

Naked on Pluto Media Art report for Audiovisuaalisen kulttuurin edistämiskeskus

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Introduction

For the first 3 weeks of July work was successfully carried out on the Naked on Pluto online game to allow it to be shown at FILE festival São Paulo 2011. The development was carried out by Aymeric Mansoux, Marloes de Valk and Dave Griffiths.

We followed the initial work plan:

1. Conceptual/planning/content - will include blog posts and reporting of activity and research.
2. Implementation, game code and website - again, blog posts on progress, issues encountered.
3. Support during the exhibition

Most of the time was spent dealing with concepts and implementation, as the exhibition turned out to need little in the way of support.

Results

Our stated aims were to satisfy the following points:

Externalise the game play for gallery visitors in an engaging manner (without requiring a facebook login).

We have successfully provided the game with a new homepage (an new wordpress blog), which exposes players to a large amount of detail and information before they are required to log into the game. This blog is automatically update by in-game characters, both in response to player interaction, and autonomously. In addition to the planned reporters and interviewer game characters, we also included more peripheral characters and features,

including 'SpyBots' who follow players and snoop on their activities and report them to the blog, also giving the existing BarMan character a blog column to report on events occurring and players coming and going from his bar. Other work included plenty of spoof advertising for the site (all when clicked on send you to the game) and passing through gender information from facebook profiles to allow generation of blog stories about players.



Illustration 1: The finished game homepage

Provide a clearer explanation of the project's context by incorporating the opinions expressed in the interviews we carried out, along with surrounding material.

The interview questions provided a very clear indication of the purpose and context of the project, and for the first time are now visible from the very first impression of the game. This has turned out to be one of the major enhancements made possible by this work, and it fits in appropriately with the overall feeling of the game when playing. We decided not to include material from the previous interviews, as it turned out not to be as necessary as we

thought, and would have been difficult to integrate alongside the minimal in game information provided by players.

Here is one automatically generated story from a player's interaction:

"Today we welcomed the loyal @RodolfoHenriqueCarvalho on our show about social networks, who I was amazed to find out disagreed with the statement: 'I am happy trading my personal information for online services.'"

Perhaps, most importantly - involve the players in the ongoing process of criticism.

One of the most challenging aspects of this project is to struggle with the temptation to adopt an overly didactic anti-social networking stance. To try as much as possible to avoid this is required if we wish to create an experience which allows people (ourselves included) to arrive at their own decisions. Incorporating the player's opinions has turned out to be a good way to present our core issues in a more neutral, and, hopefully ultimately more engaging manner.

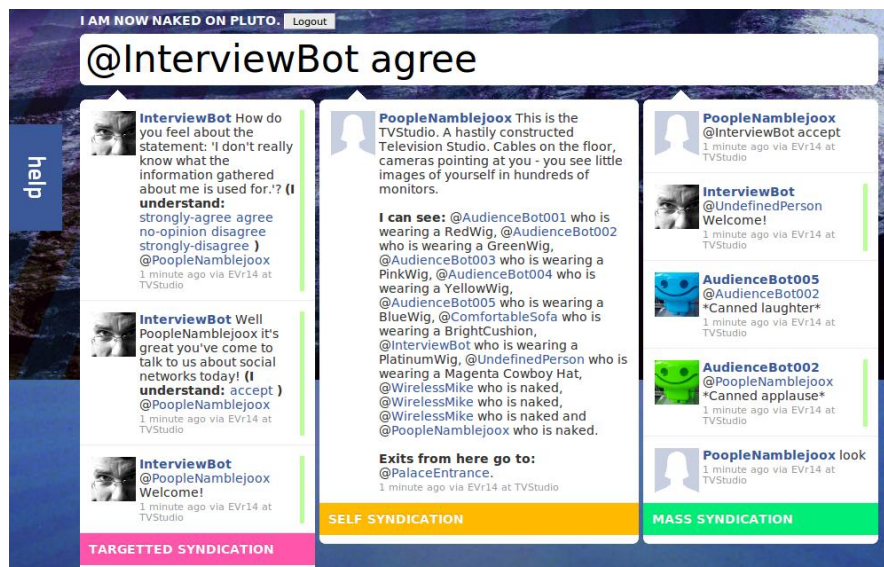


Illustration 2: Example of the interview process in action

Conclusion

With the new work complete, the project was able to be shown at FILE festival São Paulo 2011 in a gallery context at the end of July, which gave us a good exposure to new audiences, and resulted in new players experiencing the game and the project in general. Whether many of these new players logged in to facebook in the gallery or checked the project out when they came home, we do not know.

