

**Pass the
Information**

**Extend the
Knowledge**

**Gathering and Sharing Online
in Creative Practices**

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Abstract

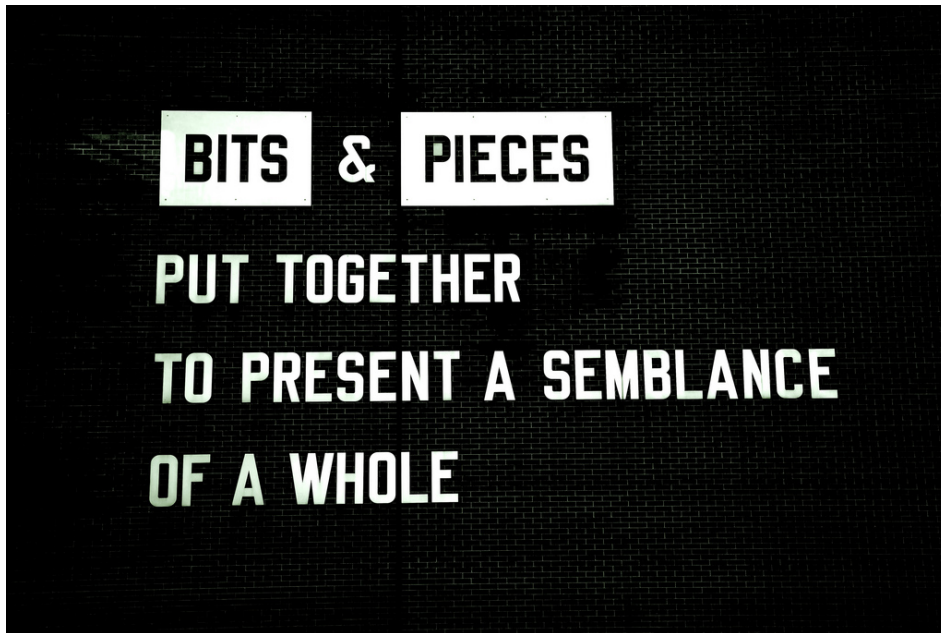
This thesis presents an in-depth exploration of gathering as a creative process within the digital realm. Through the investigation of User-Generated Content (UGC) platforms, this study examines how interviewed artists, designers, and developers are using these platforms as "digital gardens", i.e. online containers to cultivate over time curated references that reflect their visual culture. The research secondly sheds light on the crucial role of specific platforms, in turn influencing creative processes, intertwining visual culture, ownership, content curation and collaboration, platform design, and usability. It therefore aims to thematize emerging tension points, unraveling the impact of these platforms on creativity, knowledge cultivation, and the complexities of managing diverse digital information spaces.

Examining the collaborative aspects of gathering, with the case study of Are.na (2012), this study navigates the transition from individualistic creative processes to more inclusive models of collaborative commons through sharing within UGC platforms. Despite their inclination towards privacy, these platforms paradoxically foster external source interconnections, emphasizing broader themes of sharing, open-access culture, and redefining ownership dynamics. Through an analysis of platform challenges and radical initiatives promoting personal web spaces, it explores cultural shifts, ownership dynamics, and the economic implications of shared creative

processes and resources, hinting at potential collective knowledge growth.

KEYWORDS

Collection, Gathering, Sharing, Knowledge, Digital Gardening, User-Generated Content, Online platforms, Curation, Collaboration, Public Learning



↑ WEINER, Lawrence, 1993, 'Bits & Pieces Put Together to Present a Semblance of a Whole', Night Photograph of Installation, Walker Acquisition Fund © The Artist.

Introduction

This master's thesis explores the potential offered by online collaborative platforms in facilitating creative processes, examined through qualitative interviews involving artists, designers, and developers. With the emergence of Web 2.0 (2003) and subsequent User-Generated Content (UGC) platforms like Tumblr (2007), Pinterest (2010), and Are.na (2012), creatives have significantly enriched their visual culture. These platforms provide dedicated spaces for various purposes, spanning from passive media consumption to more active engagement methods such as documentation, curation, contextualization, collection-making, collaboration, and resource-sharing. The investigation aims to shed light on the often undisclosed creative processes employed by individuals in these domains, and how in turn they are influenced by platforms, and could help foster better understanding and as an example, facilitate billing procedures.

