I AM A FUTURE PLACE

FUTURE PLACES 2008
FESTIVAL PROCEEDINGS

UT Austin | Portugal
International Collaboratory for Emerging Technologies, CoLab

FCT Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia
Ministério da Ciência, Tecnologia e Ensino Superior

The University of Texas at Austin

U.PORTO

SPONSORED BY:

BRANDIA CENTRAL

duvideo

inovelli

VSMAU

PORTO Câmara Municipal

PortoDigital

GRUPO RAR

Público

www.futureplaces.org

2008

PORTO

7-19 OUT

DIGITAL MEDIA AND LOCAL CULTURES

FUTURE PLACES

DIGITAL MEDIA FESTIVAL

FUTURE PLACES 2008 ORGANIZED BY

UT AUSTIN - PORTUGAL PROGRAM, DIGITAL MEDIA

FUNDAÇÃO PARA A CIÊNCIA E TECNOLOGIA

IN COOPERATION WITH

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

UNIVERSIDADE NOVA DE LISBOA

CURATED BY

HEITOR ALVELOS

KAREN GUSTAFSON

www.futureplaces.org

CONTENTS

keys

06 MANUEL HEITOR, ANTÓNIO CÂMARA, JOSÉ MARQUES DOS SANTOS

maps

09 **DIGITAL MEDIA, LOCAL CULTURES**
SHARON STROVER

11 **NO LONGER LONGING: DIGITAL MEDIA AS THE AGENT OF CONTEXTUAL CHANGE**
HEITOR ALVELOS

14 **THINKING ABOUT DIGITAL MEDIA**
KAREN GUSTAFSON

crossroads

17 **IN THE FUTURE LURKS THE POSSIBILITY**
NUNO AZEVEDO

17 **I AM SOMEHOW IN-BETWEEN**
MIKE HARDING

19 **FUTURE PLACES OF ACTION AND TRANSFORMATION**
LUÍSA RIBAS

bridges

23 **THE UNIVERSITY OF PORTO AND THE NEW MEDIA**
ARTUR PIMENTA ALVES

26 **ACTIVE MEDIA 2.0**
STEVEN DEVLEMINCK AND BORIS DEBACKERE

29 **DIGITAL MEDIA AND LOCAL CULTURES**
DANIEL PIRES

31 **THE DAY STOP STOPPED STOPPING**
ANSELMO CANHA AND HEITOR ALVELOS

37 **URBANSYNC: AS WE MAY FEEL?!**
STEPHAN BAUMANN

monuments

45 **DIGITÓPIA @ FUTURE PLACES 2008**
RUI PENHA

47 **INTERFACE DESIGN FOR MOBILE DEVICES**
NUNO CORREIA AND MÓNICA MENDES

50 **LIVING ROOM PLANKTON**
FILIPE PAIS

51 **TIME SIFTER**
SHLOMIT LEHAVI

53 **BURNING THE SOUND**
RUDOLFO QUINTAS

58 **REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST FUTURE PLACES FESTIVAL**
GEOFF MARSLETT

squares

61 **THE FUTURE IS HERE**
FÁTIMA SÃO SIMÃO

64 **FUTURE PLACES 2008 CREDITS**

keys

Future Places is about experiencing knowledge networks. It considers emerging challenges on innovation patterns, which requires us to look at competence building and the need to better understand the process of building knowledge-driven societies worldwide.

Overall, it refers to the evolving phenomenon of democratizing innovation, which I argue does require a serious commitment in the advanced training of more human resources and in supporting and promoting their research through knowledge networks. This is because it has become a commonplace to say that “knowledge is increasingly important”. Commonplaces are comfortable, but often sterile, both intellectually and in terms of suggesting actions to private and public decision makers, given that it is difficult to add much novelty to discussions associated with commonplaces.

Future Places takes the challenge of attempting to probe deeper into the relationships between knowledge and the development of our societies. By forcing us to look at the idea of building knowledge-driven processes, *Future Places* promotes the simple, but powerful, idea of *learning*. The fundamental issue is associated with a dynamic perspective, requiring people and people with the ability to be engaged in knowledge-based environments. It is about *People* and *Knowledge* and this continuous interaction has gained particular relevance in recent years!

In particular, let me refer to three main implications of looking at *Future Places*.

First, we need to consider innovation together with competence building and to foster individual skills through the complex interaction among formal and informal qualifications. We need to widen the social basis for knowledge activities, including higher education enrolment, and we need to strengthen the top of the research system leading to knowledge production at the highest level.

Second, we need to consider the social shaping of technology and the emergence of “human centred systems”. Both incentives and infrastructures do not operate in a vacuum, being shaped by and shaping the particular context where they operate. The local context must have embedded a set of social capabilities that define the context under which knowledge networks evolve.

Third, we need to also consider experimentation in social networks, which necessarily involves fluxes of people. It is the organized cooperation among networks of knowledge workers together with different arrays of users that will help diffusing innovation. But establishing these innovation communities requires the systematic development of

routines of collaboration on the basis of sophisticated research projects, not limited by administrative constraints and in a way to facilitate new forms of using products and services, as well the design of those products and services. I refer to these communities as “creative communities”, for which the experimentation of new ideas in “design studios” is particularly important to provide adequate forms of interaction of users with adequate research environments.

Manuel Heitor, Secretary of State for Science, Technology and Higher Education of Portugal.

///

Future Places 2008 was a landmark event for digital media in Portugal and elsewhere. Art met science and technology. Interactive installations complemented lectures and workshops. People from all over the World met in Porto for an exciting happening that attracted some of the leading figures in the field. As a Director of UT Austin - Portugal Program, I am proud that the Program was instrumental in organizing Future Places. We are looking forward to Future Places 2009.

António Câmara, UT Austin - Portugal Program Director, Digital Media.

///

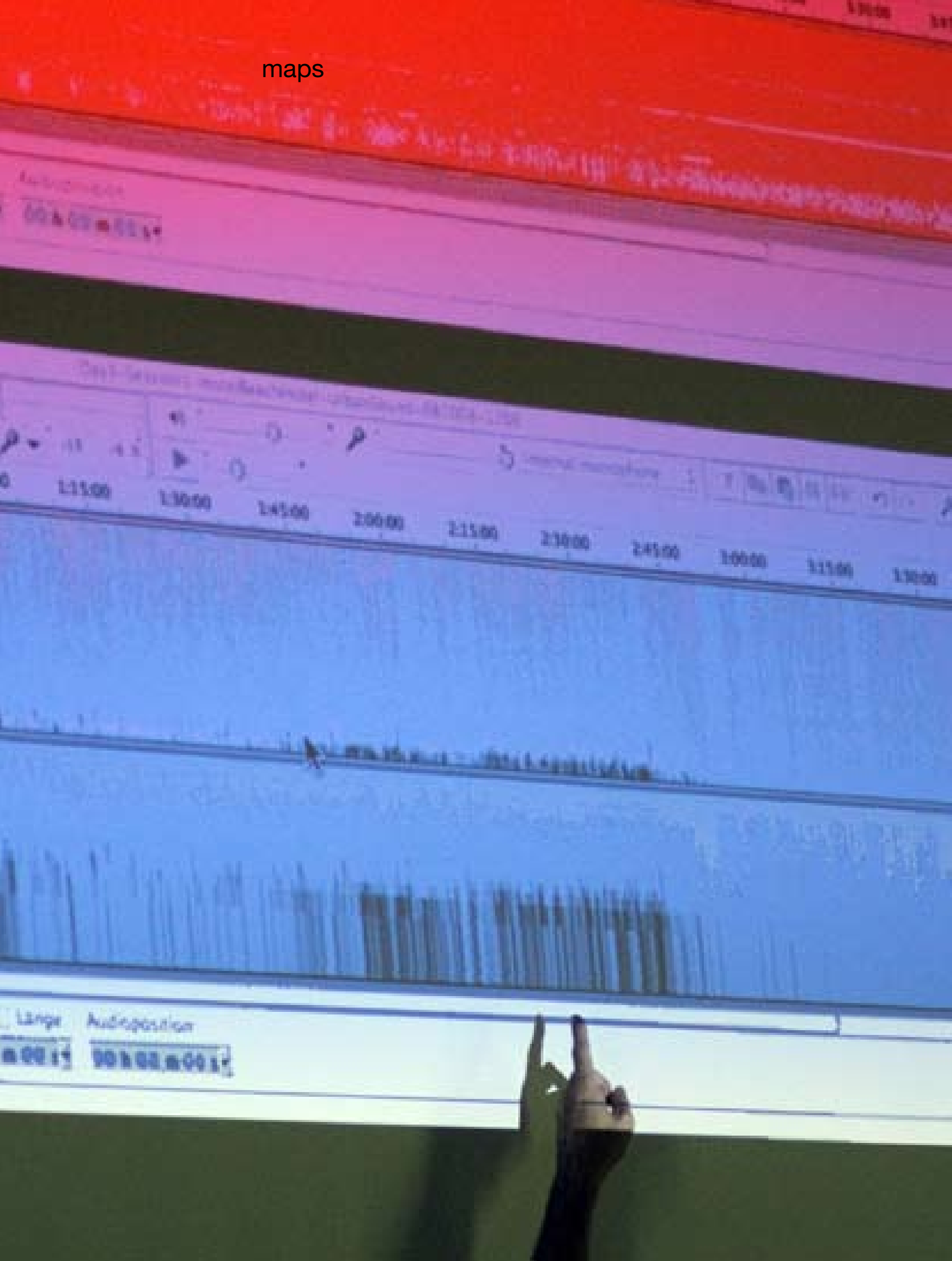
The University of Porto is proud to host the Future Places Digital Media Festival, in partnership with the University of Texas at Austin.

One of the key strategies of the University of Porto has been the reinforcement of its avenues of collaboration with culture and society at large, and we believe Future Places is a true example of how this can happen in fruitful ways. Furthermore, Future Places has explored innovative ways in which to consider the relationships between creativity, research and action, and by doing so has been setting new templates for academic activity.

While establishing strong international networks of participation, the Festival is managing to weave a strong presence in the context of Porto, by working in partnership with multiple agents of very diverse profiles and missions. We want this to be one of the main roles of the University of Porto: to act as a catalyst across disciplines, contexts and institutions, in order to foster change and growth.

We will be pleased to continue hosting the Future Places Digital Media Festival as it becomes, we trust, an essential part of the City´s cultural and social fabric, and its projection and relevance elsewhere.

José Marques dos Santos, Rector, University of Porto.


maps

DIGITAL MEDIA, LOCAL CULTURES

SHARON STROVER

UT Austin – Portugal Program Director, Digital Media.

Philip G. Warner Regents Professor of Communication, College of Communications, University of Texas at Austin.

People everywhere are attracted to media because we know they're important change agents: they affect people – they arouse us emotionally, motivate us to do certain things – to vote, to respond, to scream, to think. They are not simply large industries, although many media industries are large, worldwide conglomerates, and they are not important simply because their industries make a lot of money. Rather, media are significant because they express what it means to be human, to move through life – to endure, to enjoy, to persevere, to think, to laugh, to change. They allow us to express and to reflect, to know ourselves and each other.

In the 21st century, media systems are the touchstones of a new literacy that goes beyond the printed word in form and import. One significant feature of *digital* media is the simple notion that this format breaks down many barriers, rendering voice, text, image, data capable of penetrating other forms and morphing into new expression. While conventional theory has it that this creates a lot of problems – copyright being a prominent example – less conventional theory celebrates this development and anticipates with enthusiasm what will come next from the wild and wooly arena of the digital. Whether we are talking about web 2.0 (or beyond), new chip-based technologies, new forms of interactivity, or the growing raft of production tools premised on digital systems, the communication world is changing rapidly and radically.

The significance of media constitutes one major factor motivating the broader Digital Media program in the UT Austin - Portugal collaboration. The program has brought together engineers, computer scientists, filmmakers and producers, writers, social scientists, musicians, artists, archivists, and information technology scholars in a multi-pronged effort to learn, discover, cultivate and produce. The *Future Places* Festival is one effort that galvanized our imagination at the outset of the project, and we continue to explore ways to build upon the energy and insight that it has assembled.

Why *Future Places*? The root of the idea has to do with the relationship between media and the locality. In the 21st century, our countries are complex: media have expanded what it means to be a nation in a complicated world, while at the same time they extend and deepen our sense of community and friendship. In an environment as media-saturated as ours, how media render our culture and our sense of humanity is crucially important. These are not matters to be left to wholesale, bland television or radio networks remote from lived experience. Rather, when we hear people talking about "global information infrastructure" – which now is really everything that we do – we absolutely must recognize that these structures have

to do with our moral claims, with the types of political and economic systems in which we live, with our values. Those values have a lot to do with where we are, our personal histories, the spaces and places we inhabit and traverse, the people with whom we interact. The locality is a messy, lived-in place, the place we call “home” in a million ways, whether through the food we eat, the language we speak, the customs we share or the music we make. That place is the root of our culture.

This is what brings us to the intersection of local culture and digital media. Media are in part about telling stories. Human beings live through and by stories. This means that who puts together the stories has a lot of responsibility for shaping our culture, for getting it right. We are all storytellers and story-makers, that is, the subjects of the stories as well as their makers. With digital media in particular, the means to make stories – whether by capturing the latest street incident in a cellphone camera or using animation tools to render a romance – has gotten easier and easier. Access to storytelling tools has never been better, and paralleling this are the easier ways to distribute stories, allowing more and more people to see or hear or read those same stories.

Digital media tools mean new opportunities for expression within the local environment. Predominantly one-way media systems of the 20th century, could exercise a top-down, paternalistic voice with relative ease. This, in turn, could translate into popularizing dominant ways of thinking about certain problems and of representing oneself and others. Just as some media systems were rising to worrisome levels of uniformity and reach, digital media began to break the stranglehold. The past ten years have witnessed widespread change within media systems, and indeed they continue to change as new capabilities of media (and of people) develop. Instead of single dominant television networks, there is Internet-based content, including radio stations from all over the world, YouTube videos from everywhere, and people using cellphones to convey messages on current events in the streets as they unfold. Digital media afford the possibility of crowd sourcing as we reach for new ways for come up with

opinions, ideas, and feedback. People gather information and share it digitally – in some circumstances established newspapers now are training large numbers of citizens to be reporters because the ability of many people to cover certain events vastly outstrips the capabilities of just one or two employed reporters. A huge amount of uncertainty surrounds older, established media systems as they continue to search for ways to connect with populations that have discovered something new and more interesting by using digital media tools and networks. We are no longer audiences. Rather, we are participants.

As well, our own social networks are changing. *Future Places* intentionally aims to capture that sense of the digital environment as well. If traditionally "place" has meant a rooted, geographically defined area, the people within it bound together by the rules and options of proximity, now technology-based networks have created new places for all of us. We have "friends," many of them people we have never before met, across the globe, and we interact virtually. *Future Places* embraces virtual domains. The rhythms of a group conversation in virtual space weave the fabric on a different plane, one as important to many of us as any material place might be. Digital media create these new places and the opportunities to build different communities, to explore other ways of thinking, acting, and being.

We embarked on the *Future Places* festival to celebrate the local as rendered with and by digital media. Its international reach continues to grow, and we are pleased to have responses to the competition from all over the world. The people involved in the festival – the jurors, speakers, workshop leaders, students – represent a range of talents and approaches; each, in his and her own way, expands the concept of the local and allows us to explore it in some unique fashion. The *Future Places* workshops demonstrate our commitment to provoking people's imagination and to augmenting skills. The event is both celebration and inquiry. We expect that it will grow even as the nature of the digital environment grows, fostering new opportunities and recognitions, remaking the local and reasserting our shared values.

///

NO LONGER LONGING: DIGITAL MEDIA AS THE AGENT OF CONTEXTUAL CHANGE

HEITOR ALVELOS

Curator, Future Places.

Professor, University of Porto.

Associate Director,
ID+ Research Institute for Design, Media and Culture.

The very Portuguese lack of tradition of social involvement is heavily documented and analyzed elsewhere. Whether the roots of this phenomenon are historical, cultural or even political is the subject of much speculation, but in any case the fact that the much-cherished "fado" (literally "fate") is the quintessential Portuguese musical style may be a not-so-subtle hint of a certain *modus operandi* turned *modus vivendi*... We tend to accept any given scenario with resignation, and seem to further take some sort of perverse pride in this very resignation. Miracle or catastrophe, it is actually irrelevant – it is all about the fact that, as a people, we are all immersed in the understanding that reality originates from above, as a random succession of occurrences of obscure logic.

Regardless of where exactly this paralysis of action is rooted, its longevity has been reinforced by a social loop turned into semantic loop. We have had very few stable structures for public participation, and have thus long grown accustomed to being spectators of higher narratives – whether cultural, social, political, historical or religious: the hero is always the other, and the other is interchangeably God, the President, a football champion, a local politician or a TV host. *Hero* or *villain* is often interchangeable in our minds: it is often a plain matter of vacuous protagonism, of innocuous celebration or mourning, devoid of consequence or accountability.

This historical narrative has woven a parallel reality into the country´s fabric. We have grown accustomed to precariousness, and have, in the meantime, begun to enjoy it: the regular expressions of outrage are spoken in hushed tones, often directed at daily occurrences, an endless exercise in rhetoric that reveals a profound addiction to the status it supposedly questions. Our imagination has been regularly hijacked by its own negative formulation: it only rears its head as an outraged refusal of existing and seemingly perpetual paradigms, but hardly ever dares propose alternatives. We contest outcomes, but do not scrutinize their causes, and certainly do not engage in alternative constructions. Urban space is altered randomly, just as we become European champions of some sport or another – yet the real tragedy is we hardly have a clue as to *how* or *why* these things happen. We simply shift between being hopeless and amazing in our own minds. The architect that ruins the structure of a public garden, preventing people from socializing by way of an unaccountable aesthetic vision of sorts, is hidden by this veil of fate. It just *happened* that way.

