“LIVE BITS: Art Exploring Real-Time Connectedness”

OUROBOROS
Proposal by Alvaro Cassinelli, 2008

Early production & deployment schedule

Project webpage: www.k2.t.u-tokyo.ac.jp/members/alvaro/Ouroboros/
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First of all, thank you for having selected this project among the Finalists. I feel honored and I am now very excited and curious about the outcome of the real experiment. I will try my best to make of it a successful and enjoyable experience by all - developers, contributors as well as end users.

The present text is a preliminary draft of the production (§.I) and deployment schedule (§.II), and complements the “budget” document sent earlier which already explains some aspects of research and production. I am also including in §.III a list of already confirmed collaborators (24.11.2008).

**I. Production Schedule (January to June)**

I roughly see this happening in two phases:

**a) Project advertisement and first proof-of-principle tests (January – March):**

- First of all, I will develop a prototype of the software and try a first test between Berlin and Tokyo (University of Tokyo and University of Arts in Berlin, with the help of a confirmed special collaborator, professor and media artist Jussi Angesleva), and if possible right away between Linz and Tokyo (working with people at Futurelab). A three-gated Ouroboros could be functional as early as the middle of February. I will then distribute the software among a few more collaborators (mainly at University campuses), and test the system with up to ten gates in different continents (I have confirmed collaborators in South and North America, Asia and Europe – see §.III below). I don’t see any obstacle in this first phase: a prototype of the software could be done in a week (even with Processing). At the same time, I will start a software version integrating a central server in charge of recalculating and re-arranging the topology of “Ouroboros” in real time, as a function of all collaborators and contributors’ variable schedules. A “schedule database” will be accessible for consultation and modification at any time through a PHP-enabled webpage.

- During these first three months, I will also search and select main collaborators. I already have a few confirmed collaborators (see §.III) but I will be able to contact many more potential collaborators – individuals as well as institutions – as soon as (and if) this proposal is accepted. Main collaborators (universities, museums, galleries, etc) may have a strict schedule for deploying their gates, so this is better discussed well in advance. From the pool of these collaborators, I will choose some four or five best locations and confirm them as special “stable points” for the topology, meaning that the Ouroboros dynamic structure will rely heavily on these gates (coming back to them as often as needed). As for today (24.11.2008), I can foresee that the following locations are good candidates for maintaining these gates: Main gate in Linz (Hautplatz? FutureLab? AEC?), University of Tokyo (Hongo Campus), Montevideo (Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales), University of Arts in Berlin, Telenoika headquarters in Barcelona, and Media Lab Prado in Madrid, but this is subjected to change since it is too early to confirm anything.
• As soon as (and if) I get approval for this project, I will start advertising it at large
to prospect potential contributors around the world (individuals or institutions
willing to participate for a very short amount of time – in a one-time basis, for
hours, to a few days). Contributors may not have a fixed schedule in their minds;
however, if properly exploited, this “wild” resource can introduce a lot of
dynamism to the whole project.

b) Confirm “backbone” schedule, and “tuning” (April – June):

• By the beginnings of April, I expect to have a fully functional system. What I will
need then is to refine the selection of the best places, discard some places and
confirm others, as well as work on the “tuning” of the central server behavior (for
instance, in case of too many gates, the topology can split in two separated loops,
perhaps temporarily sharing the main gate in Linz; or in order to accommodate
for the time differences, the body of Ouroboros could be made to automatically
“crawl” over the surface of the Earth so as to avoid the night by exchanging gates
one by one as they go into the night, as in the drawing).

Another interesting thing to explore is the integration of SMS messages to be
projected into the Ouroboros tunnel, so that people would have an effective
mean to communicate (the text send by a user on a particular gate may appear
as a banner or superimposed on the image being captured by that gate; or it can
even made to slowly “fall” into the tunnel, becoming very visible on a gate at a
time, until the text comes back to the gate where it was sent and disappears).

• Towards the end of the production period, I will be able to confirm a “backbone”
schedule for modifying Ouroboros topology as a function of the collaborators’
availability, location and time differences. Again, this information will be available
for consultation and modification in a website dedicated to the project. As
described in the main proposal, the goal is to have at least three or four gates
opened at any time. (Ouroboros will remain always open though: at any time a
gate can be opened anywhere in the world, as long as the “gatekeeper” is
accepted and confirmed through the web system supervised by me and/or by
people in charge of the Main Gate in Linz). If for any reason the scheduled
topology cannot be realized, the central server will search automatically - first on
the database of collaborators and then on that of contributors - to find an
interesting, as diverse as possible trip around the world.
II. Actual deployment of the Main Gate in Linz

I will travel to Linz sometimes between the first or second week of June to supervise the installation of the Main Gate in Hautplatz (or in any other decided location). This will be the occasion to instruct the crew of Ars Electronica about how to interact and control the system from the Main Gate. Given the simplicity of the physical installation, the most delicate aspect will be the choice of the right place and angle of shooting. Two days may be sufficient for this, if I count with the help of technicians as well as the advice of video professionals. Then, one or two more days will be needed to tune things and try several example topologies.

I’d like to note here that if the production phase can be done already in collaboration with people in Linz, then everything may be ready well before the actual deployment of the Main Gate. The only thing that will be needed is to set the screen and camera in its final place.

This brings me to the following important request: I will need as soon as possible a correspondent/collaborator in Linz (at least starting from the second phase of the production schedule). This will not only simplify things, but it is essential in order to determine and discuss the main schedule for Ouroboros topology – the opening hours of the Main Gate in Linz, working days during the week, etc.

