DE 2012

DATA_
ECOLOGIES_
2012

15/06
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*THE_MAP_*
*&_THE_*
TERRITORY

INTRODUCTION
THE_MAP_&_THE_TERRITORY

Speaking of an experience, object or place without abstraction leads to Borges' tragic Cartographers' full size map of the Kingdom, something as useless as it is accurate [Borges46]. In order to discuss, we abstract from the Territory to the Map and attempt to include all that is necessary [compass angles, melodies] while removing what is not [shades of grass, sniffles of the trombonist]. How many ways is this abstraction possible? What are the important abstractions for which audiences and goals? How do we combine abstractions in order to reconstruct [as much as we are able to] the original unabstracted something?

"The Map and the Territory" is the fifth in our series of Data Ecologies symposia. The core of the Data Ecologies has been the interplay and contradictions between present, existing, "real" things and their abstractions; physicality and virtuality, models in the physical sense [abstract model of a physical system] and models in the mathematical sense [concrete models of an abstract system]. Previously we have looked at computational models as a basis for physics, systems for artificial evolution, quantum models of language and learning as well as the idea of value and money as an abstraction thereof. Through all of these previous iterations of Data Ecologies, we have been repeatedly confronted with the challenges of describing processes; economic processes, physical processes, computational processes, evolutionary processes. The techniques people use to describe these processes are manifold. Independent of the method used, whether it is done via flow charts, Feynman diagrams, predator-prey models, complexity curves or pseudocode, they all show a hint at some of the problems associated with the challenge of description. So, for the fifth iteration of Data Ecologies, we have decided to concentrate upon that very challenge of description – notation. How do we formulate what we have seen and experienced, how do we state what should eventuate, how do we discuss the processes we wish to construct, coerce or control without building the entire process in advance? The simplest – or better said, most known and widely used form of abstraction is that of language. By speaking about something we are constantly abstracting. Abstraction as in finding a simplified, even generalised form of a physicality or existence in time and space and reducing that wholeness to words. Language can be used to describe what should happen, from the simplest need for food to complex forms of desire. Language can also be used to describe what is and what has happened. Storytelling is perhaps the most universal human language trait and is claimed to be the basis for our learning and fundamental comprehension of a surrounding world. Through the creation of stories, we explain to ourselves and all the ones around us how and why [we understand that] things are the way they are. Language also acts as a technique for enabling and controlling collaboration, as we can coordinate our actions and discuss possibilities without having to actually construct the things we are discussing. So perhaps one could say that language is the core abstraction, the core notation in our experience.

Abstraction is a graded process, with various degrees of abstraction possible. Some abstractions are hardly less complicated than the original. On the other hand, a very high level of abstraction can be obtained, taking a piece of theatre and reducing it to "a tragic tale of love and loss told amongst the ruins of post war Dresden" which may be accurate as far as it goes but avoids much of the details of the piece of theatre itself. Theatre nevertheless offers a multitude of examples of textual abstraction, with a vast collection of pieces that are notated as pages of textual dialogue and occasional instructions as to movement or effects.

The formalities used in theatre scripts are simple and readily understood and use little more than standard white space and new line typography to communicate the structures of the theatre piece. It is perhaps for those constructions that fall outside the realm of language that diagrammatic and other notational principles become more relevant. Choreography is hugely problematic, with dancers moving in three dimensions as well as moving their limbs. Music is simpler but also non textual; early religious chants were notated using the solfège system commonly known as the "Do Re Mi" technique of note naming [made popular by the musical "Sound of Music" but existing centuries before, probably imported as with many mediaeval innovations from the Arab world], however describing something as simple as a children's song with these techniques might be rather too daunting. There are many reasons to move away from language as the form of abstraction we wish to use for certain notations of specific systems.

