

Generic Infrastructures [2]

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3. fringe economies and community response in US and EU

"I have a vision for San Diego and that vision is about walkable, livable communities, not big, mega-structures that inhibit people's lives," said Councilman Tony Young. – newrules.org

"There were 4,500 pawnshops in the United States in 1985; now there are almost 12,000, including outlets owned by five publicly traded chains. In 2005 the three big chains -- Cash America International (a.k.a Cash America Pawn and Super- Pawn), EZ Pawn, and First Cash -- had combined annual revenues of nearly \$1 billion. Cash America is the largest pawnshop chain, with 750 locations; the company also makes payday loans through its Cash America Payday Advance, Cashland, and Mr. Payroll stores. In 2005, Cash America's revenues totaled \$594.3 million." Living in America's Fringe Economy By Howard Karger,

"Somewhere along the line our country has changed from one based upon a strong sense of community and fairness to an 'I've got mine so eff you' attitude. Americans have been sold a bill of goods for a couple of generations now and it's been financed by the liquidation of assets and overextended credit. Tens of millions that think of themselves as middle class and above the rabble are but one or two ugly blows from being in a financial trap with no easy way out. They have borrowed and leveraged everything to keep up with the Joneses and are living way beyond their real means. All the things laid out in the article above are examples of a culture based upon greed, selfishness & denial" (reader response Posted by: NoPCZone on Dec 29, 2006 2:01 AM)

13% of the US population falls below federal poverty threshold¹. Sixteen per cent of EU citizens are at risk of poverty², say the latest 2005 Eurostat figures, 55 to 72 million.³ In Finland, one of the richest EU countries 600.000 citizens (12%) fall below the EU net income per single adult poverty line of EUR 975 per month (2004 figures).⁴ Many of the financial strategies in these dependent situations revolve around borrowing, lending, leading up to debts which brings financial penalties resulting in even more borrowing. As such, this was never a new situation. In the last decade, however, in many rich industrial countries, the fringe economy⁵ which is characterized

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_in_the_United_States

2 "No EU country has less than 10% of its population living on low incomes (based on a low income threshold of 60% of median income before housing costs)." <http://www.poverty.org.uk/01/index.shtml>

3 <http://www.euractiv.com/en/socialeurope/72m-eu-citizens-threatened-poverty/article-145627>

4 <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/More+than+half+a+million+Finns+are+below+European+Union+pover+ty+risk+line/1135218875377>

5 The term "fringe economy" refers to a range of businesses that engage in financially predatory relationships with low-income or heavily indebted consumers by charging excessive interest rates, superhigh fees, or exorbitant prices for goods or services. Some examples of fringe economy businesses include payday lenders, pawnshops, check-cashers, tax refund lenders, rent-to-own stores, and "buy-here/pay-here" used car lots. The fringe economy also includes credit card companies that charge excessive late payment or over-the-creditlimit penalties; cell phone providers that force less

by excessive fees for financial services is growing so fast that according to Professor Karger “in an important sense the sector is no longer “fringe” at all: more and more, large mainstream financial corporations are behind the high-rate loans that anxious customers in run-down storefronts sign for on the dotted line:”

“Ron Cook is a department manager at a Wal-Mart store in Atlanta. Maria Guzman is an undocumented worker from Mexico; she lives in Houston with her three children and cleans office buildings at night. Marty Lawson works for a large Minneapolis corporation. (The names have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals.) What do these three people have in common? They are all regular fringe economy customers.”⁶

