

# **EVERYONE'S A SOCIALISER**

**KATHOLISCHE STIFTUNGSFACHHOCHSCHULE**

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## INTRODUCTION

- THIS TALK IS **PRIMARYLY** ABOUT **MASSIVELY-MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAMES**
  - A TERM I SHALL ABBREVIATE TO **MMOS**
  - FOR PRETTY WELL THE SAME REASONS **KATHOLISCHE STIFTUNGSFACHHOCHSCHULE** IS **KSFH**
- THE CONFIGURATION OF THE **PLAYER BASE** OF MMOS HAS **CHANGED** OVER THE YEARS
- TODAY, I'M GOING TO OUTLINE **WHY**
- LET'S START BY **LOOKING** AT THESE CHANGES...

## CARE BEARS

- IN THE LATE 1990S, THE TERM **CARE BEAR** WAS PREVALENT IN MMOS
- ORIGINALLY, IT MEANT **ROLE-PLAYERS** WHO STOPPED **PLAYER-KILLERS** FROM HAVING **FUN** BY NOT CARING ABOUT BEING **KILLED**
- IT CAME TO MEAN **ANYONE** NOT INTO **PVP**
- CARE BEARS WERE **RIDICULED** BY **HARD-CORE** PLAYERS FOR BEING **WIMPS**
- YET **TODAY**, CARE BEARS **THEMSELVES** WOULD BE CONSIDERED **HARD-CORE**

## HARD CORE

- **TODAY'S** HARD-CORE PLAYERS:
  - PLAY FOR **HOURS** EVERY NIGHT
  - TAKE ON THE **TOUGHEST** CONTENT IN **RAIDS**
  - **LEVEL** UP AND **GEAR** UP AS FAST AS POSSIBLE
- **CARE BEARS** DID THIS 16 YEARS AGO!
  - AN **AVERAGE** PLAYER FROM 2000 WOULD BE A **POWER** PLAYER TODAY!
- I'M GOING TO **EXAMINE** THIS PHENOMENON TO TRY TO EXPLAIN ITS **INEVITABILITY**
- I'LL **START** WITH SOME LIGHT **THEORY...**

10, DOWNING STREET

- THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UK LIVES HERE



## PLAYER TYPES

- THE THEORY IN QUESTION IS **PLAYER TYPES**
  - WHICH, AS IT'S **MY** THEORY, I KNOW QUITE WELL
- IT'S BEEN USED IN MMO DESIGN FOR **20** YEARS
  - BECAUSE, **UNEXPECTEDLY**, IT ACTUALLY WORKS
- IT'S REGARDED AS **STANDARD**
  - IT'S ALSO REGARDED AS **BLINDINGLY OBVIOUS**, BUT THAT **WASN'T** THE CASE WHEN I PUBLISHED IT
- THE THEORY POSITS THAT **DIFFERENT** PEOPLE FIND **DIFFERENT** THINGS **FUN** IN MMOS
  - AND THAT MMOS NEED TO **PROVIDE** FUN FOR **ALL** PLAYER TYPES IF THEY'RE TO **SUCCEED**



## TYPE #1

- MANY PLAYERS REGARD MMOS AS BEING WORLDS THEY CAN **ACT ON** – BASICALLY **GAMES**



## TYPE #2

- SOME PEOPLE JUST LIKE **INTERACTING WITH** THE WORLD, EXPLORING THE **THRILL OF THE NEW**





### TYPE #3

- THROUGH THEIR **AVATARS**, MANY PLAYERS ENJOY **INTERACTING WITH** EACH OTHER



## TYPE #4

- A FEW PLAYERS ENJOY **ACTING ON** OTHER (USUALLY UNWILLING) PLAYERS...