For the sake of indicating where we think we can work towards, we select one well developed area of notation as a discussion core. One easily recognisable example of non-textual notation is the musical staff of five parallel horizontal lines for Western music. Even those of us with limited musical experience know that the lines represent notes and the ordering of them from left to right indicate a process in time – the construction of melody or something approximating it. Notes have different shapes to indicate their length, notes are arranged above one another to indicate simultaneity, extra curves indicate glissando and slides, vertical lines break the music into bars, numbers indicate time signatures. The role of staff notation is principally twofold; to let a composer notate what should happen in a piece of music, and for a musical transcriber to notate what did happen in a piece of music. These roles are of course not mutually exclusive and it is possibly the most important

role of a form of notation to allow a group of musicians to develop a piece of music by agreeing upon what they will do, doing it and then adapting their intentions and notating those adaptations so as to collaborate and discuss their musical development. This role of notation as a technology for mediating communication and collaboration is perhaps its most important. Of course the staff is not a complete description of a musical piece. Reconstructing the original from the abstraction leaves many open factors, where multiple perspectives might help but it is rare that a collection of abstractions can completely define the original. Even something as well defined as Bach's Goldberg Variations receives two massively different embodiments at the hands of Glenn Gould, let alone from different musicians. For many this is a wonderful expression of the freedom of interpretation, but for many composers it blocks their desire to construct a certain type of musical experience. To this end composers and musicians have developed ever more complex collections of musical notation extensions including different staves, note shapes, textual guides and a plethora of symbols. In addition to classical notation systems, musicians and composers continue to develop further non standardised musical notations, such as those collected in [Sauer09].

Thus we see the three core contexts where notation is used:

- *To describe what should happen, e.g. as writers or composers, to plan, command or design [prescriptive description, perhaps "prescription"],*
- *to describe what did happen, e.g. by a musicologist or transcriber, an archaeologist or other recorder of events and their traces ["postscription" as the appropriate term offers itself],*
- *and most importantly to assist communication and dis cussion as an act of composition or construction, e.g. a playing ensemble, a design team, a dance troupe.*

This year's Data Ecologies edition aims to discover and discuss ways that practitioners in various fields are dealing with the processes of notation. Some fields, as music already mentioned above, are well defined, as are certain realms in mathematics, theatre and software development. Other fields have multiple notations that could be standardised or universal but are not, such as choreography and gaming, while other domains, such as interactive multimedia installations and experimental electronic music appear to suffer from an almost complete lack of any usable notational principles, relying upon verbal description, hand waving and comparisons to existing systems. There are many reasons for the lack of notation in these domains. Part of the problem lies in the multitude of variables being dealt with: actions of computational systems, movement in space, multiple choices of actions and multiple media streams. Computational systems offer a whole extra layer of problems in trying to notate what should happen at a detailed level, with multiple timelines and reactive systems intertwining with no levels of abstract description. Within musical notation several techniques for dealing with options such as multiple endings and improvisational indications were created and discovered , which may be applicable to the challenges of notating interacting and open systems.

Our primary focus and that of several participants is that of openly explorable, interactive media enriched mixed reality environments. Much of the work that has happened in this realm is explorative. Many of us are developing new techniques, exploring new media, new technologies, new approaches to the creation of cultural works of many types. Recently the realm of Aesthetic Research [see e.g. [Carter05,Barrett07]] has gained wider acceptance and has received further attention requiring the development of research methodologies that enable

the communication and discussion of experimental works. Much of this documentation has defaulted to still and moving images of the works with textual accompaniment and some diagrams that attempt to describe structural properties. Each practitioner has found their own language to attempt to describe their developments and observations. We feel that they and we would be well served to have a wider variety of notational principles to draw upon in order to notate these works. Not only would this facilitate communication with people interested in the research, but should help us sharpen our own analysis of what we are doing as practitioners, to document how we made something work for the next time we wish to build it, to repair the things that are not working as we expected and to discuss with colleagues and collaborators. Like the Ariekei in [Mieville11], without abstraction and metaphor our ability to think is curtailed. We won't be able to have a finalised handbook at the end of these few days of discussion.
Still we hope we become more familiar with possible ways and methods about how we can communicate between ourselves, with our collaborators, our audience and our partners in creating the works we wish to create.

