

The Living World: Items and the Bartz War

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1. Introduction

Korean game culture developed based on online games, especially MMORPG¹, and various negative effects (for example, violence, game addiction, mental health problems of adolescents and item trade) have been attributed to these games. Previous researches have warned against violence in games and its effect on aggressive behavior (Buchman & Funk, 1996; Jeon, 2012; Kim, 2015), some focused on game addiction and tried to show that digital games are dangerous for Korean society (Lee et al., 2003; Kwan, 2005; Kwang et al., 2008). In Korea, it is not only MMORPG, but most digital games that have a strong negative image and the trade of game items in particular is seen as a problem and as a source of many other social problems related to games. There are numerous reasons for this negative image, in part it is due to the rapid growth the Korean game industry. With the IMF crisis in 1997, Korean game developers focused on developing a new market, online games; and since the late 1990s the government led the rapid development of high-speed Internet. The spread of internet networks allowed players to play games at home (not only in PC bangs), and online gaming became more popular in Korea than anywhere else in the world.

The first Korean MMORPG, Lineage², was released in 1998 by the well-known Korean game developer company NCsoft, and 5 years later, Lineage 2³ made a spectacular debut and gained great popularity. Among the many games viewed as related to “social problems” and in particular, to the issue of trading game items (using real money it is also called as RMT⁴: Real Money Trade), games of the Lineage series are always mentioned among the main culprits. Researchers have pointed out also that there is a relation between game addiction and some characteristics of MMORPGs, in particular to the fact that in-game characters are improved and developed (Jeon, 2014). To achieve goals and to survive in the game world, players have two possible strategies. One consists in building networks with other people who play the game – this leads to gamers living together as in society; the other is acquiring more items (resources) than other players – this, it is thought, leads to item trading.

Games like Lineage 2 have also been defined as “Living games.” According to Lee (2010), “Living games” are games where, instead of following a pre-designed story, playing itself is the process through which players make the story and change their character as they interact with each other. It seems therefore that some of the characteristics of MMORPG that lead to game addiction and item trading are also what defines them as “Living games.” In this paper, I suggest that an important aspect of item trading and related issues is that conflicts surrounding items exert their influence both in the game world and the real world. Therefore, I explore items issues starting with an event that occurred in the game Lineage 2, the Bartz Liberation War, to answer a wider question: how does the social dynamics inside the game influence real world events and how do values and preoccupations of the real world come to shape the world of “Living games”? I also argue that present

キーワード：韓国 MMORPG、アイテム取引およびアイテムマーケット、バッツ革命戦争、Underwear Corps、Living games

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approaches to item trading are insufficient to understand item trading and the game culture surrounding items.

Since Castronova (2002) first considered seriously the question of item trading, research can be divided into two main types. One concerns how the legal system should deal with item trading. The other is an economic approach that tries to explain item trading in terms of economic factors. In these approaches as they are found in Korea, a central point is that in-game events are not understood to influence what happens in the real world, nor vice versa are real world events assumed to influence what happens in the game world.

However, some researchers suggest that the social dynamics involved are more complex and that aspects of these two worlds interacts as is, in fact, implicit in the idea of "Living games." For example, Consalvo (2007) focused on the phenomena of "cheating" and on "walled off" spaces in MMO games, arguing that "cheating", which means "players breaking the rules", and "walled off" spaces are more adequate to represent the relationship between the game world and the real world than simply invoking the "magic circle". She also uses the concept of "paratext" to understand the influence of fans and fan communities upon digital games and on the game industry. Cheating is certainly an important phenomenon as are the actions and interactions of players. However, neither "cheating" nor "paratext" are sufficient to explain the outbreak of the in-game war on which this paper focuses. In this paper, I use the concept of "Living games" to explain the complexity of the relationship between the real and the game worlds. This relationship is dynamic and changing as a result of players' actions and the two worlds continuously influence each other. The idea of living games allows for motivations that are more significant and go beyond the reasons for cheating (gaining advantages) that push players to change the rules, in other words, the norms of their world. In the Bartz Liberation War, the actions of players that took place in the game world sometimes did not bring them any benefits, but they nonetheless transformed both the in-game world and the outside world.

