

Platframe Postscript

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Introduction

The platframe is a website that converges and frames pre-existing tools, to facilitate online encounters, exchanges and forms of content production. It is a frame rather than a form – as it attempts to sustain a certain legibility of the boundaries and relationships of the many different tools, softwares, services, frameworks and legacies embedded in the technical object. We have expanded this readme from the conventional format of a step by step installation manual towards a reflective document that considers the process of the website coming into being, its different ‘lifecycles’, the expectations it created and the conversations it facilitated.

How to preserve a **platframe**?

While the platframe is a continuation of pre-existing tools, placing them in a different setting, creating new relations and dependencies, it never solidified nor reached one final state or destiny. The platframe grew, matured, broke, and continued to evolve. Documenting such a living creature, is in and of itself a challenging project. From what perspective, or at what moment to make the cut? When and how to create the necessary distance to draw together its many traces, and how to make them available for others in a meaningful way? This readme thus grapples with the issue that comes with documenting something that is constantly changing, emerging and evaporating. We took the approach of structuring the documentation of the platframe through its different lifecycles, which include the different tools that have been informing the process of making this digital object, whether or not they became explicitly visible. Some screenshots will help to give an indication of how the website was coming to life, how it accommodated different encounters and how it challenged those encountering it. The most intensive moment of this was the workshop day on May 7, 2021, with around two hundred participants interacting on the platframe.

Lifecycles

The platframe went through different stages and states (and continues to do so). It changed its configuration and appearance at different moments in time. We refer to the different states as lifecycles. Each lifecycle facilitated different forms and intensities of interaction of participants with the website and with each other. We also referred to the process of designing the platform as a choreography, due to its spatial and dynamic characteristics, and its relation to temporality.

Lifecycle 0: Development

In December 2020, Hackers & Designers was invited to work with the organizing team of the 3rd Workshop on Obfuscation (Jara Rocha, Seda Gürses, Ero Balsa) to conceptualize, design and develop a digital platform that takes an important part in facilitating an online workshop. The challenge was to develop this digital object while the conference was also still in the process of development. Principles that were important to address from the beginning of the process were:

- **F/OSS:** The extensibility and adaptability of everything we were developing
- □ **Privacy and data security:** The need for care around privacy and security issues, which seemed to be even more amplified due to the global pandemic and our increasing reliance on online meetings platforms.
- □ **Welcoming and safe online encounters:** Writing a code of conduct and a careful and moderation of the chat in order to create and sustain a safe (online) environment that is welcoming to all participants.
- □ **Collaboration across disciplines:** The possibility

to engage in a collaborative, reflective making process that transgresses solutionist approaches to technological development, disciplinary boundaries and different knowledge domains. The platframe thus, became a convergence of different tools as well as a convergence of different practices.

- Digital Discomfort: Embarking on this project as 'nonexperts' in platform development, we had to manage the expectations of everyone, including our selves. This platform would probably challenge us more than the, by now habitual experience, of meeting on Zoom, Teams or Google Hangout. As the Workshop on Obfuscation raised questions about inner workings, ethics, and socio-technological entanglements, the platframe would therefore ask for more patience and endurance from participants than they were used to. In that context Jara Rocha curated an anti-solutionist collection of formats for digital discomfort.

Map / Navigation

The platframe was not designed to mimic a physical conference but aimed at facilitating the temporalities and collectivities of an online workshop. We worked with the concept of a large canvas, which extends in all directions and can be navigated similarly to how a map is navigated. It contains regions, such as the reception, study room and exhibition space, each with their own respective content. Different regions became more and less relevant in different lifecycles.

Chat

One of the most distinctive functions of

A catalog of formats for digital discomfort

... and other ways to resist *totalitarian zoomification*.

Due to physical distancing measures under COVID-19, we are finding ourselves in what can be identified as an increased condition of gathering online. This condition includes learning situations, as well as moments to share and exchange our views, analyses, approaches, results, prototypes and proposals in a wide spectrum of academic and para-academic situations.

Through the imposition of closed, proprietary, exclusive and over-optimised commercial formats for so-called "webinars", this situation is rapidly resulting in the settlement of a monoculture in mediated gatherings. GAFAM & co are taking over research and educational ecosystems, while turning all interactions into business transactions. It is therefore urgent to find ways to capture the damage of this cloudy landscapes, wider bandwidths, endless remote-working video calls and pervasive user-ization (the dominant tendency towards subjectivity-as-user-only). These are all elements partaking in an evident cultural and aesthetic flattening on platforms. These elements come to erase diversity, smoothly deepen structural dependencies and provoke relational precarity. They reproduce a techno-colonial regime that passes through deadly environmental damage and exploitative labour.

Yet, by building on and accentuating the techno-colonial regime, platform-settlers also unwillingly energize an array of counter-forces. These counter-

forces are currently collectively mobilizing to explore or invent new structures of mediation. They are asking: What are the potentials hidden in surprising ways of combining different media, in existing memories of community organizing, or in re-appropriations of techniques? What forms of remote gathering otherwise might be more opportune to our present presences?

In times of turboacademia, we feel this mobilization and desire to share the responsibility to look around and *underneath* digital infrastructures. Such a responsibility involves resisting compliance with *informatics of domination* in order to make space for the praxis of ongoing transdisciplinary critique. Part of this is trying and combining space-times, using on- or off-line tools, developing methods and semiotic-material tricks in order to organize situated formats. These trove of tactics are based on references that come from worlds beyond the *webinar-Oh-sphere*, and they engage forms of teachings that can assist the ongoing mobilization.

