

Inspiration mining: intersecting improbable connections in a new landscape of cultural reflection and influence

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Abstract. This article aims to present a critical reflection on the collaborative curatorship of the exhibition “Intersecting Improbable Connections”. It is a transdisciplinary exhibition covering architecture, design, arts, among other fields, and calls for non-linear productive thinking strategies. It explores the intersection of unlikely relationships to inspire memorable visits to museums, and it feeds the Inspædia platform, creating a new landscape of reflection and cultural influence. It advocates a new concept of exhibition curation that minimizes costs (because it does not involve transportation or insurance for the pieces) and is intended to help stimulate creative processes. Based on a selection of content from the participating museums’ permanent exhibitions, duly marked with QR Codes, visitors can access that content that is already available on the Inspædia platform and explore potentially endless connections, without losing contact with the physical object (and vice versa).

Keywords: User Experience Design · Inspiration Mining · Curatorship · Interaction Design · Inspædia

1. Introduction

The article aims to present and encourage a critical reflection on the curatorial project of the exhibition “Intersecting Improbable Connections” (2019 – 2023). The exhibition follows the interactive and collaborative intelligence platform <www.inspaedia.com>¹ (Fig. 1), whose development comes from doctoral research in

¹ “Inspædia is a kind of a revolution in perception, because it enables a new kind of visualization and the use of related contents, as well as a new kind of interface and interaction. It encourages non-linear thought, productive thought (high creativity) and

design with the title *Innovation, Design et cetera* at the Faculty of Architecture of the Technical University of Lisbon, Portugal (2006 – 2012) [1].

The Inspædia project (“an inspiring collaborative intelligence network”) was later supported by financial and human resources provided by the CAPES / Brazil Science without Borders Program, through the Special Visiting Research fellowship in the Post-Graduate Program in Design of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil (2014-2016). It culminates with the post-doctoral research “Inspædia Design UXD: inspiring collaborative and interactive intelligence” at the Lisbon School of Architecture, Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal (2016 – 2017).

During this process, the project was presented, discussed, validated and published on several occasions in different contexts and media (international conferences and national meetings, in paper and digital formats) [2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10].

The Inspædia project brings together a research team to review and achieve the Inspædia objectives. The research team has been instrumental in preparing the launch of the Inspædia platform. The exhibition “Intersecting Improbable Connections” will celebrate that launch. Next, an outline of the procedural itinerary of this exhibition is presented for reflection and discussion. Considering that the launch objectives need emotional and collaborative involvement of the largest possible number of users at a global scale – the Inspædiers² – we set up an online and offline launch strategy that is viral and innovative. The curatorial and exhibition concept aims to inspire memorable experiences in a new landscape of cultural reflection and influence which crosses, directly or indirectly, the following curating areas of interest: Design; Innovation; Art; Photography; Cinema; Performing Arts; Video Art; Architecture; Painting; Sculpture; Conferences; Exhibitions; Multimedia; Materials; Music; Historic Sites; Libraries; Universities; Teaching; Research Centers; Research; Media; Sustainability; Inclusive Design; Color; Digital Media; Digital Games; Trends; Fashion Design; Branding; Entrepreneurship; Augmented Reality; Digital Technology...

The strategy that informs the following curatorship project is related to the growth strategy of Content Curators, as well as the amount of content and relationships among content to be made available on the Inspædia platform: once the number of 100 Content Curators (CC) has been reached, each one refers 2 new CCs and is responsible for checking and validating the new content on the platform. The process is repeated until a network of 700 CCs is attained. Estimating an average production of 3 pieces of content per day and 9 related pieces of content per CC, this means 766 500 new pieces of content per year and 2 299 500 new related pieces of content per year as well.

inspiration – a memorable and playful user experience” [11]. Inspiring experiences “to be innovation” together is the Inspædia ethos.

² The inspædiers are collaborative visual storytellers who are always looking for the next productive spark (designers from a large variety of areas, architects, photographers, film directors, teachers from all teaching levels, researchers, artists from a large variety of areas, curators, entrepreneurs, managers, politicians, philosophers, university students et cetera).

