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Crypto Design Student Project / closing a cycle.



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Since the Spring semester of 2021, I have taught two classes in the Graphic and Digital Design programs at Universidad Católica Boliviana in La Paz, Bolivia: Digital Design Workshop 1 (HTML/CSS and Intro de web programming) and Digital Design 4 (Emerging Technologies, Experimental

approaches and critical analysis) These classes were conducted both in person and remotely. One of my first major project ideas involved introducing the concepts and context of cryptocurrencies from the critical and applied perspective of graphic and digital design. Here are some highlights and reflections on its evolution.



Graphic Evolution of the course and student cards

The Initial Premise and Kusillx

From their project brief:

In a fictional future scenario, local currencies begin a devaluation process not unlike what Bolivia experienced in the 1980s. A digital consortium of citizens, investors, and hacktivists — seeing the slow response of authorities — embarks on a campaign to create a Bolivian Stablecoin (a type of cryptocurrency), aiming to protect common citizens from the negative effects of devaluation.

The consortium recruits ten young digital designers to create a proposal for the digital brand identity and an example of a simple landing page, so they can use it in their proposals to launch the Bolivian Cryptocurrency.

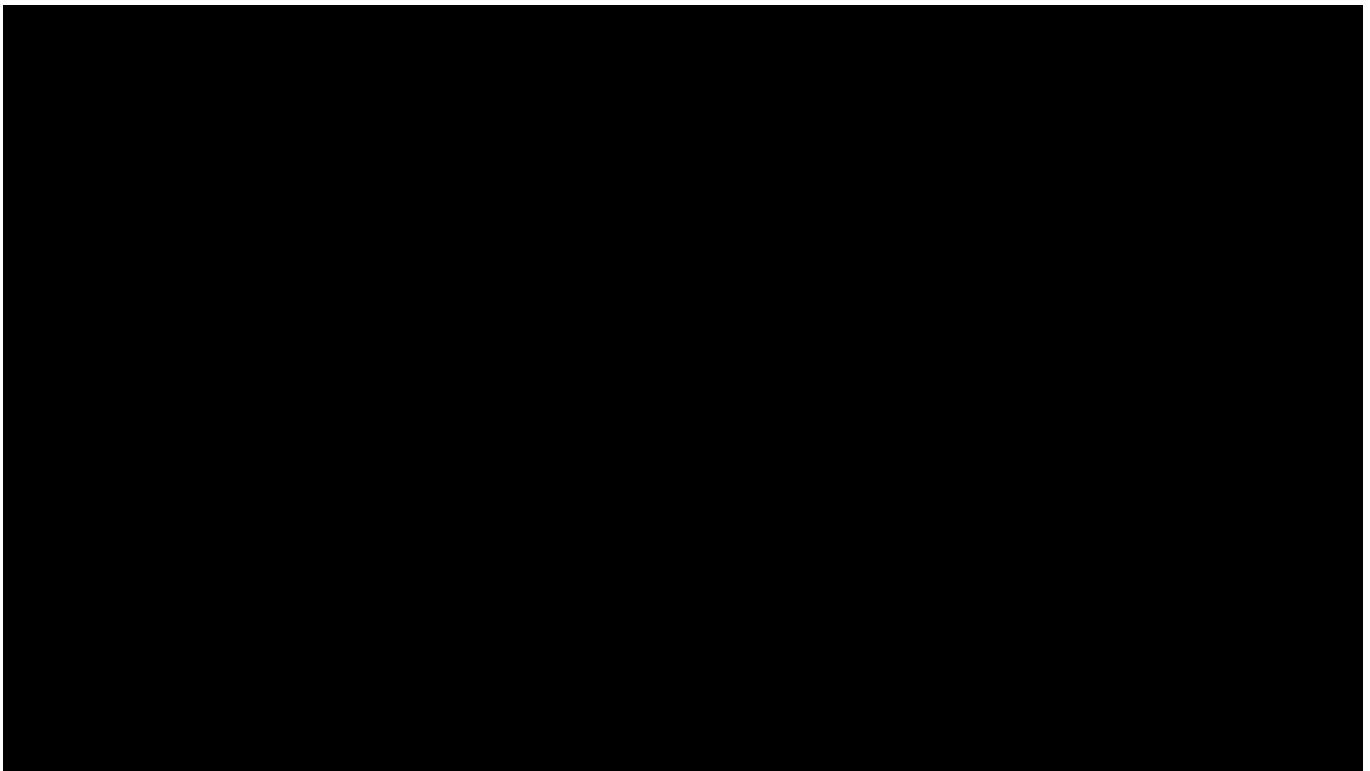
Deliverables

The designers must present a proposal for the digital identity in a Figma document.

They must create a responsive web page using Bootstrap and their prior knowledge of HTML and CSS to build a digital product that expresses, combines, and leverages the graphic/creative aspects of the newly created brand.

Dear Jury Members, you are the consortium.

A consortium of tech investors, tech workers, and civil society leaders banded together as a hacktivist group known as Kusillx. With insider knowledge of an impending economic devaluation — similar to those in the 1980s that radically disrupted livelihoods — they devised a plan to create and implement a Bolivian cryptocurrency. This stablecoin aimed to preserve savings and prevent societal chaos. As often happens, branding and visual identity were not initial priorities. However, understanding their importance, the consortium issued a request to ten emerging digital designers, asking them to propose the visual identity and a comprehensive design standard for the stablecoin.



