

Shenja van der Graaf

# ComMODify

User Creativity at the Intersection of  
Commerce and Community

palgrave  
macmillan

# Acknowledgements

Over my journey of the years it took from my first interest in audience research and digital culture in the 1990s (hello LA!) and now culminating in this book, numerous people have directly or indirectly guided my Second Life.

A very big thank you for travelling with me, Robin Mansell. Her knowledge, faith, generosity, kind words and absolute professionalism have pushed me to go the extra mile. Without her this book might never have been written. Sonia Livingstone kindly shared her intellect and experience showing me that it is ok to walk many paths. For half of my life William Uricchio has been my rock. He introduced me to the academic world and set me free.

I am indebted to the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society (Harvard), Hakuhodo Foresight, Research Center for Information Law (University of St. Gallen), British Academy, Convergence Culture Consortium (MIT), Institute for Data Driven Design, Valve Inc., Linden Lab, OpenSim and many Second Life residents, especially Garrett Cobarr. Thank you for your support. Also, Oliver Day. Thanks goes especially to all at the Department of Media and Communications (LSE) for many inspiring years. Also, a big thank you to my wonderful colleagues at imec-SMIT (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), their support and wit in good and bad times helped me to stay put and keep smiling. In particular, Wim Vanobberghen, Carina Veeckman and Caroline Pauwels. I am forever

grateful for COST Dynamics of Virtual Work and the opportunities it has given me, including this book and my son. Thank you, Ursula Huws and also Keith Randle.

The support, inspiration and challenges offered by colleagues and friends across several time zones have helped me tremendously in developing this research. David Nieborg, thank you for our unorthodox metal friendship, and Doris Rusch for being true. Jonas Breuer, thank you for being you, to have my back, and your critical eye in this endeavor.

Words are not enough to express my gratitude towards my wonderful parents, sister and family, and friends. Thank you for always believing in me and letting me be. With the door always open-wide my dad and mom offer a home-away-from-home-away-from-home-away-from-home... Thank you all for accepting my many periods of absence and true denial and allowing me to multitask between several lives. Lastly, I am indebted to Eran Fisher for his support and commitment to this project and our life-long Yuli project. In clear and muddy waters, you have been there, offering advice or just kept quiet. And the road goes on, and whither it is bound, I do not know.

Brussels, April 2017

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Designing for Mod Development</b>	1
1.1	“Hello, World!”	1
1.2	Approaching the Playground	4
1.3	All the Games That Are Fit to Mod	11
1.4	‘You Only Live Twice’	16
1.5	Playlist: Organization of the Book	19
<b>2</b>	<b>Participation and Platformization at Play</b>	29
2.1	Participation, Innovation, Learning	29
2.2	All Work and No Play?	32
2.3	The Wisdom of the Firm	37
2.4	Toolkits for User Innovation	41
2.5	Conclusion: Digital Innovation Platforms	47
<b>3</b>	<b>Game Changer</b>	65
3.1	Design Capabilities	65
3.2	The Making of Second Life	66
3.3	X-Factor	69
3.4	The Many Lives of Second Life	71
3.5	The Developer Firm as Employer	76

3.6	The Developer Community as Employer	79
3.7	Conclusion: Patterns of User Participation	83
<b>4</b>	<b>Of Toolkits, Engines and Interfaces</b>	<b>91</b>
4.1	Design Space	91
4.2	Inside Second Life: Micro-Level Design Space	93
4.3	Accessing Second Life: Meso-Level Design Space	97
4.4	The Underworld: Macro-Level Design Space	100
4.5	Servicing Second Life	103
4.6	Conclusion: Performative, Iterated and Contextual Mod Development	107
<b>5</b>	<b>Learning and the Imperative of Production in Mod Development</b>	<b>113</b>
5.1	Learning by Design	113
5.2	Mod Development as a Learning Dynamic	114
5.3	Mastering Second Life: The Developer Firm's Perspective	117
5.4	Mastering Second Life: A Mod Developer's Perspective	121
5.5	Learning from User Participation	125
5.6	Conclusion: Complex Learning	137
<b>6</b>	<b>Second Life Between Participation and Competition</b>	<b>143</b>
6.1	State of Play	143
6.2	User Participation Revisited: Qualities	144
6.3	User Participation Revisited: The Context of Commerce	147
6.4	User Participation Revisited: Benefits	151
6.5	Conclusion: ComMODify!	157
<b>7</b>	<b>Commodify! And Beyond</b>	<b>163</b>
7.1	Grounds for Play	163
7.2	At the Crossroads of Commerce and Community	165
7.3	Matters of Public Value, Literacy and Responsibility	169
	<b>Index</b>	<b>179</b>