This scenario derives greatly from a strictly formal reading of reality, as opposed to a functional one. Entitlement comes from status (either by birthright or decree), as opposed to merit, and this effectively strangulates the willingness to act: we have long known there would be no inscription, no consequence of action – and thus no evolution, as the narrative is in essence circular and self-prophetic. The gap between tangible reality and its supposed agents has been too wide to allow for any semblance of coherence between the two. When an outlier occasionally surfaces, nothing much happens: the fabricated narrative of circularity will self-regulate in no time.

The lack of avenues for effective public involvement has tended to shut down imagination as an agent of change. This is why it has been so difficult to move forward, and this is why Portuguese art has struggled with (refused?) the evidence that it could cause a measurable impact on society: it fiercely hangs to the classical model of Art as Metaphor, or expression of individual exoticism. Creativity, in our minds, has been an exercise of reverie, not a prelude to action.

It is paradoxical that digital media, immaterial and post-geographical in essence, is surfacing as a true catalyst for contextual change. If, in its early days, the allure of online communication came precisely from its invitation to be "somewhere else", the advent of social media has brought the possibility of "going somewhere" in order to transform our immediate surroundings. This transformation may occur in physical, material ways, but it inevitably begins in a shift of perception: in the case of social structures, it brings empowerment by radically changing a previously inert hierarchical construction. But it has also invited us to alter the way we look at our surroundings – and that, in effect, is already a radical change of those same surroundings.

It is now becoming less and less excusable to live out the epic of fatality. Reality may still be fatal for all we know – changes of this magnitude will certainly not take place overnight – but we can begin to look elsewhere, we can begin to *look differently*. The growing accessibility to technology, the advent of self-publishing and the emergence of the *prosumer* through the perfecting of user interfaces have all been fostering new ways of social involvement. On the other hand, the subtle and gradual merging of work and play through the evolution of online platforms (VR games, forums, chatrooms, etc.) has also translated into an added opportunity to change social fabrics without the cumbersome presence of militantness.

In essence, the challenge now resides not so much in an institutional shift, but in the realization that technology has empowered the individual to lead a myriad of interwoven shifts – the regular sprouting of all kinds of viral phenomena has made that much clear beyond any skepticism. So for the first time in History, we have institutions following individuals, scrutinizing their means and logic, attempting to learn from their processes. We have media labels struggling to come to terms with a free-flowing remix culture that has been advancing musical styles exponentially, we have museums asking visitors to record their own experiences while at the exhibitions, digital archives of enormous historical relevance born out of personal willingness and participation, online forums where citizens discuss and agree on how to better their immediate surroundings and shape new forms of solidarity.

What is at stake is the flourishing of an affective sense of place born out of multiple contributions, the creation and enhancement of narratives and symbolic systems associated with tangible territories. This has been sorely lacking in the case of Portugal, where the prevailing narrative is still very much one of fuzzy tradition, of longing for a time we are not even sure ever existed. Thus the many online initiatives pertaining to specific locations around the world attest to the possible success of a contextual template that needs to be nurtured in its local version.

In a social landscape such as the Portuguese one, traditionally reliant on higher structures, this paradigm shift may have an impact beyond anything we can imagine. But this shift will only bear fruit once the individual realizes that, for better of for worse, it no longer makes sense to blame it all on a higher power, that a paradigm shift can only be enacted by h/er own contribution.

The individual is now the key agent, and as such, the natural habitat for digital media is the local, one´s tangible space, one´s semantic space: it is simply a matter of time before we come to terms with this and act accordingly. *Future Places* is simply an attempt to render this as clear and effective as humanly possible.

///

THINKING ABOUT DIGITAL MEDIA

KAREN GUSTAFSON

Curator, Future Places.

UT Austin – Portugal Program Manager, Digital Media.

The Future Places festival created a new space for the exploration of digital media, culture, art, identity and experience. Over several days, the event brought together a diverse group of people including students, media producers, engineers, and artists from around the world to critically, reflectively, and playfully examine emerging forms of media and their implications. The festival and its workshops provided a venue for these participants to learn new skills, exchange ideas, and collaborate on projects that demonstrated the artistic, economic, and social opportunities offered by new media technologies.

What is digital media, and how does it affect existing social networks and cultures? What dominant assumptions have surrounded this creative, technical, cultural, and economic phenomenon? During the past two decades, digital media has influenced and altered our views of language, history, interaction, and identity. Like other communication technologies that came before it, digital media has been optimistically hailed as a means of empowerment and creativity and also feared as a threat to traditional networks, cultural formations, and community. In *The Network Society*, Manuel Castells (1996) refers to these myths that accompany the rise of new technologies, arguing that while technology cannot be inherently good or evil, it is also not neutral (p. 65).

As new forms of digital media and communications emerged in the 1990s, they were constructed as a way to transcend traditional concepts of interactivity and embodied identity (Hayles, 1999; Turkle, 1995). The digital medium offered new ways to express and organize information, while also challenging traditional ideas of authorship and the fixed nature of the printed word (Landow, 1994). In the realm of popular culture, early articles of *Wired*, a US publication devoted to cultural, political, and economic aspects of new media and convergence, described the empowering capacities of these new technologies, associating them with individual freedom and the strengthening of grassroots communities. These and other discourses of this period emphasize the liberatory possibilities of digital media, suggesting that it could beneficially transform traditional structures of community, hierarchy, and power, freeing people from the constraints and static nature of analog communication. These constructions of digital media focus on its unique nature and potential, characterizing it in positive terms as a revolution.

In contrast, philosopher Jean Baudrillard and critical scholar Dan Schiller demonstrate aspects of the negative beliefs associated with the development of digital media. Baudrilliard (1996) addresses the new opportunities for content manipulation but instead of finding this characteristic of digital media emancipating, he argues that it leads to an infinite and potentially dangerous search for perfection in content production: "The possibility of indefinitely adjusting the correct version creates a sort of fantasy of perfection… The result of this quest for perfection remains problematic. We have the impression that the machine operated beyond the ends of the writing." He frames digital media's fluidity and its potential for constant creative mutation and adjustment as potentially overwhelming content, so that the technology drives creative choice.

Rather than addressing content and creative process, Schiller (2000) focuses on economic implications, and criticizes the liberatory discourses surrounding the digital revolution of the

1990s, associating emerging networked media with a myth of a “cybercornucopia” which naïvely ignores the ways in which established commercial interests have already exercised a stifling influence on these technologies. Rather than ushering in a new era of democratizing, creatively freeing, empowering opportunities for production, communication, and interactivity, digital media is framed as the servant of entrenched interests, globalizing culture and encouraging dangerous deregulatory policy regimes around the world. In doing so, he harshly minimizes the potential benefits of the emerging economies and entrepreneurial creativity that have accompanied the explosion in digital media development.

Since the 1990s, the emergence of digital media has produced a host of commentators and perspectives; only a few are mentioned above but they represent several dominating constructions. In response to these, scholars including Jay David Bolter, Richard Grusin, and Henry Jenkins have introduced a different set of discourses, focused on the ties between new and old media, critically but optimistically examining the changing relationships between producers, users, and audiences. Bolter and Grusin (2000) frame their arguments in terms of mediation, suggesting that rather than completely altering these relationships, digital media enrich art and culture by responding to traditional media forms in a process of remediation; further, they find that this has been an ongoing phenomenon whose emergence precedes digital media. Jenkins (2008) similarly argues that new media does not outright replace established formats. Instead, the interaction between old and new creates a “convergence culture” which impacts all aspects of media production and consumption, causing a paradigm shift in the dynamic between cultural producers and their audiences.

Why do these conceptualizations of digital media matter? In a reflexive process of social construction, our beliefs about a technology shape its use and influence new developments, which in turn inspire new discursive responses. By stretching the boundaries of established constructions of digital media through technological, artistic, and theoretical experimentation, we can create openings for discursive shifts that may in turn have significant material and cultural consequences. The activities and the variety of perspectives represented at the Future Places festival described in this catalog challenge and complicate existing views, demonstrating new ways to think about our relationships with digital technologies.

.

REFERENCES

Bolter, J.D. & Grusin, R. (2000). *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Hayles, K. (1999). *How We Became Posthuman*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jenkins, H. (2008) *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (Rev. ed.). New York: New York University Press.

Kapor, M. (1993). Where is the digital highway really heading? Wired Magazine, 1.03. Retrieved July 3, 2005, from Wired Magazine online archive.

Landow, G. (1994). *Hyper/Text/Theory*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Schiller, D. (2000). *Digital Capitalism: Networking the Global Market System*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Thibaut, C. (1996). Jean Baudrillard: Baudrillard on the New Technologies: An interview with Claude Thibaut, March 6, 1996. *The European Graduate School: Media and Communications*.
Available online at http://www.egs.edu/faculty/baudrillard/baudrillard-baudrillard-on-the-new-technologies.html.

Turkle, S. (1997). *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

///

crossroads

IN THE FUTURE LURKS THE POSSIBILITY

NUNO AZEVEDO

CEO, Casa da Música Foundation.

During the last decade of the last century it was clear that international success across a wide variety of domains was all about thinking global and acting local. Localisation was the key word in a strategy that anticipated the possibility of adapting a global concept to multiple local realities with minor changes. The postulate of this approach was that physical space is increasingly homogenous and that cultural differences are dissipating. But times have changed. Globalisation has backlashed and it has become more and more obvious that such strategies have important shortcomings, in particular with regards to its inherent systemic risk and local vulnerability. In the future lurks the possibility of an important spin in the 20th century commonsense. It could very well be that the key to a sound global development is embedded in the reversion of the incumbent logic and that thinking local and acting global is indeed the way forward, not only in the overall development of the globe but also, and in particular, of local cultures and its capacity to become more resilient to the ever changing moods of current affairs.

///

I AM SOMEHOW IN-BETWEEN

MIKE HARDING

Mike Harding has been running Touch since 1982, with its founder, Jon Wozencroft.

He is the UK Ambassador of Elgaland-Vargaland.

Its always interesting being invited to events... expectations these days are so cocked-eyed, anything can happen. But it usually doesn't. So there is often a sense of wasted opportunity, of under-funding and hopeless organisation. The way some curators and producers treat artists sometimes beggars belief. I'm being unfair to those few brilliantly presented events which make it a joy to attend – and Future Places was one of them. After doing this kind of thing for nearly 30 years, you would expect a jaundiced response to yet another festival dissecting the role of culture and place in the digital age. But this one felt different; and perhaps most appealingly, offered a platform for some fun... serious fun. Festivals know that to involve one of the Touch guys means, because of our age and culture, a broader pre-digital view. When we started, the cassette was king and little did we know that the Sony Walkman was creating the space for the listening-on-the-move culture now so predominant So we have an advantage that we can see clearly what is happening, and not be engulfed by it, even if at times we are seduced by its gewgaws.

We are sceptics but not cynics. We gaze down with increasing horror as the medium becomes a mess.

And usually the standard of work reflects this; institutionalised funding produces institution-

alised artists whose main skill is filling in forms to satisfy the vultures at the councils. The point about being an artist is that you have no choice; its not a career option. But its top-down art now, bereft of ideas and separated from its origins. Mostly its “what’s-the-point” work, unimaginative, often copied and rarely any good. So we get the accusation hurled at us that we are elitist. Now we see it as a compliment, but it is certainly meant as an insult. “Art for all”, goes up the cry. Who are you desiccated academics to tell us, the people, what is good. You SNOBS! You cultural elitists! I spit on your grave etc. etc.

So imagine my delight when I hear that a vast, uninhabited shopping centre right in the centre of Porto is to be used as a fulcrum for street-level activities which serve to displace power from other architectural, traditional power bases. The police turned up. They didn’t like it. But what could they do? There was no trouble – the opposite in fact. They went away. We had a BLAST!!!

(I remember hearing a story that an Chilean folk singer had his fingers crushed so he couldn’t play guitar again. This horrific act did more damage to the regime than any other, revealing their own inhumanity and political stupidity.)

“Art” is so powerful, so political, in the real meaning of the word, in that it makes things *possible*. It cannot be controlled in this way. Here we had the exemplar; the shopping centre goes bankrupt and becomes a musicians’ rehearsal space. Noone else will look after it. A deal was done. New cultural roots spring up. It was called ‘START’. Perfect.

And then you meet the types who can’t function in ‘normal’ society; no, not autistic! but people (I hesitate to call them artists, which is now such a compromised word) who fulfill roles few have the courage to take on. Stephan Baumann is one. Married with a young family (how does he manage that?), he maps the frequencies [specifically in the GHz range] in urban areas which don’t show up on other charts. He calls it “UrbanSync”. Where else would he have the platform to intrigue and excite us with his unique and effervescent approach? As he says of himself, “I am somehow in-between”.

The Portuguese Ambassador for Elgaland-Vargaland interviewed me, as his UK counterpart, about this maturing dichotomy between the need for a sense of belonging and the need for new ventures in space and place to be pursued. What does “digital culture” actually mean? Does it mean anything? We explored this is a playful but, I believe, challenging and perhaps provocative way. It was great FUN!!! Missing from so much art today is that sense of FUN!!! – the idea that we could provoke a reaction by teasing, using irony and by gently distorting people’s images of themselves, but in a thoroughly civilised peaceful way. I drank tea.

It is amazing how threatening fun can be.

.

Mike Harding has donated his fee for this article to the “Please Invite Me Back in 2009” campaign.

///

FUTURE PLACES OF ACTION AND TRANSFOR-MATION

LUÍSA RIBAS

The starting point is an intrigue. The very title of the festival “Future Places” intrigues by its effect of both ‘displacing’ us from the present and ‘placing’ us in the local. This projection forward and anchoring in place drives us to consider this title as an interrogation and reflect on its implications. A suggestive overture that encourages, not so much a quest for fixed answers, but an opening up to a space of inquiry and investigation, rehearsing possible approaches and insights by unlocking them.

In the festival’s motto the “cause and effect” dialectic is called-in to question how digital media can shape local cultures and how they can be shaped by them. In other words, how can they form culture, and what forces and agents drive the local cultures’ approaches to digital media. Bearing on this idea we now propose a view of the festival that surpasses the more evident surface manifestations of this question, and concentrate on the creative discourses that arise from it – the ones that address digital and computational technology in the creative realm, its potential for aesthetic creation in artistic and designerly ways.

Some examples among the diversity of works and initiatives that integrated the festival then come to mind, such as the distinguished projects of Filipe Pais Ferreira’s “Living Room Plankton”, that visually outputs the organic behavior of a artificial organism in its reactive performance to an environment, or the work of Rudolfo Quintas, “Burning the Sound” that in a ritualistic manner uses fire and gesture as the basis for a visually amplified sound art performance. In a somewhat similar manner Ivan Franco’s performance, based on an instrumental interface that responds to natural bodily gesture, emphasizes the possible ways of approaching natural interaction processes in interfaces for creative expression.

Although diverse in nature these works can be related in the way they explore their inherently auto-referential, abstract character. As Levin (2003) argues, they can be seen as “abstract computational art-systems that address, as their subject matter, dynamism (the way things change over time), interactivity (the character of the feedback loop established with a user), and processuality (the character of algorithmic processes)…”. Another relevant aspect involves the way the senses are addressed in these works, through the combination and crossings of sensory modalities, as they “extend the creation of form across sensory modalities without necessarily promoting a tight coupling of multisensory events” (Hertz et al., 2001). Different relations between sensory inputs and outputs are articulated, be it in an audiovisual performance, a visually augmented sound performance or, as in Ferreiras’ work, by gathering sensory data (as temperature, sound, light variations) and integrating it in the causal chain of reactions that originates an ever-changing visual output.

The above works explore the emergence of meaning with processed based strategies, or the way these systems organize data, proposing new forms of user engagement in the way they structure user’s experience of this data. This path of reflection was then extended with the “Active Media” workshop, conducted by Boris Debackere and Steven Devleminck from the Transmedia Program in Arts, Media and Design (Brussels) that proposed to explore the principles of generative processes by mapping a chosen system. The concept of mapping is here paramount – as a more objective or subjective process, selective and essentially arbitrary. As Manovich (2002a) states, it gives us the possibility to create “meaningful aesthetic manifestations of phenomena that normally fall outside the scale of human senses, human perception and cognition”.

By confronting the previous works with the workshop proposition, we can then evoke what Christiane Paul refers to as an "art of relation":

"The aesthetics of digital culture can be explorations of what relations in the virtual space of the computer are about and a communication of those explorations back to our physical space and time. (…) Digital media lend themselves best to an art of relation and to imagining topographies of relations that transgress those of the physical world." (Paul, 2005)

.

This idea of an "art on relation" underlines the blending of media spaces and categories that the aforementioned elements of the festival reveal, and that is tied to the very notions that navigate the margins of the term media.[1] These notions indicate a disturbance around the conception of medium that has been radicalized in the late 20th century by digital and computational technology. As "intermedia" cedes way to "transmedia"[2] another question arises with the focus on the "active" nature of media that relates to Manovich's program of a "post-media aesthetics".

These 'inter' and 'transmedia' conceptions reflect that the reality of art practices persistently defies and operates outside the established conceptual and institutional boxes, transgressing and crossing their boundaries. These conceptions can somewhat be illustrated by the works of Ivan Franco or Rudolfo Quintas. Their intermedia nature can be recognized in that they interrelate and merge media categories, as their "compositional process works across the boundaries between media, or even fuses media, implying structures that are shared by or translated from one medium to another" (Hertz et al.). The transmedia conception entails that they transcend the notion of media specificity. In distinct ways, these two notions conceptually reflect the potential "transformative" quality implicit to digital and computational media.

Manovich (2002b) develops a parallel line of thought that completes the idea of a "medium in crisis" as a threat to the traditional idea of medium.[3] Therefore, and to adequately address the contemporary computer mediated culture, a "post-media aesthetics" is required – one that, among other aspects, updates the information communication model including the notion of software[4] underlining the "active role technology plays in cultural communication" (Manovich, 2002b). This active role is translated in the notion of "active media" that the workshop proposed to explore: "media do not represent, they generate" as Debackere and Devleminck affirm, suggesting an understanding of media as "ephemeral: transforming and growing systems in themselves".