This exploration allowed me to evaluate student competencies across several interconnected areas, including digital branding, the social responsibility of designers, design history, copywriting for digital media, and basic Figma prototyping. The process was fruitful despite tight deadlines — much shorter than traditional visual identity projects. Result like Uyuni from “UYUNI,” Laura Pamela Torrico Morón capturing the mirror-like effect of the Bolivian Salt Plains as a metaphor for transitioning to a digital blockchain economy. Students grappled with a profound question: **In a country that prides itself on its diversity, how can one symbol represent national identity amid pervasive regionalism?**



Design by: **Sharim Eivian Correa Cordova**

WallakeCoin was another memorable result. Its design, inspired by a traditional fish stew, symbolized resilience and resourcefulness — a testament to creating something iconic from humble origins. The design process intentionally drew parallels between the dish's history and the project's goals. Just as Wallake evolved from a necessity during times of scarcity into a cherished symbol of local culture, the coin's identity reflected the ingenuity required to overcome adversity. Students incorporated earthy tones and minimalist iconography to emphasize simplicity and authenticity, aligning the visual identity with the narrative of making the best out of challenging circumstances. The stark design, complemented by utensils, invited viewers to “make the best out of a bad situation.”

Iterations and Adaptations

I later adapted this project for first-year students in a course on design composition and visual communication using HTML and CSS. Students created HTML landing pages that adhered to their cryptocurrency's visual standards. Reception was mixed. Many viewed cryptocurrencies as scams or get-rich-quick schemes, reflecting broader societal skepticism. To address this, I contextualized cryptocurrencies within broader economic and technological frameworks, highlighting their potential beyond speculative trading. Through discussions and examples, I demonstrated how blockchain could provide solutions for transparency and accessibility, particularly in underserved communities. This approach helped students see cryptocurrencies as tools for innovation rather than merely financial speculation. However, digital design was beginning to take root in Bolivia's creative industries.



Designs: Jose Calisaya (Agrifut), Camila Mojica (Vianita), Pablo Zelada (BolCoin)

By the time I taught later courses like Dig4, I paused the project due to my limited knowledge of web3 and blockchain smart contracts. However, it was striking how our speculative, post-apocalyptic predictions can occasionally become an economic crisis.