2. Methods

“Intersecting Improbable Connections” is an inspiring transdisciplinary exhibition that crosses several fields and summons, from a methodological point of view, nonlinear strategies³, productive thinking⁴ and collaborative curation, exploiting the intersection of improbable relations between content to inspire⁵ new experiences.

Collaborative curatorship is both the underlying concept of the Inspædia conceptual model and the online platform that makes it operational: “We have developed a new way of operationalizing innovation and design processes inspired by the three previous models of providing knowledge (library, encyclopedia and museum), reverting them to the virtualities that the network allows. We crossed the notes of the concept of rhizome with those of the concept of library and arrived at the concept of labyrinth” [12]. The content from different curatorial areas available on the platform derives from an individual and collaborative ability to discover and present them visually, as well as unlikely relationships that can be established between them (existing or new relationships) to provoke jumps in the Inspædiars’ perception and inspire productive thinking processes.

The method used during the research process to build the Inspædia platform focused on: Case Studies, Concept Mapping, Content Analysis, Contextual Design Custom Experience Audit; Ergonomic Analysis; Experience Prototyping;

³ The collaboration of Content Curators from different disciplinary areas makes it possible to make numerous connections and configure non-linear itineraries in inspiration processes in the context of productive thinking. “Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask a creative person how they did something, they may feel a little guilty because they didn’t really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That’s because they were able to connect experiences they’ve had and synthesize new things. And the reason they were able to do that was that they’ve had more experiences or have thought more about their experiences than other people have. Unfortunately, that’s too rare a commodity. A lot of people in our industry haven’t had very diverse experiences. They don’t have enough dots to connect, and they end up with very linear solutions, without a broad perspective on the problem. The broader one’s understanding of the human experience, the better designs we will have” [13].

⁴ Wertheimer [14] coined the term “productive thinking” and Mari [15] proposed its use instead of creativity, because this term has suffered much wear and tear given its abusive application in common discourse. The context in which we speak of productive thinking is that of high creativity – a concept that is opposed to that of common creativity (Csikszentmihalyi 1997) [16]. Rudolf Arnheim (1904 – 2007) grasped the essence of the concept in the same sense we intend to use it: “Productive thinking is characterized, in arts and in sciences, by the interplay between the free interaction of forces within the field and the more or less solidified entities that persist as invariants in changing contexts” [17].

⁵ Inspiration means: encouragement; enthusiasm; genius; incentive; influence; insight; motivation; revelation; vision; afflatus; animus; approach; arousal; awakening; brainchild; brainstorm; creativity; elevation; exaltation; fancy; flash; hunch; illumination; impulse; motive; muse; notion; rumble; spark; spur; stimulation; thought; whim; deep thing; inflate. The Visual Thesaurus [18] relates Inspiration with: idea; thought; stirring; divine guidance; intuition; brainchild; inhalation; breathing in; intake; aspiration and Inspire with: instigate; prompt; occasion; enliven; exalt; invigorate; animate; revolutionize; breathe in; inhale; cheer; exhort; pep up; root on; urge; urge on.

Experiments; Exploratory Research; Focus Groups; Interviews; Literature Reviews; Mind Mapping; Observation; Participant Observation; Personas; Prototyping; Rapid Iterative Testing Evaluation (RITE); Research Through Design; Scenarios.

We have called on Kumar's "Seven Modes of the Innovation Process" [19]: i) "sense intent"; ii) "know context"; iii) "know people"; iv) "frame insights"; v) "explore concepts"; vi) "frame solutions"; vii) "realize offerings" to set up the scenarios that are both at the origin of our online and offline exhibition concept and the user experience (UX).

