prompts us to feel our way through the mist, without map, searching for the elements of our new practice. This new discomfort, albeit frustrating and disquieting at times, is also incredibly liberating and emancipating.

This new position prevents us from getting involved in militancy, for even if work is done, instructed and emulsified in a collective context, it remains above all an intimate affair. Work resists injunctions. We are aware of this within our internal dynamics. It can hardly be codified. It is organic and fragile. And we surely cannot promote it as a universal model.

Open Source Publishing, « Relearn », p.35-46.
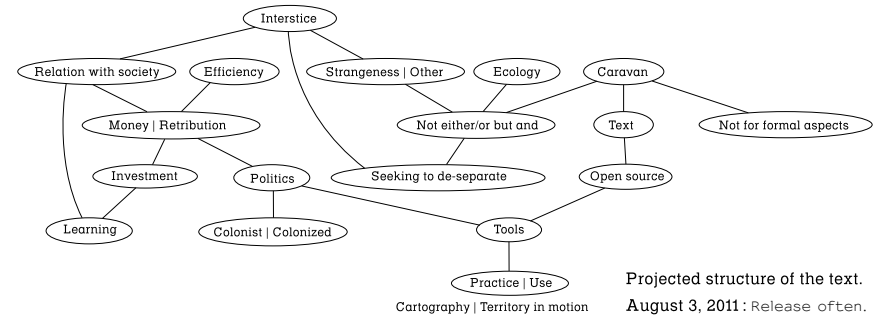
Projected structure of the text.
August 3, 2011 : Release often.

Cartography | Territory in motion

This text was written by several authors on multiple platforms ; most of it is drawn from various exchanges with interlocutors other than the final endorsers. Two tools have been used in particular. The page http://osp.kitchen/api/osp.writing.relearn/raw/relearn-pad.html was used to assemble and articulate notes and fragments of articles, with the different collaborators contributing with copy-and-pastes, editing duties, and transcriptions of oral notes... Then a diagram was drawn in order to visualize the main nodes around which our notes were articulated. After several editing sessions, two significant issues — learning and money — were left out of this initial text. We hope to discuss them in the near future in order to provide a more complete insight into the plural approaches involved in our practices. Therefore, the frequent pronoun "we" used in the text refers at least to the authors of this text (Ludivine Loiseau, Pierre Huyghebaert, Alexandre Leray and Stéphanie Vilayphiou), and perhaps other members of OSP.

THE CARAVAN

[1] OSP makes graphic design using only free and open source software.
[2] Libre Graphics Meeting, a yearly meeting gathering developers and practitioners working with free software for visual arts.

In 2008, two years after Open Source Publishing (OSP)[1] was founded, Femke Snelting wrote an essay relating how the group's attention toward digital tools and the conditions of content circulation, as well as its involvement with communities of free software developers, modified its way of making graphic design, its production process and its relations to clients. Femke claimed that free software as a practice entailed a deliberately awkward position ; a fully admitted unbalance allowing to break from customary habits without preventing us from going forward. This point of unbalance has since opened up a fundamental interstice, raising technical, social and economic issues.

OSP is now comprised of a dozen of persons. Each of us joined the group with their own background: typography, graphic design, cartography, programming, mathematics, writing, and so on. We work in small groups, with higher or lesser degrees of implication according to our interests, our competences or our, around workshops and commissioned or self-commissioned projects. This is why we prefer describing ourselves as a "caravan" rather than as a "collective." Firstly because the term brings up the idea of travel, such as the one that led us to Wrocław, Poland, in order to attend to the LGM,[2] or to Vietnam for the Open Design Week. These trips have frequently been occasions to welcome new members, but also to establish long-term, long-distance, occasional or close relations with the people we met. Secondly because the term "caravan" aptly conveys the idea of OSP as an association of heterogeneous elements, singular individualities, sensibilities, practices and positions. In respect to these two dimensions, we constantly seek to

"While a familiar gesture is one that fits perfectly well in a generally accepted model, an awkward gesture is a movement that is not completely synchronic. It's not a countermovement, nor a break from the norm; it doesn't exist outside of the pattern, nor completely in it. Like a moiré effect reveals the presence of a grid, awkward behaviour can lead to a state of increased awareness; a form of productive insecurity that presents us with openings that help understand the complex interaction between skills, tools and medium."
Femke Snelting, "Awkward Gestures", in Ludovico Alessandro, Nat Muller (eds.), Mag.net Reader, **nº3, London, OpenMute, 2008, p. 96.**

AN ECOLOGY THAT FEELS ITS WAY FORWARD

We proceed from a position that few graphic designers can completely ignore : our work, in all its dimensions (cultural, social, and economic), is highly connected to politics and ideology. These notions have long been at stake, illuminated or sublimated by what graphic designers do best : articulating images and messages. This results, among other things, in political or militant posters, and productions closely related to art — things that have a definitive agency on reality and on the community.

