

time's up/Tim Boykett

Safe Harbours/Closing the Loop

"There's Nothing as Practical as a Good Theory"

Time's Up Research Laboratories

If you hang a weight on a string and let it swing, the frequency of the swinging is, according to Galileo and confirmed by many, dependent only upon the length of the string. Thus two weighted strings of different lengths will swing at different rates. But if we hang two such different length strings from another piece of string stretched transversally, then they will influence each other, become captured into resonance and begin to swing together at related frequencies. This synchronisation property of coupled pendula, or more generally of coupled oscillators, is nigh-upon universal.

Sometimes I feel that there is some truth behind the idea that thought is vibration, an oscillation of sorts ("666 megahertz, the frequency of human thought!"), that thinking is thus in some sense composition or improvisation. Perhaps this property of synchronisation of oscillators is an effective and accurate metaphor for the "Aha!" experiences we are always having with various people. Probably not. But at least such an idea is very pseudoscientific.

"We hereby reclaim the notion of pseudoscience from the dangerous misanthropes, misguided fools and assorted miscreants that have been labeled with it. We claim pseudoscience as a source of life and flavour, a way of approaching work in the world that loses the life-threatening deadness of creation science or elixir-toting quacks, even that professional cynicism of that bugbear of rationality writ large, the institutional scientist. We are pseudoscientists, and we are here to make waves. None of this accretion of results in a Baconian evolution with outbreaks of paradigm shifting as per the Kuhn model. No, pseudoscience is for those who never lost the glint in the eye from those kiddie scientist stories, who really believed they could change the world from the back garage, and who aren't yet sure that they can't." ¹

I speak from the position of a confessed pseudoscientist; I am not in a twelve-point program.

Sometimes I wonder what happens with more weights on strings hung on longer transversals in various directions, connected in various topologies of interaction and influence. Massively coupled pendula. Systems of such oscillators, where an oscillator is not just a simple repeating waveform. Nonlinear oscillations, alone cycling happily into infinity, once rivetted together form networks with emergent properties. Coherent gaits ², synchronisation of chaotic systems ³, economic autocatalysis and network externalities ⁴. It's all observable.

De Landa's exposition of the harbour mentality, exchange and trade, replacement economics and rhizome relations is fundamental here. The hypothesis of ((partially) autonomous) harbours as a driving force of two scales of capitalism, market and anti-market, leads us to reconsider the terms and phrases involved.

The word "harbour" in current English derives from the old English "herebeorg", probably from old Norse, and is related to the word "harbinger", meaning "a person or thing that announces or signals the approach of another." Relating to the source word "herbergere" from "herberge", a Germanic word for lodgings or one who gives shelter. A role becomes apparent here, the role of the protector of new, hidden, heretical or suppressed knowledge, the harbour

and the source of the carriers of this information, the herbergere protecting that person and their information.

There must be many of these sanctuaries in harbours all over. Places for heretics, by their very nature always fleeing, to hide out, to rest their weary feet. In such places, it would not be unusual for two or more fugitives to come together simultaneously, hidden in the backroom of a dockside inn, for them to discuss their specific heresies or messages or contraband or knowledge. Such points act as nodes of concentration in a network of information, they are exchanges, routers. It would not be unfeasible for such nodes to grow.

There must be a desolate harbour in South America, the coast of Surinam perhaps, accessible only by boat, where a desolate hotel or two barely manage to keep up appearances. Behind this port town, a short distance but still far enough to deter casual visits, there is a hidden but extensive complex of buildings, some modern, well-built, housing large amounts of tech stuff, others with rough verandahs modelled on local standards looking out over the township, harbour and offshore islands. On these verandahs, groups of peculiar people, definitely not natives, sit and watch the sun set, or the moon rise, discussing at various levels of intensity and aggression the results and implications of previous work, making plans, plotting experiments, analysing results. They will return alone or in twos and threes to the buildings behind, below and around them, experimenting, postulating, negating, hypothesising.

Such groupings need to exist by the bizarre logic of what must be going on. All these corporate profit and share-market winnings cannot be disappearing into sincere, rational research and development labs or even more expensive housing and entertainment for the filthy rich. No, there has to be a collection of near-crazies who got locked out of academia and the corporate labs, but whose competence is not completely questionable. They get funded somehow, probably by some bizarre patent schemes they worked out themselves. They are the hard-core pseudoscientists and we want to get to know them.

