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Learning from Second Life

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Abstract
There is currently widespread interest in exploring the opportunities to develop learning that can be delivered in three-dimensional multiuser virtual environments (3-D MUVEs). In this paper, I argue for the need to conduct research into the emerging cultures of use in 3-D MUVEs, focussing on the example of Second Life. Drawing on social and cultural studies of 3-D MUVEs, the paper briefly explores four issues in Second Life which have profound implications for the transplanting of learning: (1) the emerging 'virtual vernacular' of Second Life builds, (2) the development of a capitalist economy within and beyond Second Life, (3) the phenomenon of 'griefing', and (4) the need to take account of the everydayness of Second Life. Only by attending to the cultures of use in 3-D MUVEs—learning *from* Second Life—can we begin to contemplate the potential for learning *in* Second Life.

Introduction

As another set of potential learning opportunities unveils itself in cyberspace in the form of three-dimensional multiuser virtual environments (3-D MUVEs), so we can witness a new gold rush, a new enthusiastic embrace of the possibilities for learning in Second Life and other virtual worlds. Yet, as with previous rushes to populate the virtual with learning, or to blend online and off-line learning in new mixes, there is a need to go carefully, and to design and implement learning that is embedded in the emerging cultures of use in 3-D MUVEs. These cultures share some common ground with other practices in virtual worlds, yet at the same time unique and surprising practices of use are taking shape. Following Tom Boellstorff (2008), I suggest that detailed anthropological engagement with the cultures of 3-D MUVEs is a vital step on the road to understanding how learning takes place (or might take place) in new worlds like Second Life. Drawing on Boellstorff's detailed ethnography and other recent research into 3-D MUVEs and MMORPGs (massively multiple online role-playing games), this paper focuses on selected manifestations of Second Life's culture of use, in order to provide a broader cultural context for thinking about learning in Second Life.

We need to ask, before installing learning programmes in 3-D MUVEs, what kind of place is this? In this paper I hope to illustrate how learning from Second Life is crucial to thinking about how to transplant or create learning opportunities in Second Life and other 3-D MUVEs. While many researchers interested in the social, cultural or experiential engagement with digital environments have argued convincingly for the jettisoning of the distinction between 'virtual' and 'real' worlds (see, for example, de Souza e Silva, 2006 on 'hybrid' gaming), for the sake of lexical simplicity I will be using them in this paper, while recognizing the folly of doing so and the need for new words to describe the experiences of folk like Second Life residents. And while I also acknowledge that 3-D MUVEs are not straightforwardly 'games', I will be drawing on ideas from gaming research, not least because I concur with Mackenzie Wark's (2007: 225) statement that 'Games are our contemporaries, the forms in which the present can be felt and, in being felt, thought through'.

Inspired by Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour's 1972 classic architectural study, *Learning from Las Vegas* (republished in 1977), a key focus of this paper is the 'commercial landscape' of Second Life. Just as Venturi and his colleagues analysed the Vegas Strip as a new type of urban form, blurring production, consumption, entertainment and leisure, and with its own distinct cultural and economic landscape, so the emergence of a cultural economy in Second Life, manifest in the virtual landscape, demands our close attention. Like the Vegas Strip, this economy has a clear geography and a set of landscape expressions. And just as Venturi *et al* refused to write off Vegas as a gaudy symbol of capital's excesses, in deference to architectural modernism, so any analysis of Second Life must engage with what Edward Castronova (2005) calls 'the economics of fun', and must seek to understand how different forms of value are accrued and displayed in virtual worlds. Thomas Malaby's (2006) discussion of the 'parlaying' of forms of capital within virtual worlds, and between the 'virtual' and the 'real', is also a key resource for understanding this cultural economy. In contrast to earlier discussions of the issue of 'free labour' in cyberspace, which focussed on the immense amounts of unpaid labour given over by users to sustain virtual environments such as bulletin boards or discussion lists (eg, Terranova, 2006), in 3-D MUVEs like Second Life, the emergence of a market economy based around what Boellstorff calls 'creationist capitalism'—marketing and selling creative labour—highlights how value is traded in and extracted from activities in virtual worlds. Understanding how economic, social and cultural value operate there, and mapping the ways in which wealth, connections and status are tradable within Second Life and beyond it, has profound implications for learning in this particular 3-D MUVE.