We have invited a number of practitioners and thinkers who might be said to lie predominately on the line between the arts, or cultural production, and research or invention [Brouwer05, Daniels08]. These are the people who are trying to solve the same, or similar problems who we hope can learn from one another.

A brief listing might be as follows:

- Elisabeth Schimana will share with us some of the challenges associated with the transcription of electronic music.

- We will learn from ideas about static semantic networks on display from Gerhard Dirmoser and explore the modelling of time as exploration paths in such networks.

- The interactions of dynamic, or live, coding and choreography systems will be raised and discussed by Kate Sicchio.

- Once time paths diverge as choices are made by visitors to and users of a system, player of a game, we end up with the problems of game design that will be explored by Lev Ledit.

- A similar collection of problems with the addition of physical space arises in interactive media systems where the Field authoring system and their use of it will be discussed by Marc Downie.

- Bringing in objects, whether as maps or props, forces us to consider the agency of visitors to and users of the objects and the space with Robert Rotenberg's analysis of material agency.

- The construction of spaces filled with objects such as exhibition spaces is the theme of Herbert Lachmayer's Staging Knowledge studies and creations.

- The composition of theatrical spaces with repeated restaging involving unpredictable inputs is the core of Toxic Dreams' practice.

We have invited these practitioners and thinkers here because we observe that they are all dealing with related problems and have developed partial solutions, many of which we believe will complement and or contradict the developments of other practitioners in the room. Thus the largest part of the day, between the talks and afterwards, is given over to discussion, where not only the participants named but the participants in the audience will be able to bring in their own expe-riences and opinions for a lively development.

We wish you, and us, all a hearty dose of ideas for, about and with abstraction and notation.

The Organisers

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MODERATION
SIMONE BORIA [UK/A]

Freelance journalist and mediactivist. Lecturer for film and media art at the Art University in Linz. Born in Manchester. Studied fashion- and costume design, fine art and art theory in the UK. Worked on many projects within the field of interculture, gender, media and art.
Lives and works in Linz.

TIMETABLE

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DAY 01
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13:30 TIME'S UP [AT]
LUNCH BREAK
15:30 ROBERT ROTENBERG [US]
COFFEE BREAK
17:00 ELISABETH SCHIMANA [AT]
18:00 DISCUSSION

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DAY 02
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11:00 TOXIC DREAMS [AT]
12:00 MARC DOWNIE [US]
LUNCH BREAK
14:00 KATE SICCHIO [UK]
15:00 HERBERT LACHMAYER [AT]
COFFEE BREAK
16:30 LEV LEDIT [AT]
17:30 DISCUSSION

PHYSICAL NARRATION

TIME'S UP

Time's Up's installations and performances have been dealing with space and its representation, perception, exploration and delineation since the Hyperfitness Studios in 1997. Arranging interactions, exploration pathways and sequences of events and interactions in a form of architectural dramaturgy, the experiences of visitors were choreographed through architectural structures in the space. The Transient performance series [1999-2002] explored the recreation of internet streaming spaces in physical venues, Trans Codec Express [2002] explored textual online spaces and their correlations with physical spaces. BodySPIN [2000-2006] embedded the walker within dynamic architectures influenced by the actions of their body in a virtual world, Reality Shift [2004] used mechanical systems to create a simple dynamical labyrinth that managed to even get the makers lost in its twisting cylinders. The physically instantiated semantic networks of Twenty Seconds into the Future [2010] and Im Tresor – der Schein trügt [2011] lead visitors from one part of the story space to another, the physical-media narrative connections of Domestic Bliss [2009] and Unattended Luggage [2012] cross reference narrative timelines and objects to build immersive storyworlds. Through all these projects, we have explored notational principles in order to try and analyse, communicate, discuss and develop the pieces, ever aware that the physicality of installations lends itself poorly to map like mappings.

ABOUT

".... IT TAKES ALL THE RUNNING YOU CAN DO, JUST TO STAY IN PLACE." - ´THE RED QUEEN EFFECT´

Founded in 1996, Time's Up has its principal locus in the Linz harbour of Austria. Its mission is to investigate the ways in which people interact with and explore their physical surroundings as a complete context, discovering, learning and communicating as they do.

