HOW WE CAN ALL MAKE IT TO THE FUTURE

A guide to offline community building in art & science

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art | science | community

Re—Imagine Europe

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#1 — INTRODUCTION AND INSPIRATION

When developing the concept of SPEKTRUM art science community (an art & community space focused on creating new links between art, science and technology) in early 2014, we wanted to find a way to combine both of our interests and backgrounds into a common concept: Alfredo Ciannameo's background in artscience, and his interest in curating the artistic direction of the space, with Lieke Ploeger's interest in community building, and finding a way to translate her experience in online community management into its offline counterpart. In addition, the concept of SPEKTRUM was inspired by the diverse mix of artists, hackers, scientists, activists and makers present in Berlin: we felt our concept could work well in this environment, and also that the city would benefit from a space focused exactly on the mixing of such groups.

From examples such as the *Hacker Bus*[1] in Brazil, where a group of hackers travelled around Brazil to help people develop technological solutions to their needs in the belief that bringing people together physically still has the strongest impact, we felt inspired to experiment with developing a physical location into a hub connecting different realities in the city. Contrary to the popularity of social media and various digital devices as means to connect people, we strongly believed in the power of connecting people in a physical space. We wanted SPEKTRUM to be an open space where everyone would feel welcome, and where experimentation and collaborative learning was encouraged.

We knew that the key to success was finding the right location. We wanted our space to be both suitable for hosting a wide range of performances as well as easily discoverable and accessible. When we discovered the former bakery in Bürknerstrasse, Neukölln, we immediately noticed the potential of the building. Not only was the back room with its' 5-metre high ceiling perfectly suitable for the type of performances we aimed to host, but the corner location, with large windows opening onto the street, provided an inviting and open character. Last but not least it was located centrally in Berlin, in a neighbourhood where many creatives lived.

From the beginning, we started experimenting with how direct physical interaction could shape the future of the space. As a very first announcement of our space, we put up the question **How can we all make it to the future?** on one of our windows to spark people's interest. During the renovation Alfredo ran a light installation: every night for about two months we invited passersby to walk through the space, talked to them about our

[1] https://thenextweb.com/la/2011/07/26/hacker-bus-on-the-roads-of-brazil/#.tnw_UpvRJfDn

plans, listened to their stories and invited them to sign up for our mailing list. Before we organised any event, we already had some support from people in our neighbourhood, as well as over 300 people on our mailing list.

We also started connecting with like-minded people in the city and joined networks such as transmediale reSource, to learn from people who had faced similar problems in running project spaces and to find future collaborations.

Before the official opening, we began setting up our community program as a way to connect different audiences to the space. We invited and stimulated people to experiment together, share their knowledge openly, create new ideas and form collaborations. As we continued building up both our artistic program and the communities, our initial vision of becoming a physical meeting point for different groups in the city slowly became a reality. Communities were formed, existing communities found a home in SPEKTRUM, and lots of new connections were made. People from different backgrounds came together, and starting discussing about how they could combine their skills to create new artistic outputs. Like the Hacker Bus, we experienced how direct physical participation is a strong driver to connect people. Between 2015-2018, nineteen different communities have been meeting up regularly at SPEKTRUM, and became a valuable resource to our space.

We intended to set up a relationship with our communities that is mutually beneficial: we offer our space and facilities for free, as well as guidance on community building and our network of contacts and channels for promotion. This enables our community members to connect with like-minded people, offering fresh input into our space and program, as well as an increased network of collaborators. It is important to be aware of such motivations for doing community work.

Our community program has been vital in developing the SPEKTRUM concept. In the last three years we have collectively learned how to best build up, maintain and strengthen communities with an artistic outlook, and we would love to see this knowledge be shared and applied more widely. We see community building, especially through gathering people from different backgrounds in a physical space (in opposition to the growing popularity of online networking), as one of the most powerful ways of connecting with your audience. Most importantly, it empowers people to interact with a space directly, rather than only being a passive visitor.

In this guide we describe how we built up our community structure, how communities were formed, how they developed and which issues we faced. Throughout the years, we have collectively gathered a list of tips & tricks for community building, as well as links to additional resources. We hope that by sharing the lessons we learned during our community building process, we can inspire others to initiate similar initiatives in the spirit of 'do-it-together-with-others'.

Community building has by now in a lot of contexts become a kind of tool, in order to sell services or get hold of people's data and emotional involvement, I think we should reflect well on the type of community we build and why, so we really create communities and not dependent interconnected groups of people.

— Byrke Lou (movLab)

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#2 — COMMUNITY PROGRAM AND PRINCIPLES

Based on the development of our concept for SPEKTRUM, we formulated two main aims that we wanted our community program to focus on:

— **bringing together people from various backgrounds in an atmosphere of creative and collaborative exchange and experimentation;**

— **opening up knowledge around art, science and technology to a wider audience;**

We used these aims as the starting point to inspire people to join our communities, as well as to guide the future developments. Next to that, we set up a basic structure for the community program. From experience in running online communities, we knew that there are some key elements that help make a community run smoothly:

— **clearly defining the shared interest;**

— **planning regular points of contact;**

— **setting up a minimal structure to help communication between members;**

— **working towards a shared goal.**

As communities are all made up of people voluntarily bringing in their time and efforts, we wanted to keep a sense of playfulness, independence and experimentation, which means that each community could be set up slightly differently. The role of Lieke Ploeger as community builder was to guide and advice the different communities during their development, as well as to oversee the community program as a whole, and stimulate interconnections between groups. The role of Alfredo Ciannameo was to oversee the artistic direction of communities, and find ways to integrate them into the artistic program at SPEKTRUM.

Our communities start from the shared interest, which is what brings the group together. A key aspect of our communities is an interdisciplinary approach to their community topic: people from different backgrounds look at this topic from different

angles and learn from each other in an open, horizontal way (instead of the traditional educational top-down model), so that emerging knowledge is negotiated in the interaction and discussion of the group. It is important for the community to write up a clear text on their topic and community at the start, so that this will attract the interest of different types of people, and is also inviting for newcomers.