2. Items and the origin of the war

The Bartz Liberation War (also called Bartz Revolution War or Bartz War) occurred on a server in Lineage 2. It started in 2004 and lasted for four years until 2008.⁵ This war led to and required widespread participation as well as long-term commitment on the part of many players who originally were not on the Bartz server. It also received an important a social echo in both the game world and the real world.

To understand the reasons why the war started; it is necessary to see that in Lineage 2, in fact in all games of the Lineage series, items are a crucial component for playing and winning.

Basically, items are virtual object inside a game world that a player gains through playing, doing things like achieving a quest, leveling up or PvP (battles between Players and Player) etc. Because of their variety there are many definitions of items according to their various purposes and uses. According to the Game dictionary (2016) game items can be categorized into two types, mounted and non-mounted items, and each type is divided in two sub-types. Mounted items are game items that are used to equip a character and to alter the information about the character and its appearance. For example, weapons and accessories (which have a decorative aspect) are all mounted items. Non-mounted items are consumable or riding items. Jeon (2005, pp. 64-65) claims that the importance of items comes from the fact that depending on the items players choose, they also choose their play experience; the story might be different in consequence and item exchange meditate interactivity between players or players and with NPC (Non-player character).

Items provide a variety of effects and items that make the player stronger were popular in Lineage 2, as in all games that include wars and battles. Items that are more powerful or difficult to gain have a higher value in real money. In Lineage 2, the high price of some items, like the "Jip-hang" sword or of rare items that are hard

to obtain and are extremely valuable within the game came to be considered as one's asset. This, as we will see, led in the real world to new government regulations to protect these digital assets.

In Lineage 2, earning items through playing takes a plenty of time and effort. Items are closely related to players progress and level up (the different capacity of items can be a major cause of variation in how fast a player becomes high-level). Furthermore, compared to other games, war, politics and economy are significant in this game (Yoon et al., 2012) and because it is a "Living game" players were able to engage in various in-game activities with other players just as they can do in real society. The more this game became popular, the harder it became to get items playing step by step. That was especially the case for rare items.⁶

Lineage 2 is a strict class society, and depending on players' level, their activities and the items they can own in the game world are restricted by the system. Lineage 2 is particularly based on PK (killing other players) and items are a means of gaining power, of showing off one's class, of raising in the class system, and simply a means to play.

3. The War

3.1 The Dragon Knights tyranny

The Bartz War reflected the existence of political conflicts inside the game, conflicts related to inequality, to class struggle, and to a desire for power quite similar to what we find in the real world. The war originally started over items related issues. The players who rebelled and began the war were looking to obtain social justice. There are two direct reasons why the war occurred. One is economic (the increase in the rate at which item sales were taxed) and the other is political.

Lineage series⁷ introduced a type of game that has been compared to an oriental painting in that it makes use of "beauty at the margins."⁸ What I mean is that even though the game developers created the game and there are systemic rules, players can decide or create many rules by themselves, which is again another way of saying that it is a "Living game." Lineage 2 has six races: Humans, Elves, Dark Elves, Dwarves, Orc and Kamael. There are different classes in each race, and members of these classes have different occupations like knight, wizard, assassin, warrior and others.

The Bartz server (one of the main servers of Lineage 2) had the largest population, The Dragon Knights blood pledge (clan) (hereafter, DK) exerted its power over the server. DK was cruel to members of other blood pledges and to players under their domination and frequently provoked war. DK started to regulate the access to most of the item hunting fields⁹, in particular to the good hunting fields, ones where it was easy to earn good items. DK also sold items at an expensive price to players who were not the member of DK and this made it hard for players in the lower levels to rise to upper levels. DK progressively became more and more powerful and finally so massive that no other blood pledge could stand against it. This period was called "the age of ruthless dictatorship (Lee, 2005, p.101)."¹⁰ The members of DK quickly leveled up and became powerful, while other players were killed by them and suffered from their domination. Furthermore, because of the castle siege warfare¹¹ inside this game, winning in collective battles is also important for playing.

As a result of DK's oppression items became more difficult to obtain for general players. And it is in that period, that one of the most popular item markets appeared, and also that gold farming significantly increased.¹² These two real-world events were if not driven by, at least strongly influenced by what was happening in the game.

