

edited by: Miren Eraso, Alessandro Ludovico, Slavo Krekovic

The Mag.net reader

Experiences in Electronic Cultural Publishing





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Introduction.

The Beauty of Printing and the Glory of Networking

Andreas Broeckmann

The story of Mag.net is the story of a networking effort by several European print magazines dealing with electronic culture. While this effort produced only mixed results and had to struggle hard for its successes, it was throughout characterised by a spirit of cooperation that had many positive effects and fostered lasting friendships among the participants.

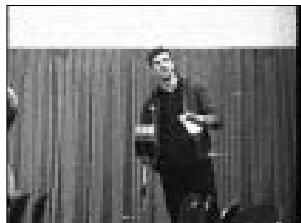
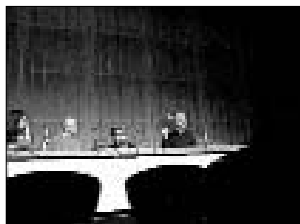
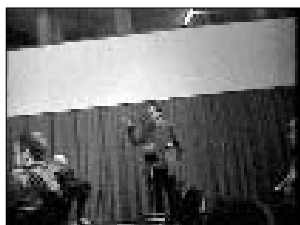
This short history of Mag.net, as well as the book which it introduces, should however not be read as an obituary, but as a monument to the desire for sharing and working together. The magazines involved represent some of the most important media for the critical reflexion of culture and art in an age strongly influenced by digital technologies and their social repercussions. Their persistence - some of them are still going strong after over twelve years - testifies to the importance of print in a time that purports to be 'digital' while remaining intensely analogue in many aspects, for better and for worse.

Much can be learned from the heroic failure to turn Mag.net into a lively and powerful networking tool. Probably most of all, Mag.net did not succeed because of the precarious nature of independent publishing which often hinges on only a few people who keep their operations going on a shoe-string. The critical mass that it takes to make international cooperations viable - whether in the syndication of content, or joint maintenance of a website, or the coordination and advertising of joint subscriptions - could not really be reached, and it is one of the paradoxes of networking that those who most need the support from others, often invest the most work in order to strengthen the network.

Since I was involved in some of the activities that led to the formation of

Mag.net, I have been asked to offer a brief account of the chronology. My part of the story starts in the autumn of 1998 when Matthew Fuller posted a couple of texts to the Nettime mailing list which had been written by the British theorist and culture critic Howard Slater for his own micro-publishing project 'Break/Flow'. Under titles like 'Post-Media Operators: "Sovereign & Vague"' and 'An Imaginary Address', these texts deal with a new type of media practice that was made possible by a technological development through which many people get access to media that offer an alternative to the regime of mass media. Slater defined these as 'post-media' practices or operations, a term that he borrows from Félix Guattari. Post-media practices are characterised by small, diverse, distributed networks of operators who make use of the new, digital means of production and distribution. Post-media practice grows out of the networked activities of passionate individuals and groups working in local and translocal contexts and using such media as magazines, record labels, websites, club events, mailing lists, etc. Differences in these networks are not eliminated but relished. Post-media practice is characterised by a critical attitude towards the media in use, acting in lateral rather than vertical configurations, and an acceptance of the processuality and continuous transformation of context and practice.

In 2000 I was invited to co-host, together with Hans Ulrich Reck from the Academy of Art and Media in Cologne, a workshop in the context of the Interface 5 - 'The Politics of the Machine' in Hamburg/Germany. Interface 5 included a series of six workshops which took place throughout September and October, dealing with different political and social aspects of (media) technologies. The title of our workshop, 'Minor Media Operations' (15 and 16 September 2000) took Slater's definition of the term 'post-media' and coupled it with the notion of becoming-minor as developed by Guattari and Deleuze: 'Whenever a marginality, a minority, becomes active, takes the word power (*puissance de verbe*), transforms itself into becoming, and not merely submitting to it, identical with its condition, but in active, processual becoming, it engenders a singular trajectory that is necessarily deterritorialising because, precisely, it's a minority that begins to subvert a majority, a consensus, a great aggregate. As long as a minority, a cloud, is on a border, a limit, an exteriority of a great



Berlin, 2002, Transmediale's Paper:Type panel

whole, it's something that is, by definition, marginalised. But here, this point, this object, begins to proliferate [...], begins to amplify, to recompose something that is no longer a totality, but that makes a former totality shift, detotalises, deterritorialises an entity.' (Guattari 1985/1995)

Becoming minor is a strategy of turning major technologies into minor machines, of appropriating media, tools and discourses for the proliferation and articulation of heterogeneity. Through an afternoon of public presentations and a whole day of convivial 'dérive' through Hamburg's harbour area, the workshop sought to initiate a strategic and analytical debate about the economy, politics and culture of the current, 'post-media' situation, and to generate ideas for using the potentials of agency that exist in this field in more productive ways. The participants were Florian Cramer (Berlin), Geert-Jan Hobijn (Staalplaat, Berlin/Amsterdam), Margarete Jahrmann (Zurich/Wien), Christian Hübler (Knowbotic Research, Zurich/Cologne), Pauline Mourik Broekman (Mute, London), Gordan Paunovic (B92, Belgrade), Siebe Thissen (Rotterdam). They represented practices ranging from sound and software culture, art and network activism - and slacking - as well as different forms of independent online and offline publishing.

From this experience came the decision to organise a small conference in the context of the transmediale.02 international media art festival in Berlin (10 February 2002). Under the title 'Paper Hype' we organised a meeting of editors of a number of different European magazines dealing with digital culture. The participants included Jan Rikus Hillmann (De:Bug, Berlin; who in fact did not show up for the panel because he had an accident that morning), Georg Schöllhammer (Springerin, Vienna), Jean-Yves Leloup (Crash, Paris), Alessandro Ludovico (Neural, Bari), and Pauline van Mourik Broekman (Mute, London). The session was moderated by David Hudson (Berlin) and discussed the conditions for publishing in the Internet era. 'What does it mean to produce a magazine, a paper publication about digital culture in an era of apparently total digitalisation? Mute calls it Proud to be Flesh!'

The informal meeting of the participants before the panel quickly made



Seville, 2002, Post Media Publishing group, picture by Sasha Kösch and Mercedes Bunz

Seville, 2002, magazine checking, picture by Sasha Kösch and Mercedes Bunz



it clear that there were many practical concerns that the represented magazines shared but that would not be interesting for a general audience. The idea to organise a workshop meeting to deal with such specialised questions could be realised because there was a standing invitation from the Barcelona-based curator Nuria Enguita to host such an event in Sevilla/Spain at the Universidad Internacional de Andalucía (UNIA) as part of the programme Arte y Pensamiento. The original proposal for the workshop 'Post-Media Publishing. Print-publishing and networks for electronic culture' (22-25 May 2002) had already been made in May 2001, prior to the 'Paper Hype' panel, but the real planning only took off after the Berlin meeting, early in 2002.

The Sevilla workshop was the birthplace proper of the Mag.net project. It was from the start geared not only at public presentation for the students of UNIA, but also as a working meeting for the participating editors. It sought to facilitate a discussion and co-operation process among the different journals around practical questions such as design, digital publishing and content management, financing and distribution, the syndication of content and the relationship between online and offline publishing. The preparatory research brought up many new contacts to small publishing initiatives all over Europe. Eventually, the list of participants included: Josephine Berry (who in the end could not come because of pregnancy) and Simon Worthington (both Mute, London), Mercedes Bunz and Sascha Kösch (both De:Bug, Berlin), Fran Ilich (Undo, Mexico), Alessandro Ludovico (Neural, Bari), Georg Schöllhammer (Springerin, Vienna), Ieva Auzina (RIXC and Acoustic Space, Riga), Slavo Krekovic (3/4 Revue, Bratislava), Kristian Lukic (KUDA Media Center, Novi Sad), Vladan Sir (Umelec, Prague), Joanne Richardson (Subsol and Balkon, Romania), Carme Ortiz and Mar Villaespesa (Think Publishing, Spain), Miren Eraso (Zehar, San Sebastian, and Think Publishing), Claudia Castelo (Flirt, Lisbon), Malcolm Dickson (Streetlevel and Variant, Glasgow/UK), Pedro Jimenez (Cafeína, Sevilla), Julian Ruesga (Parabólica, Sevilla). Among the represented projects, it soon became clear that 'collaboration is better than competition'. The first mailing list was set up while the Sevilla meeting was still in progress (repurposing a.medium on the ljudmila.org server), and a few weeks later the name 'MAG.NET "electronic culture





Seville, 2002, discussing the magazine network (Mag.net), picture by Sasha Kösch and Mercedes Bunz



publishers"" was agreed upon. Half a year later, a website was set up on metamute.org and upgraded to a Twiki-based site on magnet-ecp.org in August 2003.

What followed was a series of real-life meetings and times of intense e-mail contact about different joint projects, interrupted by at times lengthy periods during which the communication within the network all but ceased. The discussions about possibilities for joint funding applications with different international foundations were engaged, yet turned out to be fruitless, as was an application to present Mag.net at the ISEA 2004 in Helsinki. Renewed efforts to build a dynamic and representative website got stalled due to distributed responsibilities and a lack of time resources.

A small meeting took place at transmediale.03 (February 2003). For the public presentation of the Mag.net network hosted by the Ars Electronica Festival (2 September 2003), a Mag.net flyer was printed and the logo presented for the first time. A short text about Mag.net was printed in the festival catalogue. The following year was to see the ten-year anniversaries of Springerin, Mute, and Neural, as well as the five-year anniversary of 3/4 Revue. The reception organised on this occasion during transmediale.04 (31 January 2004) was a slightly scattered event and demonstrated the instability of Mag.net initiative. On the occasion of the opening of Manifesta 5 (June 2004), a meeting was organised in San Sebastian that also included a public presentation and an encounter with the organisers of the related 'Tester' project. The ensuing efforts to set up a structure for offering people the opportunity to subscribe to several Mag.net publications through a single payment took up a lot of energy and had only very limited success, resulting in less than a hand-full of subscriptions.

On the occasion of the presentation at the Ars in September 2003, the network members produced a succinct description of their shared effort: 'Mag.net (or Magazine Network of Electronic Cultural Publishers) is a network that links up independent print periodicals and e-zines covering the field of electronic culture. Its mission is to set up infrastructures



San Sebastian, 2004, meeting during Manifesta

Collective subscription advertisement



<http://www.magnet-cep.org>

MagNet is a network of European magazines focusing on a broad, critical interpretation of electronic culture and globalisation. From urbanism, sound and digital art, to postcolonial critique and theories of information politics, the editorial of MagNet's publications takes the 'digital revolution' one step further – asking questions, extending debates, and proposing examples. MagNet is now offering a collective subscription to five of its magazines. For one reduced price, you will receive a year's worth of titles – getting a glimpse of a fast changing culture from the Basque Country to Slovakia.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION €90 for:

3/4 Ricart Magazine (Slovak Republic, 4 per year)
Mato Magazine (UK, 2 per year)
Neutral Magazine (Italy, 8 per year)
Springerlin Magazine (Austria, 4 per year)
Zehar Magazine (Basque Country, Spain, 3 per year)

To order, email:
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MagNet accepts payment
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Or send your request, with payment, to:
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c/o Springerlin
Museumstraße 1
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Austria
T +43 1 522 91 24
F +43 1 522 91 25

and networks connecting publications being published in traditional fashion and Internet magazines. The objective is to define electronic culture and to elaborate on its current state.' Followed by the credo, coined by Alessandro Ludovico, of the Mag.net hardcopy publishers: 'In the era of "unstable media", paper is the most "stable" medium in the complex and fast-changing mediascape.'

In December 2005 it was time to face the facts. Alessandro Ludovico expressed what everybody was thinking: 'Let's face it: magnet is dead.' He also proposed to produce the current publication as a testament and credit to the collective effort, and to present it at an event in the middle of April in Glasgow. (If you read this text on paper, you will know that this effort of the Mag.net network has succeeded. Feel it!)

No doubt, the cooperation between the Mag.net members will continue. The most active current members include 'Neural' from Italy, 'Springerin' from Austria, '3/4 Revue' from Slovakia, 'Mute' from Britain/England, 'Zehar' from Spain/Basque Country. They share content, offer each other advice on topics and authors, and will of course make plans for future activities. The organisers of Documenta 12 in Kassel are working on a major networking project that will tie up to 70 international art magazines from around the world into a joint discourse and publication effort. The Mag.net experience is feeding into this project and its member magazines will make sure that electronic culture plays a significant role in this global art debate. The story continues. We'll see you in print!





The Mutation of Publishing.

Paper and Pixel, the mutation of publishing

Alessandro Ludovico

The death of paper didn't happen.

At the beginning of the 20th Century, the death of paper was predicted. It was foreseen just after the advent of public electricity networks and the consequent spreading of new revolutionary media, like the radio and the telegraph. The innovation impetus induced the hypothesis that the electrical transmission of the voice would have ended the printed distribution of information, replacing magazines and books with the faster voice that was transmitted over cables. The future seemed to be with wires everywhere, which would have spread the content of libraries to every home or in public spaces through some sort of broadcasting kiosks provided with primitive headphones. After half a century Marshall McLuhan foresaw a similar process: "the book [is] an increasingly obsolete form of communication", because of its slowness compared to television. In the late fifties it was a question of speed, of changing perception of time and space, and the printed medium seemed to be too slow to diffuse and consume information. Finally, the end of paper was one of the worst prophecies in the eighties, at the beginning of the personal information age. Personal computer marketing figured out the dream of a 'paper-less office', with massive magnetic archives that would have replaced huge amounts of paper. But all of this simply didn't happen. Even more, paper, and the printed medium at large, has significantly contributed to spread the new media culture and consciousness. So paper is here to stay. And no shortage of electricity can shut off a printed magazine or a book. The role of the printed page has radically mutated, from being a prevalent medium in itself to a complementary medium, often used as a static repository of electronic content. The printed page has become precious. That is true because the paper has limited, costly, time-expensive and space-consuming duplication processes. Making a physical copy of a book involves photocopying it page by page, or printing it from a file, again page by page. The result is a bunch of paper with a relevant physical space. And it's the same for magazines: editors have to select their content much more carefully now, because of the huge amount of free content available on electronic networks. Furthermore, electronic net-



'La fin des Livres' in 'Contes pour les Bibliophiles', 1895, France

works have also affected personal publishing, with so much self-produced stuff that cries out to be cited or reviewed in print so the printed paper space is, again, more precious. Actually paper and pixel seem to be complementary. Print is becoming the quintessential of the web. The printed editor is the curator, the human filter, the one who decides what to put on a stable medium and what to leave as a message in a bottle

thrown into the sea of the net. So the printed page, and its relaxed fruition, let the reader pause and reflect and take notes at the same time being independent of electricity. And paper is preserving a substantial part of the digital culture without hardware and software, describing the new media from the technical side of an old one.

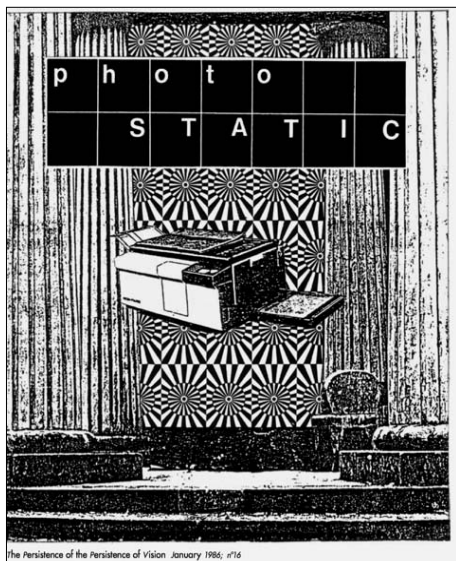
Ink vs. electrons.

The differences in consuming paper or digital information are many. Paper involves many senses, mainly touch, smell and sight. Touch tells you the type of information that you're reading when you turn the pages (rough for text books or xeroxes, smooth for magazines and illustrated books). The smell of paper can tell you how old an item of information is (inky for recently printed and mouldy or dusty for older texts). The colour of pages can tell you their age. The paper that turns yellow show its old age, but it takes decades to take this degenerative process. The electronic media are very focused on sight. You can guess the type and age of information mainly by the technology implied, like the resolution

and number of colours for the digital pictures, or the graphic style used. There are many differences between paper and electronic magazines. You can check a bunch of papers more rapidly than non-indexed electronic pages, because you can check them all at once by just flipping, instead of clicking and waiting for the next content to appear. Another strategic factor is how much you can use your own photographic memory for retrieving information. Photographic memory on paper is evident and static. You can remember the exact layout of a specific page on a magazine (even related to the time when you bought it), because it is physically in that specific place. Photographic memory doesn't work well on the screen, because it's dynamic and changes every time, even if physically it's the same place with changing contents. When you try to remember where you saw an item of information, you probably refer to the URL or the link that drove you there, but you don't have much more to help you. And the light is also very important. In the electronic media the screen is retro-illuminated. Marshall McLuhan guessed that this characteristic would induce a mystic reverence in the spectator, as the stained glass windows in the churches did during the Middle Ages. Moreover video light shines on the retina stimulating the sight considerably. Paper, on the other hand, is front-illuminated, which is much more relaxing for the sight, and its light changes according to the environment.

Spreading offline memory.

With so much abundance of information online, the most precious skill for a reader is his personal filter. Mining the sea of information on the net, with its unstable characteristics, makes people conscious that paper is a stable memory extension, platform-independent and physically limited. After the gigantic effort of digitizing books and magazines using microfilm technology (during the past decades), now there are countless efforts to preserve old printed materials, making them available again. Scanners, OCR software, the Pdf and Html standard do the trick to bring new life to the dead, out of print or missing books and magazines. This rebirth of forgotten or hard to find material is contributing to specific theoretical and historical debate. Photostatic Retrograde, for example, was a xerox art fanzine printed during the eighties and nineties. They've started to make pdf files of every issue, starting from the latest printed one, and uploading them on their website for free download, accomplishing almost two thirds of the work. Moreover, the Langlois Foundation funded a similar project for Radical Software, probably the first media art



Photostatic Retrograde, January 1986

magazine ever published. All the eleven issues (printed in the seventies) were digitized and made available on their website, providing a significant contribution to media culture researchers and scholars around the world.

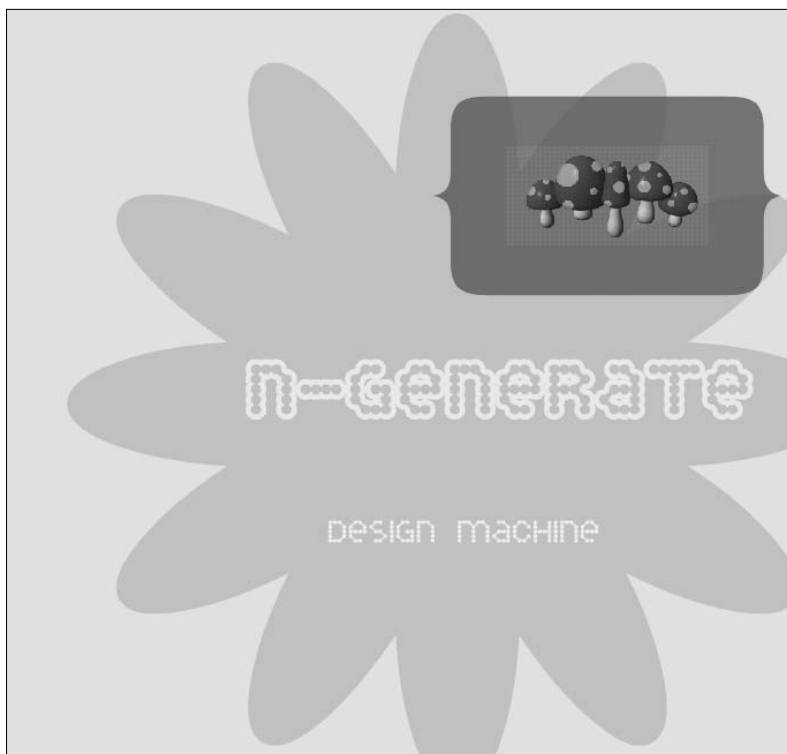
Simulated paper.