Given schools of heretical researchers, staff and faculty at the Slightly Flakey Institute, the focuses for their researches will spatter the memetic landscape in some pattern. Attempting to determine the pattern, looking for some points of light, we make our way back to the initial point and look at loops, systems of oscillators or other systems, we analyse metaphors and methods of control and perceptual modification. We close the loop of perception and control with biomechanical devices and protobiological metaphors. Calling on pseudoscientists everywhere to propose new and interesting experiments in loop-closing phenomena, we were overwhelmed with the response. A series of experiments are underway, the loops will be closed and more questions will be opened.

The list below includes those pseudoscientists known to be collaborating at this stage.

Pseudoscientists

Staalplaat

Staalplaat (NL) is an idea, a label, a radio program, a publishing house as well as a music shop in Amsterdam and, since 1996, in Berlin. Staalplaat is a platform for metamusical concepts ranging among and between new, improvised and experimental music.

Staalplaat presents in Linz: The sound of music from

Negativland

Negativland (USA) has been releasing unique and hilarious records since 1980, including the notorious U2 release (1991) which got them into a heap of copyright infringement trouble (as documented in their book/CD FAIR USE). As pioneers in the genre of reuse/ reinterpretation, their influence is felt far across the media spectrum, from MTV to advertisements by major corporations.

Muzictoerist

Muzictoerist (NL) is the tonal leg of activities of the Dutch visual artist Geerten Verheus. It deals with the representation of music and sound. Using any kind of music and sound, respectlessly taking them out of their original context, and putting them together again in different combinations, Muzictoerist provides the listener with a tonal slideshow of a strange trip in times and places. It is music to be heard, rather than to listen to, and is at its best in a background position, from where it occasionally breaks out to remind those present of times and places where music was to be heard. It is not about nostalgia, it is about the suggestive power of sound and music.

Barbed

Barbed (GB) are the London based cut & paste electro motherfuckers. Stubbornly refusing to soundtrack the party, Barbed assume sniper position on club rooftops.

People like Us

People like Us (GB) East Sussex's People like Us (a.k.a. Vicki Bennett) is a brilliant sound collagist and DJ who has released a host of fine CD's and LP's on Holland's Staalplaat label, including 1997's People like Us Hate People like You. She has toured throughout Europe but makes her U.S. debut with a series of performances on the West Coast, including live radio dates (with In Concert performers) on Free Radio Berkeley (104.1 FM, 4/7, 9pm), KFJC Los Altos Hills (89.7 FM, 4/8, 10pm), and the Over The Edge program of 4/9 (midnight on KPFA). Her found-sound technique is laced with absurdist humor and deep love for thrift store-discard vinyl and broadcast oddities.

Nicolas A. Baginsky (D)

In Baginsky's machines, the artificiality of laboratories is artistically treated. He takes up a question inherited from the tradition of scientists and mechanical engineers — what distinguishes human beings? — and he responds as an artist. Human beings are not perfectly calculable creatures, and humanity begins at that point where an individual wrestles with this question of what is human. Baginsky does so by giving expression to strange and awkward customs by means of the motions of machines.

Gordon Monahan (CDN)

Gordon Monahan's works for piano, loudspeakers video and kinetic sculpture span various genres from avante-garde concert music to multimedia installations and sound art. John Cage once said "At the piano, Gordon Monahan produces sounds we haven't heard before." "Multiple Machine Matrix," a system of computer controlled kinetic instruments made from

electronic surplus and industrial trash. MMM is a network of musical machine performers that are capable of moving complex layers of acoustically produced sound in space.

Leo Schatzl (A)

Born in 1958 in Obernberg/Inn, Upper Austria. Attended high school in Ried/Innkreis, and the Institute for Artistic and Industrial Design in Linz/Donau (master class for visual design, Prof. L. Ortner; master class for metal design, Prof. H. Gsöllpointner). Since 1987, freelance artist in Vienna; collaboration with various artistic groups (Stadtwerkstatt, Pyramedia, Dead Dog Gallery, Kunstlabor, Lo(o)sgelöst, Contained, ...); since 1992, guest lecturer (intermediate lab) at the Institute for Artistic and Industrial Design in Linz.

Rosa von Suess (A)

Rosa von Suess works on time and its — primarily linguistic — signs. These signs are frequently taken from the contexts of the culture of everyday life and popular culture. She isolates them, releases them, and freezes them - along with the time connected with them - by the use of various different medial means of expression. The stylized artificiality that these shifts bring forth in the sphere of art, as well as the transformation they bring about in the contexts of meaning of the current events that they address, are decisive elements in Rosa von Suess' work and draw the observer into an intermedial field of perception.