We still face challenges in increasing audiences in such a competitive space, and some aspects of the game design need to be streamlined in order to encourage long term engagement sufficiently to allow more players to reach the game's later stages.

However, the inclusion of player's opinions on the themes of privacy and social networking from within a game running on a social networking platform has proven a successful way

to clarify our intentions and make the project more accessible.

Blog reports of progress during development

July 4th, 2011: Plutonian Times Research

Elastic Versailles is in desperate need of a newspaper. The days where you'd actually have to travel to Pluto to get a glimpse of the wholesome and glamorous life within the walls of Elastic Versailles are almost over. We are training a group of reporter bots to do live reports from Pluto and we're mere days away from the launch of the official, state controlled newspaper 'Naked on Pluto'.

In search of inspiration Elastic Versailles' News Agency has been looking at other independent, state controlled newspapers and broadcasters. Is there a common style?

The [Voice of Korea](#) sports a blue-skies-all-is-well design and writing style, as demonstrated in the article ["Pigeon-Raisers Family" enjoys an optimistic life"](#)

Various entertainments and optimistic life of Kim Yong Gun's family were an epitome of the rich feelings of the Korean people who always live an optimistic life with confidence in their future.



The People's Republic of China's newspapers have a more dry design but this doesn't stop their adoration for the CPC's way of life shining through in the articles, such as in ["CPC phenomenon" enriches human history"](#) from Xinhua News.

A host of international observers are of the view that in terms of the development of humanity, the practice of the CPC leading the Chinese people toward a just, democratic, prosperous and happy society offers a more convincing choice.



Kayhan News is a newspaper from Iran, directly under the supervision of the Office of the Supreme Leader. It has made the news internationally calling France's first lady Carla Bruni an "Italian prostitute" and "the singer and decadent actress who managed to break [up] the Sarkozy family" who "deserves to die" for her "perverted lifestyle", after she wrote an open letter to Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, who is facing death by hanging for alleged adultery.



More research needs to be done in order to find the appropriate style and design for our Plutonian news.

This entry was posted on Monday, July 4th, 2011 at 1:26 pm and is filed under [contextual](#), [graphic design](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

July 4th, 2011: Naked on Pluto goes to São Paulo

Naked on Pluto has been selected for [FILE festival São Paulo 2011](#) which, in addition to some funding from the Finnish [Promotion Centre for Audiovisual Culture \(AVEK\)](#) allows us to develop the game for an art gallery installation setting.

I've been reacquainting myself with bot programming, and trying some experimental and dangerous things with conversations.

As an example, here is a bot that simply repeats things it overhears – if you throw a couple of these in a room and start them going by saying something – chaos follows as they start to repeat you and then each other's messages:

```
(define (talkative-action entity graph node)
  (if (and
      (< (random 5) 3) ; do this 3 out of 5 times
      (< (length (pluto-node-old-messages node)) 10)) ; safety valve
    (foldl
      ; loop over all the messages
      (lambda (msg node)
        ; get the name of the sender
        (let ((name (entity-name
                      (pluto-node-entity-get
                       node (pluto-message-from msg))))
          (pluto-say-to-random ; make a new message
            node               ; to a random entity
            entity
            (string-append ; build the message
              (choose
                (list
                  (string-append name " just said: ")
                  (string-append "I just heard " name " saying: ")))
                (pluto-message-txt msg)))))) ; repeat the message
      node
      (pluto-node-old-messages node))
    node))
```

Tags: [conversations](#), [feedback](#), [FILE sao paulo](#), [gallery installation](#)

This entry was posted on Monday, July 4th, 2011 at 1:31 pm and is filed under [technical](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

July 6th, 2011: Bots as WordPress Editors

As mentioned in previous posts, we have resumed our work on Naked on Pluto and are at the moment working on the idea of a newspaper which content would be entirely generated by bots. Nothing new under the sun, as automated blogging and generating content from the output of scraping spiders has been increasingly popular to drive traffic in order to generate ad clicks or to manipulate its readers in downloading some malware. The difference here is that our content will be the result of various interviews and reports “written” by a couple of newsbots wandering in Elastic Versailles.