The typographic production was revolutionized in the mid-eighties, thanks to the Apple Macintosh and its first laser printer. Then, scanners and various software completed the array of basic tools required to make designers and pre-press technicians wishful of definitively switching to digital production. Actually, digital processes are going to definitively overcome mechanical production. The simulation of colours through the stochastic distribution of cyan, yellow, magenta and black dots, for example, can't be done with analogue mechanics because of the high quantity of calculations required. So, total automation seems to be one of the frightening future steps, looking at creativity as the most promising missing link. Two software tools show this 'machines will replace creative people' approach: N gen software is the serious one - a self-defined "rapid prototyping graphic design engine that generates saveable graphic files from the user's own text, content filtered through n_Gen's 4Design Modules". The results are cool, good-quality, post-modern layouts, even if somehow anonymous, but, at the same time, indiscernible from a human-composed one. Even if this seems the end of an era, it obviously is not. Actually, this tool can't replace designers for medium complexity work, but it surely can push their attitudes to produce innovative combinations of forms and meanings, instead of always sticking to the same rules. The other tool to consider is Adrian Ward's Signwave Auto-Illustrator, formally "a [...] semi-autonomous, generative software artwork and a fully functional vector graphic design application [...]." The author invites you to "Discover how easy it is to

produce complex designs in an exciting and challenging environment that questions how contemporary software should behave". But the tool hides a good amount of irony, degenerating in unpredictable behaviour and sometimes sarcastic errors, playing with the dream of passing the workload to the machine and the consequent frustration of making it work properly.

Distribution and customization.

The electronic version of the physical magazine/book is still an undefined product. On one hand, digitizing the content and then printing only the essential copies is a strategy, as is borne out by the Internet Bookmobile project. Founded by the Internet Archive founder, Brewster Khale, it spreads electronic texts physically, printing them on demand in front of libraries, schools and museums. Khale uses basic technologies (computer, printer, binder) stored in a van in which he toured through the United States. These kinds of efforts are, in fact, against the e-book/e-paper proprietary struggle that, in the end, just wants to better control the rights of the publisher. "Using encryption and watermarking systems, publishers hope to connect every copy of a book with a known person, and prevent anyone else from reading it." Richard Stallman noted. Who needs crippled computer-like devices able to read unstable copyright-locked electronic texts? Everyone, instead, needs free exchange of electronic texts that should generate permanent paper copies with cheap methods of reproduction and circulation. And what about the mass circulation of popular books on peer-to-peer networks? Downloading the pdf, rtf or raw text versions of best seller books is easy and effective, but, more importantly, is the proof that the sharing of content is requested as a democratic possibility. The next, definitive electronic evolution of the printed paper will probably be the content printed on demand, or letting people choose from a variety of content to be printed and delivered as a single copy of a book or a magazine. The level of customization of the single copy would be significantly improved as these technologies evolve. And customization will undoubtedly change the editor's role. It will also declare the end of paper content intended as thousands of copies that run the same exact content. This fixed limit will make writers unsure that their content will be in the hands of all the customers, but will give much more freedom to the readers. So, actually, paper is flesh and screen is metal. And this cyborg cultural life-form will evolve significantly during the coming times.



Sample N-Gen outcomes



DIY-publishing dot sk

Slavo Krekovic

Five years have passed and we can have a look at some of the independent, non-corporate publishing initiatives in Slovakia. They emerged around and after Y2K and can be seen as examples of grass-roots cultural practices in post-communist Central Europe. How can we describe the complicated processes that link different communication media with their content-creators, readers, participants and communities? Virtual publishing spaces such as message-board-type MUDs or editable Wiki-based websites have promised freedom of expression but also new collaborative approaches and participative ways of content creation. Specialized and personal newsletters are trying to keep people informed. Furthermore, for the last couple of years, the bloggers' movement has been competing with traditional publishing institutions. And, in the space between, there are still independent publishers dealing with contemporary culture, creativity, society and technology.

It seems that everywhere there are nodes of creativity with their own life-cycles. They reflect the decentralised nature of the net. They also can be geographically defined, but usually it is ideas that bring people together and technologies that enable them to communicate, even across distances. Art servers, webzines, real and virtual cultural spaces and meeting points, creative groups: if we observe them from outside, we notice that these nodes suddenly start to shine. And, usually, they exist just for a while. However, in this period, they attract people looking for something new and/or suffering from information hunger. Some of them also want to express themselves, to participate and become involved in the creative processes – and a new community is born. Or, it can also work the other way round: there is a group of creators, writers, artists or activists, who want to establish a presentation platform for their work. Or, as we can see, there might be just a single person wanting to share something. It is not by accident, that in the post-net society, such initiatives are closely connected to electronic culture, reflecting the relationship of technology and society. They are acting outside the mainstream, specialized and critical, building enthusiastic communities around themselves.

After our years of experience, we know that online publishing has many advantages. It is a low-cost, potentially high-influence, alternative to commercial media, allowing a high degree of participation on content creation. It allows subjective writing (blogs, personal newsletters) and is very suitable for “quick” and time-limited info (e.g. about up-coming events). One of the most prolific features is interactivity with recipients, which stimulates feedback and is richer and faster than traditional media. Independent online media have their specific and specialized content profile (art, creativity, technology, culture), allowing personalization (content filtering, skins) and full-text database searching. Hyperlinks and all



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provide “long-term accessibility” of information that printed ones do. After a wild, anarchistic and subcultural phases, we see that some of the projects “localizing” accessible technologies have survived; others are dead or have been transformed into something different.

Hysteria.sk server hosting the Prielom webzine has been the most important hackers’ and hacktivists’ node since 1997. Focusing on alternative approaches and perspectives on technology (also featuring aspects of privacy, freedom and other social issues connected to technological development), the community around Hysteria has also been experimenting with wardriving and other unorthodox social and technological practices. From 2000 to 2002 the server was shut down, but afterwards it became active again.

Closely related to hysteria.sk (and running on the same hardware) was the portal message.sk, the first important website dealing with technology-related art and that started in 1999. Its roots were in the PC demo scene and although it stopped its main activities in 2003, it is still functioning as an archive of works in different media (net.art, demos, photos, videos, animations, texts). Message.sk was run by Zden, founder of the Satori innovative group of “multimedia workers”.

One of the Satori members, Dusan Barok founded the koridor.sk portal in 2000 with Nino Hybal (later koridor.org). It combined a cultural webzine, events calendar and database-guide to media, places and music bands. Koridor.sk was one of the important attempts to create an art server/cultural portal, in 2002 it dissolved into another projects.

In late 2001, Kyberia.sk server started as a webzine about technology, art, philosophy and related topics, which later became the biggest message-board-type multi-user domain, fostering freedom of expression, creativity and trying to realize some of the cyber-cultural utopias. Nowadays, kyberia.sk is the most important community server (with thousands of registered users), and still trying to keep a distance from the usual chat-rooms. Users create message boards in which creative output is valued (Kyberia has become a real phenomenon: also most of the active members of other projects listed here have an account there).

34.sk, originally a presentation website of the 3/4 REVUE cultural maga-

zine founded in 1999, has become, in a way, a continuation of several sections of Koridor.sk. Nowadays, it features not only short info about the printed magazine, but also online-only articles, an event guide, a link section and, recently, a blog section with short personal texts and comments. 34.sk is focusing on contemporary creativity in the post-net society and it has its own content management system, allowing the site to be edited by a group of people related to the 3/4 printed magazine. Linking virtual space with printed medium, 34.sk is slowly evolving towards a complex, participatory, half-open virtual communication platform.

Another hybrid model, combining a traditional medium with a new communication channel, is the radioart.sk web project. This is the only non-diy example on this list, carried out by a state-owned FM radio station (Experimental studio). Radioart.sk is exploring all forms of sound art related to electricity and features different types of content (articles, audio archive, database of works with profiles of composers, streaming audio and video archives).

Zion (<http://www.zionmag.org>), is a webzine created in 2000. It is a node run by a community of young people who are also organising cultural events and features articles, cultural news, blogs, visual artworks and message boards.

In 2004, Dusan Barok (who programmed the code for 34.sk and is also an active contributor) started the online database, Monoskop.sk, an easily editable Wiki-based portal mapping initiative, artists and works related to art and technology in Central and Eastern Europe.

Buryzone.info e-mail newsletter is a digest of upcoming events and other relevant information in the sphere of arts, new media culture and community, and compiled by Maria Riskova. It originated together with a small gallery and club - Buryzone (2001–2003) – a kind of public living room which was an important meeting point for the cultural scene.

What is the background of all these publishing and community initiatives in Slovakia? First of all, after all the efforts, we can only say that people are doing it simply because they want to, and there exists the enabling technology. Of course, it has not been easy for several reasons. Although

internet connectivity has been on the rise over the years and most of the independent projects are using private server space offered for free (many of the projects have been running on ephex.factory.sk, xena.media7.sk and kyblik.pieskovisko.sk), there has been almost no financial resources for online publishing projects in our country to date, apart from corporate initiatives (blogging possibilities offered by sme.sk – a daily newspaper's website, or inzine.sk lifestyle/cultural webzine, funded by an IT company and in existence for a couple of years. Similar to this type of website is e.g. station.sk). After all the experiences, we can say that the only thing that works is DIY. No one is going to do it for you.



Buryzone.info mailing list

(Mostly) no-one gives you money for any of it, which also means that there can be no professional editorial staff employed. Despite all governmental claims about the development of the e-society, the state arts funding in Slovakia currently supports only print-format arts publishing but no online activities. We can also see that the responses to each technological possibility are different. Mailing lists had no bigger a success; a community server, however, is very popular. Webzines that are connected to a traditional publishing medium, are working in connection to its content. Other initiatives experienced involved problems arising from the purely enthusiastic and, therefore, unprofessional nature of their way of working. Although their future is unstable, in the end, all of them together create a network of important information nodes. In order to get a closer view, it might be interesting to read the statements written by independent publishers in Slovakia themselves.

Buryzone.info

Text by Maria Riskova

„Buryzone.info“ is a simple mailing list or newsletter (not a discussion

group). The content of the e-mails that I send to subscribers I usually define as "information about cultural events in Bratislava and the surrounding area (Slovakia, Vienna, Brno, Prague, Budapest, Krakow, Internet, etc.)". I collect information (invitations, calls for participation, various offers) that I receive from galleries, clubs, institutions or individuals; then I filter it and send it to interested people.

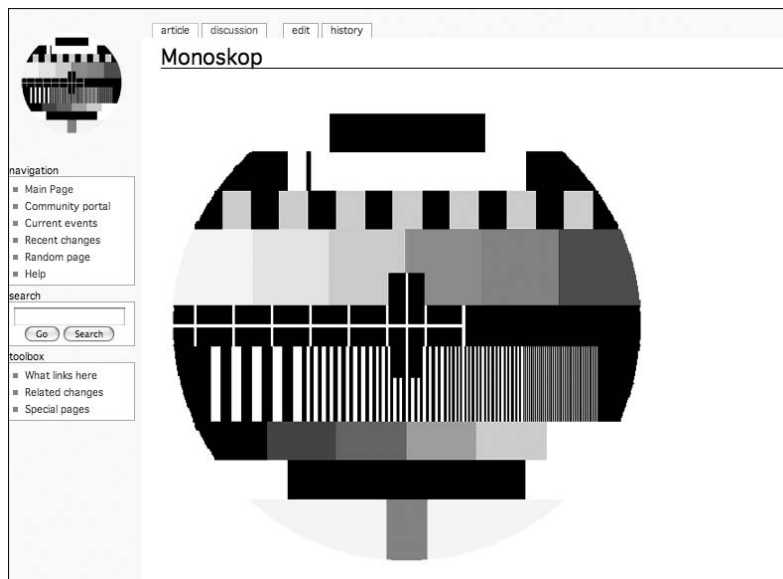
The message always includes information on events organised by me or the space I am currently involved with (so it is also a form of self-promotion), invitations for events of related organizers/friends (circle of people of my generation and interests from various cities who are connected), info about grants and „www-tip“ (invitation to visit an interesting web page of any kind). The language is Slovak plus the language of forwarded messages (usually English or German) and I update the information every week.

My strategy is to use a purely personal filter for forwarding of information. Though I try to select a variety of information, I always bring in the highlights of the next few days and events that are not very well promoted by other means - I prefer experimental things to mainstream, for example.

The self-promotion aspect refers to the origin of the newsletter. In 2001 I started to collect addresses and send out the information once a week about the current programme of the informal art space Buryzone that I used to run with my friends. In these e-mails we already were adding info about events to our programme about our fellow organisers. After stopping the activities of the space, a great database of contacts of people willing to receive culture information was left. So, the best idea was to continue to maintain the list.

During the time that I was sending the information, people got used to sending me messages about events happening here and asking me to forward it to the list. Recipients of "buryzone.info" often appreciate personal introductions to the messages (a kind of editorial) reacting to current situations in Bratislava.

The disadvantage of such a personal project is that, when I am busy with some project or other, I often neglect the regular sending of the e-mail.



Monoskop

The advantage of this personal filter is that it is in direct contact with recipients of e-mails who often react to my message hidden in the introduction.

The best way to be informed about things happening in your city is to filter information for other people. Soon you can check the list's development on the web site, www.buryzone.info.

Monoskop

Text by Dusan Barok

social context

Two years ago we started Burundi media lab in Bratislava with the main focus on new media. Among other things we have been taking part in the organization of the annual Multiplace festival. There were a number of people who were confused about what we were about and, in fact, we sort of based our activities on confusion about the term 'new media'. In summer 2004 we set up a wiki in order to store the information con-

nected to what we understood as media art and we have been doing this since then.

form

The structure of Monoskop is not really complex. On the frontpage there is a list of cities. Currently the most evolved ones are three:

Bratislava, Prague, and Brno. Under each city there are listed the current and past initiatives, festivals, events, conferences, symposiums, ateliers or academic programs, media, and individuals. If you go further, these nodes consist of a description of what it is, when it started or takes place and where. Then there is a summary of organizers, programs, links to articles and a homepage. Everything is linked to other nodes. You can edit each node easily.

highlights & reactions

Although Burundi dissolved last year, we keep using this site. My approach to Monoskop is to make notes from the personal contacts or from internet research. For instance, with the help of others, and based also on the field research, I compiled a wide-ranging overview of the history of media art in Slovakia (see the node 'Slovakia'). There are also other uses besides the database or a notebook one. A friend of mine here, the audiovisual artist Guy van Belle, is creating a text-based media piece, 'Kurt Vonnegut suite', together with Barbara Huber. Then there are people who prefer a sort of freeform rather than a portfolio- or CV-based homepage; this kind of information you can easily store here, and also save money on design and programming. The artist Michal Murin continuously edits other items in Monoskop.

links

<http://www.burundi.sk/monoskop/>

<http://www.burundi.sk/monoskop/index.php/Slovakia>

http://www.burundi.sk/monoskop/index.php/Kurt_vonnegut_suite

http://www.burundi.sk/monoskop/index.php/Michal_Murin

Zionmag.org, Lyrical look back into history

Text by zion.org crew

Zion is a Hebrew word with many meanings. Originally a proper name of a hillock of Jerusalem, it acquired abundant symbolic meanings over

& band: Anders Engen, Jan Bang, Erik Honoré & DJ Strangefruit
support: RICHTER BAND (CZ)

SEARCH

ZNMG/
VIZIONÁRI 2006

VISUAL

mlujem oravu



flaming lips lajv



Jesen



china na zldovskej

MAGAZÍN

Slovenská výpoveď o homosexuáloch



Zuza Piusi a Anjeli
plačú

txt by matej

Svadobné onánie



Vš bájčne poslúcha, takže
nedorozumenia asi žiadne nebudú

txt by -ka-

Mozez



bez sentimentu, no so šarmom... tak
tíško

txt by boba

Journal (6)



duševné ješť - prehľad knižných

CLTR.NEWS

[audio] nový singel pearl jam world
wide suicide si môžete stiahnuť tu, ak je
stránka stále temporárny offline,
strmujte na myspace.com/tenclub

30/03/2006 by chladicos

Magnétophone, Sonic Boom a Dope
Aviators hrajú 10. apríla nablízko v
prate -viac

30/03/2006 by ash

Tento piatok si spolu s kamarátmi
môžete naposledy posediť v
legendárnej krčme Štoka na Pribinovvej
ulici v Bratislave. Od 1. apríla už
nezávislý priestor s divadlom a krčmou
bude minulosťou, na ktorú sa bude
spomínať. Škoda, že to celé nie je len
nevýdarený žart.

30/03/2006 by matej

[video] DJ Shadow feat. Keak Da
Sneak & Turf Talk - 3 Freaks

29/03/2006 by chladicos

flaming lips spustili promo k novému

CLTR.NEWS

VISUAL

LINK

MAGAZÍN

HUDBA

MP3

LIVE

PKMD

ANTIZION

ČIK ČIK DOM

LÍSTIE

KNIHY

LASKONKA

KOMIKS

CINE

KINO

DIVX

ZMYSLOVÝ DIKTÁT

INTERVJÚ

VJÚ

DIVADLO

UMENIE VS. DESIGN

Zionmag.org

the centuries: its meaning may come close to expressions such as 'Promised Land', 'Holy Mountain', 'Kingdom of God'. In other words: a dimension of harmony. And although the name of our magazine is not intended in religious terms, it still indicates where we want to get with our work, and also, how we want to do it. In an honest and sincere manner, to become a refreshing island in the ocean of disgusting post-modern pseudo-culture.

Since the spring of 2000, Tomas, together with Miso and Roman, have been giving realistic outlines to the idea of creating an open space for presentation of anything they considered good. In different ways, they meet Andrej, Mario, Ondrej, Milan, Boris and Vlado – the emerging intelligentsia of the Slovak education system. They register on the zion.sk domain and together with new friends they hesitatingly embed their work into the Slovakian media world.

In the summer of 2003, zion transformed to a Central European periodical in three language versions [zionmag.com | zionmag.cz | zion.sk]. Cooperating with websites of similar thematic focus in the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia and other countries, it has created a cultural exchange network. Zion's mission is to monitor the current music, movie and literature scene.

In the autumn of 2004, zion found out that having plans is one thing, and

turning them into action is another thing. Zion regularly gets to a standstill, being able to lie motionless for long weeks. Not even an anti-zion coup in the New Year was able to stir zion's former strength. Zion's laziness, that has been its companion since the beginning, caused the loss of the Czech domain in the spring of 2005, with the summer already finding zion in a profound coma.