But recently the context has changed. From a marginal, rarely emphasized practice, graphic design suddenly found itself in the limelight with the boom of digital supports and of its derivatives that deeply depend on articulations between text, image, and visual codes. In parallel, the economy has taken such a prominent place that advertisement and marketing have secured a quasi-hegemonic position in the visual field. Graphic design is now submitted to it, up to its most seditious forms that borrow from marketing its authoritarian techniques, which thus part to the vast pretense dedicated to our entertainment as consumers of culture and of what advertising executives have managed to establish as a crudely overblown term : concepts.

Everyone experiences this position in a different way, still we share the opinion that it is uncomfortable enough for us to mobilize the energy needed for redirecting our practices, with the supplement of joy and solidarity brought on by a collective logic. This jeopardy takes us from a sense of discomfort — a feeling of alienation and of proletarianization (that is, the sense of having only your workforce left to offer) — to another sense, a sense of the unknown that

"While fundamentalists pretend to impose their definitive views on identity, and others learn to hate it, feminism suspends or adjourns the belief in authentic identities. What we need is an approach that mimics the shape of the spider web, a zigzagging pattern traversed by paradoxes, asymmetrical places and the resurgence of relentless power relations that lie just underneath it, for no linear or politically progressive approach is able to take into account everyone at once . If power relations are not linear, then resistance itself cannot be."
Rosi Braidotti, Op Doorreis : Nomadisch denken in de 21ste eeuw, **Amsterdam, Boom Uitgevers, 2004, p. 228.**

FROM "EITHER/OR" TO "AND/AND"

[1] Isabelle Stengers, In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism, trans. Andrew Goffey, London – Lüneburg, Open Humanities Press – Meson Press, 2015.
[2] Ars Industrialis, "Manifesto 2010." http://arsindustrialis.org/manifesto-2010.

In In Catastrophic Times : Resisting the Coming Barbarism[1], Isabelle Stengers, denounces what she describes as "infernal alternatives," such as the following proposition : "Either you support GMOs, or you support a deficient agricultural system that is unable to feed the world population." Pointing out these antinomies, Stengers points at a certain economy of knowledge that privatizes what should not be subjected to private appropriation — such as living beings. For OSP, the question may first transform into "either you're a graphic designer, or you're a programmer." Applied to the issues pertaining to open source, the alternative may then become "either you're against intellectual property, or in favor of recognizing artists." In order to go beyond antinomies, and following Eric Schrijver's proposition, it is possible to declare, "I like tight pants and mathematics." We are not seeking to gather everything, but rather to conceive the possibility of combining ideas that seem incompatible at first. This allows to pass from an "either/or" to an "and/and" alternative, fully taking into account an "inclusive" practice — which again rejoins the hackers' philosophy insofar as they are outside of technophilia/technophobia dichotomy — and inventing a way to say "and", that is, another way of apprehending the industrial world : "The exemplary character of the battles waged by free software activists lies in the fact that, for the first time, workers from the industrial world are inventing a new organization of work and of the economy that makes de-proletarianization its principle and its credo."[2]

"Approaching a practice then means approaching it as it diverges, that is, feeling its borders, experimenting with the questions which practitioners may accept as relevant, even if they are not their own questions, rather than posing insulting questions that would lead them to mobilise and transform the border into a defence against their outside."
Isabelle Stengers, "Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices", Cultural Studies Review 11, nº1 ,March 2005, p. 184.

redefine our field of action, through our position at the crossroads of various disciplines, and through our collaborative practice. And while our discussions are often the site for contradictory debates that nourish our practice, we all agree on one point: the necessity to get involved in libre culture[3], that is, to form an ecological milieu of practices that break with the notion of ex nihilo and solitary creation in order to encourage the exchange and re-appropriation of works.

[3] "Libre culture refers to a subculture of the broader free culture movement most closely aligned with the principles of the libre software movement. Libre communities favour use of libre software to ensure that anyone can participate in collaborative production of cultural works, and libre file formats to ensure that anyone may experience the products of their work." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libre_culture.

FREE SOFTWARE

In 1983, Richard Stallman initiated the GNU project, a set of software that is now one of the pillars of the GNU/Linux free systems. For us, however, he his greatest contribution was undeniably achieved in the legal field. In 1989, he wrote the GNU General Public License (GNU GPL), a contract meant to accompany his software in order to protect the GNU project, in reaction to the use of copyright laws he regarded as abusive. This contract is articulated around four principles, four freedoms granted to the users :

— The freedom to run the program as you wish, for any purpose (freedom 0).

— The freedom to study how the program works, and change it so it does your computing as you wish (freedom 1). Access to the source code is a precondition for this.