Firstly, the Content Curators (A1 + A2) (i.e. the Authors) select other Inspædia Content Curators (B1 + B2 + B3 + B4 ...) from different cultural areas (architecture, design, cinema, photography, media arts ...) to create (or insert) new content to feed new visual narratives ("Trails"). The Content Curators also select the hosts of the exhibition "Intersecting Improbable Connections": starting with a list of 137 museums (from 32 countries), they invite each director to participate, choosing one or more Content Curators (C1 + C2 + C3 + C4...). The three curatorial teams (A + B + C) – select and relate each pair of pieces of content, both physical (from the museums' permanent collections) and digital (what is already available on the Inspædia), duly marked with QR Codes, so the visitors can access that particular piece of content and explore its endless connections, without losing contact with the physical object (and vice versa). The following Inspædia functionalities allow those interactions: "Map", "Time Line", "My Collection", "Collections", "My Trail", "Trails" and "Get Inspired" (the latter challenges flâneurs to explore Inspædia) (Fig. 2-15).



Fig. 1. Inspædia imagotype. Source: Authors, 2016.

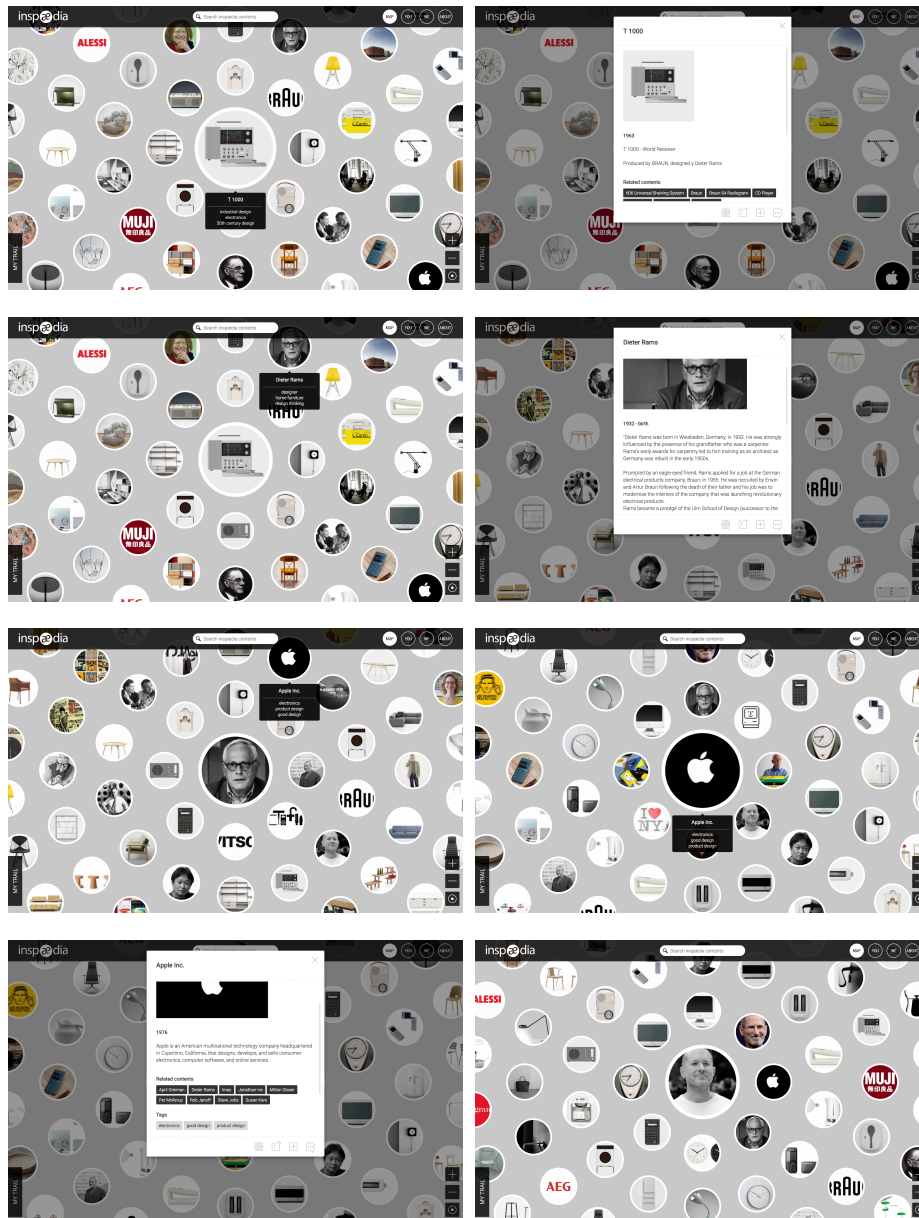
Figs. 2, 3. Visiting the Design Museum permanent exhibition: Braun content. Source: Authors, 2018.