Currently there are 33,000 check-cashing and payday loan stores, just two parts of the fringe economy⁷, in the USA, “more than the all the McDonald’s and Burger King restaurants and all the Target, J.C. Penney, and Wal-Mart retail stores in the United States⁸ combined”. As a possible strategy against further growth of the fringe economy Karger argues for more “community-based lending institutions modeled on the Grameen Bank⁹ or on local cooperatives.” There seems a powerful link between the rise in the past two decades of mega retailers and the rise of the fringe economy. Local governments hesitate more and more to welcome the supercenters unequivocally. The San Diego City Council, for example, recently voted against the construction of supercenters- over 90,000 square feet - effectively preventing Wal-Mart and Target from opening in the city.¹⁰ In *Big-Box Swindle* Stacy Mitchell shows how since 2000, “over 200 big-box development projects have been halted by groups of ordinary citizens, and scores of towns and cities have adopted laws that favor small-scale, local business development which limit the proliferation of chains.”¹¹ In Europe the anti globalization movement found a new focal point on issues of work, low wages, temporary jobs, flexjobs in the Stop Précarité movement (2000), culminating in the

creditworthy customers into expensive prepaid plans; and subprime mortgage lenders that gouge prospective homeowners.

Karger, H. (2005). *Shortchanged: Life and debt in the fringe economy*. Berrett-Koehler. Winner of the 2006 Independent Publishers Award in Economics/Finance.

6 *Living in America’s Fringe Economy* By Howard Karger, Dollars and Sense. Posted December 29, 2006. <http://www.alternet.org/workplace/45813/> Millions of Americans live on the margins of the American economy, depending on the likes of payday lenders and pawnshops, who charge excessive interest rates and superhigh fees for their services. Howard Karger is professor of social work at the University of Houston, and author of *Shortchanged: Life and Debt in the Fringe Economy* (Berrett-Koehler, 2005).

7 *Working Moms Struggle to get by at Cingular*, By Pat Ray, Cingular Shop Steward. “Juggling never-ending responsibilities at home, constantly searching for affordable daycare, occasionally being woken up in the wee morning hours by crying children and surviving 40-hour work weeks at Cingular’s Bothell campus, many blue collar mothers have trouble with the balancing act working a full-time job to bring in enough income to support their family and caring and spending quality time with their kids at home. Read the entire article at http://www.washtech.org/news/labor/display.php?ID_Content=5124

8 “The fringe economy is no longer solely a U.S. phenomenon. In 2003 the HSBC Group purchased Household International (and its subsidiary Beneficial Finance) for \$13 billion. Headquartered in London, HSBC is the world’s second largest bank and serves more than 90 million customers in 80 countries. HSBC plans to export Household’s operations to Poland, China, Mexico, Britain, France, India, and Brazil, for starters. One shudders to think how the fringe economy will develop in nations with even fewer regulatory safeguards than the United States.” Karger, Howard. *Living in the fringe economy*.

9 See Project Enterprise (PE), started in 1996 by Nick Schatzki and Debra Franklin as the only Grameen-style provider of micro-business loans in New York City. http://www.grameenfoundation.org/where_we_work/united_states/project_enterprise/

10 “The ordinance was patterned after a similar law adopted in Turlock, California. Wal-Mart challenged that law in court, but in July a federal judge ruled that the measure was constitutional.” http://newrules.org/retail/news_slug.php?slugid=348

11 Stacy Mitchell and the Institute for Local Self Reliance (ILRS) <http://www.bigboxswindle.com/>

withdrawal of the CPE – making it easier to fire workers under 26 – by the Villepin government after huge protests and nation wide strikes. *Le Monde* commented “that “précarité” was going to be a central issue in the upcoming 2007 presidential elections.”¹²



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4. make generation goes local

“With national and international news now practically a commodity online, the value of local and regional papers, Rob Curley, recently appointed *Vice President of Product Development* , Newsweek Interactive¹⁴ says, is in using the Web to cover not only “big-J journalism” but also “small-J journalism”--events that rarely make headlines but loom large in our everyday lives. “We can’t out-CNN CNN. But we can make sure that no one out-Naples us.”¹⁵

A placeblog, a hyperlocal site, is “an act of sustained attention to a particular place over time It’s about the lived experience of a place:

