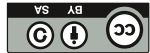


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The systems that use automated mechanisms and what we have called assembling protocols tend to minimize the areas of discussion, deliberation, and collective decision-making. In some cases the perception of being part of something collective could practically disappear. This raises the question of the role that consciousness of participating in collective creation processes can play, and what changes when the fact that being a participant is left out of the experience of those who participate. There is a great potential to explore and develop collective creation in a network context however, we can't stay on the surface, it's necessary we try and reflect on the conditions of the experience, the characteristics of the systems involved, and the political and social issues that arise from them. We must do it bearing in mind that, by pooling and discussing the interpretations, we are shaping these experiences and fertilizing the soil for the germination of new proposals.

This (controversial) expression web 2.0(16) refers to a set of new internet-based "services" that would have in common, among other things, collaborative use between users. A common example is the wikis. However, other examples are the systems based on folksonomies such as Flickr(17), where tags -with keywords- of what the user registers (photo) to be shared in the system are then used by indexing and search mechanisms. The paradox is that this personal work, almost automatically, generates a collective resource, and at the same time its control is usually concentrated in few corporations (mainly Google and Yahoo).

will run the risk of stagnation. questioned, instead of generating new proposals and reformulations, experimentation in this field variation or improvement of an already-done work are valued very little. If this inertia is not brought out the contradictions of artistic circuits, not only due to the discussion about authorship, but also because in these circles, traditionally, the originality is honoured, and the propagation, model based on the restriction of copying and modification rights. The discussion about copyright in software development has encouraged its use in other creative areas, challenging the are evolving and improving through collective work regulated by the GPL license. The example of the internet has made it possible to group programmer communities starting from the projects that incorporate new authors. This is what happens in software development. The sum of copyleft and the accumulation of contributions through derivative works, each new "version" of the work may conditions. This form of regulation can also be understood as a model of collective creation based on distribute and modify the work, as long as they keep the copies and derivative works under the same restrictive protection of rights. Broadly speaking, a copyleft license guarantees the user's right to registered in legal contexts bound by the Berne Convention(15), overturning the trend towards being developed. Copyleft is a way of regulating the exercise of rights over a "work" that is changes that the expansion of the copyleft suggests, and to the way what is known as web 2.0 But if we talk about collective creation in a network context, it is worth paying attention to the

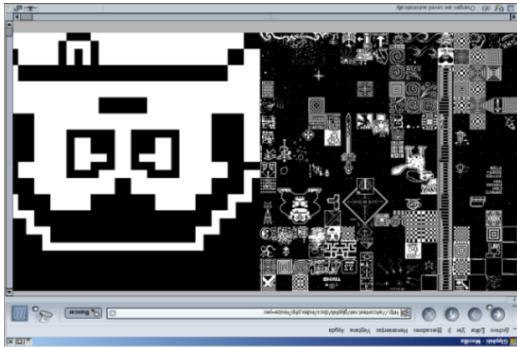
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David Gómez Fontanills, November 2006, TAG Taller d'Intangibles
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Collective creation: an overview



Clay, seeds, and source code. Three articles (1/3)

leads to confrontation; both regarding the "subject" and the "occupation" of the space. So, the characteristics of the programs have an influence, but they don't fully determine participants' experience or the interaction dynamics that will be established between them.

Potential constraints

It's been a few days that I spend some time connected to Glyphiti (6). I look how the picture is and I draw something. This morning the drawing of the ship was still there, taking up various squares below. I drew some little men there. But now there is no trace of it. Someone has dedicated their time to erasing all this part by drawing doodles square by square. At the top, there are two apples, one bitten. Apples have been around for some days now. One of them was a pear, which was later transformed. I don't remember the apple being bitten this morning, I think I would have noticed. I spend some time drawing a bite on the other apple. Last Saturday when I was drawing I saw how several squares were changing. Someone was drawing at the same time as me. They were drawing a figure who was waving. I made the same in the square next to it. Drawing pixel by pixel in black and white is something, it's not as easy as it sounds! A sign appeared under my drawing: a colon, a slash, and a colon. Is it a code? I don't know what it means...

