

## Philip's Blog Philip Linden's Weblog

December 06, 2005

Country or Platform or Both?

Gwyneth Llewelyn has recently written a great and thoughtful blog entry, where she worries that 'mainland' SL will effectively become a landscape dotted with huge colored cubes. She says that all the 'content' of SL will soon be inside those cubes, and that the exteriors will be opaque because the owners of the content will want to be isolated. She points out that P2P teleporting will speed this transition. I think there is an unavoidable truth in this - people will naturally strive to strictly control their surroundings, up to and including the 'Truman Show' of Gwyn's vision, where one even paints the distant horizon line to suit (presumably the inner surfaces of her imagined cubes). Sadly, as has been shown by things like suburban housing developments, humans will do this to their individual loss - for example living too far from one another or building high fences, and then bemoaning the lack of any neighbors to talk to. I don't think that this is a future that we can avoid by imposing telehubs, because this urge is too powerful and SL is too open. For example, devices like ROAM already allow people to easily circumvent any kind of forced local travel by rocketing into the clouds and moving at supersonic speeds to their destinations. Moreover, as SL's code and protocols are increasingly made open, local operators of simulators will likely abolish telehubs in favor of direct transport (as is already done with 'sit teleporting' within land parcels). The 'tragedy of the commons' will prevail: attempts by Linden Lab to impose global rules designed to reinforce community/country will be overridden by personal or local economic interests. So does this mean that the idea of 'country' is lost, and that SL will be like a collection of personal websites, each in it's own cube?

I'm not so sure. I think the future of SL can be summarized as a set of questions about Gwyn's boxes:

How big are they going to be?

How many different people 'live' inside them?

Do they ever overlap each other?

Are there boxes inside of boxes?

I think the answer is found by considering each box to contain not 'content' but instead a community: One or more people drawn together by shared experiences. SL is a place full of community, and this isn't something that is going away. This is because SL allows people to create and have shared experiences in a very very rich way - in some ways richer than real life, and those shared experiences create community. For example, the welcome area has a community (those who are frequently found there) which is based on the shared experience of welcoming new users to Second Life. Although the different things that can happen in the Welcome Area are numerous and extremely varied, they share a comprehensible thread, and a person familiar with the goings-on there is joined to other members of the Welcome Area community by his/her ability to predict roughly what is going to happen next and be a part of it. The most powerful forms of shared experience in Second Life bring together people, content, and experience into a single physical place. Big nightclubs, Luskwood, Abbott's Aerodrome come to mind - these are other examples of places that combined with people create shared experience.

How Big can the communities be? Consider a 'public' forest in SL (they exist today, right?), designed to be enjoyed by a community of users that set aside and own the land, contribute to its creation, and walk around inside it. The right 'size' for this forest is set by the largest number of simulators beyond which the addition of a new simulator would add no pleasure to the experience of being in the forest. I think that even today this number is (for Forests and many other experiences) quite a bit bigger than a single sim. Clearly what needs to be added are features to better enable groups (especially mainland groups) to share ownership of areas, but I think that as we add those features and also improve things like rendering distance, the upper limit to the box size will become quite large. We crave complexity and scale, meaning that there will always be a motivation for a like minded group of people to establish the largest contiguous space they can equitably inhabit together, rather than shutting off the borders at the edges of

their parcels and living in isolation.

The number of inhabitants can also, I think, be quite large. Considering a community like Luskwood - clearly with better tools and the ability to add land area, this will be a pretty big community, with easily hundreds or thousands of members wanting to live collectively and share resources - with their houses being near meeting spaces and stores, for example. So again, while I can imagine island communities of large numbers of people being very common, I doubt that individual 'boxes' which are like small walled parcels will be very popular.

Overlapping is also something that we see happening already. Anshe's island communities, where there are common services/zoning rules and connected lands but distinct internal subcommunities are already examples of overlapping/inside boxes. Again, I think most of the problem with people overlapping and intersecting their communities comes from LL not yet having provided the right features in the code to allow an adequate balance of power, rather than an inherent desire or tendency toward total isolation.

