New Education Is What This Country Needs

An educational institution's answers to the 2008 Ars Electronica Festival theme: A New Cultural Economy—The Limits of Intellectual Property

The age of copyright and intellectual property has reached its expiration date. A development that already manifested itself in the technical fundamentals of the Internet has reared its head in the actual practices of a young generation of users and is bringing forth a new economy of sharing and open access.
Gerfried Stocker and Christine Schöpf

What is the significance of such an approach and such a description of reality for an educational institution like St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences?
What consequences does taking leave of conventional regulations in the area of copyright and intellectual property have for the field of education as a whole?
And who could have already recognized such tendencies quite early on, analyzed them, and, if need be, implemented a reaction to them in its educational model? Who, if not this institution?!
Consider remixing, resampling and VJing strategies that we're familiar with from youth culture and clubs in which these open structures have long since been the common practices of a creative and virulent scene that has already been living out these processes for all to see. The whole pop, hybrid and postmodern culture has long been a determining protagonist and beneficiary of these developments. Now, an up-and-coming young generation is hardly willing to submit to the rules of play that have long since been ignored by countless profiteers. The dams are breaking and a tsunami of recombined and newly-configured content is flooding through the worldwide data channels. Diverse Web2.0 portals like *Wikipedia* and *YouTube* are bundling and summarizing these strands of data, creating new categorization models and sharpening observers' views of artifacts of reality that haven't been present for quite some time. Data and information that have hardly been available for generations can be easily accessed, and this is something now taken completely for granted. Like a kaleidoscopic pattern generator, these information particles flow through all channels and can be both passively consumed and actively utilized. Numerous variables of image and sound combinations put together by Internet users worldwide thus sharpen both the view of as well as insights into old patterns of production and simultaneously call them into question in a subtle, playful way. The creative potential of a new generation becomes palpable when one logs on to such portals; the refreshingly naïve and relaxed mode of dealing with the medium as such and its conventions of long standing kind of makes you smile sometimes.
Education—something originally conceived of as free, per se—is now likewise becoming an omnipresent and transparent cloud of data that, sometimes in quite disorderly fashion, sometimes in a very well-structured way, enwraps our social fabric. The challenge this poses to educational institutions today is precisely in identifying and marking these disordered informational entities and then proceeding to interlink and structure the information particles into content-based instructional units.
How can one assure a modicum of quality in the face of this enormous diversity of data?
How can the phenomenon of an uncoordinated creative ur-force that has ceased conforming to

the rules be integrated into a traditional cultural-historical conception of a work, its producer and the person partaking of it?

Only by means of ceaseless observation and concentrated attention is it even possible at this point to get a sort of overview, take a wide-angle perspective or obtain insights into the overall cybernetic processes that are operational today, though, in doing so, we always remain cognizant of the fact that what we confront thereby is merely a selective and severely restricted macro perspective. Here, the instructor becomes a cautious escort and navigator on the path to knowledge, points out possible routes through the purported information jungle and interlinks content in a way that does justice to the pedagogical objectives at hand. By means of Web 2.0 technologies that constitute ideal virtual presentation platforms, instructors can access weblogs or free image archive portals like *Flickr,* bundle their contents and make it available to students. Via feedback loops, students then have the possibility of reacting to this content themselves, supplementing or revising it, and inserting it into their own creations.