If the beginnings of the Internet were accompanied by an ideology of accessibility and sharing comparable to a new form of public space, referred to by founder of the World Wide Web, Tim Berners-Lee[a] as “a collaborative medium, a place where we [could] all meet and read and write.”¹, its development, including UGCs, is a form that refutes this principle. Owing to advancements in recommendation algorithms, miniaturization of hardware, wireless connectivity, and expanded data storage capabilities, most current UGC platforms exist as private data repositories within the corporate sphere of the Web, predominantly centralized by tech giants like GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft, etc.).

Web 2.0 also witnessed the rise of mobile devices, altering user interactions. In December 2010, desktops held 95.9% of the



↑ Tim Berners Lee in front of the World Wide Web, 1989, @CERN.

01. LAWSON, Mark, 'Berners-Lee on the read/write web', BBC News [online], 9 August 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/4132752.stm> [consulted: 16 October 2023]

market share compared to mobile's 4.1%, but by September 2023, mobile devices claimed a 53% share². The decline of the World Wide Web is attributed to the surge in dedicated mobile applications released by device manufacturers' application stores such as Apple's App Store or Google's Play Store (both 2008), overshadowing traditional web usage and aligning with the dynamics of platform capitalism. As asserted by Knopf³, the structure of social media platforms is engineered to retain users within these "walled garden" enclosed environments, solely focused on content consumption, rather than interconnection.

UGC services and networks foster a notion of a somewhat ambiguous "semi-public" digital space for human interaction, as highlighted by Ertzscheid⁴. However, these platforms, according to Tariq Krim's *Slow Web Initiative*⁵, are "greedy for our data", confining interactions and content behind barriers, via restricting access, relying on user data consent, offering limited free access (freemium), premium subscriptions, or demanding attention in exchange for access. Whereas, according to Jenny Odell:⁶

A public, noncommercial space demands nothing from you in order for you to enter, nor for you to stay; the most obvious difference between public space and other spaces is that you don't have to buy anything, or pretend to buy something, to be there.

—Jenny Odell

02. STATCOUNTER GLOBALSTATS, 'Desktop vs Mobile vs Tablet Market Share Worldwide', Statcounter GlobalStats [online chart], September 2023, <https://gs.statcounter.com/platform-market-share/desktop-mobile-tablet/worldwide> [consulted: 16 October 2023]
03. LIALINA, Olia et al. (eds.), 2009. 'Digital Folklore: to computer users, with love and respect'. Stuttgart: merz & solitude. Projektiv. ISBN 978-3-937982-25-0. [online] https://monoskop.org/images/9/91/Lialina_Olia_Espenschied_Dragan_eds_Digital_Folklore_2009.pdf [consulted: 2023.11.25]
04. ERTZSCHEID Olivier, 2013, 'Qu'est-ce que l'identité numérique? Enjeux, outils, méthodologies', Marseille, OpenEdition Press, series: « Encyclopédie numérique », 69 p., ISBN 978-2-8218-1337-3.
05. KRIM, Tariq, 2023, 'Slow Web' [online] <https://www.slowweb.io/fr/> [consulted: 2023.11.27]
06. ODELL, Jenny, 2019. 'How to do nothing: resisting the attention economy'. Brooklyn, NY: Melville House. ISBN 978-1-61219-750-0.