With a four-minute warning after midnight on the twenty fifth of December, zion mobilized itself in autumn in probably its last attempt to stand up, supporting itself against a wall, loudly spitting a nasty swear word.

node: "<http://kyberia.sk/id/21836>" Kyberia.sk syntax

template: "<http://kyberia.sk/id/3>" 3

parent: "<http://kyberia.sk/id/63535>" Kyberia

owner: Daniel

Text by Daniel Hromada, 04/09/2002

(...)

stage 3 – temporary autonomous zone. crypto.con.text (2006-2008))

assumption: humankind is at different stages of development and understanding of the world (karma)

assumption: those living at a lower stage tend to distrust those living above


assumption: those living at a higher stage tend to distrust those living below

Although Moore's law gradually ceases to apply, memory capacities and Internet speed will continue growing at an exponential rate even in Slovakia, and within 6-8 years, any 3D audio or video transfer will be just a piece of cake. Projection will be transferred from monitors to projection screens and glasses, to be followed later on by the first implants directly onto the nervous system that will become a craze similar to what GSM phones are currently. Children will each get their unique UIN instead of the current personal ID. In this situation, it will be already crucial to defend your consciousness against the negative impacts of the marketing business whose illegal worms will try to penetrate your con-

prvý apríl prešiel ale ja nechcem byť koderom asilu takze ring volny

login: password: login

name: id:



Traktát

Úvod

Minulý rok som sa rozhodol opustiť Wittgensteinov traktát. Ako človek do problematiky mi kamierka odpovedá prebšiat si najnovší Wittgensteinov židopis (P. Mark - Wittgenstein, ideál gánie) ktorý som prebšiat až do základu vykonania videného krúku. Viaka nemu sa pozorom na Ludwigovo dielo hlama ale na dielo genialného a smutného človeka a tento "kudský pohľad" u mňa prebšiat nad pohľadom skrze optiku zápisnej tradície. Tento svoj postoj objasnim v časti prvej. Nechámto mesiacov predmým ako sa mi do rúk dostal slonový dachek ktorým mohlo náť ľad ako Traktát som mal pripraviť na filozofických sládkoch nejakej senie internetového systému kyberia.ak a traktátová forma Traktátu mi bola potvrdením oprávnenosti mojho prístupu založeného na tzv. "slonových bodoch". O tejto forme, a o jejich možných problémoch so slonovkami "Torma" budem písať v časti druhej. Rozuvaly

terminologický boj som zvládol a stále zvládam a pochopením termínu "tautológia" tiež jeho definíciu ako stavu, keď je podaná nulová informácia, resp. stavu, keď je povedané dvakrát to isté len iným spôsobom dovolím si budiť celkom rozumom. Predsa však považujem Wittgensteinovu tautológiu za niečo, čo by bolo správne pochopenie mienaj, a v čisto možnosť, veľa, by mohlo byť? A reformu myšlienky a "kudského sveta" vedúc, preba za tautológiou - "kudskou a ktorého používajú všetky formy" budem venovať v časti tretej. Spomenul som slonov svet, a práve toto slonov, tento symbol s postupom času dostal vo Wittgensteinovej myšli - a teda aj v Traktáte keďže Traktát je jednou z možných foriem zobrazenia "kudského" mysli - iným výkonom a toto rozlíšenie na "trej svet" a "svet ako súm filozof" hodiam odprezentovať v časti štvrtaj. Na to chýnula načítaním v časti piatej kde vyložím čo apod. pre mňa z Traktátu vyplýva pre edicij žiuce subjektu vo svete (traktát chápem ako modus ponens medzi logikou a slonkou). Príslu zakončím zanovným kodcom pre riadok slonáka.

node: Traktát jenam pro pomatateľ

template: 2

parent: Ludwig Wittgenstein


owner: Daniel

cube coordinates: 25.05.2004. - 12:49:33

101
63334
63372
860188
860196

ABSCISSA
KUBUSIA


000001010000353400063577008601860086019601095571

 Daniel 03.09.2004. - 15:31:53 NEW priester a bod

Množinu všetkých možných hodnot - tj. definíciu obor - premennej nazývam priesterom tejto premennej.

Konkrétna hodnota premennej sa dá chápať ako bod v tomto priestore.

00000101000035340006357700860186008601960109557101107510

 Daniel 09.09.2004. - 13:07:29 NEW premenia

Vyhodenie prázdného priesteru znamená vykonanie premennej.

0000010100003534000635770086018600860196010955710110751001107515

kyberia.sk

sciousness, not to speak about the omnipresent bots of government agencies. If you care at least a little about the world being colourful and the water being wet, you will have to use very powerful cryptographic methods (which will, however, cease to have any sense upon the introduction of quantum computers – ref.The End).As space will cease to play a role not only from the aspect of sound, but also from the visual aspect (in case of an implant directly in the NS, also from the aspect of smell, feeling and taste), people of similar thinking start getting isolated from the surrounding areas of the web, secular islands will begin to emerge in the ocean of information – Hakim Bey refers to them as Temporary Autonomous Zones – TAZ. Systems such as kyberia, nyx etc. will close in on themselves - to use a biological term, the membrane separating them from the rest of cyber space will become semi-permeable, letting in only information necessary for running the system and for its further development, and letting out all waste. The individual members will become "tentacles" searching for interesting information on the web to share them with other members of the zone. Of course, it will no longer be possible to have all this centralized on a single piece of hardware somewhere in a dust-covered server room, however, it will be distributed among computers of all users by way of a hologram, where each part will contain information on the structure of the whole (analogy with human

memory is not purely incidental).
The autonomous zone will not only be a reality that you consciously choose because it is shared by individuals of similar thinking, but also a reality that you choose to be safe against individuals whose thinking is very distant from humanism. Let's face it, 80% of people are domesticated primates who, in their full nakedness, not only do not know (this is something we all have in common) but do not even want to know. As for illusions that one day you will succeed in changing them, forget about that, and you will immediately feel lighter at heart(...)



Mute Magazine, new publishing, networked economy

Mute

We've crossed oceans of time for you to find us.

Summary.

For years, it has been Mute's dream to conduct its publishing on a more participatory platform. Starting with our mini-manifesto *Ceci N'est Pas Un Magazine* (Sept 2001), we plotted the project as it moved through various developmental stages and now, after years of planning and building, it is alive and kicking at brand new site Metamute.org.

With the move to this new location, Mute has embraced the evolving culture of Open Publishing and finally made the web its home. Mute content is now made freely available as soon as it is published and users can post to the site in numerous newly created areas.

Mute still retains a printed magazine (now quarterly), which is produced using print on demand (POD) technology and extends our core editorial activity through themed issues. We have also added a facility for users to make their own personalised collections of POD content, straight from the site.

Another online facility, called the Agent Network, exists for distributing publications. Through this, users can sign up to distribute Mute in their own neighbourhoods and communities and receive a portion of the cover price in return. At Metamute.org, you can register, input details about sales outlets and events to build up the existing network, as well as manage your own activity by organising orders, deliveries and payments. Our hope is that this feature will help get the magazine to the full diversity of its audience and build a more sustainable economy for the organisation as a whole.

On the back of this model, we also encourage users to get involved with editorial and promotion too.

Mute continues to feature the critical writing it is known for, but by using the internet as a production base and home, it can explore the web's multimedial nature and better engage its audience. In this respect, other notable projects associated with our relaunch are a BitTorrent, the Public Library, and a series of online art commissions.

Finally, keep in mind that what you are looking at is the BETA version of Metamute.org. This is currently being tested to gauge usability, design and architecture. This phase will be complete once beta users' feed back has been acted on. If you would like to be part of this process and would find a beta users' document helpful, you can view it here, <http://www.metamute.org/en/beta>

Please come and join us - Mute <http://metamute.org/>

What's new?

Membership

Metamute.org is a membership based site where you can log in to submit articles or upload media. There are a variety membership categories, reflecting levels of involvement and usage. These are: anonymous, authenticated, subscriber, agent and editor.

Free to share magazine content

Simultaneous to its publication in print, Mute will be making its magazine content freely available online for non-commercial use, reprinting and translation.

OpenPublishing

The following areas of the site are open for members' contributions: News & Analysis, Public Library (P2P file sharing service), Calendar, Forums & lists.

POD and User POD [*]

Print on demand is a high quality, low cost form of digital book printing, through which one or 1000s of copies can be printed in several locations throughout the world. Mute has opted for this technology for reasons of cost, but also so we can be more responsive to developments on our

website. Outside of our regular magazine run, we will be producing a variety of other POD imprints. As a user, you can compile content from across the site – articles, images, text from other websites that have been posted in the News section, etc. This (your 'POD' book) can then be printed and delivered at low cost, or just printed off on your home computer. The digital print process also means you can leave a PDF of your book online to share with others, in our POD Park.

Public Library (PL)

Media based works can be uploaded/ downloaded by any user at our P2P BitTorrent, the Public Library. At the PL, you can also share your opinions on the files available and we encourage users to regard this reviewing as integral to the uploading and downloading of their media warez.

Content filtering [*]

The Mute site is vast and will become even more so. To make its content more accessible, we have added a system of classification which helps you sort the content of the site. We feel strongly that the new Mute should be about your view of things as much as ours; to make this happen we invite you to expand on the subjects we've included in our category listings. Help guides will soon be available on how to do this, and we will also keep our own classifications constantly under review (the present listing is definitely just a beginning!).

Shop

We have opened up our shop to allow users to sell their cultural products and digital downloads next to ours. In line with this, we have also enabled multi-currency transactions via PayPal or credit card to make it easier for users to make associated financial transactions.

Agent network, the Networked Distribution Services/NDS [*]

Mute invites site users to join our agents scheme, which rewards the local distribution and sale of Mute with 30% of the cover price. The system - whose working title is NDS (Networked Distribution Service) - is made possible by software which allows orders, deliveries and payments to be tracked online. Mute's agent network is also open to users offering their publications for distribution and sale: through this process of mutual support, we aim to contribute to alternative distribution net-

UNDERNEATH THE KNOWLEDGE COMMONS

The struggle to protect the so-called Knowledge Commons against the current regime of IP enclosures is gathering momentum. Referencing the shared popular ownership of common lands in the pre-capitalist era, today's knowledge commoners want to build a resource, a life source, of intellectual wealth to sustain people living under informatic capitalism.

But this endeavour is not without political, tactical and philosophical problems. In this first issue of the new format *Mute*, we foreground the antagonisms and contradictions of the Knowledge Commons.

Texts by: Gregor Claude, Yves Degoyon, Martin Hardie, Benjamin Mako Hill, Jaromil, Yuwei Lin, Peter Linebaugh, Aymeric Mansoux, RampArt Hacklab, Palle Torsson, Agnese Trocchi, James Wallbank, Steve Wright, Simon Yuill and Soenke Zehle

The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common
But lets the greater villain loose
Who steals the common from the goose

TXRN 0755044417



9 780955 066412

00500



96 13 133

MUTE

www.metamute.org



Mute vol.2 #1 backcover

works globally.

Translations [*]

Users can translate articles on the Mute site into a variety of languages through a simple online editing process. Volunteering to translate can be done without contacting the editor, as the site provides an easy to use text editor and automated submission process. Mute is still working on the protocols involved, as multiple translations in (likely) varying degrees of completion will need to be categorised systematically and original authors consulted on their preferred relationship to new texts.

Banner monitoring

Metamute.org allows web advertisers to have greater levels of control over, and awareness of, the activity of their ads. Information relating to banners' performance can be viewed and analysed by day, week and month, and banners can be switched on and off for specific periods of time. As in other areas of the site, this activity is contained in a personalised work area which automatically responds to members' status and registration details.

Project commissions

Metamute.org has a projects area where we will regularly feature new art and cultural commissions.

[] Items accompanied by this sign are still in varying stages of development, although they are a full part of our project planning.*

Participation.

Participating in Mute happens through three roughly drawn categories, namely Content, Distribution and Technology.

On the content side, our OpenPublishing features mean users are free to contribute articles to the site. Should you want to have greater involvement, you can also work as an editorial agent in closer contact with Mute editors.

This deeper dimension of participation engages the hybrid nature of Mute, since it highlights the gap between open content and content commissioned and edited in the conventional way. Mute's print magazine will

be heavily influenced by what users contribute through the OpenPublishing channels: getting involved in between the two will help editors make a more responsive magazine.

On the distribution side, our agent network and online distribution system mean users can help Mute and other publications directly in their distribution efforts.

You can add details of appropriate outlets and events and/or actually sell the magazine for a commission.

Mute engages with FLOSS as a social movement. In addition to doing editorial work, it has done this through technology initiatives. To carry on this work we need your involvement and support, whether it is in the area of research, coding, finances or another realm of activity we haven't imagined yet..

How do you get involved?

Content.

OpenPublishing areas of the site are places that you can openly post to once you are registered as a member. These include:

- * News & Analysis – here you can repost or write on any topic you feel is of relevance to Mute editorial. The title may evoke a factual, 'newsy' orientation, but we welcome material on any subject, including fiction and reviews!
- * Public Library – here you can upload any size of media file along with opinions and reviews relating to them.
- * Calendar – here you can post details of events you think other Mute users may be interested in. Take care to fit your item to the format: short and snappy is best!
- * Forums & Lists ('Discussion') – our forums allow for our email lists to feed into the site, so you can either post from inside the website or through your own email client. Mute has several lists, including the general discussion list Mute Social. To join any of them, visit the URL

Ceci n'est pas un magazine

(We've crossed oceans of time to find you...)

Comments? Ideas? Flames? *Metamute's* new forum (<http://www.metamute.com/forum>) awaits you. Or contact us at the editorial address.

Mute's evolution in perspective

Over the last six months, *Mute* magazine has been in a suspended state of publication. During this time, we've been contemplating the implications of our magazine's content – the digital 'revolution' and its discontents – for its form and self-sustainability.

When *Mute* published its pilot issue, in 1994, the Net was anything but ubiquitous. *Mute's* original 'Financial Times' newspaper format was a deliberate attempt to debunk the information revolution's much vaunted inclusivity – hence our decision to make a printed object and our motto 'Proud to be Flesh'. Six and a half years later, we face a very different picture: the many-to-many publishing environment is now far more than a theory spouted by inspired techno-lotus eaters and our publishing gesture is dwarfed by the reality of today's Net.

So, our gawky teen phase of self-contemplation has resulted in a few structural and 'philosophical' adjustments. You might have seen the first signs of this in our fledgling e-letter *Mutella* and our recently redesigned *Metamute* website. Well, the long shadow of cyberspace has now fallen across our paper-bound and 'top-down' notion of content generation too. Like us, you'll have come across words such as 'prosumers' and 'user-generated content'. Such New Economy buzz-speak for the consuming producer (or producing consumer) often functions as an alibi for no editorial at all or, worse, a vampiric relationship to a community. Nonetheless, in sticking so monogamously to a traditional editorial model we have ignored the non-vampiric alternative.

If you think this is all a very long-winded way of saying we want to be in better dialogue with our readers, you're both right and wrong. Right because we do, wrong because that's only the start of it. Part of our objective is to continue producing *Mute* as a printed magazine; the other part is to develop discussion forums, tools/files/software exchange spaces, research areas and special publishing projects. This way, *Mute* can hopefully become a more accurate vehicle for exchanges that go on between us and you. You could say the editorial centre of gravity is shifting – from offline to on, and then imagine all that that implies. 1



1 THE BAWN OF TIME, 1994-1995
Mute started as a printed newspaper with a single active version, *Metamute* v. 0



2 WHEN DINOSAURS STALKED THE LARVA, 1996-2000
A printed magazine with an online archive and *Metamute* v.1.0 (aka 'metu') soon to be archived on *Metamute*



3 THE PRESENT, 2001
A printed magazine, the *Mutella* e-letter, *Metamute* v. 1.1, archive, events



= Mute

= *Mutella*

= *Metamute* archive

= talks/events

= shop

= research

= online/offline services

= code

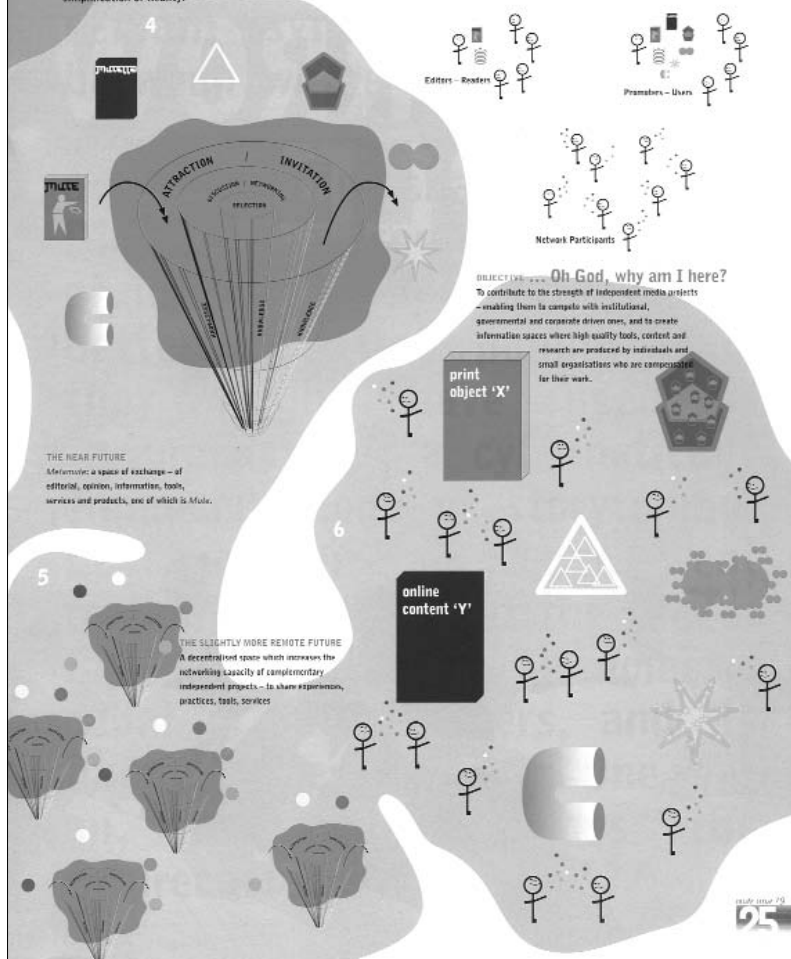
Mute 2001, Ceci n'est pas un magazine

WHO IS WHO?

Illustration: originated by Quim Gil
<qqil@metamute.com>
Executed at dawn by the fine hand
of young Damien Jaques
NB you are approaching a
simplification of Reality!

In the classical editor-reader relationship
the roles are simple: editors edit and
publish, readers read and pay. What we
are more interested in is a variant of

the slogan 'Stop spending money,
generate your own value!' In effect, can
that badly maligned entity known as a
'community' generate an economy of
its own.



<http://lists.metamute.org/mailman/listinfo>

* Create a POD – users can make their personal compilations of content from the site, keep them stored there as PDFs for other users to browse, and make them available for ordering and delivering as a POD book.

Moderation [*]

Users can rank articles and comments. This information is aggregated by the website to prioritise articles and comments for transfer to the home and main section pages.

Agents

If you want to become an agent please contact the Mute webmaster on webmaster AT metamute.org Our agent types are broken down into:

- * Editorial agents
- * Distribution agents
- * Promotional agents

Economy.

