

Memory and self-dismantling in social experiments: anthropological physics and technoxamanic heys (ebós)

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Abstract

Both mythological and hacker histories have recognized roles for self-dismantling: it protects the messenger, allows the detachment of the self from self image, is an artistic technique, etc. Brazil has a pronounced role in this context, for it yields religious freedom since the colonization and beforehand, and holds a renowned and visceral hacker behavior: the kludge culture (aka. 'cultura da gambiarra'). This article exposes this legacy by two means: the description of social experiments made by many participants at once, memorials of images, videos, texts, music, webpages, groups, avatars/nicks/pseudonyms, presentations, etc. This text is itself an experiment, and will be fed back to the community for comments before publishing, as usual with any *anthropological physics* experiment. The materials herein are no secret, and are usually not unpublished, although most of it have not been bind to a DOI or an ISBN/ISSN. Further directions are given as seminal ideas because next steps will be given by the community upon diverse interests and context stonework.

Index terms— anthropological physics, technoxamanism, memorial, complex networks, data mining

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A a banana

1 What? or motivation

The main motivation of what is described here was and is to enable members/-participants to take action in their networks by means of scientific knowledge. Such networks are complex and social networks, topological structures that are embedded in, and embed, other complex systems. The ethic issues that arise when experimenting with other humans were ameliorated with the rise of the *anthropological physics* [?, ?, ?]: researchers or activists should keep the processes as open as possible (texts, software, data, processes, outcomes, people involved, etc) while studying and experimenting in their own networks; a trace inherited from ethnography and similar to the technique/strategy of writing diaries.

2 How? or social, technoxamanic experiments of Collection and Diffusion of information

Many experiments were carried out by diverse human agents, either directly or through a second/fake/pseudonym/avatar/nick profile, i.e. people, for various reasons, made conscious efforts in order to interact with their networks to achieve specific goals or inspect the outcome. Two examples are very efficient in exposing the procedures and potentials: one that is continuous within few months, one that is ephemeral and occurs in only a few hours or less. In such a diversity-rich setting, these experimental procedures were called *technoxamanic* experiments (or 'yeys' for Brazilian Portuguese 'ebós').

2.1 the Cow of the End of the World (continuous experiment): progressive network activation from Peripherals to Hubs for a crowdfunding

This is maybe the most powerful mechanism by which we performed collection and diffusion of information. The results were very effective in spreading information about social networks, in gathering knowledge from diverse parties and in modifying the social structures in which I participate. Most concretely, academics came to São Carlos for formal meetings, new collaborations were established (such as the UNDP consulting described in Section ??), money was obtained (various contributors transferred a total of about 3000 Brazilian reais) and my Facebook network increased about 50% with individuals interested in the research. The process consisted in:

1. Downloading my Facebook friendship network. This was done by means of the Netvizz software, which is not possible nowadays and requires scraping of Facebook pages because of new usage terms.
2. Sorting my friends from the less connected to the more connected, i.e. from my friends that have less friends in common with me to the ones that have more friends in common; i.e. from periphery to hubs.

3. Sending private messages for each of my friends, in such order. The messages were derived from a template I conceived in which I exposed the research and the information diffusion process.
4. Making steps 1-3 for three times.

In each cycle of steps 1-3, my friendship network grew about 15% and there were typical reactions in each cycle. In the first cycle, my Facebook contacts reacted with estrangement and replies such as “what are these network structures?”, “what are you doing? I can’t understand!”, “I never thought of such a thing as these networks”. In the second cycle, they replied with interest and support. In the third cycle, they engaged in establishing collaborations with visits, in the elaboration of documents and technologies and in co-working proposals.

The data related to performing these three cycles can be organized by downloading my personal data in the Facebook interface. The experiment was carried in scientific terms and initial hypothesis were confirmed by these results. Even so, these results are not still confirmed by performing the experiment again, which poses both a problem and a potential scientific undertake. Given that the diffusion process was done in Dec/2012-Jan/2013, it was frequently considered by fellow specialists as having some influence in the civil society mobilization that occurred in Brazil in Mar/2013 and thereafter. A very simple PDF document was built afterwards for delivering back these results to the networks [?].

2.2 Betweenness VS Closeness centralities (ephemeral experiment)

This was first thought about in meetings with the artist and activist Pedro Paulo Rocha. The idea was to activate the network not by means of a long-standing process such as described in the last section, but by an ephemeral endeavor. There were some artistic performances with this proposal, in which I did not participate. Nevertheless, there was one of these instantaneous activation processes that I have done in conjunction with other specialists which was rather interesting. In analyzing Facebook ego friendship networks, I found that the set of ≈ 50 members with the greatest betweenness centrality was disjoint with the set of ≈ 50 members with the greatest closeness centrality, which is very unexpected. Therefore I proposed that one should send the same message to both set of friends separately. The messages were different for each person performing the experiment, and it was about something they were interested in and wanted to spread and get feedback. The result was systematic: the set of friends with greatest betweenness always reacted very friendly with encouraging messages and sharing the original message in their timelines. The set of friends with greatest closeness always reacted with many leaving the chat group and with no replies. We hypothesize that these reactions are because the large betweenness set of friends is more likely to have control over the information flowing in the corresponding ego network while the large closeness set of friends is more likely to observe/receive influence by the information. This experiment was performed by partners related to the consulting reported in Section ?? and other partners involved in making an international technoshamanic festival.

2.3 massive tagging (semi-ephemeral experiment)

One very simple process by which we performed collection and diffusion of information was by tagging many friends in Facebook posts. Currently, one can tag up to 99 friends in a post and we did not find any limit for tagging friends in comments. If one makes abusive use of tagging (too many posts or too many comments) the Facebook platform sometimes restricts the permissions of that user. Even so, I have made many posts with up to 99 friends tagged and tagged more friends in the comments and made experiments such as the ones described in the last sections and never got restricted. It seems that the platform has some automated behavior but employees actually perform the restrictions at least in some cases. The employees might check the posts, tagging and messages to see if it is really spam or in anyway abusive. In [?] are some notes and data of one of these experiments (and a preliminary script for analysis).

Another powerful way by which I many times performed diffusion and collection of information is by crossposting, i.e. by sending a message to many email lists at the same time. I find this very effective but the email list users often report that they understand such practice as abusive. Even so, no one has ever sent me a message reporting discomfort with my crossposts. There was one occasion some years ago when a user replied with a challenge for arguing why the crosspost was appropriate and then made some good contributions. I personally perceive that this prejudice against crosspost is one of the main reasons why email groups are losing users to other communication protocols such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Telegram and Diaspora.

2.4 video-conferences, etherpads, websites, gadgets, and whatnot

3 so What and How? Or the outcomes

4 by Whom? Or galleries / memorial

posts with many people marked. limits on marking people, citing them in comments, private messages.

5 What shall we remember? or Memory and Narrative

This appendix holds a memorial through short contextualizations and listings. Following the *anthropological physics* guidelines to ameliorate ethic issues, the materials are as related to the author as possible, considering the reasons and relevance of the exposition.

A avatars/nicks/pseudonyms

B websites

C groups

labmacambira, metareciclagem, submidialogia, tecnomagias grupos do fb canais de irc

D videos

E image galleries

F texts

nuvens cognitivas tese e dissertacao

G musical pieces

half shape