

Egotiation: the interdisciplinary process from chaos to concept

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Abstract

The Smart Studio at the Interactive Institute in Stockholm is an experimental, interdisciplinary group that develops ideas and projects related to the use of information technology in art and everyday life. The studio consists of people from varied backgrounds as art, architecture, cognitive science, cultural studies, design and engineering. There are several projects running parallel in the studio, consisting of smaller and larger workgroups. The studio members also assemble in joint force, at least once a year, to develop an idea together from scratch. In an attempt to consciously use everybody's individual knowledge and background as an asset in the creative process the group develops methods to work as one large, many-faceted brain and body. The aim is to create an unexpected and extraordinary result that could only be generated out of the mix and interference of everyone involved. Brainball (honorary mention at Ars Electronica 2001, more info at smart.interactiveinstitute.se) is an example of this. The studio members always look forward to this process and find it to be at the core of their intentions with interdisciplinary practice.

During a one-day workshop, the Smart Studio would like to invite participants to take part in a similar process and share the brainstorm techniques that are used in order to realize this convergence of very different minds.

Proceeding from a topic theme, the workshop will explore some methodologies for creating new concepts together in groups. The groups should be as mixed as possible to give each individual a chance to confront the wealth of variety in the workgroup and the assets and problems that this brings about. The topic will be biofeedback, using the electrical signals from the body as an input to a technical device or system. This is a topic the Smart Studio has worked with in several projects, as Brainball, Brainbar and the Virus project.

1. The workshop

The workshop will start with background information about the Smart Studio and workshop methodologies, and will after that turn into an experimental arena for generating ideas within the topic. Members from the Smart Studio will coach and lead the process using different methods for conceptual development. The aim for the day is to create a number of concepts and sketches that will inspire the participants into cross-disciplinary work of their own.

1.1 The outline for the workshop

1.1.1 Background Smart studio and work methods.

- Working in a cross-disciplinary group
- Workshop as a work format
- Methodologies; overall planning, what kind of process we want, workshop outlines, time aspects, material and documentation.

- Generative phase, examples: Brainstorming, Visualisations, Provocations and Surrealist games.
- Visualize result, sketches, scenarios and prototyping.
- Evaluation and choosing ideas
- Exploration and evaluation of new work methods.

1.1.2 Background about biofeedback systems and our earlier work in the area, projects like Brainball and Brainbar.

- Defining biofeedback systems and examples of signals used in these systems.
- Earlier projects:
Brainball is a game, a piece of art and a research project in human machine interaction using brain activity. Brainwaves are measured by EEG-sensors to allow interaction between two persons playing the game. The players control a ball on the table through their state of relaxation, and the game object is to score a goal with the ball on the opponent's side by relaxation.

Brainbar is a mechanical bar that mixes a drink from the visitor's brainwaves. The drink mixed depends on the visitor's state of mind.

1.1.3 Generative phase

Using the different methods presented and thereby negotiating between egos, the groups will engage in a creative process.

1.1.4 Quick sketch phase

Ideas will take shape with sketches and scenarios.

1.1.5 Presentation of concepts for the rest of the group.

1.1.6 Final discussion and summarizing the experience.