Karthik Swaminathan (USA)

Karthik Swaminathan is exploring the strategies of decentralised interactive systems in composition, installation and design. His works include "Memetic Playground," in which audience members deliver messages to improvising musicians and "Oracular Media" in which an interaction with objects is responded to by messages from recorded voices that the participant is given to interpret. He observes that the points of most interaction are in the spaces that are left out. He plays electric violin and sampler under the name of Mneumonyk Hi-Fi.

Yuri (A)

<http://www.mond.at/yuri>

Alexander Barth, Harald Mayer and Gerd Trautner, Baujahr 1976, students at the FHS Hagenberg for Medientechnik und Design in Upper Austria.

Triclops International (AUS)

Formed in 1993 Triclops International is an artistic performance-based company that focuses on creating large-scale spectacular events. The company strives to present innovative work by re-appropriating the techniques of industry and engineering. Through our investigation into industrial technique and application we create powerfully expressive devices the behaviour of which steers away from the practical and borders on the irrational. Triclops International is dedicated to presenting works to non-traditional theatre-goers in unusual locations. All self-staged works are free to the public and we prefer commissioned works to be the same.

Insight Instruments (A)

Producers of medical interfacing/analysis equipment, based in Vienna, Austria. Offering technological assistance and support for various projects in the Closing the Loop 1998 laboratory series.

Prema Murthy (USA)

<http://www.thing.net/~mimic>

My work examines the shifting boundaries of a gendered / socially constructed body by remapping its surface through various forms of new technologies. I explore these new forms of gender embodiment through performance-based installation, digital prints and sound. I have shown my work and performed in the US at several places including The Clocktower Gallery-NY, The Gertrude Stein Repertory Theater-NY, Sandra Gering Gallery-NY, MIT-Boston, The Alternative Museum-NY and The University of Iowa-IA. In addition to my individual work, I have collaborated with Floating Point Unit, an art group that creates installations designed to be viewed both physically and online using new forms of broadcast technologies. I have recently been awarded a 1997 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in the Computer Arts category.

John Duncan (USA/ITA)

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~jduncan>

"John Duncan is one of the rare artists whose work always stays on the edge: circulated in rumours, described as brilliant by direct witnesses, as infamous by others, as accurate by Duncan himself. In Tokyo Duncan's live performances, and pirate TV and FM radio broadcasts on the stations he built and operated, have spurred increased legal restrictions on media airspace and directly influenced a new generation of Japanese artists. In Los Angeles, Duncan's work is banned from publication. In Europe, Duncan's performances and installations are described as "der Klang wird zur Waffe" (Sound as Weapon)."

Nuoc Mam Dirndln (A)

Andreas, Kasper, Peter

Wuerst'lbauten are mobile, intercultural, multicultural, global-universal structures for communication and consumption that cost a mere pittance.

Wuerst'lbauten are traditionally coded as "masculine." Mostly, they are frequented exclusively by male wuerst'ls. Wuerst'ls are consumed mostly by male wuerst'ls (female wuerst'ls mostly prefer bananas). Wuerst'lbauten are mostly constructed in a masculine, Cartesian-rationalist style - whereby the internal organization has recourse to the theories of Margarete Schuette-Lihotzky (the Frankfurt kitchen).

Gelatin (A)

<http://www.t0.or.at/~bebe/>

Ali Janka, Tobias Urban, Wolfgang Gantner, Florian Reither 1997 — international astronaut congress — Museumsquartier lock sequence activated — Kustbuero 1060 Vienna

Pinguin fiction — Flex Wien fresh meat — New York
1998 — weekend — Galerie Damtschach vidi wall — Flex Wien.

Bibliography

¹ Tim Boykett, **The Theory of Hypercompetition**, in preparation.

² Mark W. Tilden, "The Evolution of Functional Robo-ecologies", in **Ars Electronica 1993: Genetische Kunst — Künstliches Leben**, ed. Karl Gerbel, Peter Weibel, PVS Verleger, 1993, and: J.J.Collins and S.A.Richmond, "Hard-wired Pattern Generators for Quadrupedal Locomotion". In: **Biological Cybernetics** 71, 1994.

³ Louis M. Pecora and Thomas L. Carroll, "Synchronisation in Chaotic Systems". In: **Physical Review Letters**, volume 64, number 8, February 1990.

⁴ Manuel DeLanda, **A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History**, Swerve editions, New York, 1997.

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