I think that in a few years when we look at the global map of SL, we will see clumps of land corresponding to communities of experience. The 'country' part of SL will have become plural - each large community will be its own country in a universe that at the highest level is an open technology platform. Taken together there will be thousands of such communities, meaning that, like the real world, global position doesn't mean that much. In a similar way, we don't really need to consult the world map to know what is 'different' about Alaska and Tahiti - we just think of them as being separated by a long plane flight, and we don't really need the details of direction or separation. We just 'teleport' there using United Airlines and step off the tarmac right into the place without having and experience of the intervening distance. But what remains true about the real world globe, and I think will remain true about the SL map, is that as you zoom in to a region of interest, the areas around it will be of interest to you. Specific communities will be embedded in other more general ones. For example, if

you are thinking about visiting Tahiti and are browsing a world map, you might discover somewhere like Rarotonga (a more obscure but also interesting vacation destination). I suspect that when there are multi-hundred sim communities on the SL map (think of them as continents), you will find that the adjacent communities to those continents have chosen to be there because they may be in some way relevant (or perhaps counterpoint!) to those communities. We need to add the features to allow land use to be balanced between individuals and groups and communities, but I think that we will not need telehubs to see large and complex communities emerge.

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## Comments

I think the notion that SL will become a land of closed in boxes is ridiculous. It already exists in one form, where people will put up walls to block out their neighbors and replace it with a different texture. So what? People want solitude, allow them that. But not everyone likes that, there are tons of people who enjoy the splendid views and sunsets that SL creates. We have forests and other recreations of nature abound.

If everyone wanted to live in boxes they already would be and some are, but it will hardly become an epidemic.

What I would love to see though, in comparison to the "boxed parcels", is for SL to allow each user to create their own world. Which will eventually happen if SL allows users to host their own, me thinks. And you could "portal" from one of these worlds to another, and if you allow you could start your own community in your own. That would be great.

Posted by: Oz Spade | December 06, 2005 at 01:08 PM

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Philip, I'm almost embarrassed that you took time to read my ramblings and comment on them. Thanks for that.

:)

Oz, I think that "box metaphor" has eluded you. The silly pictures with the cubes on a sandbox are a problem for the SL-savvy, who immediately think of 10x10x10 m cubes, and naturally label that as "ridiculous". Don't take the picture literally. Read what Philip has written: "when we look at the global map of SL, we will see clumps of land corresponding to communities of experience".

Each of those boxes correspond to one of those clumps of land, or, if you prefer, a specific community living "inside" it. Not literally inside a box with painted pictures on the wall!! Actually, now that I've re-read my own ramblings, I thought the metaphor was pretty obvious. Perhaps it isn't. Well, Philip certainly understood it quite clearly and described it in much better words than I did :)

So, for the sake of completeness – no, I don't think that people will "wall-in" themselves and never look to the "outside" of their houses! Instead, I think that people will gather inside communities, as opposed to spreading themselves all over the virtual landscape (like they currently do).

What this means is a move from a continuous, virtual landscape, to one with "private" communities (based on interests), small patches of land (where "small" can be whole continents, of course) without any relation between each other, and travel across them will be from one "private" community to the other – directly, without the need of watching what's in-between.

In a sense, what you describe as "several worlds" which you can "portal" from one to another, is precisely what I think that will happen (soon), and which Philip describes as "each large community will be its own country". The difference between your suggested model and what Philip describes (and that I have inaccurately represented with "boxes") is that there will be "land between" – what I call the "wasteland", unorganized space that is somehow not important, between the multiple, self-contained communities. Under your model, there won't be any "need" for "wasteland" – it would be

like a big chatting system where you move from room to room, and people just meet "inside" (not literally inside, but metaphorically inside), and "portal" to the next room when they want to get in touch with them.

We have that now: it's called IMVU. Or Virtual Worlds (<http://www.virtualworlds.de/>).

Perhaps I should replace that picture with the silly boxes with one representing the solar system – it would reflect a better metaphor, SL as a group of "individual planets".