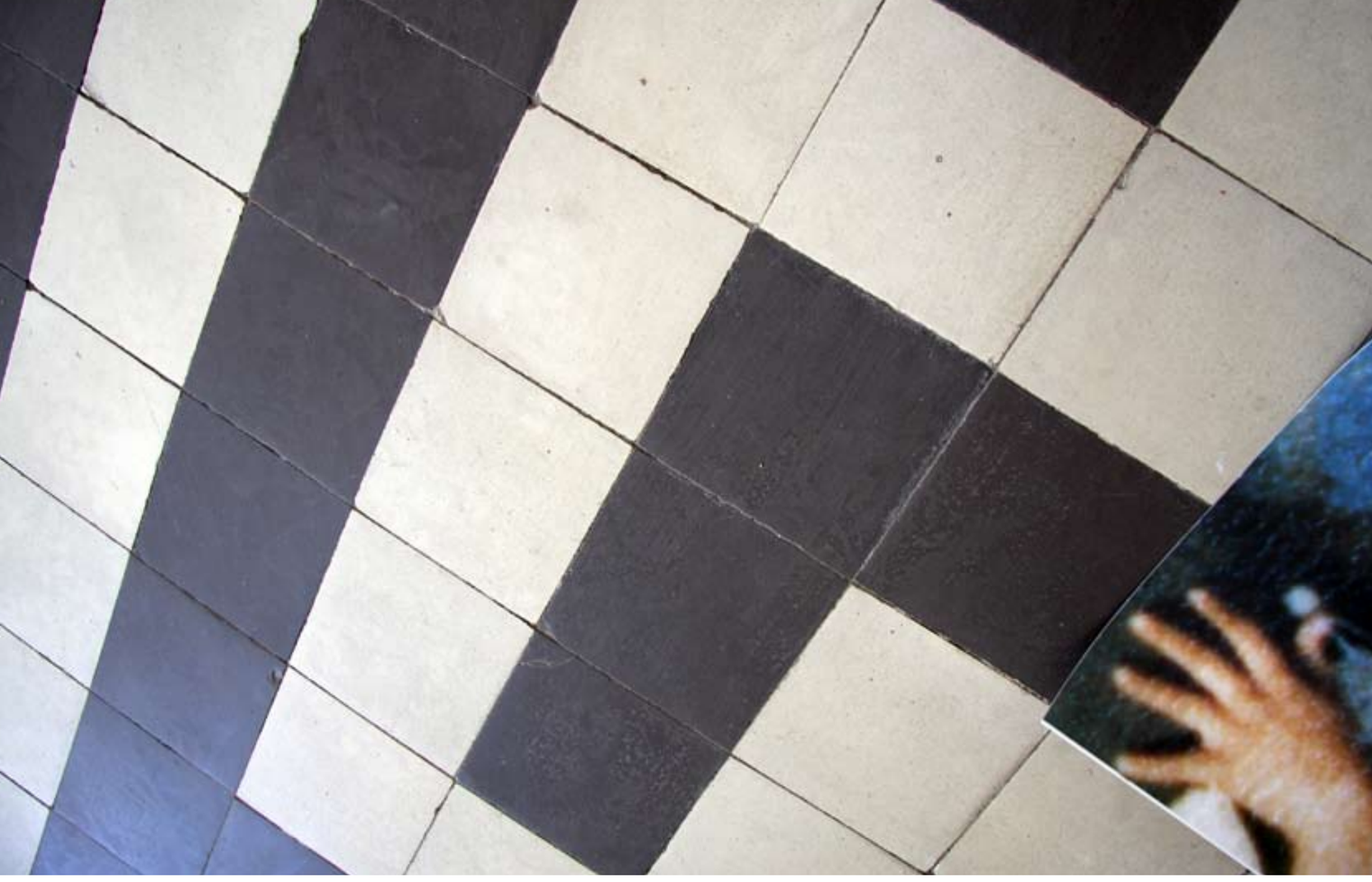
In sum, the reality of the diverse creative works that the festival confronted us with, specially those who foreground their active, transformative and participatory qualities, illustrate the questioning that the notions gravitating around the term media entail: a shift in their very nature and consequently on the categories that we use to frame and understand them. By underlining the active role technology plays in cultural communication, by exploring the interspaces between media categories and by transcending them, we find our "future places" as places of action and transformation.

Returning to Brzyski's discussion on the blurring and crossing of established taxonomical categories:

"If inter-relationship posits engagement between terms (nations, disciplines, media), then trans-relationship creates a vision of transcendence of the system, a utopian state of disengagement that nonetheless affirms the system as real. (…) Here as with the inter-terms, in order to transcend one must have something to rise above. Without the referents of nation, discipline or medium, there can be no trans-nationality, trans-disciplinarity, or trans-mediality."
*(*Brzyski, 2008)

In fact, this statement, might also be understood as a metaphor of the perspective that the Future Places Festival established, by both acting on the "inter" and "outside" level of its its referents (digital media, place, local culture), or by addressing the engagement between them and their very transcendence.

With its international call, its transversal view on a diversity of projects, and by pervading public spaces and staging festival activities in diverse contexts, the festival reveals, investi-



gates and questions what is already happening in terms of the potential and impact of digital media on local cultures. In the context of *Future Places*, the over-quoted statement by William Gibson gains new sense: “The future is already here, it’s just unevenly distributed.”

.

NOTES

1. Some of which might be traced back to various artistic practices defined as new art forms in the middle of the 20th century – such as the concept of intermedia popularized by Dick Higgins.

2. As Anna Brzyski (2008) points out in her discussion of the various prefixes to the term media.

3. Manovich reveals the limitations of the concept in addressing a true understanding of contemporary digital culture. On the material level, computerization entails the shift from separate representational and inscription media to a computer ‘metamedium’, having as effect the liberation of the techniques of a particular media from its material and tool specificity – a shift from representation to transformation anchored on the idea that *“mapping one data set into another, or one media into another, is one of the most common operations in computer culture”* (Manovich, 2002a). As a result, on the aesthetic level, the “*traditional strong link between the identity of an art object and its medium becomes broken*” (Manovich, 2002b).

4. (Author’s and reader’s software) as notions that overwrite the traditional view of the “passive” nature of medium.

.

REFERENCES

Brzyski, Anna. *New Media, Old Media, Inter-Media, Trans-Media: A Historic Perspective*. Journal of the New Media Caucus Vol. 04.N. 01, 2008.

Hertz, Paul, et al. *Erasing Boundaries: Intermedia Art in the Digital Age*. Panel Presentation N-Space Art Gallery SIGGRAPH, 2001.

Levin, Golan. *Essay for Creative Code*. Flong, 2003. <http://www.flong.com/texts/essays/essay_creative_code/>.

Manovich, Lev. *Data Visualisation as New Abstraction and Anti-Sublime*. Manovich.net. 2002a. <http://www.manovich.net/DOCS/data_art_2.doc>. (08-10-2008)

Manovich, Lev. “Post-Media Aesthetics.” In *What’s in a Name*. Ed. Herman Asselberghs. Vol. 01. Transmedia Texts Series. Brussels: Hogeschool Sint-Lukas, 2002b. pp. 12-20.

Paul, Christiane - “Intermedia in the Digital Age”. In *Intermedia: Enacting the Liminal*. Breder, Hans, and Klaus-Peter Busse (ed.). Dortmunder Schriften zur Kunst, Intermedia-Studien, Vol. 1. Norderstedt: Books on Demand GmbH, 2005. pp. 37-50.

///

bridges

THE UNIVERSITY OF PORTO AND NEW MEDIA

ARTUR PIMENTA ALVES

UT Austin - Portugal Program
Co-Director, Digital Media.

Full Professor,
INESC Porto, Faculty of Engineering
University of Porto.

One essential characteristic of Modern Digital Media is the fact that they are not a simple evolution of traditional media. Traditional media had already a complex nature, requiring the contribution of multidisciplinary teams mixing technical and creative teams. However the fact that they were characterized by the use of a linear narratives and that they were distributed by a reduced number of platforms, governed by clear business models, creates a situation where media content can be discussed independently from the distribution and production technologies. New media are more complex because this separation cannot be made anymore.

Modern Digital media add to this already complex situation a number of new dimensions: (1) technological convergence towards generic IT technologies in production, transmission and consumption, (2) support of interaction bringing the need of nonlinear narratives and (3) a multitude of different distributions platforms with highly changeable and unclear business models. In this environment, creators, besides the need to use complex development environments have considerable difficulties to sustain long term activities. The free for all paradigms introduced by the Internet induced a storm of changes in the media business. The development of businesses aiming at the exploitation of the obvious potential of these new media in areas such as business, culture, education, entertainment, on-line news has been slowed down by that. Current players coming from the traditional world are confused and fill threatened and have reduced capacity to take risks in the current disruptive business scenarios.

In situations like this there is a lot that universities can do through experimental projects in collaboration with industry: work in technology, new types of content, new services and business models can be done to support the consolidation of this process. However to go in this direction universities need to adopt new approaches in the organization of their research and teaching activities, so that interdisciplinary work is easier and new convergence cultures can develop.

The University of Porto is a large traditional university with different schools operating in traditional areas in a rather autonomous way. They are placed in different parts of town and, this geographical displacement in addition to the considerable difference in the cultures of the academic communities that each one of them has generated (and this diversity is a plus point) makes it difficult to achieve the creative multidisciplinary environment that will lead to the preparation of the new builders of the digital age. The task of changing or creating new cultures must always be seen as a long term project that needs the development of an appropriate stimulating framework.

In the last two decades I gained a significant experience in driving this type of multidisciplinary processes in research, at INESC Porto, where I have been a director for over 20 years, but also in the academic world due to my responsibility in the creation and management of several teaching programs at the University of Porto.

INESC Porto is an R&D institute working in the interface between academy and the economic world in all areas of application of information technologies, electronics and communications, what corresponds to a very wide range of applications in diverse sectors going from energy systems to e-Gov or digital media.

In theory the development of multidisciplinary projects is easy as, when funding is available, it is possible to gather a multidisciplinary team as necessary to solve complex problems in innovative ways. In practice however, and in the long term, this is not as easy as it looks and it requires central driving.

One first element of that comes from the fact that research is very international and competitive. To be recognized researchers need to focus in small scientific niches of activity and this drives them to prefer work in well defined scientific projects that do not require lots of interaction and meetings for mutual understanding and coordination. Directing a multidisciplinary institution implies the need to fight that resistance and to show researchers what they can gain by getting involved in such projects. To add to this problem multidisciplinary activities are often not easily recognised to be scientifically good and are frequently seen more as experiments in support of industrial interests without significant scientific content. As a consequence of this, the attraction of ambitious researchers to this type of research, closer to “the market”, is not easy. Another important level of difficulty comes from the considerable different between market cycles and research cycles – industry aims at short term results that are not easy to make compatible with the multiyear academic program cycles.

This is however the drive of most multidisciplinary research work taking place today at INESC Porto, including new media. Current changes in programs to fund research and innovation with companies by QREN are a significant step to help institutions to stimulate these type of activities.

The establishment of academic teaching programs in the university brings another set of problems. The University regulations make it very difficult to create any new entities to drive the new interdisciplinary programs. This is good as what is needed is not new schools working in isolation with the rest of the university but a framework for the collaboration with existing Schools. Setting up new units as independent as currents schools are would not only suffer from serious sustainability difficulties but also would lead to difficulties in critical mass to work in some of the discipline. In this situation, up to now, all interdisciplinary programs were done through some sort of internal academic consortia. This strategy is good to manage undergraduate programs with courses developed by different schools but it cannot easily generate integrated research and teaching activities as required in second and third cycle programs that generate the new breed of people with mixture of cultures that essential to the development of the new media. Let me go through some experiences held at UP.

The area of Communication and Media started just over 10 years ago under such a scheme of collaboration between the schools of Engineering, Fine Arts, Humanities and Economics. Quite a lot was done in terms of creating a new breath of students in journalism and communication with a mixed set of skills has been successful. If there are difficulties they come essentially from the difficulties experimented to dive the lectures to understand the changes that are taking place at a fast rate.

Another program that has been implemented using the same model is the master program in Multimedia that has been developed through the collaboration of those schools plus the School of Sciences. It has been working for more than 10 years. After a difficult start full of misunderstandings between students with different backgrounds put together into common classes and the lectures from those schools there is now a good understanding and many successful projects have been developed through those students.

The experience gained in these two cases makes me a firm believer in this multidisciplinary approach in the teaching programs. Students gain a lot through the direct contact with colleagues with different skills that significantly assist their learning outcomes. I am not just talking about the scientific background but of very fundamental cultural issues.

It is interesting to go a little deeper in this through an example of this exchange between different cultures: the typical attitude of a Fine Arts student is very creative and entrepreneurial due to the way they are trained – for their home work, from the very beginning of their training they have to know what others have done and create proposals that are different and find answers to some new question they are given to work. On the other side, in spite of all the efforts that are currently being done to make them entrepreneurial, an engineering student is educated in a more deductive world. In this world they trained to be competent to solve engineering problems and this means they must do well things that others have already done – a possible home work for an engineering student is to write a program to achieve a result that is previously indicated. These represent two schools of thought that produce different minds, appropriate to do different tasks in different worlds but when we create environments that allow them to work together understand and respect individual skills each one of them can contribute to, we are forcing the appearance of something new that we could not expect to see if they work in isolation. It is one of those situation where the some adds to more than the sum of the parts. The main requirement in this process is to have teachers that have a sufficiently wide open view to stimulate and exploit these gains. The gains are clearly visible in many of the project work that students have produced in their thesis in the past years.

Another interesting story is the programs in traditional and on-line media. Media is going through a very deep revolution and the traditional roles of journalists are being challenged by

the online world with a new world of possibilities open to an individual equipped with basic Internet and multimedia communication skills. The investment in our undergraduate course in communication sciences was made to create graduates that understand a lot more than journalism in order to be capable to contribute to the development of the new media companies. This was made through the participation of the Schools of Engineering, Humanities, Economics and Fine Arts. The resulting graduates are not easily inserted in the traditional corporations as they are organized according to the traditional skills but they have been very well received in many departments due to their flexibility and familiarity to the Internet world. By adding to the expertise of the course, the experience of a small audiovisual production team created in the university, the University of Porto has done significant activities in training for the media groups. This was a great success and there is now a great demand from all media groups to train multimedia journalists. This is an interesting example of the way universities can have a role in this complex situations where evolution scenarios are difficult to identify.

The exploitation of these opportunities requires a new mode of operation. That is clearly understood by the managing bodies of the University and will take place in the framework of the transformation of the University of Porto into a Foundation that is now being done.

The first is the creation of a better way to manage researchers and resources as needed to coordinate teaching and research activities in these areas but extending the scope of current research activities to new areas of research not well covered in the Media Arts such as performing arts and music. The second will be the creation of a new framework for the development of projects with industry such as the pole for creative industries, oriented towards the content production industries.

This will offer space accommodate companies, common production infrastructures to be chaired by teaching, research and companies, incubation and spaces to interact with the public, support for the development of experimental contents in all forms, all this placed in the very centre of historical city of Porto. We call this project P.INC and I believe that, linked with the creation of a Creative Industries Cluster in Porto, already approved by government, the partnership we are building with University of Texas at Austin, the organization of international events like Future Places, will significantly increase the scope of our current activities.

///

ACTIVE MEDIA 2.0

SOME REMARKS ON BEING ACTIVE AT FUTURE PLACES

STEVEN DEVLEMINCK

Professor
Sint Lukas Brussels University College of Art & Design

Transmedia Director

BORIS DEBACKERE

Artist

Staff Transmedia,
Hogeschool Sint-Lukas Brussel

Manager V2_Lab,
V2_ Institute Rotterdam

[SOME REMARKS ...
... ON BEING ...

"L'homme connait le monde non point parce qu'il y dérobe, mais par ce qu'il y ajoute."
P. Claudel, Art poétique, 1907

In some recent studies an apparent shift has been identified in the way we experience and deal with modern society. The rigid cognitive frameworks of human society seem to be replaced by more 'fluid' social and cultural interactions giving the promising perspective of a world 'becoming' completely transparent and open. Seen in this way, scientific, cultural or artistic explorations generate new levels of information and provide for the necessary input to change our present social, cultural or geopolitical behaviour. In a recent article in the popular magazine Wired, Rem Koolhaas comments on our old ideas about space and place. "The past three decades have produced more change in more cultures than any other time in history. Radically accelerated growth, deregulation, and globalization have redrawn our familiar maps and reset the parameters: Borders are inscribed and permeated, control zones imposed and violated, jurisdictions declared and ignored, markets pumped up and punctured. And at the same time, entirely new spatial conditions, demanding new definitions have emerged."[1] One of the immediate results of this global awareness in terms of our perception of the world seems to be an increased need for understanding and explanation. While this demand for clarification is stronger today than ever before, the proliferation of the methods and results has changed. According to Bruno Latour the role and context of modern research has changed considerably. "The 20th century was the golden age of the laboratory. Answers to the great research questions were sought within cloistered chambers, where small groups of specialised experts scaled down (or up) phenomena in blissful isolation. Call it the era of trickle-down science: Knowledge emerged from a confined centre of rational enlightenment, then slowly diffused out to

the rest of society."[2] This meant that the community was free to accept or ignore these results, but it was impossible to add to them or question them. "Science was what was made inside the walls where white coats were at work."[2] Outside, experience – not experiment – was the prevailing standard. Today, however, all of this is in flux. "First, the laboratory has extended its walls to the whole planet. … Second, you no longer need a white coat or a PhD to research specific questions. … A crucial part of doing science is formulating the questions to be solved; it is clear that scientists are no longer alone in this endeavor. … Third, there is the question of scale. The size and complexity of scientific phenomena under scrutiny has grown to the point that scaling them down to fit in a laboratory is becoming increasingly difficult."[2] With Bruno Latour's remarks we can read that the locus of research is no longer the small room but rather the entire planet. The instruments to accomplish this are present everywhere. Houses, factories and hospitals constitute the primary "outposts" for laboratory research. A worldwide network of environmental sensors scans the planet in real time. Information-gathering satellites observe the earth from above, as if under a microscope. Genetics examines populations as frequently as it does the individual. Whether in the area of science or art, the significance of the research act and its representation in society has changed. Rather than revealing exact outcomes, these new research strategies offer different viewing positions through which our world can be observed.