Fig. 4. QR Code to access to Braun content on Inspædia. Source: Authors, 2019.

The relationships between the different Content Curators are collaborative and interactive, dynamic and rhizomatic, to produce unexpected intersections between different cultural areas and allowing Inspædiars and museum visitors to jump to unexpected contents and contexts; to provide infinite possibilities that may update and refine creative processes (i.e. to generate new insights and foresights). We also expect visitors to the exhibition "Intersecting Improbable Connections" to become Inspædiars (as Flâneurs or perhaps Content Curators).

Each Content Curator creates a narrative linking it to at least one piece from the museum's permanent collection to relate it to others on Inspædia. Each of these

narratives (saved in the Inspædia functionality “My Collection”) can intercept others, provoking detours (jumps) which are essential for the effectiveness of the inspiration mining processes.



Figs. 5–12. Visiting Inspædia: from Braun to Jonathan Ive. Source: Authors, 2019.

This is the reverse of what Inspædia Content Curators usually use, as it starts from the real (located) to the virtual (not located). The process of creating new visual narratives results in the expansion of the Inspædia content and, consequently, increases the number of opportunities for intersections with related content. Finally, it fulfils Inspædia's strategic goals of growth and creates unique experiences for visitors to the "Intersecting Improbable Connections" exhibition that can stimulate productive thinking processes.



Figs.13, 14. Back to the Design Museum's permanent exhibition: Apple content. Source: Authors, 2018.

Fig.15. QR Code to access Apple content on Inspædia. Source: Authors, 2019.

The exhibition concept is both collaborative and democratic, because it allows any visitor to become a Content Curator and increases collaborative intelligence and critical reflection. Visitors are invited to register on the Inspædia platform to be able to save the content they considered to be the most inspiring, along with the visual narratives of the Content Curators' tripartite team to build their own collection in "My Collection". They can share it by sending an e-mail. The "Share" and "Send Feedback" functionalities are fundamental to providing the desired and expected viral contagion (interaction> attraction> love).

It is our intention to invite the MAAT – Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (Lisbon, Portugal) to be the main host of the exhibition "Intersection Improbable Connections". A multi-screen will be installed in its entrance space to access and watch, in real time, all interactions, digital and physical itineraries and the geo-referenced location of visitors to all the permanent exhibitions of the participating museums. A series of conferences at the host-museum broadcast via streaming and workshops for children (K-12 schools) will complement and diversify the visitor experience.

We strongly believe this to be an unprecedented, memorable and inspiring curatorship concept to inspire productive thinking processes. It is part of a multidisciplinary curatorship and provides an (almost) infinite collection of related digital content that is transported to reality through bi and three-dimensional physical pieces to produce new reflections and interpretations of material and immaterial culture linked by the following tags: Abandoned Cities; Abandoned Places; Abstract Art; Abstract Expressionism; Abstractionism; Advertising; Aerodynamics; Aesthetics; Africa; Age And Aging; Alternative Consumption; Amsterdam; Analogy; Anthropology; Architect; Architectural Restoration; Architectural Renovation;