## INTEREST GRAPH

- WE CAN **PLOT** THESE BEHAVIOURS ON A **GRAPH**:

**ACTING**

- *EVERQUEST*



**PLAYERS**



*SW:TOR*

**WORLD**

- *SECOND LIFE*



*THERE*

**INTERACTING**

FURTHERMORE

- THE THEORY **SAYS** THAT THIS DISTRIBUTION OF **FUN** APPLIES ACROSS **ALL** VIRTUAL WORLDS **ACTING**

- *SHADOWBANE*



**PLAYERS**



*RIFT*

**WORLD**

- *A TALE IN THE DESERT*

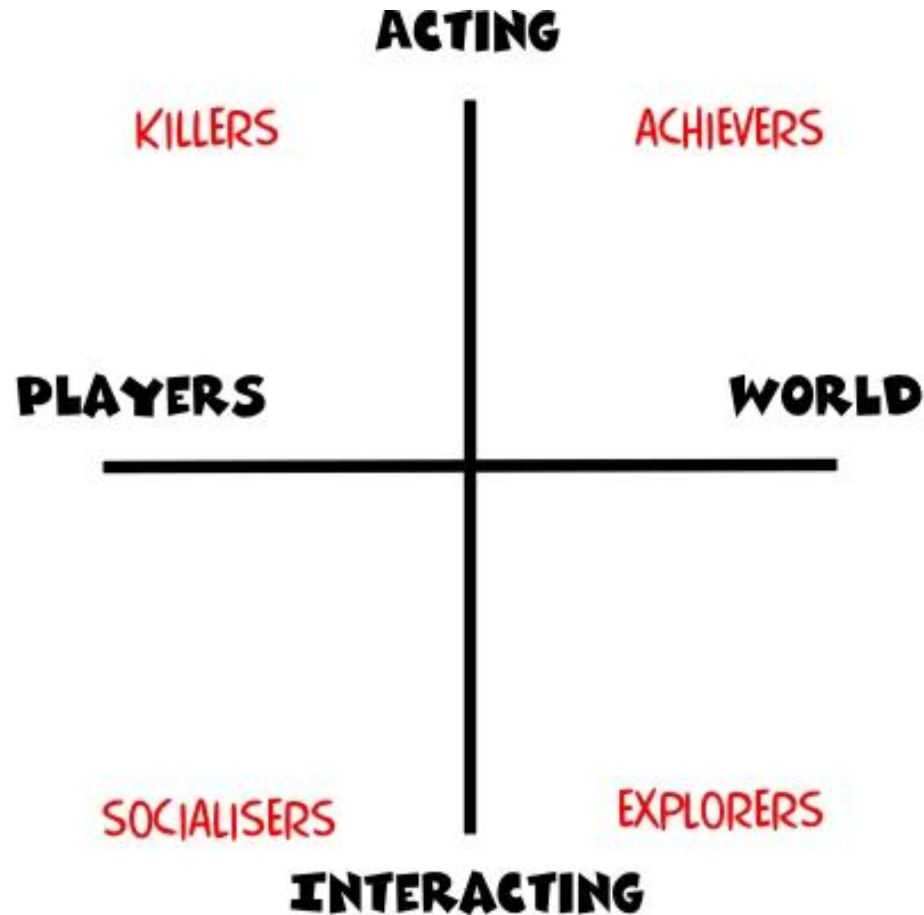


*PUZZLE PIRATES*

**INTERACTING**

## FORMALLY

- OR, WITHOUT THE **INTRUSIVE** MINI-SCREENSHOTS:



## SUMMARY

- SO, WE HAVE **FOUR** BASIC PLAYER TYPES:
- **ACHIEVERS** PLAY THE MMO AS A GAME
- **EXPLORERS** ANALYSE THE GAME'S STRUCTURE AND SYSTEMS
- **SOCIALISERS** TREAT THE WORLD AS A CONTEXT FOR INTERACTIONS
- **KILLERS** ENGAGE IN DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR
  - THE NON-JUDGEMENTAL TERM USED BY PEOPLE WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT KILLERS **REALLY ARE** TRYING TO BE **JERKS**



## BALANCE

- FOR REASONS TO DO WITH THE WAY DIFFERENT PLAYER TYPES **AFFECT** ONE ANOTHER, THERE ARE **FOUR** STABLE CONFIGURATIONS IN MMOS:
  - **ACHIEVER** DOMINATED "GAME WORLDS"
  - **SOCIALISER** DOMINATED "SOCIAL WORLDS"
  - **BALANCED** WORLDS (NB: THESE ARE RARE!)
  - **EMPTY** WORLDS, AS THE KILLERS DROVE EVERYONE AWAY
- OVER THE PAST **15** YEARS WE'VE SEEN GAME WORLDS COVERTLY **BECOME** SOCIAL WORLDS