This movement towards a more universal and at the same time individual activity is further developed by Helga Nowotny: "Today we are surrounded by a plethora of strategic options which have never existed before. However, in the process of increasing the scope of individual creativity and social innovation, a subtle and momentous shift in their balance has occurred. Innovation is the social side of individual human creativity. It relies on human communication systems, on language, memory, and the use of symbols in mathematics, music and aesthetic-artistic systems of representation. It is oriented toward communicating modes of seeing and thinking or producing artefacts which, through their applications in a range of different and local contexts, allow the creativity embodied within them to continue exerting an effect. … It is now distributed throughout society. The local contexts in which individual creativity operates and from which it originates have multiplied. They have become an integrated element in the ensemble which makes up a machinery of innovation constructed by modern society."[3] But does it open the way to a better society?

… ACTIVE …

"Dans lequel il est prouvé que Phileas Fogg n'a rien gagné à faire ce tour du monde, si ce n'est le bonheur." Jules Verne

Now that we are starting to understand these underlying phenomena depicting the nature of this emerging new world space, the implications of it are vast. Whether we are considering the social or cultural relations of modern society as previously described, we also need to start thinking in terms of contemporary space. Indeed, although many of these views on the importance of a fluid and transparent world space are verified by studies in art, architecture, geography and science, these studies not always reveal the complete picture. On closer examination the 'fluid' inherent in these studies seems to vanish. Stefano Boeri sharply remarks: "These are disciplines that should keep their finger on the pulse of living conditions in the urban context, but that often seem more interested in studying the flux and flow, rather than the locally felt friction that influences them."[4] In doing so, the construction of this 'global' fluid model of world space paradoxically has increased the specificity of the 'local' space. One of the lessons to be drawn from these contradictory forces is that the greater the exchange, the more aware we become of the subtle and sometimes deep differences.

This type of 'undertows' of thoughts and associations constitutes the building blocks for new approaches of creating and using art. In creating and thus being active, this underlying power of the undertows generates paradoxical results: it redefines not only numerous local insights but also gradually addresses global questions. People become a (re-)active actor in creative processes of producing visuals or making music. Working and interacting with this kind of dynamic processes given by digital means asks for different approaches from those in the era of mimicking media. The multi-media revolution introduced a noticeable shift from audiovisual media towards real-time human interaction with the medium.

While the progression of current technological processes is of an exponentially different order and magnitude than what has occured in previous areas, it is also clear that inordinate

claims have been made for the importance of technological shifts. But it is not the technological transformation that is at issue here so much as the system of representation. This is an age wherein the boundaries of everything from science to philosophy or literature to artistic practice are evacuated, where their historical hierarchies are flattened, where the very possibility of definition has become suspect.

However, as these ways of working continue to proliferate, it becomes apparent that a practice without the recognition of its own histories, fails to convey its full potential and carry its power of meaning into the future. In order to contextualize these current developments, and their artistic, cultural, and theoretical impact, it is important to situate this practice within a broader historical perspective.

... AT FUTUREPLACES]

"What counts is that all spokespeople are in the same room, engaged in the same collective experiment, talking at once about imbroglios of people and things." Bruno Latour

The concept of single units as information unit (the prevailing view since the introduction of the computer), seems no longer to be valid when we think in terms of flows of exchange or even structures or currents in flowing, creative (forms of) meaning. As discussed, one of the immediate results of this awareness in terms of our perception of the world seems to be an increased need for understanding and explanation that takes account of both global and local conditions, and their interrelations. Lev Manovich contends that the rise of the 'new' media did not lead to a fundamental rewriting of the methods analyzing art and culture but only provoked an increase of medium-bound labels for different forms of art. He describes a 'post-media aesthetics,' where art is a form of information design and information behaviour. One drawback however, is that the system relies too much on cognitive values, neglecting the affective side of information.

As the boundaries of digital art expanded during the mid-1990's, museums began to take a serious interest in its development. Significant exhibitions of digital art have been held in recent years, showing its increasingly widespread acceptance throughout the contemporary art community. In addition, museums and galleries are bringing their collections of traditional art online, making them easily accessible. As a result, the role and presence of art in society is undergoing considerable change and growth. The art experience extends now to homes, cybercafes and any public or private space where there is internet access or a local area network. Fundamental to any explanation of digital art however is an understanding of the context in which we view it – the 'art experience' itself[5].

A crucial part of setting up a symposium/festival lies in properly formulating the questions to be adressed (and solved). It is becoming more and more the case that cultural events such as FuturePlaces are key participants in this endeavor. The sharp division between an artistic inside and a scientific outside, where theories are formulated, is evaporating.

The people in this festival step into this one room that Bruno Latour is referring to. And it's not just all talk in there. An art work is often the result of a network of people and their interventions in relation to each other and the discussion of the topics to be addressed. This event is by no means different in its composition. All of the participants testify of such interdisciplinary formats. Composed of a wide selection of artworks, lectures and workshops this festival invites the participant to follow a trail to the outer margins of science and art as well as the local and global conditions in which they exist.

New media technologies and new linkages and alliances across older media are generating profound changes in our political, social and aesthetic experience. In developing a debate and showing a wide variety of 'cross-mediated' contemporary art practices, the FuturePlaces festival endeavors to more accurately describe and engage the complexities of interplay between media, art and culture(s).

.

NOTES

1. Koolhaas, R. 2003. The New World. Wired, 11.06 (June).

2. Latour, B. 2004. Politics of Nature. Harvard University Press.

3. Nowotny, H. 2004. Naught, Nothingness, Nobody. Between Nanoworlds and Global Culture. Jovis Verlag.

4. Boeri, S. 2003. Border Syndrome. Territories. KW-Institute for Contemporary Art, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Köning.

5. Wands, B. 2006. Art of the Digital Age, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London.

Devleminck, S. 2002. What's in a Name, Transmedia Text Series, Sint-Lukas Brussel

///

BAD HABITS

DANIEL PIRES

in conversation with Michael da Costa. Daniel Pires is the artistic director of Maus Hábitos.

Maus Hábitos is a *cultural intervention space* based in Porto, Portugal. (Maus Hábitos means Bad Habits in English). It's arrival, during the 2001 Porto EU City of Culture celebrations, sparked a renaissance of the entire downtown area of the city including a major cultural center in neighbouring district Santo Ildefonso, many other bars and clubs, shops, and most recently a plethora of residential accommodation.

[Porto is the country's second largest city and birthplace to leading personalities such as Sophia Mello Breyner (writer), Siza Vieira (architect), Rosa Mota (runner), Manoel de Oliveira (film maker), Rui Veloso (singer) and King Henry the 1st (monarch).]

Maus Hábitos is located on the fourth floor of a downtown multi-storey car park on Passos Manuel Street which was built in 1939 by an events promoter. Eventually, in 1942 the same person built the 3500 capacity Porto Coliseu concert hall across the way.

Passos Manuel is actually named after Manuel da Silva Passos, a forward thinking 19th century politician who led the *Septemberists* group, a left wing arm of the liberal party. He eventually became Minister to the King 1836 through 1837 and was instrumental in launching socio-cultural projects such as the first Fine Art academy and National Theatre academy in Portugal and the Casa Pia orphanage.

The Passos Manuel garage is a modernist late thirties building and its lines are inspired by the automobile and its symbolic value: travel, freedom and autonomy. Various businesses, some of them creative, were housed within the block: barbers, newsagents, public baths, mechanics, typog-

raphers, tailors, a cosmetics laboratory and a car showroom with a distinct American feel. Their neighbour the Porto Coliseu is also a modernist building. Its design is inspired by the saxophone: music as a sign perhaps of freedom, soul searching and teasing the senses to their limit.

In fact the location is included in the book *1001 Buildings You Must See Before You Die* published by Quintessence: "This garage continues to bring a taste of thirties America and its automobile fascination to downtown Porto. It was built at a time when a car represented a romantic lifestyle rather than a functional object. Passos Manuel represented a move in thirties Portugal away from tradition and towards innovation. At the time of its construction this garage was a radical new architectural language for this gritty northern city."

"The fourth floor has an unrivalled panoramic view of the old city centre and on the horizon, the sea" explains Daniel Pires, the director of Maus Hábitos pointing towards the huge windows in the Maus Hábitos lounge. "This gives us both a global and peripheral vision of the city. The fact that we are an 'upergound' cultural space away from the street and ground level often makes me think of Maus Hábitos as a big boat, a kind of virtual space which makes various 'trips' with various members of 'crew'. It's a place where you have to use your creative energy, thinking, instincts and sense of observation. The choices you make here are intimately linked to the convergence of rationality and said sensitivity. A place where imagination alone, maps out the path ahead. That allows us to 'dock' in a Porto (!) full of curious people who are interested in innovative participation either as creatives or in the audience."

"In fact the 'boat' is more like a cruise liner!" He explains, "Since we have a stage, five exhibition spaces, two bars, a restaurant, a kitchen, a workshop and an admin block. What we have here are cultural manifestations that fill up the space: activities that bombard the senses and create and communicate different ways of being, doing and making things happen. We really have a different attitude to life here."

"For us Maus Hábitos is a stone in the cog of any political machine that attempts instrumen-

talize culture in the name of rational discourse. It is a *cultural intervention space* without destination or curatorial stance. As a result we are 180º away from a typical cultural institution."

"Maybe we are fisherman", Daniel continues with a wry smile, "And we live from fishing. We feed the local community, they feed us and we connect with the global one. The fact that we are independent has given me the chance to think and to be free. Luckily, we only have to participate informally in local politics."

He then explains how Maus Hábitos works: "The organisation of the Maus Hábitos cultural intervention space is very organic and elastic; sometimes there is a sharing of tasks and effort but not all the time. Every person takes responsibility for the work that they carry out and the audience that they are trying to reach. This dynamic gives us the maximum possible elasticity. We are always growing and not only thinking but acting too."

Echoing the philosophy of the US based "Living Theatre group", Maus Hábitos is based on "living culture". In other words making it, Maus Hábitos, relevant to people's lives within its context. For Daniel and his team that signifies a city with a decreasing population, a small political interest in the creative sector and a large higher education population with a high percentage of Erasmus students.

"Culture is a local people attraction", Daniel Pires concludes. "Nothing more, nothing less. You have to be honest about that thing."

In the summer of 2008 Maus Hábitos hosted a project entitled *Sweet & Tender Collaborations*; a seven week creative residence of forty five artists, across all disciplines, comprising twenty two nationalities. The city of Porto was temporarily transformed into a landscape of meeting, experimentation, challenge and creative adventure: a platform from which new and unusual projects were launched. These artists all had one thing in common. They were nomads without a fixed home or base. As the saying goes, *wherever they laid their hat, was their home*.

This network was permanently sharing new ideas and developments that could be of interest to the group as a whole. Their best friends were PCs or Macs, which were omnipresent, Skypes were always online too (in 'do not disturb' mode of course), Myspaces were full of new videos, images, messages and friends, and Facebooks were making new friendships whilst ending others. Maus Habitos was their common talisman but they also creatively blurred boundaries and sharpened a creative edge in Porto, a city that historically, and on many different levels, has perhaps always been on the edge…

///

THE DAY STOP STOPPED STOPPING

ANSELMO CANHA

Musician, Design Researcher.

HEITOR ALVELOS

Course Director MA Image Design, University of Porto.

Stop Shopping Center (CCStop) opened in Porto in the early 1980´s, and soon turned out to be a commercial flop. From the mid-1990´s onwards, its empty shops have gradually been taken over by music bands; nowadays, the daily life of this shopping mall is filled with the activity of hundreds of musicians.

This phenomenon displays a vital impulse, shared by hundreds of people, and attests to a complex array of resources, in the fields of performance, music and image-making. In the activity of these musicians-researchers, through the relation they establish between musical legacies, their repertoires and music communities (i.e. between a History, a practice and a social involvement) we can recognize past and future processes of transformation through de-re-codification of individual and collective expression: we observe the recycling process of a whole culture. As if demanding our attention to its territory, the building itself offers an analogous process in its relation to the city: the building is urban heritage as well, it is and was practice (first commercial, now musical), and weaves those ingredients in a constantly evolving social evolution.

1. CCSTOP. THE MALL OF MUSIC.

CCStop was part of a surge of shopping malls that took place in the early 1980s. This phenomenon coincided with the gravitation of Portuguese society towards the European Economic Community, and what it brought in terms of prosperity and openness to the World. Musically, both of these phenomena coincide with the often-called Boom of Portuguese Rock.

The building that now hosts the bands was, before 1982, a garage/showroom of a renowned car brand (incidentally: “Austin”!). The financial difficulties felt by the garage´s proprietors were at the forefront of the reasons for its transformation into a shopping mall. This decision may have been heavily influenced by the then maverick success of Brasília Shopping Center, as well as the garage´s location, near the Eastern arteries of access to the city. To the best of our knowledge, it would have been this context (intuitively taken as a certainty) that would have persuaded the shop owners to invest on one of the 147 units of CCStop. Yet the outcome was far from the expected one: rather than having the passers-by stop for a visit, CCstop was overtaken by its social surroundings – it began reflecting the multiple yearnings of the Eastern sector of the city. The humble population that surrounds CCStop projected onto it their conflict between the ambition of reproducing the order and prosperity they witnessed from afar, and a certain rebellious rehearsal of templates of modernity, mainly embodied by local youth gangs, who quickly took over the mall. The stalling of CCStop occurred largely because of this struggle.

Nowadays, the general air of abandonment that permeates the Shopping Center matches perfectly with the surroundings. In this urban area the conservation of houses is precarious, prostitution abounds, and the standard of living is generally low. At CCStop, the few active shops not related to music seem to cater to the ladies of the neighborhood, with arrays of clothes, sale of perfumes and beauty treatments. On Thursday nights, or Saturday afternoons, these same ladies will accompany their husbands for ballroom dancing at Porto à Noite danceteria, on the roof of the building. On the other hand, nearby residents complain about the odd session of punk-rock coming out of a rehearsal room. But ultimately there are few signs of animosity towards this context and the musical community that flourishes within.

In parallel with the booming of shopping malls, economic prosperity and Portuguese Rock, traditional musical practices changed, and with them their traditional contexts of operation. Local associations and Firemen headquarters were then the venues for Portuguese Rolling Stones cover bands and the like; these then gave way to sports arenas, where Portuguese Rock bands began claiming their semantic space and aesthetic originality – and they also gave way to shopping malls as places where music communities began to socialize.

On the other hand, if the new economic political and context gave access to information and instruments to a wider number of musicians, the bankruptcy of shopping malls offered them rehearsal space. The means of musical production thus became more accessible, and it was at CCStop that this factor became more expressive. In 2008, 77 music-related units were identified.

This whole buzz derives from a growing access to information and sociability, to music production and consumption, and it closely precedes a second wave brought by digital media and the internet. Today, the outcomes do not necessarily correspond to the new protagonists´ original aims. Yet we observe individual initiative and enthusiasm, submitted to the subtle structures of the new contexts where it is now produced and consumed. Let us take a closer look:

The CCStop building is the technical apparatus that determines the shape of this musical community. Its public areas hide the outside, and turn upon themselves in circular motions, a one-exit labyrinth. The former shops are now the intimate territory of a single band each, or the hinge of projects that are born, cross-polinate, evolve and disappear. In either case, its inhabitants perform the same ritual of customization and isolation, drawing a clear line between the common areas and the private spaces. As a result, we face a maze of seemingly abandoned shops, while, during busy times, with musicians working in their “cells”, the corridors become casual borderlines – akin to the “ilhas” of Porto, semi-private communities where one feels as if trespassing when crossing their narrow ways.

Inside the rooms at CCStop, each project develops a bidirectional impulse of individual expression and socialization. The joy of musical experimentation in the rehearsal room raises the possibility of public expression, while the exterior social context shields the territory in which the project may be interpreted: in this way, it shapes the limits and the sense of the musical experiments. What was witnessed within the bands was the supremacy of globalised musical formats, that shape the inside of these rooms, through an array of symbols that override any ambition of subversive, original experimentation of this same semantic context. As a consequence, projects are born submissive, through its legitimate fate and the experience of public and private sharing. Suddenly, the original impulse is betrayed by its own resolution.

From CCStop outwards, each band attempts to find its own circle of visibility. Most bands can be seen playing live at local bars, assigned according to aesthetics and audiences. There is, however, a common thread: the “traditional” gig tends to become a backdrop, a casual pastime, mere curiosity. The format of the spaces, stage and lights enhancing the musicians, is in direct contrast with the audience´s relative indifference. On MySpace, this indifference can be witnessed yet again: the bands remain drowned in an ocean of music projects, hopeful that some viral phenomenon, unlikely and unexpected, will trigger their success. Could physical, virtual and symbolic space, fragmented by walls and categories, be responsible for the perpetuation of these cells, defining the invisibility and lack of breadth of what is produced?

How can CCStop overcome these patterns and contribute to a communal role to music that evades the above logic and owns up to its original, ritualistic and tangible essence?

2. THE IDEA OF CHANGE

Just as CCStop is a poor variation of the architectural and commercial abstraction that is the shopping mall, developed out of sheer faith in financial success, so the formulas of Rock music are mimicked according to a fixed blueprint, a stereotype embraced in an attempt to make up for the need for self-expression and socialization. As far as media and commerce go, the fact that this blueprint replaces a wealth of authentic creativity is irrelevant. Yet, if there was to be a blueprint, it would be that of individual research bridging with local, specific contexts, weaving culture and creativity where it already is present.

The occupation of CCStop by a great number of bands is a great example of the above. At the same time as a pervasive hyper-rational social and cultural construction revealed its own bankruptcy in this particular shopping mall, individual initiative on the part of the musicians gave it a new use. The lack of success became a blank page and enabled development. Collectively, musicians acted economically, politically and strategically in ways more effective than any institutional decision. And, regardless of styles or trends, the loose, spontaneous and anonymous enjoyment of music happens at the shopping mall on a daily basis, and it gathers symbolic weight when it comes to the desire – and the ability – to change. Although the musical output survives on the border of submissiveness, the daily experience finds its possibilities for freedom in anonymity and privacy. The dedication, the ability for self-regulation, and the talent, offer themselves as available resources and energy.

