

Online games as social meeting places

October 12 2010

boundary crossing in online games, researchers Jonas Linderöth and Camilla Olsson at the University of Gothenburg analyse the culture of online games and the boundary-crossing community associated with the activity. The report looks at meetings with other cultures, development of language skills and players who travel to meet up with other players. But it also deals with culture clashes, exclusion and sexualisation.

The report, which was released by the Swedish Media Council on 5 October, shows that digital online games function as social meeting places, where players from all over the world come into contact and play together. The social aspect of the game is often the key element for the players, something that has been overlooked by many people.

Performance culture

Online games have a clear performance culture where players are welcome if they are proficient at the game, and this is why issues such as age differences, nationality and social class are not as important as they are in other social arenas. It is quite common for older and younger players to play together, but only if the younger players can communicate on the older players' level.

Other social rules

"However, the performance culture does not apply to one area: if the player is a woman, certain stereotypical gender perceptions emerge, which mean that other social rules come into play," says Senior Lecturer

at the Department of Education, Communication and Learning, Jonas Linderoth.

Female players are treated differently and subjected to sexualisation in the world of online games. Many have developed counter strategies, for example women pretend to be men, vice versa or players keep their gender secret.

In 2007, Jonas Linderoth was one of the authors behind the report *Living in World of Warcraft*, which attracted considerable coverage at the time. The report highlighted a specific aspect of online game culture, namely the problems associated with time consumption. This current report focuses on the opportunities as well.

Broader scope

"This report is more about everyday phenomena. It has a broader scope in that it's about several different types of online game and doesn't just focus on one game or genre," says Jonas Linderoth.

"The World as a Playground is based on a qualitative study and you can't draw general conclusions, but there is reason to take a close look at the way in which masculine behaviour is established as the norm, even in the world of [online games](#)," says Ann Katrin Agebäck, Director at the Swedish Media Council.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

Citation: Online games as social meeting places (2010, October 12) retrieved 9 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-10-online-games-social.html>

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