III. Preliminary list of collaborators (by continent/country/city):

Below is an early list of collaborators and contributors already willing to provide help, advice, material and logistic support - for free. I received their confirmation just one day after I sent an email (yesterday!) describing this project, which makes me quite confident that there will be enough collaborators to make this project a success.

Europe

Germany: Berlin: Jussi Angesleva (Professor at the University of Arts in Berlin and senior concept designer at ART+COM). His field of specialization is in physical and embodied interfaces. A gate will be installed at the University “for students to suddenly have this hole in space to different interesting institutions”. The company ART+COM could also be involved, and a gate be installed in their locals.

Austria:

- Linz: Ars Electronica team of course. I also had the confirmation of friends at Futurelab willing to contribute (Carles Gutierrez, Sofy Yuditskaya).
- Vienna: Emmanuel Andel (artist and co-fonder of 5VOLTCORE artist group). He would love to install a gate at the group artist studio in Vienna.

France:

- Paris: Horacio Cassinelli (independent artist and graphic designer). Perhaps a gate in a Parisian gallery (in a stable basis or during special
events such as vernissages). Luc Foubert (researcher in Cognitive NeuroSciences and involved in the organization of events in the Trance-Psychadelic stream through the collective ”Homeostasys”). He would like to open gates during some of the many Trance events held in France and Switzerland. He could use Ouroboros as a vehicle to share the experience as well as an interesting psychedelic interactive “motif” per se. (It would be interesting to consider transmitting sound through the body of Ouroboros, perhaps attenuated by the “distance”, filtrated and reverberating as if transmitted over a long empty tunnel.)

- **Nantes:** Cedric Huchet, (in charge of SCOPITONE festival in France). Proposes a gate just before Scopitone festival (from August to September), at the Castle of Ducs (architectural heritage), and other places in the city (churches, exhibition spaces, nuits electroniques…).

**Spain:**

- **Barcelona:** Jose Luis de Vicente (curator of SonarMatica, ArtFutura, etc). He is interested in the project and will prospect for interesting opportunities in the Spanish media-art area. Sytse Wierenga (Project assistant at the SPECS group, University of Pompeu Fabra). He is willing to install a gate at the university, and “also into some mixed/virtual reality space” as well as Eloi Maduell and Irma Vila (Telenoika artist group), willing to install a gate in the Raval ni Barcelona – where Sonar festival takes place) and during VAD festival in Girona (October). He’s in charge of the technical aspects of the festival. He also offers a private gate in his house in Madremanya (with a landscape of mountains and fields).

- **Tenerife:** Carles Gutierrez (Creative Engineering at Futurelab).

- **Madrid:** Medial Lab Prado, perhaps at the Plaza de las Letras. I can count with the help of many people from “Interactivos" team, that already replied to my email with interest.

**UK:** London: students from the Royal College of Arts (RCA) in London would be interested on a gate at RCA (Thomas Thwaites, Cesar Harada).

**The Netherlands:** Amsterdam: Valeria Marraco (dancer/performer/video artist). Interested in installing a gate (without confirmed schedule).

**SOUTH AMERICA**

- Uruguay: Montevideo: Tomas Laurenzo (designer, artist and computer engineer of the University of Uruguay), Enrique Aguerre (video artist and founding member or the Núcleo Uruguayo de Videoarte; he is in charge of the Department of Video at the Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales, Bellas Artes, other places. This can be a permanent Gate for the whole duration of the exhibition.
Colombia: Bogota: artist Oswald Asprilla Perez proposes to maintain a gate during “Bogota Despierta” event (the “Nuits Blanches” of Bogota).

NORTH AMERICA ---------------------------------------------------------------

USA:

• Los Angeles: Media artist Nova Jiang proposes to open a gate at UCLA campus for a limited number of days, one or more times.

• Minneapolis: Steve Dietz, founder and Executive director of Northern Lights, founding director of 01SJ Biennial, etc. He proposes that Northern Lights could participate on an intermittent basis on the project, (not necessarily in Minneapolis)

Canada: Toronto: Simone Jones (Professor at the Ontario College of Art & Design). She is interested in the project and offers the support from her school.

ASIA ---------------------------------------------------------------

Taiwan: Taipei - Sue Ching You (curator of Digital Art Festival Taipei). Propose a gate in Taipei sometimes from 7/1 to 9/6.

Japan: Tokyo - University of Tokyo (I will take care of this gate myself), and certainly at other locations in Tokyo. I am now contacting people at the University of Fine Arts, Waseda univ, Tokyo Denki Univ., as well as ICC intercommunication Center, Spiral House, and other public exhibition spaces.

Korea: Seoul. Artist and Professor Jin-Yo-Mok at HongIk university may install a gate at the university campus.

I am now waiting for more answers, but this preliminary call for collaborators demonstrates that there are a lot of capable and experienced people interested in participating. This looks very good.

Other: If I get approval of this project, I will be able to officially contact or submit this project for exhibition at venues such as Sonar (Barcelona, 18-20 June), SIGGRAPH (New Orleans, 2-7 August), Bains Numeriques (6-13 June), Nuits Blanches (LA, Santa Monica Pier in July / Seoul in August, etc), etc as well as advertise this in workshops such as International DORKBOT or Interactivos. In short, to any event whose schedule overlaps with that of LIVE BITS.