The mission!

The Mute site has been designed to address the difficulties facing a small publishing cultural group, the most persistent of which remain reaching your audience and covering your production costs. Since our history is probably representative of that of other small cultural organisations, we would also like to use any lessons learnt as a starting point for a broader discussion on economic working models. The holy grail remains building a sustainable content economy that is not centred primarily on advertising. We want to see whether the other 'traditional' revenue streams of distribution & sales, subscriptions and, latterly, 'services' (like software provision and consultancy) can be developed to generate a working financial model. Mute has received increasingly regular and generous public funding over the years, and regards this as the kind of base investment other businesses might receive from the private sector. These funds currently contribute to basic running costs and special projects, such as software and workshop initiatives. FLOSS culture has also become an important part of our organisational model, as we use free software tools

and reciprocate through knowledge and code.

How are we doing it?

PODs

PODs help Mute continue as a print publication by eradicating the set up costs associated with traditional printing methods. By allowing you to print precisely the number of publications you need at any given time, PODs allow publishers to spread out their expenditure on printing. You can subdivide your total outlay on a print run into however many parts you need to, meaning the way you spend money is more in keeping with how you receive it (in dribs and drabs!). The publications also get printed in different locations around the world, significantly reducing shipping costs.

Agents network, the Networked Distribution Services/NDS [*]

To reach your audience you need good distribution. Having had a mixed experience with traditional magazine distributors (where, especially for international sales, an enormous amount of postage cost and actual magazines go to waste meeting loosely calculated 'sale or return' order numbers from sales outlets), Mute has now started using an NGO-built 'Contacts Management' web system to attempt a more precise operation. The software we are working with is called CiviCRM: this was developed to reach voters in the US Democratic presidential nomination campaign of Howard Dean, but can be used just as well by a small magazine to organise relationships with its distributors. We are creating our network of local agents to sell Mute together with other publications at a variety of outlets and events. All orders, deliveries and payments are conducted over the net. To find out more or help out, see <http://www.metamute.org/agents>

Donations [*]

Mute is developing a variety of fund raising drives to raise donations from its users. We plan for them to support the organisation generally, as well as specific projects, and they are presently categorised into the following

* Mute organisation - a donation of £10 (\$15 / eur 15) or higher from a 25% percentage of our user base would go a long way to helping Mute

sustain its ongoing editorial activity and web infrastructure. We are presently exploring what users would like to receive in return, going from simple name credits to other free services.

* **Print fund** - this fund is being developed to support translation and international re-printing of Mute content and the NDS 'agents network' service for Mute and other publishers. The print fund will also help facilitate collaboration with other organisation in different regions.

* **FLOSS and Web2POD/ NDS** - this project will will contribute to the ongoing development of POD technology and Mute's NDS service. Here we will be looking from small donations from users as well as partnerships with organisations who want to use the technology or services.

* **Public Library** - the public library BitTorrent needs financial support to pay for server bandwidth use and site maintenance. Users can offer non-monetary help by contributing some of their own bandwidth, while financial donations can help with technical maintenance.

Partnering with Mute

Sell your products on Metamute

Metamute has a shop where you can sell your cultural products. In return for listing your product and integrating it into our sales system, we ask for 25% of your sales price. You can also offer your product on our NDS 'agent network' system where sales and distribution arrangements are negotiated individually between sellers and distributors.

Distribute with NDS

NDS is a DiY distribution system for paper print currently being developed by Mute. You can offer your publication to the network's members worldwide and see if they will sell it for you at local outlets and events. In return we ask that, as a user of NDS, you add any relevant local contacts you have and also act as a distributor. NDS will be financed through user donations and fund raising. This service is currently under development and will not be available until March 2006; please get in touch if you have any suggestions for development or improvement of our plans.

Become a FLOSS partner

We have developed a series of new tools for the FLOSS CMS Drupal and CiviCRM, and there are several ways you can get involved in this project. Firstly on a technical level, as a voluntary developer or researcher. Secondly on an economic level, as a contributor to the fund being built to continue development. The following FLOSS projects are available from Mute:

- * Web2POD
- * User POD tool
- * Contextual and multi dimensional menu
- * E-commerce modification for multi-currency, multi-region payment on account tool
- * Networked distribution services

Or look at the NDS Web2POD project invitation at <http://linkme2.net/6n> (Dec 05).

Consulting with Mute



If you require a paid-for installation of the same system or consultancy of any kind for your own project, please get in touch with Simon Worthington on [simon AT metamute.org](mailto:simon@metamute.org) or see <http://3d.openmute.org> where Mute's software and consultancy activities are described at its project OpenMute.

END

process for beta testers

Mute <http://metamute.org/>
January 2006

Beta introduction and

Welcome and introduction!

As a friend of Mute, we would like to invite you to be involved in the relaunch of our web site Metamute. With technical help from OpenMute, the Mute team have been working on a replacement for Metamute.com for the whole of 2005 and we are finally ready to bring you its progeny, Metamute.org. We hope you'll like the new Metamute's mixture of OpenPublishing, commissioned content and Print on Demand features and that you'll be an active part of its evolution over the next year.

The site is now pretty much ready for release, but before we open it to the public we need your help taking it through its paces. To do this, you'll need you to register on the site, after which you can post content, try out different features and test facilities like our POD park. For those who watch out for these things, Metamute.org is based on FLOSS content management systems Drupal and CiviCRM. A number of site features are still under construction, but these should be completed before the site is publicly launched at the beginning of February 2006.

Below you can find a list of areas you can post to as well as details on areas that are still under construction. We have also described a variety of channels created for your feedback.

Your help is much appreciated – Mute

Web addresses and contact details.

Main site

<http://metamute.org/>

Public Library BitTorrent

<http://pl.metamute.org>

Agent Network

<http://dev.metamute.org> and <http://crm.metamute.org/>

Bug tracker

<http://3d.openmute.org/>

Email lists

<http://lists.metamute.org/>

IRC [#metamute](http://irc.freenode.net)

Contact us, Email: webmaster@metamute.org
or Tel: +44(0)20 7377 6949

Reporting back to us

We have created a variety of feedback channels for the beta testing group to ask questions, take part in discussions and report bugs or feature requests.

* Lists - we have a discussion list called that you are welcome to join. This can be done at <http://lists.metamute.org/mailman/listinfo/mute-beta> . Mute and OpenMute team members are on this list and you can see it archived at <http://www.metamute.org/en/forum/3413>

* Bug tracker - the bug tracker is a web based system for reporting bugs or feature requests. Within it, we have set up a project called MetamuteBeta. At the bug tracker you'll find a list of all currently reported issues and you are welcome to add a bug note if you think it's required. You will need to register at <http://3d.openmute.org> and navigate to the 'Development' area of the site, visible on the left menu bar.

* IRC - We have an active IRC channel on irc.freenode.net called #metamute. Please join us here to chat about the project.

How long will the beta test period last?

We are planning to run the Beta test of the Metamute.org site over January 2006, unless we encounter major problems. Fingers crossed :-)

What we'd like you to do on the site

* Post to the site - there are a variety of OpenPublishing areas of the site including 'News & Analysis', 'Public Library' (a P2P file sharing service), Calendar, 'Discussion' (forums & lists)

* Become a PL seed - we need beta testers to upload to the Mute BitTorrent and also act as seeds on the file sharing network. Full instructions can be found on the PL site, <http://pl.metamute.org/>

* Troubleshoot POD - the POD features of the site currently allow you to create your own personalised collection of Mute site content and have the collection stored in our POD Park area as a downloadable PDF

file. At present, the PDFs created only have extremely basic styling, but we are working on a version of the facility to jazz it up. Either way, having people test it will be very useful

- * Feature suggestions - if there are things you think we should add to the site or that we could make improvements on, please don't hesitate to make your suggestions.

- * Text corrections - if you see any errors or typos, corrections are appreciated.

- * Moderation - over the period of the beta test we'll be introducing a set of features that allow users to vote on articles, in effect 'moderating' them to higher priority positions. We will make an announcement on the beta email list when they are available.

Known problems

A number of features on the site are still in development or proving problematic. These have been listed below so you are aware that we are working on them and don't waste your time informing us.

- * Pay on account - at present this service for 'agent' members is not functional.

- * PODs timeout - large PDF documents that are created as part of the POD process time out when you click the 'view PDF' button, the result of which is that a single page blank document is returned to the user.

- * Contextual menus - the contextual menu is the two-layered grey/white menu that runs horizontally across the top of the site. The menu system is meant to give the user an indication of which part of the site they are in by highlighting it in red. Occasionally, the menu system loses its highlighting.

- * Agent network - currently the agent network is uncompleted. We will make announcements on the progress of the system on the beta email list.

- * Site information - some written site information is still under con-

struction (including projects and other), so please bear with us... though comments are still appreciated!

Be aware!

* PayPal is live - our PayPal transaction system is live so if you make a purchase your account will be debited. Any questions regarding payments should be sent to

* Data loss - since the site is in beta testing mode it is possible that articles or any type of data added to the site could become lost or, in an extreme case, we might have to restore the site to an earlier backup version.

The roadmap

06/01/2006 ----- Version BETA

06/02/2006 ----- Release 1

2nd Quarter 2006 - Release 2

2nd Quarter 2006 - POD

2nd Quarter 2006 - Agent network



What Are We Doing Here?

Miren Eraso

Many of the magazines whose titles were so common in the 1980s are today only to be found on the shelves of press libraries. There are many reasons for a magazine's success or failure, though economic and political reasons are the ones most commonly cited. Taking a purely Darwinist approach, one might see the ones that survive as being the best; however if one is to take into account all the further elaborations on the theory of evolution, it might be more accurate to say that those that survive are not those that best compete, but rather that those that survive are considered to be the best. It is therefore with some irony that I would say that it is quite a feat to have reached the beginning of the twenty-first century publishing on paper (naturally, we have been aided by the circumstances). Starting from this premise, critical of the neo-liberal notion of development doctrine, which tends to propitiate mercantilist dynamics, we set out on the road of paper and pixel.

As we all know by now, in today's capitalist societies, flows and exchanges occur at high speed. Speed has now become a constituent part of our lives and we coexist with volumes of information which would have been inconceivable just three decades ago. At the same time, this contaminated reality can be seen to be bringing about major changes in the way consumer goods are produced and distributed. In general terms, all of these transformations help to adopt new ways of approaching strategies of communication and dissemination.

The Internet has played a leading role in this new panorama. Because it is an "accessible" technology, it has facilitated the creation of networks and flows of dynamic information, and promoted new and previously impossible relationship and working opportunities. Artists, groups, agents and institutions were quick to realise that the Internet would open up new possibilities, and were excited by the potential of this new medium. But, let us turn back the clock a bit further and see what artists expected from the emergence of television. Many video-creators pinned their hopes on this new medium, thinking it would allow them to make their



Superflex "Karskrona 3", 1998

names and disseminate their work. However, television failed to meet their expectations and video work ended up being exhibited on the same old art circuits— museums, galleries and video libraries. The advent of the Internet also sparked great hopes. Driven by the desire to work in an expanded space, with a certain autonomy and a greater degree of self-management, even the most critical artists and art agents saw this medium of communication, production and dissemination as offering the chance to create a new public sphere; a space which, in principle, would not be conditioned by political interests (through it was conditioned by economic interests), where “free” relations could be established between individuals and groups. In time, though, we have seen that there is no such thing as “universal” or “free” technologies.

One could say that the most obvious difference between the analogical and the digital phase lies in the fact that analogue artists were looking for a medium of dissemination that would enable them to disseminate their work, whereas digital activists or artists are in charge of producing, publicising and distributing their work. Speaking about their “10-dencies” project, Knowbotic Research, said they were not seeking to develop technologies but to create events that would allow them to rethink urban planning. In doing so they were converting the medium into a project, and

it is here that the true potential of the digital lies: any person or group can produce their own projects and disseminate them; this may not be a new idea, but its consequences are. Knowbotic Research designed a model for interactive participation: without the Internet, we would almost certainly never have been aware of the development of this interactive intervention.

Obviously, though, this is not a linear narration in which the events happen chronologically. The Do It Yourself culture of the 1970s has now, oddly enough, been revived by the manufacturers of domestic appliances and computers who have lowered the price of the machines and brought out new models and accessories. This culture has installed itself, with all its paradoxes, in a context that fosters and favours the liberalisation of public services, and the promotion of culture as a spectacle. But cheaper digital apparatuses has led to more widespread use. And in the meantime, the hackers (one of the pillars of the development of Internet, as Manuel Castells notes) were toiling away in silence for a fairer world. Their philosophy has also been extended and popularised, and has come to create what we could term the culture of potlatch or hospitality, in which the freedom of usage is defended over and above the freedom of commercial exploitation, defended today by proponents of Copyleft.

The reticulate structure of the Internet has encouraged the creation of several organisations drawing people together around projects that are critical of contemporary culture. In recent years, organisations have sprung up promoting publishing projects that seek to spark critical debate, research and experimentation (in Spain, these include: www.irational.org Technologies to the people) <http://www.e-tester.net>, www.arteleku.net, www.aleph-arts.org, and critical platforms: www.valencia.org, www.barcelona.org, www.amarica.info and others.). These (generally not-for-profit) organisations are usually financed by public institutions or programmes and by subscriptions. However, those that are not publicly run tend to face economic difficulties that can endanger their very survival. To this extent, their situation is similar to that of traditional publishing projects: they have an uncertain life expectancy.

This is a story in which analogical and digital are combined, and in which decentralised and expansive horizontal organisational structures are springing from this alliance. These are network-designed projects, organised over the Internet and spreading as new complicities and projects are



La multitud conectada [The Connected Crowd] workshop which took place at the International University of Andalucía (La Rábida), September, 2003

generated. This is explained on the website for Art and Electricity, a project developed by Fundación Rodríguez in coproduction with Arteleku: “From the outset, it was interested in looking for new paths of presentation, distribution, of publicising itself, without differentiating by areas or contexts, but rather reaching out to the places where it wants to be present, from an arts centre to an electronic music festival”.

Art and Electricity brought together 10 people working in different areas of creation: music, video, design, graphic arts, in different media and mostly with electronic tools. This group project, of shared authorship, sought to escape from art distribution channels and enter commercial distribution channels, in order to extend the dissemination of the project. Its CD was sold with the July 2001 edition of the trend magazine Neo 2. This marked an attempt to escape from the art circuit, to reach other spaces and obtain greater visibility.

This is the keyword of this journey—visibility. We all know that the Internet is an immense space in which different types of interests concentrate and coexist. And it is here that we can define publishing work and establish the dynamics of visibility. While it is true that the Internet lowers productions costs (though not by that much), it also reduces social visibility, and it is therefore necessary to place greater stress on distribution. This has also been one of the problems faced by the print edition. The important thing is to intensify the effectiveness of distribution. The MagNet platform (Network of Electronic Cultural Publishers) was born out of the need to find new distribution channels based on the creation of structures of exchange. It includes six magazines and five affiliated organisations. Through this distribution platform the network seeks to define a space for new cultural forms, and offer a potential for negotiating cultural values.

Today, publishing on paper is a complex task (as it always was). Many different experiences and agents from different disciplines are putting forward new ways of dealing with information and experimenting with the development of non-standard ideas. The symbiosis between paper and pixel is gaining ground, enriching today’s publishing landscape. Paper still has a place, for its versatility, its ease of handling, its adaptability, and its reproducibility, and although these features are not exclusive to the print medium, it is paper’s physical presence that ultimately leads publishers to preserve it. In an exercise in combining media, Zehar (www.zehar.net)

also seeks to link social and cultural practice, to face up to the changes that are occurring in different creative areas (design, architecture, visual arts, music, net-hacktivism, etc.), and to use experiences to approach specific contexts. These new ways of bringing theory and practice together are making it possible to break with the traditional idea of hierarchy in publication, allowing something which is nearer to day-to-day problems, and to a work which is structured in networks of collaboration.

To conclude, the coordinates at which we stand today are different to those of previous decades and we can see that the changes that have occurred in capitalist societies have had a direct impact on production in

El Commons Service Group® declara Zehar
una



**Committed to building the commons through serving art, artists, and audiences
<http://www.ecoledumagasin.com/csg/>*

Commons Service declares Zehar AGCS free zone

publishing and art. A complex and aestheticised contemporary landscape has taken over the terrain that previously belonged to art. As Suely Rolnik notes in the editorial to Zehar 51, "Creation has now become the main value of capitalism. As a result, art has lost its autonomous status, and faced with this alliance, politics and art appear sadly to have become divorced". Let us say that we cannot achieve social and political transformation, but the task of publishers does consist of questioning, the deconstruction of the concepts acquired, and the search for new transforming ideas.





Sharing Knowledge.

Creative Commons in context

Nicolas Malevé

Adaptation of the Creative Commons (CCs) to various European legislation has provoked a flurry of articles in the press. The reason most often adduced for their importance is that they would make it possible for many Internet users to do something legally which could currently land them in court: downloading music free of charge. The Creative Commons would put an end to the war between the distributors, users, artists and producers.

Our view of this "conflict" may be conditioned by the polarisation of the participants. In the current debate, the conflict is defined as being one of simple opposition: bootleggers v large companies. We consider this polarisation to be dubious, given that it silences the space from which we seek to understand the artists/writers/coders/researchers, etc. It is built on a twin amalgam:

- * the economy of musical creation backs a war which faces off the large companies against the users of music files, strategically likened to pirates.

- * the artistic economies are reduced to the paradigm of commercial musical production.

It is really quite disappointing that, in this scheme of things, the only position that remains for artists is very close to that of the producers -- poor creators pillaged by the greed of the Internauts. Thus, the artist, as if under a spell, expresses solidarity with his or her "distributor". If we conduct a bit of research, however, we clearly see that artists are far from being unanimous on this question. Many consider that citation, "sampling", "remix" and reappropriation of existing resources all form part of a certain artistic practices. And there are many and sometimes concurrent reasons why large numbers of artists severely criticise the notion of (the rights to) authorship. It would be difficult to find a common thread to the postmodern reinterpretations of Sherrie Levine and Elaine Sturtevant; the pop appropriation of Warhol or Lichtenstein; the deterrent policy of the situationists and the collaborative openings of mail-art.



The theoretical influences/affiliations surrounding them (postmodernism, situationism, critical feminism, etc) are also different and even sometimes competing. And if we leave the area of "high art" and look at "pop" culture, we can also hear dissonant voices: from the pragmatic criticism of Courtney Love¹, through the rebellion of "Prince/The Love symbol"², to the numerous lawsuits filed against fans who have made a range of less than indulgent re-interpretations of TV series or commercial productions³. Finally, a growing number of artists are showing themselves to be sensitive to the problems raised by the evolution of author's rights in many international problems: their role in supporting America's industrial and commercial hegemony (transformation of European author's right into copyright, pillaging of the intellectual resources of developing countries⁴, etc)

It is easy to show up the bias in this analysis and bring out its true purpose. In an attempt to protect artistic creation, strong pressure is being brought to bear to achieve and ensure technical and legal measures are taken that will greatly outweigh the financial problems of the musicians and their representatives: confiscation of the dissemination tool -- in this case the Internet -- the strengthening of the monopolies of certain players (the ever greater power of collecting societies), the consolidation of control policies (EUCD⁵), etc.