To help communities run smoothly, each group meets up at least once a month, usually on a fixed day of the week. SPEKTRUM offers the space freely to communities on Tuesdays and Wednesdays: meetups are always free and accessible to everyone. After the first year, when more communities were formed, we usually have two communities meeting up on one night: one in our front area, and one in the main event room at the back. Apart from community members mixing with each before and after meetups, communities also sometimes spontaneously decided to combine their meetups and work together.

Even though communities may have been running for some time, and core groups are formed, newcomers are always welcome and encouraged to join community meetups. Some of the core members (usually two or three people per community) take on the role of community supporter: they function as the main contact person with SPEKTRUM, and take on some additional tasks, such as planning the meetups. One of the supporters is always present at meetings to ensure continuity and to introduce new members to the work that is currently going on in the group.

Although the main focus of the communities is on face-to-face meetups, communication within the community also happens online through Facebook groups, Slack channels and mailinglists. Apart from the SPEKTRUM website, **Meetup**[1] is used as the central channel to announce community meetups. Meetup has a large outreach opportunity to the wider public, which ensures that people from outside the SPEKTRUM network are able to find their way into joining one of our communities: by searching for certain topics in Berlin, they will find the matching group of their interest at SPEKTRUM. Our Meetup group currently consists of 2500 members.

SPEKTRUM stimulates the communities to focus on creating an outcome together (for example an artwork, exhibition, event or activity), which assures that the group maintains focus in building towards a shared goal. Ultimately, the main approach of each community is artistic, and the final focus is on the co-creation of an artwork as outcome of the group process. Presentations of these outcomes could take place during specific community showcase events, but also as part of other SPEKTRUM exhibitions, or external events. In this way, our community program provides a way of gathering input as a

[1] http://www.meetup.com/spektrum/

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space, next to showing the output of the artistic process in the form of our events and exhibitions. This is of vital importance for creating a dialogue between the space, its outputs and the people in our network.

The communities at SPEKTRUM do not operate in a vacuum: several times a year all active members meet up at the ReConnect communities table. ReConnect is the group that connects different communities running and being set up at SPEKTRUM. At the communities table, everyone comes together to share what they have been working on and exchange ideas for cross-collaboration. In addition, ideas for new groups can be shared, as well as tips and best practices for running communities. We have summarised our learnings from these ReConnect meetups in *chapter 4* of this manual.

Naturally, it took a process of joint learning to arrive at this community structure. After running the community program for about two years, we noticed a need for writing up what we were doing more explicitly. Up until that time, we talked about the community structure at ReConnect sessions, and individually with people involved in the communities, but especially around the ownership of a community we experienced some differences in expectations. This became especially apparent when the Smell Lab name was registered as a trademark in early 2017. That is why we decided to collectively work on a definition of what our community program is about, with inspiration from similar movements.

COOPERATION, NO COMPETITION

We strongly believe in the power of cooperation and collaboration rather than competition. As an alternative to the competitive individualism of today's society, we set out to work collectively, sharing our ideas and knowledge and developing projects through a free debate based on solidarity, cooperation and exchange. Without each other we are not as rich in diversity, contents, skills and destinies.

HORIZONTALISM, NO HIERARCHY

Communities are organised in a non-hierarchical way: everyone participating has an equal say. The only structure applied is that of community supporters: a minimum of two people per community take on additional responsibilities, such as announcing meetups and welcoming new people, and function as main contact point for the community. Decisions are taken by the group with collaborative and horizontal methods: the community supporters assist in preparing and guiding the decision-making process. SPEKTRUM is available for advice and support.

Started as a community manifesto, this developed into the formulation of our four community principles in December 2017. Community principles written by Lieke Ploeger in collaboration with SPEKTRUM communities (Dec 2017), *CC-BY-SA 3.0 Germany*

This principle has been inspired by the *Feminist Internet Manifesto*.

This principle has been inspired by *Patterns for decentralised organising* (Loomio / Enspiral).

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OPEN, NO RESTRICTIONS

We believe that ideas and knowledge need the freedom to grow and spread to benefit many, instead of being locked up and restricted to benefit only one. Communities are encouraged to use open source software, and spread their outcomes under open licences such as CC-BY and CC-BY-SA. We would love to see others to start up similar communities in their own cities: all we ask is that you attribute SPEKTRUM when you do so.

INCLUSIVE, NO DISCRIMINATION

Everyone interested to participate is welcome, no prior knowledge is required. Newcomers are always able to join. Be excellent with each other. All attendees at our community meetups should help ensure a safe environment for everybody. Both our events and online channels are dedicated to providing a harassment-free experience for everyone, regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, or religion (or lack thereof). We do not tolerate harassment of participants in any form. Those violating these rules may be expelled from the event at the discretion of the organisers.

#3 — COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STAGES

Throughout the years we saw communities developing through several phases: some communities went through all of these, while others stayed in a certain phase, or some decided to stop or pause activity at some point. In this chapter we describe these different phases and the focus for community building in each of them, which may help to understand how an initial idea can grow into an active community, and how best to guide this process. This should not be understood as a linear journey: our communities have also moved between phases during periods of lesser activity.

Since our focus is on face-to-face meetups, and stimulating people to get together in a physical space to inspire each other to new collaborations and projects, we have not actively promoted the online presence of our communities too much over the years. We left it open for groups to choose what channels they use (Facebook groups, Slack, mailinglist, Twitter, Hackpad), and from our side focused on announcing meetups timely via our website and Meetup, as well as in the weekly newsletter. We do make sure that the tone used for announcements always makes it clear that anyone who is interested is willing to join, no prior knowledge is required and newcomers are welcome, to ensure that there is fresh and diverse input to the communities.

Phase 1: Initiation / start

Due to the voluntary nature of the community program, and the experimental way we started up our program, there is a variety of ways in which communities originated. Apart from an initial effort we did in starting up several communities at the beginning of SPEKTRUM, we saw it as vital to create an atmosphere of collaborative and open exchange (defined on our website as 'a social and physical playground for curiosity and critical understanding'), which stimulated like-minded existing groups to connect to us.