What is at stake here is the awareness that musicians may have of the effects of their practice in a process where creative production has become a market place, and the market place has become the quasi-exclusive mediator of culture. These effects revert towards themselves. To the musician, rebelliousness is enacted in a context of submission. To the industry, the formats that make up its rational efficiency strangulate the possibilities of innovation in production. In the community, the formalities, significations and virtual conventions replace a deeper ritual sphere. We face the challenge of resolving the paradox of social relation turned market relation.

3. START!

The research into CCStop is paralleled by a growing willingness to transform it. Initially regarded as an opportunity to extract social, cultural, conceptual and methodological knowledge from the universe of focus, this willingness became gradually more present as the research itself gradually confirmed the potential at stake. Thus the added proximity to the subject of study, and the deep knowledge developed throughout, gave the ideal ground upon which actual endeavors could be rehearsed and consolidated: the musicians´ trust, consolidated throughout the participant research, meant they were generally receptive to the possibility of developing joint endeavors, suggested through a series of informal meetings.

The stated aim was the external visibility that music projects housed at CCStop could benefit from, through the creation of a loose internal network. The underlying logic was that, as a collective, CCStop was a larger entity, and therefore more readily acknowledged by outside agents and spectators. However, a second aim was present: the strengthening of internal ties among the musicians. An aim that, it was hoped, would be accomplished through the regularity of said informal meetings, and subsequently through the musicians´ participation in proposed group actions.

START! was born out of an opportunity to integrate the international digital media festival Future Places, in Porto, in October 2008. This opportunity arose through informal acquaintances, and was quickly identified as a favourable starting point: the festival itself gathered an array of agents, shaped into a temporary network around the challenge of having digital media contribute to the development of local cultures. The subject was clearly convergent with the stated needs of the CCStop, and a series of key protagonists of the festival were readily acknowledged as potential allies.

The Kingdoms of Elgaland-Vargaland (KREV), a fictitious state that is in reality a worldwide network of outsider artists and cultural agents, could itself be regarded as an appropriate metaphor for CCStop. It was therefore proposed that, for the festival, the musicians freely participate in a loose collective interpretation of KREV´s “national anthem”. One CCStop musician, Gustavo Costa, composed a symphony to be conducted via mobile phones. The outcome of this hybrid semi-improvisation would be released by Ash International, a UK media label also represented at the festival.

The concert began around 6pm, on October 10, 2008, taking over a majority of spaces of CCStop, and lasting close to one hour. About fifty musicians joined the event, performing in their rehearsal rooms, in the building´s corridors and porches. The mood was one of joy and euphoria, throughout the event as well as in its aftermath, when musicians bonded around food and drinks offered by one of the local coffee houses. Nine digital sound recording devices were placed throughout the building, connected to three computers in order to capture the sound for future sharing and releasing, but festival participants further recorded their own versions of the concert. Adding to the festival´s official photographer, a CCStop team of video makers filmed the event out of their own will, and are in the process of producing a documentary film.

A 7” single, containing extracts from the October 2008 concert, should be ready by the time you read this. Its launch will be accompanied by a new concert in the same format as last year´s. This format may be regarded as the “annual catharsis” as defined in anthropological terms, whereby a given social structure engages in periodical rituals of excess in order to self-manifest and self-regulate.

4. THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Apparently, CCStop remains in the first age of accessibility to music; that is, it did not proceed to the stage that generalized digital production associated with a hyper-connectivity between producers and audience. At CCStop, Digital Media are generally employed within the parameters of established social/market relations. They appear as magnetic and inoffensive tools, and act as powerful, however subtle, frames for existence – just like the musical formats or the walls of the shopping mall. If there is a challenge to Digital Media at CCStop, it is how to subvert its incidence as another discreet or tolerated framework, and therefore how to have such media work out its contextual dilemmas.

• How can CCStop define and expand its genuine proposition, a recycling operation built upon the remains of a commercial mirage – while keeping the expanded symbolic capital derived from this fact?

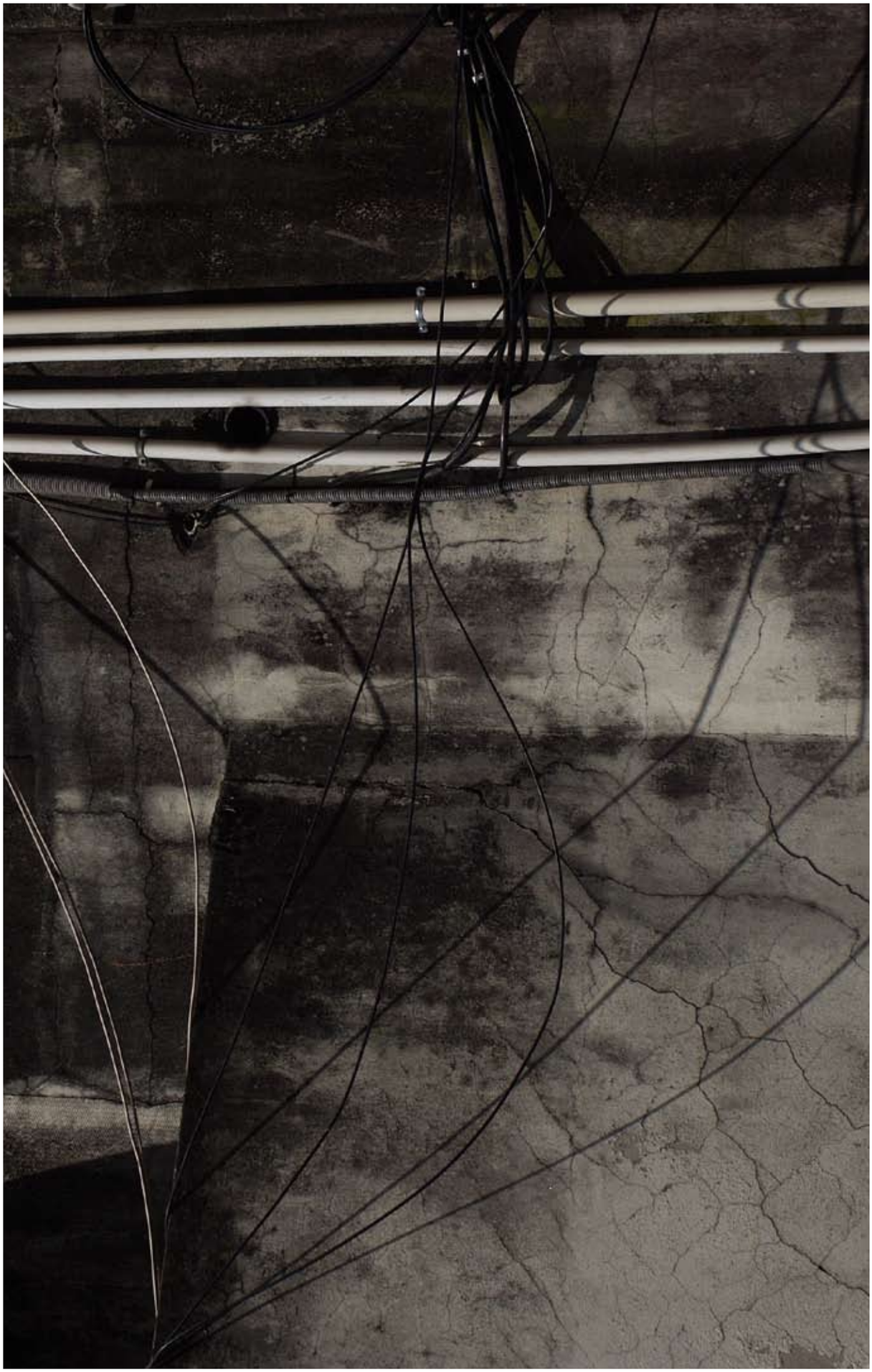
• How can the context of CCStop render public and operative the creative blueprint it already points towards, centered on the research, lab-based practices, that remains confined to the rehearsal rooms?

It is necessary that CCStop engages in dialogue with external social logics, through genuine differentiation and contribution. An own voice is required for this disparate and chaotic universe, a voice that will not extinguish it in its own formulation.

In practice:

• How can we promote a platform for musical practice and publishing that confers musicians the experience and the joy of music beyond their elected references, while maintaining the legitimacy of their autonomous paths? How can we accomplish a visibility and a more participatory, more rooted experience of community – a present and future dynamic and a communal value?

Digital Media can be crucial in this. It can add to human presence, communication and un-



derstanding in this particular context and momentum. As a pervasive symbolic and operative territory of contemporaneity, digital media can go beyond its own cliché and strengthen this human presence and relation – ironically, through processes of mediation that revert back to a palpable space.

It must be pointed out that, despite clear improvements, the musicians´ acknowledgment of CCStop as an asset is itself precarious. However, we have come to realize how this process needs to occur in its own time, and as a result of genuine, rooted dynamics. Prior attempts at conferring a formal structure and even a statutory identity to CCStop failed precisely because they consisted of individual intentions the musicians would not necessarily subscribe to. The emergence of CCStop as an entity, acknowledged both internally and by the outside world, needs to be precisely that: a reality that emerges as a consequence of its contextual and content dynamics, not through the creation of an associated fiscal entity.

Three challenges regarding Digital Media and CCStop:

• How can Digital Media foster a creative space at CCStop that, despite the individual projects, invites regular and participative research practices, open to both musicians and audience, producing new genuine ways of making, enjoying and sharing music? Musical hybridity is clearly on the increase, as a result of exponential access to the remotest forms of musical expression via online sharing communities: the creation of online channels within CCStop will foster the emerging of new musical languages.

• How can CCStop musicians have a more effective awareness of external structures that continually shape their contexts of production, the balance of the social/market relation, and the borders between private and public aspirations? Will an increase of intervention and knowledge about Digital Media be able to contribute to the resolution of these issues? The current availablility of online self-publishing facilities may be explored in ways that are simultaneously chaotic and strategic. CCStop may be the brand that unites a multitude of exercises.

• How can Digital Media improve human/personal presence communication and dynamics inside the CCStop community? A Twitter channel may be a good starting point.

START! took the first steps in these directions. The next steps include an ongoing partnership with research projects, the creation of a participatory website, and the creation of a joint music label. They are unfolding as we type. Tune in next year.

///

URBANSYNC: AS WE MAY FEEL?!

STEPHAN BAUMANN
German Research Center for AI.

1. WHY?

UrbanSync aimed at finding the correlates which define personal well-being in an urban context. Since we live our lives meanwhile in a world augmented by technical artifacts, the boundaries seem to blur between being always-on or completely-off. Knowledge workers, artists, Web2.0 aficionados define the quality of life and especially urban life by something in-between work and activities in private life, something in-between the office, the city, the countryside (the “third place”). During my 3 week stay in Porto I intended to perform a gathering of urban signals in typical settings of my life as a research-artist. The approach was intended to be as close as possible to do this in a 24/7 manner. Equipped with a portabel MP3-recorder to record urban sound, a wristband containing diverse sensors to collect physiological and ambient data (heart rate, skin conductance response, accelerometers) as well as locative data (GPS) and a commodity device to scan “electronic smog” (signals of GHz networks) I wanted to document the multimodal input of urban signals encountered over the course of an hour, a day, a week. In contrast to existing work I planned to analyse, visualize and sonify the large-scale amount of data in a post-processing mode. The required devices are non-instrusive and it was possible to document experiences over large intervals of time. Beside collecting the first open reality data stream the experiments should be a blueprint for future devices allowing for realtime interfacing the environmental and social richness of the urban playground surrounding us.

The scientific mission was designed to include the disclosure of the collected data for free download on a public website. In this way I hoped to stimulate interdisciplinary collaborative

work of scientists and artists in related fields such as audio analysis, sonic interaction design, ambulatory assesment of vital data, urban planning and multimodal interactive art.

2. THE MISSION

During September the technical setup was tested at the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence in cooperation with the researchers providing the wristband (Dr. Papastefanou, GESIS Mannheim, Germany) and the department for intelligent user interfaces regarding methods for audio event detection. In addition to these hardware-related issues required software modules and data formats had been installed and tested.

The hardware included a so-called “esmog scanner” tracking the GHz frequency range and demodulating the received signals to the audible frequency range. The audio output of this device was fed into a Olympus digital voice recorder in order to record these signals for postprocessing. A Zoom H2 digital audio recorder was used for the recording of the urban soundscape. It was placed into an open side pocket of a backpack. The sensorband was used to gather physiologial data and according contextual data, especially 3 accelerometers. A standard GPS datalogger was used for localizing the authors position over the course of the 19 different sessions. (FIG 1)

During October the technical setup was used to perform several explorations of the urban space in Porto. The multichannel sensory data was recorded as described above and stored for post-processing issues by transfering the data to a laptop with an additional external harddrive. Different typical everyday life use-cases of a researcher working on science and art provided the basis for in-situ techno-sociological data gathering. The design of these explorations followed the advice of wellknown phonographers [http://www.quietamerican.org/]:

Use Case – Motion and action: *Moving a microphone implies narrative. Recordings made while moving or acting (walking, biking, typing) challenges the listener to identify with the recording. Recordings made while acting have narrative momentum. Especially when people listen with headphones, such recordings offer an opportunity to enter into an experience. This is described as ‚immersion.‘ Play with motion.*

Use Case – Presence: *I define presence as the degree to which my agency, as recordist, is apparent. ... It is impossible in many situations to vanish. Many environments – especially human social ones – are inevitably altered by my presence. Often the best I can do is obscure the fact that I am recording by using stealthy equipment. Sometimes there is no choice but to act. Sometimes acting makes the recording.* (FIG 2)

As a result 19 different sessions representing a mixture of being in motion and showing presence are now available. This sums up to approximately 45 hours of reality streams. For each of these sessions the complete data sets are available and a short ethnographic un-edited note that was written immediately after the performance of such a session. The session title describes either typical places in Porto or typical actions, tasks, transportation vehicles. The range is covering the ordinary and the unique. The sessions had not been planned in advance and occured over the 3 weeks more or less by just living a typical life:

- Beauty Session Mercado do Bolhão/ Ribeira/Douro
- Casa da Música
- CC Stop
- Eléctrico
- Estádio do Dragão
- Final walk at the beach
- Long Sleep – Dom Henrique
- Lost in Porto
- Matosinhos
- Norte Shopping
- Português
- Praia da Luz
- Praia de Lavadores
- Professional
- Rehearsal CC Stop
- Saudade
- Serralves
- Short Sleep – Dom Henrique
- Taxi

In addition to this a diary of the entire mission was published under http://urbansync.wordpress.com.

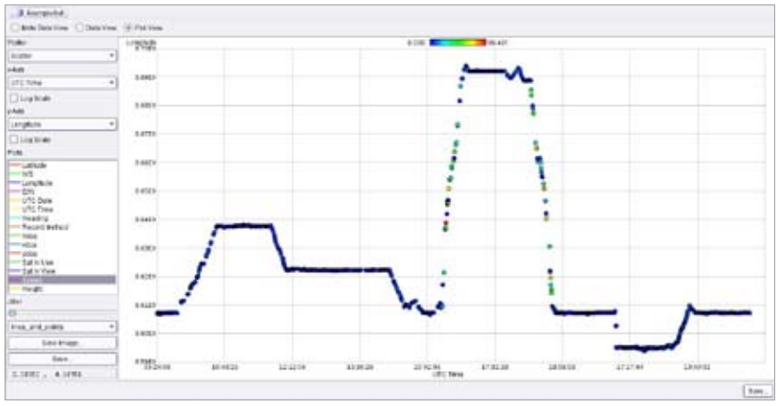
3. SCIENTIFIC METHODS AND CROWDSOURCING

In order to guarantee valid data gathering I performed rough data processing routines and the visualization of the GPS-trails after each session. GoogleEarth (FIG 3), Rapidminer and Audacity had been used for these tasks. In order to maximize the scientific impact and aesthetic potential of the data further specialised approaches have to be implemented.

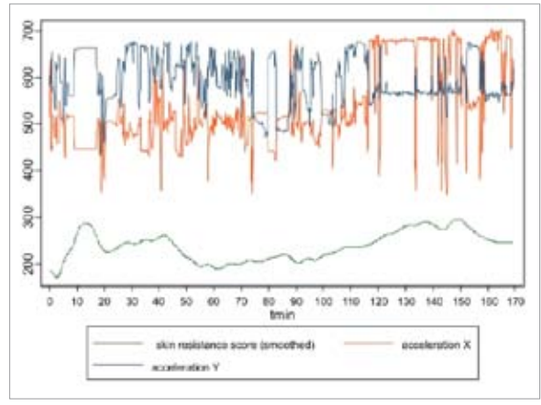
1.

2.

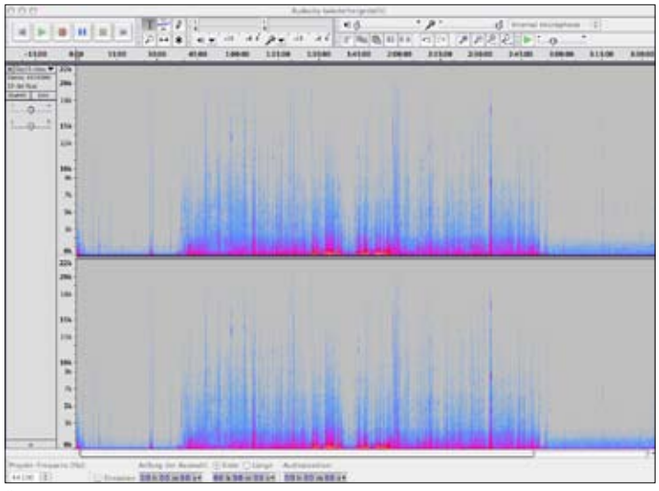
3.