One annoying problem was Chinese gold farming¹³ that was destroying the economic balance inside the game. "Stopping Chinese gold farming programs!" became an important objective for DK and a good excuse for the indiscriminate killing of other players under the pretext that they were automatic programs. To implement

this policy DK introduced the infamous “Scholarship quiz.” It consisted in asking an unknown player a ridiculous question which he or she would likely be unable to answer and then to kill the player considering that failure to answer was a proof that it was not a person but an automated system. To carry out these executions DK established what it called the “Dispute Resolution Committee.” In this way, the increase in gold farming that resulted from the in-game policy of DK in turn motivated DK to introduce new policies that increased resentment against its rule.¹⁴

Progressively, DK became the sole dominant force over the whole Bartz server. In March 2004, DK declared it would raise the tax rate from 10% to 15% on its territory (Myung, 2008). Inside Lineage 2, there are shops that sell items, and it is common for low-level players to buy items in those shops and the shops’ profit are owned by the blood pledge which controls the territory. The higher tax became a burden for every other player on the server, especially in the territory under DK’s regulation. Furthermore, as we have seen, it was also difficult to get items in the hunting fields that were also controlled by DK.

In reaction to these practices, some players informed the game developers (NCsoft) of the new situation created by DK’s decision, but the game company did not consider that it was a serious issue. Until then many players had remained neutral between DK and anti-DK factions, but these new oppressive policies, and the game company’s indifference, became the trigger of the war in which many previously neutral players now joined the resistance to DK power.

3.2 The War’s unfolding

On May of that same year, one of the anti-DK pledge Red Revolution (hereafter RR), occupied the Girin castle, which had previously been occupied by the DK, and reduced the tax rate to 0%. DK took revenge on RR and soon won back the ownership of Girin Castle. This short-term victory of the resistance nonetheless appealed to the players who had complained about DK and encouraged them to participate in what became the Bartz War. The Bartz Alliance was established by anti-DK players who were still too weak to fight against DK, individually or in small groups. The alliance aimed at assembling a very large number of players to oppose DK. Creating the alliance however was not a purely in-game event as the alliance sought to recruit players who were not from the Bartz server and even previously non-players. Below is a public announcement appealing to other players join the Bartz alliances:

“If the Bartz War does not get the power of the general players (“users” in the original statement) the Bartz Alliance might be defeated. Even players of level one only, if they all gather and attack together, it could cause great damage not only physically, but also morally. Everyone is watching us, not only on the Bartz server, but also on all servers. We should give them hope. There should be a no dictatorship like this one again.”

(Source: <http://blog.ncsoft.com>)

DK’s rule, in the above statement, is represented as a “dictatorship,” and the anti-DK alliance implicitly as fighting for “justice and freedom.”¹⁵

The weakest and lowest class players supporting the Bartz Alliance came to be called the Underwear Corp, for reasons to be explained below. As this announcement spread to other sites and servers it became a huge issue outside of the game. The number of players involved in the war reached as many as 200,000 according to the Game dictionary (Lee & Han, 2016, p. 283).

The announcement quoted above indicates that participating in the war changed from simply playing a game as usual into something different: resolving a difficult and important issue. Players were calling for justice and they encouraged each other to fight against the oppression of DK. The war of liberation became a

movement fighting for social justice against an absolute power, as progressively people who did not play Lineage 2 and even people who were not game players took an interest in the Bartz War. Not only players on the Bartz server, but also players from other servers gathered on the Bartz server and new players came to fight against DK as members of the Underwear Corps. Players who came to the Bartz server from other servers had to create a new character on the Bartz server to participate in the war, since the transfer of characters from one server to other is not allowed. These new characters were called the Underwear Corps because they had only basic items (equipment).



Figure 1 The dead body of Underwear Corps
(source: <http://blog.ncsoft.com/?p=24544>)



Figure 2 Join The Underwear Corps poster

Due to their Low level and basic equipment, the only tactic they could use was the “Human wave strategy.” Thousands of Underwear Corps members participated (Lee, 2005) during the time of war. The underwear Corps was supported by most of Lineage 2 players, and the war was such an event that it was reported and discussed in the normal media.