During this start up phase, the focus for community building is first of all on clarifying the exact topic and scope of the community and deciding whether the community fits in with the rest of the program. One of the first steps is to create an inviting text that will attract participants with diverse backgrounds. We also introduce the new community supporters to the basic elements that are needed for making the community run smoothly (having multiple supporters,
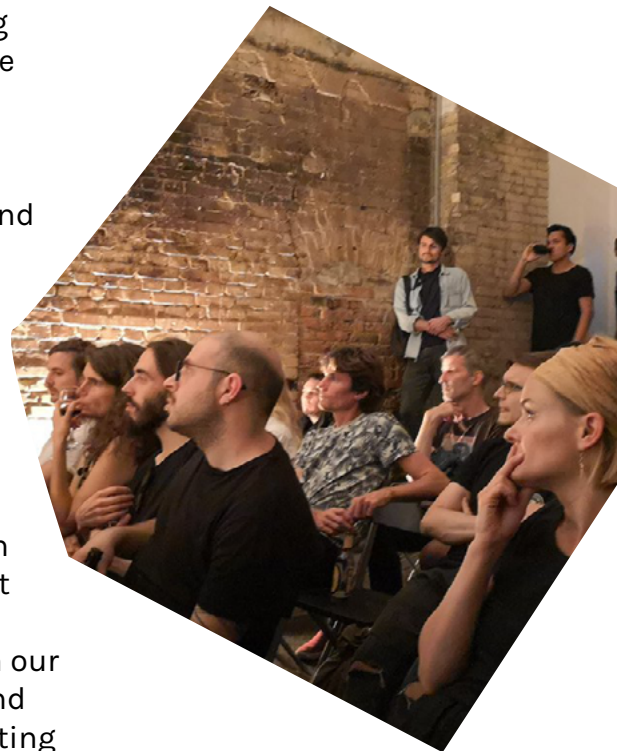
establishing a fixed schedule for meetups, and presenting progress at ReConnect sessions) and set up the planning for the first events.

These were some of the starting points for our nineteen communities:

ROUND TABLES: FIRST SPEKTRUM COMMUNITIES

When we were close to opening our art space, we invited everyone we knew at the time for a series of round tables. We asked people to share what they were working on, what they are interested in, and what they would like to do with the space. From these first nights, a number of topics of shared interest emerged, such as olfactory art and live cinema. During the first ReConnect meeting in June 2015, the community concept was presented and participants shared their ideas and interests, as a result of which the Smell Lab and the Live Cinema (LC) Lab were formed. The format of a round table (participants sitting in a circle facing each other, with each person sharing their input in turn, followed by an open discussion) was later used for the ReConnect community meetups as well (see **chapter 4**).

COMMUNITIES INITIATED OUT OF A SPECIFIC NEED

When the initial idea of our community building program started spreading, people came to us with ideas for a community they would like to start. This happened for example with the movLab, RoboLab, Artificial Creativity, Software Art and Spatial Projections communities. When asked for reasons why they selected SPEKTRUM for starting their groups, people said the benefit for them was to join forces with existing communities, and benefit from the community already involved with SPEKTRUM.

SPEKTRUM also identified some direct needs as a space, for which we intended to set up communities. From before opening our space, we had the idea of creating a makerlab, with digital manufacturing tools such as 3D printers that would enable people to work together in the space as well. When we met Michael Ang ahead of the opening, the idea of the maker community developed further in collaboration with him, leading to the first meetup in early 2016, and the start of building the makerlab shortly after receiving a grant from the Berlin Senate for Culture and Europe.

Another need for a community was identified by Alfredo Ciannameo during the curation of the States of Matter exhibition, which had the four classical states of matter (solid, liquid, gas and plasma) as the subjects of the artworks selected. He established a dedicated community MetaMatter in connection to this event, with a focus on transformations of matter. Leading up to the exhibition, the community worked on gathering interest in the topic, as well as bringing an additional

artwork into the exhibition (Philip Silva & Felix E. Klee - STM - scanning tunneling microscope).

After the exhibition, the community continued having meetups on different states of matter, with others taking over the community supporter role.

PRE-EXISTING GROUPS FINDING A HOME IN SPEKTRUM

After the first months of opening our space, we received requests of existing groups, who felt connected to our community program and preferred to be taken up into it with their community. This happened with the Sonic Code Sessions, AAARTGAMES, Creative VR and Berlin Modular communities. Some of these groups reported that they managed to attract a more diverse crowd by having their meetups at SPEKTRUM as part of the community program: the AAARTGAMES community was happy to get more participants with an art background, as well as more female members. For the Creative VR group, it was the reputation of SPEKTRUM as a place where art and tech communities can overlap that made them decide to join our program.

COMMUNITIES AS A FOLLOW-UP OF OTHER ACTIVITIES

As SPEKTRUM developed further, additional communities were also born more organically, out of existing activities that led to a logical continuation into a community. This was for example the case with the VJ Open Lab: started as a workshop series

(VJ for women) in 2016 to boost female participation into our program, we noticed there was a lot of interest in this topic, and participants wanted to continue to meet up after concluding the workshop. We therefore decided to start up the VJ Open Lab community in the summer of 2017. Nearly 60 people have been attending the VJ workshops and this is still one of our most active communities.

Another interesting example of a community coming out of existing activity is the XenoEntities Network. Between July - October 2016, Pedro Marum completed an internship at SPEKTRUM as part of his studies. Included in the internship was the curation of a specific event at our space: inspired by the communities already running, and based on his previous research and network, Pedro asked to set up a community in connection with this, and organised two community meetups and two screening events as part of his internship. After completing the internship, the community continued, and is still one of our most vibrant communities to date.