Adding to Malaby's analysis, which is indebted to Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) formulation of the different forms of capital, we can borrow Sarah Thornton's (1995) conceptualisation of 'subcultural capital' in order to explore how 'nonlegitimised' forms of value also emerge and circulate in 3-D MUVEs. In this regard, the paper focuses on the phenomenon of 'griefing', drawing an analogy with earlier discussions of hacking. While griefing is widely characterised as a form of nuisance, it can also be seen as a playful subversion of the potential latent in virtual worlds. In this way it is analogous to

hacking, both in the sense that hacking's origins lay in finding ingenious (and often mischievous) solutions to particular system problems, and in terms of the demonisation of hacking as an illegitimate and even criminal activity. Taking my cue from Julian Dibbell's (2006) 'Viruses are good for you', I also explore what we can learn from griefing, not least in terms of how it draws virtual world users' attention to the possibilities that exist, and their own limitations in accessing those possibilities. As a form of countereconomy of fun, then, the deployment of subcultural capital in griefing has much to teach us about cultural norms, their policing and their contestation. In addition, reactions to griefing highlight the limits of 'fun' in this economy, and how those limits are policed. As such, griefing is a key phenomenon to understand how informal (even illegitimate) learning takes place in 3-D MUVEs, and how it is given (or denied) value. New ways of learning and new ways of deploying knowledge and skill are emerging in 3-D MUVEs, which educators must understand if their learning interventions are to make sense to communities of practice forming in spaces like Second Life.

Finally, the paper returns to a recurring theme in my work on e-learning: the everydayness of users' engagements with virtual worlds. While Boellstorff argues that a standalone 'virtual ethnography' is sufficient to understand Second Life, I would suggest that we still need to think about how 3-D MUVEs are engaged with in the context of participants' everyday lives, online and off. Pargman and Jakobsson's (2008) work on MMORPG (massively multiplayer online role-playing games, such as *World of Warcraft*) players is particularly insightful in this regard, stressing the mundanity of gaming, and the constant 'frame-switching' that players engage in, as they move between games, and from 'virtual' to 'real' worlds. A mapping of the how gaming becomes a part of everyday life, and its interleaving with other prosaic daily activities, helps us understand not only immersion but also nonimmersion, casual engagement, boredom and restlessness as everyday experiences in virtual worlds. If learning is to be successfully embedded in 3-D MUVEs, a greater understanding of the concomitant embedding of virtual worlds in participants' everyday lives is a vital first step.

As the other papers in this issue attest, the possibilities for learning in Second Life and other 3-D MUVEs are undoubtedly developing, but what is also at stake, I want to argue, is learning *from* Second Life—making sense of the place and its inhabitants, their ways and whys, in order to think more fully about how forms of learning might work with, but also challenge, the emerging culture and economy of Second Life.

The Strip and the grid

Commencing their work in 1968 through a series of site visits, cartographic experiments and research 'studios', the US architects Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour began to explore the landscape of Las Vegas, Nevada. The resultant book, *Learning from Las Vegas*, published in 1972 (and revised and expanded in 1977), is a landmark text in architectural theory and practice. Inside, the authors sought to challenge the then-dominant architectural aesthetic of modernism, with a playful account of this 'new' urban landscape: a vernacular, commercial cityscape of neon signs and advertising billboards, of alternating spectacular sights and dead zones,

centred on The Strip, the main street running through the middle of the city. They produced countless maps which sought to capture the experience of this landscape—an experience, they argued, best understood by passing by, at speed and at distance, in a car. So they mapped, among many other things, every written word on The Strip that could be seen from the road, illumination levels, gas stations and motels. Summing up the experience of passing through The Strip, they write of 'a new landscape of big spaces, high speeds, and complex programs', noting too that 'time travels fast today' and that this necessitates 'an architecture of bold communication', of 'enormous signs in vast spaces at high speeds' (Venturi, Brown & Izenour, 1977: 8–9). Important to their account of the newness of Vegas is the speed of its development, and the fact that it sprang forth on virgin desert, freeing its development from antecedent urban morphology—whereas other cities grow incrementally, through accretion and retrofitting, Las Vegas was hastily erected on blank space. From one viewpoint, the result is chaotic, unplanned, unmanaged—an expression of pure commercialism, constructed around one key aim: the extraction of capital from visitors. Writing about the casinos, Venturi *et al* (1977, p. 49) note that 'one loses track of where one is and when it is'; these interiors produce, they add, a new way of 'being together and yet separate' (p. 50).