Glyphiti is an online program created by Andy Deck in 2000, where an image is transformed through the intervention of different people. The image is divided into 256 squares. To make changes on it you need to select a square and draw by changing white pixels into black or vice versa. The system does not allow drawing on various squares at the same time. To make a drawing that would occupy a large part of the image, you must edit the squares one by one. The proposal has an asynchronous orientation, each person can connect and draw at the moment they choose. The stack of contributions makes the image evolve. But a simultaneous connection is not prevented either.

It is impossible to identify the participants. Like in Wikipool or Open Studio, participation is anonymous. However, unlike Open Studio, there is no chat channel nor is there a means to communicate with other participants. We do not know the number of users connected at any given time nor those who have intervened during a period. Everything happens on the image and any possibility of communication, collaboration or dialogue lies in it.

The experience of the potential literature can help us interpret Glyphiti. For several decades, OULIPO(7) members have been exploring the creative potential of making literature through self-imposed constraints. The existence of obstacles in the conditions that define the creative experience creates a stimulus rather than a limitation. What are the restrictions that Glyphiti imposes? Editing in black and white, pixel by pixel, and square by square. Anonymous participants, only interaction through drawing. These peculiar conditions open up very diverse ways of exploring their potential, and the participants apply them square after square, day after day, in interaction with other co-authors that they know they are there, but cannot identify them or count how many there are.

Creating a public good, generating social structure

I've been reading what Wikipedia says about the Minotaur. The article has several links to other articles. Many are in blue (an article that already exists), but others are in red. Where it reads that the bull "was born from the union of Pasiphaë and the Cretan Bull"; "Pasiphaë" and "Cretan Bull" are the links in red, meaning that the pages are not created yet. Since I know something about the subject, I click on "Cretan Bull" and a page opens with this title, ready to be edited. I write some notes about the history of the bull in the Greek myth. Using double brackets

I put some links to other related articles that are already created, like "Minotaur" and "Daedalus"; or to be created, like "Minoan" and "Pasiphaë".

I write what I remember, now it is not a good time for me to consult bibliography. I believe the article is a draft and it will be completed in time. I reach "Maintenance templates" from the help page. I discover that typing "{|draft article}" will leave a note indicating that it needs to be improved and it will automatically be put in a list of articles to be completed.

I notice that the "Minotaur" page has a box with several links to articles on Greek mythology. I think it's in all related articles. I click on "edit" tab and see that at the end of the article it reads "{|Greek mythology|}". This is a call to a template that automatically puts the box, without having to copy all of it for each page. I copy the mark and paste it to the article I was editing. Then I press the button to see a preview of how it will look. Once checked, I save the page and it is registered in Wikipedia. Then I click "Monitor" tab to add the page to a list of monitored pages, so I will know if anyone makes changes.

Through a link to "Minotaur" I reach "Theseus" page, a much more complete article with images and everything, which has a box indicating that someone is working on it. Out of curiosity, I view the history of the article where I can compare any two of the versions from when someone started about three years ago with a similar draft to the one I just made for the bull. When I return to the article, an orange box at the top indicates that I have a message on my talk page. Someone, let's say Pasqual, left me a welcome message with various instructions for collaborating with Wikipedia. He used the mark "{|welcome|}" to do this, which inserts all this automatically.

Wikipedia project was founded in 2001 by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger, and it is a copyleft content encyclopedia created collectively on the internet. A wiki system makes it possible, which allows anyone to edit articles directly from the browser. Editors can be anonymous or they can identify themselves as registered users. The latter allows, among other things, to keep track of who edited an article.

A public good in economics(8) is something that everyone benefits whether or not they have participated in its production, and the fact of benefiting from it does not reduce the available good. A common example is the night lighting of streets or public fireworks. The Wikipedians, editors of Wikipedia, intend to produce a public good, a resource of free knowledge available to everyone. They also aim to adopt what they call a "neutral point of view" in the wording, displaying different perspectives on controversial issues.