Phase 2: Emerging communities

This is one of the most exciting phases for the community building, as during this phase the initial idea is tested out in real life, and the direction the group can go into is still relatively open. Most important during this period is to clearly communicate the purpose and topic of the community, be as inviting and open to newcomers as possible and work on finding like-minded participants willing to join. For some groups there was a lot of initial interest, with around 50 people joining the first meetups: for others, it took some more effort to find interested people and they had to actively seek out and contact individuals who may be interested in participating.

In the spirit of how we set up SPEKTRUM, the learning by doing approach continued in this phase: with each new community, we helped them get a clear text and images online on dedicated community pages, and announced meetups via our Meetup page. We found that Meetup is one of our most effective channels for attracting new people, and people with different backgrounds. This is because on Meetup, you can simply search for a topic of interest in Berlin, and get recommendations for all events on that topic, regardless of whether you already know or follow SPEKTRUM (as would be the case on Facebook).

During the first meetup, the supporters introduce the community topic, and all participants introduce themselves to each other, followed by an open exchange of ideas on what to collaborate on. Depending on the kind of people willing to get involved, the community then chooses a certain direction, which can range from doing hands-on experimentation (for example building machines for the lab, or testing out a material in

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different states of matter), inviting presentation of interesting work related to the community topic, having a joint jam session or working together on a certain project.

But most importantly, it all starts with the people that come and express their interest: this should be the basis on which the community builds itself.

Phase 3: Consolidation & Encapsulation

As communities start to grow, the focus for community building shifts to consolidating the group: establishing a regular meetup schedule, having fixed community supporters and a clear goal that the group works towards. This shared goal is one of the most important factors for making a community stronger: as Michael Ang of our MadeByUs community said, it helps give a common direction and the opportunity for individual members to contribute. We invite all communities to show their outputs during showcase events that we run several times per year, for example during the transmediale Vorspiel festival for some more promotion, but also host other community events as they come up.

We usually saw a core group of around 5-10 people forming for a community, after the first experimental start up phase, and then a larger group of anywhere up to 50 people around this. Since it is harder to work in large groups on a specific output, sometimes communities decided to form smaller group within the community to work on specific tasks. These smaller groups then meet up separately, and the main community

meetups focuses on sharing what is going on with a wider group, and introducing newcomers into the community. For the AAARTGAMES community, this turned out to be a practical solution.

For these more consolidated communities, our work at SPEKTRUM shifts from supporting the communities in establishing themselves, to finding ways to promote interactions between the work of communities and the regular program we run at SPEKTRUM. This is where it becomes really interesting, as there are often many ways that communities can interact with our space. As we started to use the space more and more for workshops as a way to make certain technologies and skills accessible to a wider audience outside of the world of institutional education, we found that we had many community members with specific skills, who are perfectly suited to organise introductory workshops within this workshop program. These workshops then in turn helped to introduce new people into the communities.

In addition, our MadeByUs community, a making community focused on artistic, DIY, and experimental uses of digital fabrication techniques like 3D printing, has been a central community for our space from the start. Following on a successful funding by the Berlin Senat Department for Culture and Europe in 2016, they created a makerlab at SPEKTRUM: building the machines from open source kits and engaging the community directly to build the lab together. This gave more opportunities for community members to develop work. A great example is Michael Ang's SISYPHUS machine-learning robot, which was designed with another community member, 3D-printed at SPEKTRUM, and then assembled in an open workshop.

In the third year of the community program, we also started involving communities into the regular SPEKTRUM exhibition program, for example in the 2017 series of Dark Society exhibitions. For the exhibition 'Dark Bodies Dark Identities', our XenoEntities community curated a screening program and took part in the closing panel discussion. Also, one of the exhibition's installations, Polyvalent Embodiment by Marvin Bratke and Alexander Grasser, was completed in collaboration with the MadeByUs community: they helped print the 3D-sculpures. For 'Dark Technology Dark Web', our AAARTGAMES community exhibited their anthology Data Mutations, while for 'Dark Habitats Dark Ecology' the Scent Club Berlin organised a smell walk.

We've made the decision to split our community into two concepts, AAARTGAMES - the public side, events hosted at SPEKTRUM, and the collective AAA. This was for a few reasons but most importantly as a core group of us started getting really involved it became unclear to others if this was a public event or not, so by separating the two I think it has become clearer for everybody.

— Troy Duguid (AAARTGAMES)

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This encapsulation of our communities and their work into our program is extremely fruitful for the development of our space and its audiences, because it provides not only a way for people to see the outputs of these community efforts, but also offers them a way in: if they feel inspired by what they see, they can easily join the next meetup and get involved with the community directly.

We Make It fundraiser event - Sisyphus robots (March 2016)

Phase 4: Branching out

As communities become established groups and show their work at different occasions, they also attract external interest and start to collaborate on projects and organise activities outside of SPEKTRUM. Another possibility is that new projects originate within a community and branch out on their own. Such outcomes are very rewarding because they demonstrate that the process of community building has been successful: the community is strong enough to venture out on its own. Apart from actively looking for opportunities that communities can contribute to, and spreading the word about what is going on in our community program, there is not much for SPEKTRUM to do in this phase. It is amazing to see how a first idea and shared interest can grow from a circle of people introducing themselves to some of these examples.

The **Sentire project**[1], which originated out of the movLab community. When Olga Kozmanidze and Marcello Lussana met during a movLab meetup in 2016, they developed a first performance for a movLab showcase event called Sentire: an immersive performance where gradually the sense of hearing and the sense of touch morth one into another, giving a chance to perceive one's body on a deep level.

They continued to collaborate and established Sentire as a cross-disciplinary research project bringing together artists,

[1] http://www.sentire.me

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scientists, therapists and developers. It consists of two parts: an immersive performance series based on interactive sound and PhD research on human perception.

They secured funding and organised the conference *Enhanced Sensing*[1] in April 2018, aiming to create a frame for discussion on cognition and on human-technology interaction, particularly in relation to movement and sound.