In a stunning feat of analysis, the authors contest those critical assessments of The Strip that see it is gaudy, soulless, ruthless and chaotic. They argue that disorder is merely 'an order we cannot see', hail its seeming incongruity as a kind of inclusiveness, and celebrate a populist, experiential aesthetic: '[i]t is not an order dominated by the expert and made easy on the eye. The moving eye and the moving body must work to pick out and interpret a variety of changing, juxtaposed orders' (Venturi *et al*, 1977, p. 53). Crucially, this is a landscape of escapism, of entertainment, of fantasy.

> Essential to the imagery of pleasure-zone architecture are lightness, the quality of being an oasis in a perhaps hostile context, heightened symbolism, and the ability to engulf the visitor in a new role: for three days one may imagine oneself a centurion at Caesar's Palace, a ranger at the Frontier, or a jetsetter at the Riviera rather than a salesperson from Des Moines, Iowa, or an architect from Haddonfield, New Jersey ... . The Strip shows the value of symbolism and allusion in an architecture of vast space and speed and proves that people ... have fun in architecture that reminds them of something else. (Venturi *et al*, 1977. p. 53)

Rereading this description of a landscape of light and speed almost inevitably conjures comparison with a newer landscape—the 'virtual vernacular' emerging in cyberspace. In particular, Venturi *et al*'s discussion of signage and illumination brings to my mind Daniel Miller's (2000) insightful discussion of how websites function as 'aesthetic traps' which seek to capture passing surfers through dazzling displays of web design (or some kind of novelty 'hook'). And the discussion of The Strip resonates with Tom Boellstorff's (2008) anthropological mapping of the landscape of Second Life, a topography known as the grid. In his discussion of place and time in Second Life, Boellstorff writes of the importance of forms of visual expression in the virtual built landscape, and the importance of building itself as an expression not only of virtual property ownership, but also a display of skill, taste and capital deployment. His discussion of these themes opens with a telling anecdote about protests surrounding the appearance of a gaudy, neon-lit

new store in a particular Second Life neighbourhood. Described by protestors as 'blight', the storefront is soon surrounded by signs voicing residents' objections to this over-the-top, out-of-proportion 'flashing monster' (Boellstorff, 2008, p. 90–91). This anecdote reveals the emerging aesthetic norms of Second Life, but also the inventiveness of some 'builders', who also clearly understand the Vegas-like experience of Second Life—a landscape of speed and distance, where one needs 'traps' to lure in passers-by. Given the popularity of flight as a mode of travel for avatars in Second Life, the landscape is indeed apprehended this way, or observed via maps which show the clustering of avatars (and which resemble, to me at least, some of Venturi *et al*'s cartographic experiments).

Critics of the emerging built landscape of Second Life decry its lack of imagination and experimentation. 'When it comes down to it', write Bryan Boyer and Heather Ring (2007, p. 1–2), 'from an architectural perspective, Second Life just sort of replicates suburbia … . [T]he main thing which is missing from SL is any sense of urbanism'—there's no master planning, no architect's vision, just the virtual vernacular. Read from a viewpoint infected by the spirit of *Learning from Las Vegas*, of course, these criticisms echo those modernists who failed to see the value and meaning of commercial, vernacular, ordinary architecture. As Venturi *et al* (1977, p. 154) wrote somewhat provocatively: 'many people like suburbia'. While pretty much anything is possible in Second Life, architecturally, what is striking is the serial replication of the same types of built form, and the expressions of aspiration that builders there create: beachfront locations, familiar scales and layouts, recognisable houses. Boellstorff neatly captures a sense of this in an exchange between Second Life residents:

> KARY: Perhaps the formation of communities in SL is limited by our acclimation to notions of RL, much like how folks in SL add sinks and bathrooms to their houses, even though such things are perfectly useless.
>
> RIMA: And roofs, etc., creating a model of a perfect rl?
>
> MARKY: I never understood the homes in sl with kitchens.
>
> JEEN: I remember I saw a laundromat once, and it made my day!
>
> (Boellstorff, 2008: 244)

