Hacking Innovative Pedagogies (HIP): Digital stories

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DIGITAL EDUCATION REWILDED

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Hacking Innovative Pedagogies (HIP)

1. About the project

The "Hacking Innovative Pedagogies - Digital Education Rewilded" (HIP) project has the objective to "rewild" higher education by prioritizing fair pedagogies and by using bottom-up selected digital tools. It is guided by sustainable principles and seeks to recognize individuals and share effective practices.

"Rewilding" refers to the idea of reevaluating traditional teaching methods to accommodate human learning complexities and address inequalities in human-digital interactions.

This project challenges conventional digital pedagogies, empowering educators with principles that are oriented towards diversity and that facilitate complex human learning in the context of the human-technology dynamic.

The project is funded through Erasmus+, from 2022 to 2025 as a cooperation project between the University of Graz, Aalborg University, and Dublin City University (figure 1).

Figure 1: YouTube Screenshot. Click here or on the picture to watch the video about the project.

2. The HIP Makerspace

As a part of the HIP project, the research team developed a virtual space in the metaverse using the platform SpotVirtual. Since we wanted to use this space to develop things together, we refer to it as a Makerspace (see figure 2). Over a three-week period, educators, technical experts, and student teachers collaborated in virtual teams to work on a chosen challenge. Participants interacted in this world anonymously through avatars.

The aim of the Makerspace activity was to work together and solve a challenge relating to higher education pedagogy and explore the usefulness of the virtual encounters and participation dynamics.

The HIP team (called the "wizards") supported participants during this time

Figure 3: Meeting in the Makerspace (SpotVirtual)

synchronously or asynchronously (e.g., if participants left messages in the Makerspace). The wizards conducted during this time digital ethnography (with the permission of the participants), collecting fieldnotes and taking screenshots (see figure 3).

As a result of these observations, we produced three digital stories.

Figure 2: The Makerspace (SpotVirtual)

3. Digital Stories

The following three cartoons were prepared as cartoons and offer insights into the participation dynamics in the virtual makerspace.

The cartoons shed light on the journey of the team responsible for organizing and establishing this virtual world and illustrate the educational interventions that were created as part of the activities within the HIP project.

The cartoons present some of the complexities of virtual learning environments and reflect on various aspects when learning and interactions "go virtual" (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Collaboration in a virtual environment (SpotVirtual)

Here, we provide a brief description of each comic including an outline of the key themes.

The first page of each comic will also be shown, with the option to access the full narrative by clicking on the link in the picture caption.

Comic 1: "The Making of the Makerspace"

The first story titled "The Making of the Makerspace", addresses the challenges of creating an aesthetic experience in a virtual learning environment (see figure 6). In the creation process of a virtual world, it is crucial to consider design choices and how they shape the perception of those participating in this environment (Nardi, 2010).

"Any perception entails intention, a synthesis of past and future (protentions and retentions), attentional aiming, passivity and activity" (Diodato, 2021, 53).

> Although aesthetic experience is subjective, collaboration in the creation process is essential.

We found that participants were able to actively contribute to this experience by modifying and adapting the online environment. In addition, the virtual

Makerspace activities allow for personal encounters, and design choices will shape aesthetic experiences.

Comic 2: "Non/Ideal Self"

The second story, entitled "Non/Ideal Self", explores the interplay of two distinct aspects of an individual (see figure 7)– their actual identity and ideal self (see figure 5). The story explores how virtual environments offer the opportunity to reflect on one's identity especially in the light of the imposition of stereotypical judgements by society (Przybylski et al., 2012).

The comic also delves into the notion of the 'auto-stereotype', a projected self-image. This can create barriers to the interaction with others (Petkova & Lehtonen, 2005). The stereotypical attributions depicted in the story manifests through names, visual embodiment, or nonverbal means of communication. The comic illustrates how the Makerspace can function as a 'laboratory for constructing identities,' (Turkle, 1994) where the actual self undergoes transformations.

Comic 3: "The Spy"

The third story, entitled "The Spy", examines the complexities of observing participants in a virtual environment. This work is inspired by key works of philosophers (Freud, 1926; Foucault, 1977; Zuboff, 2019).

> It explores themes of power dynamics and ethical considerations inherent in the research journey.

The comic uses humour and exaggeration, to and questions modern university systems that are at times shaped by the need to manage and control, also referred to as neoliberalism (see figure 8).

Figure 5: Different avatars and identities (SpotVirtual)

Figure 6: The first comic. Click here or on the picture to see the full story.

