

# Contents

<b>Preface</b>		9
<b>1</b>	<b>Of Elves and Men</b>	11
1.1	Introduction	11
1.2	RPGs as Cultural Phenomenon	14
1.3	New Media	17
1.4	Game Studies as Research Field	19
1.5	Postmodern Society	21
1.6	New Media as Drivers of Postmodernity	23
1.7	New Media Engagement	24
<b>2</b>	<b>Fantasy Media: A Traditional Genre Prepares for the Future</b>	28
2.1	The Fantasy Genre	29
2.2	The Hero's Journey	31
2.2.1	The Stages of the Hero's Journey	32
2.3	From Oral Tradition to Digitality: Historical Development of Fantasy Media	34
2.4	Four Categories of Fantasy Media	37
2.5	Ludus and Paidea	43
2.6	Typology of Role-Playing Experience	44
2.7	RingCon and The Cloud: The Fantasy Community	49
<b>3</b>	<b>Living in a Networked Society: Sociological Theory, Social Change and Concepts of Immersion, Identity and Space</b>	56
3.1	Rationalisation as Disenchantment of the World: Max Weber	57
3.2	The Janus Face of Modernity: Jürgen Habermas	59
3.3	Living in Risk Society: Ulrich Beck	60

3.4	Sociological Theory: Role-Playing Experience as Manifestation of Social Change	61
3.5	Game Studies: Concepts of Immersion, Identity and Space	63
3.5.1	The Pleasure of Gaming: Player Motivation, Immersion and Bricolage	64
3.5.2	Representations of the Self: Identity and Identification in RPGs	70
3.5.3	Identity and Identification with Media Personae: Para-Social Interaction and Relationship	73
3.5.4	Living in Virtual Spaces: MMORPGs as Culture and Lived Space	76
3.5.5	Research Questions	82
<b>4</b>	<b>How to Explore Virtual Realms: Methodology</b>	<b>84</b>
4.1	Magical Realms: Participatory Observation in RPGs	85
4.2	The Player's View: Focused Interviews and Creative Visual Research	87
4.3	Statistical Data on the RPG Scene: A Semi-Structured Questionnaire	88
4.4	Analysing Material: Qualitative Content Analysis	89
4.5	The Research Process: Surprises, Challenges and Perspectives	90
<b>5</b>	<b>The Mergence of Spaces: Results and Interpretation</b>	<b>98</b>
5.1	Results of the Questionnaire Study	98
5.1.1	The Different Types of RPGs	99
5.1.2	The RPG Scene	100
5.1.3	Media Use of Role-Players	101
5.1.4	Identification with Media Characters	102
5.2	Interviews and Participatory Observation	103
5.2.1	The HPI: Personality Test Results	104
5.2.2	The Attraction of Gaming: Fantasy Elements & Diversity of Experience	105
5.2.2.1	Fun in Gaming – Differences between Traditional and Digital RPGs	105
5.2.2.2	The Story as Central Element of RPGs	107
5.2.2.3	Diversity of Experience: Living in a Story	108
5.2.2.4	Creativity as Source of Pleasure	109
5.2.2.5	Fantasy Elements and Pleasure in Gaming	110

5.2.3	Well Aware of Public Opinions: Role-Players & Criticism	111
5.2.3.1	Social Problems & Addiction	112
5.2.4	A New Perspective: Moral Decisions in RPGs	113
5.2.4.1	Value of Community	113
5.2.4.2	Values in Fantasy Setting	114
5.2.4.3	Moral Decisions in the Game	115
5.2.4.4	Values in Real Life versus Values in the Game	116
5.2.5	How People Claim Their Gaming Space: Social Aspects of Gaming	117
5.2.5.1	Significance of Role-Playing Games	117
5.2.5.2	Significance of Avatar	118
5.2.5.3	Significance of Community	119
5.2.5.4	Social Learning	121
5.2.6	RPG Space as Third Space? Player and Game Relationship	122
5.2.6.1	Real Life Interaction with Game Space	123
5.2.6.2	Self-Reflection and Comparison of Player and Avatar	124
5.2.6.3	Development of Self	125
5.2.6.4	The Mergence of Spaces in RPGs	126
5.2.7	Summary of Results	130
5.3	The Mergence of Spaces: User-Practice & Virtual Worlds as Lived Space	132
<b>6</b>	<b>Conclusion: Online Game Space in a Cultural Context</b>	<b>139</b>
	<b>References</b>	<b>144</b>
	<b>Appendix</b>	<b>150</b>
	Abbreviations	150
	Guideline Interview in German	151
	Guideline Interview in English	154
	Observation Guidelines in German	157
	Observation Guidelines in English	159
	Excerpts from Questionnaire in German and English	161
	German Originals for Quotations in Chapter 5	164
	List of Figures	170