## SOCIALISERS

- SOCIALISERS FIND FUN FROM **INTERACTING** WITH OTHER **PLAYERS**
- IN THE **PAST**, THEY DID THIS IN **SOCIAL WORLDS** SUCH AS *SECOND LIFE*
  - OR IN THE TEXT WORLD DAYS, *LAMBDAMOO*
- **TODAY**, THOUGH, THEY'RE DOING IT IN **GAME** WORLDS
- THEY **REGARD** THEMSELVES AS ACHIEVERS OR EXPLORERS (THAT IS, AS **GAMERS**) BUT THEY'RE **ACTUALLY** SOCIALISERS

## SIX REASONS

- I BELIEVE THIS SHIFT HAS **SIX** MAJOR CAUSES
  - I KNOW THAT EVERY FIBRE OF YOUR POWERPOINT TRAINING IS SCREAMING FOR ME TO LIST THOSE SIX REASONS **RIGHT NOW**, BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT
- THEY GO FROM **GENERAL** TO **SPECIFIC**
- I SHOULD POINT OUT THAT I'M NOT SAYING **ONE** WORLD OR THE **OTHER** IS **BETTER**
- IT DOESN'T MATTER TO ME **WHICH** OF ACHIEVERS OR SOCIALISERS DOMINATE
  - I PREFER **BALANCED** WORLDS ANYWAY...

SPORTY

- THIS IS A MAZDA MX-5



## #1 UBIQUITY

- THE **FIRST** REASON THAT SOCIALISERS ARE BECOMING DOMINANT IS THAT GAMES ARE NOW **EVERYWHERE** IN ADVANCED SOCIETIES
- YOU **DON'T** HAVE TO BE A **GAMER** TO PLAY GAMES TODAY
- THE **SOCIAL** BARRIER HAS BEEN REMOVED
  - THOSE PEOPLE CLAIMING GAMES ARE **ADDICTIVE** AND MAKE PEOPLE **VIOLENT** HAVE **LOST**
- IN THE WILD, SOCIALISERS **OUTNUMBER** ACHIEVERS THUS THEIR **SUPPLY** IS GREATER

## #2 CHILDREN PLAY

- THE FIRST TIME I VISITED **LONDON**, I WAS **18**
- I REMEMBER WALKING FROM DOWNING ST. TO BUCKINGHAM PALACE FEELING **AWESTRUCK**
- I'D ONLY EVER SEEN THESE PLACES ON **TV** BEFORE AND YET **HERE I WAS!**
  - IT WAS AN **INCREDIBLE** FEELING!
- MY **KIDS** WENT TO LONDON ON SCHOOL TRIPS AGED **8** OR **9**
- THEY COULD **NEVER** CAPTURE THE SENSE OF EXCITEMENT **I'D** FELT AFTER THAT



## MMOS

- **CHILDREN** PLAY VIRTUAL WORLDS THESE DAYS
  - CLUB PENGUIN, WIZARDIOI, MINECRAFT, TROVE, HABBO, ...
- THEY'RE **NOT** GOING TO GET THE SAME FEELING OF **AWE** THAT FIRST-TIMER **ADULTS** DID
- THEY SEE MMOS AS **JUST ANOTHER** KIND OF GAME, BUT WITH A **SOCIAL** ASPECT
- THEY TREAT THEM AS A **GENRE** OPTION
  - PLAY **WITH** OTHERS: MMOS
  - PLAY **AGAINST** OTHERS: MOBAS

### #3 SOCIAL NETWORKS

- SOCIAL NETWORKS ARE AMONG THE MOST **ANTI-SOCIAL** INVENTIONS IN EXISTENCE
- THEY **WALL** PEOPLE **OFF** FROM EACH OTHER
- IT'S **HARD** TO MAKE **NEW** FRIENDS IN THEM
- PEOPLE **LIKE** MAKING NEW FRIENDS
- IN **MMOS**, THEY **CAN** MAKE NEW FRIENDS
- IF YOU GO TO MMOS FROM A **NEED** TO MAKE FRIENDS, YOU'RE ON A **SOCIALISER** TRACK
- HENCE YET **MORE** SOCIALISER SUPPLY