Here is a statement by a player from another server who joined the alliance:

“On June 22, I joined the Bartz server in the Underwear Corps. All I had was a sword and a basic armor. I was nothing but a naked low-level character wearing my underwear. In my hometown (8 servers), I lived as the head of a small blood pledge. Our server is also occupied by a large clan like DK, but there is no terrorism, such as controlling the hunting fields, even though there is a gap between the rich and the have-nots. I did not have enough, but I managed to stay there and earned a living day by day with hard work (‘nogadai’ – the word means severe physical labor in Korea (slang) – players often use this expression to indicate that gaining items requires hard work). When I decided to volunteer in the Underwear Corps, many friends objected to my decision.”

(Source: The Lineage 2 Game Forum bulletin board appeal from “*The Bartz Historia*”)

Similar statements were also made in the game world. The decision of players to participate in this struggle against evil, despite the temptation to compromise (to remain at home), was a difficult one. To participate was not an easy decision, it was more difficult for a player than just leaving things as they were, or to claim that “I don’t know anything” or “it is not my business.” It meant a huge drop in level for players who had spent hours leveling up. Nonetheless, those who remember their time in the Bartz Alliance are proud of their participation and of acting together with numerous unknown persons for the same goal of justice.

Here is a third post related to this war which directly addresses the issue of the relation between the real-world and the game world:

“Some will say this is a game, do not mistake it for reality. Nobody knows why, but if you ask me why users mistake it for reality. I’ll just want to say the following: Even though this is virtual reality, inside the

game it is one of our worlds, and I think that justice should dominate there also. Though I, myself may not be a great power and though we together may also not be a great power, we might be able to win anything."

(Source: The Lineage 2 Game Forum bulletin board appeal from "The Bartz Historia")

Because a digital game is a game, you can leave it, you can quit playing anytime. However, many players like this one, participated in the war to protest against injustice. Instead of quitting the game they continued to play because the game had acquired a different meaning. This shows most clearly that events in the game world (DK oppression) no longer only take place in the game world understood as separated from and independent of what happens and what we value in the real-world. The Bartz War evidences not only the internal and external economic reasons of items trade, but also that in a "Living game" based on massive interactions between players issues of freedom and justice can motivate numerous players to give up their hard-gained upgrades to transform the game world for the best.

Lee (2005) argues that the movement of the Underwear Corps transformed virtual reality. It humanized it and made it more high-minded. That, I think, is one of the most important points when considering issues related to digital games: their meaning. It also can be said that in this case, the boundary between game and reality became transparent, porous, as more and more of the virtual world moved across the border that separated it from the real.

The war and its related history ended in 2008. It is hard to say that justice won. The Bartz Alliance and the Underwear Corps achieved victory and conquered Aden Castle. They met on the so called "Day of Freedom in Bartz," but they soon parted way (due to war booty and conflicting interests in items and hunting fields). Their division allowed DK to regain power. Moreover, when RR was in power, like DK, it controlled the hunting fields and this disappointed many players who had joined or supported the Bartz Alliance and the Underwear Corps. Finally, here is a statement made by Akirus (the leader of DK) when he retired from power and officially declared the break-up of DK:

"Just as good and evil exist in the world, there are good and evil in Lineage 2 world. Everyone chooses good. But we choose evil rather than good. I think that because evil was there, good was able to shine more brightly."

(Source: The interview with Akirus from the "Lineage 2" bulletin board <http://www.inven.co.kr>)

It seems then, that according to the leader of DK even, those who participate in the War against the DK were fighting for justice and freedom against DK, which, he recognized, incarnated evil.

4. Items trade inside games and item markets

What was the influence of this war on item trading? Items trading and the hidden economy of illegal trading has become a major problem in Korea. Under current law, trading items that have been illegally obtained (through hacking or auto programs, known as "Bot"¹⁶) or that have been mass-produced for profit is prohibited. The law only recognizes items trading as legal if the items satisfy the condition of having been gained by player's effort through playing the game (Choi, 2012). However, it is not always clear if the items that are for sale were produced for profit-making or not. There have been several attempts by the Korean government to regulate illegal item trading and to solve the problems related to item trading. The revised version of "Game Industry Promotion Act" describes what kinds of items trading should be regulated and the maximum trading value of items that can be traded through item markets.¹⁷

Economic activities related to digital games items take two forms; (1) Items trade inside games (2) Items

trade outside games through items markets. Items trade inside games includes more than the items trade that takes place with NPC. For this distinction, between item traded inside the game and item traded outside the game, the place of payments is not the criterion. Even when trading takes place inside the game, payment can be done either inside or outside of the game, using game money or real money. Neither then does whether the payment is in game money or real money allow us to distinguish between inside or outside the game trading. The distinction between inside and outside trading rests rather on where the negotiation leading to the trade took place (in other words: where did the buyer and seller decide to trade and made their contract, was it inside or outside the game).

