

**UK Government BERR / OECD  
ICCP - Workshop:  
Virtual Worlds  
An Introduction**

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***RENREYNOLDS***



Oh hai

[www.reyreynolds.com](http://www.reyreynolds.com)



TERRANOVA

[www.virtualpolicy.net](http://www.virtualpolicy.net)



# the Virtual Policy Network

- A think tank dedicated to exploring the public policy implications of virtual worlds
- Supporting
  - Governments
  - Industry
  - Academia
  - Regulators



# What is a virtual world?

- An online space where people can get together and share an experience
- Bartle's characteristics:
  - It is shared and persistent
  - Interactions occur in real-time
  - There is an underlying automated rule set, the 'physics' that determines how individuals effect changes
  - Individuals represented within the world



# What is a virtual world?

- What is not
  - A Web page
  - Grand Theft Auto Multi-player
- What is
  - Games
    - World of Warcraft
    - Maple Story etc.
  - Social
    - Habbo Hotel
    - There.com
    - Second Life
    - Twinity etc.
  - Business
    - Second Life
    - Olive
    - Quack etc.
- Think of VW's like TV or Film



# Quick facts

- Active Users: 100+ Million
- Registered Users: 100s Million
  - Habbo Hotel 120 Million +
- Demographics:
  - All ages
  - Club Penguin: 6 - 14
  - Habbo: 13 - 18
  - WoW: officially 15+ but actually much broader
    - Average MMO player 26
  - Second Life: 18+
- Usage:
  - Habbo 43 min per
  - MMO 22 hrs per week
    - Tends to cannibalize TV watching
  - Account holding for several years





# Quick facts

- Second Life
  - 80% UK Universities
  - Major brands
    - Nike
    - Toyota
- Sun: Wonderland
- Forterra Systems: Olive
- ProtonMedia: ProtoSphere
- Qwaq
- VastPark
- 3DXplorer
- Active Worlds



# Quick facts

- Growth of 'serious'
  - UK: Serious Games Institute
  - US: Federal consortium of Virtual Worlds





# What is a virtual world?

- Social practice with broadening appeal that has impact on citizens
  - Tool
    - eCommerce
    - Innovation
      - Business
      - Product development
      - Data visualization
  - Business
    - Games / utility spaces
      - Developing, publishing, supporting
      - Commerce
      - Training / Education



# What is a virtual world?

- Beyond these there are broader ways of understanding virtual worlds
  - Digital artifact
    - Content
  - Medium
    - Common carrier / broadcast
  - Game (even as a tool)
    - Like a sport legally
  - Community / Society
  - EULA Space
  - Public space
    - Protest
  - Identity play-space
    - Fake / Possible



# Policy Iceberg

- VW's are a medium that can contain almost anything that can be digitized
  - TV, Film, Images
- Illuminate policy debate
  - Character - Identity
  - Terms of Service - Free speech
  - User generated content - IP Rights
  - Chat logs - Privacy / surveillance
  - Gold Sales - Wage arbitrage / tax points
- They point to a possible future
  - Guilds - the future of management
  - Teaching iSL - future of education



# BERR / OECD Focus

- Practice
  - How can virtual worlds contribute to innovation, to transformation of business, government and public services and to increasing transparency, improving innovative services delivery, and creating employment?
- Policy
  - Should public policy frameworks be adapted to support governments, citizens, and businesses using virtual worlds to improve their performance? If so how?





Thank you

Ren Reynolds

[www.virtualpolicy.net](http://www.virtualpolicy.net)

[ren@virtualpolicy.net](mailto:ren@virtualpolicy.net)

+44 7778 285 273