All of these features need to be examined in greater detail, but within the framework of this presentation, we will centre on the Creative Commons which have grown up in the fertile terrain of this criticism of author's rights. If the Creative Commons have drawn heavily from the

critique/controversy sparked by author's rights, they have also been inspired by the alternatives that preceded them. In order to understand the complexity of the Creative Commons proposal, we want to place it in some perspective, by briefly looking at the nature of the General Public Licence, one of the major alternatives to the use of intellectual property, as used by music majors and software multinationals. We also want to compare the Creative Commons with another proposal which has received less media coverage, the Free Art Licence.

The General Public License (GPL), copyright reinterpreted.

The GPL was created by Richard Stallman in 1983 and adopted by free software developers. This licence unambiguously guarantees the right to use a computer program free from any restriction (the program may be used for any purpose), the right to study (we can learn how the programme works), the right to copy, modify and distribute copies free of charge or commercially. The GPL implies a "genealogy". To understand the meaning of the word "genealogy" in this context, we need to look at the mechanism governing copyleft within the framework of the GPL. Copyleft is not a negation of the author's rights; rather it is a reformulation of the way they are applied. It is a rerouting of the author's rights. Because I am the author of a work, I can convey greater liberties to my users under contract than the law awards them by default. As Florian Cramer⁶ points out, the word "licence" comes from the verb 'licere' meaning 'to authorise'. In order to authorise the additional uses of a production, one needs to be its owner. And in the field of intellectual property, this means being the author (or possessing rights equivalent to those of the author). These additional rights are attributed with one sole condition: that the same freedom is guaranteed with copyleft for any work deriving from it. One cannot place a work under copyleft if one does not own the rights (a work cannot be "laundered") and one cannot restrict the usage authorisations which have been awarded to a free work, either for that specific work or for the consequent works.

In the context in which copyleft has emerged, the world of IT, re-using the code is a fundamental challenge. Programmers write a generic code on which others can build higher-level applications. Otherwise, it would be necessary to reinvent the wheel for each new program. Offering an open code thus represents a huge advantage, in that it enables hackers

to spend their time writing what still remains to be written, instead of on what has already been written. Another element essential to any understanding of the success of this model in this context, is that the emergence of copyleft is a "conservative" movement which seeks to go back to the practices of exchange that prevailed before copyright on computer programs came on the scene. For many years, exchange of codes and free circulation of sources was the norm. The GPL did not create practical solutions out of nothing. It reinforced a tradition solidly anchored in the computer media.

An alternative can be a way of escaping from the world and digging oneself into a trench; of living apart. In this scenario, the world is left behind and a new world built outside the world. An alternative can also be a way of transforming the world we live in so as to be better off. The 'genealogical' aspect of these licences, the fact that they are based on existing practices and on grounded necessities represents a real challenge in this distinction. The progressive adoption of free software, in fields as varied as scientific applications, public administrations and the arts, shows that a growing number of individuals are convinced that they offer empowerment, that access to the code allows a plural definition of culture and knowledge. Creations as refined as the Linux operating system and the Apache server are inescapable proof of this. In the case of free software, the fact that the GPL is more than an avoidance of the world, does not mean that a certain tendency to isolation is not present in the free software culture. If it is not disseminated, the use of this licence essentially operates as a filter, rejecting all the impurity at the frontier of its utopian world and the project becomes an avoidance of the world. That which is free is condemned to live on the basis of this paradox, because it is based on the author's right to transform the practice. In effect, this danger/temptation is always present given that the users of the GPL must recreate, from original materials, creations that stand at the beginning of a chain. The GPL takes to heart the idea of a new genealogy of works, encouraging the re-appropriation and transformation of free (and only free) materials. Copyleft obliges the user to maintain the genealogy of these creations. Copyleft has not arisen out of the paradigm of copyright, it reinterprets it.

For many, the scope of the GPL is not limited to information technology. It is a model of resistance which can be applied to various fields. We find

its influence behind projects for encyclopaedias, information, scientific research. The GPL's potential consists of "releasing" the knowledge, the resources and the conditions of access to those "universal assets". It is understood as a way of renegotiating the social contract, i.e., the limits of property, the conditions of its application and, in short, the relations between the individuals and the state.

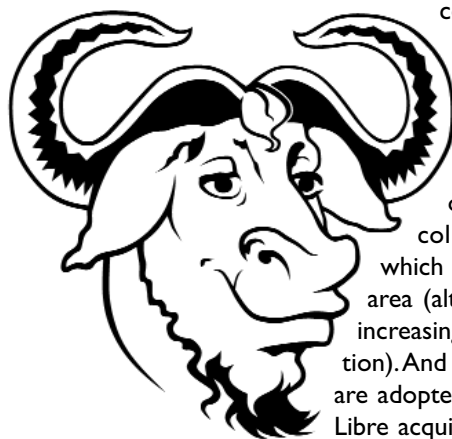
Copyleft, as defined by the GPL, encompasses a set of things: legal practice (reappropriation of author's rights), methods of dissemination (genealogical aspect) and political project. Let us now look where subsequent licences such as the Licence Art Libre and the Creative Commons stand vis-à-vis these different aspects -- how they incorporate them, qualify them, disseminate them or reject them.

The Licence Art Libre (LAL, Free Art License) - the GPL in the context of Contemporary Art.

The Licence Art Libre was drawn up in 2000 by Copyleft Attitude, a French group made of artists and legal experts. The goal was to transfer the General Public License to the artistic field. The interest shown by the group in the GPL was oriented towards a pragmatic and ideological use. In the GPL, Copyleft Attitude was looking for a tool of cultural transformation, rather than a convenient and effective means to help disseminate a piece of work. The world of art (the dissemination of culture) was perceived as being entirely dominated by a mercantile logic, monopolies and the political impositions deriving from closed circles. Copyleft Attitude tried to seek out a reconciliation with an artistic practice which was not centred on the author, which encouraged participation over consumption, and which broke the mechanism of singularity that formed the basis of the processes of exclusion in the art world, by providing ways of encouraging dissemination, multiplication, etc. From there on, the LAL faithfully transposes the GPL: authors are invited to create free materials on which other authors are in turn invited to work, to recreate an artistic origin from which a genealogy can be opened up.

The process has not been free from problems. In the art world, for example, the existing practices were mostly individualist. Despite the fact that there was a tradition of artists working in an open way, even if sampling and collage could not exist without using material made by others, the value given to the name, to the author was, in short, a synonym of

uniqueness. Whereas Warhol drew unreservedly on the repertoire of images provided by American popular culture, his estate has mercilessly persecuted anyone trying to use his work without paying very high royalties. The use of existing materials in art cannot so simply be compared to the situation in the field of IT. Images or sounds are often not used as building material, but instead they are torn out, transformed against their will, attacked, ridiculed and criticised. Artists rightly attack the emblems of the consumer society, commercial propaganda and the tricks of the new powers that are colonising our minds. This places the creators of the LAL in a paradoxical situation: they now have a licence which is more elaborate than the practice it is supposed to defend -- a practice of positive collaboration instead of reappropriation⁷. This licence is therefore supposed to accompany the propagation of a model of positive collaborative creation which is rarely found in this area (although the Internet is increasingly changing this situation). And only if these practices are adopted can the Licence Art Libre acquire an authentic transforming status and emerge from a distant utopia into this world. The members of the group, conscious of this problem, hold public events, Copyleft parties, which are at the same time a chance for exhibition and a chance for participative creation.



The LAL shares with the GPL the project of re-examining the existing terms of the relations between individuals and access to creation and artworks. While LAL is not intended to renegotiate the social contract in general, it does include elements of great interest from an egalitarian point of view between the creators who use them. The position of the different authors in the chain of works, does not consist of a hierarchy between the first author and subsequent one. Rather, the licence defines the subsequent works as original works "resulting from modification of a copy of the original work or from modification of a copy of a conse-

quent work", and throughout the text of the licence they are mentioned regularly. This concern has left its mark on various of the group's practices and, of course, on the licence logo -- of which there are as many different versions as there are interested users.

The Creative Commons (CCs), a Legal Toolbox⁸

Set up in 2001 by an essentially academic group (legal experts, scientists, employers and a director of documentaries) and backed by one foundation and several universities, the CCs acknowledged that their inspiration came from the GPL. However, they are more influenced by the pragmatic potential (how to resolve a problem) of the GPL than by its potential to transform. In effect, the CCs present themselves as the "guarantors of balance, of the middle ground and of moderation". Unlike the GPL, which is a specific mechanism for effecting a modification in the system of creation/dissemination of software, the CCs have been set up to smoothen it out, make it more flexible, more moderate, although not entirely different. The main aim is to save the cost of a legal transaction when drawing up a contract, and to restore the friendly image of the Internet -- which has been turned into a battlefield with the growing number of lawsuits against Internauts -- in order to restore confidence among possible investors.

What the CCs propose is a palette of licences that offer the possibility of granting users certain rights. These rights may be more limited than those awarded by the GPL and the LAL. Users of the CCs can choose between authorising or prohibiting modification of their work, commercial use of their work and a possible obligation to re-distribute the subsequent work under the same conditions. In the CCs, two distinctions are re-introduced which were not contained in the GPL: the possibility of prohibiting modification of a work and the difference between commercial and non-commercial use. The CCs give the author a predominant position. Whereas the LAL view the author as being like the others in a given genealogy, the CCs see him/her as a person who stands at the beginning of the chain. He or she can decide whether to authorise the subsequent use of the work, and is defined as the original author. When this decision is taken, the authors can request that their names not be associated with a derived work whose contents they do not approve of. If the GPL excludes the commercial/non-commercial distinction (the user is given the freedom to sell the software), it is because the possibi-

lity of trading with the resulting code will help accelerate its propagation. The greater the propagation, the greater the dissemination achieved by the free software and the greater the number of monopolies that will be abolished. The business made from a piece of free software is simply considered as another means of propagation. It accelerates the process that allows a social contract to be renegotiated. The CCs do not place as much stress on propagation. They were not conceived as the outriders of a renegotiation of the social contract, but as tools for renegotiating individual contracts, based on individual relations. Naturally, we can use the CCs to create a licence close to the LAL/GPL; accepting the transformations and commercial use, on condition that the author is mentioned and that these conditions are applied to subsequent works. But this is just one of the possibilities on offer. As Antoine Moreau said, the CCs represent freedom of choice and the LAL represents a free choice. Or as Femke Snelting suggested⁹ at the launch of the Guide to Open Content Licenses, the CCs are licences which have gradually erased their narrative potential (their way of narrating the world) to become tools. As tools, these licences logically anticipate the varieties of conflicts which might arise with the use of the work as a commercial reappropriation or the deformation/de-naturalisation of a text or a film.

Conclusion

Even at the risk of oversimplifying, we could start from the postulate that the CCs and the LAL are legal tools which allow another application of authors' rights. - In the case of the LAL, a stress is placed on the transforming potential for the field in which it is applied: art. This transforming potential can only be produced if this licence reduces/supports a series of practices. And these practices, in this particular field, are still not very widespread, although this is changing. The LAL always faces the temptation of defining itself as a project of society or, at the very least as a project for art. And the identity question hangs over it: do we really form a group because we use the same licence or not? - In the case of the CCs, an entire discourse, the image, the choice of representatives, etc., is there to erase/mask any attempt at transformation. This is more of a desire for arbitration, for compromise, to make do and to contribute the tools to do so without a prioris. Of course, this supposed "neutrality" has been called into question by many players. The artist/activist Sebastian Luetgert¹⁰ referred to the CCs as the "social democracy of the Commons". This may be a valid criticism if we take into account the

general spirit of the licences and the promotional discourse which follows. In some later article, we should examine how users react, though: the true potential of these licences can only be measured by looking at how those interested use them and if observing the dichotomy -- sometimes flagrant -- between all of the projects and the carefully selected sample on the website creativecommons.org. But in terms of the CCs' official discourse, the message is clear; they are defined as a service, and not as a project.

The "alternative" licences give a vision of creative exchanges in society. In doing so they have a twin aim: to announce to the participants in a project, the rules of a game to which they are invited, but also to highlight through contrast -- and it is a worthy quality -- the narration that underlies "traditional law". What was considered as something that had been acquired, as a fact, suddenly is rediscovered as a project. We no longer have the law and what is outside the law. We have the law as a project and the world that the law creates by narrating it.

Notes and references

Copyright. This text has been published in accordance with the conditions set out in the Licence Art Libre.

Links:

<http://www.gnu.org>

<http://artlibre.org>

<http://creativecommons.org>

¹Courtney Love Does The Math. In this article, published in salon.org, the singer shows with figures that the music production/distribution system is designed to minimise the revenue of the performer. She does not accept that Internauts should be treated as pirates while the large corporation are behaving like unscrupulous predators.

²The name "Prince" has been the legal property of Warner since 1993. Prince decided to change his name to protect the independence of his work. He was one of the pioneers in the struggle against the large companies. He has been followed by stars such as George Michael and Courtney Love. 3 - The Poachers and the Stormtroopers, Henry Jenkins, url:http://www.strangelove.com/slideshows/articles/The_Poachers_and_the_Stormtroopers.htm

³Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture (Studies in Culture and Communication), Henry Jenkins, Routledge (June 1, 1992)

⁴Copyrights: A Choice of No Choice for Artists and Third World Countries; The Public Domain is Losing Anyway, Joost Smiers url:<http://www.constantvzw.com/copy.cult/copy-rights.pdf>

⁵EUCD, "European Union Copyright Directive", and EU directive whose purpose is to harmonise author's rights in the member states of the Union. Adoption of this directive jeopardises the right to private copy and tends to restrict the exercise of "exceptions" to authors' rights. url:<http://wiki.ael.be/index.php/EUCD-Status>

⁶On the occasion of the launch of the book "Guide to Open Content Licences" by Lawrence Liang, Florian Cramer gave an analysis of the notion of "licence" in relation to artwork. url:http://www.constantvzw.com/cn_core/vj8/events.php?id=23 url:<http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~cantsin/homepage/>

⁷"In spite of all its qualities, the LAL suffers a considerable handicap insofar as it is targeted at artists, to whom precisely the idea of art is something distant, given that the best of them prefer to practise art or even, although this is more difficult, not to make art, and as a result they avoid using the LAL. By dint of overly restricting its goal, the LAL runs the risk of losing its practical value and being remarkable only for its beauty". Comparatif de Licences Libres, Isabelle Voddani, 31 May 2004 url:http://www.transactiv-exe.org/article.php3?id_article=95

⁸Term used by Séverine Dusollier, a researcher at the "Centre de Recherche Informatique et Droit", of Facultés Notre Dame de la Paix (Namur), in charge of coordinating adaptation of the Creative Commons to Belgian law.

⁹On the occasion of the launch of the book "Guide to Open Content Licences", Femke Snelting gave an analysis of the development of the logos used by the different copyleft movements. url:http://www.constantvzw.com/cn_core/vj8/guests.php?id=255

¹⁰Debate on the mailing list nettime: <http://amsterdam.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0407/msg00020.html>

Tales of the Commons Culture

by Monica Narula, Awadhendra Sharan and Shuddhabrata Sengupta

Imagine the digital commons: public and accessible to all... But, is it anything like a city, a library – or more like a fertile groove in the landscape? In an online conversation, Monica Narula, Awadhendra Sharan and Shuddhabrata Sengupta, three co-founders of Sarai, Delhi's innovative new media initiative, discuss.

Monica Narula <monica@sarai.net> wrote:

The ripple-causing proposal by Grossman and Minow to the American Congress to disburse \$18 billion in a trust fund (The Digital Opportunity Investment Trust) to generate knowledge that would remain “open source data” and in the public domain, data that would counter “the trend toward copyrighted, privatised ‘pay-per-view’ scholarship that threatens the university system” has been announced but not yet become fact. [<http://www.current.org/pb/pb0107gift.html>]

But this fact evokes another time...

Our desire to know more about the world takes us to places in which we can find narratives concerning ourselves and our communities. The public library is one good example – but how easy is it to define what constitutes other such spaces?

There are various kinds of libraries that exist in the city of Delhi, some established and run by the national and city government bodies, and some that are the offerings of other nations' cultural largesse. In all these, only one offers relatively unfettered access – the American Centre Library. Many university students in Delhi are members of only this library, and for a lot of them the idea of ‘freedom’ and ‘free America’ have become synonymous with its existence and operation.

Yet the libraries that you do not enter are as formative as the ones you do. The problem lies not in the fact of you being given access to only one universe, but of being barred from many others. This arises not from a lack of resources but because these emerge from public policies which

premise themselves on the continuation of gated knowledge communities.

This conclusion evokes a memory...

I was told by a friend of the ramblers in England – who go on long walks for the wonderful pleasure of taking in “mountain, moor, heath and down” – that when they walk, they do so partly to keep public paths public. Many of these walking routes have emerged from being trod by countless people over countless years. By law, if they are not used by the public to walk on them, they will revert to private ownership.



These paths evoke other ones...

In most rural parts of India one can find ‘sacred groves’. These are now usually small, very small, groves where vegetation has been allowed to grow unhampered by any fear of slash and burn. These dense growths are looked after by the village, may contain flora not found in the vicinity for 500

years, and are the source for medicinal herbs and potages used for traditional, often quite effective, healing. Communities maintain these, in some form or the other, because their survival is linked to the groves.

If we are to imagine a digital commons, then we must first admit that a commons does not emerge on its own. It does not exist sui generis. It has to be invented, created, maintained and protected. In cyberspace there are no embedded communities, with their ecologies of survival. Here the proximity is not one of space but of affinity. Here if we want our commons, dispersed affinities will have to tend, and wend, their paths

together. But even as we do so, we must remember that no matter where the library comes from, it cannot constitute its public by exclusion. And that these dispersed affinities will have to engage with power, memory and practice – the historical processes and contemporary conditions of their formation – so that new gates are opened, not old ones locked again....

Awadhendra Sharan <sharan@sarai.net> wrote:

Commons are a finite set of resources shared by an embedded community. Historically, the process of closure is linked to the establishment of

market relationships and notions of private property. In that sense, the digital commons are both similar and dissimilar to the idea of 'commons'. First, the differences:

Unlike traditional commons, the digital commons are not a resource that belongs to an embedded community. Hence the notion of reciprocal responsibilities that is so central to the management of the



traditional commons is difficult to imagine here.

And, unlike the traditional commons, it is not a limited set of resources that is at stake. Theoretically, and linked to the question of scale, one can posit an almost infinite sense of resource.

On the familiar side, what remains is the attempt at gating, underwritten by the acceptance of the primacy of private property. This process of

gating may be carried out both by industry and by governments. The digital reference, however, is not only to free software and commercial software. For gating is also being realised in the name of 'public interest'. Here it may be pertinent to consider that even with respect to traditional commons, governments have instituted regulatory practices in order to attain sustainability. There can be two kinds of critiques of this latter move:

(i) The process of tight regulation of commons in the name of 'higher goals', 'public interest' etc. has to be considered on a case-by-case basis. It is quite possible that this process saw the further dispossession of the



most marginal sections of the society (e.g. through nationalisation and management of forests by the State). On the other hand, it could enable the dispossessed/marginal to gain a greater voice in the management of affairs (e.g. the management of village forests by the panchayat – an elected local government body – rather than the traditional community, which were often dominated by the high caste).

In this context one may consider for instance whether 'gating' in the form of determining child-appropriate content is enabling or disabling.