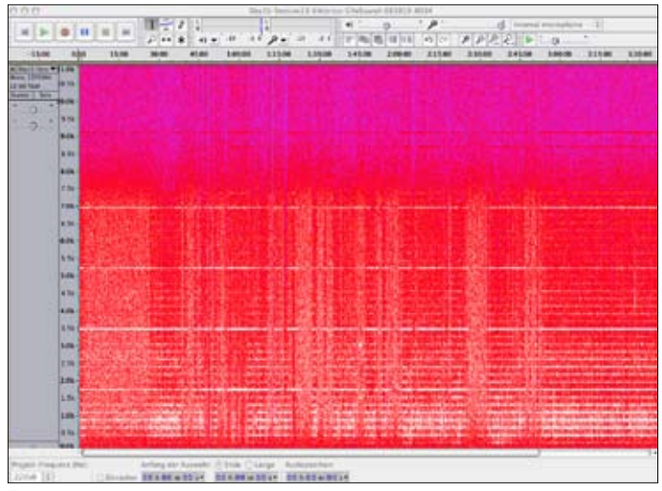
4.



5.



6.



7.

1. Sensors and recording devices.
2. Backpack with Zoom H2 in “stealth-mode”.
3. Visualization of GPS trails
4. Finding patterns in GPS data: “Motion vs. Presence” (Y-Axis: Longitude, X-Axis: UTC Time, Color: Speed).
5. Plot of smoothed skin resistance data aligned with the X-Y accelerometer data.
6. Spectrogram of urban sounds: “Hotel, Music, Traffic, Electrico, Traffic, Hotel”.
7. Spectrogram of sonifed GHz signals.

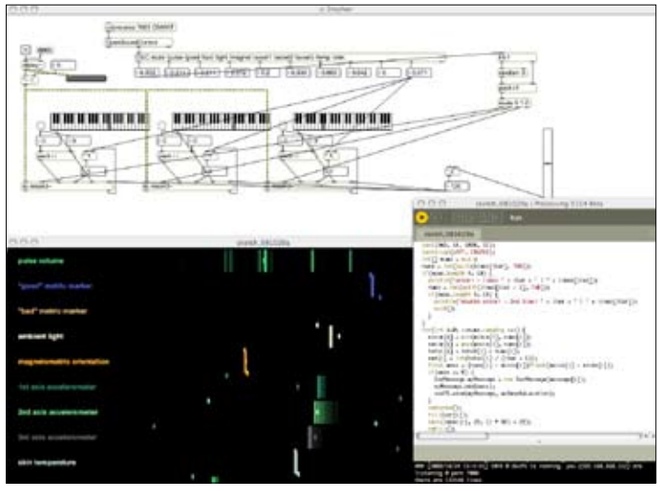
The 3 week stay was used to collect a maximum of data rather than implementing fine-grained additional analysis incorporating sophisticated datamining or audio analysis (e.g. classification of the recorded urban sounds and the sonified esmog data). Furthermore the input of experts in the media arts was incorporated by giving talks and having verbal communication with faculties for the fine arts and media arts in Porto.

The analysis of the several input channels (urban sound, esmog sound, GPS, physiological data) in order to discover relationships and dependencies was done by visual inspection first. (FIG 4) (FIG 5)

Sharing the data sets with other researchers has excellent potential to “crowdsource” the process of the scientific post-processing in the area of semantic audio analysis. Several institutes had been receiving the data in the meantime to work on their “scientific appropriation”. (FIG 6) (FIG 7)

4. MASHUPS FOR THE MEDIA ARTS

Beside the scientific post-processing the visualization and sonification of the collected data by interacting through audiovisual traces is an open issue to be implemented. In order to create a pleasing and intense interaction scenario for exploration of the urban experiences further collaboration had been started. Rui Penha, a Porto-born sound artist and composer worked on sonification of the physiological data using Max/MSP and Processing. Follow-up meetings intended to extend this approach by incorporating movement patterns (as found in the accelerometer data) and GPS data to establish “macro - and microrhythms” of urban inhabitants and the city itself. (FIG 8)



8. At-site development of sonification and visualisation of bio signals with sonic artist Rui Penha.

5. ARTISTIC STRATEGIES WITHIN SCIENCE: CLASH!

The mission delivered different results: The qualitative findings in the area of socio-technological design methods, the Open Reality Data Stream and it triggered subsequent research for implementing reality mining methods and innovative multimodal interaction paradigms.

Qualitative findings for socio-technological design: The experiments raised my personal awareness for the sonic space surrounding me in different places and situations of my life to a much higher degree than I was expecting. Although people being active in field recordings told me about this in advance I was really impressed that human beings already possess astonishing capabilites to process sound in a very fine-grained way. Unfortunately this capability is most of the time not perceived and used as a foreground process since the urban context maybe offers too much of visual overload. In addition to this the urban sonic space is already heavily overloaded by industrial (e.g. traffic noise) and technologically induced sound artifacts (e.g. ringtones, private conversations over mobile phones in the public space) disturbing a pleasing sonic experience most of the time. Therefore sonic interaction design has great potential and the obligation to develop methods which act as a “context-dependent cognitive filters or amplifiers” as well as supporting “personal sonic memories”. By the latter I mean the possibilities to focus on and record unique sounds in everyday life with the help of automated detection and to find ways to retrieve such moments afterwards even in large-scale collections.

By developing such methods and devices for everyday use severe implications for issues of privacy or better to say “intimacy” result. During my experiments I was able to record privacy-related situations in stealth-mode which means people do not assume that the existing technical possibilities may be used for such purposes. But when I was asking people for being allowed to intervent into social situations of intimacy the responses showed a diversity of soft and strong acceptance or rejection depending on the personal skills and willingness to play with “self exposure in the digital age”. Some statements of observed people should shed some light on this:

“ Recording in public space is not legal” [Lawyer]

“ When you record I stop to speak although I understand that your scientific mission is needed” [Media artist]

“ I dont mind if you record our private conversation, after a while I get used to it and even forget about this observation” [Researcher]

“ I could arrange a very special setting with my family for you since you need such recordings for the sake of science” [Musician, Researcher]

Therefore the design of such systems should offer the user the required degrees of freedom to select different privacy modes depending on the social context and general personal preferences.

Open Reality Data Stream: The weblog of the STSM contains a download page with detailed descriptions as follows:

“This page contains the description about the usage of the data gathered on my different trips to Europe. The data is licensed under Creative Commons license: Attribution-Non Commercial-ShareAlike. You find 4 different data streams for each of the individual sessions belonging to different cities:

· GPS in (kmz, gpx, CSV)
· Urban Sound as digital audio (mp3)
· Physiological data and context (CSV)
· Sonified Esmog data as digital audio (mp3)

Technical details and synchronization: The session pages contain GPS data in kmz, the Urban Sound was recorded in CD quality but is offered for practical reasons in 128kbps MP3. The GHz sound is offered in 64kbps. The physiological data was captured at 50Hz rate, please remind this when aligning the 4 data streams. Synchronization was achieved by starting the recording of GPS and Urban Sound simultaneously. If you check the audio file you hear me counting in the start of the recording of the physiological data (” 3 2 1 bio”) and the GHz recording (”3 2 1 Giga”). For precise data mining about correlations between the different data streams you have to take according offsets into account.

The physiological and context data: It contains 10 different sensor values, organized as: “pulse volume”, “good metric marker”, “bad metric marker”, “ambient light”, “magnetometric orientation”, “1st axis accelerometer”, “2nd axis accelerometer”, “3rd axis accelerometer”, “skin temperature”, “skin resistance”.

We provide the raw data without the required smoothing, removal of artefacts, etc.

High Quality Data: If you need the high quality data you should contact me in order to arrange a different method of data transfer – either DVDs via postal service or I try to come to your place with a HD for copying the data.”

Reality mining and multimodal interaction paradigms: The digital audio tracks of the urban soundscape offer the possiblity to be analysed by using well-known methods for digital signal processing as developed by researchers in even specialized subfields such as music information retrieval. I was surprised to find a lot of different music-related hidden tasks being included in everyday life. Although I was not seeking actively for such situations they occured by nature and offer great challenges for sophisticated approaches to handle new music information retrieval tasks in urban environments and for obvious commercial impact (e.g. proposing soundtracks to stimulate well-being in malls, optimizing Muzak, detecting top10 ringtone melodies, recognizing popular tunes as played by street musicians, etc.).

The signals emitted in the GHz range and their sonic counterparts evoked complex sound scenes. By analyzing visually the spectrograms of the 19 sessions some typical patterns have been identified. In the urban environment the carrier signals for the GSM networks are present with very high energy levels. Personal phone calls and the sending of text messages resulted in ad-hoc bursts in these scenes which can be identified. The presence of WiFi hotspots and the transmission of data over bluetooth was hard to identify in outdoor usecases. The sessions in the hotel room offer potential to perform a more fine-grained analysis of these

signals. But it has to be stated that it seems to be required to work with blind source separation or informed model-based approaches to analyse the complex scenes in a precise way. Another way around could be to use different, more sophisticated sensors for professional scanning of the HF frequency range not producing sonic counterparts of the emitted signals. Nevertheless the sonic representation of the GHz range offers great potential when thinking about the design of context-aware auditory displays or future music consumption in the urban context. Performing aesthetic mappings by using Max/MSP or Pure Data could be a straightforward approach to come up soon with first prototypes for such kind of sonic experiences.

If we look at the physiological data it has to be stated that procedures for smoothing and dealing with the correlation of artifacts induced by movements are strongly required before further quantitative analysis of this data is possible. Performing preliminary visual analysis of smoothed plots of the skin resistance aligned with the soundscapes resulted in contradictory findings. Since the field of ambulatory assesment of vital data is still very young improvements of the hardware and according approaches for data analysis have to be developed in the future.

Although not being intended the very obvious usage of GPS and accelerometer data represents an excellent basis for reality mining on micro vs. macroscopic scales. The availability of both data streams in CSV-format allows for the application of clustering and classification models as implemented in the open-source data mining tool Rapidminer. A potential application using the results of such clusters of movement patterns is a retrieval-by-movement approach to access sounds. We started to work on this recently by using the Wiimote controller to mimic the movements of the hand when dealing with different tasks and social situations in everyday life. If we use the resulting pattern of these real-time accelerometer data we can retrieve the best matching cluster in the Open Reality Data Stream and as a consequence access the according sounds the observer was perceiving in Porto. Time and space are neglected as major dimensions for retrieval and we are curious to experiment with this setup to achieve a very natural and poetic way of interacting with urban sounds. This outcome should be made available to everyday people by being installed in public events or exhibitions.

.

REFERENCES

C. Nold (2004). http://www.biomapping.net/

L. Gaye and Mazé, Ramia, Holmquist, Lars Erik (2003). Sonic City: The Urban Environment as a Musical Interface, NIME2003.

A. Bassoli and Brewer, Johanna, Martin, Karen, Dourish, Paul, Mainwaring, Scott (2007). Underground Aesthetics: Rethinking Urban Computing, IEEE Urban Computing.

http://www.quietamerican.org/

A. Dunne and Raby, Fiona (2001). Design Noir: The Secret Life of Electronic Objects. http://www.dunneandraby.co.uk

.

This work was partially supported by the COST Action IC0601 on Sonic Interaction Design through a Short-Term Scientific Mission at INESC Porto, Portugal.

///

9. Talks about UrbanSync

monuments

DIGITÓPIA @ FUTURE PLACES 2008

RUI PENHA

Digitópia Curator, Casa da Música.

Ph.D. Student, University of Aveiro.

Certainly not an example of digital media or digital art in itself, Digitópia was a rather strange submission to the Future Places 2008 Prize, as it is a project that, more than being based at a major concert hall, is the consequence of a joint venture uniting four institutions: Casa da Música[1], INESC Porto[2], ESMAE[3] and Escola das Artes - UCP[4]. On the other hand, it was quite obvious that Digitópia was quickly evolving into a "Future Place", fostering a new generation of digital media creators and providing them with means for the informal development of skills. Digitópia - Platform for the Development of Digital Music Communities just had to be somehow present at a festival based around Digital Media and Local Cultures.

The Future Places Festival, as Digitópia, is at home in a city that not only hosts flourishing universities, art schools and institutions, but above all has managed to nurture a strong bond between them, giving birth to several heterogeneous communities that revolve around art, technology and science in a rich, symbiotic relationship. In this context, the festival increases overall awareness of our community and attracts new valuable contributors: in a world of virtual communication, Porto might well become the place to be.

On a more personal note – and after the mandatory disclaimer stating that the opinions expressed here represent my own and not those of anyone else – I couldnt help but be mesmerized by the number of times that copyright-related questions arose during the 2008 edition of the Future Places Festival. Having the promotion of free musical content and software as one of its major goals, copyright issues have also plagued Digitópia from the start. It is obvious that this is one of the main issues to tackle while discussing the future of media and art.

Conceived to protect the authors rights, it seems that a significant part of the copyright problems are very far from the authors legitimate interests, and sometimes they even appear to work against them, as a result of legal issues stalling an otherwise simple process. The two main reasons behind the need to regulate the distribution of content are the protection of authorship and the authors legitimate right to decide wether or not some specific usage of the work violates its original purpose. One might argue that Creative Commons[5] licenses fully address the attribution issue and provide a good amount of choice regarding the usage policies while permitting the free distribution of content. The problem is that, when in doubt, we cant assume any license other than full copyright. It seems somewhat awkward that the authors that want their work to be freely shared are the ones that have the hassle of finding a way to pack their work with a license that, if lost, forces the work to be protected in ways that severely violate the authors original intentions. The time has come to agree on a new stan-

dard. Between public domain, obviously too relaxed, and regular copyright, nothing short of anachronic, Creative Commons licenses are clearly mature enough for the job and, from my point of view, if we could infer an Attribution Non-Commercial[6] license by default we would definitely be better equipped to navigate a world where everyone creates content and is eager to share knowledge.

Today, when we think about copyright issues, more often than not were revolving around piracy. Well, it seems to me that piracy is much more prejudicial to the distribution companies than it is to the authors. It is true that, in some realms, the last grew to depend on the former, but that reality is only as old as the mechanical means of reproduction. For music and movies in particular - as these appear to be the major problematic areas -, that is not more than a lifetime. The truth is that the all-mighty distribution companies were incapable of fulfilling the ever increasing demand for variety, accessibility and affordability. At the same time, they maintained, if not comparatively decreased, the added value of their products, particularly important when dealing with bodiless digital data. Quite a few small distribution companies flourished with the internet, yet the big names in the industry, in a clear state of denial, chose to shot in every direction while desperately attempting to stop the bleeding. Only a handful ever tried to find a solution: do they really deserve the authors loyalty? I would like to take this opportunity to attempt some - light, but heavily biased - futurology on this theme.

Creating art is a demanding and, more often than not, time-consuming endeavor that requires a considerable amount of resources. It is true that it is dangerous to put a price tag on a work of art, more so when doing it at a preliminary stage, but artists need to be paid for their work. Long gone are the times when the few rich and well-educated could devote their time investigating and creating for pleasure and posthumous fame. What if we could conceive a model where the artists would be paid to create content that would then be freely available for everyone to enjoy? What if we could devise such a system without putting yet another burden on taxpayers money?

Again, Porto seems to have an answer for this. Both Fundação de Serralves and Fundação Casa da Música have shown that art sponsoring can be beneficial to both the art and the business worlds, exchanging financial resources for prestige and brand activation. While certainly not exempt from criticism, this model has taken both institutions to a level that would be difficult to attain with state-funding alone. How could we transpose this experience to an earlier stage of commissioning new works? How could business benefit from sponsoring new art while guaranteeing the artists independence?

Art has an unrivaled power to connect and touch people and a great part of this power comes from its ability to freely question everything. It seems obvious that no one would deliberately force a lower quality outcome for their investment, so I dont believe that someone who is bright enough to invest a significant share of their marketing and brand activation resources in art sponsoring would want to restrict the artists inherent freedom.

But who should choose and guide this investments? Who could establish seemingly impossible connections between aesthetics and “brand spirit”? Who could guarantee that a spe-

cific target group would be led to identify with a company through their investments in art? We can identify several traditional mediation roles that could provide us with some models. First and foremost, the curator. Usually specialized in some aesthetic realm, the curator has an acute understanding of art and is able to grasp connections between different works and different artists in order to build an experience for an exhibition or private collection. Radio DJs have played a very important role introducing new music to audiences that followed their personal taste. Brand activation managers seek to devise a brand spirit and implement it coherently through different means. Stockbrokers know their clients as well as they know the market and advise them according to their specific interests and investing style.

As the curator, a person fulfilling this new role would have to become an expert in some aesthetic realm and establish a narrative point of view that would identify his work, so that brand activation managers could hire him accordingly to their own brand spirit. Their target audience would be able to identify his "aesthetic fingerprint" and follow his choices like once we did with Radio DJs. Like the stockbroker, this person would have to deeply investigate new artists in order to identify future investments while keeping their clients interests in mind. Why on earth do I think this could work without compromising art? Because different investors would guarantee diversity: while, e.g., the cellphone network corporation could favor big instantaneous pop-like successes, the insurance company could identify with works destined for a slow but steady and long-lasting recognition. The beauty of this would be that aesthetics, and, perhaps most importantly, aesthetic-based decision making, would have to become a part of everyones life. Who knows, maybe we can still save the word from drowning in nail polish...

.

NOTES

1. http://www.casadamusica.com
2. http://www2.inescporto.pt/
3. http://www.esmae-ipp.pt/
4. http://www.artes.ucp.pt/
5. http://creativecommons.org/
6. http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/

///

INTERFACE DESIGN FOR MOBILE DEVICES

NUNO CORREIA

UT Austin – Portugal Program Co-Director, Digital Media.

Professor, Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia, Universidade Nova de Lisboa (DI/FCT/UNL)

Coordinador of the Interactive Multimedia Group (IMG/CITI)

MÓNICA MENDES

Lecturer, Faculdade de Belas-Artes, Universidade de Lisboa (FBAUL)

Member of the Centro de Investigação e de Estudos Arte e Multimédia (CIEAM)

INTRODUCTION

Mobile devices and network infrastructures open the possibility for new forms of information access or storytelling while visiting physical places. The Interface Design for Mobile Devices workshop addressed this new trend by exploring the user interface design opportunities and challenges for different devices, taking into account the underlying information architecture or storyline. Participants with diverse backgrounds developed projects in user interface design and information structuring for exploring a physical location. In this Future Places event, the inspiring local were the grounds of the Serralves Museum in Porto.