Architectural Theory; Architecture; Art; Art Academies; Art Déco; Art Direction; Art Education; Art History; Art Manifesto; Art Nouveau; Art School; Art Theory; Artificial Lighting; Artist; Arts And Crafts Movement; Asceticism; Asia; Authorship; Automobile Design; Avant-Garde; Aviation; Barcelona; Baroque; Bauhaus; Berlin; Biodiversity; Biography; Biology; Body Art; Bone China; Book Of Hours; Brand Design; Branding; Bricolage; Bridges; British Empire; Business Design; Capitalism; Catalan Modernism; Ceramics; Chairs; Chicago; Childhood; Chinese Porcelain; Christianity; Cinema; Class; Classic; Classicism; Closet; Co-Design; Cognition; Colour/Color; Colour In Architecture; Colour In Urban Space; Comics; Commodification; Communication Design; Communication Studies; Competition; Computers; Computer; Communism; Concept; Conceptual Art; Conservation; Constructivism; Consumer Culture; Consumer Representation; Consumerism; Consumers; Consumption; Contemporary Art; Cookware; Copenhagen; Corporate Design; Corporate Identity; Crafts; Creative Cognition; Criticism; Crystalware; Cubism; Culture; Culture Industries; Curation; Dada; Dadaism; Dandyism; De Stijl; Decadence; Decorative Arts; Deconstruction; Dematerialization; Design; Design Centre; Design Consultancy; Design Culture; Design Diary; Design Future; Design History; Design Journals; Design Magazines; Design Management; Design Methods; Design Project; Design Studies; Design Theory; Design Thinking; Dialogue; Digital Art; Digital Media; Disruptive Innovation; Dissertation; Diversity; Divisionism; Drawings; Dutch East India Company; Economics; Ecosystem; Education; Exhibition Design; Eighteenth Century; Electronic Video Gaming; Emotions; Empathy; Encyclopedia; Engineer; Engineering; Enlightenment; Entrepreneurs; Entrepreneurship; Environmental Design; Environmental Footprint; Essay; Ethics; Ethnography; Ethnology; Europe; Everyday Life; Exhibition; Exhibition History; Experimental Theatre; Expressionism; Faience; Fantasy; Fanzines; Fascism; Fashion; Fashion Design; Fashion Forecasting; Fashion Industry; Fauvism; Femininity; Feminism; Feminist Movement; Fetishism; Field Theory; Figurative Art; Figure; Figure of Speech; Flâneur/Flaneuse; Florence; Flower Festivals; Folk Art; Form; Frankfurt School; Furniture; Futurism; Futurism; Gambling; Game; Gardening; Geography; Ghettos; Glass; Glassware; Globalization; Glocalization; Grand Tour; Graphic Design; Great Britain; Habits; Happening; Hedonism; Helsinki; Health; Heritage; Hero; Heroine; Higher Education; Hinduism; Historicism; History; Home Appliances; Homeware; Homosexuality; Human Body; Humanist Typography; Hybridization; Idealism; Identity; Identity; Ideology; Illuminated Manuscript; Illumination; Illustrated Book; Illustration; Image; Inclusive Architecture; Inclusive Design; India; Informality; Information Design; Innovation; Insight; Interior Architecture; Interior Design; Interior Design History; International Exhibitions; International Style; Internationalism; Internet; Islam; Isms; Italy; Jamming; Jazz; Judaism; Jungendstil; Kids; Kitchen Design; Kitsch; Knowledge Workers; Labour History; Land Art; Landscape Design; Leisure; Lgbtqia (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual); Liberalism; Library; Life Sciences; Lifestyle; Light; Light And Colour; Lighting Design; Lisbon; Literature; Locomotives; Logotype; London; Luxury; Madrid; Magazines; Magazines Women's; Management; Mannerism; Mantua; Manufacture; Mapping; Marginalia; Marketing; Marketing; Marxism; Mass Culture; Material; Material Culture; Material Culture Of Childhood; Material Studies; Materiality; Materials Engineering; Mathematics; Matter; Memory;