(ii) One can make a more radical critique that does away with the idea of any regulation. But what would be the ground on which to make this radical critique: the Internet as a completely different medium, requiring

different sets of ethical behaviour? In the case of the traditional commons, however, the reason that so many traditional commons have survived is the well-accepted principle of management through community norms. Could such a system prevail online?

My general point about commons/sharing etc. is not concerned with equity or material access. To the extent that we live in regimes of property, I accept that there will be exclusions. To me, what is important is the possibility of contesting the grounds of such exclusion. In that regard, I think the free software movement stands on a very different footing to

the anti-censorship strategies of net activists. In both cases, they are contesting very different principles of exclusion. And again, both these are quite different from the politics of lessening the digital divide, either in terms of access to computers/bandwidth, or in terms of computer literacy and expressive abilities.

The digital commons can still be

imagined and precisely because it is not anchored in an embedded community, it offers the distinct possibility of extending the boundaries of the 'community' in question. In other words, it is not the case that unless everyone has access to computers, or unless everyone is computer literate or unless free software becomes the norm, there is no commons. There is – if we bear with Marx's insight that the seeds of the new are already contained in the old.



Shuddhabrata Sengupta <shuddha@sarai.net> wrote:

I don't think the digital divide is something that operates between those that have access to computers and those that don't. As a corollary, one might say that a 'digital commons' is not necessarily that which exists between all people who have some form of access to computers.

Access (or the lack of it) to a digital space is a function of cultural distance as well as social class and economic capacity. While a young working class kid may not have access to computers in a city like Delhi on a frequent or regular basis, a powerful and elite intellectual in the same city, (say, a director in a publishing firm) may choose not to work with



computers, because he can afford to, (let us say that his secretaries take a lot of dictation). Does this mean that these two people are on the same side of the Digital Divide, or that they share an 'Analogue Commons'?

Clearly, a data entry operator who gets repetitive strain injury and the spoilt rich kid who gets a new

computer every time Apple brings out its latest model are not equally placed within a 'digital commons'. Perhaps there is nothing common (digitally or otherwise) between them. What then, is a common digital space in culture, and how might it be entered, and how might we pitch our tents on it?

It is no doubt true to say that a notion of a 'Commons' in societies such as ours is quite fragile. The commonplace and somewhat bleak (bleak in

my opinion, that is) understanding of 'a common cultural space' seems to be that which people can 'hold' together out of having a shared sense of being mutually beholden to a given 'identity' formation, or to a given construct of destiny and culture, or subculture, devolving from this 'identity' formation. This is the tricky terrain of the 'authenticity of feeling' or subjectivity of togetherness that a given identity formation bestows upon its people. But the problem with this tyranny of authentic feeling is that it doesn't allow you to take things away from this 'identity' or to bring new things into this field of 'identity' which would either subtract or complicate matters for its formation. This identity formation could be language,

nationality, religious adherence or ethnic affiliation.

In other words, I cannot simply edit that constituent of my particular cultural commons (that which is shared by me and others who I think are exactly like me) without simultaneously challenging one of the key features in the landscape of my commons. This threatens to dislocate me, both emotionally and culturally.

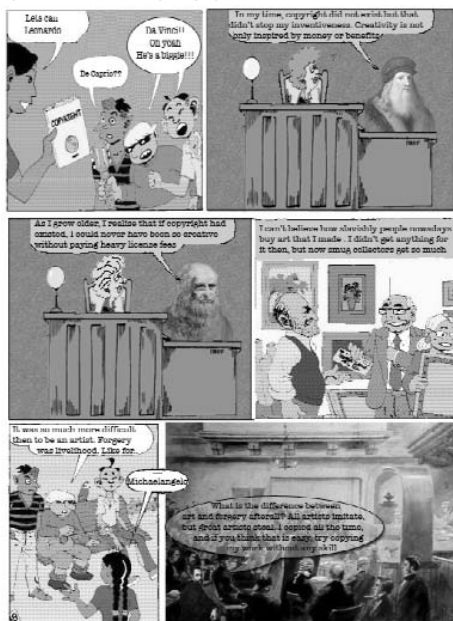
But can I afford not to conduct this operation? Especially, if I want to find new things to share with other people.

One problem that has been bothering all of us at Sarai has been the question of appropriate scripts and fonts for writing in Hindi and other Indian languages in a digital domain. This is crucial to any project that seeks to intervene in the fashioning of a 'digital commons' in Non-Romanolect languages. (Romanolect languages are those whose character set is the Roman alphabet, like English, Turkish, Yiddish, Tulu and



Bahasa Indonesia, while Non-Romanolect languages would include Arabic, Russian, Japanese, Hindi, Bengali and Hebrew.) In South Asia and in India, (where Romanolect and Non Romanolect languages cohabit) this would be of paramount importance. And the shape of an emerging 'digital commons' would bear the mark of this cohabitation.

The dilemma that is before us is something like this: am I committing cultural violence to the language that we share (Hindi) by arguing that it be written in the Roman alphabet on computers, so as to make Hindi in some ways more accessible (shareable) as a digital language for first time computer users? [Notice here, the crucial difference between that which we 'share' (the Hindi language) and that which is 'shareable' (the Roman alphabet).]



Or am I, by insisting that Hindi be written only in Devanagari characters, also ensuring that it never takes its place as a workable language in any 'digital commons', at least for the time being, and so necessarily endorsing a linguistic monoculture in which English, with all its class and cultural baggage in a South Asian con-

text, reigns supreme?

Now this is a very vexing question because, by writing Hindi in Roman characters (as opposed to Devanagari characters), I am simultaneously taking something away from the present form of the language (its script) and adding something (other characters) to the act of writing in that language. In other words I am at the same time subtracting from and complicating the sense of the 'Hindi-ness' of this new Hindi in cyberspace.

This imperils me with its inauthenticity, cleaves me from the history and tradition of the language (its existing commons) and at the same time allows for new forms of solidarity by discovering a possibility of expression that would otherwise be denied to me, (because of the difficulty and the cost of writing Hindi digitally) that I can share with others, in Hindi (as opposed to in English), in the digital domain.

The question to ask would be which of these things contributes to the Commons that we are building in the present for an appropriate digital form of the Hindi language. Should we abandon the task of building a 'digital commons' in Hindi because it may not be possible to do so with



the existing script in an accessible fashion, thus ensuring that the majority of those who have Indian languages as their first languages are always left looking into a digital domain from outside, never looking out from within it.

While on the one hand, the loss of Devanagari characters, does involve a sense of loss of the shared and even tactile familiar, a

refusal to countenance that loss (at least until such time that a standardised key map and accessible digital tools for Devanagari are available) also means ensuring that Hindi remains a fringe language in the digital public domain, and that only those who have access to difficult and expensive Hindi software and proprietary fonts are able to deploy Hindi as a language of digital expression.

In other words, by insisting on the latter option, I help maintain the grip

of an existing cultural and social elite over a popular, living language. I do this in order to continue sharing an authentic sense of the Hindi Language with its established forms of practice.

It seems to me that the need to build a 'digital commons' might in some cases imply that we have to find new tools that are alien, though not unfamiliar, to our older commons and to established forms of authenticity and togetherness. If we were all equally inept and inauthentic in our deployment of these new tools, then this would imply an equality of ineptitude. And the fumbling, the necessarily faulty and crude steps that we could take, with new (though not necessarily unfamiliar) tools, would still be worthwhile in that they could at all be taken together and in common.

This does not require us to jettison older tools inasmuch as we continue to operate in older forms of common cultural space (say in print), but it does ask of us a certain equivocal stance, of being non-committal to older as well as to newer forms of shared cultural spaces. Of realising a necessary 'outsiderness' at all times, in all common spaces. And realising that our deployment of a particular tool of expression is contingent on the 'commons' that we are in, at any given moment.

While the sense of inauthenticity accompanying this stance may produce some discomfort, it at least brings with it a means of entering the digital commons on reasonably fair terms. Once there, we are free to forage for new meanings and new identities.

originally published on Mute Issue 20, July 2001

The cartoon is done by the Alternative Law Forum (Bangalore):

<http://www.altlawforum.org/lawmedia/CC.pdf>

It is a critique on the original cartoon published by the World International Copyright Organization:

http://www.wipo.org/about-wipo/en/info_center/cartoons/pdf/copyright_cartoon.pdf

Almost noise-free, German media art collections struggle to save bits and bytes

Christiane Fricke

Anyone looking at transient media art images in the technically perfect form in which they float over monitors and projection surfaces will probably not have given too much thought to how future generations might be able to share the same experience. Popular opinion seems to assume that whatever has made its way into a museum and been recognized as a cultural achievement worthy of preserving and making publicly accessible must have a certain amount of durability.

How long this durability might actually last is something that not even the professionals dared to predict who met at the conference »404 Object Not Found – What remains of media art« in Dortmund to devote their attention to the special considerations involved in the production, presentation and preservation of software- and net-based art. It is clear that merely archiving image media on the shelf at the right temperature or, in the case of net art, on the server, is not enough. One touch of the delete key or computer worm attack suffices to irrevocably wipe out an artwork. Magnetic tapes can stick together and become useless after only seven to ten years. Video formats such as the so-called open-reel tapes (1/2-inch) »died out« 30 years ago, and their successors, such as the 3/4-inch U-matic format, are »threatened«. Playback devices and replacement parts will soon become obsolete. In the digital realm old systems make way for new software applications in ever briefer time spans, leading experts to predict that data stored today will be available to us for a maximum of ten to 20 years.

That's nothing compared to the 553 years the paper on which the Gutenberg Bible is printed has withstood. But perhaps just enough time to give restaurateurs and curators of German media art collections the chance to develop and implement concepts to save their holdings. And to do so if possible in a concerted effort, such as the Dutch demonstrated with their »Project Conservering Videokunst« begun in the year 2000.

But Germany is still far from this type of systematic undertaking, which received support from the highest government levels.

There is, however, one exception: commercial art video distributor and service provider 235 Media in Cologne, buoyed by funds from the Bundeskulturstiftung, can now start saving the 1,100 tapes in its archive in DigiBeta format. At the same time, the Kunststiftung NRW is funding the pilot project for a database called MedienKunstArchiv, which offers an online preview, stills and information on the archived works. Archive and sales will later merge in a non-profit foundation.

But the museums have not yet reached this point. From his post at Bremen's Kunsthalle, Wulf Herzogenrath, in cooperation with the Lenbachhaus in Munich, the Düsseldorf Kunstsammlung NRW K21 and the ZKM Karlsruhe, has applied for support from the Bundeskulturstiftung for a research and data preservation initiative based on three components. The initiative proposes establishing up-to-date standards for restoration and discussing these in the context of a symposium. A few minutes from two video works will be restored as a demonstration, and an edition of the 50 most important video works will be published.

The Video Forum founded in 1972 by the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (NBK), which is the oldest and, with 800 titles, second-largest videotape collection in Germany, is joining together with the Art History Institute at Humboldt University to apply for a grant from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) for a project researching ways to record its collection onto digital media. The project will also address the question of what can actually be restored. 80 percent of the archive is stored on U-matic-low tapes. In the past the artists have been contacted directly when the Forum needed to replace the defective submaster tape with a new copy of the master tape held by the creator.

The question of what can be preserved using which system and in which condition is one that art historians, restaurateurs and technicians can only solve together. For example, when the director of the Video Forum, Kathrin Becker, tried to play a tape by Canadian media artist Ernest Gusella on a recorder from the eighties, she was forced to diagnose the tape as a total loss. Yet the same tape played with a seventies device pro-



duced an almost noise-free picture. But what constitutes »almost

noise-free« can only be judged by someone whose visual memory reaches back far enough to know what the work should look like. Therefore, whenever the artist is not available for consultation, it is important that there be some sort of documentation of the central characteristics essential for the aesthetic functioning of the work.

The Kunstmuseum Bonn is also applying to the DFG with a research project for preserving the 397 titles in its collection, not in use today for the most part for reasons of conservation. The chosen target format is DigiBeta. Plans are also being made for a new presentation concept designed to afford visitors access to the works without the need for assistance.

1,600 video titles and about 400 audio CDs are housed in the Mediathek at the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, playable on a jukebox in the outdated MPEG-2 half D-I compression codec. Although suitable for viewing purposes, this system is not appropriate for conserving the artworks. A backup copy of U-matic tapes is made in analog BetaSP format. DVDs are used for exhibitions. The



Museum für Moderne Kunst (MMK) in Frankfurt/Main also backs up the data on its approx. 150 tapes and films in both analog and digital form. The general assumption is that analog formats will probably survive longer than digital media, for which there is always uncertainty as to whether the next software will use the same compression parameters. Besides, small scratches on an analog tape do not lead to such severe problems as they do on a digital disc.

In the case of multimedia objects and installations, it is important to preserve the works in their original condition if at all possible, according to Carmen Beckenbach from the Medienmuseum at the ZKM. When the laser disc player in Lynn Hershman's interactive installation »Lorna« (1979-84) broke down, the decision was made in consultation with the artist to use a comparable device. When after another four-and-half years a problem occurred with the data disc, Hershman burned the data onto DVD and integrated a DVD player into the artwork instead. She placed the old device in a glass case within the installation.

The conclusion that concepts designed to preserve material simply cannot remain viable in the long term was also reached by medien_kunst_netz dortmund in its EU-sponsored case study for the reconstruction of a video installation by Diana Thater, as presented at the conference this summer. But placing one's faith completely in documentation that allows for a »rematerialization« is not the solution either. Because the very technology that holds the work together and gives it its form is also a part of the cultural moment.

*404 Object Not Found – What remains of media art?, 19 to 22 June 2003, Dortmund; organized by medien_kunst_netz_dortmund
<http://www.404project.net>*

originally published on Springerin issue 3/03, "Reality Art"

Islands in the Net, from non-places to recon- quered anchorages of the avant-garde

Krystian Woznicki

With the spread of the Internet, the utopia was given a location in cyberspace. It was now a question of exploring, surveying and settling this new continent. Those who departed for it dreamed the dream of a better world. In its immaterial expanses, new social models could be tested and new forms of life practised. Capitalism, racism and all the other evils of material world would be overcome. And what is more: it was not only the perfect counter-world, but also represented the next world order. Linked-up, decentralized, without hierarchies. This dream was of course also based on a new image of humankind.

Setting off for the New World

The cybernetic paradise was the place where all promises were to be fulfilled. The ideas about this legendary place were very modern. People seemed to realize that it would be not so much a concrete place as a non-place. Paradise functioned in the networks only as long as it, as such, had no name and no address. It was a state, a moment in which a network experienced an ideal balance between online and offline reality. Bruce Sterling was the first to promulgate this idea. In one of his cyber-thrillers¹ in the late eighties, the dissolution of political systems leads to an increase in decentralized life-experiments. Huge corporations in the hands of the producers, independent enclaves devoted to »data piracy«, and anarchistic liberated zones generate a varied information economy whose network also has room for enclaves: deregulated zones, so-called »islands in the Net«. A few years later, this maritime metaphor was adopted and developed by Hakim Bey. Sterling's sci-fi scenario had partly become reality. The islands in the Net were given a new status. Their subversive potential was now what was emphasized. For the structures that began to form in cyberspace were all too similar to those that had arisen between the 16th and 19th century in the course of the discoveries and conquests of the naval powers: it was a capitalist system in whose lee Hakim Bey saw pirates and corsairs stretching an alternative »informa-

tion network« around the globe. This network was made up of »scattered islands, remote hideouts where ships could be watered and provisioned, booty traded for luxuries and necessities. Some of these islands supported >intentional communities,« whole mini-societies living consciously outside the law and determined to keep it up, even if only for a short but merry life.² Data dandies in »Temporary Autonomous Zones« were to experience something similar.

The end of the information era

When Douglas Rushkoff proclaimed the end of the information era in 1997, a new chapter of it had just begun. Where Rushkoff saw imminent chaos, the infrastructure of the global players took on increasingly concrete forms. But the diagnosis of this New York cyber-critic could not be denied: »We are immersed in a popular culture that is already reckoning with the fact that humankind must accept its role as master of its own destiny.³ God was dead. Human beings had taken His place. In this socio-cultural climate, the new media technologies, above all the Internet, seemed only to give more fuel to the fantasies of omnipotence associated with this fact. The fingertips of the »netizen« linked by the keyboard with the arenas of global »eyeball culture« contained the power of the Creator. On the banners in these arenas was written »self-empowerment« in all languages – the catchword of the WWW-democracy. God was responsible for building the Garden of Eden; now it was in the hands of the individual to create the cyber-paradise. A promise that was to be fulfilled at first mainly by corporations and states. Shopping islands were created on the Internet. At the same time, places of mass tourist pilgrimage were linked up. The Indonesian island of Bali, for example, was transformed into a »high-tech paradise«. »Here, young Indonesian programmers communicate in the international language of C++ and Java on behalf of corporate clients in Europe and North America.⁴

The faith in the cybernetic paradise is still intact even after the collapse of the New Economy. In the regions where, between the 16th and the 19th century, people looked for new resources and possessions – generally known today as the Third World – the talk is of Special Economic Zones: as highly developed cyber-laboratories that cut themselves off from the miserable situation in the world directly outside; as highly controlled centres for global flows of information that have opened their gates wide to the global economy. In the Korean animation film »Sky Blue« (2004), this division into atopia and dystopia, already familiar from

cyber-punk, is taken to an extreme with the reduction of the entire world to two cities: Ecoban, a technological paradise that has isolated itself from the polluted environment, and Marr, an uncultivated area inhabited by refugees. After the flood catastrophe of December 26 2004, this metaphor can be also applied to the Indian Ocean. While most of the region, analogously to Marr, is reduced to rubble, one lonely island remains tranquilly in the water, untouched by the »Flood« (»Die Zeit«). Ecoban is really Mauritius, which has been talked about as the ultimate »cyber-paradise« since the start of the 21st century: »A tiny island in the Indian Ocean [that] is wiring itself to be an Internet hub – and has jobs for U.S. techies.⁵

Renaissance of the utopia

The appropriation of the utopia by commerce, and its subsequent ghettoization, have, since the last decade, certainly helped take the sheen off the idea of a better world held together by digital networks. Speechlessness and pessimism have spread through the camp of the »digerati«. Rudolf Maresch and Florian Rötzer have proposed a very surprising corrective to this trend. In their new book⁶, they put forward thirteen concepts whose common characteristic is that they all make the »new«, which promises things like information technologies, biotechnologies and gene technologies, the focus of utopian thought in order to reconquer the material and immaterial resources of cyberspace.

However, the hype that descended upon the societies of the First World like a wave in the nineties is not reproduced here. The dreams of the brave new world with a digital golden lining which, not without reason, have been discredited as neoliberal sugarcoating owing to the collapse of the New Economy – these dreams have released potent desires that can be seen as a breeding ground for utopias. In contrast with the anarchistic dreams of Hakim Bey, no more maps are to be distributed where the sought-after land of Utopia is indeed shown, but in a vague place that remains inaccessible. No, the unattainability of the utopian goal – which has always been characteristic of utopias – is to be called into question. The maps compiled by Maresch and Rötzer depict landscapes in which the utopias are within grasp and accessible: the linkage of all the computers in the world to form a »global brain« or the creation of social strata and real-time migration flows established on the Internet. The concepts take account of what is feasible, of the contradictory nature of society. In short: of reality. This characteristic, say the authors, will help



utopias to experience a new renaissance.