Contemporary development methods in digital media explore the potential of experimental approaches where mobility is crucial, contributing to local communities growth and empowerment. By reinforcing connections and congregating the most diverse cultures, local naturally becomes global. In this essay we present some reflections and guidelines on interface design for mobile devices and the methods applied on the three-day workshop at Future Places festival, developed in an environment of an intense and concentrated collaborative experimental work.

INTERFACE DESIGN FOR MOBILE DEVICES

Interface design for mobile devices starts by setting the solution and describing the workflow, defining the information architecture followed by visual design.

Specifying the solution - by describing the concept, defining the users, and identifying the subset of features - will act as a reference and a filter for the options to consider in the development process. To define the application, features and functionality must be set by highlighting the essential, what really matters to users *in motion*; then, a concise representation is created and the subset of features becomes clear.

The mobile device is very responsive and is always on – typically, interactions with the phone

do not last long. Applications should be simple and direct, easy to use in short periods of time. Identifying secondary tasks that users will do with the proposed solution and the objects they will interact with will determine hierarchy and organization.
The workflow definition encompasses the interaction design microstructure. Interaction design involved at this stage focuses on building the functionality that will allow the users to achieve their task in a quick and effective way.
Users are already familiar with the way some features and controls of the standard integrated applications work, and the main content should be accessible as soon as possible, avoiding intro pages. Pages should be light, not only to load quickly, but also to optimize user time while on the move.
Terminology must focus on the user, and should not be overly technical. Minimizing text entry as input should be accomplished by selecting options, rather than having to write to access the information. Navigating through lists and pickers help to accelerate access to what interests the user. Features should be presented in several screens, from a macro set of general options to more specific features, whether they are mainly task-oriented or object-oriented. The need of zoom and panning should also be reduced.
For the interfaces design layout, one must start by considering the platform where the application will be used: size, interface devices (multitouch, keyboard), responsiveness, internet and other functionalities, portability and the possibility of being “always connected”.
In a phone, resolution is higher, but there is less space, processing speed and bandwidth than in a computer.
Interface design for mobile users use requires robustness. Given the small sizes of the screens, constraints apply and context awareness is harder to provide, so detailed work is dedicated to navigation issues, menus, buttons, unambiguous pictograms and symbols, and short names. Although different devices have specific requirements, some general guidelines apply to the design of interfaces. Asking “what is important now?” will help to just keep on the screen what is really critical at that time. The result will certainly be different from the desktop computer interface.

The content presented can be maximized by optimizing the use of space, selecting sub-features, and also changing the font size for readability. Minimizing ads, redundant controls, text and unnecessary labels, and paying attention to the unused space will help to keep content simple and well organized. A clean design with hierarchical information and visual highlights, using the system fonts and a restricted color palette with great contrast between type and background will increase readability.
For multitouch screens, providing targets is important given the size of the fingers; for lists, clear edge-to-edge design will be prone to faster navigation. Most interfaces rely on vertical controls, and consistent criteria should be defined for the alignments of labels, controls, and values. From general information to specific tasks, an extensive use of arr0ws throughout the interface will work as a progression of screens that follow, and ensure that the navigation structure and the screens are well known and hierarchical.

Finally, it is essential to communicate the status of the application with feedback to the users on what is happening, when, and what has changed.

DESIGN PROCESS

Starting from the participants’ interests, previous experiences, and expectations, and considering the design of visual interfaces, available technologies were introduced. Programming tools, network infrastructures, and access to geo-referenced information have a major role in the design process. Additionally, in the interface design for mobile devices, key concepts and references on task analysis, usability issues, heuristics, and design guidelines are of critical relevance; when applied, these become the structure and look and feel of the overall project.

Such concepts had visual expression through the InStory case study, a system for mobile information access, storytelling and gaming activities in physical spaces. Previous outcomes from a course featuring a module on mobile interface design at ESTGP (Portalegre, Portugal) were also introduced to the workshop participants.

The case studies presentation set the context for a challenge, made to the participants, to develop a project in two days. Accomplished by multidisciplinary teams, each participant had individual responsibilities on the final result. The elements that were requested for each project were the concept, structure diagrams and the visual interface.

The concept is the description of the idea and main features involved, while the information architecture and interaction design is implicitly defined in the interface. The interface includes a 1st level template for the home/main menu and a 2nd level with content definition, geo-references, user data and optionally games.

Methodology suggestions included the distribution of tasks, sharing indoor and outdoor image and video resources, rapid prototyping techniques, use of heuristics checklists, design guidelines, and emulators, as well as uploading interface design images to the mobile devices for debugging.

Field work was required for collection of records at the Serralves Foundation for site-specific resources. An important step in the process was the presentation and discussion of ongoing work, a collaborative approach that later contributed to improve the final proposals. Comments and suggestions shared at this stage triggered the optimization of the proposals.

A critical overview on limitations and prospects of development were then discussed, considering proposals that could lead to implementation. Further ideas aroused during the public presentation of the outcomes of the workshop in the main Future Places conference.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The challenge proposed to the workshop participants was successfully achieved through collaborative “hard work”, bringing ideas to life in an inspiring environment where participants interacted as if they already knew each other before. Interesting proposals appeared – useful, playful, and ambitious projects with potential for further development.

More advanced approaches and narratives languages, including geo-referenced data visualization, real-time video, interactive storytelling, and mashups to support local communities, will be the focus for future work.

.

REFERENCES

CORREIA, Nuno et al. [2005] “InStory: a system for mobile information access, storytelling and gaming activities in physical spaces”, *in ACM ACE 2005, Advances in Computer Entertainment Technology*, pp. 102-109, Valencia, Spain

iPhone Developer Design [2008/02] iPhone User Interface Design, iPhone Tech Talks | Video (01:00:32)
http://adcweb.apple.com/cgi-bin/adconitunes.pl?destination=adc.apple.com.1479953497.01479953503.1521820374

WHITE, Gabriel [2008] “Designing for the Last Billion”, *Interactions*, ACM, Volume 15, Issue 1 “Toward a model of innovation”, Section “Addressing critical changes”, pp. 56-58, NY
http://interactions.acm.org/content/?p=36

ZWICK, Carola, SCHMITZ, Burkhard, Studio 7.5 [2005] *Designing for Small Screens*, Ava Publishing

.

LINKS

Outcomes from the Interface Design for Mobile Devices workshop
http://colab.ic2.utexas.edu/futureplaces/2008/10/outcomes-from-the-interface-design-for-mobile-devices-workshop

///

LIVING ROOM PLANKTON

ENVIRONMENT AND USER AS EVOLUTION AGENTS

FILIPE PAIS

Living room Plankton is an interactive installation inspired on plankton and lichen species where a virtual organism grows and reacts according to the surrounding environments. LRP brings to discussion two aspects which became popular on artistic practice: interactivity and artificial life.

Technology has been driving the way we build and perceive experiences allowing the creation of new worlds, departing from a mimetic look trough nature, that were first static and its now becoming more and more real, evolving into unknown places with or without our presence.

From the early computer generated pieces in the 60's by artists like Vera Molnar and Michael Noll, exploring automatic drawing based on mathematic abstractions, to recent artists like Casey Reas and Ken Rinaldo, complex systems arise from basic element interactions based on simple rules. The early static visual forms rendered in the 50's-60's, were lately (during the 70's) turned into moving image sequences where time was the new introduced element. The next decade brought the real time sound and image synthesis. During the 90's, artists as Scott Snibe and Toshio Iwai explored new interactions, where the mouse is substituted by other inputs as mechanical, optical and sound sensors which augmented our experience towards object and space. More than a technical transformation this artworks brought questions related with author and spectator relationships.

Interactive art is the latest manifestation of the "death of the author". The "interactive artist" is merely a context-maker, who provides the basic ingredients, sets up the situation, and then disappears. The spectator-turned-into-the-user that provides the meanings, in a sense creates the work at the moment of the interaction.[1]

As in Myron Krueger's "responsive environments" LRP arises from the "collaboration between the artist, the computer, and the participant" and trough system interactions or by

other words, growing and living in autonomy, depending on the environment conditions. Exploring the idea of interpersonal interaction, the users might collaborate to create a specific output provided by the conjuncture and the moment. Since systems interactions occur the user(s) are no longer self-represented on their own but in addition with the system behaviour.

Nature and organic aesthetic and functionality has become the inspiration source for many artists using new technologies and Living room plankton explores it as well. In nature we find phenomena and choreographies emanated by living beings and inanimate matter which are invisible to the eye or that slip our attention either for being too mercurial or supine and unhurried. Mirroring nature at some level this object leads to plastic contemplation through an virtual organism's daily routine and interactions with real world.

Artificial Life artworks could be considered as a subgroup of Artificial Life research in that most artists are more concerned with creation of an aesthetic as opposed to testing theoretical biology.[2] The purpose of LRP as an artificial life object is firstly to be a contemplative experience and not a mimetic one, by other words, the emergent properties don't need to fit exactly the one's observed in nature since the organism evolving shares functional and form properties from different organism's living in nature. This life cycle is visually portrayed in a projection on an existing wall on any space subject to perceivable daylight fluctuations and the growth pattern is intimately related with the atmosphere of its placing trough a network of humidity, light, temperature and sound sensors that. Tough its outputs will range dramatically, as the habitat it dwells in with its climate conditions will dictate its performance.

Living Room Plankton as other artificial life artworks and their emergent characteristics, create constantly new aesthetic and functional realities, different from the one we know in our planet, allowing each user to "act as a selective pressure in the evolution of the work" and giving a specific and unique meaning to inter-personal interactions.

.

NOTES

1. Huhtamo, Erkki, Seven Ways of Misunderstanding Interactive Art

2. Rinaldo, Kenneth E., Technology Recapitulates Phylogeny: Artificial Life Art

///

TIME SIFTER

SHLOMIT LEHAVI

The digital age changed drastically the whole definition of space and time. In a way, we live today in simultaneous spaces and parallel time zones – the physical and the digital, where we maintain our unique cultures while at the same time the digital mega-culture erases uniqueness of place and identity. The more the world is 'connected' the more we become aware of a collective memory and collective subconscious that plays an important role in the layers of identity one carries.

I've been preoccupied with thoughts of collective memory and collective subconscious and the paradoxical notion of time for quite some time now, however, it was not until the summer of 2007 that I found myself looking for ways to address directly the subject of time and memory in my work. During the summer of 2007, while going through an old personal footage for a project I was working on, I found myself 'traveling' in time and space, re-living the moments and experiencing the old sensations as new and fresh. Then, it suddenly struck me – we do have a time-machine! Video is a time-machine. The more I thought about it the more I realized that regardless of any technology, regardless of time across time, there is an even greater time-machine – our brain! Memory and desire make us travel in time and space.
Intrigued by this thought, I started developing my project Time Sifter.
Thinking about time, space, time travel, memory, collective memory, video as a time machine, the brain as a time machine – I was looking at ways to convey it all. I wanted to create an environment that will intrigue a conversation on what is universal rather than what separates us as human beings, to talk about the personal vs. the collective. I wanted the viewer to interact with data that is composed of images and sounds that are both collective and personal memories.

"Constancy of place is a formidable basis for establishing a strong sense of sameness. Even as we ourselves undergo dramatic changes both individually and collectively, our physical surroundings usually remain relatively stable. As a result, they constitute a reliable locus of memories and often serve as major foci of personal as well as group nostalgia." Eviatar Zerubavel, Time Maps Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past, 2003, page 41

Having now finalizing the content's concept, I was also trying to find the ultimate interface to convey this idea of time and memory as collective and as personal. For that I thought of using circular screens (symbolizes roundness of time, repetition, perpetual mobile, the globe), and let the viewer flip it (like old time globes) to change the video content and with that change place and time.

The idea for the sieves came to me while I was in a visit to the city of Istanbul. In the market of Istanbul, I came across a sieve's shop. The image of the sieves as vertebras, as spine, moreover as horizon – one of the most significant images that in my opinion sums up the mystery of time and space – left a great impression. I there decided to use original hand crafted sieves, particularly from the market in Istanbul, and retrofit it with a screening material to use for projecting the videos.

This juxtaposition of using sieves that carry a history and reference to local cultures while at the same time being in the universal memory, sieve as a tool to sift, in this case, time, to its fundamental, using this old tool in combination with digital footage and high end technology to enable the user interaction, to merge and bridge time, space and cultural consciousness is the essence of this project.

"…if time has become space, then the unfolding of time that constitutes a life becomes a journey too, however much or little one travels spatially." Rebecca Solnit, Wanderlust, 2000, pp 72-73)

///

BURNING THE SOUND

A VISUALLY AMPLIFIED SOUND ART PERFORMANCE

RUDOLFO QUINTAS

”Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.” This quote by Arthur C. Clarke applies well to Burning the Sound, a performance by young Portugese artist Rudolfo Quintas combining high technology with one of the earliest tools used by humans – fire. Over the thousands of years this element has not lost any of its magical, mesmerizing qualities. With all our current knowledge the behaviour of flames is still beyond our control and understanding. The performance amplifies this chaotic energy, taking us back in time to a moment when we would gather around a fireplace to witness to shamans. The custom software instrument developed by Quintas is so well designed that all of the involved high technology seems to disappear, bringing into focus the live performer and his skill of ‘playing with fire’. The work is both compositional and performative – both technical and expressive. Quintas’s own presence in the work drawing the audience into the light of the flame leads to a kind of exchange – a kind of visual and physical ritual. The lighter functions as a kind of paintbrush that can carve out sounds from the air that fire is fire is constantly eating.” Transmediale Jury Statement 2009

Burning the sound is a visually amplified sound art performance pushing the ritualistic primitivism, gesture and body to technological mediated computer sound performances. It is meant to expand the aesthetic and composition approach in the genre of late 90s electronic music Glitch whose roots can be found in earlier 20th Century Futurist ‘Art of Noise’ manifesto.

It was created a new ‘performance-specific-instrument’, that is, an instrument specifically developed for a performance - as analogy to a ‘site-specific’ art work whose space (site) is the ‘canvas’.

This instrument, highly gestural, captures the flame’s shape from regular fire lighters and matches, to sonically render in real-time the distortion and micro manipulation of sound samples by affecting the way the data of a sample is read and played. This is made trough the development of a costume Augmented Reality interface. As the flames visual impulses are deeply connected to the aural perception of the sound – ‘the sound seems to be burning’. This process establishes a percepto-motivated audiovisual metaphor.

The performance is timeline structured guided by gestural improvisation based on pre-established ‘rituals’. It has aprox. 13 minutes, set to be live performed using massive sound speakers. It is sonically ‘aggressive’ from the begging, growing from droned to rhythmic sculptured sounds, from free improvisation to pattern sequencing until its subversion.

I perform with the feeling that I am “exorcising the sound”, this is for me, a spiritual attempt in finding the moments were the “noise” produced by digital distortion becomes warm and beauty, almost like the fire itself, is not good or evil, just needs to be in the right place.

CREATIVE PROCESS / FAILURE AND INTUITION IN PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH

“... ‘failure’ has become a prominent aesthetic in many of the arts in the late 20th century, reminding us that our control of technology is an illusion, and revealing digital tools to be only as perfect, precise, and efficient as the humans who build them. New techniques are often discovered by accident or by the failure of an intended technique or experiment…” Kim Kascon (MIT Computer Music Journal, 2000)

This project was born from failure. It came during my practice-based research at the *ISR - Institute for Systems and Robotics* in Lisbon[1] in the context of ‘*Experimentação Arte, Ciência e Tecnologia’* program promoted by DGartes / Ciencia Viva[2]. This program main aim was to support artist residences inside Portuguese scientific research centres. I applied to ISR because it was the one whose scientific areas best matched with the technological side of my practice, like Computer Vision, Image Processing, Computer Graphics and Sound.

Having started the program in September 2007, I started to work on the ideas that had previously submitted regarding my application. These were about the use of movement produced trough a gesture, both as subject, interface and content creation in a piece. In November 2007 I first presented this research in *TeDance* – International Conference on Dance and Technology[3] intituled *“Gesture Space-Time Shapes for The Augmented Body”* (Quintas 2007) and then in December at the *‘4th International Workshop on Body Technologies’* at La Casa Encendida, Madrid[4].

For the purpose of this research, I was prototyping a software (artefact) to demonstrate the

theory (critical thinking). One day, mid November, I wanted to test a bunch of code I had just finished prototyping, whose aim was to play sound trough the production of movement in front of a video camera. Nothing new in fact, but it was my starting point. To avoid noise issues with visible light, I had developed the camera tracking system to work with Infra-red light, but I noticed I didn't had infra-red light with me at that moment. Without it, the camera was seeing all dark and no movement could be captured from the camera. Instead of waiting to bring the Infra-red lights it the next day, I picked up a lighter form my pocket, using its flame as a source of infra-red light. This was enough to test the code.

When I turned on the lighter in front of the camera, instead of hearing the sound playing as expected, the flame made the sound to be heard as if it was being burned! - something like *'rrrr….rrrrr'* instead of the expected *'Pum-tzzz…Pum-Tzzzz"* sound. Immediately I found beauty on this error as the flame impulse was a perfect metaphor for the outputted distorted and sharply sound. This effect on the sound happened because the flame was continually playing the beginning of the sound buffer. It was a kind of Glitch that could be produced and performed trough an elegant synesthesic system.

This kind of discovery is highly probable to happen during a practice-based research when the artist is the one who works directly with its medium. He's an art-maker having the ability to make a critical judgment when faced with failure. In this case, this failure made me vision

new possibilities that instantly engaged me. The first *'rrrr…rrrrr'* noise produced was too banal. But with time I found a way to modulate the pitch of this noise based on the flame spatial position allowing almost infinite variations.

I immediately stopped working on the project I was researching for and from the same day to the following weeks I worked on this new discovery. I did it because immediately I felt in love with the idea of developing a performance with it. Sometimes one has wills inside led by intuitive knowledge that are just waiting for the write moment or mean to come out. I believe this is part of the artist job, but it's almost impossible to communicate it before it's existence, almost impossible to be written in a grant application, and the risk to go trough it, stopping the work on the subject you were supported, its only a matter of knowledge-based intuition and faith.