Memorabilia; Metal; Method; Middle Ages; Migrations; Milan; Mimesis; Mimicry; Mind Map; Miniature Illustration; Minimalism; Mirabilia; Model; Modern Movement; Modernism; Modernist Typography; Modernity; Modernization; Montréal; Moscow; Motion Graphic Design; Motorcycle Design; Multiculturalism; Museums; Museums Studies; Music; Music Festivals; Mythology; Myths; Naples; NASA; Nationalism; Natural History; Natural Lighting; Natural Sciences; Nazism; Neo; Neo Crafts; Neo-Impressionism; Neo-Tribes; Neocapitalism; Neoclassicism; Neoliberalism; Neoplasticism; Neorealism; New Look; New Materials; New Media; New York; Nineteenth Century; North America; Nostalgia; Notebook; Novelty; Oceania; Office Design; Open Innovation; Opera; Oporto; Oslo; Packaging; Painting; Panopticon; Paris; Parlour; Participation; Participatory Design; Patent; Pattern; Pattern Book; PCM (Production-Consumption-Mediation) Paradigm; Performance; Performance Arts; Philosopher; Philosophy; Photography; Physics; Pictogram; Picture Book; Plain Style; Plastics; Plywood; Poet; Poetry; Poiesis; Poietic; Pop Art; Popular Culture; Porcelain; Porcelain; Portfolio; Portuguese Empire; Post-Impressionism; Post-Modernism; Post-Structuralism; Postcards; Postcolonialism; Poster Design; Post-industrial Society; Positivism; Poverty; Prague; Prefabrication; Prints; Product Engineering; Production; Productive Thinking; Propaganda; Prosumers; Prototyping; Psychology; Public Space; Publishing; Purism; Quilting; Radial Plan; Railway Design; Railways; Rajasthan; Realism; Recreation; Recycling; Reformation; Refrigerators; Regionalism; Religion; Renaissance; Rendering; Representation; Retail; Retail Design; Revivals; Revivals; Rhetorics Of Needs And Wants; Rituals; Rococo; Roman Empire; Romanticism; Rome; Ruins; Russia; Samples; San Francisco; San Petersburg; Sanitary ware; Scandinavian Design; Scenography Design; School; School Of Design; Science; Science And Technology Museums; Science Fiction; Scientific Housekeeping; Scrapbook; Scroll; Seat; Semiotics; Senses; Sensibility; Service Design; Service Industry; Seventeenth Century; Sex; Sexuality; Shelving; Sign; Silk; Skill; Smart Phone; Sociability; Social Class; Social Design; Social Distinction; Social Exclusion; Social Exclusivity; Social Inclusivity; Social Innovation; Social Issue; Social Mobility; Social Movements; Social Reform; Social Sciences; Socialism; Socialist Realism; Sociology; Sofa; Software Design; Sound Design; South America; Souvenirs; Space Perception; Stage Design; Stained Glass; Standardization; Still Life; Storage; Store; Streamlining; Style; Styling; Subculture; Subjectivity; Suburbia; Suprematism; Surrealism; Sustainability; Symbolism; System; Table; Tablet; Tableware; Tableware; Taste; Taylorism; Technique; Technology; Teenagers; Television; Television Set Design; Textile Design; Textile Design & Manufacture; Textiles; Theater; Theatre Set Design; Theory; Thesis; Tools; Tourism; Toys; Tradition; Transculturation; Transgression; Transport; Transport Design; Transitional Object; Transavanguardia; Trenchcoat; Trendology; Trousers; Tudor Style; Twentieth Century; Typeface; Typography; Unesco Heritage Sites; Uniformity; Uniforms; University; Urban Cultures; Urban Design; Urbanization; Urban Space Renovation; USA; User Culture; UxD (User Experience Design); Vaporware; Venice; Vernacular; Verona; Vicenza; Video; Video Art; Vienna; Viennese Actionism; Vision; Visual Culture; Visual Culture; Vorticism; VR (Virtual Reality); Wallpaper; War; Water Closet; Web Design; Well-Being; Wiener Secession; Wiener Werkbund; Wiener Werksätze; Wikinomics; Wood; Wool; Work; Workshop; World Exhibitions.

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