In any case, I cannot disagree that, in the medium-to-long term, this is what very likely is going to happen. I'm perhaps a bit skeptic of having "countries" surrounding similar-minded "countries", although those examples also exist in SL (islands clumping together). We can only see what will happen. I have for long been a firm believer in "federations" of communities that have similar goals, and also believe that similar-minded communities will, over time, come closer together. I have no factual data to support those claims, just intuition, I guess – most people, to a degree, will naturally clump together according to common interests, if the distance is not a factor (something we've been discovering since the dawn of the Internet).

What I just hoped is that this would happen using the current mainland and its telehub system, using them as attractors for providing the required asymmetries to put this development in motion. It seemed to be working so far to an extent. The absence of the telehub system may, however, point towards a different future: one where people will disregard the "lay of the land", so to speak, and reinvent it for themselves – either on the islands, or on large patches of the mainland, in planned communities.

Posted by: Gwyneth Llewelyn | December 06, 2005 at 02:06 PM

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I think Gwyn's cube analogy is going to be correct in

some instances but not in others. In a number of places (mostly the older, core sims it seems to me) like-minded landowners have tended to gather without a formal agreement and imprint the sim with a distinct "flavor." I base this on noticing that land availability tends to be pretty rare in these sims, while there is plenty of land for sale all over the map, the older sims are the most difficult to buy into. I personally think these sims will change very little in the advent of p2p as most of the landowners are long term stakeholders in SL and many have extensive builds that are not easily moved to another location. In those cases, each sim is like its own web page. In sims that are more unstable and land is changing hands more often, the trend will probably be towards isolation and attempting to exert as much control as possible over one's environment as a natural defense mechanism.

In the end, it really will come down to the stability of the landowners in the sim and whether they are "buy and hold" investors or "chasing the buck" investors.

Posted by: Isablan Neva | December 06, 2005 at 09:09 PM

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Which is it, Philip: "with their houses being near meeting spaces and stores" or "global position doesn't mean that much?" Those are two mutually exclusive designs for a system, You either have to design a system where distance means nothing -- save for local, accepted rules -- or you design a system with enforced traveling, running in MMORPG's.

You continuously and incorrectly think of Second Life as being a physical, meat area. Second Life, and the Internet at large, are not meat areas where such limitations as geography, distance, and staircases (for us wheelchair bound folks) limit or define how you traverse. The Internet is information flow, that information can be used to exchange words, to draw pictures, or someday upload the physicality of Natalie Portman to our brains. However, that information should *\*never\** be forgotten, and the rigid physicality of the real world should never be imposed upon it.

If you want waiting areas between worlds, like some clock-filled, "time tunnel" from an old "Muppet Babies" episode, then build one and force people to use it. However, if you're trying to build a platform that impatient, wannabe transhumans (like myself) are going to use, don't try to shoehorn twentieth century metaphors into the protocols.

This is the same mentality comic book publishers are using: one story, one universe, one continuity. Comic publishers are excited when they sell a million copies of a \$2.50 book (\$2,500,000) one month; what they miss is that "City of Heroes" has a monthly population of about 180,000 people, each paying \$14.95 (\$2,691,000/month), to have versions of their heroes in various stages of self-defined continuity.

Talking about Second Life in terms of a universe of countries is a stupid, malformed idea. We already have a such a thing, it's called The Real World. Treating Second Life like an escape from The Real World, a way to circumvent this universe with another, is foolish. You should treat Second Life as a tool, or platform, that allows you to experience The Real World in new ways, not seperate ones.

I'm never going to be a fashion model, and I would not want to be one. However, in Second Life I've had the opportunity to play one. Second Life offered me opportunity to experience something I never would in my physical life. As great as that experience was, I'm glad it was something that was added to my life, not something that happened in spite of my real life.

Posted by: Jarod Godel | December 07, 2005 at 09:42 AM

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Personally, I think that the p2p won't hurt much. Yeah, it'll bring about change, but we'll be okay.

