

## ***Concepts of Liminal Space***

Void, without form, without light; inchoate, but aware (however imperfectly) of form and purpose.

The liminal spaces – embedding rites of passage, with people moving from one state of being to another – were three-layered multiverses incorporating a physical space, the virtual space of trance and dream and a visual space of representation: paintings left behind on cave wall; artefacts. Shamans and creatures from Myth entered these spaces, left behind their constraining present and found their identities shifting and changing. They brought back to those unable to cross with them (their communities, cabined, cribbed and confined by spatial temporality) messages to guide them in their daily life. The shamanistic ability to shift time, shift place and shift shape linked the grounded earth world with fluid visions to guide their future.

Van Gennep's concept of Liminality (1909; 1984) identified the in-between-ness of those in a condition of dislocation, where hierarchies are reversed and uncertainty rules. Jung (1978) referred to liminal spaces as boundaries between states of being, where the liminal space offers the possibility of a re-creation of self, where symbolic actions create meaning for the participants. Conflict, chaos, uncertainty and the breakdown of old structures accompany these actions.

So, within these MirandaMods participants are transformed by acquiring new knowledge, a new status and a new identity in the community. Liminality brings with it a sense of power and possibility that is in part a release from prior constraints (temporal; spatial; personal; professional) and in part a reflection of the autonomy engendered by the de-stratification of existing professional power relationships of learning.

The conventional ecosystem of learning is based on the separation of home, the institution (school, college, university), neighbourhood, work: all of these are bound into a system. This system operates the constraints of age, class, money and expectations, all of which act as gatekeepers for the system.

In contrast, the liminal spaces that we inhabit and within which we work are everywhere, and nowhere.

This liminal state is heightened when many of the participants are engaged in the research process, ethnographers exploring the boundaries of what is, and is not, possible in the interrelationship between technology and culture – as complete participant researchers. The more deeply the individual participates in the group and evaluates the actions and values within it then the more deeply they are in the liminal self-reflexive state between participant, researcher, observer and analyst. The range of interests and concerns of all these participant-researchers

reduces the possibility of researcher bias when conclusions are drawn.

Meyer and Land (2003; 2005; 2006) appropriate the concept of Liminality to use with the term 'threshold concepts' when students move from one stage of learning to another; Raiker (2011), in the context of undergraduate and postgraduate learning, develops the notion to describe Liminality as the space where mental blocks form.

For our purposes, however, Liminal Space, and its attendant concept of Liminality, can be most tangibly observed in the MirandaMod context and process, where a range of actors come together, accepting the possibly chaotic, fluid instability and uncertainty of creating meaning and new knowledge.