As mentioned before, the AAA collective was established out of the AAARTGAMES community. They released two anthologies, *Dystropicana*[2] ('digital multimedia archipelago') in 2016 and *Data Mutations*[3] ("a conglomerate of interactive projects') in 2017, and have performed both on several occasions throughout Europe, for example during the transmediale Vorspiel opening in 2018 and at Berlin Art Week 2018. In the spring of 2018, ARTE filmed one of their meetups for the *Tracks series*[4].

Apart from developing these projects, the collective advocates for collaborative practices more generally: *a talk they gave at the IULM University*[5] in Milan in June 2018 is a great illustration of how they created an alternative way to organise themselves and their game development. This attitude and practical example of successful collaboration also inspired our other communities. Two of our most active communities are Scent Club Berlin (a collective of artists, designers, scientists and those working in and between fields of smells and scents) and the XenoEntities Network (a platform for discussion and experimentation focusing on intersections of queer, gender, and feminist studies with digital technologies).

[1] https://spektrumberlin. de/events/detail/sentire-presents-enhanced-sensing-conference.html

[2] https://aaa.itch.io/ dystropicana

[3] https://aaa.itch.io/ datamutations

[4] https://www. youtube.com/ watch?v=hMMGuuKUP2s

[5] https://vimeo. com/277525284

Both groups organise events outside of SPEKTRUM on a regular basis, including screenings, workshops and performances. In the summer of 2018, both communities participated in the exhibition *Welt Ohne Aussen: Immersive Spaces*[1] since the 1960s, curated by Berliner Festspiele at Gropius Bau in Berlin.

The XenoEntities Network curated *Existential Futurities*[2], a tripartite event cycle of performative curated-workshops proposing alternative methods of being-together, while the Scent Club Berlin hosted the workshop Work the Scent: The Smell of Death and several Olfactory tours, offering visitors an expanded perception of the works presented by engaging with them from the point of view of the nose.

It is important for us that our communities work towards becoming independent entities, that branch out of SPEKTRUM into other collaborations as well. Even though having a physical space greatly helps in accelerating the community building process, it should not be fully dependent on it: some of the groups that have been established at SPEKTRUM have now grown into strong communities that develop activity outside of SPEKTRUM as well. This in turn frees up our space for new ideas and communities to initiate the first phase, making it into an organic process.

[1] https://www.berlinerfestspiele.de/en/aktuell/festivals/gropiusbau/programm_mgb/gropius_bau_ausstellungen/gropius_bau_18_welt_ohne_aussen/welt_ohne_aussen_ausstellung/detail_welt_ohne_aussen_237909.php

[2] https://www.facebook.com/events/236157697151870/

#4 — RECONNECT: TIPS & TRICKS FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING

We started a meta-community from the beginning called SPEKTRUM ReConnect: the first ReConnect meetup during our opening weekend was also our first every community meetup at SPEKTRUM. ReConnect is a gathering of all community members of SPEKTRUM, where groups can share what they are working on, discover ways to start up collaborations with others, but also discuss how best to run communities and learn from each other's experiences. In this chapter we summarise our learnings from eight ReConnect communities tables that took place between June 2015 - June 2018.

Having regular meetup with everyone proved to be very useful: it helped everyone learn more about the different projects that communities are working on (with around 10-12 active communities at a time, this was not always easy to keep up with), to find connections and new ways to collaborate. It also strengthened the sense of connectedness with each other and the space, so that we felt like we are working together on something, instead of working only in our own community.

But most importantly, the sharing of experiences that happened during these community tables helped to build better communities. Since we are all trying to achieve the same result (building an active community of people with different background working on artistic outputs around a specific topic), we all ran into similar problems. Talking openly about issues, and sharing possible solutions, gave us new ideas on how to best work together within our communities.

It was great to have existing communities join our program, and provide fresh input on their learnings during ReConnect. For example, when the AAARTGAMES community joined SPEKTRUM, they had already developed quite a strong collective, with inspiring ideas on collaborative creation and ways of boosting interaction during their meetups. When they explained how they worked during ReConnect, this helped other communities see what was possible, and how they could start trying out parts of this method for themselves.

How do you find the right people for your community?

Write a clear and inviting text that describes what the community is about: if a description is too general, people usually don't feel excited to join;

Organise different types of meetups: presentations, workshops or other activities, to attract different types of people;

Use channels that allow people that do not know your space yet to discover you and promote your community widely;

How do you make sure everyone feels welcome and feels part of the community?

Mention explicitly in your announcement texts that no prior knowledge is required, or that newcomers are invited to join, so that the meetup will feel accessible to people with different backgrounds;

Agree to a code of conduct or safe space policy and mention this in your announcements and/or at the beginning of meetups, so that everyone is aware of this;

Our VJ open lab experimented with having special roles for community members, such as a: mood facilitator that checks in on all people, a timekeeper that makes sure that the planned program elements get enough time and someone responsible for the set up. This idea was based on Starhawk, *The Empowerment Manual - A guide for collaborative groups*[1], 2011. These roles can then change each meetup so that everyone gains experience with the process;

[1] *https:// sustainabilitypopulareducation. files.wordpress.com/2014/05/ the-empowerment-manual_ nodrm.pdf*

How is the group managed? Who takes on responsibilities?

We have found that having two to three people as community supporters works best, because it helps share the responsibility and workload. When only one person was taking care of tasks like planning meetups, it quickly became too much.

We also experimented with having a larger group of supporters, or having a rotating supporter role, but this took more time and effort to schedule, and became quite confusing in communication between SPEKTRUM and the community;

When possible, it is best if the community supporters have diverse backgrounds, experiences and networks as this allows them to spread their responsibilities evenly and contribute with their own unique perspective;

A great way to bring fresh input to a group, and help everyone feel included, is to invite new members to take over the role of supporter after they have been with the community for a while;

One of the most challenging aspects of community building, is getting everyone in the right community mindset, which for us is about collaboration, not competition, and has no hierarchy between members.

ACTIVATING YOUR AUDIENCE
How do you make sure everyone participates, especially in larger groups?