Wikipedia has a complex social structure. The metaphor of layers of an onion(9) is a way to explain it. This gives us an organizational model with a very populated outer layer of people who consult the articles, and a path towards the interior where each step from one layer to the next involves a reduction in the number of people, and at the same time a higher level of involvement. The inner layers of Wikipedia's onion consist of the people who edit the articles. There are fewer people who contribute regularly, compared to those who do it occasionally. And there are even a smaller number of highly involved users called "librarians", a status that is achieved by choice and it involves additional characteristics in terms of use of the system with respect to other registered users. The activity in all layers is always visible to anyone who wants to follow it. It is also possible to move from one layer to another, depending on the degree of dedication and involvement.

Who will open the black-boxed systems?..

Let's go back to the experience with FreakMachine. When I am drawing the body of the monster, a Parisian café appears around me. Man Ray, Yves Tanguy, Joan Miró, André Breton and

A narrative and a much more elaborate variant of the exquisite corpse is the experience of the same and drawn feet instead of a head? The character would have been complete but upside down. rule of the system; she was asked to draw feet. What would have happened if Marcel had one of the drawing a head where she thought feet would be expected. At the same time she skipped one of the communicate with them. In our previous example, Rosa tried to get into the minds of the others by them to speculate on what the other two parts will look like and they can somehow try, blindly, to surprising, often funny and suggestive result. When a participant draws, it is not uncommon for themselves to some simple rules: extend a few lines to the next part of the drawing and/or draw starting from the lines that come from the previous part. We can say that these are some basic protocols that ensure assembling the parts. But the heart of this proposal is that the parts that come together to hide parts of the drawing from whom to continue. Three people share the authorship of the "exquisite corpse" on the internet, where you follow a very similar procedure using a folded paper created by Nick Langridge in 2002, is one of the variants of the surrealist game was expected of her, and she drew a head instead of the feet that were asked of her(4)

created, Marcel, Rosa and I. It is a two-headed character, because Rosa decided to subvert what A few days later I got a second automated message from FreakMachine (Your break is ready!), email address of someone I know, let's say Rosa. Then I put my name (well, I use a nickname) and my email address on a form. I also write the Marcel's drawing that I can see. As I am asked, I draw a body by connecting these lines and some dashed line at the upper part where I see some black lines going down. It is the only part of I click the URL in the message and a simple drawing space is loading on my browser. There is a draw its body. I have thirty days to do it.

Marcel, drew the head of a "monster" and the automated message tells me that I am expected to I get a message with an invitation to participate in FreakMachine(s). Someone I know, let's say

Corpses in the inbox

about collective creation in a network context. Finally, I will make considerations about who defines the rules of the game, and each case. I will highlight some issues that influence this experience yet often escape the attention of participants. I will use some of the collected «seeds» in order to create an overview. I will use my own interaction scenario(2) technique for system design, in order to present some collective procedures or forms of social organization that create conditions for collective creation.

transformed in other contexts. We collected works that were presented as network pieces as well as creation that we wanted to "germinate", making it easier to be reproduced, re-interpreted and/or as "seeds" in a ready-made activity on "found objects", considering them "proposals" of collective launched the «Germindor» project to explore collective creation processes(1). We identified cases

Ready-made as seeds

Between 2005 and 2006, as TAG Taller d'Intangibles Workshop ("TAG Intangibles Workshop"), collective, we

novel "The Floating Admiral", written in 1931 by fourteen crime novel writers of the Detection Club. Each participant wrote a chapter starting from an initial situation (a murder), keeping in mind all that had been introduced in the previous chapters, but without knowing which character was the murderer in the minds of those who had preceded them. The hidden part, in this case, is the end that each writer imagined (which they kept in a sealed envelope).

Working together on a piece with hidden parts can be a game of assumptions where participants seek converging or distancing themselves from what others do, even trying to test the solidity of the process.