Social Complexity and Graduate School Influence

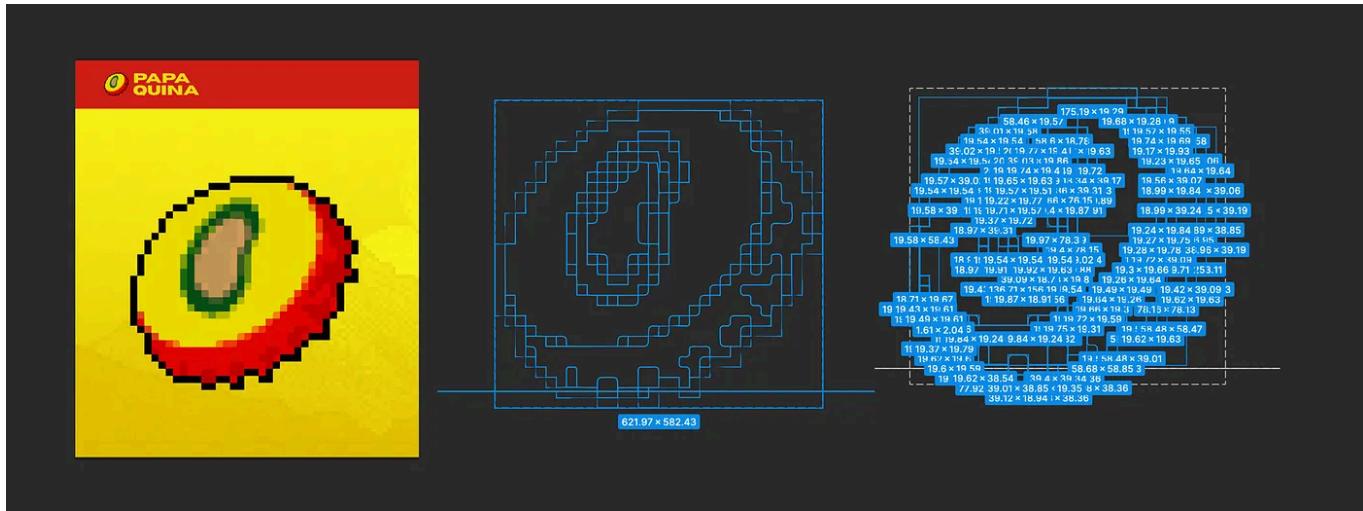
As with any cycle, I decided to end my teaching years at “The House of Design” (a nickname for the faculty) with a less dramatic post-apocalyptic framing. Grad school deeply influenced my teaching, introducing me to service design, social innovation, and speculative design. I brought these concepts into my courses, often demanding extra effort from students.

This final iteration of the Bolivian cryptocurrency project incorporated my expanded knowledge of web3 development and AI as valuable learning tools. Earlier in the semester, I intentionally emphasized the importance of prompt design and writing as skills to develop and refine continually. Role assignment and instructional prompt requests were critical for learning complex concepts such as writing, compiling, deploying, and verifying smart contracts.

My students in Bolivia — experiencing the realities of a fluctuating exchange rate — witnessed the cryptocurrency market transition from being perceived as a scam to becoming a viable financial solution. These circumstances added depth to our discussions.

