

Being a wizard: Insights from a teaching intervention in a virtual makerspace

Moving educational interactions into a virtual space dramatically changes the nature of human-technology interactions. Virtual environments change the embodied ways of being together (Vindenes & Wasson, 2021). We are presenting three cartoons that share insights about the nature of participation in a virtual world we identified as a virtual makerspace, since various education interested groups came together to make something. The cartoons reflect on the experiences of the team who organized and set up the virtual world and dreamed up the educational intervention that formed part of the “Hacking Innovative Pedagogies” project activities. Being in the virtual world meant that people were able to change who they are in the real world and choose their virtual identity. The reflections of our interactions echo also how we perceived this environment as teachers and researchers who sometimes “spy” on others. The poster shows three comic strips, each with a QR code that allows the reader to finish each story. Using comics for communication was a deliberate choice of methodology, allowing us to use a visual vocabulary (Eisner, 2008) and visual grammar (McCloud, 1993). The semantics of the visual language in comics allowed us to share subtle shades of how it “feels” to have an educational experience in a virtual makerspace.

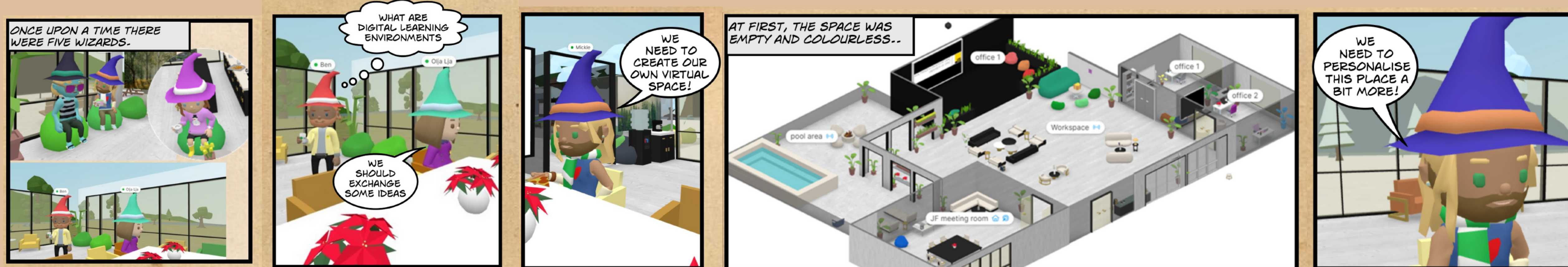


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THE MAKING OF THE MAKERSPACE



Scan to see the whole story of “The Making of the Makerspace”



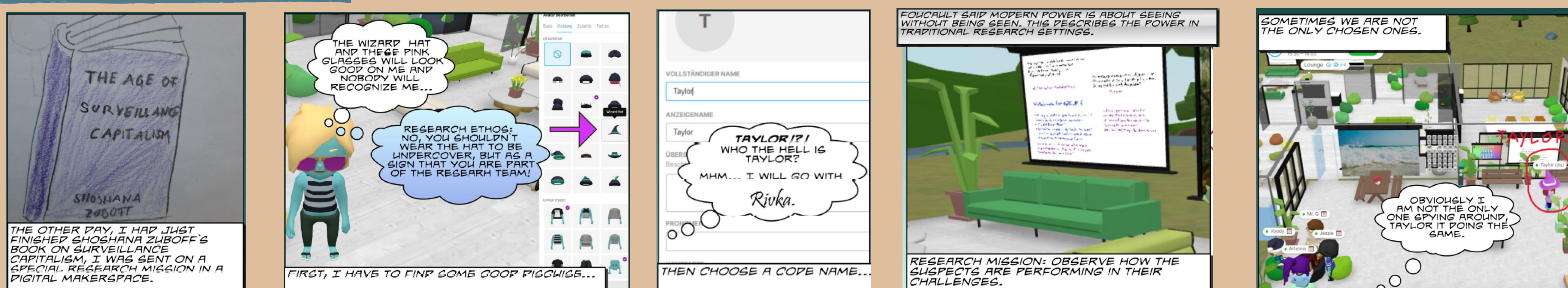
THE (NON) IDEAL SELF



Scan to see the whole story of “The (Non)Ideal Self”



THE SPY



Scan to see the whole story of “The Spy”



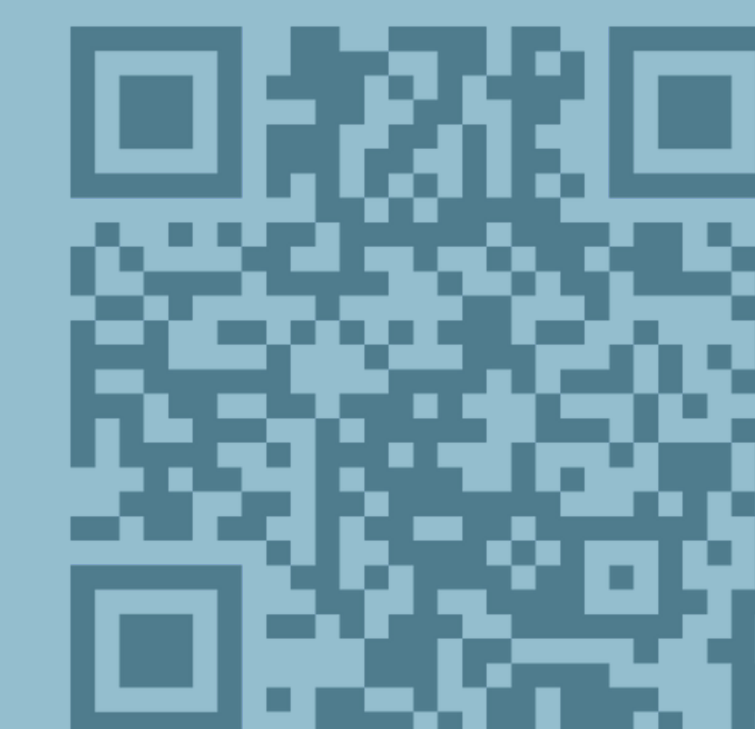
DISCUSSION

The first story (“The Making of the Makerspace”) emphasizes the importance of aesthetics in virtual spaces. Collaborative design choices shaped the subjective dimensions of aesthetics, foregrounding aesthetic experiences as participatory (Dewey, 1936) and not just as a form of appreciation (Nardi, 2010). The second story (“Non/Ideal Self”) explored identity through the narration of two distinct aspects of an individual – the actual identity and ideal self. People are often dissatisfied with various aspects of themselves, due to stereotypical judgements imposed by society (Przybylski et al., 2012). In the virtual environment this is also true and identity construction may become a barrier to interaction (Petkova & Lehtonen, 2005). The narrative shows that the virtual world is “laboratory for constructing identities” (Turkle, 1994) where the actual self can undergo a transformation to become the ideal self. The third story (“The Spy”) addresses the challenges when doing research in a virtual space. Alluding to classical and current texts by Freud (1926), Foucault (1977) or Zuboff (2019), it reflects on issues of power or ethics in the research process. The story also uses narrative strategies like humor or exaggeration to touch upon problems of competition and indifference in the neoliberal university.

CONCLUSION

From the perspective of the “wizards”, the teaching team who set up a virtual environment for learning together, we explored the nuances of creating and experiencing virtual learning environments. The cartoons visualize, by utilizing methods of speculation and reflection, the role aesthetics, identity and critical ethics play in virtual learning environments.

Scan for references



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