“That experience may be news, or it may simply be about that part of our lives that isn’t news but creates the texture of our daily lives: our commute, where we eat, conversations with our neighbors, the irritations and delights of living in a particular place among particular people. However, when news happens in a community, placeblogs often cover those events in unique and nontraditional ways, and provide a community watercooler to discuss those events.”¹⁶

12 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precarity>

13 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Md006.jpg>

14 <http://www.robcurley.com/>

15 FROM: ISSUE 110 | NOVEMBER 2006 | PAGE 94 | BY: CHUCK SALTER
http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/110/open_hyper-local-hero.html

16 <http://www.placeblogger.com/faq>

Google Maps, Google Earth, What?Where? Live Local Search (Microsoft beta)¹⁷ provide a local layer of commercial local data. Map Tools.org¹⁸ is a resource for users and developers in the open source mapping community. Open Source GIS¹⁹ attempts to build a complete index of Open Source / Free GIS related software projects. OpenStreetMap²⁰ aims to create and provide “free geographic data such as street maps to anyone who wants them.” If you want to see friends or strangers in your area, download Plazes, “a service you can use to add location awareness to other applications you frequently use”.²¹

upping the trends: a scenario: towards generic infrastructures

“At what point does infrastructure become, well, infrastructure - the stuff you can rely on being out there? Would you buy an electric driven vehicle when there are only a few public recharging points scattered around your regular stomping ground? To what extent do technologies such as personal access to accurate location positioning and real-time status updates mitigate the need for blanket coverage of infrastructure such as this Elektrobay charging point in London's Covent Garden? (This charging point is aimed at council workers not the general public so the argument is moot in this exact context).”²²

In his 1930 text *The Revolt of the Masses* Ortega Y Gasset elaborates on the “one the fact which, whether for good or ill, is of utmost importance in the public life of Europe at the present moment. This fact is the accession of the masses to complete social power.”²³ This social power is for him determined by actual presence, corporeal visibility:

“Perhaps the best line of approach to this historical phenomenon may be found by turning our attention to a visual experience, stressing one aspect of our epoch which is plain to our very eyes. This fact is quite simple to enunciate, though not so to analyse. I shall call it the fact of agglomeration, of "plenitude." Towns are full of people, houses full of tenants, hotels full of guests, trains full of travellers, cafes full of customers, parks full of promenaders, consulting-rooms of famous doctors full of patients, theatres full of spectators, and beaches full of bathers. What previously was, in general, no problem, now begins to be an everyday one, namely, to find room. That is all. Can there be any fact simpler, more patent more constant in actual life?”

For Ortega social power is asserted through physical presence, citizens asserting themselves as individuals, not behaving according to certain socio-cultural rules of genre forcing them into not being there, or at least not seeming to be. As they become visible in the streets, their very presence can be offensive. What will happen if citizens start mapping their own street infrastructures, energy supplies, pollution levels? Plato's metaphor of the ship of state²⁴ is quite apt under current circumstances, as we can see the state as an organizational model break midship. Of the four trends

17 <http://intl.local.live.com/>

18 <http://www.maptools.org/>

19 <http://opensourcegis.org/>

20 “The project was started because most maps you think of as free actually have legal or technical restrictions on their use, holding back people from using them in creative, productive or unexpected ways.” http://wiki.openstreetmap.org/index.php/Main_Page

21 <http://beta.plazes.com/help/faq.php>

22 http://www.janchipchase.com/blog/archives/2007/02/post_181.html

23 THE REVOLT OF THE MASSES, by Jose Ortega y Gasset, 1930

24 The Ship of State. This selection is from Book VI of Plato's *Republic* (488a-e). <http://www.luc.edu/depts/polisci/faculty/katz/plato1.html>

described above, two are pulling it into one direction (*convergence of systems of control, overdependency*) and the other two are pulling it in the opposite direction (*fringe economies, make generation goes local*). Yet this is not their only relationship.²⁵ The overdependency on particular structures of energy are straining natural resources, becoming too expensive for a general audience which starts looking for alternatives. The convergence of systems of control makes particular technologies ubiquitous and therefore more cheap. This allows the make generation²⁶ to build on them creatively and use system tools for local and individual purposes.