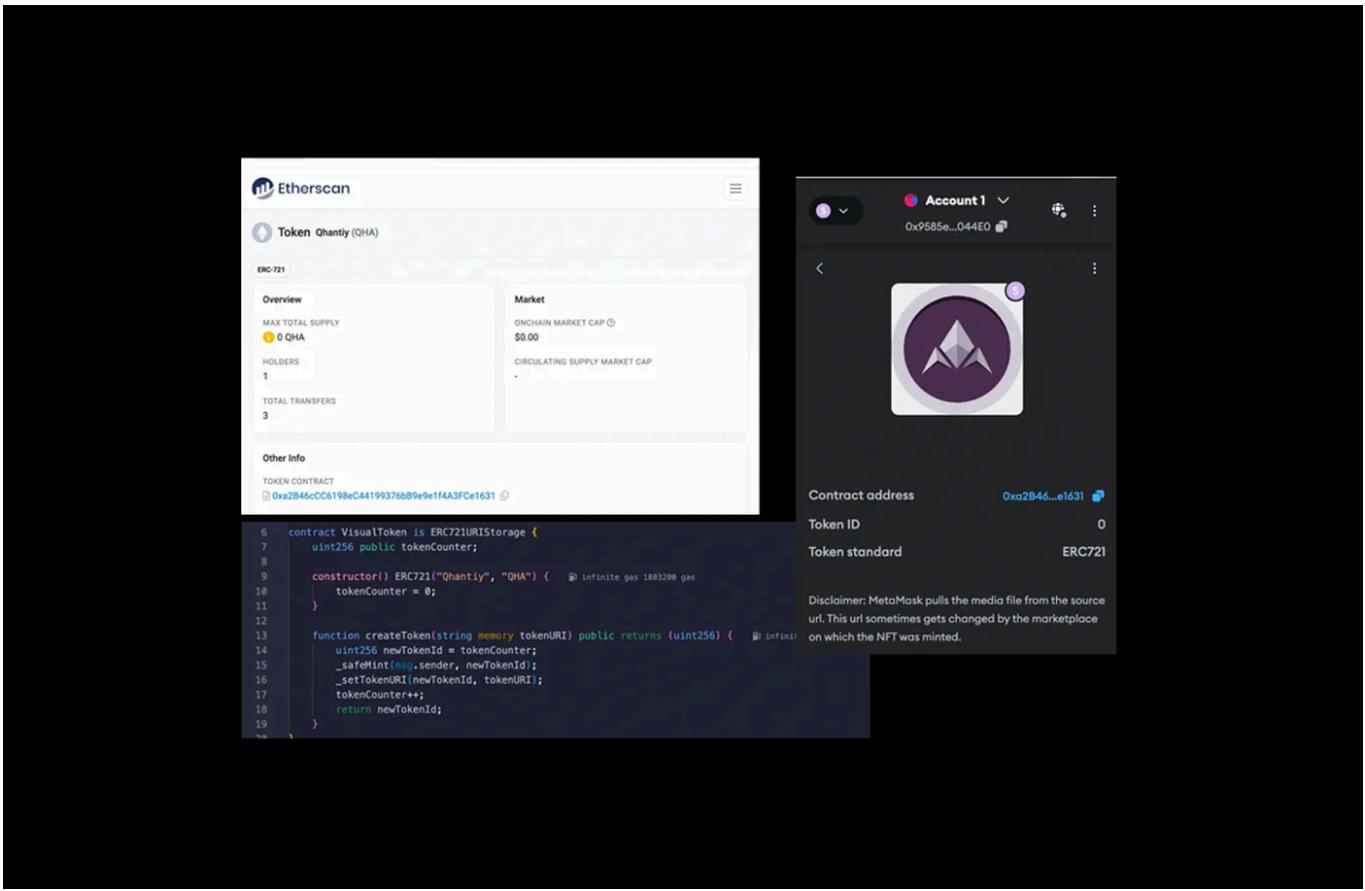
An unexpected limit.

Both technical and cost limitations in the printing process influenced and constrained the way designers created communication pieces. While web design reduced the cost of printing, it introduced new constraints such as loading speeds and legibility. Later, visual exploration experienced a boom with tools like Canva, which shifted design from a craft requiring precision and detail to a practice centered around editing existing content.



Process of simplifying or sometimes redoing (by SANTIAGO MONJE MENSIO)

Initially, I did not intend to limit their proposals for the logomark, coin icon, or graphic beyond considerations of legibility and responsive design. However, during the first tests on a blockchain network, we discovered that even seemingly simple vectorized graphics could significantly impact the amount of test tokens needed to complete smart contracts. This insight led me to develop the concept of “code-economy aware digital design.”



