

technology and its culture. The unspoken challenge to its members was that they should create something alternative to the dominant commercial culture on the Internet. It drew on the experience and involvement of its members (including the authors') in pirate radio and pirate television, digital bulletin boards and use of the streets as a canvas and art platform. It connected with the work of groups like I/O/D, Irrational, Mongrel and *Mute*⁰⁴ magazine to hack around everyday culture using public communication platforms to create independent art works and publications. In spite of its makeshift form, the works that were presented in early issues of *Furtherfield* gave rise to a lively and encouraging dialogue between artists around the world, including users of email lists such as *Syndicate* and *Rhizome*⁰⁵ who were dedicated to the discussion of networked culture.

The Furtherfield Neighbourhood Do It With Others

Ten years on, the Furtherfield community—by which we mean its neighbourhood of sister-sites and projects (see the map)—has morphed and expanded with over 400 active contributors and a regular readership/audience of approximately 16,000 people around the world. Its activities and projects have steadily grown in scope and ambition. Its core activities of review, criticism and discussion have been directed, sustained and driven by the research, skills and energy of the Furtherfield team, and its diverse international group of users, on a mainly voluntary basis. Specific projects that facilitate in-depth collaboration between programmers, artists, and artist-programmers have received some public funding. Since 2004 Furtherfield has run a gallery for networked media art in North London called *HTTP*⁰⁶ and has received regular core funding from the Arts Council of England to help consolidate and develop the sustainability of its activities.

In recent years the Furtherfield neighbourhood has initiated or participated in collaborative projects that experiment with and develop artworks, tools and structures of cooperation. These have been co-invented or adapted by artists, activists and technologists, many of whom (but not all) are committed to ideas of social change through their practice, being specifically concerned with the freedoms, openness and democratization of media and technology.⁰⁷ One such project is the *NODE.London Season of Media Arts in London*,⁰⁸ organised consensually by a large group of voluntary organisers. In March 2006 150 media arts projects took place in over forty London locations, as well as online in the form of exhibitions, installations, software, participatory events, performance-based work, and many other self-defining forms.⁰⁹ Its structure was inspired to some extent by the scale-free networks of the Internet, which, the science of networks tells us, maintain high levels of connectivity regardless of size.¹⁰



Do It With Others (DIWO) : Furtherfield Neighbourhood Map

- 1) Cut on dotted line.
- 2) With printed side down, fold each corner to the centre.
- 3) Turn the folded paper over so that the flaps face down.
- 4) Again fold each corner to the centre point.
- 5) Fold in half and crease to make a rectangle, unfold and then fold in half the other direction.
- 6) Using both hands put your thumbs and index fingers under flaps.
- 7) Push towards centre until pyramid forms and the DIWO map appears.
- 8) Pick a word and open and close the game in alternating directions for each letter of the word.
- 9) See how the projects make different connections with each other in the Furtherfield Neighbourhood.

KEY to Projects in the Neighbourhood

- 1) Furthernoise.org
- 2) HTTP Gallery
- 3) Rosalind : Upstart New Media Art Lexicon
- 4) FurtherStudio real-time online art residencies
- 5) Skin/Strip real-time contributory artwork
- 6) NetBehaviour Mailing list
- 7) Blogs- blog.furtherfield.org, blog.visitorsstudio.org, blog.game-play.org.uk
- 8) VisitorsStudio real-time online multi-user mixing.

Left: *DIWO Furtherfield Neighbourhood Map*

This map draws on a children's game and was conceived of as a way to deal with the troublesome issue of representing both the lateralness and the connectedness of projects and activities in the Furtherfield Neighbourhood. This origami-style map allows travellers to see how different projects are located next to each other at different times.

For many, however, the first need is for community—to cultivate neighbours who “interact, share, converse and play with each other”.¹¹ *FurtherStudio*,¹² an exploratory project of real-time, online net art residencies, was launched in September 2003. This project was inspired by conversations with UK net artist, Jess Loseby. She spoke of her difficulties—as a disabled mother of three, living in a rural area—in accessing the resources and engaging in critical dialogues available to other artists and academics through the usual round of conferences and residencies. The *FurtherStudio* web facility offered a public window on the artists' PC desktop as they worked.¹³ Residencies lasted for three months, during which time the artists worked from their studios or homes creating works that incorporated and responded to visitors' contributions. The chat and critical forum facilities enabled artists, critics and visitors to discuss the work made by the artists for the project in a series of live, globally accessible interviews and critical debates.

VisitorsStudio,¹⁴ created in parallel to *FurtherStudio*, was envisaged as an experimental break-out space for visitors to the online residencies. The idea was to give visitors an insight into some of the artistic processes and concerns of resident artists by creating a social space online where they could experiment and learn together using some very simple audio-visual media mixing tools. *VisitorsStudio* was enthusiastically adopted by writers, programmers, artists and musicians. It provided an informal creative space that supported learning and fruitfully connected established practitioners with newbies, acting “as a container, connector, and root node for artists and performers wishing to virtually get together and ‘jam’ online.”¹⁵

With *VisitorsStudio* the art is created and distributed in real time across the Internet by many participants linking together at the same time, who mix and remix files that they have created or found and subsequently uploaded to the common database. Alternatively, participants retrieve, manipulate and remix files that have been uploaded to the database by other contributors. The live conversations shared as they collectively create the work may also be considered a part of the performance—along with comments or occasional heckling from the audience.