But throughout the interviews and the Web, Are.na is acknowledged as a digital garden. This paradox raised inquiries on which specific attributes make a private UGC platform suitable as a semi-public digital garden. In a 2019 conference⁷, Are.na Co-founder Charles Broskoski developed the following attributes of a UGC platform. Do platforms, encourage active or passive use, regarding aspects of cognitive load? According to Geert Lovink, “Today’s psychological platforms offer personalized, fuzzy information for the swiping dazed and confused. We do not know what we want, but we want it so much.”⁸ In a 2020 US study, passive use of Instagram was more common than active use (48.48% vs. 20.79%).⁹

A *garden* draws a sense of public view and access. Commonly defined as a “rich-well cultivated region” where things are “cultivated”, they can be displayed “[...] so that the public can go and see them [plants and flowers].”¹⁰ Out of this context, radical handmade¹¹ and public uses of the Web re-emerge, reminiscent of the Web’s early vernacular days.

The individually-scaled practice of *Digital gardening* then, refers to planting seeds, cultivating knowledge over time, on your fully owned and handmade corner of the Web, without restrictions to specific platforms or technologies. It is another neologism to the list of nature-inspired terms to describe technological actions and methods, dating from the nineties via *Hypertext Gardens*¹² (1998), early Hypertext (1965) experiments within the Web by Mark Bernstein. The essay metaphorically featured topics of free internet exploration within open gardens and wilderness. While being less centered on building personal digital spaces, it emphasized the experience flows and how Web contents could be organized.

07. BROSKOSKI, Charles, 2019. ‘Creating the new social web’, The Conference [online]. Malmö, Sweden. 28 August 2019. Retrieved from: <https://videos.theconference.se/charles-broskoski-creating-the> [consulted: 2023.11.25].
08. LOVINK, Geert, 2021, ‘Notes on the platform condition’, Making and Breaking. [online] <https://makingandbreaking.org/article/notes-on-the-platform-condition/> [consulted: 2023.11.23]
09. BEYENS, Ine et al., 2020. ‘The effect of social media on well-being differs from adolescent to adolescent’. Scientific Reports. Vol. 10, no.1, p. 10763. DOI [10.1038/s41598-020-67727-7](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-67727-7).
10. MERRIAM WEBSTER, ‘Definition Garden’, [online] <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/garden> [consulted: 2023.11.27]
11. R. CARPENTER, J., 2015, ‘A Handmade Web’, LuckySoap. [online] <http://luckysoap.com/statements/handmadeweb.html> [consulted: 2023.11.25]
12. BERNSTEIN, Mark, 1998. ‘Hypertext Gardens’ [online] <http://www.eastgate.com/garden/Gardens.html> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

Re-emerged in 2015 by Mike Caulfield's conference and essay¹³ *The Garden and the Stream, a Technopastoral*, Caulfield underlined the need to reclaim independent ownership from the corporated Web platforms and social media, by setting up a personal yet public digital space of knowledge curation on the Web, for content to be de-streamed from algorithmic feeds and cultivated over time.



↑ Video of Caulfield's Stanford Conference,
'The Garden and the Stream: a Technopastoral', 2015.
→ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckv_CjyKyZY&feature=emb_logo

Therefore, the research question I endeavor to answer is:

How using online user-aggregated content
platforms and digital gardens to gather
and share knowledge can transform (or not)
a creative practice?

This question will address the ambiguous tension point of
how creatives actively use those platforms, versus how those
platforms develop passive influence on their processes in return.

Passively liking an image is not the same as connecting it
to a curated folder actively defined by the user. Is the platform
open-ended or restrictive for how one can use it? What is the
focus or purpose of the platform? The scale and diversity of the
population of the platform are also highly linked to what content
(its quality and context) is generated on it. To what extent the
platform allows the interconnection of Web contents outside its
walls? To what extent the platform gives a sense of ownership to
its population to steer the direction of the platform? What is the

13. CAULFIELD, Mike, 2015, 'The Garden and the Stream,
a Technopastoral', HapGood, [online] <https://hapgood.us/2015/10/17/the-garden-and-the-stream-a-technopastoral/>
[consulted: 2023.11.27]

method of communication between members on the platform? Is it considered introverted, with minimal features, or extraverted with full multimedia communications? In this sense, does the platform allows meaningful ways to be alone on it? Last but not least, do the platforms target individual gain or encourage collective gain interacting with other members' content?