Include a mix of presentations and interactive elements during the meetup. Our AAARTGAMES community for example used small physical, introductory games at the start of their meetups to encourage people to participate, boosting their active participation during later moments of the meetup. These kind of activities that involve everyone also create a welcoming atmosphere from the start;

Another option is to limit the amount of people, and ask everyone to sign up for a meetup. With groups of 20-30 people it is much easier to get everyone involved than with an audience of 50+ participants;

Try out a different meetup format: instead of having people sit and listen to presentations, you could schedule a workshop or hackathon. Our MadeByUs community, which is all about making, found that activities like building the lab together and running workshops worked better to involve members then meeting up and discussing projects;

Set up the room differently: this also influences people's behaviour. When you set up rows of chairs facing a screen, people are more likely to behave as a passive listener. To boost interaction, it is better to form a circle of chairs, or have people stand up, walk around and have conversations in smaller groups;

It is important to us that we maintain a collaborative environment without a supposed leader/ representative getting all the attention, I think this is an important reason why our community has stayed intact for so long.

— Troy Duguid
(AAARTGAMES)

How can you boost your community and start producing outputs collectively?

A great way of learning together is by experimenting and playing games together, as a way to set the right atmosphere for further collaborative work.

Find a concrete task (for example developing a performance for a specific event, or create an installation) and set a deadline for this. This will help focus your activity and bring the group together to achieve the result.

When working on a specific outcome, it can be helpful to work in different modes: a large open group that meets up in a monthly rhythm to connect with everyone and collect ideas, and smaller groups focused on getting a specific task done that meet up more often to work together.

Organise a joint meetup with other communities sometimes or do a joint activity, such as a collaborative jam session or skillshare to find new connections between groups, and bring in fresh inspiration.

have a theme for the entire event, and communicate this leading up to the event. I believe this also is more intriguing and less intimidating to newcomers than an event that is simply a number (for example, AAARTGAMES 17 vs AAARTGAMES 17: truth/untruth, beauty/unbeauty etc).

What would be the first tip you would give someone who wants to start up a community?

— Know your audience (people who might be interested in joining your community);

— Be very precise about what you want the community to achieve / be for;

— Learn how to communicate, structure, and moderate your events;

— Think how to make the community inclusive: try to find such a framework that will allow communal, shared activities for people with different backgrounds;

— Start it as a team, and work collective. Starting alone can be overwhelming;

- Take into consideration the life realities of the people you expect to be involved;

- Stay open to every suggestion in your core team and within the community;

- Don't be shy to contact people you admire and wish to have in your community meetings (I almost always got answers and most of the time had positive answers);

- Put community first rather than yourself;

- Be patient because it doesn't grow fast;

Community building is not a straightforward process, and the outcome always depends on the people and relationships that are formed. That is why one of the key elements is to create an atmosphere of openness, inclusion and support, where people feel welcomed and encouraged to participate.

It is exactly this feeling of being part of something, which motivates community members to come and participate, and which is vital for us as a space. It is only when people feel welcome, listened to and able to contribute their input that a true dialogue can start between our space, our communities and our program.

It felt like being part of something genuinely ours, something that, although was initially based on sole enthusiasm and a naive belief in non-conditional exchange, eventually flourished into the strong community of like-minded people.

— Valeria Barvinska
(VJ Open Lab)

If you find yourself in a situation thinking I wish there was an event on xyz, start your own. Culture is built by people and you are a person. There are always people out there who were thinking the same thing and would be happy to see someone start a community event around this topic.

— Merle Leufgen
(AAARTGAMES)

FURTHER RESOURCES

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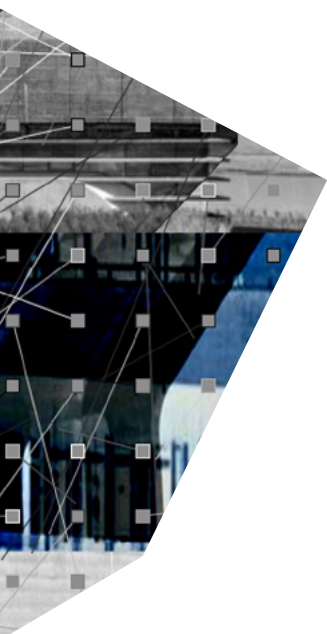
LIST OF SPEKTRUM COMMUNITIES

Currently active (as of October 2018)

SCENT CLUB BERLIN

Scent Club Berlin is a collective of artists, designers, scientists and those working in and between fields of smells and scents. The group focuses on scent and olfaction as a medium for art, science, and technology, expression and experimentation. Since its inception, the group has created interactive installations in which the visitors become not only observers, but also participants in the work.

Community supporters have included: Chaveli Sifre, Aleksandra Pawlowska, Mareike Bode, Max Joy, Alanna Lynch, Eeva-Lisa Puhakka and Sheraz Khan.

→ *https://spektrumberlin.de/ communities/scent-club-berlin/ about.html*

LC (LIVE CINEMA) LAB

LC (Live Cinema) Lab provides a dedicated space and facilities for audio, visual and audio-visual artists to form new collaborations and develop cross-disciplinary work. It is focused on hands-on work. Ideally members join, plug into the system and start playing. The lab also offers a space for technical development, in which lab members share their knowledge about software and hardware. According to the needs of the lab some sessions will be dedicated to making new software, bug fixes, soldering or hacking new instruments or controllers.

We develop ideas around how to interconnect different audio-visuals devices, exchanging signals, creating feedbacks and translate and transform the different elements. Beyond using more established audio visual technologies such as video projections and loudspeakers we are curious to develop instruments which allow to explore new ways of creating, composing and perceiving audio-visual media.

By developing our own tools we want to expand the vocabulary of the performance. Besides researching the possibilities of audio-visual composition we investigate the sculptural aspects of the language which integrates technology, the performer and the audience in immersive environments and spatial setups. The sessions lead towards live performance pieces where the audience is exposed to work-in-progress pieces developed in the lab. An important part of each session is chat and drinks.