VisitorsStudio sits within rapidly shifting artistic territory of real-time art, software art, net art and participative and collaborative expression in contemporary, digitally-enabled *remix culture*. The late twentieth-century shift from material to immaterial culture, and the explosion in the rate of copying, duplicating and redistributing of cultural artefacts, means that this culture is now open to the influence of not just ‘professional’ cultural producers but of the vernacular. The process is further accelerated by the popular adoption, mainly by 16–25 year olds, of commercial (but ‘free’) spaces like *Flickr*, *MySpace* and *YouTube*,¹⁶ which support the mass sharing of media files.

VisitorsStudio provides a space for informal, impromptu and *ad hoc* collaborations and a place to not just chat and store and share media files but also to extend the dialogue beyond text into a rich audio-visual medium: to work together on projects, and towards the co-production of a cultural landscape that has value and meaning for all participants.

Larger events are also organised that could be said to fall into two categories. The first is the showcase—where established artists and musicians collaborate to create sophisticated performances that showcase their innovation and artistic concerns, such as the *Month of Sundays*¹⁷ series organised by Bristol-based *Furthernoise.org*.¹⁸ The second approach is to focus on shared human, political and global concerns. By projecting *VisitorsStudio* into public spaces—community centres, cafes, bars, galleries—these events can connect communities of people in public spaces around the world. An example of this kind of project is *DissensionConvention—A Transatlantic Multimedia Protest Jam*¹⁹ which coincided with the Republican Convention in New York, in 2004. Over twenty international net artists and digital artists created a five day long broadcast of “collaborative art-polemic with a focus on how Bush and the US Republicans negatively influence every locality around the world.” The protest jam was projected at *RNC NODE* at Postmasters Gallery and in local NY bars and cafes, and attracted thousands of online visitors.

Furtherfield is now working with *Furthernoise* to develop a workshop programme called *CoMix*, in which young people from London and Bristol in the UK will collaborate with others in the Bronx, NY, USA, collaging and mixing audio-visual files and creating performances together live. A new database will be created especially for young people, the first new installation of the *VisitorsStudio* artware to be dedicated to particular groups of users.

We hope that we have been able to communicate some of the processes, contexts and practice in the Furtherfield Neighbourhood. *DIWO* means exploring the potential to share visions, resources and



DIWO Furtherfield Neighbourhood Map

agency, through collaboration and negotiation, across physical and virtual networks—maintaining a critical consciousness and hopefully, somehow having a decent life at the same time... We are aware that we may have underplayed some of the difficulties that we continue to face in sustaining our activities. Another time. Instead, we wanted to share our understanding, drawn from our own experience, of the value of nurturing non-commercially-driven spaces for collaboratively authored and variegated visions that involve the use of technology. Because if we do not take control of the tools and the media, and at least make an effort to empower ourselves and the communities that we value, then others may come along and take that possibility from us.

Ruth Catlow and Marc Garrett—Furtherfield.org 2007
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/>

Endnotes

01
 Geert Lovink in an interview between David Garcia, Geert Lovink and Andreas Broeckmann, for *The GHI of Tactical Media*, Transmediale.01 Festival, Berlin, 2001. <www.uoc.edu/artnodes/eng/art/broeckmann0902/broeckmann0902.html>

02
 <smallomweb.org/modules/wakka/HowNodeIWorks>

03
 Backspace <bak.spc.org>

04
 I/O/D <bak.spc.org/iod>, *Irrational* <irational.org>, *Mongrel* <www.mongrel.org.uk> and *Mute* <metamute.org>

05
Syndicate <syndicate.anart.no> and *Rhizome* <rhizome.org>

06
 HTTP [*House of Technologically Termed Praxis*] <http.uk.net>

07
 These ideas include notions of 'Free' and 'Open' culture as defined by association with i) network-facilitated sharing and development processes of Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) ii) open organisation and consensual decision making of anti-globalisation protest movements iii) Political philosophy such as Hardt and Negri's *The Multitude* iv) the Happenings and art events of 1970s Fluxus artists.

08
 NODE.London *Season of Media Arts in London* <www.nodel.org>

09
 See *NODE.London - States of Interdependence* by Catlow and Garrett. Available from <publication.nodel.org/States-of-Interdependence>

10
 Albert-Laszlo Barabasi, (2002) *Linked: How Everything Is Connected to Everything Else and What It Means*, Perseus Publishing, Cambridge, MA.

11
 <www.electrichands.com/artstatement.pdf>

12
 <www.furtherstudio.org/online>

13
 The *FurtherStudio* web facility utilised a technical solution (using server-sockets and Perl script) developed by Neil Jenkins for *Skin/Strip Online*, an earlier real-time online contributory project developed by Furtherfield and *Completely Naked*. See <www.skinstrip.net>

14
 <blog.VisitorsStudio.org>

15
 A text about *VisitorsStudio* by Patrick Lichty for the Game/Play exhibition <blog.game-play.org.uk/?q=VisitorsStudio>

16
Flickr <www.flickr.com>, *MySpace* <www.myspace.com> and *YouTube* <www.youtube.com>

17
 <www.furthernoise.org/index.php?url=page.php&ID=134&iss=57>

18
Furthernoise.org is a sister-site to Furtherfield.org, run by musician Roger Mills, that provides an online platform for the creation, promotion, criticism and archiving of innovative cross genre music and sound art.

19
 Organised by Furtherfield.org. For archives of the protest jam, see <www.Furtherfield.org/dissensionconvention>