To answer this investigation, nine qualitative interviews of Western Europe-based artists, designers, and developers were conducted on their general online creative processes, and more specifically on the Are.na platform. We will gain insights into various aspects, such as tension points related to privacy, collaboration, and sharing within the creation process, and specific use cases of platforms, ranging from passive to active, and how they influence creative methods—transitioning from individual-based research toward more radical and critical models of gathering and sharing resources.

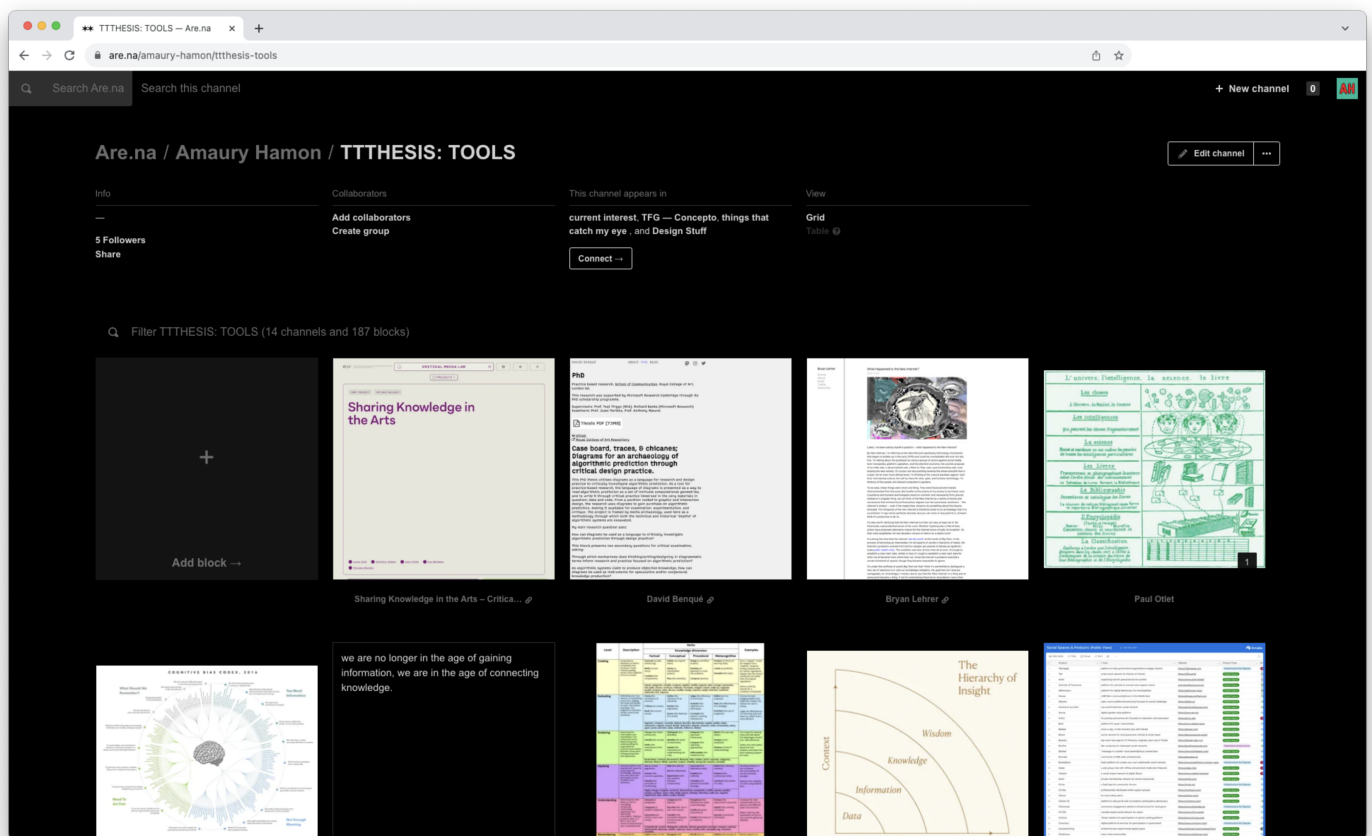
The aspects of creative processes in focus regard how interviewees, beyond their craft, practice what Nicolas Nova calls “Research-Creation”, i.e. to develop and renew knowledge through tactics, tools, observation, exploration, and combination of ideas and concepts.¹⁴ I believe the exploration online regarding the browsing, curating, and storing of references, to develop visual or literacy culture is key to investigating: which are the end goals, and to what extent interviewees exchange, collaborate, contribute, and share publicly—actively or unconsciously in their process. The interview kit helped the thesis to get insights and tension points such as topics of the intimacy of ideas, originality and legitimacy, gatekeeping, or contributing and sharing publicly.