— The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbor (freedom 2).

— The freedom to distribute copies of you modified versions to others (freedom 3). By doing this you can give the whole community a chance to benefit from your changes. Access to the source code is a precondition for this.

Stallman also introduced the notion of "copyleft". We regard it as his greatest hack. Copyleft is not the opposite of copyright as defined by law, but deals with the particular use of copyright in order to grant more rights to software users while preserving the rights of their authors. Yet, what grabs our interest here is that the GNU GPL License specifies that changes made on pieces of software distributed under this license must be redistributed under the same conditions.

Relying on these prerogatives, OSP is not a countermovement. We seek to inscribe our practice in a legal context, particularly by paying close attention to licenses. Concretely, this means that we do not use software when we do not accept their terms of use, we do not use sources that are not explicitly meant for reuse, and

"[T]he General Public Licence [...] authorises any and everyone to use and to modify a program under this licence, but which defines every program derived from it as falling under the same licence. It is opening a very innovative interstice endowed with the means to propagate itself thanks to the successful misappropriation of the usual role of property rights." **Philippe Pignarre, Isabelle Stengers,** Capitalist Sorcery. Breaking the Spell, **trans. Andrew Goffey, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p.114–115.**

account for the partially destructive processes that characterize design in contrast to software development) ? To whom are we making these sources available, and how will they be legible ? How to adhere to "release early, release often"[1] in a fruitful manner while simultaneously exploring perennial and sustainable traces ? How to fund this surplus of work when the production process of the main support is over ? How to remain sensitive when confronted to the dichotomy between projects that use familiar processes but remain frustrating, and more experimental projects that inevitably place us in an awkward position ? How to keep on cooking larger meals and sharing them, how to keep oneself committed to these economies of scale ?

[1] This well-known watchword among free software developers invites authors to forget about their complexes and to refrain from trying to produce a finished project on their first attempt. The question pertains to what "releasing sources" means. Does this mean publishing source files ? Adding comments to the code ? Documenting them ? Making the code generic in order to make it more easily reusable ? This is the reason why it is preferable to publish as early as possible in order to enable others to contribute to the project, code-wise or documentation-wise…

LIBRE CULTURE

The nagging and euphoric issue of transforming uses into practices is absolutely central in OSP's ways of proceeding. As a result, the design process is embedded in its production tool as an essential component in the creative development. The constraints, idiosyncrasies, bugs and particular orientations attached to pieces of software built by a wide range of author-individuals coming across our operation chains demand taking indirect ways, leading to re-combinations that make it completely impossible to believe in the supposed neutrality of these tools. Tools summon practices, and are in turn shaped by what exceeds the notion of use. Because such hierarchical permutations occur at each step of the process, the boundaries get blurred — or thicken, perhaps. Intermingled as they are with processes that could seem external to it, the code reveals its articulations, and its second nature — a poetic one — becomes visible within this confusion. Code is poetry, code is culture.

When we come upon a surprising result, we seek to understand how it occurred in order to reproduce it in a different way and use it as a material. The power of attraction of a tool does withstand a prolonged uncovering of its inner parts, which tends to keep us at bay from potential hard-rock-like guitar solos encouraged by technical brilliance.

Our wariness toward technical feats and the machine perceived as an autonomous element external to man is frequently expressed in the documentation of our projects. We try as much as we can to explain our work process and to publish the source files so that interested parties may reuse them in a different way. Yet, a myriad questions arise when this particular step takes place in reality. What really are source files in an articulated graphic project (or, how to

"What is a hacker essentially, and what is the positively subversive dimension of this figure? I believe it lies in the hacker's capacity to appropriate the technological and industrial offer without conforming to the marketing dictates pushed by the industry's business plans. This is the case because what these agents implement are not uses, as is believed by industrialists seeking to control the future of their product through use: what they create are highly complex social, individual and collective practices that refer to what we used to call a praxis – yet in an extremely novel and rejuvenated sense of the term."
Bernard Stiegler, introduction to Le Design de nos existences. À l'époque de l'innovation ascendante, **Paris, Mille et une nuits, 2008, p. 35.**

that the material we distribute necessarily comes with a license. This license not only formalizes the commitment between its issuer and its recipient, but also provides contextual elements pertaining to the choice of this license. This attention has frequently triggered misunderstandings among our colleagues outside OSP. Some perceive it as a superficial posture, others as a pretension, and yet we have chosen to take this issue seriously for several reasons. First of all, if we consider that vocabulary matters, then the act of reading the licenses of most proprietary software is an issue, down to their very name, "End User License Agreement", which sets producers against users. Secondly, if we follow the logic whereby the building of a legal framework inevitably leads to that of a social one, licenses are a way of publicly presenting alternatives to what we deem to be erroneous within the current legislation. This formalization enables it to be collectively appropriated, rejected or criticized, and therefore offers a possibility for evolution.