First success with Qhantiy Token

This approach challenged the visual expectations of shiny, futuristic technology designs that often require high processing power for crisply rendered graphics. Instead, I emphasized the importance of considering practical constraints, such as the limited availability of test tokens. During this time, I reviewed numerous vectorized logo marks and often demonstrated how a better understanding of Bézier curves, compound shapes, and unnecessary points could significantly reduce SVG code complexity and length. This required students to focus on simpler, cleaner SVG code to reduce hypothetical deployment costs, encouraging functionality and intentionality in their designs. When I gave them the choice and honestly the most common practice of using a third party hosting for their graphic separate from the contract, they unanimously chose to embed their graphic identities directly into the smart contracts, demonstrating a profound understanding of purpose-driven design and how

much they value their design work in the face of posterity and permanency blockchain represents.

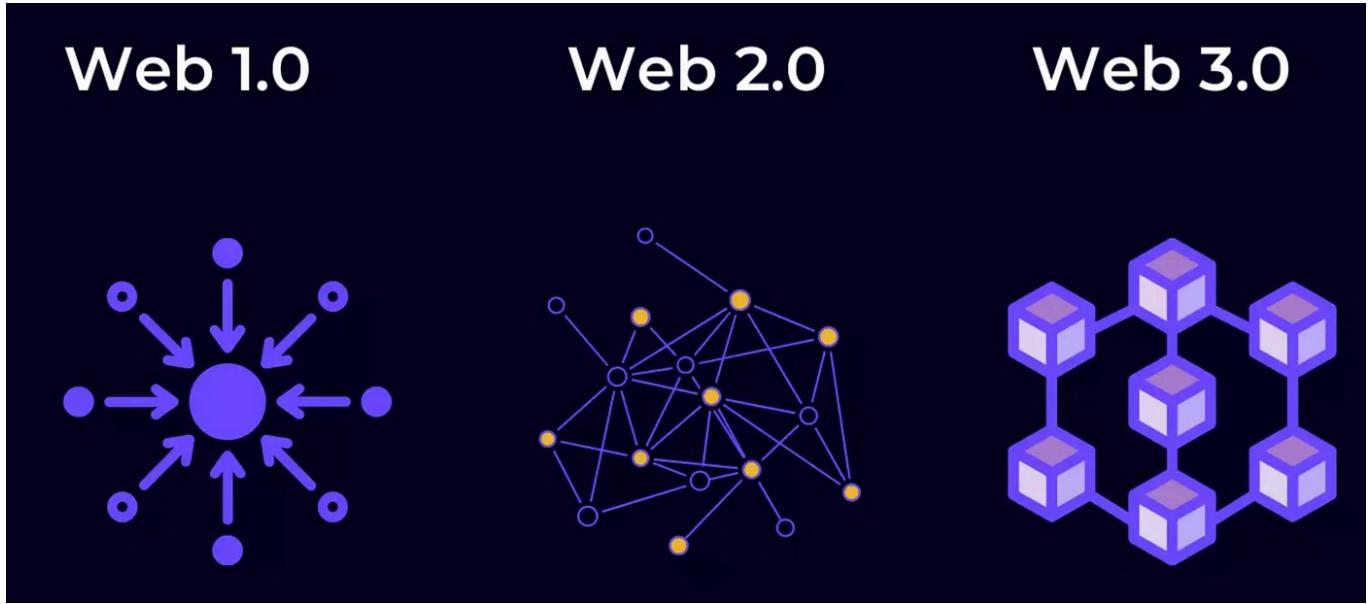


Image: Rapid Innovations

This decision deeply moved me, as it reflected their grasp of the intentionality required in their work. It reinforced the idea that in a world of ready-made templates, detailed design efforts should not be outsourced, but rather integrated directly into the technological frameworks they are building. Yes, anyone can design, but not everyone is a designer.

Finals and Finals are not always final.