I would like to say, though, that I very much like Oz Spade's idea (which reminds me a LOT of the Metaverse from Snow Crash by Neil Stephenson) in which each SL user can host their own world (of which the only

restrictions are those of their hardware) so that they can build and script and develop offline or on the road (laptop), while also having the ability to travel to the mainland and the LL-hosted worlds (private islands, etc). From the Lindens point of view, this means that there will be more user-created goodness for potential denizens to be attracted to (new users), without the worry of buying new servers or increasing bandwidth. If a user had a personal computer hosting their own world, and linked it to their house on their own 512m parcel of land on the mainland, all they would have to do is make a simlink from the house to their computer and transfer each user there.

Of course, the potential for abuse is a consideration, but I believe it would be an interesting endeavour.

~GF

Posted by: Ghordon Farina | December 07, 2005 at 09:52 AM

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Dude, where's my planet?

I think we have been trending towards this "box" or "solar system" scenario for some time now.

I remember, back during the heated debates over government in SL, some folks, including myself, predicting that we would see the emergence of city-states. I even suggested that there would be "no-man's land" between. I fancied myself living in one of these "lawless zones". (I am grinning as I think about that.)

Of course, even before the arrival of Neualtenberg, we already had some localized, common interest zones and sims. Some were in existence as far back as beta.

Nexus Prime, Venice, Outlands, Little Tokyo, Americana, Slate, Tabor Village, Kissling City, Darkwood, Luskwood, to name a few.

Private island sims were made available, and each

developed its own distinctive flair.

Neualtenberg came into existence, outgrew its original confines, moved, and continues to flourish.

More recently we have seen the emergence of player owned continents, most of which are zoned and/or themed to some extent.

I really don't think that the removal of telehubs is going to accelerate this trend that much, if at all. It is really inevitable.

People gravitate towards places which hold interests congruent with their own. It's human nature, and I don't think that's a regrettable thing. I would be much less enamored with SL if it was one big, heterogeneous conglomeration.

I shudder at the thought of endless suburban sprawl, with strip malls here and there. I get enough of that in my day to day life.

This is going to sound cliché, but we should celebrate and embrace our regional dissimilarities, not fear them.

Posted by: Nolan Nash | December 08, 2005 at 01:44 AM

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The point here is if physical proximity helps to build communities, or if it's completely irrelevant.

In the Internet (or before that), the notion of physical proximity is mostly irrelevant – if by that we mean RL geographic location. The truth is, people "reinvent" physical proximity. They congregate on the same websites, web forums, chatrooms. This is the new "physical proximity". Of course, the Internet or the old BBS systems were very abstract systems and all this reasoning is so hard to apply.

In SL, however, there is "familiarity" in terms of what we can call a virtual physical proximity. I may live in Portugal and my neighbour in New Zealand (antipodes to

each other), but we both may share a parcel in the same sim, side by side. We naturally talk to each other, and get friends to join us. Later these friends also buy plots nearby. We have common interests and ideas, so we congregate on the same spot, and grow outwards.

Take a look at a sim with, say, 2 years of existence. At its beginning, it was probably looking like the First Land sims in the Northern Continent these days: utter chaos. But the old sims, these days, look lovely altogether. Friends have moved together, people sharing the same ideas, shaping the terrain around themselves to better reflect their sense of community.

This, in my opinion, is a Good Thing. It may take weeks, months or years (mostly depending on what the driving force is – urban planning or organic growth). But it slowly falls into familiar landscapes to our very human eyes.

Now let's see the alternative, proposed by all those who put an emphasis on surrealism, transhumanism, or simply isolation. Under their models, the virtual landscape should \*not\* reflect proximity of interests – you can get people together through p2p teleporting. In a way, this is what happens when people on MSN Messenger, Yahoo or Jabber simply fire up their applications, create a chatroom, and get together for a bit of talking. They don't need "physical presence" to get together. Thus, it follows that SL doesn't need to follow a "physical" model of the universe to make the communities grow. Experimenting with surreal landscapes is an opportunity that is available on SL, and we should exploit it.