In previous studies (Choi et al., 2007; Lim, 2009), item trading models center on the agents doing the trading, the seller, the consumer, and on whether it is an individual, a game company, or a broker. To the opposite, this paper categorizes trading in relation to where the negotiations occur (in the game world or in the real world). This is because in item trading the agents doing the trading are often interchangeable (sellers can be buyers and vice versa). Thus, it seems more meaningful to consider the whole context, and not simply who trades with who. The social issue of items trading results from the interaction between the game world and the real world. In that sense item trading is not just ordinary trading, not just an exchange between a producer and a consumer, but also a transfer and communication between two different worlds. That is why whether the trading, that is the bargaining, the negotiation and agreement, takes place in the game world or in the real world is important.

Trading conducted inside the games between players was common before item markets appeared. Even though this trade takes place inside the game world, the trading often involves real world money, and conflicts over items trading were frequently reported. Often, these conflicts caused what is called in Korea Hyeon-pi (meet-up fight)¹⁸ or a legal battle between players. In Lineage 2, inside item trading is often done by a player A (buyer) and a player B (seller) who are thus interchangeable. In this form of item trading, the algorithm that regulates the production and consumption of items is very straightforward. Item trading is a simple system between one player (who needs an item) and a player (who wants to deal with a surplus). Strictly, items are provided by game development companies, and in view of the fact that the players buy and sell items and own them inside the games, in the case of inside trading the producer, consumer or buyers and sellers all coincide. Players meet inside the game and trade using either in-game currency or real money.

The clans of Lineage 2 (Blood pledges like DK) have a keen interest in item business. They need items to become more powerful and once in power of a region they can tax the item trade that takes place in shops. Therefore, hunting place where good items are easily gained became the occasions of epic battles between clans and the sale of items in shops in the territory they control is an important issue. Blood pledges therefore can have a huge influence on the ease and volume of item trade.

Outside of games items trade today is mostly done on items markets. Because many players find the effort to obtain items long and cumbersome (also because in Lineage 2 it was nearly impossible for low level players to gain items on the largest server dominated by DK), items trading economy developed and in consequence a new position, or a new type of agent appeared. One who in general is not a player, but more often an item producer, someone who plays to produce items. This development may be called "the secondary economy revolution," because the so called "autarky stage" of game economy was overpassed and left behind. The popularity of digital games (mainly MMORPG) and greater interest in items led to new types of items trading and to the transformation of the gaming world. The production line was transformed and many game clans joined the item business. How to get item became more deeply, and differently, related to playing as items battles between clans became more frequent.

Item trading on item markets takes the following form. First, A (a seller) registers the items for selling on

the market site. B (a buyer) accesses the item market and selects the items he or she wants to purchase from the registration list. B then pays the market, but not A directly. B and A decide of a time and place meet in the game (by an email or a call or using the “present system” that allows a player to present his or her items to other characters in same games). After the buyer and seller verify the item’s quality they inform the market that the transaction is complete, and the payment, except for the fee of the item market, is transferred to A.¹⁹

In Korea, the history of item markets begins with the popularity of MMORPG. According to KOCCA (2013) the item trading industry was estimated to be worth than 1.5 trillion won in 2011 and 2012 and assuming its hidden economy, the scale of item trading industry is large enough to be considered a significant part of the real economy. In the early stage of item markets, there were only individual buyers and sellers and selling generally took the form of an auction. Outside of the games, players met face to face or using the communities’ freeboards. Players used cash or real saving accounts for payments. Progressively the popularity of games transformed this invisible private item market into officially accepted real markets. Following the establishment of “Item bay,” the profits and growth of these markets increased yearly²⁰ and items trading became a professional occupation that gained prominence.