Even though the project is officially complete, it remains relevant. Groups like Bolchain and early crypto adopters in Bolivia continue exploring its implications. The project's speculative design approach asked students to storyboard Bolivian services, products, or traditions that could benefit from blockchain technologies. This grassroots exploration of web3's potential has been inspiring.

Cripto^{grafik}_{_}

Cripto-ecosistema educativo de Bolivia

Codiseño: Alumnos de Materia DIG4, (2022-2024) Taller DIG1 (2021-2) con Lic. Edwin Mauricio Olivera | Licenciatura en Diseño Digital, UCB San Pablo, La Paz Bolivia.

iy (QHA) dapp  BELEN NICOL
SIL)  '24 ERICK MARCELO LOAYZA
'24 NICOLAS LEONARDO PEREZ

>Proximamente > Proximamente > Proximamente > Proximamente

I am currently documenting the cryptocurrency proposals on a landing page featuring designs by Belen Nicole, Erick Loayza, and Nicolas. The next steps involve collaborating with Bolchain and grassroots crypto communities, offering my former students visibility and opportunities in this exciting ecosystem.

Closing this cycle, I want to thank my teaching assistants **Fernanda Delgado, Enrique Gutierrez, Noelia Cordova, Carolina Cabrera, Brianna Cordova, Matias Moscoso, Sarella Abruzzese**. Over the past years, they have no idea how much I learned from them and how appreciative of their efforts and curiosity that help me stay extra motivated.

My mentors and supervisors and friends — Ernesto Montellano, Ana Luisa Unzueta Arce, Carolina Benítez Muñoz Reyes, Abel Catacora, Josefina Matas. — for their support, friendship. Special thanks to Cecilia Mariaca, head of the Design department, for entrusting me the opportunity to explore teaching at the intersection of emerging technologies and social impact. Having shared the common experience and hustle that involves being of a

Bolivian cultural attachment in the U.S. Bolivia needs leaders who view education as a shared process of empowerment, fostering innovation and resilience in students. The impact of this project demonstrates how speculative design and emerging technologies can inspire solutions to real-world challenges, proving that education is a transformative tool for societal progress. If designers and artists don't take up the challenge to inspire new generations, who will?

I urge other educators within design or outside to take content, ideas or procedures of this project. In Bolivia the chance to foster a new generation aware of decentralization and disrupting systems has a small window of opportunity. So far it has only showed me in students interest, curiosity, dedication and commitment.



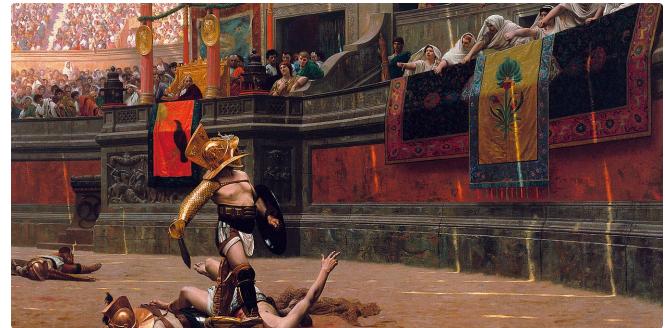
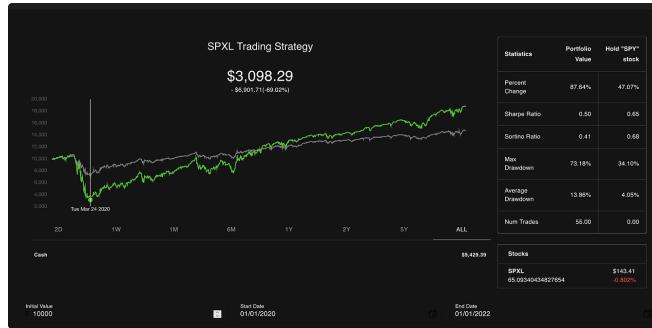
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