Developing a creative's visual culture online—as is the case offline—implies spending time and consuming content shared by others, to “absorb”, i.e. curate and collect what can fuel inspiration, and lead to new knowledge and ideas. Considering the online space as a pool of aggregated visual culture already there, why would creatives use it only one way and not contribute more actively with their self-made collections?

This MA thesis is designed as a website-first output, to shape a form meaningfully suitable to its content. Using web-to-print features (more on this process available in the design notes appendice), it allows for anyone to print freely the research in A4, supporting universal access when unfortunately, most academic writings lack a broader audience due to limited online presence, enclosed access to academic platforms, and lack of PDF indexation in search results. In an echo of the aggregated

14. NOVA, Nicolas, 2021. ‘Enquête/Création en design’. Genève: HEAD Publishing. Manifestes, 2. ISBN 978-2-940510-47-4.

platforms investigated and the digital gardening approach, this thesis was fueled by gathered references in a dedicated public Are.na channel¹⁵, and its design methodology reflects the overall topics at hand in this research, between resource-sharing and learning in public. With accessibility in mind, the web-based content allows a diversified and richer approach, including audio/video/website embeddings. This personal experiment, as a graphic designer interested in Web programming, led to the tinkering of alternative and open-source publishing and writing tools, rather than standard GUI-based corporated counterparts.



↑ TTTHESES: TOOLS, Are.na channel where references for the Thesis were gathered. [Link](https://www.Are.na/amaury-hamon/ttthesis-tools)

15. HAMON, Amaury, 2023. 'TTTHESIS: TOOLS', [Are.na](https://www.Are.na/amaury-hamon/ttthesis-tools) [online] <https://www.Are.na/amaury-hamon/ttthesis-tools> [consulted 2023.11.25].

Gathering as a radical creative process

This chapter embarks on a nuanced exploration of gathering as a radical creative process in the digital realm. From Le Guin's perspective to evolving contemporary digital gathering methods, it dissects how platforms redefine authorship and emphasize collective efforts within a container-content paradigm. With diverse perspectives from nine Western-based creatives interviewed, this chapter illuminates the shift from traditional to online methods. It scrutinizes the role of specific UGC platforms in the creative process, used for curation and collaboration on creative content gatherings. Therefore, it unravels their impact on creativity, knowledge cultivation, and the complexities in managing information across varied digital spaces, as well as the intricate relationships between visual culture, content curation, and platform usability.

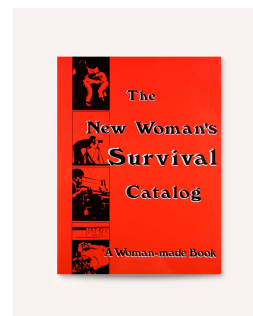
On Gathering

Designer Mindy Seu roots Ursula K. Le Guin's gathering practice and extends it to a contemporary approach in the digital age. Le Guin in her book *Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (1986) brings perspectives on the notion of collection and gathering, stating the first human tool was a basket, a tool for communion, rather than a spear, a tool for domination. It then places the protagonist in narrative structures as a gatherer rather than a hunter.¹⁶ To this aim, Le Guin emphasizes the significance of gathering, collecting, and sharing. This vision supports the idea of a collection working towards collective good expressed by Daniel and asks questions about the role of the collector, and also the form of the container gathering such collections. The carrier bag, in this context, becomes a symbol of collection and preservation—a vessel for holding various elements that contribute to the sustenance and enrichment of a community. Le Guin's theory challenges the dominance of the hero's narrative and highlights the importance of collective efforts, cooperation, and the sharing of resources and knowledge.