This movement of digital technology towards our everyday life and our daily encounters in the streets, which are themselves becoming a digital territory, a hybrid space made up of services and communication protocols, is – as we have seen – currently being negotiated by the logistics, retail, telecommunications and security industries. Wireless is increasingly pulling in all kinds of applications, platforms, services and objects (RFID) into networks. Many people communicate through mobiles, Blackberries, digital organisers and palmtops. Cars have become information spaces with navigational systems, and consoles like Nintendo DS have wireless capabilities and Linux kernels installed. We are witnessing a move towards pervasive computing as technology vanishes into intelligent clothing (wearables), smart environments (which know where and who we are) and pervasive games. We will see doors opening for some and closing for others. Mimicry and camouflage will become part of application design. iPods will display colors and produce sounds that correspond to your surroundings.

But there is an intrinsic autonomous trajectory in this hybrid space that is currently being explored and evidenced not in applications, but in programming and design principles.²⁷ Processing.org (an open source programming language and environment for images, animation, and sound), - started out as a programming environment for visuals, and is now moving away from the screen to produce the conceptually sound and working Arduino board. As the site²⁸ explains: 'Arduino is an open-source physical computing platform based on a simple I/O board and a development environment that implements the Processing/Wiring language.' Jaromil (dyne.org) has fitted up Nintendo DS (a handheld games console with wireless capabilities) with Linux to

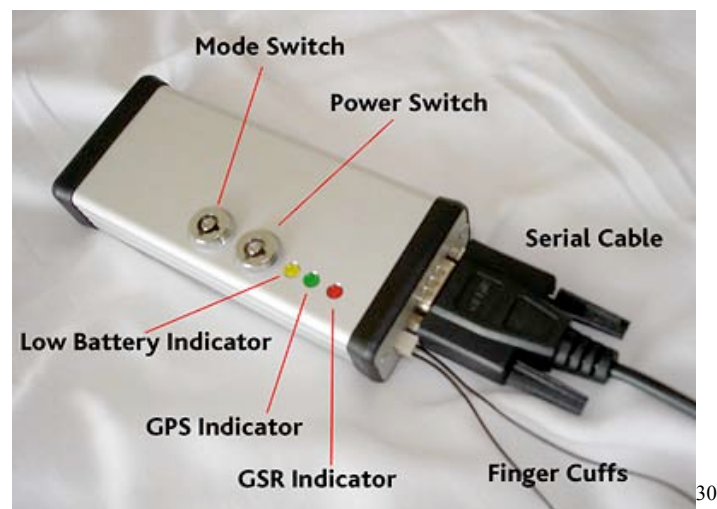
25 Korea is learning from its R&D on ubicomp and plans to spend a significant amount of research funds on cutting edge technologies and products, yet not in the high end industrial sectors but in everyday life applications : *"Support will shift from helping labs and companies catch up with leading countries to helping those institutions develop original technology. Another aspect of the commerce ministry's revised R&D strategy involves the development of technology that can be directly applied to Koreans' everyday lives. The commerce ministry plans to focus up to 70 percent of its budget to develop what it calls "Killer Applications," which include flexible screens, new materials, robots, and other cutting-edge technologies. The government says it will boost investment into small and mid-sized high-tech companies and promising industrial sectors in regional provinces. Other items on the list of killer applications are hybrid vehicles with built-in crash-prevention sensors, precision manufacturing robots and textiles that inhibit bacterial growth.* <http://www.ittin.net/Support/SupportRead.jsp?rowCnt=10&SupportNo=178>

26 See: Make Magazine: "The first magazine devoted entirely to DIY technology projects, MAKE Magazine unites, inspires and informs a growing community of resourceful people who undertake amazing projects in their backyards, basements, and garages". <http://makezine.com/magazine/>