Now while I certainly agree that there is a very large number of people in SL promoting this kind of view – large in percentage, compared to the same number of people in RL – one must take into account that SL is not any more the small 500-people group of radical thinkers that it was back in 2002/3. It has grown to embrace non-radical people. The same 500 are still around, still pressing their agenda, but they are "surrounded" now by 92,000 people who are used to "familiarity". They are the ones that wish log cabins inside virtual forests, and lakes and waterfalls, and

shops in their community, and walk across the stone path to talk with their neighbours – even if all those concepts, from a surrealistic point of view, don't make any sense at all. We can get rid of them. We can use the "linked chatroom" approach of IMVU or Virtual Worlds or whatever platform you may care to name.

So I agree that the issue is not telehubs – but immersion. What SL has as an unique feature is the replacement of a surrealistic environment with a fantastic one. Gravity works, but we can fly. We build houses on the ground, but we can go through walls. We build familiar vehicles and furniture, but the way they appear with a deep bass sound when they rezz them is "magical" in nature. While I have suggested elsewhere that all this could, in future upgrades, be "disconnected" in private islands (ie. turn off gravity, change sky & water textures, etc) for the ones wishing to explore surrealism, the truth is, even on the mainstream artistic movements, surrealism has been slowly replaced by magical realism. And that's where SL currently fits in: a familiar landscape, but with magical/fantastic elements. This is what those 92,000 people react positively to.

The introduction of surrealistic elements (as said, an outdated perspective in terms of mainstream art, although I won't discuss this fully – I'm definitely not qualified enough to embrace that discussion, my own artistic training is quite limited in scope) in SL will certainly change all that. I think that what Philip tried to express in his blog entry (if I may be so bold to interpret it) is that despite the surrealistic element (p2p teleporting), people will congregate on communities with physical (even if virtual) presence, and that these will grow. I cannot but agree with that view. Most people – although not all – will embrace the familiarity of a realistic (but magical) place, and get together to escape the unfamiliarity of the surrealistic landscape. These communities will certainly attract people together. But, contrary to the current model – a mainland where the dominant modelling forces are "attractors" to shape it – this will happen like RL private condominiums in the middle of large tracts of slums in a wasteland. People will live in the private condominiums and avoid the wasteland using p2p

teleport.

The question then is: what purpose will that wasteland serve? Will it be just a place of cheap land where further communities will develop slowly over the time, hoping against hope to attract people from the "p2p network traffic lanes"? This is like hoping that people flying from Hong Kong to London will more often than not make a stop in Afghanistan just to look what is going on there, and citizens of Afghanistan, by themselves, doing all the efforts to have the airplanes regularly stop there by doing interesting things (we have some RL examples where this actually worked – Dubai comes to mind). This is much harder, and I'm not sure if it will ever happen.

From some comments here, it even looks like that nobody seriously expects that to happen – the mainland, slowly, will lose its purpose. SL will be a "water world" with scattered islands here and there, interconnected by p2p teleport. Or, if you wish, it will be a planetary system, with each community living on a planet, and using p2p teleport to hop between the void. A "void" which has had a fantastic development due to organic growth so far, but that the near future will simply discard over time, to the point that it might simply disappear for lack of interest.

Is a "world" built of "isolated countries" such a bad idea? I don't think so. As said, so many other virtual world platforms have embraced the same concept, and they are thriving. But we will lose over time the uniqueness of what SL had to offer. That's what I'm mostly sad about.

Posted by: Gwyneth Llewelyn | December 08, 2005 at 05:37 AM

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Great thoughts here, and thank you for the clarifying your thoughts here, Gwen.

I agree that there will be an inevitable push towards zoning and community groupings -- humans have an affinity towards grouping. This will not be universal,

however.

There will be lots of people who do not want to fit into an existing community but prefer to be the rebel in the "wasteland" between. There will be those who reject the existing communities and try to create their own order/community within the wasteland.

Fly around much of SL now and what do you see? Chaos, up close, or a wild-and-woolly tapestry zoomed out. Some people hate it and flee to a controlled community zone, and some people love it and gravitate to this blank canvas. That will not change.

One thing is for certain, people do not want excessive artificial constraints placed on them. You create telehubs, i. e. inefficient transportation, and you inevitably get ROAMs and supersonic jetpacks etc.