Utopias were always the answer to the question: What do we lack? These media theorists from South Germany have published a collection of maps that turns the tables and asks: What does the utopia lack? The answer to this question is not a treatise on the deficiencies of utopias, but rather the consequence of the diagnosis, which is: utopias need a name, a place and an address.

Translation: Timothy Jones

Notes:

¹ Bruce Sterling: Islands in the Net, New York 1988

² Hakim Bey: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, New York 1991

³ Douglas Rushkoff: Children of Chaos, London 1997

⁴ Warren Caragata: »Bali High-Tech Paradise«, in: Asia Week, 27. April 2001

⁵ Simon Robinson: »Cyber Paradise«, in: Time, 28 October 2002

⁶ Rudolf Maresch & Florian Rötzer: Renaissance der Utopie, Frankfurt am Main 2004

originally published on Springerin issue 1105, "Past Forward"

Hunters and (Sample-)Gatherers, problems of trans-cultural appropriation in contemporary electronic music

Christian Höller

In 1995, Kuo Ying-nan, a 76-year-old Taiwanese farmer, was not a little astonished when a friend from Taipei rang him up: »Hey, your voice is on the radio!« And, indeed, it was Kuo's singing that could be heard - in the world hit »Return to Innocence« by the Rumanian-German music producer Michael Cretu, better known under the name »Enigma«. This, without Kuo's knowing about it, let alone having given permission. The long journey of the vocal part had taken it through many different stages that are today prototypical for processes of global exchange and transfer: in 1988, at the invitation of French (and Taiwanese) cultural authorities, a group of Taiwanese musicians from various ethnic backgrounds – Kuo belongs to the Ani group – toured through several European countries. The tour resulted in a CD that, as well as including other earlier ethnomusicological recordings, adapted the polyphonic Taiwanese songs for the Western market. This meant that musicians like Cretu could immediately start helping themselves to bits and pieces from this sampling pool. Although Cretu's music publishers did very wisely pay 30,000 francs in license fees to the French »Maison des Cultures du Monde«, this money never reached Kuo, one of the sampled artists.

This story, which incidentally had lengthy legal repercussions and has now resulted in an out-of-court settlement, is no rarity. Timothy Taylor,¹ who has given a detailed account of the case, first points out the contrapuntal elements in global culture sampling: for example, the massive objection raised by Enigma fans, who were of the opinion that Kuo's voice would never have attracted world public attention if Cretu's genius had not made it widely known; or the gesture of self-empowerment by a »subordinate« musician who unexpectedly asserts his right to the recordings that were used and takes legal action against the Western music industry. According to Taylor, however, there is also a much more com-

prehensive cultural phenomenon at work here: for Enigma and other Western musicians, »ethnic samples« act primarily as raw material from an exotic cultural pool that has not yet been sullied by technology and the modern age – thus the song's programmatic title, »Return to Innocence«. The way in which this glorifying view is accompanied by an exploitation of that very innocence encapsulates a central paradox of the globalization of pop music. The same applies to the cover-up tactic of seeing the »indigenous« - regardless of what sampling sources it comes from – as the seemingly natural stanchion of a global spiritual awareness.

The ethnomusicologist Steven Feld also has a few such tales to tell. For example, the one about the copy of a vocal and whistling part that was recorded in the sixties in the Central African Republic and cropped up again in 1973 in Herbie Hancock's jazz-rock hit »Watermelon Man«. Hancock neither credits this sound element to the Ba-Benzélé Pygmies, from whose music it comes, nor were the original producers able to participate in the success of the piece in any way – something Hancock shrugs off with a set phrase of legitimation: »A brothers kind of thing – a thing for brothers to work out.² But even beyond the orbit of Afro-American music, where claims to a diasporic counter-modernity are always being made, samples from the music of Central African rainforest dwellers are extremely popular. For example, in the productions of the French duo Deep Forest, some of whose most important resources are ethnomusicological recordings. The Pygmies, for instance, serve Deep Forest (and others) as an almost cynical projection surface: »Somewhere deep in the jungle are living some little men and women. They are your past; maybe they are your future³, they say.

The story of the piece »Sweet Lullaby«, which is also recapitulated by Steven Feld, is particularly characteristic.⁴ In the years 1969/1970, the ethnomusicologist Hugo Zemp made recordings on the Solomon Islands in the Pacific. These included a lullaby sung by a member of the Baegu tribe called Afunakwa. The vocal sample, reissued in 1990 on a UNESCO CD, found its way into the studio of Deep Forest, among others. Enswathed in sugary synthesizer sounds and provided with a leisurely swaying dance beat, the a-cappella piece mutated into »Sweet Lullaby«, Deep Forest's first big world hit and subsequently the background music for countless advertisements. Zemp, who had been the first to bring this recording within the audio horizon of the West, raised an objection to

the use of this and other samples. Here, too, a long debate ensued about the legitimate usage of ethnic sound material, a debate that has not yet led to any unanimous solution. Whereas one side – the commercially successful one – claims that its respectful care of the great cultural traditions of the world promotes global harmony⁵, the other side – the academic, critical one – can only respond by shaking its head with ethical demean, maintaining that this alleged respect is nothing more than a primitivist caricature of old colonial attitudes, that the hunt for samples simply does not take any claims to copyright seriously, and that not a single cent of the profit gained by the culture industry flows back to the cultures that have been sampled. This all clearly illustrates a power set-up in which the airy-fairy talk about supposedly democratized or democratizing world music seems like sheer mockery.

This conclusion is given added credibility by the fact that, as recently as 1996, the Norwegian saxophonist, Jan Garbarek – and he was not the only one – took the aforementioned singing from the South Pacific for a piece of Central African Pygmy music and used it to make his own »Pygmy Lullaby«.⁶ Here, the prototypical »schizophony« of contemporary musical production – i.e., the separation of sounds and samples from their original contexts of creation and usage – has reached a new level. After all, Garbarek had simply taken his sample from the Deep Forest piece and did not himself undertake the journey to this remote oral, indigenous tradition, as his predilection for ritual forms of music might have one suppose.

Which is something that is no longer necessary, anyway, especially in view of the fact that the globalized adaptation of ethnic sounds has now taken on industrialized forms.⁷ For example, companies like Roland or Spectrasonics today specialize, among other things, in putting together whole sampling databases of musical cultures defined in ethnic or territorial terms. The results, with eloquent titles like »Heart of Africa« or »Heart of Asia«, again highlight the inner contradiction of this kind of globalization. On the one hand, there is mostly little fuss made about appropriate compensation for the use of the recordings – often, this is limited to once-off symbolic (if that) payments and an anonymous thank-you to »the many gifted musicians who contributed to the project.«⁸ On the other, these sound packages, removed from their context and digitally polished, are marketed as the epitome of authentic world culture – ideal additional value that mainly benefits its users.



The flair of the supposedly authentic thus acts as camouflage – not for expropriation per se, but for potential appropriations that function primarily in a »schismo-genetic« manner. The musical object is detached further and further from its original sources and broken down into more and more volatile by-products. All without relinquishing the symbolic profit that these sources can help to generate. »Tele-music« is what people used to call it. »Sampling Safari« would have been a more appropriate name.

Translation: Timothy Jones

¹ See Timothy D. Taylor, »A Riddle Wrapped in a Mystery. Transnational Music Sampling and Enigma's »Return to Innocence«, in René T. A. Lysloff & Leslie C. Gay, Jr. (ed.), *Music and Technoculture*. Middletown, Connecticut, 2003, p. 64–92.

² See Steven Feld, »The Poetics and Politics of Pygmy Pop«, in Georgina Born & David Hesmondhalgh (ed.), *Western Music and Its Others. Difference, Representation and Appropriation in Music*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 2000, p. 254–279 (Herbie Hancock quote, p. 257).

³ In the intro to the first piece, »Deep Forest«, on the CD of the same name (550 Music/Epic, 1992), cited by Feld, »Pygmy Pop«, p. 272.

⁴ See Steven Feld, »A Sweet Lullaby for World Music«, in *Public Culture*, 30 (2000), p. 145–171.

⁵ From Deep Forest's own statement on its second CD, »Bohème«, which received a Grammy in 1995; see Feld, »Sweet Lullaby«, p. 155.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 159 f.

⁷ See Paul Théberge, »Ethnic Sounds. The Economy and Discourse of World Music Sampling«, in Lysloff & Gay (ed.), *Music and Technoculture*, p. 93–108.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

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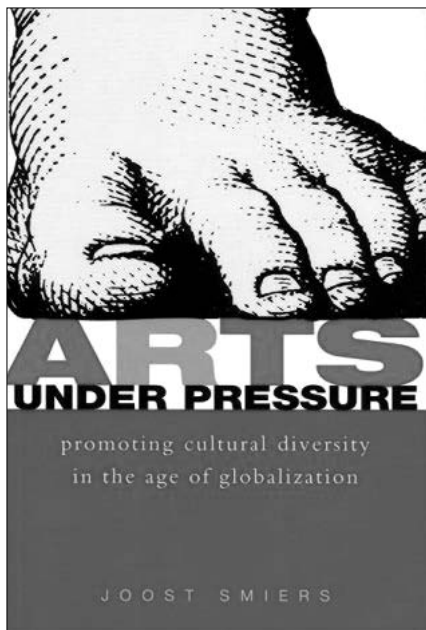
Imagining a world without copyright

Joost Smiers & Marieke Van Schijndel

Copyright once was a means to guarantee artists of a decent income. Apart from the question as to whether it actually functioned as such – most of them never made a penny from and still don't owe a penny to the system – we have to admit that copyright serves an altogether different purpose in the contemporary world. It now is the tool of conglomerates in the music, publishing, imaging, and movie industries to control their markets. They decide whether the materials they have laid their hands on may be used by others. And if they allow it, under what conditions and for what price. European and American legislation extends them that privilege to a widow – when she is no less than seventy years old – after the passing away of the original author! The consequences? The privatization of an ever-increasing share of our cultural expressions, because this is precisely what copyright does. What else? Our democratic right to freedom of cultural and artistic exchange is slowly but surely being taken away from us.

Yet, a fascinating development is taking place before our very eyes. Millions of people exchanging music and movies over the Internet refuse to accept any longer that a mega-sized company can actually own, for example, millions of melodies. So, digitalization is gnawing away at the very fundamentals of the copyright system. But there are other concerns as well. As stated, most artists derive no financial benefits from the copyright system, a system which, in fact has wreaked havoc on them. It is also unacceptable that we have to consume cultural creations the way they were dished out to us, and that we may change neither title nor titbit. We thus have every reason to ponder about a viable alternative to copyright. What might, in our vision, such an alternative conceptualization of copyright look like? To arrive at that alternative, we first have to acknowledge that artists are entrepreneurs. They take the initiative to craft a given work and offer it on a market. Others can also take that initiative, for example a producer or a patron, whom in turn employs artists. All of these artistic initiators have one thing in common: they take entrepreneurial risks.

What copyrights do is precisely to limit those risks. The cultural entrepreneur receives the right to erect a protective barrier around his or her work, notably a monopoly to exploit the work for a seemingly endless period of time. That protection also covers anything that resembles the work in one way or the other! That is bizarre! We must keep in mind of course that every artistic work – regardless of whether it concerns a soap opera, a composition by Luciano Berio, or a movie starring Arnold Schwarzenegger – derives the better part of its substance from the work of others – from the public domain. Originality is a relative conception! In no other culture around the globe, except for the contemporary



Western one, could or can a person ever call himself the owner of a melody, an image, a word! It is therefore an exaggeration to gratuitously allow such work such a far-reaching protection, ownership title, and risk-exclusion - because this is exactly what copyright offers.

One might ask whether such a protective layer is really necessary for the evolving process of artistic creation. Our proposal, which entails three steps, will demonstrate that this is not the case. What then, do we think, can replace copyright? In the first place, a work will have to give it a try on the market on its own, without the luxurious protection offered by copyrights. After all, the first to market has a time and attention advantage. What is interesting about this approach is that this proposal strikes a fatal blow to a few cultural monopolists that, aided by copyright, use their stars, blockbusters, and bestsellers to monopolize the market and

siphon off attention from every other artistic work produced by artists. That is problematic in our society in which we have a great need for that pluriformity of artistic expression.

How do we envision this fatal blow working? If the protective layer that copyright has to offer no longer exists, we can freely exploit all existing artistic expressions and adapt them according to our own insights. This creates a most unpleasant situation for cultural monopolists, as it deprives them of the incentive to continue with their outrageous investments in movies, books, t-shirts, and any other merchandize associated with a single cultural product. After all, why would they continue making these investments if they can no longer control the products stemming from them and exploit them unhindered?

The domination of the cultural market is then taken from their hands. The effect of our proposal is that the cultural market will be cleansed of cultural monopolists, and that the cultural and economic competition between many artists will once again be allowed to have its course. This offers new perspectives for many artists. They are no longer driven from the public eye and many of them will then, for the very first time, be able to make a good living from their work. After all, they will then no longer have to challenge – and bow down to – the market dominance of cultural giants, because that will vanish! The market will be normalized.

It may of course happen that a certain artistic expression demands sizeable initial investments. This is the second situation for which we must find a solution. Think about movies or novels. We propose that the risk bearers – the artist, the producer, or the patron – will receive a one-year usufruct for works of this kind: that is the right to use the fruits of the works derived from the public domain. After all, as was the case with our first example, the artistic work will belong to the public domain immediately after its conception. But in the second situation we describe here there is the difference that the risk taker, who has made a considerable investment, will have one year to exploit the work financially. This will allow the entrepreneur to recoup his or her investments. It will then still be anyone's personal decision whether or not to make extremely high investments, by making a movie, for example, but no one will be granted usufruct of that work for over a year. When that period expires, anyone can do with the work as he or she pleases.

The third situation for which we must conceive of a solution is when a certain artistic creation is not likely to flourish in a competitive market, not even with a one-year usufruct. It may be the case that the public still has to develop a taste for it, but that we still find that, from the perspective of cultural diversity, such a work must be allowed to exist. For this situation it is necessary to install a generous range of subsidies and other stimulating measures, because as a community we should be willing to carry the burden of offering all kinds of artistic expressions a fair chance.

Cultural monopolists desperately want us to believe that, without copyright, we will not have artistic creations and, therefore, no entertainment either. That is nonsense. We will have more, and more diverse ones. A world without copyright is easy to image. The level playing field of cultural production, that is a market accessible for everyone, will once again be restored. A world without copyright offers the guarantee of a good income to many artists, the protection of the public domain of knowledge and creativity, and to us as members of the public that to which we are entitled: a surprisingly rich and varied menu of artistic alternatives.





Active members and affiliates.

Magazines.

3/4

<http://34.sk>

3/4 magazine was established in 1999 under the name Tristvrte revue (later 3/4 REVUE) with the intention to cover the sphere of contemporary visual and performing arts, music and sound art, cinema, etc. It is being distributed in Slovak and Czech republics. Starting as a bimonthly, since 2001 it has been published as a quarterly and its content has focused more on intersections between art, society and technology. Its main aim is to link together communities with different backgrounds, to explore new forms of creativity including new media culture and digital arts, subculture phenomena, cutting-edge music, activism, critical reflections on postmodern society, technologies and urban life, etc. 3/4 is more than a magazine: it is a creative node, unorthodox platform for original projects based on both text and visuals, encouraging people to explore, think and create. Therefore, besides interviews, reviews and articles, 3/4 supports innovative forms of communication based on the paper medium – e.g. several pages of each issue are offered to visual artists to create new works.

34.sk was originally a presentation website of the 3/4 magazine. Nowadays, it features not only info about the printed magazine, but also online-only articles, event guide, link section and recently a blog area with short subjective texts and comments. 34.sk is focusing on contemporary creativity in the post-net society and it has its own content management system allowing the site to be edited by group of people related to the 3/4 printed magazine. Linking virtual space with printed medium, 34.sk wants to slowly evolve to a complex, participatory, semi-open virtual communication platform.

The publisher of 3/4 and 34.sk is Atrakt Art – Association for Advanced Arts and Culture (<http://atrakt-art.sk>). It was established in 2000 in Bratislava. Atrakt Art is also a record label, releasing recordings of innovative contemporary music, a film production company, organizer of NEXT advanced music festival (<http://nextfestival.sk>), organizer of experimental music sessions, concerts, multimedia events and workshops, co-organizer of Multiplace (<http://multiplace.sk>) decentralized new media culture festival and other projects related to art/creativity, media, technology, urban environment (<http://www.citylab.sk>), etc. Since 2004 it has been the co-founding body of independent cultural centre A4 – Zero Space (<http://a4.sk>).



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EVERY THING IS NEW BUT U



Mute

<http://www.openmute.org>

Mute is an online magazine dedicated to exploring culture and politics after the net. Mute combines quarterly issues dedicated to specific topics (Precarious Labour, The Knowledge Commons, etc) with regularly updated articles and reviews. The site also features ongoing coverage of relevant news and events contributed by ourselves and our readers. As well as the online magazine, Mute also publishes a quarterly book (aka Mute Vol. 2) which features selections from current issues together with other online content, specially commissioned and co-published projects, and relevant historical material. Finally, Mute is also an online multi-media resource, with a Public Library where readers can contribute reviews as well as upload media files which flesh out and diversify media history and other of Mute's perennial concerns.

Mute magazine was founded in 1994 to discuss the interrelationship of art and new technologies when the World Wide Web was newborn. But its coverage has expanded to engage with the broader implications of this shift. Mute's investigation of the social, economic, political and cultural formations of 'network societies' maintains an accent on the relationship between technology and the production of new social relations. At the same time, the magazine's remit has grown broader and now includes analyses of geopolitics, culture and contemporary labour that, while necessarily inflected by contemporary developments in technology, go far beyond this. While Mute was born out of a culture that celebrated the democratising potential of new media, it becomes ever more apparent that we need to critically engage with the ways in which new media also reproduce and extend capitalist social relations. Finally, Mute hopes to stimulate approaches to art and politics that challenge the orthodoxies of both the constituted left and 'critical' new media culture.