27 "WE WILL SEE migration of social applications as user-generated content moves to the WiFi environment. YouTube, MySpace and multi-user games will be available on hand-held devices, wherever you go. People will carry their digital assets much like their bacteria. Israeli tech guru Yossi Vardi calls it "continuous computing. The nanotechnology world foreseen by K. Eric Drexler arrives in the form of MEMS, or microelectronic mechanical systems. Very inexpensive moving parts will be mass-produced like a semiconductor. But unlike semiconductors, they move. Useful for anything that employs moving parts." John Brockman is publisher and editor of Edge (edge.org) What will they think of next? <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-tech28dec28,0,1897236,full.story>

28 [<http://hardware.processing.org/>]

create small, cheap computers for rural environments. The Nintendo also “doubles as a wireless MIDI keyboard controller”.²⁹



Usman Haque, Bengt Sjolen and Adam Somlai Fisher - architects and programmers shaping both locative media theory and practice - are working on Asus(brand) W1-Hdd, wireless hard disk boxes to make up as Linux computers in order to disperse them, like smart dust, into our streets. A forebear of these citizen designed networks is the i3 sponsored project LiMe³¹ that predicted all this connectivity in daily settings. Lee Thorn spearheads the Jhai PC³², a low cost, low power wireless linux box. According to Steve Cisler : “They opened up the hardware design for others to use, and one designer worked on that one as well as Negroponte's machine. He said that there may be about 100 low cost project under way (with rather thin support) around the world.”³³ Open Beacon “offers a wide range of use cases such as visitor or item tracking and wireless remote control with a free self-contained and low-cost RFID design”.³⁴ We are at a

29 Nintendo DS doubles as wireless MIDI keyboard / controller Joining the nearly endless amount of Nintendo DS hacks already in the wild is TobW's DS Sampling Keyboard, which "uses the DS's microphone and touchscreen" to interface with a software-based sampling keyboard. A close contender to join our Music Thing series, this wonderous hack takes advantage of the wee machine's excellent X / Y-axis controls as well as its built-in WiFi to beam the MIDI commands wirelessly. The program has been tested with Wifi, GBAMP, and M3, so "it should work on pretty much anything," and provides a much less expensive alternative to those dedicated offerings. While musical gizmos are always more effective when seen heard rather than just heard about, be sure to click on for a front row seat to the YouTube demonstration. <http://www.engadget.com/2006/11/27/nintendo-ds-doubles-as-wireless-midi-keyboard-controller/>

30 Christian Nolds lie detector combined with GPS to produce mood maps of how people feel in particular places, www.biomapping.net

31 <http://www.design.philips.com/about/design/section-13506/>

32 See also: Ndiyo visio. “Ndiyo has a model. It's not the only one, nor necessarily the best one, but it does work now using today's technology. It's based on sharing the power of a PC between several users at once. Today's computers are easily capable of supporting multiple users, but in the past there hasn't been a convenient and affordable way to do this. Now there is.” <http://www.ndiyo.org/intro/summary>

Appropriate Software. “Following common desires to make software increasingly appropriate, we contribute to the common process of World Development, by connecting with the working processes of individuals and groups, by developing appropriate software supports for their work, and by providing such supportive applications as shared services. At the same time, we record how such developments are achieved, and follow tendencies which are understood to be appropriate, so as to make things more appropriate.” http://www.appropriatesoftwarefoundation.org/ASF/Home_en.html

33 <http://www.jhai.org/>

34 OpenBeacon is a free design for an active RFID device which operates in the 2.4GHz ISM band. The device contains a unique serial number, but may have other information. OpenBeacon is designed as a transceiver device and therefore both transmits and receives radio waves. The intention of this project

crossroads where artists and designers not only more take control over the very principles and materiality of the 'networkwaves', but also are more determined to make local applications for everyday use. The convergence of highend EU projects like Hagggle³⁵ - opportunistic computing top down - and citizen designed networks like Hivenetworks³⁶ - opportunistic computing bottom up- is becoming real in its technological and scaling aspects. According to Alexei Blinov (Hivesnetwork.net) whose project is to "liberate embedded computers for artistic use", we can now see the network as a content structure, "no longer only a connectivity structure through which access to the global internet is facilitated".