Most current creative practices are variable processes in constant evolution, as opposed to a series of static objects. Our enthusiasm toward free software thus stems from their design process itself, insofar as it is based on a collective practice creating a network of relations between specific communities, tools and practices.

"Alphabetic writing is above all — and remains so in a secular world — the condition for constituting a public law, that is, a law accessible to everyone, known by everyone, and questionable by everyone, thus founding a 'public affair', or res publica, what the Greeks call politeai : the common public space, founded by a published law in the sense that it is meant for citizens with equal rights and duties under this law, to the strict extent that everyone knows how to read it and is able to write it."
Introduction to "L'Écriture au XXIe siècle",a seminar held in Noirlac, October 20–21, 2011.
http://colloque2011noirlac.livreaucentre.fr/categorie/presentation-du-colloque/

OSP calls for a generous artistic practice that recognizes that culture is above all based on the circulation of ideas, and on the fact that any work is derivative by nature, in the sense that it is informed by preceding works.

REFLEXIVE TOOLS

[1] Jacques Lafitte, Réflexions sur la science des machines (1932), Paris, Vrin, 1972 : quoted by Vincent Beaubois in Esquisse d'une pensée intensive de la technique, dissertation, Master 1 in Philosophy, Université de Nanterre Paris X, 2010, p. 4.

[2] Emmanuel Souchier has for instance remarked that the digital, contrary to the historical "writing" support, performs a disconnection between "memory space" (the sheet of paper or the hard drive) and "reading space" (the sheet of paper or the screen): "L'Écriture électronique: la rupture sémiotique", in Design… Graphique ?, Valence, Erba Valence, 2002, p. 41.

[3] This has been brilliantly demonstrated by Adrian Ward's Auto-Illustrator. Developed in 2001, Ward's software is a parody of Illustrator. It creates a gap between the user's expectations and what the software operates, following its own logic.
http://swai.signwave.co.uk/

In public discussions about our practice, the most recurring questions concern the singularity of digital tools. "Isn't the computer just a tool? What is the difference, say, between Gimp's or Photoshop's 'paint brush' tool and an actual painter's brush?" In Reflections on the Science of Machines[1], French philosopher and mechanology pioneer Jacques Lafitte distinguishes three types of machines: 1) passive machines (e.g., a hammer); 2) active machines, that is, machines that comprise their own energy source (e.g., an internal combustion engine); and 3) reflexive machines, that is, machines that comprise their own energy source as well as their own source of information (e.g., a computer with an Internet connection). According to this theory, the brush is a passive machine, since the energy and information come directly from its operator. The Gimp/Photoshop "paint brush" tool is a reflexive machine: while the user commands the movement by his or her own will, like for any traditional paintbrush, the association that link them together is indirect. Operating between the user and the tool, the software negotiates and transforms information according to its algorithm, which is itself composed of other pieces of information[2] When the operator's gesture is effectively translated onto the screen, that is, the space of the software's framework, it is only because the algorithm negotiating the relations between actions and effects was written for that purpose[3]. So the information emitted by the operator is just a part of a larger set of information, the rest of which is contained by the whole set of software instructions.

Because free software reveals its source code, but also and above all the history of its development through discussion threads about the programs, the formats and even the bugs (without any attempt at concealing them), it allows to display the reflexive nature of software. This disclosure thus allows to appreciate the specific qualities of a computer tool — for instance its dynamic nature — to evaluate its potential, and to imagine new purposes for it.

According to the traditional discourse among the free software community, releasing the informational part that constitutes the code enables one to take control of it : it can be appropriated by users, who in turn become able redefine the modes and purposes of their tools according to their own criteria. But while releasing the code is call for getting involved in the elaboration of our tools, we realize that in practice, this claim omits the fact that control is always acquired at the expense of someone else. Programmers control the code; designers control design; typographers control typography, and so on. In each case, and in the first place, one needs to be able to penetrate the culture surrounding it, to enter the circle. For us, free culture mainly refers to the willing agreement to lose a hypothetical sense control, to let go. It entails a questioning of one's certitudes in order to get something new in return. Open code plays a part in this movement, but is not enough.

"Never alone" is one of OSP's mottos. It serves as a reminder when we boldly explore unknown territories on our own. The sense of unbalance we mentioned at the beginning of the text may then easily turn into paralysis as frustration and incomprehension take over. This is one of the reasons that explains the significance of OSP's collective dimension : when working on a project, we always seek to bring together individuals with various levels of competence, experience and ease, so that we are able to join forces and share our discoveries. But it is also a matter of crossing different approaches or sensibilities, and hence trying to modify our outlook, our gestures, our language, that is, to redefine together the fields we are exploring.