→ *https://spektrumberlin.de/ communities/lc-lab/about.html*

During this part participants reflect upon what was just created, talk about inspiring new artwork they experienced or any other topic.

We hope to collaborate with other labs, festivals or visiting artists. We would like to acknowledge RecPlay in the Hague (run by Robert Pravda) and Share.dj (started by Keiko Uenishi) for providing the great inspiration and know-how about audio-visual collaboration between many participants.

Community supporters have included: Wolf Bittner, Sahar Homami, Or Sarfati, Nenad Popov. Sound direction and spatialization by Henrik von Coler.

SONIC CODE SESSIONS

The Sonic Code Sessions aim to provide a time and place for self directed and collaborative learning + experimentation. If you would like to free yourself from the limitations that come with traditional music software, this is for you! We occasionally do jam sessions and plan group performances.
Anyone interested in generative music and the use of computing skills for sonic expression is welcome, no matter if a complete beginner or an expert. Please bring a computer to experiment with and learn about sound programming.
All sound coding environments are welcome - e.g. PureData, SuperCollider, Max/MSP, CSound, ChucK, etc. If you don't have one yet, our welcome guide will help you getting started.

Community supporters have included: Florian Hanisch, Abe Pazos, Rui Miguel, Achillefs Sourias and Carlo Cattano.

→ *https://spektrumberlin.de/communities/sonic-code-sessions/about.html*

MOVLAB

At movLab we are researching ways to digitize motion and the human body and to make the data accessible for further use in VR, gaming, stage performance or art. We are building sensors, writing code and exploring new ways of moving.

At our community meetings we get together and experiment. Some of us are trained professionals, others are completely new to the field. You do not need to know or have anything to join us, apart from respect for the people around you. We embrace diversity in thoughts, bodies and looks! We take the unknown and unfamiliar as inspiration and as a challenge to rethink ourselves. For experiments to happen, bring your current projects, bring your tech and your ideas! An especially warm welcome those who are often underrepresented in the tech domain!

Community supporters have included: Byrke Lou, Arielle Esther, Magdalena Klein and Pauline Canavesio.

→ *https://spektrumberlin.de/communities/movlab/about.html*

MADEBYUS

MadeByUs is a making community focused on artistic, DIY, and experimental uses of digital fabrication techniques like 3D printing and laser cutting. What are the possibilities for community-based local manufacturing and how can we support this at SPEKTRUM? The MadeByUs lab will provide facilities for on-site production of physical prototypes and small scale production. We plan to build the machines (3D printers and laser cutters) from open source kits and engage the community directly from the beginning to build the lab together through a process of co-production and learning together. MadeByUs will provide workshops that will teach how to use the tools and encourage collaboration between technologists and artists in the different communities, both at SPEKTRUM and in the larger area of Berlin / Neukölln.

Community supporters have included: Michael Ang, Thomas O'Reilly and Felix Klee.

AAARTGAMES

AAARTGAMES is a community of people interested in games as audio/visual interactive art. We get together once a month to present and support each others projects and discuss concepts related to interactive art in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere, followed by general discussion over drinks. Absolutely everybody is welcome, all levels of experience and all walks of life!

Community supporters: Troy Duguid and Merle Leufgen.

XEN

XenoEntities Network (XEN) is a platform for discussion and experimentation focusing on intersections of queer, gender, and feminist studies with digital technologies, initiated by Pedro Marum and expanded to a collective including Lou Drago, Rita Macedo, and Zander Porter.
The XEN-curated programs comprise events with performances, screenings, and panels. Programs revolve around contemporary art and philosophical-theoretical themes such as posthumanism, xenofeminism, cyborgs and prosthetics, surveillance technologies, virtual reality, amongst others.

Apart from curated programs, XEN organises 'Assemblages', which are free-access gatherings with the purpose to (discuss) research, where participants can propose topics and ideas within the scope of the platform. We invite speakers from different fields to our sessions and organise round-table discussions, complete with readings of relevant materials as well as discussions of texts and artworks.
Through the discussion of these topics, XEN speculates about new forms of existence and explores the expansion of bodies

and subjectivities within the digital realm. XEN is an open-community platform for anyone from any background who has an interest and curiosity in these topics and/or is willing to expand/corrupt/disrupt/explode them in safe(r) contexts.

Community supporters have included: Pedro Marum , Lou Drago, Rita Macedo, and Zander Porter.

BERLIN MODULAR

Berlin Modular aims to bring the modular synthesizer, the experience of building one, and it's luscious sounds to all people and aliens alike. We want to meet up with other enthusiasts to: build modular synthesizers, have jam sessions, showcases, plan future events, share demonstrations and performances with. We will be providing lead free solder, soldering irons, and misc. DIY tools. We can help you in German, English or Gibberish.

Community supporters: Darrin Wiener, Arthur Gib

→ *https://spektrumberlin.
de/communities/berlin-modular/about.html*

VJ OPEN LAB

VJ Open Lab offers the Berlin VJ Community a monthly meeting for inspiration, experimentation, and exchanging of ideas and knowledge in the live video field. Initiated by the VJ Women workshop group formed in SPEKTRUM in spring 2017, VJ Open Lab is a collaborative platform without hierarchy that values joint efforts, partnership, and initiative. VJ Open Lab is open to anyone interested in live visual arts and Vjing. Beginners and visitors are also welcome to join.

Community supporters: Claire Fristot, Valeria Barvinska, Jana Auer, Liudimila Kartoshkina, Isabelle Vuong, Rita Eperjesi, Cornelia Albrecht, Christina Rey

→ *https://spektrumberlin.de/
communities/vj-open-lab/
about.html*

METAMATTER

MetaMatter is a laboratory of research and practice focused on transformations of matter. Taking a multidisciplinary approach, we look at chemical, physical and biochemical processes with the aim to build knowledge and tools for creative projects. We investigate color, state, mass and temperature to find out the conditions of reaction. We also research aspects of unfolding the nature of materiality, set in motion by using electromagnetism, luminescence and vibrations.
In our community meetings we have talks and presentations on topic-related projects together with a more pragmatic level of collecting experiences to share with others. Anyone with a passion for learning to understand the possibility of matter as an available medium for Art and Science is welcome to join.