## #4 REVENUE MODEL

- AROUND **2012**, THE REVENUE MODEL FOR MMOS **SHIFTED** FROM **SUBSCRIPTION** TO **FREE-TO-PLAY**
  - IE. FREE TO PLAY A DIFFERENT MMO IF THIS ONE EVER TRIES TO WRING ANY MONEY OUT OF YOU
- F2P **SELLS** THINGS THAT PLAYERS **WANT**
- SOME PLAYERS WANT **SUCCESS**
- THEY WILL BUY **ANYTHING** THAT GIVES THEM AN IN-GAME **ADVANTAGE**
- THIS IS **PAY-TO-WIN**

## P2W

- ACHIEVERS REALLY, **REALLY** DON'T LIKE P2W
  - UNLESS **THEY'RE** THE ONLY ONES DOING IT
- IF THEY **DETECT** P2W, THEY WILL **STOP PLAYING**
  - NO MATTER **HOW** MUCH THE DEVELOPER INSISTS IT'S NOT **ACTUALLY** P2W, JUST SIMILAR TO IT
- FEWER ACHIEVERS **TILTS** THE GAME IN FAVOUR OF SOCIALISERS
- SOCIALISERS DON'T BUY **MUCH** BUT CRAZY-RICH ONES SOMETIMES BUY **EVERYTHING**

## #5 DILUTED GAMEPLAY

- OVER THE YEARS, DESIGNERS HAVE **WATERED DOWN** MMO GAMEPLAY
- THEY HAVE A **CORE** AUDIENCE OF GAMERS, BUT TO **GROW** THEY NEED TO **WIDEN** IT
- **THAT** MEANS THEY NEED TO MAKE THEIR GAMES MORE **BROADLY** APPEALING
- THAT **IN TURN** MEANS MAKING THEM LESS **CHALLENGING** AND MORE **COMFORTABLE**
  - AFTER **ALL**, THE CORE AUDIENCE ISN'T GOING TO **LEAVE**, EVER EVER EVER!

YES...

- **UNFORTUNATELY**, IF YOU STRAY **TOO** FAR THEN THE CORE AUDIENCE **WILL** LEAVE
- YOU'LL GET A **NEW** AUDIENCE, BUT IT WON'T BE **CORE**
  - AND IT MAY **CANNIBALISE** THE AUDIENCES FOR YOUR **MAINSTREAM** GAMES
- IF YOU AIM TO **ATTRACT** SOCIALISERS THEN AT SOME POINT THE MMO STARTS TO BE **ABOUT** SOCIALISERS
- **THIS** IS WHEN YOUR **ACHIEVERS** LEAVE



## SPORTS CARS

- IN THE 1960S, WE HAD **SPORTS CARS**
- THESE CARS WERE **CLASSY**, NIMBLE, SPEEDY, SPIRITED, MANEUVRABLE AND **FUN** TO DRIVE
  - **IF** MADE BY BRITISH OR ITALIAN COMPANIES
    - SORRY PORSCHE, SORRY BMW, SORRY MERCEDES, ...
- TO **GROW** THE MARKET, MANUFACTURERS MADE THEM INCREASINGLY **EASIER** TO HANDLE
  - POWER STEERING, POWER BRAKING, SOFTER SUSPENSION, SEATS WITH VERTICAL BACKS, ...
- FINALLY THEY COMPETED WITH **FAMILY** CARS

## MAZDA

- IN SO DOING, THEY **LOST** THEIR CORE AUDIENCE
- THEY GOT SO FAR **REMOVED** FROM SPORTS CARS THAT NON-AFFICIONADOS WONDERED WHY ANYONE EVER **LIKED** THEM
- IN 1989, **MAZDA** WENT BACK TO BASICS AND UNVEILED THE **MX-5**
  - THE BEST-SELLING SPORTS CAR IN **HISTORY**
- THE CORE AUDIENCE **WAS** STILL THERE, IT JUST WASN'T BEING SERVED
- ACHIEVERS **ARE** THERE, FOR THE **RIGHT** MMO

