLS AVAILABLE NOW
  - DESIGNERS CAN **ALSO** DECIDE WHAT **OFFLINE** ADMINISTRATIVE **SUPPORT** TO GIVE GUILD LEADERS

#### CULTURE

- THE **THIRD** WAY THAT DESIGNERS CAN INFLUENCE COMMUNITY IS THROUGH **CULTURE**
- NOTE: CULTURE **ITSELF** CAN BE AFFECTED BY PASSIVE OR ACTIVE PHYSICS
- CULTURE IS THE MOST **IMPORTANT** WAY TO DESIGN FOR COMMUNITY
  - I'M THEREFORE GOING TO SPEND THE MOST TIME **TALKING** ABOUT IT
    - OR AT LEAST SAY MOST WORDS ON THE SUBJECT...

#### WHAT I HOPE TO SHOW

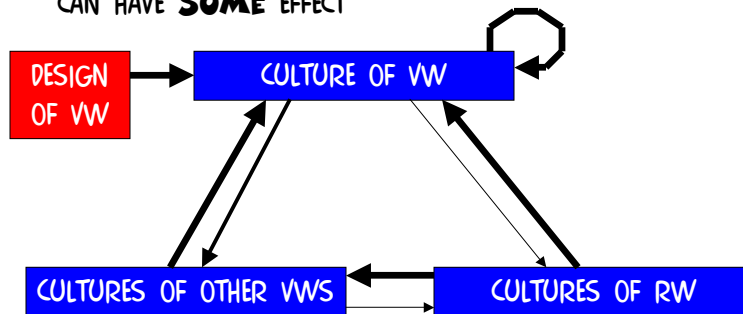
- A VIRTUAL WORLD'S CULTURE AFFECTS ITS PLAYERS' **BEHAVIOUR**
- MUCH OF THIS CULTURE COMES FROM THAT **IMPORTED** BY ITS EARLY PLAYERS
- HOWEVER, DESIGNERS **DO** HAVE SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE ON THEIR VIRTUAL WORLD'S CULTURE, THROUGH ITS **DESIGN**
  - **COROLLARY** (NOT DISCUSSED HERE): WHILE THEY ARE DESIGNING THEIR VIRTUAL WORLD, DESIGNERS SHOULD ACCOUNT FOR WHAT ITS FINAL CULTURE WILL BE, GIVEN ITS LIKELY STARTING POPULATION

#### WHENCE CULTURE?

- THE CULTURE OF A VIRTUAL WORLD IS SHAPED BY **3** FACTORS:
  - WHAT PLAYERS BRING WITH THEM FROM **ELSEWHERE**
    - THE REAL WORLD OR OTHER VIRTUAL WORLDS
  - THE **DESIGN** OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD
    - PEOPLE ARE MORE OPEN IN VIRTUAL WORLDS BECAUSE OF THE **PSEUDONYMITY** THESE AFFORD, **NOT** BECAUSE THEY COME FROM SOME MORE OPEN PART OF REAL-WORLD SOCIETY
  - THE CULTURE OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD **ITSELF**
    - GENERATION TO GENERATION – YES, IT'S A RECURSIVE DEFINITION

## RW CULTURE

- **OUTSIDE** THE VIRTUAL WORLD, CULTURE COMES FROM FACTORS **BEYOND** DESIGNERS' CONTROL
  - EXCEPT THAT VIRTUAL WORLDS, 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
- EXAMPLES:
  - PLAYERS USE REAL-WORLD LANGUAGE (EG. ENGLISH)
  - RW LANGUAGE USES SOME VW TERMS (EG. NEWBIE)
- MOST EFFECTS ARE MUCH **HARDER** TO ASCERTAIN
  - HAS THE FACT THAT **CROSS-GENDER** PLAY IS ACCEPTED IN VIRTUAL WORLDS 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?

#### 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. **ADOLESCENTS**
- HOW MUCH OF *EVERQUEST*'S DIKUMUDISH CULTURE IS DUE TO ITS HAVING DIKUMUD PLAYERS **SEED** IT, AND HOW MUCH IS DUE TO ITS IDENTICAL **GAMEPLAY**?

## NEW CULTURE

- 15 YEARS AGO, **DISTINCT** CULTURES FOR NEW VIRTUAL WORLDS 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 VIRTUAL WORLDS BEGIN WITH A **COMMON** CULTURAL HERITAGE AND HAVE TO **EVOLVE** FROM THERE
  - SHAPED MAINLY BY THE VIRTUAL WORLD'S DESIGN
  - WHICH MAY MEAN A CULTURE SHOCK - EG. PD, BRANDING

## BOUNDARIES

- THE **MAIN** CULTURAL/COMMUNITY CRUCIBLES ARE THE VARIOUS **INSTANTIATIONS** OF VIRTUAL WORLDS
  - 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** VIRTUAL WORLD BOUNDARIES
- THERE CAN ALSO BE SUB-CULTURES **WITHIN** INDIVIDUAL INSTANTIATIONS
  - CULTURALLY DISTINCT GUILDS, CLASSES, "RACES", ...

#### OVERLAP

- WE NEED TO REMEMBER THAT "CULTURE" AND "COMMUNITY" EXIST AT **MANY** OVERLAPPING LEVELS
  - ONLINE, 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 ALL STANDARD ANTHROPOLOGY STUFF
- WHEN WE TALK ABOUT "VIRTUAL WORLD CULTURE" OR "VIRTUAL WORLD COMMUNITY", WE MUST ENSURE IT'S CLEAR WHICH **LEVEL** WE MEAN

#### FINAL SLIDE!

- SO WHAT HAVE I SHOWN HERE?
  - NEW COMMUNITIES ARE SHAPED IN **PART** BY THEIR **ENVIRONMENT**
    - AND DESIGNERS **CREATE** THOSE ENVIRONMENTS
  - THEY'RE **ALSO** SHAPED BY THEIR **CULTURE**
    - AND DESIGNERS GET TO **SEED** THAT CULTURE
- COMMUNITY EXPERTS KNOW A **GREAT DEAL** ABOUT **MANAGING** COMMUNITIES, BUT **NOT** MUCH ABOUT **CREATING** THEM
- CONCLUSION: MAYBE WE SHOULD **TALK..?**