

Didactical Tool: Digital Worldmaking

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Worldmaking, "making/shaping a world", is often related to the concept of "reality". However, this approach to worldmaking implies that at the same time there are worlds that are not real, but rather constructed or invented. Especially when speaking of online worlds, the terms "virtual world" or "non-real world" are often used. Yet, the offline world can be constructed just as the online world can be real.

What is it about?

Firstly, educators should read the concept on Digital Worldmaking. As this concept is also linked to additional concepts, there is an opportunity to also read the concepts on Digitalisation, Digital Gender Gap, Digital Queer Gap, Digital Inclusion, and Cyberethics. Secondly, they should watch the video "Worldmaking" on transca.net (<https://www.transca.net/en/Videos>). Thirdly, some exercises should be selected including questions to work on it. This should be realised on their own as a first step, and then together with the students. While working with the students, the goal is that they should independently consider what "digital" has to do with "worldmaking". Any ambivalence they might feel between "online" and "offline" worlds, should be fleshed out independently by the students.

Try it out

Example 1:

Research which groups exist in the digital world? Where can you find them? Do the same or similar groups exist in the "real" world? What makes them different?

- How would you define community in the digital world?
- How would you define community in the "offline" world?
- Are there differences or are they the same?
- Are there aspects that exist only in the digital world or only in the offline world?

Example 2:

Second Life describes a kind of virtual game where you can build a virtual life. It simulates a world in which you can do the same things as in the offline world. You can choose which characters you want to represent, from adults and children to animals and mythical creatures. Within this world you can do different activities, like dancing, going for a coffee with friends,

or visiting a fashion show. The goal of Second Life is not so much to play a computer game, but to network, make friends, and build a social life. Many participants make no distinction between the online and offline worlds. For them, Second Life is as real as the offline world, because people eat together and even have relationships just as they do in the offline world. One of the inhabitants of this world describes it as follows: "*It's the people who live here who make it real.*" (Boellstorff, 2015, p. 182)

Some questions to think about:

- How are the terms "worldmaking" and "digital worldmaking" dealt with here?
- Think about the concept in Second Life. Would it be "real" for you?
- What does the "real" world mean to you?

Example 3:

To help people with autism to better cope in the "real" world, there are various programs and therapies. One possibility is to use virtual reality to depict the offline world and thus promote communication and social interaction. This involves using computer programs to map either the real world or a completely new world. Within these worlds, people learn to develop skills that they can then apply in the "real" world.

- How can the digital world and the real world be distinguished in this example?
- Is it possible to clearly separate these two worlds?
- What are the notions of offline world and digital world here?
- How does this project influence the idea about the world(s)?
- What other concepts can be applied/seen here?

Example 4:

Read through the following concepts: *Digital Gender Gap* on digitclue.net and *Othering* on transca.net

- What connection can be drawn between the two concepts?
- What connection is there to "digital worldmaking"?
- Would you classify the aforementioned distinctions as being harmless or harmful?

Example 5:

In the digital world, there are standards and guidelines that users should follow. Especially in the field of media ethics, there are many areas in which discussions are held about the "right" behavior. Have a look at the following pictures and consider what the social norms and expectations are.



Example 6:

Cyberethics also contributes to the topic of norms and expectations within the digital world. Read through the concept of cyberethics on digitclue.net. Then research the following terms: PAPA- model, netiquette, information security, privacy, intellectual property.

- How are these terms related to the idea about the (digital) world?
- Why are these terms important in the context of social norms?
- What is acceptable group behavior in the context of social media?
- Are there social norms that are the same in both the online and offline worlds?
- Are there norms that are only applicable in one of the two realities?

Example 7:

Everyone has their own definition of digital worldmaking. Your students will also have different ideas of what the (digital) world looks like. Think about your own definition. Write it down on a (digital) whiteboard. Then have your students write down their own definitions.

Tell your colleagues

After working and discussing some of the examples with the students you can share your work with colleagues all over the world. For this you can share whiteboards, notes, documents, and pictures, on the Digital Inclusion Map on the Website of DigitClue. The D.I. Map is a map of the world, where users can share projects, materials, ideas, and comments on digital inclusion in their own country.

Thinking further

You now have thought and discussed about Digital Worldmaking from your own perspective, as well as the perspective of the students. You have learnt that the world means something different to everyone. We invite you to think about Digital Worldmaking from a different perspective.

Imagine you are a robot with artificial intelligence. How would this creature describe the world? What is the imagined reality of the robot? Does it always have to be digital or can a robot also live in the “real” world?