

EMMA thesis proposal

1. Jörg Frohnmayer Wintersemester 2004/2005

2. Pathway New Media

3. Titel

Labyrinth and maze — metaphors for information structures

4. Central problem:

The analysis of the metaphor distinguishes two different aspects. On the one hand the interior of a labyrinth or maze constitutes a confusing information structure with local awareness of the visible part of the whole shape. On the other hand both metaphors exhibit a global structure yielding an entangled pattern. Additionally, there is a difference in both metaphors, as a maze leaves open a choice of way whereas the labyrinth does not.

5. Exploration of the problem:

Our perception of objects depends on the perspective on objects. As an example consider a crossroad. Perceived on the ground a choice of direction has to be made. However perceived from above all directions can be traced.

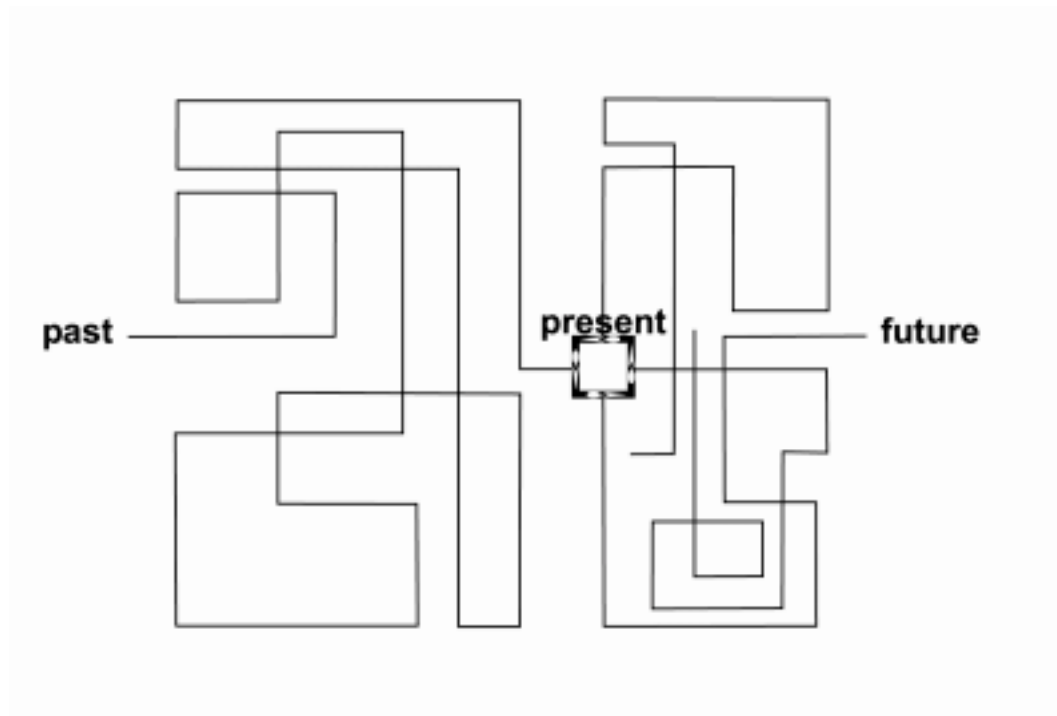
«In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others; in the fiction of Ts'ui Pên; he chooses — simultaneously — all of them. [0]»

This difference opens a new difficulty as soon as a destination has to be reached. The concept of right or wrong establishes itself in the metaphor of a maze. Hence a chain of «right» decision leads to the desired destination. Rather than to discuss methods of finding such a chain we concentrate on the question in which way it alters the perception of the current situation, which is related to the theory of contingency described by Giorgio Agamben [1]. However it should be noticed that the intricacy of decision-making does not arise in the metaphor of the labyrinth.

This discussion will be applied to a theory of information and its structure. For example Deleuze [2] exposes a discussion about information and structure with his rhizom metaphor. He wrote that the meaning of information is always meta information about another substance. However if a biological rhizom root dies a variety of new roots spring from the dying root, thus the information is still there because the unity of past, future or at least the potential of one remains. The information will be present as long as there is a reference object for the information to be applied on.

6. Textual aims:

It is hard to see the clear pattern of both metaphors inside any information structure relationship. In the moment you describe information structure as a phenomenon with a reference to time, you are able to map the metaphors pattern in a desired form. This form can represent the past, present or future of a structure.



Dynamic processes at present are hard to focus on. Therefore the information should be in a beneficial form [3] to be communicated without diffusion. The form is configured that the individual can interact with the scene. Consequently one is able to create individual significance of the content. This opinion should be stressed from the metaphorical link to confusion, where a clear analysis of the benefits and shortcomings should be made.

«Just as we gaze through a “window” in the physical world, the GUI’s window metaphor suggests that the Interface can present data, words or images, as they “really are” – without distorting them. [4]»

This common problem beyond the degree of distortion which is caused by a two dimensional or a three dimensional «window» should be analysed with regard to the metaphor. In particular, the cognitive relationship between objects and the feedback by manipulating them with different devices and in space is of concern.

7. Artistic aims:

A specific three dimensional scenario for the exploration of a labyrinth or maze should be designed and programmed. The path of the pattern is generated by an algorithm displayed in an immersive CAVE environment. The programs architecture supports several interaction techniques mentioned in «an immersive system to support pattern detection [5]». These manipulation techniques are part of an interface that plays with three dimensional game aesthetics from «old dungeon games». Hence some subtle interface elements to manipulate the scene are going to be implemented.

As soon as you interact with a machine it is always the question what you want to manipulate. Thus the degree of self-determination in digital media is combined with a responsibility of the designers for the creation of the environments.

8. Instructor/tutor:
Prof. Olia Lialina
Prof. Dr. Helmut Draxler

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