Online jam

It's 9:18 pm, I connect to Wikipool. We had agreed to connect at 9pm with a group of people we met in a workshop. We also sent messages to other people inviting them to participate. I already see some pictures of nuclear bombs and explosions in the composition. I think of the news about Korea. I open Google Images in another tab and search for "Bush-Korea". I choose an image where the U.S. president appears with his finger raised, as if he is lecturing. I get the source URL and use it to incorporate into Wikipool composition for deep reference, without having to download it to the hard disk. Everyone is posting images in square format and someone has decided to sort them forming a mosaic. Someone else is repeatedly sending an image with missiles aiming the sky. Next to Bush's picture there is an equal-size photo, which looks like Hiroshima. Then some peace symbols... I jump back to the Google tab and search for "peace". I choose a white symbol on a black background and incorporate it. It seems that, like a flock of birds spontaneously synchronizing their flight, we have all turned to this theme. Images of bombs and explosions give the way to symbols and pigeons.

Someone writes "21:37" in red. Yes, it is this hour. More flags, symbols and pigeons are inserted among "21:39", "21:42"... Someone is committed to writing the time. Another participant replies: "20:42 in the Canaries ;-)". The composition is full of images where white dominates, combined with letters in red. I look for images of snow and post them to intensify the white. Other people follow me, but smaller images where red is predominant also appear. Someone posts the picture of a red and white dress. I search for "red white" in Google and this picture is one of the images on the first page of results.

Wikipool is a program we created in 2003 as the TAG Taller d'Intangibles team. The story above is a subjective description of how a session could be when using the program simultaneously with other people. So it's a synchronous experience where several people intervene in the same composition that evolves in time. In such an experience, common or divergent cultural references of the people involved play a certain role. When current issues come up, it is as if people are commenting about them but in a less conventional way, like association of ideas. The meaning that the combined composition has can depend on the coincidence in what is interpreted and in what it feels like to do. This dynamic can be compared to the dynamic of jazz musicians in a jam session. If it's an open session, a musician can go on stage and play with the people they haven't played before. The shared knowledge of musical standards and structures will make the joint creation possible, as well as the ability to respond or accompany improvisation.

The feeling of doing a visual jam can also appear with Open Studio (5). Created in 2000 by Andy Deck, Open Studio is an online graphics editing program where participants share a drawing space. When there are several users connected you can see how the strokes of the others appear in time.

Both in Wikipool and in Open Studio, the experience can be much more frustrating than how it is told. It is not strange that the dynamics of performing on the same composition/drawing space

participants. economies, and experience confrontation, conflict, or collaboration dynamics with other creation, by participating in glyphhitt, freakmachine or other projects of network, we can explore the tradition has given rise to some interesting proposals and experiments with regard to collective The appropriation of digital networks as a working territory from artistic practice and thinking another.

this user actively pushes, directly or indirectly, the development of technology in one direction or themselves are adapted for different collectives, the exploitation of their resources also differs. And

In a network context, the transformation by use happens all the time. When the technologies the software).

In recent years, the number of Wikipedians who participate in the task of creating an encyclopedia has grown. Participants in this task have been attracted by the work that is being created and by the way it is being done (the rules of the game), with the political and ideological created and by the way it is being done (the rules of the game), with the political and ideological

Collective creation in a network context

transformed by the superposition of informal rules, as a product of the interaction between These rules can be conditioned by a series of black-boxed constraints. Moreover, they can be but relatively. What I think is important to point out that an artist who supposedly defines the Under these parameters, if what we want is to play, who sets or controls the rules is important. becomes a proposal for action, a set of constraints, rules of the game, an invitation to play.

one hand, because potentially spectators tend to be many. On the other hand, because they usually share and confront the points of view by evolving this intervention. The ready-made presents us a situation where the action becomes small and the whole weight of the work is left aside from the interpretation. No direct intervention on an object is necessary to set the withdrawal of interpretations in motion. An open work allows the active role of the spectator not to be limited to the interpretations and to be able to move into action. So it no longer makes sense to only speak of spectators, but we shall speak of participants. The work stops being an object to observe and it becomes a proposal for action, a set of constraints, rules of the game, an invitation to play.