Community supporters have included: Alfredo Ciannameo, Felix Klee, Alice Cavnana and Kat Austen

→ *https://spektrumberlin.de/
communities/metamatter/
about.html*

SPARTHABITAT

SPARTHabitat is a community engaging in the various relations between space and art, following a multidisciplinary agenda. We have a focus on outer space, but also investigate phenomena from the physical space to the virtual space, gallery space, or urban space. We explore artistic, technological and biological implications for the human species in the ascending age of space travel and virtuality. We offer an environment for exchange and idea creation not only for artists, but also involve people from other backgrounds such as scientists, engineers, developers, or musicians from diverse levels of experience.

Community supporter: Thomas Heidtmann

→ *https://spektrumberlin.de/ communities/sparthabitat/ about.html*

UNFOLD

Unfold is a group of people interested in the intersection of technology, art, science, and politics. Giving value to the lived experience that every human being can access, we aim to create an inclusive environment exploring human-computer interaction to discover, unfold, perform, hack, and connect our ineffable perception. As technology becomes more and more connected with our personal sphere, we feel the need for a public project and group in which it is possible to discuss, experiment, create, and discover how we can understand embodied cognitive processes in relation to their context and environment. This implies a political role of our individual activities and choices, as they affect more clearly our society.

Based on this motivation and topic, we want to welcome any activity that helps us discover perception in relation to ourselves, to others, and to our environment: a performance or an installation, a body and/or mind exercise, a software or hardware to experience, a text to read and discuss together, or an idea to realize with others. We invite experts, professionals, and also any interested human being to come and find connections, to propose and accept, to experiment and experience.

Community supporters: Olga Kozmanidze, Diana Neranti, Regis Lemberthe

→ *https://spektrumberlin.de/ communities/unfold/about. html*

RECONNECT

This group is meant for connecting the members of different communities running and being set up at SPEKTRUM. Several times a year we host the ReConnect communities table, where all communities around topics such as audiovisual research, olfactory experimentation, embodiment of technology and DIY electronics come together to share what they have been working on and exchange ideas for cross-collaboration. In addition, ideas for new groups can be shared, as well as tips and best practices for running communities.

→ *https://spektrumberlin.de/ communities/reconnect/ about.html*

Previously active communities

ARTIFICIAL CREATIVITY

Monthly conversations and presentations on the intersection of creativity and artificial intelligen- ce. We are interested in the use of AI techniques such as neural networks, genetic algorithms, Markov chains, natural language systems, etc. to generate creative works, be it stories, poems, paintings, musical compositions, drawings, Super Mario levels, or anything else, and in tools for assisting human creativity. No prior knowledge about AI is required to attend; just a sense of curiosity about the future of machine-made art and its philosophical and cultural implications!

Community supporters: Anastasis Germanidis, Caglar Cakan.

→ *https://spektrumberlin. de/communities/artificial- creativity/about.html*

ROBOLAB

RoboLab is a community based on discussion and creation in the area of robotics. Critical discussion will be complemented by playful and experimental prototyping. All levels of experience and backgrounds are welcome: RoboLab is open to anyone that is curious about robotics.

Community supporter: Thomas O'Reilly

→ *https://spektrumberlin.de/ communities/robolab/about. html*

SMELL LAB

The Smell Lab was a monthly meeting space open for everybody who is interested in experimenting with the sense of smell. Being a space for propelling olfactory experimentation, participants (beginners or experts) were invited to share their knowledge and connect with other smell enthusiasts.

Organised by Klara Ravat and Claudia Mannigel (community supporters) in collaboration with SPEKTRUM.

→ *https://spektrumberlin.de/ communities/smell-lab/ about.html*

SPATIAL PROJECTIONS

Once a month we meet to experience the power of the Raspberry Pi through augmenting the reality with the help of projection mapping. We are going to learn projection mapping by doing it with preconfigured Raspberry-Pi-based workstations. It is also the time and place to find help if you are having trouble with your Raspberry Pi creative coding project.

Community supporter: Krisjanis Rijnieks

→ *https://spektrumberlin. de/communities/spatial- projections/about.html*

CREATIVE VR

Creative VR is about art, games and virtual reality intersection. It's not about strictly commercial / industry-based projects or 360 videos, it's about developing and pushing VR as a new medium in a creative way. We want to connect people who are interested in artistic VR projects. We want to bring graphic programmers and game developers together with contemporary artists with different backgrounds. We look for projects with contemporary aesthetics, non-realistic styling or non-gaming projects. We want to connect people who create experiences which are made spe- cially for VR environments and who work on interactions which are possible only in VR worlds.

Community supporter: Vladimir Storm

→ *https://spektrumberlin.de/ communities/creative-vr/ about.html*

SOFTWARE ART

The Software Art community is interested to foster the use of digital platforms in combination with hardware for artistic projects in installation, performance, instrument making, interface development, and new media applications. A custom piece of software is a personal set of rules and a process written in a computer's language to produce, in this case, a piece of art. It is similar to conceptual art. The name software art groups the many terms that describe art related to custom software / media / computers as: interactive art, new media art, generative art, glitch-art, net art etc. To code is a invisible form of informated art. With our meetups we try to aggregate people that want to produce something useless but beautiful.

Community supporters: Antonio di Stilo, Juan Duarte

→ *https://spektrumberlin.de/ communities/software-art/ about.html*

IMAGE CREDITS

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- — Page 7: MetaMatter
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- — Page 12: Michael Ang, MadeByUs
- — Page 14: Scent Club Berlin
- — Page 17: André Wunstorf, AAARTGAMES
- — Page 19, 20, 21, 22: André Wunstorf, Scent Club Berlin
- — Page 24, 25: VJ Open Lab, Juan Duarte (Software Art), Scent Club Berlin

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