Clearly, when given virtual freedom to express their creativity in architectural form, many Second Life residents do fall back on the familiar, the suburban. While critics such as Boyer and Ring (2007) see this is limited and limiting, an expression of 'spatial banality', it might be more productive to think through what this tells us about the value of familiarity and the need for virtual worlds to be recognisable *as worlds*. For those seeking to devise learning opportunities in 3-D MUVEs, exploring what counts as recognisably educational seems equally important. Where some accounts of new technologically enabled learning have sought to almost 'smuggle' learning into seemingly nonlearning contexts (such as gaming), there is a clear message from current Second Life residents that emerging cultures of use bear strong similarity to pre-existing cultural conventions. Certainly there is room for experiment; but there are also clear limits. So,

while some advocates imagine boundless possibilities constrained only by 'the technology and the creativity of the educators using it' (Childress & Braswell, 2006: 195), it is important to acknowledge and understand the limits embedded in emerging cultures of use. These are not failures of imagination, but reflections of the way creativity is here used to provide a sense of grounding, of place making, of comfort and familiarity.

Nevertheless, as Boellstorff (2008) writes, one striking characteristic of Second Life is the sheer popularity of building as an activity and as 'a source of great pleasure and meaning' (p. 97). This is, in fact, a recurring motif in discussions of 3-D MUVEs like Second Life: that new forms of creative expression are enabled by these virtual worlds, and that this creativity is both a manifestation of some inherent desire to create (stifled in the alienated labouring of the capitalist workforce) and at once the source and expression of particular regimes of value. In short, a new cultural economy is coming into being in Second Life, where work is fun and playing can make you rich.

The Second Life of capital

The emergence of a market economy in Second Life is probably its most remarked-upon feature: an economy founded on user-generated content, in which residents create and sell a variety of virtual objects, skills and services. Also highlighted in countless accounts is the 'spill over' or 'bleed through' of this virtual economy into the 'real world', the off-line economy. Through trading sites or specialist brokerages, fortunes built up in-world can be cashed in for real-world riches. For some commentators, the emergence of this economy merely evidences the naturalness of capitalism, leading to laissez-faire attitudes that advocate letting the 'invisible hand' of the market set the rules of this game in acknowledgement of the fact that 'capitalism loves to explore' and that '[n]othing makes a world feel more alive than an active market system' (Castronova, 2005, p. 163, 172). For others, the fact that this activity is taking place in what is ostensibly a game is a cause for concern: making play into work is not a 'fun' way to unlock your earning potential, but capital's colonising of 'free' time, even of 'freedom' itself. The emergence of this economy, the colonisation of play by work, reveals for some critics the true nature of gaming: 'to train a player to work harder while still enjoying it … . [G]ames are inherently work platforms that train us to become better workers' (Yee, 2006, p. 70). This critique echoes earlier discussions of the ways in which so much of cyberspace is underpinned by 'free labour'—how the bulk of the content is created and uploaded freely, whether by gamers or bloggers, bulletin board moderators or chathosts (Terranova, 2006). Yet the 'bleed through' of online and off-line economies perturbs this analysis: where free labour could be conceptualised (in some cases) as a form of gift-giving that bypasses capitalist logic, the trade between virtual and real worlds signals the capitalisation of the virtual. Of course, for those who protested about their labour being exploited for no financial return by the corporate Web, this is a change for the better. But for critics, it signposts the co-option of leisure, play and nonwork time back into the capitalist economy.

Boellstorff (2008) labels the economic activity in Second Life 'creationist capitalism', although he admits this mistakenly summons ideas of 'intelligent design' and religious

creationism. Nevertheless, he uses the term to explore how creativity is seen there as an expression of self-identity, an unalienated form of labour, or leisure-work, which has had mixed effects. For learning technologists, therefore, part of the task at hand is to consider how Second Life residents think about 'work' and 'play', and where learning might best sit on a continuum of 'workness' and 'playness'. To put it bluntly: do Second Life residents want learning to be fun? But what interests Boellstorff (and me) more than solving the riddle of whether the emergence of this 'hybrid' economy is a 'good' or 'bad' thing, is how new regimes of value are also emerging. Thomas Malaby (2006) also explores this notion, and in particular the ability of gamers to 'parlay' different forms of capital both within virtual worlds and between the virtual and the real (where parlaying means maximising the value of existing assets, often by trading them in new contexts). Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) well-known discussion of the different forms of capital (economic, social, cultural), Malaby maps how social activities (such as networking) or cultural competencies (such as knowing the shared codes of avatar behaviour) are utilised in Second Life as forms of capital to be accrued, drawn on, traded and displayed. As he summarises, 'Second Life [is] a place where one can viably leverage skill into connections into credentials into a product into money and all combinations thereof' (Malaby, 2006, p. 159).