Table 1 *Item trading status and its growth*

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Turnover	192	1,680	2,452	2,845	3,426	4,200	4,200	4,809	5,048
Rate of growth		75%	46%	16%	20%	13%	9%	15%	5%

(Source: Item bay web site <http://www.itembay.com>)

Most item trading is related to MMORPG. Since 2001 when the first game item market, “Item mania,” appeared, the number of item trading agency sites (game item markets) increased rapidly. The data from the item bay website above also shows that items markets grew remarkably during the period of the Bartz war.

The growth of item markets also brought about changes in gold farming, a gigantic growth and a globalization of the process (item producing work was displaced to other countries, such as China, both to reduce labor costs and other expenses, and to avoid legal pursuit). According to a survey by the Korean government, there are about 130 item markets (KOCCA, 2010). Item trading through these markets is more expensive, but safer than trading directly between players, because of what is called Meok-Twi (Eat and Run, disappearing without paying after having obtained the item) is frequent. Limitations on the amount of trade, or authority over the sale of items, and other issues related to these virtual markets, or better, these real markets of virtual objects are ambiguous, difficult to determine and to enforce legally. In Korea, the “Game Supportive law” (2007) introduced the category of digital estates²¹ in response to the increased market for game items. This law has formed the basis of the regulation for buying and selling items since 2007, nonetheless this domain of activity remains rather unclear and vague. Recently, to reflect changes in the item market, the Korean government renewed the regulation related to items and made it stricter.²² Nonetheless, problems related to item markets (the sale of illegally produced items, fraud, etc.) are increasing yearly.²³

One source of the problem is that there is no correlation between the regulations of items trade and the freedom of players. This is because present regulations do not prevent game companies from developing items. They only regulate the ability to buy and sell or trade items on the market. Thus, regulation can limit individuals’ (mostly players’) freedom on the market, but not their freedom as players motivations in buying items are related to the games themselves. It is to win and to enhance one’s reputation in the game world, or to reach upper levels, or to master more difficult quests and missions and to achieve different goals set by the game. These motivations are also related to the players’ self-satisfaction and to individual pride.

Fundamentally, these are the reasons why players buy and pay for items. Their purchasing activities aim at returning to the game world and are related to the game play (Byeon & Park, 2012; Park & Huh, 2005). That is another reason why, item trading on item markets cannot be reduced to a simple transaction between interchangeable buyers and sellers, nor explained by that simple model (Yoon, 2013).

5. Conclusion

This paper focused on in game items related problems trying to show how these in game problems are also related to out-of-game items trade and items market as an illustration of how the game world and the real world are intertwined. The Bartz War and item trading issues are typical examples of the way in which the worlds inside and outside the game are interrelated. The Bartz Liberation War is an event that happened inside a digital game, but not only. It did not exclusively happen inside Lineage 2. It had a widespread influence on the game world in general, on virtual reality, as claimed by Lee (2010), but also on the real world, on Korean society. It involved the mobilization of numerous individuals, hundreds of thousands, over four years. This phenomenon, given its size, allows us to recognize the consequences of interactions between the real and the virtual worlds in more than one domain.

First, there was a change in item economy models. The war had an influence on outside trading. It encouraged the rise of item markets. Increase in item trading and markets was not only the result of the popularity of the digital games or the developments of the Korean game industry. I believe, and hope to have shown that game issues, like the Bartz War, facilitated these changes and the establishment of the new item economy model that led to item markets becoming big business.

I mentioned earlier, that in Lineage 2 items are important for playing the game. The world inside the games is a class society, to some extent similar to what we find in the real world. There is a gap between the wealthy and the poor, and items (resources) are needed to succeed. Therefore, players took risks to obtain items and safe trading was hard to find. One reason for this is a central characteristic of digital game objects (including items): the fact that they do not have a physical shape or are invisible outside the screen. This meant that trade had to be "trust based". Therefore, it was inevitable that something had to be done to guarantee the safety of item trading. Eventually, item markets had to appear also outside of games. However, if item markets allow item trading to become more formal, transparent and legal, they do not completely resolve trade related problems, like item fraud, that gave rise to them and they, themselves, give rise to new problems.