Curated as an anti-solutionist collection, the Catalog of Formats is an attempt to document the plausibility of such practices and to encourage affirmative counter-forces. The Catalog may work as a device for trying emergent formats and hopefully destabilizing *too comfortable* articulations of online gatherings. It is an invitation to do so while enjoying the rigorous, engaging and creative formats for and by communities themselves.

The modes of using the Catalog are as diverse as the types of gatherings it might be useful for. This is why we do not necessarily recommend reading it in a linear fashion, but to try out oblique and fragmented approaches. We defined nine vectors as possible lines of consideration for anyone interested in setting up an online meeting, and a tenth one is on-topic for the Obfuscation series of events the Catalog was born into. We composed the structure so that the user of the Catalog can cross its sections: these vectors can operate as entry-points to then be combined, intersected and adjusted depending on the needs or desires of organizers.

#1: Temporalities

#2: Spatialities

#3: Material conditions

#4: Participants

#5: Methods

#6: Media

#7: Traces

#8: Governance

#9: Tools and infrastructure

#10: Obfuscation

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this website is the 'spatially' distributed chat. Participants could leave messages anywhere on the canvas and navigate either through the map or the list. As a result, the platframe is a 'living' space: all participants emit their presence through the visibility of their cursors and messages.

The discussion around obfuscation demanded a close inspection and consideration of networked privacy practices. Messages dropped on the platframe are assigned a lifetime by their authors, an enumeration of seconds they are allowed to exist before self-destructing. As they near their expiration dates, their visibility decreases until they are deleted.

An important feature of the chat was the moderator's role. To create an environment that is safe and free of hostility we created a moderators' login which would allow a selected group of trusted participants to erase or censor messages, or block access to the platframe if needed.

Cookies

Technically the platframe did not use cookies. However, data submitted by participants, such as their display name, position, cursor's color and messages were sent to our Hackers & Designers server and to the other participants. To remember participants, the server assigns a unique identifier (UID) to their browsers and stores it in the browser's localStorage, that looks like this: "uid": "266f429f2d4". When a participant accesses the platframe, the server authenticates their UID against its store of users.

On a technical level, this was not absolutely necessary and we did explore alternative methods that rely purely on peer-to-peer authentication with no servers involved (see CRDTs). Although this method was worth exploring, it could not ensure full certainty that participants blocked by moderators

A Personal History of Consensus Decision making

Angela Jerardi

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Consensus Decision Making

Consensus decision making is a creative and dynamic
ing agreement between all members of a group. Instead
voting for an item and having the majority of the group
way, a consensus group is committed to finding solutions
one actively supports – or at least can live with. This means
all opinions, ideas and concerns are taken into account. By
closely to each other, the group aims to come up with proposals
work for everyone.

Consensus is neither compromise nor unanimity – it aims
weaving together everyone's best ideas and most important
process that often results in surprising and creative solutions
both the individual and the group as whole.

Working together

At the heart of consensus is a respectful dialogue between
about everyone working together to meet both the individual
group's needs – working *with* each other rather than *for* or
other, something that requires openness and trust.

Consensus is looking for 'win-win' solutions that are acceptable
decision will be made against the will of an individual or a
Instead the group adapts to all its members' needs. If ever
a decision they will all be much more committed to making

Consensus decision making is based on the idea that people
full control over their lives and that power should be shared
just concentrated in the hands of a few. It's about having the
decide one's own course in life and the right to play an equal
in creating a common future. This is why it is
used widely in groups working towards a
more just and equitable society such as
small voluntary groups, co-operatives
and campaign networks.



www.seedsforchange.org.uk

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Guidelin

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- ★ Be willing to wor solution that's be not just what's be flexible and willin thing up to reach
- ★ Help to create a r trusting atmosph should be afraid t ideas and opinion that we all have d backgrounds and we get upset by d
- ★ Explain your own clearly. Be open a the reasons for yo Express your conc the process so tha taken into accoun als.
- ★ Listen actively to trying to say. Mak understand somec and their underlyi cerns and emotio one space to finis to consider their p

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Facilitation

In most meetings, there are one or more facilitators. They ensure that the tasks of the meeting get done: that decisions are made and implemented. They also help the group to work harmoniously and democratically.

The facilitators might take steps to keep the meeting focused. They ensure a few people don't dominate the discussion. They might take a break when people are getting tired; they might have prepared an agenda and process that will help the group achieve its goals.

The facilitators shouldn't have any more power than anyone else. They should stay neutral on the issues under discussion. They don't make all the proposals and decide things for a group. They facilitate their job with everyone's support and co-operation.

If a small group doesn't give anyone the role of facilitator, the group can be responsible for making the process of the meeting work.

The decision making process

The diagram below shows how a discussion evolves during the decision making process. At the beginning it widens out as people bring different ideas and ideas to the group.

This provides the material needed for a broad-ranging discussion. The group explores all the options and helps people understand each other's concerns. This can be a turbulent and sometimes difficult stage. The group might be grappling with lots of competing or contradictory ideas. This is the most creative part, so don't lose heart!

Then the group moves on to synthesise a proposal. This means finding the group's common ground, weeding out some ideas and combining all the useful bits into one proposal. Finally, if the group agrees on a proposal a decision is reached and implemented.