Thus our research is based upon constructing interactive situations not unlike the normal physical world, inviting an audience into them and encouraging their playful experientance-driven exploration of the space and its behaviours, alone and in groups. In this research process we use tools from the arts and design, mathematics, science and technology as well as sociology and cultural studies. Our goals are to collaboratively investigate the world and its options with a general public, communicating and discussing these discoveries through workshops, publications, teaching and symposia.

MATERIAL AGENCY OF THE MAP
ROBERT ROTENBERG

Agency is a quality of human beings. It refers to the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act. A person's action almost always conveys her intent to other people. Such messaging is the comprehensible component of action, its pragmatic context. Material objects enter into this exchange of meanings between people because implicit messages are built into them by design.
This would be of little consequence except in those instances where some of these messages modify or augment the actor's intentions. We respond when an object speaks to us, or tells us where or when to go. When we design, we are imagining a specific response by the consumers of our work. When that response in fact occurs, the immediate cause of the response is the object, hence, a material agency at work. Maps are designed objects that imagine a specific response, both to context, to form and to function. While a focus on the potential agency of a particular map can be a useful exercise, this talk will instead seek out at maps with agentive force that emerge out of assemblages of non-map material.
Borrowing a tool from Deleuze and Guattari work [1987], we will attempt to discover objects that are not intended to be maps in the formal sense, but can serve nevertheless as directional guides, or clues, toward a desired goal. We will offer each other examples from a variety of media and settings that can all be subsumed under one territory or another.

ABOUT

Professor Rotenberg received his Ph.D. in anthropology from University of Massachusetts, Amherst and has taught at DePaul University since 1979. He teaches courses in many aspects of anthropology, with research interests that involve the city, the museum and material agency.
http://las.depaul.edu

DIGITAL NIRVANA
ELISABETH SCHIMANA

What code do we leave for the others? Files? Patches? Description? In the long tradition of musical culture a powerful tradition is interpretation. For interpertation one media has to be translated into another. But very rare this process is going on within the electronic or digital music community. Most of the time the performer is the composer and only she or he knows. So one could span a space from digital nirvana to grave symbols in stone. I'm gliding in that space.

ABOUT

Elisabeth Schimana *http://elise.at*
Works as a composer, performer and radio artist.

She studied Electroacoustic and Experimental Music at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna and musicology and ethnology at the Universit of Vienna. In her works she has been dealing with space / body / electronic since many years. She is also the founder of IMA Institut für Medienarchäologie.

MISE EN SCÈNE
TOXIC DREAMS

We work in cycles, which means we look at our work as a continuous process, over a long time, as opposed to the single-unit production. Working over a long period and with several productions that are intertwined thematically allows us to demonstrate that every reading or staging is a political act, every interpretation an exercise of power. We can, over time, dramatize the process that bestows the force of "truth" upon certain cultural voices and interpretations. It shows how isolated points of view are subordinated to more systematic perspectives allied with institutional power, be it the power of the state or the literary and cultural establishments. It visualizes, over a number of productions, the play of meaning across a field of knowledge. It visualizes the process that grants certain aggressive voices the status of cultural history and excludes the voices of the disenfranchised. When a text is reexamined over a couple of performances it allows us to dramatize history's reliance on the written text and its exclusion of those points of view, tentative and impermanent, which are not written down, not subject to the linearity of writing. It challenges the assumption that history in the theatre means fictionalized costume drama. It suggests instead that theatre, on account of its pretense, its use of simultaneous actions and its separation of the role from actor, is the most suitable medium in which to "write" history.

ABOUT

Since 1997 we have been putting on shows that deal with the not knowing... shows that busy themselves with the slippery nature of reality... shows that refuse coherent, narrative, through lines... shows that celebrate the ambiguity of everyday's life... shows that became more and more fragmented as time went by...