What is particularly significant about this analysis is that, by drawing on Bourdieu's (1986) elaboration of capital forms and attributes, we can better understand how cultural codes such as status and distinction operate in Second Life. This is important for any consideration of learning potential, since the regimes of value that consolidate around particular manifestations of skill or status impact directly on the take-up (or not) of learning. Studies in off-line learning have shown repeatedly the need to consider established (but also emerging) cultures within learning groups, and in particular how this relates to social class formation and the value of cultural capital (eg, Albright & Luke, 2008). As Boellstorff (2008) notes, a common manifestation of the deployment of cultural capital in Second Life concerns newcomers ('newbies' or 'noobs'), but he also spots forms of 'appearance status' and 'skills inequality' as expressions of something like a Second Life class structure. Now, while some commentators argue that the 'freedoms' of virtual worlds enable users to 'enter whole new economic worlds where their wealth, status, and abilities differ greatly from their embodied, material being' (Molesworth & Denegri-Knott, 2007: 130), Bourdieu was at pains to point up the resilience of class, and our inability to remake ourselves or to 'pass' as from a different class (on virtual class passing, see Bell, 2001). Despite interacting with avatars in Second Life, the embodied, embedded 'habitus' of class is never far away, and this must be acknowledged and worked with if learning is to 'stick' in 3-D MUVEs.

Bourdieu's (1984) model of the forms of capital emphasises social reproduction—how social structures such as class are kept in place through the building up and deploying of forms of capital—while also acknowledging that the 'tools' utilised to accrue or deploy capital are constantly changing. In *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*, he mapped the formations of cultural capital among the French new middle classes, and while his maps may appear as static renderings of the taste formations and

consumption cultures of French doctors, teachers, lawyers and so on, in reality they are a series of time-specific snapshots of what is a constantly moving taste-scape. The dynamism of this model is also evident in later work by other scholars interested in capital formations, including those that produce new and distinctive revaluings or devaluings of cultural objects or social activities—the so-called cultural intermediaries (Featherstone, 1990). Perhaps most notable in this regard, and of most use to us here, is Sarah Thornton's (1995) elaboration of subcultural capital. While the object of Thornton's analysis was dance music culture, the idea of distinctive regimes of value and taste formations among 'subcultures' is of much broader importance, as I will now discuss in the context of a particular subcultural activity in Second Life, 'griefing'.

Griefing is good for you

Griefing is defined by Boellstorff (2008, p. 252) as 'behavior in a virtual world intended to disrupt the experience of others'; it is described by Second Life residents using terms such as vandalism, graffiti, nuisance, blight. Given the argument I have made earlier about the importance of building and about emerging architectural aesthetics, Boellstorff notes that constructing unattractive builds in Second Life is widely seen as a form of griefing. The sudden appearance of new structures, signs, messages and so on also attests, of course, to the skill of those constructing them: not just programming skill, but also skill in knowing the social codes and how to disrupt them. Griefing may be thought of, therefore, as the deployment of subcultural capital, and as analogous to hacking. While hacking has been widely demonised as illegitimate, often criminal and malicious, the origins of the activity (and the term) are more about finding imaginative solutions to hardware or software problems, or exploiting loopholes in systems design, often just as a way of displaying technical prowess or subcultural capital (Ross, 2000). While some forms of griefing are undoubtedly aimed at causing disruption, or even of extorting (virtual or real) money from residents, such as 'lag bombs' or 'grid attacks', others are simply playful, or seek to make clear to other residents either a flaw in the system or a flaw in their knowledge of the system. So while Linden Lab's Cory Ondrejka (2006) talks only of 'cheating' and how it worsens the gaming experience, a different reading brings to the surface the value of griefing as a form of learning itself.