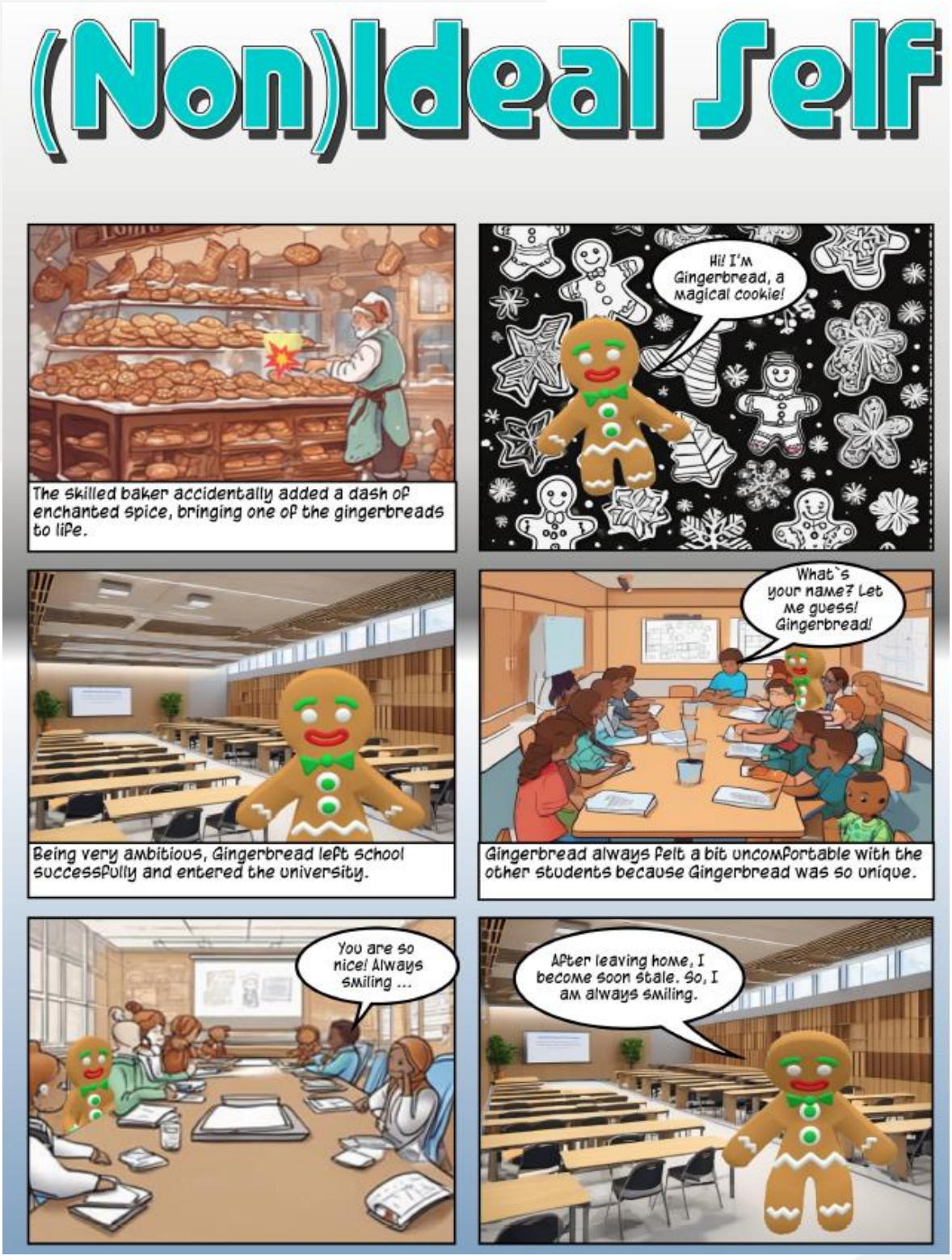

Figure 7: The second comic. Click here or on the picture to see the full story.

Figure 8: The third comic. Click here or on the picture to see the full story.

4. Conclusion

We presented here three stories from our experiences of creating and hosting a learning and collaboration experience in the virtual environment called the Makerspace (see figure 9).

Figure 9: Collaborative, virtual meeting (SpotVirtual)

Using cartoons, we explored the nuances of virtual learning. environments, with a focus on aesthetics, identity and critical ethical reflections as higher education educators operating in a virtual digital context. Guided by the principles of reflection and speculation, our cartoons sought to illustrate how thoughtful design, personal identity exploration, and ethics shape experiences and assist individuals in navigating the complexities inherent in digital spaces.
The following word cloud (figure 10) also highlights the different terms that were often used by us in relation to the makerspace and the HIP project.

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Figure 10: Wordcloud HIP Project

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