Items trading in the age DK's rule was controlled by the in-game power of the clans. The Bartz War was a rebellion against this power when it became too oppressive; it was a fight for justice and against inequality. This led to the rise of items markets where the buying power of players (and the economic clout of producers, like gold farmers) reflect a different type of inequality, the economic inequality of the real world. On these markets, one can buy items with real money to become as high-level as one need as fast as possible and thus transform real world inequality into in-game inequality.

The second consequence, which is closely related to the growth of items trading and markets, is the transformation of the Korean government's policy toward game items issues. In Korean game policy, items were not originally important. However, as large and small disputes and issues, including items, related to the Bartz War were reported, the policy changed to reflect this. For the first time, the players' labor investment was recognized as conferring value to an item. Recognizing this change the Korean government tried to consider items trading as just another market, similar to every other market, while it was in fact the result of the growing interpenetration of the in-game economies and the real-world economy.

There is finally another significant domain that needs to be considered: the perception of digital games in

Korean society and their place in Korean culture. The Bartz War was an innovative and revolutionary event in the game world. Regretfully, it was also a kind of failed revolution. Some may argue that nothing worthwhile happened or was changed by this event. Yet, for many of the unknown players who fought for justice and to defeat the evil of DK, the consequence was a change of worldview, of the game and of how to think about digital games events. Even if the Bartz server was once again occupied by DK, many unknown players did not give up and protested until the end, knowing that they would die. In the game world of Lineage 2, justice and freedom became as valuable as they are reality, and that is what was visibly illustrated by the war.

The Bartz war was not sufficient to change the attitude of all who had a negative view of digital games, but there is no doubt that it influenced many people who were not players of Lineage, or of digital games. It has brought about a change in the social perception of digital games which, until then, had been regarded as exclusively concerning the entertainment of juveniles. News, not only within internet community blogs, but also newspaper articles reported the Bartz war, while many people also shared their opinion about this event in game communities or among other internet communities. Novels and other derivative works based on the Bartz war were published and exhibitions were held. Even today many people in Korea remember the Bartz War as a remarkable virtual revolution in the game world and talk about how the actions of many unknown participants changed the world both inside and outside of the game.

Thanks to new technology, it is possible that in a future (that is not so far removed), there will be more real-like games, more lively "Living games" that show us players constantly interacting between the game world and the real world. These two worlds are more than merely closely related and they interact more deeply with each other than we usually think. It is not only that games' influence can extend to the real world, but also that the forces at work to change the game world are similar to those that change our society. These two worlds form a vast system of circulation in which influences continuously go back and forth. The game world is not an only a world of fiction, or another different world, but both are the living world in which we are live.

Notes

- 1 MMORPG (Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game) is a game that players play with numerous other players through an online network.
- 2 Lineage was released in 1998 and this game has had a great impact on both the Korean game industry and gaming culture. In fact, Lineage became a model of Korean MMORPG.
- 3 The release of Lineage 2 was called "the appearance of a Blockbuster MMORPG" (Yoon et al., 2012). Despite the concern that the sequel of the successful game would not succeed, this game has achieved tremendous success.
- 4 RMT is the most common term used to indicate item trading.
- 5 The Bartz war is usually divided into the first and second war. However, the period when the greatest number of players participated and that was most active was the Bartz War 1 period from 2004 to 2006, and this paper focuses on this period.
- 6 Rare items are difficult to acquire compared to other common items and they have powerful effect on characters. These items can be obtained by killing boss monsters, as a reward of a high-level quest, and can also be purchased from sellers. It is also possible to categorize items as either basic items or rare items (Han et al., 2011). In this alternative definition, basic items are items that offered from the very low level or obtained by completing a mission or from a NPC.
- 7 The theme of the Lineage series was based on the famous girl manga Lineage (Shin Il-sook, 1993). However, Lineage 2 was developed as an original story and started with six races.
- 8 Quoted from the article about personal interview of Song, J. K (the Chip developer of Lineage, source: <http://betanews.heraldcorp.com/article>).
- 9 Hunting fields are places where you can acquire items and experience point by hunting monsters.
- 10 The DK blood pledge was based on high-level players (all members were at least more than level 61), good equipment and on the leadership's political power. To put this in perspective, about 85% of all players were below level 40, before the Bartz Wars (The

Game Dictionary, 2016).

