

Interactivos? - Medialab-Prado, Madrid

Concept

Interactivos? is an open research and production platform for the **creative and educational uses of technology**, focused on the collective creation using **open hardware and open software tools**. Its goal is to experiment with the use of electronics and software for artistic, design and educational projects, thus contributing to the development of an **international network of interconnected local communities** of cultural producers in this field.

Interactivos? events are a **hybrid between a production workshop, a seminar and a showcase**. A space for reflection, research, and intensive collaborative work is created, in which several projects previously selected by an international open call are developed in **transdisciplinary work groups** composed by the author of the proposal and the interested collaborators. Within two weeks, the works are completed and set up in an exhibition. The process is **open to the public** from beginning to end: visitors are introduced to projects and people and can even become collaborators.

Inspired by the organizational models of free software development communities and by the Open Space Technology, in Interactivos? the **physical space acts as an accelerator** for the exchange of ideas and for the emergence of answers to complex problems within a short period of time.

The question mark in the title challenges the promise of interaction and participation in the so called "interactive art", where participation is often understood as a choice between a few given options. The word "interactivity" is more fully expressed through the **collective creation**, in an environment where participants get the opportunity to both learn and teach different knowledges and skills, and the chance to "do it themselves" with the help of others.

Interactivos? is an **open platform**:

- It is structured around **open calls** for projects, papers and collaborators.
- The seminars and workshops are **open to the public** from the beginning to the end.
- Transdisciplinary work groups are established and connected first through an **on-line forum** (before the event starts) and then in the **physical space** in a self-organized and negotiated process between participants.
- Participants are encouraged to prepare proper documentation for the developed projects, both during and after the workshop, and to publish the results and source code under licenses that **grant access and distribution of the knowledge produced** during the workshop.

Interactivos? network expands in the physical space -with many visitors to the showcase of developed projects in each of the workshops- and in the Internet, through the documentation of talks and projects and the on-line forums. The on-line wiki is also an important communication tool between the participants of the workshops to update information and documentation of their on-going project, so both participants and interested public can follow the process in real time.

Although started in Madrid by the Medialab-Prado program, Interactivos? encourages other institutions and people to **replicate the model** in other places and contexts.

Since the platform was formed in 2006, Interactivos? events have been held in several locations all over the world and have served as a catalyst for an **international network of**

collaborations and contacts among local and international agents.

- Open calls for projects and collaborators are internationally spread through the web. In less than three years, **more than 500 proposals** from **32 countries** have been received, and **74 projects** have been developed in 7 international workshops.

More than 700 people have taken part in the Interactivos? workshops, among leading tutors, technical assistants, project leaders and collaborators.

- Profile of participants is very diverse: artists, engineers, musicians, programmers, hackers, designers, architects, psychologists, educators, anthropologists, magicians, biologists, physicist, etc.

Objectives

- Research and experiment on social and educational innovation. Interactivos? seeks to transcend the traditional workshop model or the typical teacher-student relationship where the experts teach and a group of students learn. The Interactivos? model involves an exchange of information among all workshop participants and is based on collective and transdisciplinary production processes.

Research and experiment on permeable ways of cultural management where users become producers of contents.

- Research and experiment on new ways of cultural management that, taking inspiration and making use of on-line experiences and tools, seek to optimize resources and encompass production, research, learning and exhibition in an integrated process.
- Foster accesibility, spreading and development of open source programming and physical computing tools for creative and educational uses.

Foster fruitful connections between knowledge communities that are usually isolated from each other.

Contribute to the creation of an international network of collaborations and contacts among local and international agents working in this field.

Reflect on the political, social and educational implications of free culture and the value of knowledge produced by citizens outside the formal and official institutions.

Keywords

Project-based learning, collective learning, collective production, knowledge exchange, transdisciplinarity, DIY, DIWO (Do It With Others), programming, electronics, open source, socio-cultural innovation, human-based interaction.

Web Address:

<http://www.interactivos.org>

<http://wiki.medialab-prado.es>

<http://foros.medialab-prado.es/>

History

Interactivos? was conceived as an evolution of the different activities and dynamics developed within the educational program of MediaLabMadrid. Two workshops held in 2005, *Making Things Move* by Zachary Lieberman and *Arduino: Open Hardware Tools* by David Cuartielles, led to the creation of a local community of like-minded creators who became MediaLabMadrid regulars. After those experiences, the idea was to offer a workshop long enough to develop projects that could be finished and shown during a 2/3

week event.

Interactivos? started thanks to a close collaboration between MediaLabMadrid's educational and cultural mediation program (led by Laura Fernández and Marcos García), and the artists and developers David Cuartielles, Zachary Lieberman, Hans-Christoph Steiner and Casey Reas (who finally could only join for a short seminar), with the technical and production support of Enrique Tomás, Mónica Cachafeiro, Manuela Gallini and the rest of the MediaLabMadrid team.

The first idea was to offer a space and a learning and production context in where three open source tools could merge in the developing of specific projects: Arduino, Processing and Pure Data. Soon the goal was to go beyond the tools themselves and to focus on the idea of collaborative and transdisciplinary production processes.

From September 2007 on, Medialab-Prado at the Plaza de las Letras (Madrid), as an evolution of MedialabMadrid, has continued improving this model by celebrating new editions of Interactivos? in Madrid and other places:

- Interactivos?'10: Neighborhood Science (Madrid, June 7 – 23, 2010)
- Interactivos? Laboral'10: Process is Paradigm (Gijón, April 8 – 23, 2010)
- Interactivos? Arteleku'09: Mixed Episodes in Hybrid Bases (San Sebastián, July 16 – 30, 2009)
- Interactivos? Lima'09: Magic and Technology (Lima, April 13 - 28, 2009)
- Interactivos?'09: Garage Science (Madrid, January 28 - February 14, 2009)
- Interactivos?'08 México: Technologies of Laughter (Mexico City, August 1 - 16, 2008)
- Interactivos?'08@Eyebeam: Better than the Real thing (New York, June 26 - July 12, 2008)
- Interactivos?'08: Vision Play (Madrid, May 30 - June 14, 2008)
- Interactivos?'07: Magic and Technology (Madrid, May 25 - June 9, 2007)
- Interactivos?'06 (Madrid, April 18 - 30, 2006)

Approaches and methodologies experienced within the Interactivos? platform have served as a model for the evolution of other lines of work at Medialab-Prado and thus, Interactivos?-type workshops have been held within *Visualizar*, *Inclusiva-net* and *AVLAB* lines of work, following this same pattern of collaborative work. There has been also other experiences inspired by Interactivos? outside Medialab-Prado, like the *Colaboratorio LPCI* at the Salamanca University, where students and lecturers coming from different faculties and citizens from Salamanca and other cities gather and share their competences and abilities in the development of specific projects.