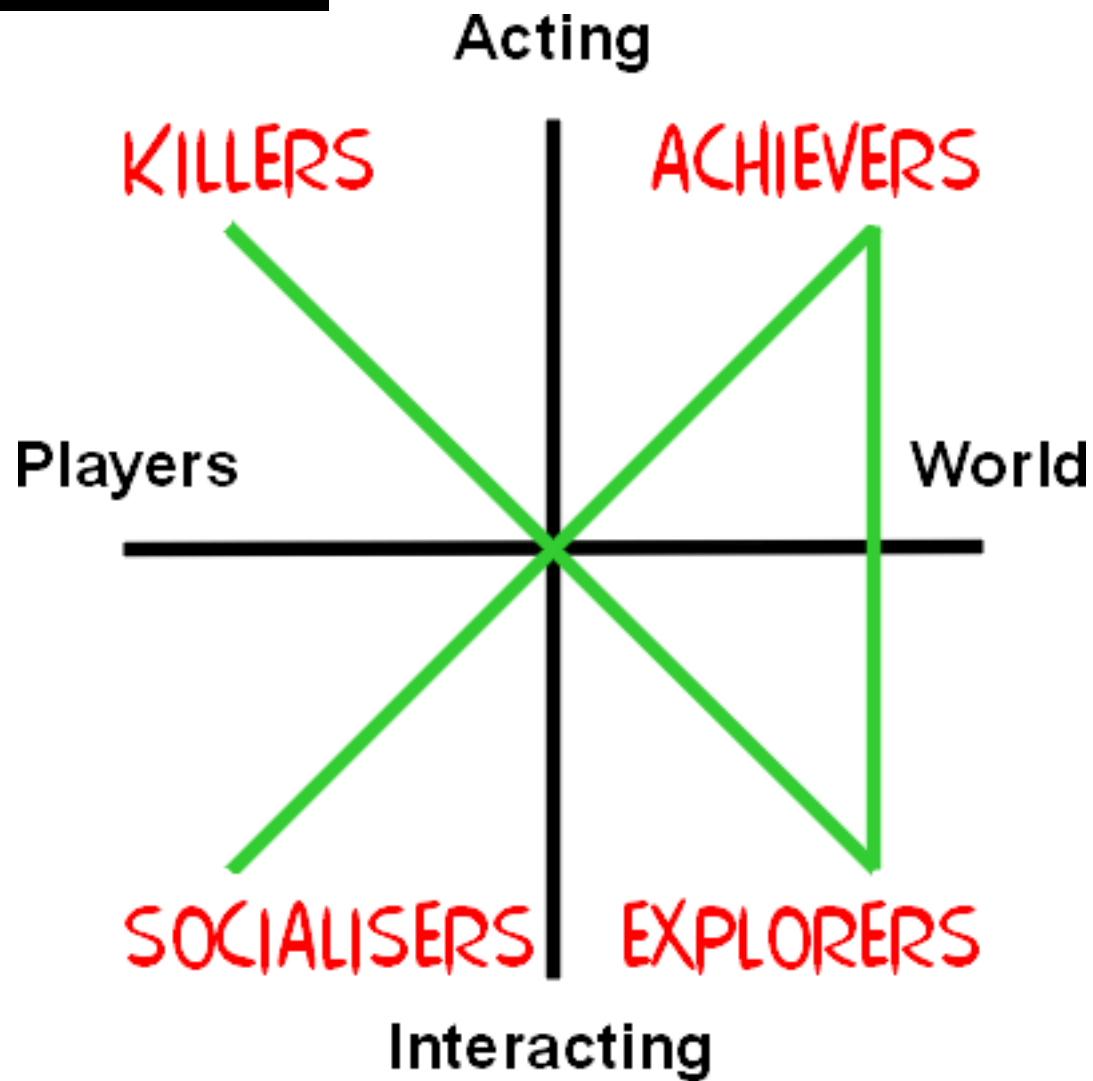
## #6 DEVELOPMENT PATHS

- ALL THE REASONS SO FAR **CONTRIBUTE** TO THE SHIFT TOWARDS SOCIAL WORLDS, BUT NONE OF THEM **CAUSE** IT
  - NONE OF THEM MAKE IT **INEVITABLE**
- THERE IS, HOWEVER, AN **UNDERLYING** EXPLANATION THAT **DOES** SHOW WHY THIS SHIFT WAS **ALWAYS** GOING TO HAPPEN
- TO **FOLLOW** THIS, WE NEED TO RETURN TO **PLAYER TYPE** THEORY
  - MY CAPACITY FOR SELF-PUBLICITY IS UNBOUNDED