Seeing it from one other view, the decision that made me go trough is almost like as if you were walking on the forest with a planed path, but you suddenly find a landscape you never saw before - you stop. You stop looking at the beauty of its form and the knowledge you can read from it, there is something that makes you stay – the particular way colour plants are printed, how water flux moves between rocks, or the specificity of how some shadows are projected on the surface.
In Art this new landscape can be just an idea, a vision, a belief that can come from failure.

I referred to 'knowledge-based intuition' and by this I mean the ability to make a critical decision when something new is brought under our sight. Maybe all intuition, in general I mean, is based on accumulated knowledge. To the scope of my arguing on artist intuition decision making, is that one can feel engaged to start a new direction and not having necessarily all the elements of the equation in hand. On the other hand, its decision is as solid as more knowledge the artist has on the subject. The more he knows about the subject he will be working on, the more critical he will be able to be with it's development, the more succeeded he will be able to be.
Rejecting and assuming directions under the creative development can only be ensured by ones sensibility and critical thinking.

BACKGOUND / FROM NOISE TO GLITCH AESTHETICS

"The musician's sensibility, liberated from facile and traditional Rhythm, must find in noises the means of extension and renewal, given that every noise offers the union of the most diverse rhythms apart from the predominant one." Luigi Russolo (1913)

When I meet my discovery, immediately I found it could have an amazing potential as a new gestural interface for music expression. I knew the gender of music and approach I wanted to work from the beginning. The gender was very clear to me as the outputted sound had the plastic quality of Glitch aesthetics and the way it was being produced was extremely engaging to me, both mental and formally.

Glitch is a genre of electronic music that emerged in the early 1990s. It is characterized by a vocabulary that uses sounds resulted from the malfunction of digital technology as the basis for its musical production, such as: CD skiping, software crashes, bugs, system errors, hardware noise, everything that can result from digital distortion.

One of its founders were the Oval, a band formed in Germany at the beginning of the 1990s. In a time where the use of synthesizers was in fashion, they started a new approach in the production of electronic music: they damaged CDs by writing on them with pens, then using the produced distorted sounds as the base of their music vocabulary. The sound quality of this of this method was quite unpredictable, today, there is a vast range of music software that allowing musicians to create and fine tuning the exact "glitched" sound they are looking for, such as: Reactor, FLStudio, Abelton Live.

Although Glitch music is relatively recent, its roots can be found back to Modernism with Luigi Russulo's Futurist Manifesto "The Art of Noises". Almost 100 years ago, he demands for new sounds that could open a completely new pallet for music production and listening. He argues that humans started to grow up being familiarly with the aural qualities of the new urban landscape, with its frenetic rhythm, speed and energy, high volume and constant noise. Based on these facts, he calls for a new generation of musicians to expand the traditional instruments and approaches for new ones that can give rise to a new virtually infinite post-industrial era.

Later on John Cage's composition 4'33' (1952) made the silent revolution, giving permission to be used any sounds in a music composition.

FROM 'LAP TOP' TO GESTURAL INTERFACES / INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

"Today's digital technology enables artists to explore new territories for content by capturing and examining the area beyond the boundary of 'normal' functions and uses of software." Kim Kascone (2000)

The history of gestural expression based electronic instruments goes back to the beginning of the XXth century with the Theremin. Built in the 1920s by Leon Theremin, this instrument was mastered by Clara Rockmore (Rockmore 1998) and today it is used buy hundreds of music bands. Later on, with the born of computer music, the need to push the human gesture in sound syntheses and sampling, has caused musicians and researchers to engage in creating new interfaces for musical expression, also called Hyper-Instruments. 'The Hands'[5] (1984) by Michel Waisvisz (1949-2008) it is on of the first interfaces to give gestural control and play of sound samples in the computer using MIDI protocol. Since 2001, there is a international conference dedicated to the subject of new musical interface design called NIME – New Interfaces for Musical Expression[6].

Computation is becoming more hybrid each day. Buring The Sound shares this nature as it is based in Augmented Reality costume interactive system.

Usually, a Augmented Reality system, uses the actual image from a camera were are superimposed digital graphics in real-time to interact with the real image in a playful, artistic or informative way. Are the cases of the latest computer games, art projects or information visualization systems. In this specific case, the camera uses the image to use the flames position to interact with digital sound.

Computer music has also been called 'Lap Top' music because the computer becomes the associated instrument that audience sees in a live performance and it pursues little gestural expression once the keyboard and mouse were not designed having music in mind. It's almost impossible to feel the correspondence between the outputted sound and the performer intention when live played with a keyboard and mouse. This almost nulls the performance aspect of computer music when played live. I don't believe in it as a cultural need for "gestural theatre", I am more on the position that we need to rethink and redesign our practice.

In Burnig The Sound, the performer gesture in relation to its instrument, only makes a physical body correspondence to the outputted composition, as it shows the performer emotional state, and brings the instrument to live and makes it to exist.

INSTRUMENT SPECIFICATIONS

Burning The Sound instrument captures the flame's shape from regular fire lighters and matches, to sonically render in real-time the distortion and micro manipulation of sound samples by affecting the way the data of a sample is read and played (figure 1).

This is achieved by two main software modules linked together: the computer vision and the sound software.

The computer vision is the one that analyses the incoming image from the infra-red video camera to read and track the flame's position, speed and on/off signal, sending this information to the sound software.

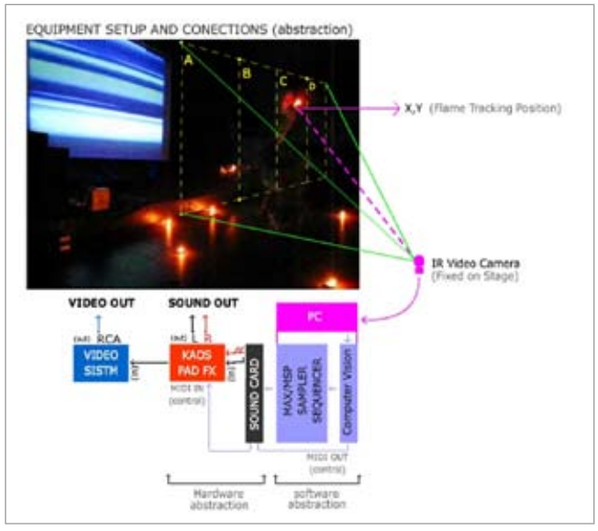
The flame horizontal position is the variable that chooses the sample to be played - there are always four sound samples but these change during time, they correspond to four virtual rectangles vertical aligned in the image (figure 1, areas A, B, C and D). In the case of figure 1, the flame is in the rectangle area C, making the sound sample that corresponds to that area to be active.

Instead of being played normally, this means, all the samples in side the sound buffer are played linearly from the beginning till the end, the sound playing event is continually being repeated, playing only a few samples from the start position of the sound buffer. Then, according to the the flame's vertical position the sound pitch is shifted, up and down from the mid centre on the image.

Thus, when a flame crosses two areas, like from C to B, the sample changes but the pitch remains the same as variable for the pitch is the same. This ensures that one doesn't feels a harsh discontinuity in the produced sound. This is the instrument principle, then, the sound is further processed and is mixed with some effects MIDI controlled by the X,Y position of the flame.

There is also a visually amplification, and I call it 'amplification' because the generated image is not the main medium or the motivation for the performance but it works as dialog component and a visually amplification of the flame impulse. It is a visual metaphor that amplifies the flame generated by the minimal act from the fire lighter and matches - A flame burns because there is oxygen to be burned on the air. If our perception could visualize this event, for sure our comprehension about this event would change radically. Thus, the visual dimension on the performance aims to express this phenomena expanding it trough a plastic and artistic vision. This establishes a relation with the sound intensifying the expressiveness of the performed gesture.

Its important to notice that the instrument manipulation is highly gestural, and needs to be trained like other classical instruments to achieve mastery: issues on speed, rhythm, keeping the flame alive in fast movements, controlling the heat on the fingers, are some of them that need mastery.



1.

•

REFERENCES

Kim Cascone (2000) " *THE AESTHETICS OF FAILURE: 'Post-Digital' Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music*, Computer Music Journal 24:4 Winter 2000 (MIT Press). http://mitpress.mit.edu/journals/COMJ/CMJ24_4Cascone.pdf

Russolo, L (1987). *The Art of Noises*. New York: Pendragon Press. (Originally published in 1913.)

Warner, Daniel; Cox, CChristoph (2004), *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, London: Continiuum International Publishing Group LTD, pp. 10-14, ISBN 0-8264-1615-2

Rockmore, Clara (1998). *Method for Theremin*. Edited by David Miller & Jeffrey McFarland-Johnson. Made publicly available at http://www.electrotheremin.com/claramethod.html

•

NOTES

1. http://welcome.isr.ist.utl.pt
2. http://www.dgartes.pt/arteciencia/Index.htm
3. http://www.tedance.com
4. http://www.reverso.org/Taller4-2007-eng.htm
5. http://vimeo.com/1219170
6. www.nime.org

///

REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST FUTURE PLACES FESTIVAL

GEOFF MARSLETT

Lecturer and Filmmaker
UT Austin and Swerve Pictures

This past October I was asked to be a juror for the Future Places Festival in Porto, Portugal. I was honored to be asked to look at the artwork of colleagues in my field and give them my feedback. So I was definitely interested, but I still had one main question, “what is Future Places?”

Now that the festival has come and gone, and I have had time to reflect on the experience, the entries, and the time spent at the festival, I am going to try to answer that question. I am going to answer it with some of the great presentations and pieces I saw as a juror. I am going to answer it with some of the ideas the participants fused into their work. I am going to answer it with a couple of the questions it left me with.

This was the first year for the Future Places Festival and so it was a learning experience for all of us involved. There were a lot of exhibits to see, a lot of places to go, and some pretty long nights for the jury. The high quality of all the work and the diversity of the types of projects made assigning prizes very difficult. As a jury, we still weren’t even sure how to decide whose “future place” was the most noteworthy. So we sat back, asked ourselves what future places were and came up with some favorites. These types of projects will be the seeds that this festival evolves from.

The two second place awards went to Shlomit Lehavi and Rudolpho Quintas. Lehavi’s installation related memories, digital imagery, and physical mediums to one another. It was also a piece that continued to evolve -- parts of it were even shot while she was in Porto for the festival. It challenged how we relate to digital media, both physically and from an organizational standpoint. While lo-fi in actuality, the ideas behind the piece were interactive, changing, and beautiful.

Quintas’ performance was both entertaining and accessible. The digital music was created specifically by the motion of the flames he was working with. It showed both creativity and technical abilities, but more importantly it represents a whole new way of using digital tools for live performances. As with any good live show he left the audience discussing the performance afterward.

The first place award went to Filipe Pais for his “digital lichen”. The jury selected this piece as the first place winner because it seemed such a good match for all aspects of the mission statement. It provided a new an innovative use of digital media. In this case it was utilization of generative art. The “digital lichen” used the local surrounds- the sounds, the temperature, the brightness- of the environment to create a unique and specific piece of art for the viewer. Generative forms of art making will likely become more and more common, and pieces like Filipe’s will definitely influence the work of those around it.

In addition to these pieces we commended Rui Penha for his work involving the community in digital music at Casa da Musica through the Digitópia project and Marta Calejo for her photographic projections in abandoned dwellings.

So what did they all have in common? How did we single them out as Future Places? First of all they used the strengths of digital art forms not to globalize their work and free themselves from needing to be somewhere specific, but rather they used the digital tools to root themselves in a specific local. The installations were influenced by their surroundings just as much as they pushed back and influenced those same surroundings. These were events that could never be the same in some other location.

Second, they represent avenues of what is to come. They used technologies that weren’t around a few years ago, and in some cases were creating the technology for the projects. These forward looking ideas push new ideas both commercial and artistic.

A Future Place is something just out of reach, and the joy of a festival like this is exploring what each person thinks this future will be. Regardless of what specific form that Future Place takes, the focus on giving a particular place to these futures makes each vision of the future uniquely Portuguese. I hope as this festival grows and changes it can be an example of how digital technologies can have a positive local impact as well as a global one.

///


squares

THE FUTURE IS HERE

FÁTIMA SÃO SIMÃO

That digital media have completely changed the way we see the world is pretty widely accepted. That we are going through a global transformation is also extensively defended.

Just like iron in Pre-History, or the steam machine during Industrialization, changed Humanity forever, so are digital media impelling us to reshape our patterns and adapt to absolutely new realities. Authors such as Richard Florida or John Howkins defend that, as Maslow once stated for individuals, so does Humanity move to a different stage as its basic needs are progressively satisfied (Florida, 2008; Howkins, 2007). Our History shows that throughout centuries our aims have evolved from agriculture, specialization and trade, industrialization and, finally, functional organization. Yet, in the last decades, the world has been shifting towards Humanity's urgency for creativity and fulfillment. We have entered the Creative Era. The social, economical and political models we once knew are failing and decaying; institutions, structures and disciplines are dramatically changing, disappearing, being replaced or merging. Digital media are the transformation tool for the rise of this new creative paradigm.

Social effervescence caused by the so-called digital revolution has finally hit the political sphere and we watch international, national and local agendas valuing creativity and digital media over other (no longer) typical priorities. Portugal (and, in particular, Porto) has been no exception to this. The Digital Media Program of UTAustin – Portugal Colab is an example of the political will to place the country in the global digital context. Thanks to programmes like this and to the dedication of the people involved, Porto has hugely reinforced its position in the international circuits of knowledge. In parallel to this, other policies have allowed the city to develop its creative attributes. Creativity is an answer for escaping the crisis many industrialized places such as Porto have been facing. Increasing unemployment, brain-drain and company bankruptcy have been a sad reality in recent years. When capital and labor fail, the only chance is to look elsewhere. And the answer might be another (probably, the most important) production factor: human capital. Aware of the effectiveness of creativity in urban regeneration – based on successful cases such as Sheffield or Austin, considered by Florida a "leading center of the Creative Economy" (Florida, 2002; p.72), the Portuguese government implemented a Creative Industries Strategy for the Northern Region of Portugal (CCDRN, 2008), which came in to consolidate the prolific although fragmented initiatives already in place. This political context places Porto, a once struggling city, within the exciting track of sustainable growth.

Several already existing atomic cultural and artistic manifestations are becoming increasingly

more consistent and intertwined. The borders between disciplines are blurring. Science, technology, arts and culture are getting closer every day. The easy access to information provided by digital technologies represents a whole new world of opportunities and possible combinations for the infinite equations of knowledge. Artistic processes are applied to pure sciences and vice-versa. Digital media is, once again, a catalyst for this, serving the creation and sharing of endless opportunities/ ideas, fostering collaboration and engagement. One's thoughts are virtually accessible to anyone who is interested, and these can result into new ideas and processes. Digital media is a facilitator of the "rip, mix and burn" (Lessig, 2005; p.25) process of creativity.

If creativity can be highly competitive (virtually everyone is creative), at the same time, it is also exclusive, unique. And its uniqueness is due to the creative agent's circumstances, its identity, that is to say its place and distinctive culture. The smells, the flavors, the light, the sounds we are used to, all influence our creative skills. Yet, today, a whole new concept of place and identity is in sight. Locality is no longer only a physical, tangible concept. There is a whole new world map to be drawn upon the wide web ocean. Local cultures are much wider than their natural geographical limits. They might even not have a physical presence at all. But they do have a place and peers somewhere on the internet. A whole parallel virtual world is being built and the border between this and the real world are gradually blurring.

Future Places is a bridge over this fading frontier, a bridge between physical and digital, today and tomorrow, here and there. It is a melting pot of tools, places, time and people. If, on one hand, it showcases outstanding thoughts and projects about digital media and local cultures, on the other hand, the festival itself promotes the local culture of Porto through means of the digital media, strengthening its presence both in the tangible world and on the web. Future Places is, thus, an experience to be repeated, a happy crossroad of interested and interesting people and ideas. Future Places is a monument to the new era and others yet to come.

.

REFERENCES

Florida, Richard (2008), Who's Your City? – How the Creative Economy is Making Where to Live the Most Important Decision of Your Life, Basic Books, New York

Florida, Richard (2002), The Rise of the Creative Class, Basic Books, New York

Howkins, John (2007), The Creative Economy, Penguin Books, 2nd edition, London

Lessing, Lawrence (2004), Free Culture, Penguin Books, London

CCDRN (2008), Estudo Macroeconómico – Desenvolvimento de um Cluster de Indústrias Criativas na Região do Norte

///

FUTURE PLACES 2008 CREDITS

THE VENUES

Casa da Música. Avenida da Boavista 604-610, Porto.
Centro Comercial Stop. Rua do Heroísmo 333, Porto.
Maus Hábitos. Rua Passos Manuel 178, Porto.
Passos Manuel. Rua Passos Manuel 137, Porto.
School of Fine Arts. Avenida Rodrigues de Freitas 265, Porto.
Serralves. Rua D. João de Castro 210, Porto.
University of Porto - Reitoria. Praça Gomes Teixeira, Porto

JURY

Philip Dean
Geoff Marslett
André Rangel

GUEST MUSICIANS

BJNilsen
The Future Places Inpromptu All-Stars Orchestra

STAFF

Fátima São Simão, Anselmo Canha, Carlos Oliveira (Local Managers)
Prentiss Riddle (Web Manager)
Sofia Santos (Communications Officer)
Heitor Alvelos (Photography and Design)

THIS CATALOG

PHOTOGRAPHY AND IMAGES

Heitor Alvelos (cover, pages 15 and 63)
Anselmo Canha (pages 34, 36 and 62)
Stephan Baumann (pages 39, 40, and 42)
Shlomit Lehavi (detail, page 52)
Jonathan Groger (page 54)
Rudolfo Quintas (scheme, page 57)
All other photos by **Luís Barbosa**
Mashup of Luís Barbosa's photos by Heitor Alvelos (page 35)

GRAPHIC DESIGN

A Transformadora (after the graphic concept of the
2008 Future Places Festival designed by Heitor Alvelos)

PRINTER

Gráfica (?) in

September 2009

www.futureplaces.org
futureplacesfestival@gmail.com