We are committed to ensemble work, we believe tha craft and skills still matter to the process of making theatre... we try to keep rehearsals as long as we can afford, we believe that the show finds itself during the work... we resist/object to the importance given to text over other aspects of performance [actors, set, music, media etc...]....we think that the best way to view our shows is to accept confusion as part of the experience of sitting in the theatre... we put shows that ask the audience to make up its own mind, we don't know better...

We are mind jugglers... vaudeville clowns... film buffs ... popular culture junkies... gertrude stein followers... we like silent movies... godard... musicals... we are liars... cheap dancers... risk takers... bad gamblers... we love the old fashioned, big acting style theatre, we don't know what to do with it... we can still watch someone slams into a door, it still makes us laugh...

toxic dreams was founded 1997 by Kornelia Kilga [producer] and Yosi Wanunu [director]. Associated members are Michael Strohmann [video and music], Irene Coticchio and Anna Mendelssohn [performers].

www.toxicdreams.at

ART AS INQUIRY IN THE OPEN STUDIO.

MARC DOWNIE

Computers grow more powerful every month, dressed in new interfaces and displays, wielding new algorithms against ever expanding datasets. But the relationships on offer between artist and computer have remained, in many ways, remarkably stable – tools, platforms and communities grow or shrink on timescales of decades. Disciplines, and ultimately industries, often seem content to live on the surface of computation. How can art and the digital catalyze each other? The immense challenges, and equally immense opportunities, for creating with computers demands new tools and programming paradigms for art-making – yet these tools are hard to ground, make or even theorize about. As a practicing artist I have caught glimpses of solutions to this growing dilemma in cinema, performance and installation; each incorporating, but interrogating, techniques drawn from AI, games and computer graphics. I will talk about these sightings in a series of artworks that my group has made that engage photography, notation and large datasets. Ultimately, in an era where science and engineering are becoming increasingly open – open source, open access, and open data – I propose that the practices of artists, scientists and engineers have much more in common than their disciplinary boundaries and traditions might be comfortable with. I suggest a conversation between art, science and the humanities that is both urgent and broad, and one that escapes conventionalized attempts to share values or aesthetics and concentrates instead on commonalities of practice.

ABOUT

21

Marc Downie studied theoretical physics at Cambridge and artificial intelligence at MIT. He is a co-founder of OpenEndedGroup, an independent digital art collective based in New York, whose pioneering approach to digital art frequently combines three signature elements: non-photorealistic 3D rendering; the incorporation of body movement by motion-capture and other means; and the autonomy of artworks directed or assisted by artificial intelligence. Over the last ten years this group has worked in the broadest variety of media and venues: making art for façade, gallery, dance, stage and cinema; responding to an ever expanding range of materials – drawing, motion capture, photography, music and architecture. Always in collaboration and always crossing disciplinary boundaries, they enter and exit fields without permission from, and without deference to, established disciplinary structures. The group have been resident artists and researchers at institutions around the world including Lincoln Center / USA, EMPAC / USA, Le Fresnoy / France. OpenEndedGroup are presently in residence at the Isabella Stewart Gardner museum in Boston.

HACKING CHOREOGRAPHY
KATE SICCHIO

Hacking choreography explores both the overlap of programming and coding languages and choreography, as well as principles of computer hacking such as re-purposing or subverting. Drawing on similarities such as defining terms and executing commands, choreography becomes a code run by dancers, but also code for movement may be considered choreography. Throughout this project a practice-as-research approach has been taken in exploring these concepts and various studies have been created to 'hack' choreography. These include creating a dance coding language based on Java that is hacked during a performance, hacking Fluxus scores, and letting dancers hack the performance. The ongoing aims of this research is to continue to find the similarities between code and choreography through both choreographic devices and programming languages, as well as find if this may find implications in areas such as live notation or live coding.

ABOUT

Kate Sicchio is a multiplicity. She is a choreographer, media artist, and performer. Her work includes dance performances, installations, web and video projects and has been shown in Philadelphia, New York City, Canada, Germany and the UK at venues such as Banff New Media Institute and WAX Brooklyn. Her research has been published in International Journal of Performing Arts and Digital Media and presented at ISEA, Digital Resources in Humanities and Arts, Congress of Research on Dance and others. She has recently completed her PhD at University of East London and is currently Senior Lecturer in Dance at University of Lincoln, UK.

