“LIVE BITS: Art Exploring Real-Time Connectedness”

OUROBOROS
Proposal by Alvaro Cassinelli, 2008

Project webpage: www.k2.t.u-tokyo.ac.jp/members/alvaro/Ouroboros/
Email: cassinelli.alvaro@gmail.com

----------------------------------------

Budget

Research

This phase involves evaluating the best shooting configuration (best shooting angle, zoom, appropriate size of screens, etc.) as well as tests on two possible networking infrastructures – a simpler ring topology or a star topology with a central server capable of quickly handling any link disruption.

But most importantly, the research will involve selecting the appropriate places for installing the Gates, finding institutions, collaborators and contributors willing to take care of these Gates, and finally planning a realistic schedule for running them. The later has to be done by taking into account availability of human resources, allocated budget for each place, world time zones, etc. Talking about the schedule, I foresee a high variability on the number of open gates during these 81 days, for reasons that cannot be easily predicted; to remedy this, I will try to fix a schedule for a periodic “reconstruction” of Ouroboros every one or two weeks, and for a few days to a week each time. In particular, the first and last week of the project should coincide with a full-fledged reconstruction of Ouroboros body. It is my hope that this scheduled periodicity will ensure a minimum of activity around the Gates during the other intervals.

Individual collaborators will be people heavily involved in the project, providing advice for refining the concept and aesthetics, as well as taking care of its production for free; contributors (or gatekeepers) will be people willing to run a gate from the whole duration of the project or for a brief period of time (a gatekeeper fee may be an incentive for them). Finding collaborators and contributors will involve a lot of emailing, phone calls and when possible, traveling to check and discuss issues in place. To this date, I already have a list of half a dozen potential collaborators.

It is even conceivable to advertise this project as a large common project between media-art institutions or even capitalize on the infrastructure of temporary festivals – there are enough media art festivals out there so as to cover the whole duration of the Live Bits project. (This could be a premiere: a single work, exhibited in many places at the same time that does not disintegrates despite the closing of one or more of these events - and involving in an essential way each particular place since the work itself is the collection of these places).

Evaluating a fee for this (extremely important) research phase is difficult, but 1000EUR may cover experimentation, material and documentation to be sent by snail-mail, telephone calls - and coffee for the sleepless nights because of the differences in local times.
Rentals of equipment and facilities, project materials

Neither the equipment (projection screen, projector and camera) nor the Gate configuration needs to be the same everywhere. For instance some Gates can be open in a (no longer!) private living room or on a public bar, while others can be set on open spaces or occupy for a moment large advertisement displays. Moreover, a clear wall (inside or outside a building) can be used as a screen if the lighting and the surface is adequate (rear projection may in principle be better to avoid capturing people’s shadows, but if the projector has a short throw, or is set on the ceiling or placed sideways, then rear and front projection will perform equally well). Finally, there is no need to use a professional camcorder to shoot the video: a good webcam may provide very decent resolution (but perhaps not optical zoom functionality).

If I restrict myself to places where I already have good contacts, I can imagine a gate in Hauptplatz run by Ars Electronica Futurelab, another in Madrid run by fellow artists and technicians at Medialab Prado (perhaps in the Plaza de las Letras), another in Montevideo (Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales), another in ICC Intercommunication Center in Tokyo (NTT), another in La Maison des Arts de Creteil, in Paris (perhaps in the square Salvador Allende), another in Hong Ik University in Seoul, one in a trendy bar in Paris - to cite a few. All these gates may be maintained for free if I succeed making this project interesting enough for these institutions. Sponsors (shops, galleries, showrooms, bars, hotels - and even holiday resorts that could even pay to advertise their paraisdes!) may be also an alternative worth exploring. All this is without taking into account many friends that will probably try opening a Gate just out of curiosity – but this will be in a random and punctuated way though.

That being said, it is clear that a minimum budget is necessary to secure a few gates in case free-support fails to the point that not even two gates can be opened simultaneously in a regular basis (an unlikely event I hope). As explained in the main project proposal, at least three locations need to provide a good and stable Gate at any given time. It is too early to decide exactly which places will be selected for these “official” Gates - which is critical in order to provide an estimated budget. We can however imagine the worst-case scenario (i.e. no support at all). Since I already have all the hardware to set one Gate (at the University of Tokyo, Hongo Campus), we only need to secure two others (for which I already have some spare equipment). Between buying and renting equipment, buying the equipment will is the best option as shown below (this equipment could be handed over to Ars Electronica at the end of the exhibition - in particular the projection screens and projectors).