Posted by: Forseti | December 08, 2005 at 01:12 PM

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While it is perfectly understandable that our Noble King Philip defends the decision to (more or less) kill the Telehub system here, the most interesting aspect of the vision presented here is his repeated admitting that the current tool set provided with SL is NOT sufficient to make this vision real.

It's completely plausible to me that Second Life might evolve to a world - or solar system - with more or less closely or loosely connected communities that define themselves not only by a group or organisation name and titles, but with some "physical proximity", too. This has to do with the way the human brain works; hardwired and trained. There might be some impatient "transhumans" out there - like Jarod - but I would like to question if this target audience is large enough for the business plan of LL.

I don't think that P2P teleporting will lead to the complete desintegration of the SL society. I am opposed to implementing it now because, IMHO,

(1) it will not alleviate the massive usability issues of SL (see <http://secondslog.blogspot.com/2005/11/what-is-reason-for-new-users-to-turn.html>)

(2) it removes what little effective zoning is present in SL today.

And it seems a little paradox to me that this mild zoning pressure provided by the telehubs is removed and at the same time a vision is propagated that NEEDS better zoning tools and better support for semi-independent communities in SL.

To make Philips vision a reality, we would need tools that make group efforts much more effective, that would make group owned land a much lesser financial risk for those involved, that would make the inner workings of groups much more grief-resistant and that would connect group tools with land management tools in an effective way.

But that would be just a first step.

Building sub-continents like Dreamland or Queso-Land or whatever little empires exist now in SL ... takes a lot of energy, will power, money and time. The largest project of that type is Anshe's Dreamland. And Dreamland shows how flawed the current toolset is: with a usable but clumsy billing system, no effective way to control or enforce zoning rules and no effective way to delegate many of the tasks of managing such a community without great risk.

Dreamland is managed by a mom-and-pop business through a single account, because there is no other way to do it. Models which distribute the work load (and responsibilities and risks etc) of large holdings like Dreamland on more than two or four shoulders simply do not exist or are very risky with "SL as it is".

If Philip (or LL as a company) really would like to realize the vision presented here, Linden Lab would have to license SL or - even better - set up a kind of franchise, where an individual, a group of residents or an RL company could buy/rent servers from Linden Lab

and on these servers play more or less the same role Linden Lab now plays for Second Life at large. In such a model a lot of related services (like account management, billing etc.) would be handled (for a fee) by Linden Lab but would be done as a proxy for the franchise.

Of course these other organisations would compete with the Lindens in some ways. Why should Linden Lab further such a model? Because it would lead to a much more attractive SL (and more residents) in the long run. Those who like the current anarchy would still find it. Those who like a little more structure could get it. Those who would like to stay on their communities could do so. And those who like "to travel the globe" could do that, too.

Posted by: Pham Neutra | December 09, 2005 at 08:35 AM

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I think that one thing gets overlooked in all this bruhaha, and that is that content creates communities. Night clubs, Tringo, Slingo, gambling and even Bad movies create community.

Elex Dusk, with a 512 meter plot in Mare did more to create community than a battery of telehubs. Small and large communities form around places where people want to go. SL is a marvelous platform for socializing and yet it is also a marvelous place to build and dream house. I don't think P2P teleporting is going to put everyone in a box, and all traffic will be isolated to a few island boxes. People like to wander, they like to explore.

There will be ample numbers of people who want to wander around the grid, but they will be exploring because they want to, not just skimming over land and getting frustrated with builds that impede their progress.

Thus I see telehubs as neutral. they facilitate people getting from point a to point b. What is important is what happens at point a and point b? how do we build communities around content? These are the questions we must now address. What is entailed by community

planning in a virtual environment?

Original I think Philip read Jane Jacob's book. Well Jacobs was largely reacting to the urban planning model of Robert Moses, who felt that cities are for traffic. Thus a conflict was set up between the small local community that was self contained, and the central urban hub with residences outlying the commercial structures and people commuting to work in cars. In the 21 century we can see the failure of each of these models. SL is something new, we are not limited in terms of time and distance, nor do we want to be. Thus virtual geography will not create communities. People will do that, and make the geography match.