We thus come full circle. Open source and creative commons as reality lived out on a daily basis by the young generation become a reality lived out on a daily basis in our educational systems.
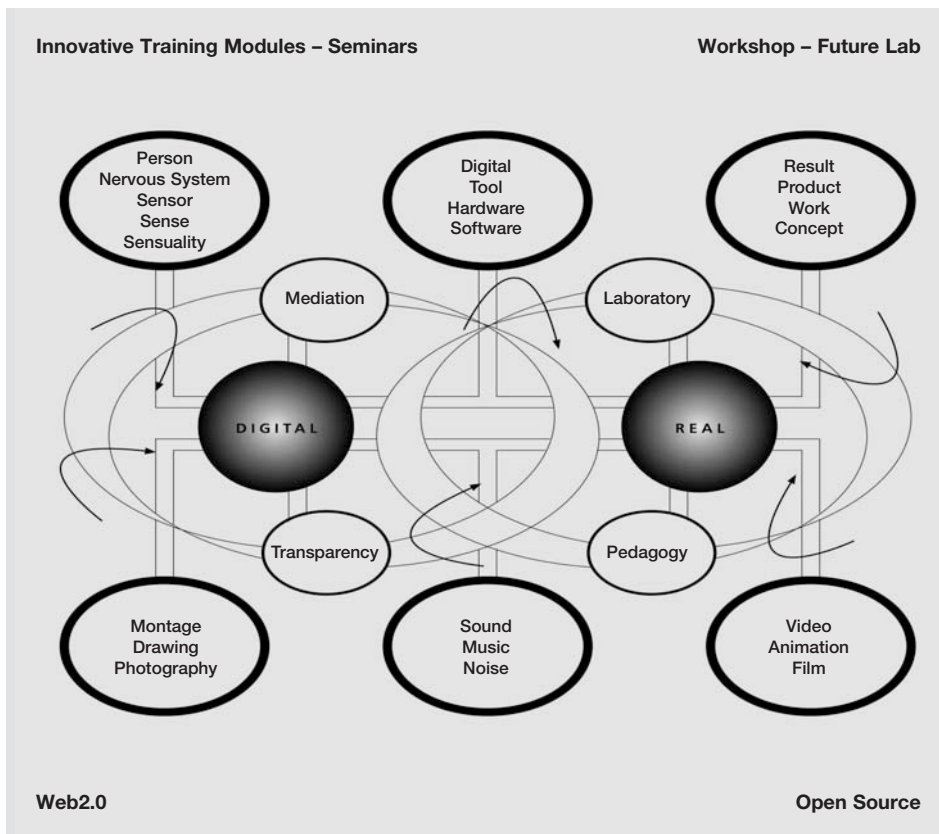
The system revises its parameters and is rewarded with a much higher level of attraction and vision as a result of this change.

The Media Technology Program of the Department of Media Production at St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences is taking a proactive approach to this course of action and is thereby attracting heightened attention in the context of other educational institutions.

> We don't need no education.
> We don't need no thought control.
> No dark sarcasm in the classroom.
> Teachers leave those kids alone.
>
> Hey, Teacher leave those kids alone!
> All in all you're just another brick in the wall.
> All in all you're just another brick in the wall.

Pink Floyd already recognized this point nearly 30 years ago and called it by name in their song "Another Brick in the Wall." In the Web 2.0 Generation, the dream of the self-determined and creative world-sphere has come to fulfillment almost on its own. The dissolution of conventional educational patterns frees up a view of other educational models. Everyone is called upon to face this challenge and, with Pink Floyd's classic rock anthem resounding deep within their brains, to pitch in cultivating this different sort of educational landscape. A new education is taking shape in this country; new images are appearing on the wall.

The Media Technology Program offered by the St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences' Department of Media Production is an independent team of artists fully integrated in this year's festival context. As full-fledged players with the same status as representatives of other institutions and artists' groups, these young undergrads are getting the chance to show what they can do and rub elbows with their peers in the virulent field of media art. In "We guide you," the festival's mediation program, individual students will be assembling background information, interviews, additional text and image fragments and their own personalized chains of association, and making them available virtually to festivalgoers. A dense and complex information portal bundles this creatively enhanced data cluster and creates, simultaneously to what's transpiring in the real world, a mirror-image festival scenario, thereby linking up and remapping image-text-sound worlds into artistic motion-picture-domains in their own right. These glimpses and insights will themselves be made available online as "mere" building blocks and, as such, can in turn be processed further by other users all over the world. We guide you—you guide us!

Text: Markus Wintersberger
Translated from German by Mel Greenwald.

Media Technology Program, Department of Media Production / St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences

Program staff: Hannes Raffaseder, Thiemo Kastel und Markus Wintersberger

Students: Andreas Bauernberger, Barbara Bauer, Norbert Bichler, Johanna Burgstaller, Franz Jetzinger, Julia Kadanka, Alexander Kaufmann, Alexander Kiflon, Margarethe Lechner, Daniela Linse, Christian Munk, Karin Petter, Gerald Preissl, Moana Ponesch, Natalie Ramler, Sarah Rosenwald, Sandra Seitz, Leopold Singh, Thomas Tröger, Benjamin Urbanek, Thomas Wagensommerer
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