## DRIFT

- ITS **LONG** BEEN KNOWN THAT PLAYERS CHANGE PLAYING STYLE OVER TIME
  - SINCE **BEFORE** PLAYER TYPES CONCEPT EXISTED!
- IN *MUDI*:
  - NEWBIES STARTED BY **KILLING** ONE ANOTHER
  - THEN ABANDONED THAT AND WENT **EXPLORING**
  - MOVED ON TO RACKING UP POINTS AND RISING LEVELS - **ACHIEVING**
  - FINISHED AS GNARLED OLD-TIMERS **SOCIALISING**
- **MAIN SEQUENCE** FOR PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

ON THE GRAPH



## 8 TYPES

- I **DID** HAVE **ELEVEN** SLIDES HERE EXPLAINING THREE **OTHER** PATHS
  - MAIN EXPLORER, MAIN SOCIALISER, MINOR
- THESE ARE VISIBLE WHEN YOU ADD A **THIRD** DIMENSION TO THE PLAYER TYPES GRAPH
- HOWEVER, AS I DON'T WANT TO PUT YOU TO **SLEEP**, I SPARED YOU
- ALL BUT ONE OF THEM END AT **SOCIALISER** ANYWAY
- THIS IS INDEED THE **POINT** OF THIS EXERCISE

## MOVEMENT

- PLAYERS DON'T STAY **ONE** TYPE **FOREVER** IN AN MMO
- THEY **CHANGE** TYPES OVER TIME
- MMOS ARE A **HILL-CLIMBING** EXERCISE THROUGH **IDENTITY** SPACE
- IN PLAYING THEM, PEOPLE CAN **BE** AND **BECOME** WHO THEY **REALLY** ARE
- WHEN THEY REACH THE **END** OF THEIR JOURNEY, **MOST** WILL HAVE BECOME **SOCIALISERS**
- MMOS **MAKE** PEOPLE BECOME SOCIALISERS!

## UNSURPRISING

- IT'S THEREFORE **UNSURPRISING** THAT PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN PLAYING MMOS FOR SEVERAL **YEARS** WILL NOW BE SOCIALISERS
- MMOS ARE **PLACES** TO THEM, **NOT** GAMES
  - THE GAME CONCEIT GIVES THEM THE **CONTEXT** FOR SOCIALISING
- MOST OF THEM DON'T **REALISE** THEY'RE SOCIALISERS, BECAUSE THEY **STILL** WANT TO PLAY A **GAME**
- THEY **DO**, YES – BUT WITH **OTHER PEOPLE**



## A MIX

- WE DO NEED A **MIX** OF WORLDS
- PLAYERS DON'T **START OFF** AS SOCIALISERS, SO IF THE **GATEWAY** GAME WORLDS DON'T EXIST THEN THE TAP WILL BE SWITCHED OFF
- ALSO, **SOME** PLAYERS END UP AS GURU-LIKE **EXPLORERS**, NOT SOCIALISERS
  - **THEIR** NEEDS SHOULD BE RESPECTED, TOO
- AS PLAYERS MATURE IN THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF **THEMSELVES**, THEY MATURE IN THEIR REQUIREMENTS FROM AN **MMO**

## CONCLUSION

- THOSE PLAYERS WHO **LONG** FOR THE MMOS OF THEIR **YOUTH** AREN'T BEING **SELFISH**
  - **THEY** WOULDN'T ACTUALLY FIND THESE GAMES **FUN** ANY MORE
- THEY NEVERTHELESS **DO** UNDERSTAND AT SOME LEVEL THAT **OTHER** PEOPLE **WOULD** BENEFIT FROM PLAYING THEM
- **THIS** IS WHY THEY WANT **GAME** WORLDS
- ULTIMATELY, MOST PLAYERS ARE SOCIALISERS **BECAUSE THEY WERE** ACHIEVERS