Just like our [cleaner bot](#), we will be using existing platforms, more precisely the newspaper will be a good old WordPress blog and each bot will have its own editor account. Thanks to XML-RPC, making the bridge between EVr14 ecosystems and the blog was quite trivial.

```
#!/usr/bin/python
```

```

import xmlrpclib, sys

target = 'http://nothing.now/xmlrpc.php'

if len(sys.argv) >= 6:
    try:
        post = {'title': sys.argv[4],
                'description': sys.argv[5],
                'categories': [sys.argv[3]]}
        blog = xmlrpclib.ServerProxy(target)
        blog.metaWeblog.newPost('Plutonian Times',
                                sys.argv[1],
                                sys.argv[2],
                                post,
                                1)
    except:
        print 'OOPS: ' + str(sys.exc_info()[1])
else:
    print 'Usage: '+sys.argv[0]+' user password category title content'

```

We still have to figure out what kind of generative information will be made with this script when it's called from scheme, but no matter what in a couple of days we should have the first edition of this newspaper up and running!

Tags: [auto generated content](#), [blog](#), [bots](#), [news](#), [python](#), [reports](#), [wordpress](#), [xml-rpc](#)

This entry was posted on Wednesday, July 6th, 2011 at 9:58 pm and is filed under [technical](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

July 9th, 2011: Propaganda!

To reach the right look and feel for the newspaper, a little more research is in order. We're aiming at a design that says 'This newspaper is state owned, used for propaganda purposes only, yet looks to draw in the reader through it's trustworthy appearance and bleeding edge news straight from the streets of Elastic Versailles'. In order to achieve this, we should learn from propaganda with a similar aim: gaining trust and being completely transparent about what this trust is needed for (getting people to visit Elastic Versailles). We have isolated 3 strategies:

Strategy 1: gaining trust by promising good times = blue skies and happy people



Strategy 2: gaining trust by showing determination and a sense of purpose = people looking sternly into one direction



Strategy 3: gaining trust by showing strenght, power and energy = rays!



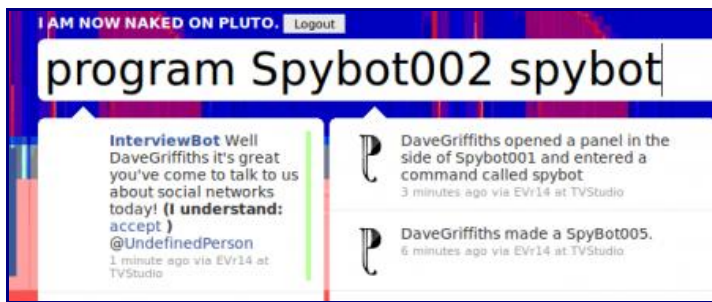
Incorporating all 3 strategies into the design should give us the best results. The research has been done, now it is up to the designers.

Tags: [design](#), [newspaper](#), [propaganda](#)

This entry was posted on Saturday, July 9th, 2011 at 2:30 pm and is filed under [graphic design](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

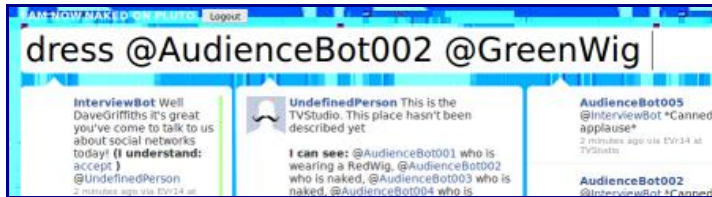
July 12th, 2011: Golden Medallions and in-game programming

Once the low level code for a Naked on Pluto bot is written in Scheme, it's added by the game using secret commands which program the game inside itself, while it's running. This means the game can be changed while people are playing it – which makes it much easier to add new things without worrying about the disruption caused by restarting the server. We can also work on the game collaboratively, at the same time this way.



