

6th European Conference on  
**eGuidance: widening access to  
lifelong guidance**

Adopting Virtual Worlds

# A fact of (second) life

- Virtual worlds (VWs) are **here to stay and grow**: better try and make the most of them
- **Online games** = most surveyed - profitable! – subset of VWs
- **Lessons** to be drawn as to education and governance

# EDUCATION 1

- **OECD** on Videogames & Education, Santiago, October 2007 (see [www.enlaces.cl/seminariovideojuegos](http://www.enlaces.cl/seminariovideojuegos))
- **Serge Tisseron** submits that games drive:
  - IMMERSION
  - INTERACTION
  - RECOGNITION
  - NEGOTIATION

# EDUCATION 1

- Air-tight **immersion** guarantees full **attention**
- **Interaction** elicits a sense of responsibility, **ownership**; makes for child-centered, customized knowledge appropriation
- **Impersonation** combined to instant feedback makes for safe simulation, enhances **self-esteem**
- **Negotiation** opens minds to **new sources of learning**.

# EDUCATION 2

- **Mediappro** ([www.mediappro.org](http://www.mediappro.org)) pinned down a widening **gap** between schools/home, street
- **GiS** ([http://games.eun/org/upload/gis\\_synthesis\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://games.eun/org/upload/gis_synthesis_report_en.pdf)) took stock of how **games** are used at school, identified prerequisites for their **productive use**

# EDUCATION 2

- In 2006, Mediappro contrasted the youth's **passion** for game consoles, home PCs, mobile phones, etc with the **dearth of attention** given to school curriculum
- Interestingly, Mediappro found out that the youth are eager to **learn from their elders** how to reconcile their passion with a meaningful, productive life. This gives parents, teachers a chance to restore their authority. It ties in with GiS' prerequisite 1, **coaching**.

# EDUCATION 2

- GiS also documented the fact that using games increases the use of traditional teaching aids (complementarity, **no displacement**)
- Standing for **mass collaboration**, VWs fit the shift to child-centered knowledge appropriation

# GOVERNANCE 1

- Edward Castronova: « Online games » = misnomer;  
« **synthetic worlds** » = more fitting
- Virtual communities = ideal **testing grounds** for social behaviour
- Publishers, users = **2 basic constituencies**

# GOVERNANCE 1

- Game designers = **gods** (Richard Bartle). Likewise, chat room moderators = **judges**
- Game **publishers** need to be educated to governance
- Purpose of the guidelines of the **Council of Europe** (real world-assisted governance of VWs, see [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int))
- **Users** too need an education: who's in charge?

# GOVERNANCE 2

- The 5th c. BC « **Polis** » rediscovered?
- **Risks:**
  - full divulgation of private life in social networks
  - Transparency: success, failure decided by popular demand
- **Rewards:**
  - free, agora-like debate on blogs, in chatrooms
  - equal opportunity to contribute to VWs' « politis »

# CHALLENGES AHEAD 1

- Option **1** = **ignore** or play down VWs= the generation gap will only grow
- Option **2** = **make the most** of VWs
- **EU** institutions go for **Option 2**:
  - FP7 TEL call = example
  - E-Inclusion on self-training, job mobility, ageing better, etc
  - Web 2.0 seen as « digital equalizer » affording everyone the same chances irrespective of social status, education, location.

# CHALLENGES AHEAD 2

- **EU foresight:**
  - EC Com 28.04.08
  - EP Reso 12.03.09
  - EP Reco 26.03.09
- **CoE foresight:**
  - 2008 guidelines to online gaming, ISPs
  - Draft Reco regarding online content
- **UNESCO Convention on cultural diversity**

# CHALLENGES AHEAD 3

- **Regulation**-wise, a UKG-OECD workshop held in March 2009 found that:
  - most virtual worlds offer a combination of content, media and plain space
  - all three components have been subject to longstanding, well-tested legal provisions
- Logic would then recommend a **mix** of:
  - applicable law
  - light-touch regulation designed under the auspices of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

# CONCLUSIONS

- VWs = **effective tools** to get students and citizens ready **for the 21<sup>st</sup> century**
- Ubiquitous, affordable, harmless and user-friendly **access** to VWs will encourage their **adoption** “from cradle to grave”
- VWs’ **regulation** must be **conspicuous** enough to inspire trust but **light** lest innovative use is stifled.