Digital Worldmaking

Authors: Christa Markom, Magdalena Steger, Jelena Tošić,

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 constructed or invented. Especially when speaking of online worlds, the term virtual world or non-real world is often used. Yet, the offline world can be constructed just as the online world can be real. Anneesh, Hall, and Petro (2012) describe the construction of a world as made out of networks and different layers: across art, media, and social practices. Thus, there is no such thing as an objective, universal world that is the same for everyone. The "real" world is that world in which a particular person lives in at a certain point in time. This can be both online and offline. (Aneesh, Hall, & Petro, 2012, pp. 1-3)

A strict distinction between the offline and online worlds cannot be made. For many individuals, the digital world is a part of the offline world and cannot be separated. The communication- and social scientist Ahmet Atay (2021) talks about the fact that life and identities exist as well between the online world and the offline world. The everyday life of many people is shaped by the digital. In addition to social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, people also use digital technologies such as smartphones, laptops, or MP3 players. In recent years, the pandemic has also shown that aspects of everyday life that previously took place in the "real" world can easily be transported into the "digital" world. Online classes or work meeting via ZOOM, blur the line between the real and digital world. (Atay, 2021)

In addition to social media, so-called "virtual realities" are also part of the digital world. Virtual realities are used, for example, to help children with autism cope better with challenges in the offline world. Virtual reality can be used to practice dealing with different situations in the "real" world in a safe environment. Sometimes virtual reality also contains an image of the "real" world. However, a completely new world can also be built. (Bellani, Fornasari, Chittaro, & Brambilla, 2011) That similar activities are possible online as in the offline world is shown by computer programs, the so-called "Second Lives". Users create an avatar with which they "live" in a certain environment. The idea is to do exactly the same as in the offline world. Different users meet and go to the cinema, to dance classes, or to a café. Therefore, it cannot be called a computer game, because there is no final goal to achieve, but a (second) life is built and lived. (Boellstorff, 2015) As mentioned, users design their own avatars. Among others, this benefits people from the LGBTIQ+ community, as identities can be changed more easily than

in the offline world. Therefore, the identity one adopts online can sometimes be closer to one's own "reality" than the one they have in the offline world. (Boellstorff, 2015)

In his article, Atay (2021) also focuses on queer identities in relation to the digital world. According to him, the online world brings entirely new ways of negotiating and expressing issues of queerness. [1] Atay calls this "digital queer worldmaking". As a mode of digital activism and empowerment, he sees the digital world as a new way "...*to empower silent and marginalized queer and trans voices within our discipline.*" (Atay, 2021, p. 183)

People imagine the world from different perspectives and think about the world as a whole. The reflections, ideas, and understanding of the world always happen from a certain perspective. The idea of how the world is ordered can be through political systems, religious ideas or a connection between different parts, elements, spaces, and times. (TRANSCA, 2022) This also manifests in the links between the online and offline world. As described above, they are not separate, but condition each other and sometimes even overlap. Life in different collectives and groups can also be conceptualized differently. Examples of this are the "Second Life" or groups on social media where people can exchange ideas and experiences.

In summary: when we speak of "worldmaking", we must take into account both the offline world and its intersections with the online world.

Literature

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[1] For more information see Digital Queer Gap