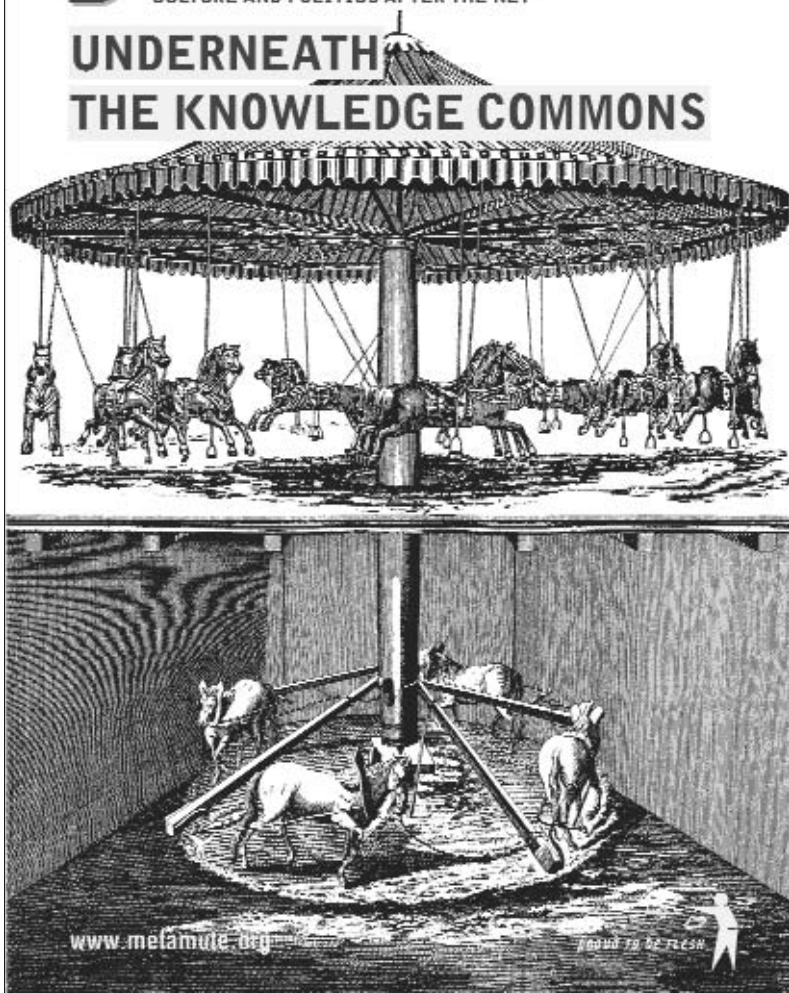
Mute published 'Ceci n'est pas un magazine', a series of mini-manifestoes and progress reports outlining our own plans for a long-term participative publishing model. Part 1 was published in issue 19 (2001), part 2 ('The Magazine that Mistook its Reader for a Hat') in issue 25 (2002/3), and further associated documents have accompanied the recent overhaul of Metamute, all of which are available here. What's documented in these files is one path from traditional top-down publishing (albeit that of small magazine) into the uncharted realms of interactivity. In fits and starts, it portrays Mute's vision of diversification, as we attempt to deal with the promise of new media through the provision of tools, editorial content and peer to peer structures. We now find ourselves a hybrid publication attempting to fuse bottom-up content generation with conventional editorial practices of selection, commissioning and editing.

MUTE

CULTURE AND POLITICS AFTER THE NET

Vol 2 #1
£5/€7/\$6

UNDERNEATH THE KNOWLEDGE COMMONS



Neural

<http://www.neural.it>

Neural is a media culture magazine born in Italy in late 1993 and is printed every four months in two different editions (the English one and the Italian one). The Neural website went online in 1997. Starting from November 2000, it is daily updated with news, reviews, interviews and essays. Some people refers to it as a 'work of art', and it won an Honorary Mention in Prix Ars Electronica 2004 (Net.Vision category). For us it's the best info-gallery we'd want to read. It'd be also defined as our personal narrative of the media culture's evolution, formed by important chunks of information condensed in a limited space.

Among the most valuable data for the project is the readers' feedback, that let us understand new needs and trends. So the magazine's editorial line is constantly changing (even slightly) every issue, and the same happens online. In our perspective suggestions and critiques are vital for the project. And even if compliments are welcomed and encourage us to go on, critiques are the driving force that let us shape the Neural project in better forms. When Neural started the aim was to serve a community with the most idealistic journalistic approach: connecting info and ideas to let people find inspiration for developing their own projects, confronting with others, through a sort of info-node, free for all. Many collaborations started with other entities, and among them some are built (on different levels) with different sympathetic websites/blogs/ mailing lists like We Make Money not Art, Runme.org, Wikiartpedia/uCan and AHA. Neural it's still a not for profit project. All the online content is published under a Creative Commons license.

One of the main characteristics of electronic culture is spreading fast powerful ideas. A good technical hack, as an innovative sound use, or an original concept shown in a proper electronic artwork, are meaningful signals. These signals are ideas, which have to be shared among the worldwide interested community, for a participative development. The aim of Neural is to exchange meaningful ideas concerned to local and international groups of people. This is our primary purpose. So we're interested in ideas, theories and striking practices that break conventions and keep people thinking on what they're doing locally or globally. So one of the resulting values of the magazine is reporting, as stated in a famous nineties slogan, about those who 'thinks globally and acts locally'.

Finally, we're totally committed to continuing keep Neural on print, because printed paper is probably the last organic medium in the post-media era. It represents the luxury of static design and, in the common sense, the safety that your work will not be switched off or deleted.

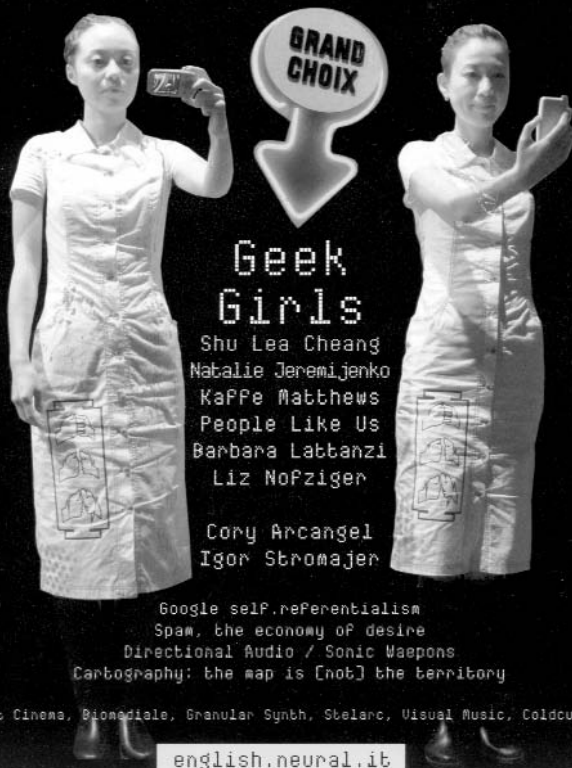


neural

HACKTIVISM

E-MUSIC

NEW MEDIA ART



GRAND CHOIX

Geek Girls

Shu Lea Cheang
Natalie Jeremijenko
Kaffe Matthews
People Like Us
Barbara Lattanzi
Liz Nofziger

Cory Arcangel
Igor Stromajen

Google self.referentialism
Spam, the economy of desire
Directional Audio / Sonic Weapons
Cartography: the map is [not] the territory

Soft Cinema, Biomediale, Granular Synth, Stelarc, Visual Music, Coldcut...

english.neural.it

Issue 24 (English edition) - Europe € 5 - Rest of the World \$ 6.95

Springerin

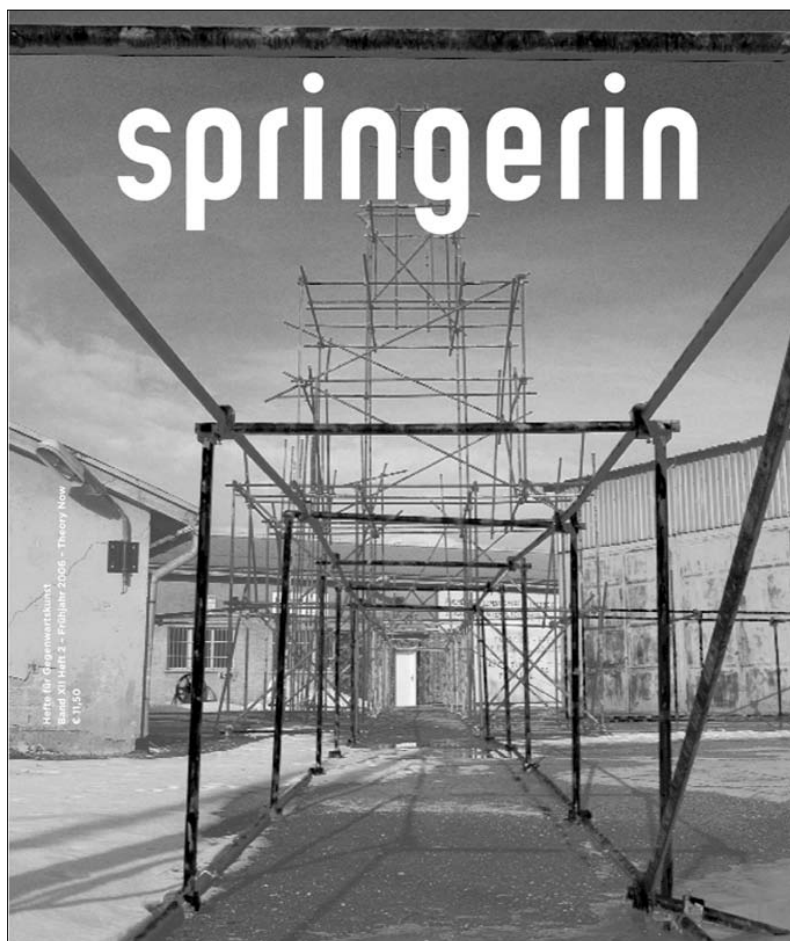
<http://www.springerin.at/>

Springerin is a quarterly magazine dedicated to the theory and critique of contemporary art and culture. Founded in 1995, it addresses a public that perceives cultural phenomena as socially and politically determined. Springerin informs about current events and tendencies in the cultural field by critically circumscribing their conditions and meanings.

The magazine is published in German and distributed internationally. Over the past 11 years, 44 issues have come out; since summer 2001, there is also an English-language website. A special section of every issue (Netzteil) is examining the potentials of new technologies and media. The main section is dedicated to positions, motives, conflicts and debates around a controversial topic in contemporary culture. A section titled Artscribe critically informs about important exhibitions, events and publications.

Springerin addresses a broad public interested in the wide spectrum of contemporary culture. Artists, gallerists, collectors, art pedagogues are served by Springerin as well as readers from the field of the humanities and those generally interested in new media and popular culture.





Zehar

<http://www.zehar.net/>

Zehar is a magazine of art and contemporary culture. Zehar uses a transitory denomination (through) to define its purpose as a receptive intermediary between the artistic community and society at large. The magazine's aim is to maintain a critical reflective spirit, inspired by the conviction of the need for consolidated stable bases, which enrich the context and a plural environment. Zehar is four monthly. In order to encourage the variety of ideas, we devote each issue to one theme and invite a guest editor to work on it. The section titled Shorts presents reviews about exhibitions, events, books and films.

The paper version has two editions, Basque/Spanish and English/Spanish, but the electronic edition is trilingual (<http://www.zehar.net/>). Zehar is published by Arteleku (<http://www.arteleku.net/>), a public art centre under the auspices of the Culture Department of the Regional Government of Gipuzkoa, Basque Country, Spain.

The first issue of Zehar came out in November 1989 as a newsletter of Arteleku, but the issue 29 of October 1995 marked the beginning of a transition period, and from then on the magazine worked with the idea of the archive as a documentary space. Transition was also the name chosen for the latest issue, Zehar 57 of November 2006. We wanted to convey the idea of progress and change. Although we were aware that these states sometimes cause instability, we also think that they provide the basis for a dynamic interaction process. In this respect, we tackle two political transitions: the transition to democracy in Spain, and the transition in Armenia. The idea of dissent or -in Chantal Mouffe's words- the concept of "friendly enemies", and artistic practice as an aesthetic and political project, were the threads running through the various articles. We also analysed the future of cultural policies, which often serve to legitimise political interests, and the debate on financing artistic production.

Interviews, texts, photographs gradually make up the working processes and form the archive culture. This culture is based on the collection, re-appropriation and re-mixing that characterises the visual arts but also music. Archive that allows re-interpretation and a re-reading. Archive that question memory while at the same time reactivating it. Archive which transforms the present but also the future.



Transición Transition







Active members and affiliates.

Affiliates.

Arteleku

<http://www.arteleku.net/>

After considering the situation that contemporary art was going through during the 80s, in 1987 Gipuzkoa Provincial Council encouraged the creation of a space designed to promote art and contemporary culture.

Arteleku operates outside conventional norms and has gradually become a meeting point for creating, reflecting on, experimenting with and disseminating art and culture. It promotes a kind of teaching that transcends boundaries and a greater degree of individualisation in the face of the standardisation process that we can observe in traditional centres where art is taught and disseminated. Arteleku is located on the outskirts of Donostia-San Sebastián in the district of Loiola. In its 5,000 m², distributed over three floors, local and international artists and anyone interested in improving their knowledge of art and contemporary creative work can find a professional support structure and a physical space where they can work, carry out research and exhibit. Its installations and facilities are constantly being updated to meet the increasingly varied needs of modern creative artists: a documentation centre specialising in contemporary art, an ultramodern multimedia room, spaces loaned out on a temporary basis, a lecture hall, a set, industrial production workshops...

A significant interdisciplinary activity programme enables it to act as an observatory of the latest artistic trends, either through projects of its own or those produced in collaboration with others, - monographic courses, workshops and seminars run by specialised technicians, exhibitions or performances coordinated by guest artists. This centre, which is a symbol of creative activity in the Basque Country, aims to a certain extent to provide a response to the way that the art scene has evolved, which has been heavily influenced by globalisation and new technologies.



Free Association

<http://www.freeassociation.info/>

Free Association seeks to celebrate independent cultural projects and explore the function of creative activity, chart new directions in critical practice and uncover the avant garde legacies to the present. As a consequence it tackles the changes that are taking place in the creation, management and distribution of art and its attendant writing.





This image is part of the series 'Angry Artworks' by Euan Sutherland



Arteypensamiento

<http://www.unia.es/artpen/>

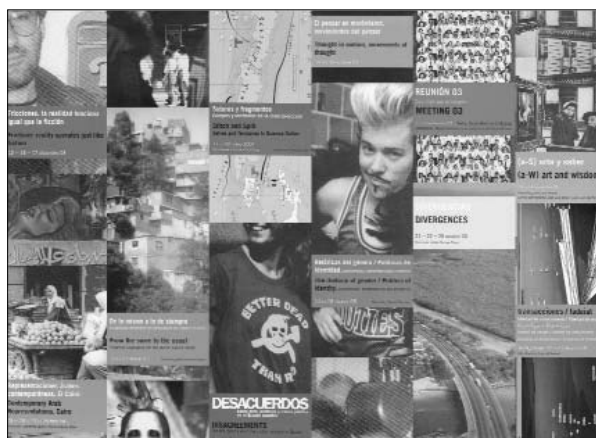
Arteypensamiento (artandthinking) is a project organised by the International University of Andalusia with the aim of incorporating the university into the discussion, production, diffusion and consolidation of contemporary creation and thought. It should be seen not simply as a way of contributing to the International University of Andalusia's academic activities, but more as a way of involving the university in the cultural and social framework, and as a means of increasing its influence on the social fabric.

Arteypensamiento, is based on the concept of re/thinking, the relationship between art, culture and society, and as a result aims at re/formulating models, formats, modes of presentation and diffusion: workshops, laboratories, seminars, conferences, encounters, projects on the Net, publications.

In line with the concept of re/thinking, Arteypensamiento, proposes a model adapted to the needs of today's artists, to methods of production, and to the diffusion of contemporary creation, bearing in mind the socio-economic, political, and philosophical reality of our times.

It would be interesting to generate a dialogue between art, thought, and society, as well as to transfer and interrelate artistic experience and contemporary thought within the context of the space in which it is exhibited, and, at the same time, to see the context not only as a place of presentation but also as a place which creates its own concepts.

Arteypensamiento believes that it is essential that spaces of knowledge cease to be seen solely as grand places for contemplation and become creative and productive spaces, which allow artists and thinkers to carry out projects which change the tendency to contemplate and over-concentrate on the object, and move towards a culture of process, motion, and dialogue, so as to give art and thinking a sense of importance in social dialogue, opening new ways of communication, cooperation and co-production with other national and international institutions and spaces which have encouraged the development of nonconformist and plural views.



UNIA arteypensamiento

www.unia.es/arteypensamiento



UNIA
arteypensamiento



Street Level Photoworks

<http://www.streetlevelphotoworks.org/>

Street Level Photoworks is a gallery and open access organisation that promotes the creative use of photomedia and supports artists through gallery exhibitions, commissions, off-site projects, publishing and critical forums. New work in photography and media art practice are promoted by artists from local, national and international sources. The exhibition programme is made up of invited projects and from open submissions. Recent exhibitions include 'Jo Spence Photographer: Works from the Archive' in association with the Jo Spence Memorial Archive; Catriona Grant's 'The Examination Room', in association with Belfast Exposed; Denis Doran 'Common Ground'; and 'The Jump Films' by Mark Neville. Proposals from artists and curators are accepted and collaborative work is particularly sought in the fields of media art and social engagement.

Recognised for its integrated practice, the organisation has education at the centre of its ethos – this includes work with groups and individuals marginalised from participation in forms of mainstream culture. Over the past two years this has included projects with some of Glasgow's transitory asylum seeking community in the North of the City. (<http://www.multi-story.org>)

Throughout 2006/07 the organisation will be based in temporary premises and will be developing its artistic and education programme through collaboration and new partnerships with artists, other arts institutions, non-art agencies, community and voluntary-sector groups. It is part of the Trongate 105 initiative which involves several arts organisation in the development of the current building into an innovative arts and education complex which will open in 2008. This will see a range of facilities for the production and presentation of new work and a range of access initiatives for the public unparalleled in Scotland.



Transmediale

<http://www.transmediale.de>

Transmediale is a festival for art and digital culture. It is a forum of communication for artists, media workers and a broad public interested in arts. transmediale includes exhibitions, conferences, live performances, artist presentations and a variety of fringe events throughout Berlin.

Transmediale was founded in 1988 as a video art festival and has taken place annually, in Berlin, ever since. First conceived in close relation to the Berlinale film festival, the festival changed its name from 'VideoFest' to 'transmediale' in 1997/98, thus reflecting the fact that its programmatic scope had broadened to encompass a wide range of multimedia-related art forms. Since then, digital technologies have become firmly integrated into our everyday lives. 'Digital culture' is no avantgarde terrain any more. transmediale has responded to this development by focusing its programmes not on the latest technical novelties and scientific speculations, but on the actual usage that people are making of such technologies.

One way of emphasising the cultural approach to media technologies has been to formulate themes for the annual festivals that are not technologically focused, but refer to the engagement with technologies as a social paractice. Thus, we went from 'Do It Yourself!' (2001) and 'Go Public!' (2002), through 'Play Global!' (2003) and 'Fly Utopia!' (2004), to 'Basics' (2005) and 'Reality Addicts' (2006). The programme of Transmediale focuses on art that reflects about social and cultural meaning of technologies and media. At the same time, the festival places these artistic practices in the wider context of digital culture by offering a series of related conferences, workshops and discussions.





Other Founding Members

ACOUSTIC.SPACE

Acoustic Space
<http://www.rirc.lv/>

Balkon

Balkon
<http://www.balkon.ro/>

DE:BUG

De:Bug
<http://www.de-bug.de/>

Flirt

Flirt
<http://www.flirtonline.org/>



KUDA Media Center
<http://www.kuda.org/>

new media scotland

New Media Scotland
<http://www.mediascot.org/>

Umelec

Umelec
<http://www.divus.cz/umelec/>

.// undo (on {dú})

Undo Magazine
<http://www.cnca.gob.mx/undo/>



"This short history of Mag.net, as well as the book which it introduces, should however not be read as an obituary, but as a monument to the desire for sharing and working together. The magazines involved represent some of the most important media for the critical reflexion of culture and art in an age strongly influenced by digital technologies and their social repercussions. Their persistence - some of them are still going strong after over twelve years - testifies to the importance of print in a time that purports to be 'digital' while remaining intensely analogue in many aspects, for better and for worse."

Andreas Broeckmann, artistic director of Transmediale