

Enrique Rivera (cl)

Plataforma Cultura Digital
Director
enrique@plataformaculturadigital.cl

Catalina Ossa (cl)

Plataforma Cultura Digital
Director

Absolutum Obsoletum

If It Works It's Out of Date

In 1970 at the beginning of Chilean socialist pacific revolution in the Allende's government, Fernando Flores, an engineer in charge of CORFO, the office which was in charge to manage the nationalized companies, knew the work of the cybernetician Stafford Beer on Management Cybernetics, and invite him to apply his VIABLE SYSTEM MODEL.

Beer accepted the invitation and the project started with the configuration of a transdisciplinary team and a branch of several Chilean and foreign institutions, like INTEC (Institute of Technology), ECOM (Computer Company of Chile), together with important theorists, scientists and designers such as Raul Espejo, Gui Bonsiepe, Humberto Maturana, Francisco Varela, among others. They developed the interface, software, technical implementation and the training of the people who will compile and transmit the data, a group compound by engineers and common workers.

This was a conceptual and technological revolutionary project that was applying a data transferring system based on the human nervous system and autopoiesis, in a country where for the management of it's own data, used to send the information to BBAA in Argentina by plane, to get the information 2 months later. They were developing a system to have the data for correct decision making in one day. Very ahead of it's time.

Cybersyn mainly consists of an interface of hardware and software built in Chile and England. It creates a network of telex machines connected to a computer that ran the Cyberstride Software, with the mission to connect the state administration with the newly nationalized companies like CODELCO, Chile's biggest cooper company. But the main characteristic of this project was to give TO THE PEOPLE THE TOOLS OF SCIENCE, participating in the decision making trough the Cyberfolk project.

They were almost on the same level of the most advanced researches on real time networks in the world, and if the coup had not occurred, maybe

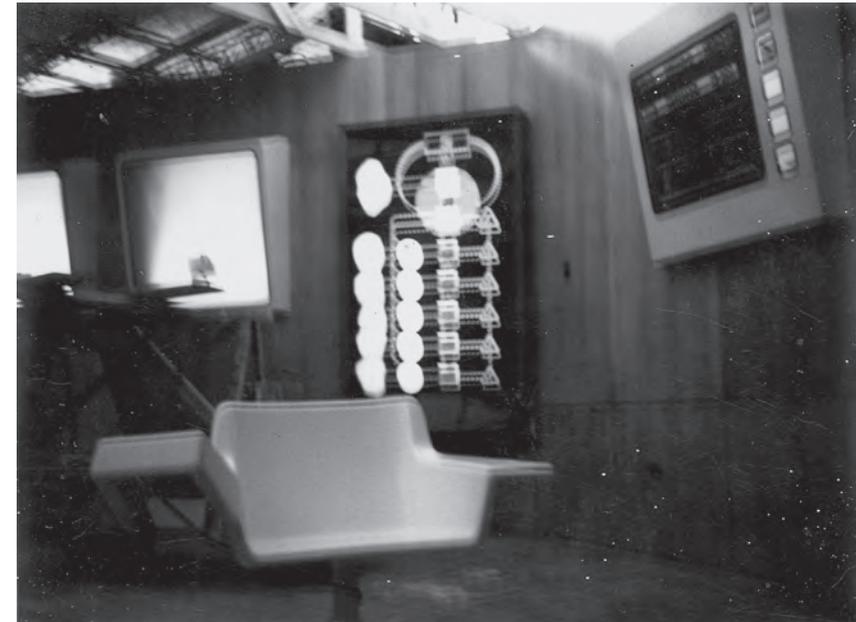


Fig. 1: Operation room on construction, 1972.
Stafford Beer collection, Liverpool John Mores University

this project could have been a great contribution for what we know today as creative commons, open knowledge, glocal, prosumers, social networks, immersive interactive spaces, decentralized economy and open democracy.

On the opening of the Cybersyn operation room, Salvador Allende and Stafford Beer prepared a speech which concluded with the next lines:

What you are about to hear today is revolutionary, not only because this is the first time that this is applied in the world, it is revolutionary because we are making a deliberate effort to give the people the power that science gives to us, enabling them to use it freely [1].

The operation room was supposed to move to the La Moneda Government Palace on September 1973, but this never happened, and the speech was never delivered. Describing this period, David Whittaker, a personal friend of Stafford Beer wrote [2]:

These were times of great uncertainty in Chile, as attempts to destabilise the government were rife. In Stafford's account of his final meeting with President Allende, on July 26th, he has this to say: "He asked me whether I had anything to ask him. I said yes; in view of the confusion being generated around the project, would he tell me quite directly the extent to which he expected worker control of the social economy. He replied: 'El máximo'. This had chimed perfectly with their first meeting, at La Moneda, two years

earlier. On that occasion the President wanted reassurance that the project was decentralising, worker-participative and anti-bureaucratic. Stafford was immensely impressed with his grasp of the model of the Viable System set out in *Brain of the Firm*, confirmed by his intelligent and probing questions. The model was being sketched out on a large sheet of paper on the table, and as Stafford worked his way up through Systems One, Two, Three and Four – he came to draw the final box number Five and label it ‘The President’; but he was pre-empted by the President himself who threw himself back in his chair saying: “At last, el pueblo.”



Fig. 2: Chair control panel detail, 1972. Stafford Beer collection, Liverpool John Mores University



Fig. 3: Multinode Metagame, ZKM 2008. Ossa & Rivera collection

This was the aim of the interactive installation *Multinode Metagame*, to bring the chance to the people to know this “archeology of Latin American media,” using variables proposed on the original project, but with modern technology. All these variables were created with the purpose of creating an atmosphere of immersion which would enable visitors to interact with the installation in an absolute unique and never to be repeated way. The different elements of the installation are laid out in such a way that they allow for what could best be defined as a kind of non-linear narration or edition, where information or knowledge can be modified by the visitors. This is why we could describe this installation as a non linear interactive documentary film, that is a kind of “aleph” that connects historical events and the new expansion possibilities of concepts and aesthetics proposed the *Cybersyn* project.

References

- [1] Stafford Beer quote
- [2] Opening speech of the operation room, by Salvador Allende and Stafford Beer 3: Catalogue of the installation *Multinode Metagame* www.multinode-metagame.cl