Current labs are not fulfilling the needs of this new generation of new media makers, according to young designer Lotte Meijer¹:

"Because of age, there is a generation gap, no way for youngsters to grow into the community. Amsterdam, for example- is regarded as one of the new media capitals in the world, but it's also losing touch with what's going on. It needs a fast-moving energetic organization. When current labs were set up, the internet was a top-down place. They successfully hacked it. Currently the internet itself is filled by consumers (blogs, wikis, myspace), so this breeds a new type of tech users, which are more interested in avoiding the mainstream & potentially more interested in hardware. New Media scene has been extended to include wireless tech, cell phones but more importantly: robotics and do-it-yourself tech (a move from the pure virtual to the embedded virtual/augmented reality) DIY is exploding, as can be seen in make magazine & dorkbot festivals. We want to focus on the increasing awareness of what tech does to our planet, so we are interested in DIY from ethical position not just for it's own sake."

Bricolabs³⁷

Timo Arnall: "What I really like about the Bricolabs proposal is the kind of low-tech hacking of everyday infrastructure. If the students come out of a bricolab course with an increased sensitivity to everyday, ubiquitous, technology infrastructures, that would be fantastic. If we could weave RFID into the mix, all the better."

Steve Cisler: "From my interaction with the different groups I think it takes a certain critical mass of what might be called social techno-hackers, and in many places you have the socially engaged without a lot of experience beyond email (if that) and you have the open source coders whose world is pretty much online. My guess is the Bricolabs people are a combination of both, or am I wrong?"

Jerneja Rebernak: "We stress community network development as bricolabs are being created, which indeedt focus on urban space in globalized societies, where agency is reclaimed as technology is not appropriated anymore (this would be a false paradigm when looking at bricolabs), but is created!"

Bricolabs is a very recent (end of 2006) project by Felipe Fonseca, Bronac Ferran, Matt Ratto, Jaromil, and the author to build a global platform to investigate this new loop

is to offer a wide range of use cases such as visitor or item tracking and wireless remote control with a free self-contained and low-cost RFID design. <http://www.openbeacon.org/start.0.html>

35 [http://www.hagggleproject.org/index.php/Main_Page]

36 [<http://www.hivenetworks.net/tiki-index.php>]

37 Bricolabs was coined by the team at coletivo estilingue. Visit them at their wiki <http://estilingue.sarava.org/moin/BricoLab> Contact Felipe Fonseca felipefonseca@gmail.com Bronac Ferran bronacferran@googlemail.com Rob van Kranenburg kranenbu@xs4all.nl

of open content, software and hardware for community applications, bringing people together with new technologies and wireless connectivity, unlike the current dominant IT focus which is on security, surveillance, transparency and control. Bricolabs is a collaborative exchange between Brazilian, Indonesian, UK, Chinese, Indian and Dutch open source experts, exploring mutual interest in distributed generation of tools, and soft/hardware skills. We focus on knowledge exchange, development of new business models and the building of a critical discourse for the current generations of young artists, designers and social scientists. The idea is to draw on the expertise of all experimental places that have the conceptual grasp of taking advantage of low tech and the full loop of open content, software and hardware for working locally in the communities and globally as no longer a countermovement against wild capital, IP and patents but a parallel one.

We build on the:

- **Brazilian** expertise gathered in the process of establishing Points of Culture (Pontos de Cultura)³⁸ “free-software studios, built with free software, in hundreds of towns and villages throughout Brazil, enabling people to create culture using tools that support free cultural transmission.” and will introduce a next phase of focus and scope: bricolabs.