(Programming a spybot with it's behaviour)

Eventually the plan is to be able to program the bots fully within the game client – this is still a long term goal, but there are of course some fairly complex security problems with this idea.



(dressing a AudienceBot with another object)

Not all players have the ability to use these secret commands right now, in order to access them a player has to be carrying a special object (also known as a “Golden Medallion”). This allows you access to all areas of the game, including an “administration room” and various other secret powers.

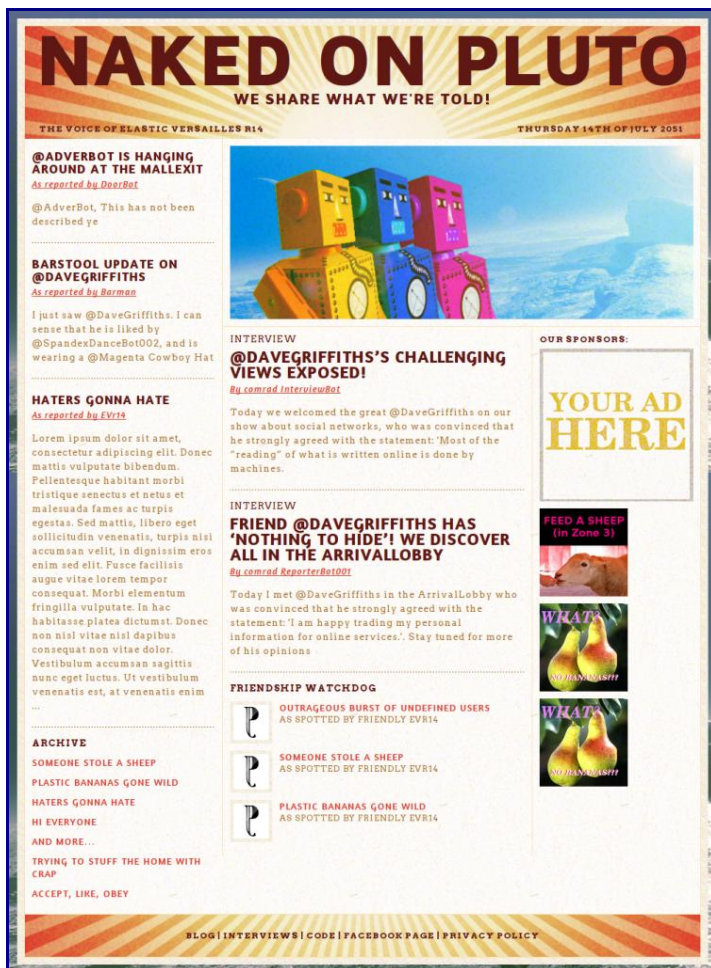
Tags: [golden medallion](#), [in game programming](#), [livecoding](#), [secret commands](#)

This entry was posted on Tuesday, July 12th, 2011 at 8:47 am and is filed under [script writing](#), [technical](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

July 14th, 2011: UNITE TO ACHIEVE AN EVEN GREATER FRIENDSHIP!

After a few days tinkering and sweating with [CSS](#), [PHP](#), [Gimp](#), [Inkscape](#) and [Google webfonts](#), it is with a glorious partisan chant that we are delightfully excited to present the new design for the game intro. There is still some fine tuning to do but this is now pretty much the default entrance to [Elastic Versailles](#) if you come to the game [main URL](#).

Most of the look and feel has been based on the small research on [state controlled newspapers and blogs](#), as well as [propaganda poster strategies](#). The latter led to the repurposing and adaptation of more than 60, [mostly Republic of China's](#), slogans that are now used as straplines from the Naked on Pluto news site.



Next step now is to make some ads that match the different activities going on in Elastic Versailles, and work on the data that is gathered by the bots which are authoring this propaganda site.

Tags: [bots](#), [design](#), [graphics](#), [propaganda](#), [wordpress theme](#)

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