Posted by: Jake Rietveld | December 13, 2005 at 04:41 PM

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Gwyn, you're contradicting yourself. If p2p means that Location Doesn't Matter, then in what sense is anyplace "wasteland"? How is it that people starting new communities there are "hoping against hope" that people will wander into their location, when Location Doesn't Matter? New communities will start up because of other attractors: forum postings, classifieds, event listings, or word of mouth; or people will just see five green dots clustered together on the map, and decide to go see what's going on. The "wasteland" is simply cheap land that hasn't been put to good use \*yet\*.

Posted by: Liberty Tesla | December 14, 2005 at 04:22 AM

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This is an interesting new vision you have, but it seems to me that the current "land" model for defining communities is still much more constrained than it needs to be. Every single sim is exactly the same size, and has the same horizon. Every piece of property is static. It can't be located as you suggest. I'm stuck with my property where it is, unless I decide to pay

huge sums to a realtor and buy a new location. I'm stuck with my neighbors, I'm stuck with a static piece of land even if I like my neighbors. All these things are not necessary or even useful in creating online communities, they are simply holdovers from the patterns we are used to in the real world. They are arbitraries.

If you truly want to give communities a good way to congregate themselves together, the ability to relate individual spaces to each other must become much more dynamic. To go back to the Metaverse precedent, remember that the Street was not a static grid. It was a common node, linking a wide variety of seperate spaces with different levels of immersiveness and quality. When you walk through a doorway, the inner space may have nothing to do with the apparent dimensions of the space from the outside.

I've dreamed of sharing a virtual community where my friends and I live together on a little street, and share a common pub on one corner. Every time a new friend joins, we shoehorn another doorway into the street. But if you enter the door to my house, you'll find yourself in a vast forest. If you enter the garage, you'll find yourself on the open hangar deck of the Kazenoin air station, ready to fly among the thunderclouds over miles of empty terrain.

What I'm saying is free us from the constraints of a static grid. Free us to make those connections to each other, and from one "box" to another.

Posted by: Ananda Sandgrain | December 15, 2005 at 09:26 AM

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As a new user, I have a few comments, but no clear opinion.

I enjoyed the telehubs, as they modelled sth that will be very cool in the futuer RW. They also provided a challenge... trying to find the location I was actually searching for! And did cause me to view areas I otherwise perhaps would not have.

However, I am now enjoying being transported to exactly where I want to go...

Since SL is such a complex set of possibilities, it seems to me that it is actually impossible to predict what will happen. Hopefully, it won't be whatever would happen in the "Real World", because there are so many variables which don't currently exist in 1L.

One aspect of my personal interest in SL is for a place to model innovative and evolutionary social structure, and hopefully find some things which can be reintegrated into 1L, as well as having experiences which are only possible in SL or dreamstates, but which are shared with others.

It surprises me how many people seem to want to just have a more beautiful, more decadent version of what is possible in 1L... not that I too do not enjoy this! But when so much more is possible in terms of evolution...

But who am I to say what another's Utopia should or should not be? The nature of a Utopia is perhaps that it works for everyone, no matter how different their desires and visions.

So as far as P2P creating isolated communities of like-minded people, I see that this is possible, and a positive stage perhaps (isn't it nice to have the opportunity to create the community you've dreamed of, with no interference from those who just don't understand?), but don't we all have our own quirks and foibles? Isn't community always a degree of work and co-operation, and overcoming differences? And, actually, maybe even the views of our worst, most hated enemy enrich our lives if they don't end it. I don't know if I believe that, but I just notice that alot of people claim they want community, and base their ideas of which people are "like-minded" on a certain set of criteria, but when you dig deeper, they don't get along either. So to create a world of lasting value, I think most people will have to confront difference in the other unless they remain on a superficial level. And having found like mindedness, may crave people with different opinions and ways of life... if you know they

can't actually kill you.

Posted by: Elan Mistral | December 19, 2005 at 11:13 AM