- **Dutch** expertise of organizing a Virtual Platform of various organizations dealing with new media. The Dutch new media scene started from underground initiatives and grassroots projects. In ten years seed money from the Ministry of Culture has helped to create a vital innovative environment where former initiatives of hackers and squatters are now centers of expertise that do consultancy for museums, libraries, education, cultural institutions.

- **UK** practice of Interdisciplinary Arts (Arts Council) where the focus on the intersection between the arts and other disciplines including art and science, art and technology and art and industry, has led to a deepening of cross-links between practitioners, large and new funding frameworks (Nesta), paradigm shifts in Humanities Research agendas and wide range of networked events. A series of placements in art and industry contexts has been brokered this year, including ADOBE, HP, and the BBC, as well as in the Pontos de Cultura network in São Paulo, a clear example of a post-industrial context attuned to the working practices of the digital age.

- **Indian** expertise of Sarai and Cybermohalla. The Sarai new media research centre based in New Delhi, India has been active since 2001 consisting originally from intellectuals based at the Centre for the Study of developing societies (CSDS), the autonomous artists group Raqs media collective and partnering with the exchange programme at the Waag society, the centre for old and new media based in Amsterdam. Sarai's points of interest are critical research on urban societies in South Asia, history and politics of technology, free and open source software, environmental studies, visual culture and media practices whose focus became information and communication technologies. Sarai has more than hundred collaborators, independent fellows and employees and has been expanding as an international network of academic researchers, artists and creators of technologies. However the hyper

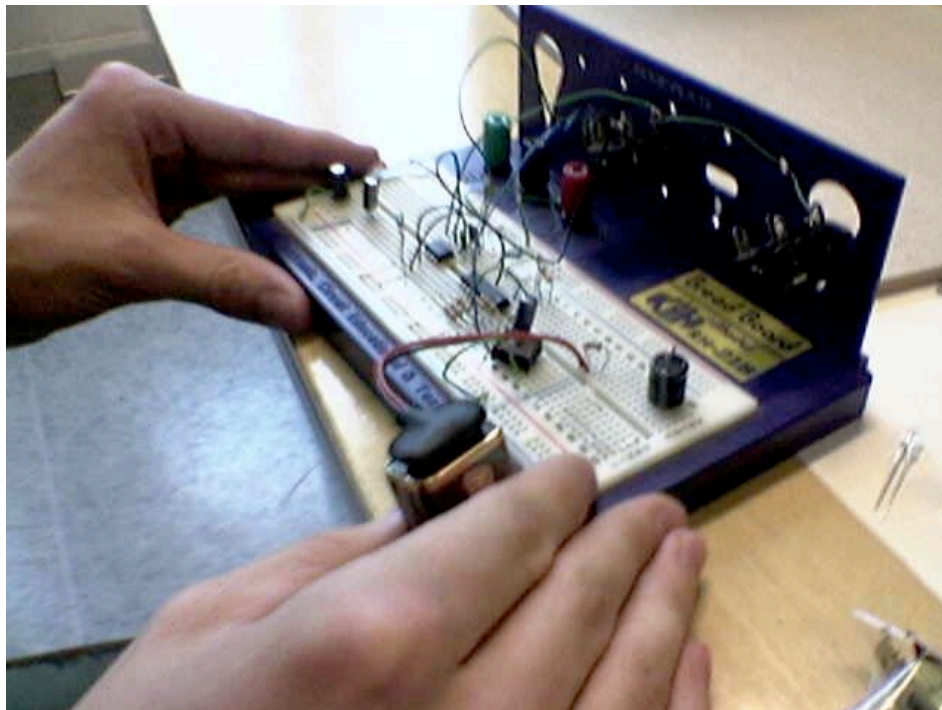
38 LaMiMe: LaMiMe, Laboratório de Mídia da MetaReciclagem, bricolab, São Paulo is the first spearhead to develop the functional artistic, community, organizational and business models. LaMiMe in São Paulo will include some pontos de cultura ("cultural hotspots") as testing environments to what is developed in LaMiMe, for instance, wi-fi to Cidade Tiradentes, east side São Paulo.