- 11 These are large-scale of a battle between players to conquer a castle or a fortress. It was first adopted in Lineage and is mostly conducted by a clan.
- 12 Gold farming is selling game items for real world money. Gradually, experts who specialize only in acquiring items and selling them for money appeared. Even more, item farms or factories (that produce items through the illegal automatic programs) appeared. This had negative consequence that interfered with game play and created imbalance of the in-game economy.
- 13 Chinese gold farmers “people who are “Playing for profit” (Witheford & Peuter, 2012) and sell items to get a real cash ” used illegal programs (called “auto”) to acquire items. This created a more difficult situation for players who wanted to gain items.
- 14 In fact, though DK’s policy explicitly claimed that they opposed gold farming, they themselves engaged in that practice.
- 15 Justice, according to Lee (2005) was for them was justice from the DK dictatorship and freedom was freedom for all players to freely go hunting.
- 16 Illegal programs which automatically collect items and hack other players’ accounts. Producing items using such programs is prohibited and so is selling items produced in this way in Korean law.
- 17 The act also says that if item trading exceeds the limit, or if items are obtained through hacking, modification, illegal programs, etc., offenders may be punished by law.
- 18 The conflicts inside the game world that lead to physical violence in the real world.
- 19 According to a survey (KOCCA, 2016) 81.2% of players were using the item market and 80% the players had an experience traded game items through the item markets that have a good reputation like *Item bay* or *Item Mania*.
- 20 Already in 2006, *Item bay* or *Item Mania* were the most well-known item markets in Korea and the scale of these item markets was estimated to be more than a trillion won (Korea Game Industry Promotion Agency, 2006). While, item markets in other countries were not as active compared to Korea.
- 21 Before this law, items were in the periphery of the economy and law. This law shows that the government realized there were important issues related to these virtual objects and that it needed to create a legal category in which they should be included.
- 22 From July 2014, the Korean game industry self-regulated random items (like Comp-Gach items) inside digital games. However, not all game companies participated in this self-regulation, and it is uncertain whether random items were defined clearly.
- 23 The statistics, the numerical value of the item market and item trade are not exactly shown and updated. Considering the invisible trade of items, it is likely that the real size of the market may be significantly bigger (Han, 2006).

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The Living World: Items and the Bartz War

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Abstract:

This paper examines the interactive relations between the in-game world and the real world using a case of the “Bartz Liberation War” (2004 - 2008), which happened inside the Korean MMORPG game *Lineage 2*. The paper studied the effects of this virtual event on related books, exhibitions and newspaper articles. The result finds that the interaction between these two worlds goes beyond what usually conceived. Especially, it finds that the history of the war and events taking place in the in-game world influenced the development of item markets in the real world. Events in the in-game world that led to the rapid expansion of the item market, changed mostly individual exchanges into institutionalized item markets, and led to the development of specialized entrepreneurs mining items for purely commercial purposes rather than for playing. These developments motivated the creation of a game-item trading policy by the Korean government, as a legal recognition of virtual assets to protect players and renewed the social recognition of digital games. The conclusion revealed the existence of a cyclical relation between the in-game world, especially of MMORPG, and the real world, and that changes in one world lead to changes in the other and vice versa.

Keywords: Korean MMORPG, item trading and item market, Bartz War, Underwear Corps, Living games

リビングワールド ——アイテムと「バッツ革命戦争」——

シン・ジュヒョン

要旨：

これまでゲームと現実世界の影響関係については、ゲームがもたらす否定的な影響が論じられてきた。本稿では両者の関係を、多人数参加型オンラインRPG『リネージュ2』における「バッツ革命戦争」(2004～2008年)を事例に考察した。関連書籍および新聞記事の精読を通じて革命戦争の経緯とアイテム市場の構成を分析し、ゲームと現実世界のあいだに従来の相互作用関係を超越する関係性があることを明らかにしようと試みた。まず、アイテム市場の急激な拡大によって取引が個人間からマーケットを通じたモデルへと変化した。それに合わせてゲームアイテムの取引を制限する韓国国内での法制度の整備が行われた。さらに、一般の人びとも支持され、ゲームに対する社会的な認識を再考するきっかけとなった。多人数参加型RPGにおいてゲームと現実世界は相互作用にとどまらず循環的に連動している。