When we integrate interpretation into the construction of the work, it becomes collective. On the interpretation. front of themselves as a player-artist, to the extent that the work is not complete without the symmetrical image of this is that the spectator (of the game or of the artistic activity) appears in the spectator, when I play. The game is both the action and the interpretation of the action. The times, if he succeeds he feels satisfied. This way he shows how I appear before myself as a (GADAMER 1997:68). A boy throws a ball and sets the rule for himself that it has to bounce three

Let's play!

for granted and it allows us to think of other possible options. This will be a practice to keep in mind if we are thinking to incite diversification and enrich the possibilities of experimentation on collective creation.

other members of the surrealist group pass around a folded paper. Further in time, several Victorian ladies invent a parlour game to brighten up the evening. Intricate and hard-to-dismantle paths are connected with Nick Langridge, the author of FreakMachine. He is programming the system that allows me to draw, using ActionScript, a JavaScript adaptation used in the programming language for Flash. This mobilizes Brendan Eich devising JavaScript for the Netscape browser in the mid-nineties, in the midst of a browser war with Microsoft. At the same time, it triggers the developers of FutureWaveSoftware, company absorbed by Macromedia in 1997, programming its FutureSplash, which would be renamed as Flash. Far afield, in the eighties we glimpse MacroMind, Paracom and Authorware. Which will form Macromedia in 1992. It will then be absorbed in April 2005 by its competitor Adobe Systems, created in 1982 by two engineers who created the language Postscript at the Palo Alto Research Center(10), where the first prototype of this very mouse allowing me to draw now was designed. When I receive Marcel's message, there is something of Ray Tomlinson(11) creating the first mail program in the early seventies, transported up here by the definition of POP and SMTP protocols during the eighties, and by the evolution it has taken until here to my current email client. When I send the message to Rosa two things happen. On the one hand, the browser that I am using steps in: Firefox. It is a remote descendant of Mosaic and some of the first browsers to interpret the HTML language created in the early 1990s by Tim Berners Lee at CERN(12), Switzerland, as one of the pillars of the World Wide Web. At the same time Firefox is the product of the Mozilla (13) project, which starts with the release of Netscape's source code as free software in March 1998. On the other hand, the server part kicks in and it involves some kind of database and the ASP language defined by Microsoft since 1996 and in competition with the free PHP language for this kind of applications.

However, neither Nick Langridge developing the system, nor Marcel, Rosa and I drawing are very aware of the people who surround us, and even less of the technologies and/or institutions that pack their actions and intentions. For us they are black boxes(14). We let them influence our experience while we get by without them. In the story above, I opened some of these black boxes showing a part of what is inside.

Perhaps thanks to the "blackboxing", all this network of past actions does not overwhelm us and we can explore its potential. As Bruno Latour (LATOUR 1998:281) says from the social theory, many non-humans are mobilized at the construction site, through which the order of space and time is reconstructed; but at the same time this construction responds to the local interaction that occurs in the here and now. And in this here and now, we mobilize our ideas and prejudices about art or working together, as well as our skills in drawing and domesticating the mouse (damn it!), which, for a moment, has opened a black box of technical issues when the movement of the hand is not faithfully transmitted to the cursor.

What happens in an "exquisite corpse", in a Wikipool session, in the evolution of an image on Glyphhitt, or in the wording of a Wikipedia article has to do with the local interactions of the participants influenced by the baggage each one carries, together with the conditions that mark the experience, related to the technologies and institutions enlisted and mobilized in the process. Every time it happens is different and this is how technology, practices or forms of social organization are transformed and propagated to a greater or lesser degree. Becoming aware of it and adopting a self-reflective attitude can help us make decisions to let ourselves be carried away or try to change the flow.

Packing some processes in black boxes helps us deal with situations without their complexity exceeding us. But black boxes tend to consolidate themselves and become increasingly hard to open. Getting used to "un-blackboxing" is also a healthy activity that helps us not to take anything