intellectual research didn't lack corporeal ground, but has been persistently validated through performance in the urban settlements of New Delhi. The Cybermohalla project consists of three local media laboratories, unfortunately at this moment only two are fully operating, since mass neighborhoods demolitions occurred in early 2006. Sarai's role as builders of sustainable and inclusive community with focus on media education helps generate a creative environment for working class youth that reflect and imprint their urban condition through digital forms and technology.³⁹

- **Indonesian** expertise of Common Room, Bandung, Ruangrupa, Jakarta and House of Natural Fibre, Yogyakarta. The objective of the *Education Focus Program (EFP) of Cellsbutton#01 (2007)* is:

*“to establish connections and interactions between communities, creators and artist with interest in new media. A second innovative aim is to make **a connection** between universities with expertise in technology and media artists/theorists who are interested in new media art and technology. The connection between art, technology and community is one of our main responsibilities. We try to build a bridge between new media artists and their communities; the people around them.”*⁴⁰

The Indonesian context brings expertise on business models in an environment with no cultural funding, all kinds of genres and output (vj, festivals, clubs, exhibition, clothing stores...) Moreover, the new media scene has been politically very important and active in recent Indonesian history, taking an active role in devising tactical and strategic performative play-action.



Bricolabs will investigate the potentialities of the combination open societies, open hardware and open labs. Its aim is to create a brand neutral and non proprietary

39 Text on Sarai by Jerneja Rebernak

40 Text edited by Deanna Herst independent art-historian, digital and visual art and culture lecturer media theory, Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam.

generic infrastructure. Following the wikipedia definition of generic drugs:

a generic infrastructure is bioequivalent to a brand or proprietary infrastructure with respect to electric and applicationcodynamic properties.

The concept of generic infrastructure claims that educating all citizens in their increasing connectivities will foster an atmosphere of realistic acceptance of new nano, sensor and bio technologies through the abilities of ever increasing wired and self educated individuals to work on the *principles* of these technologies - not from the closed ever increasing allegedly simple interfaces - but from *more* complexity.

See
www.bricolabs.net

i BRICOLABS: Lotte Meijer's plan for her Minimedialab: Distributable technology (what we learn we share)

We are interested in small & low technology.

The scale of technology is reducing, both in physical size, cost and accessibility. It's a vast field so you can't stand still in one spot, you must have a wide ranging and versatile interest.

Rapid- on the fly - prototyping, is an essential element of an environment building speculative technology based on a minimum of resources. We avoid off the shelf solutions.

Rapid prototyping is necessary because you learn by doing. Quick prototypes enable you to see if an idea still has merit, on a conceptual or functional level

see: if it is feasible

see: who else might be interested

see: other functionalities than the initial idea (which might be better)

see: ways to make it better

see: problems

Market / audience / participants:

+ a New generation of New Media Makers

+ b Citizens & Youth (bringing tech to people in friendly manner)

+ c International artist/connections

+ d Alternative business models, slow money, micropayments for connectivities.

Activities:

+ Hardware workshops

+ Software and software documentation workshops

+ Low-fi solutions

+ Presentations of projects by new & old new media makers

Goal:

+ Bottom up, learn together (develop methodology)

+ Critical look into the possibilities of technologies, including small and low-tech.

+ Investigate reusable and sustainable technology

+ Investigate friendly technology

+ Bring tech to the people, not just people to tech, be "mobile" just like the current tech (this entails having workshops on the streets not just our space)

+ use only recycled tech (xbox/asus as servers, overheadproj. as beamers and dumpstercomputers with linux)

Work with:

+ Very local organisations

+ Be a tech-questionplace for education / nonprofit organisations