"FORECAST THE UNPREDICTABLE"
LEV LEDIT

23

I will talk about the challenge of game designers to define a complete new way how to describe a game everytime, when we want to create a new one. All higher animals including humans play and all play means something. Little cats for example pretend being wild big and strong animals. which is an interesting abstraction-level in a quite natural behaviour. a gamedesign document is an abstract description of a tool which should motivate abstract behaviour for "learning" reasons. sometimes, a prototype is the only possible way to describe a game, sometimes excelsheets, sometimes prosa and rarely poems and most of the time a mixture.

ABOUT

Lev Ledit is CEO and Game Designer at „GAME GESTALT". He invented and initiated the virtual world "Papermint". Previously he was designer at Rockstar Vienna. Building on his experience as a film-maker and game designer as well as his academic studies, he teaches "Game-Design" at the University of Vienna, the Vienna University of Technology, and the universities of applied science in Graz, Hagenberg and Vienna. He is speaker at international conferences including "Nordic Game", "MindTrek" or "CORP". He has programmed and designed multimedia applications and games for several museums, including the Austrian national library. Lev Ledit is expert for the Austrian government for computer games evaluation.

ABSTRACT_STAGING KNOWLEDGE-
AN ACTIVE DECADENCE

HERBERT LACHMAYER, JUNE/01/2012

The "Staging Knowledge" format has set itself the goal of establishing an artistic-scientific research practice at the interface of knowledge production and knowledge representation as an experimental experiential medium of artistic productivity. A multi-media "knowledge space" is designed and implemented in exhibition format. This space consists of walls which convey information ["Hermeneutic Wallpapers" with integrated media installations, an emblematic-symbolic floor covering – "Psychonautic Carpet"]. This is intended to indicate that the associative content of discursive knowledge is based on strategies of artistic productivity as a reality of imagination. The artistic-cognitive "intelligence of taste" is to emerge on this "stage" – an intelligence which, usually in suppressed form, comes to bear in the unconscious production of imagery and fantasies in innovative acts of science. This artistic-scientific process of research finds it implementation in "Staging Knowledge" exhibitions, including the rhetorical-performative presence of experts, artists and students which transform the exhibitions into a "stage of knowledge".

The method is based on contextualizing the complex contents and applying different methods from various perspectives- translating into reality a scientifically appealing "artistic research practice" serving as an inspiring medium of knowledge.
The themes that are reflected on by means of "aesthetic-cognitive" strategies of representation and then disseminated include the following: "intelligence of taste" [Geschmacksintelligenz] as potential "aesthetic knowledge". An attempt is made to relate with the end of the 18th century [a debut de siècle] as marking the beginning of modernity and using its sense of freedom and exemplary individualism to "arrive in the present at the beginning of the 21st century".

ABOUT

Professor Herbert Lachmayer [*1948 Vienna] studied philosophy, sociology and art history in Vienna, Frankfurt/Main and Berlin.

Teaching activities: since 1991: Professorship at the University of Art and Design in Linz, Departement for "Staging Knowledge and Imaginative Rhetorics", Institute of Fine Art and Cultural Theory. Spring quarter 2009: visiting professorship at the Stanford University – Department for Comparative Literature. Since 2008 lecturing at the Bauhaus University Weimar.

Exhibition activities [selected]: Lebens[t]räume [Erfurt, 2011]. Gustav Mahler- Productive decadence around 1900 [Berlin 2011], "Phantasy and Pharmacie" [Vienna 2011]. Black, Red, Gold - the German colours from Jena [Jena 2010]. Summoning of National Identity – the Bernhard chamber: Neogothic at the Heart of Classicism [Weimar Palace, 2009/10]. Haydn Explosive – A European Career at the Court of the Esterházy Princes [Eisenstadt 2009]. Why did Carl August need a Goethe? [Weimar, 2008]. Mozart.
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