Julian Dibbell (2006) once declared provocatively that 'viruses are good for you'. Part of the reason why a virus, or a griefing incident, might be good for you is in reminding you of your lack of real understanding of the grid, of the virtual world you are inhabiting. Just as viruses and virus warnings can elicit panic by making us realise the depth of our reliance on networked computers, so griefing can foreground what is routinely backgrounded, or 'black boxed', for many Second Life residents: that they live in a computer program (Bell, 2001). They may know the basics of how prims[1] work, or some scripting (although many residents buy in this expertise), but their understanding of the underlying systems and subsystems may be very limited. It is important to acknowledge the

[1]A *Primitive* or *prim* is a single part object. Multipart objects will have multiple primitive parts ('prims'). In Second Life, virtual physical objects such as cars, houses, jewelry and even less obvious things such as hair are made out of one or more primitive parts called *prims*.

prankster-like nature of much griefing (some griefers prefer the label 'goon'), but also the serious value of their pranks. Boyer and Ring (2007) discuss how a kind of architectural griefing—Alpar Asztalos' project, attaching '3-D graffiti' to residents' property—can be a form of research, testing residents' reactions, but also exposing them, albeit briefly, to new architectural possibilities while also bringing to the surface dominant values about private property.

As a form of subcultural capital, griefing at once reveals new possibilities but also keeps them out of the reach of 'ordinary' Second Life residents. Their often hostile responses to griefing could be read as narrow-mindedness, or lack of good humour. But examples such as Asztalos' 3-D graffiti highlight the productive potential of griefing, not as a parlaying of a new kind of distinction, but also as an attempt to provoke residents to rethink not only their architectural choices, but also the depth of their surrender to and reliance on systems which they may barely understand. As with hacking, therefore, griefing can mobilise subcultural capital not only as a status-marking device, but as a basis for consciousness raising and collective reflection on what it means to be resident in Second Life. Rather than people reacting with hostility, there is indeed much they can learn from griefing. In terms of projects to design learning for 3-D MUVEs, a phenomenon such as griefing is immensely revealing about different ways in which knowledge and skill might be utilised by 'experts', even if the form of that 'expertise' is, to some Second Life residents, very controversial. Moreover, reactions to and feelings about griefing bring to the surface underlying cultural conventions that shape the potential learning landscape of Second Life.

Conclusion: everyday Second Life

Finally, I want to argue that those who attempt to think about the learning potential of 3-D MUVEs like Second Life need to understand how residents have integrated 'playing' Second Life with their everyday lives, both online and off. As I have argued previously in relation to the learning affordances of the iPod, without taking into account the cultures of use already settling around new technologies, we cannot expect the take-up of learning as a matter of course (Bell, 2008). This conclusion holds true, of course, of all forms of e-learning that are in any way learner-centred, taking account of the learners' needs, cultures, prior learning, previous experience and personal circumstances, yet I still believe it is worth reiterating as 3-D MUVEs witness the latest learning land grab. But, while Boellstorff (2008) argues that the study of Second Life requires a 'virtual ethnography' only, I would suggest the need to study not just the online lives of Second Life residents, but their off-line lives too (see also Miller & Slater, 2000). As Daniel Pargman and Peter Jakobsson, (2008, p. 232) write, in their study of online gamers, 'computer games and gaming are a recurring daily activity and consequently are described as routinised practice firmly integrated into their everyday lives'. As their research shows, gaming is often nonimmersive—a mundane part of the background of daily life in which gamers continually 'frame-switch' between games, and between the virtual and the real. This leads them to conclude that 'games are being transformed into a new medium that can be used for many different purposes, only some of which have to do with play' (p. 240–241).

Now, while this statement seemingly gives a green light to learning's transplant into 3-D MUVEs, it comes with a powerful caveat: in the words of one Second Life resident quoted by Boellstorff (2008, p. 239), 'that's the dirty secret of virtual worlds; all people end up doing is replicating their real lives'. While Boellstorff contests this view—and I agree with him that it is more complicated than this bald statement—it is nevertheless important to explore and come to understand the ways in which virtual lives and real lives are blended, what kinds of 'bleed-through' between 'real life' and Second Life take place, how residents conceptualise and manage the toggling between worlds, and what the implications of this experience are for things like learning. Everydayness has to be a critical concept in our research programmes. To be sure, there is potential latent in 3-D MUVEs for all kinds of novel (and not-so-novel) learning applications, but this does not mean these will 'stick', unless we understand the everyday lives of the people we imagine as potential learners. I will end by going back to where I started, to *Learning from Las Vegas*:

> There is a perversity in the learning process: We look backwards at history and tradition to go forward; we can also look downward to go upward. And with-holding judgment may be used as a tool to make later judgment more sensitive. This is a way of learning from everything. (Venturi *et al*, 1977, p. 3)

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