(a) Buying all the equipment:

- Projector, for example BenQ SP830 (3500lumen): ~1400 EUR. x2: ~\textbf{2800 EUR}
- A high-end webcam (such as QuickCam Pro 9000, 960 x 720 pixel resolution): ~80EUR. However, a consumer HD camcorder (1080i or 720i) will outperform this webcam in terms of sensitivity (bigger aperture) plus we will also have the ability to play with the zoom. For instance the Canon HF10: ~800 EUR; I already have one spare camera, so we only need one. x1: ~\textbf{800 EUR}
- Portable, front projection screen (for instance Deluxe Insta-Theater®, 100” diagonal), or rear or front Fast-Fold® (with Da-Mat® fabric). A good sized of 12’ x 12’ screen (3.7x3.7 m) costs about 1100USD (~860EUR) at the Da-Lite official website. x2: ~\textbf{1720EUR}
- A small computer to interconnect these devices, and to connect to the internet, for instance an Apple Mac mini or small PC with graphic card: ~600EUR. I already have one. x1: ~\textbf{600EUR}
- Other things (such as tripod, stands, etc): already have.
• Internet connection. A wireless Internet connection is desirable in case the Gate opens in an open space (a public square, a train station, etc...). \( \sim 100\text{EUR} \) should suffice to rent a connection for two months;

• These Gates would then tour the world (if a dynamic configuration is preferred over a static one for the official Gates). Assuming only intra-continental trips, the transportation fee for each dispatch could amount to \( \sim 100\text{EUR} \). Assuming height moves (one Gate at a time every ten days), this means \( \sim 800\text{EUR} \).

Therefore, the cost for completing two additional gates is: \( 2800+800+1720+600+100+800=6820\text{EUR} \).

(b) An estimate of the rental fee is difficult, as it is extremely dependent on the location, but realistic numbers are as follow (I checked on the net, for rental prices in Europe):

- One projector (3000 lumen, EPSON EMP-830): \( 100\text{EUR/day} \)
- Two projection screen: (DaLite Rear Projection Screen, 10.5' x 14'): \( 2\times60\text{EUR/day} \)
- One HD camcorder (Sony HDR HC7): \( 60\text{EUR/day} \)
- One small computer (Mac Mini): \( 100\text{EUR/week} \)
- \( 100\text{EUR} \) may suffice to rent the connection for the whole duration of the work;
- In case of rental of whole the equipment, there won’t be transportation fee.

Therefore, for maintaining two gates during 81 days we need: \( (100+120+60+100/7)\times81+100=23,937\text{EUR} \). Even assuming (probably unrealistically) that this support is only needed a third of the time (to be distributed so as to “patch” problems with the free Gates) the total cost of rented material would still be higher than buying everything.

**Production, Installation**

Production amounts mainly to writing the software, for which I may need some technical help in case I decide to deal with special network infrastructures (for instance, Gates cameras using mobile phones?). On the other hand, if things go smoothly, installation of the Gates will not require special budget support (no transportation fees either, since equipment will be bought in place). Anyway I consider safe to reserve a bit of budget for this critical phase (last minute problems, displacements, technical support, etc): \( 1000\text{EUR} \).

**A gatekeeper fee?**

Again, it is too early to evaluate if there will be the need of this at all (it is likely that I will find enough institutions or collaborators willing to open Gates for free, at least in a time-shared basis), but a monetary incentive may speed up the recruiting process of temporary gatekeepers if necessary. \( 50\text{ EUR/day} \) for twenty days to be distributed among different gatekeepers and at different points in time will amount for \( 1000\text{EUR} \).

**Documentation**

I have adequate equipment to document the project, as well as some professional contacts that may help me documenting this for free.

**Artist Fee**

I am motivated and curious about this idea to the point I would contribute from my own pocket if needed. If some budget is left, I don’t mind reserving it for future projects, but otherwise I will prefer to secure the project on every side.
Summary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research fee</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment, materials</td>
<td>6820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installation</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatekeeper fee</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist fee</td>
<td>180(?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total: 10000EUR</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>