In her essay *On Gathering*¹⁷, Mindy Seu defines the process of gathering to "aggregate, together with collaborators, disparate pieces from an ecosystem, and develop the appropriate container for each collection."

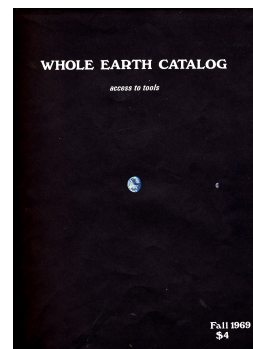
Moreover, she explores how digital platforms and online events have transformed the way people gather and share information. Bringing different examples of collective collections, such as the *New Woman's Survival Catalog*,^[b] promoted as a "feminist *Whole Earth Catalog*"^[c], and the *Cyberfeminism Index*^[d], Seu explores the evolving nature of gathering, blurring the lines between container and content, and challenging the traditional notions of fixed, solitary authorship, as she states:

b



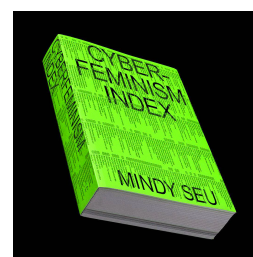
↑ Cover of 'New Woman's Survival Catalog', 1973, by Kirsten Grimstad & Susan Rennie.

c



↑ Cover of the first issue of 'Whole Earth Catalog', Stewart Brand, 1968.

d



↑ Cover of 'Cyberfeminism Index', by Mindy Seu, 2022.

16. LE GUIN, Ursula K., YI, Pu and HARAWAY, Donna, 2019. 'The carrier bag theory of fiction'. London: Ignota. ISBN 978-1-9996759-9-8.

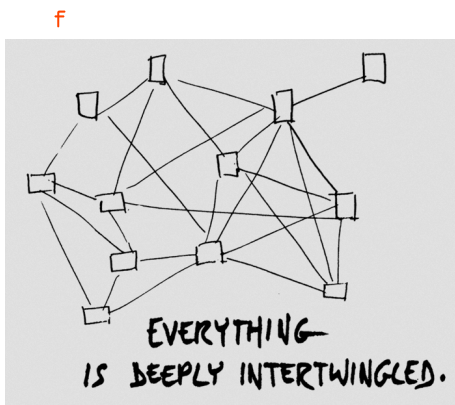
17. SEU, Mindy, 2021. 'On Gathering'. Shift Space [online]. No.1. <https://issue1.shiftspace.pub/on-gathering-mindy-seu> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

Gathering stories is radical because it refuses to give the gatherer all of the credit. The collector-collection dynamic is deliberately broken. The person who puts it together is only one of many parts.

–Mindy Seu



↑ Timeline Link



↑ Drawing of Ted Nelson in 'Computer Lib/Dream Machines', 1974.

Gathering therefore challenges the conventional notion of individual credit or authorship. It underscores the idea that the person collecting or assembling isn't the sole creator or authority behind it. Instead, it emphasizes the collective nature of gathering, where contributors, narrators, and various sources play essential roles in shaping the narrative. It is relevant to creative processes because it questions the traditional concept of a single author being solely responsible for creation. It highlights the importance of acknowledging the multiple voices, perspectives, and contributors involved in creative endeavors, advocating for a more inclusive and collaborative approach to creation. This perspective resonates with the ethos of collective participation and shared credit, emphasizing the richness that emerges from diverse contributions and collaborative efforts that can be leveraged on UGC Platforms for creatives.

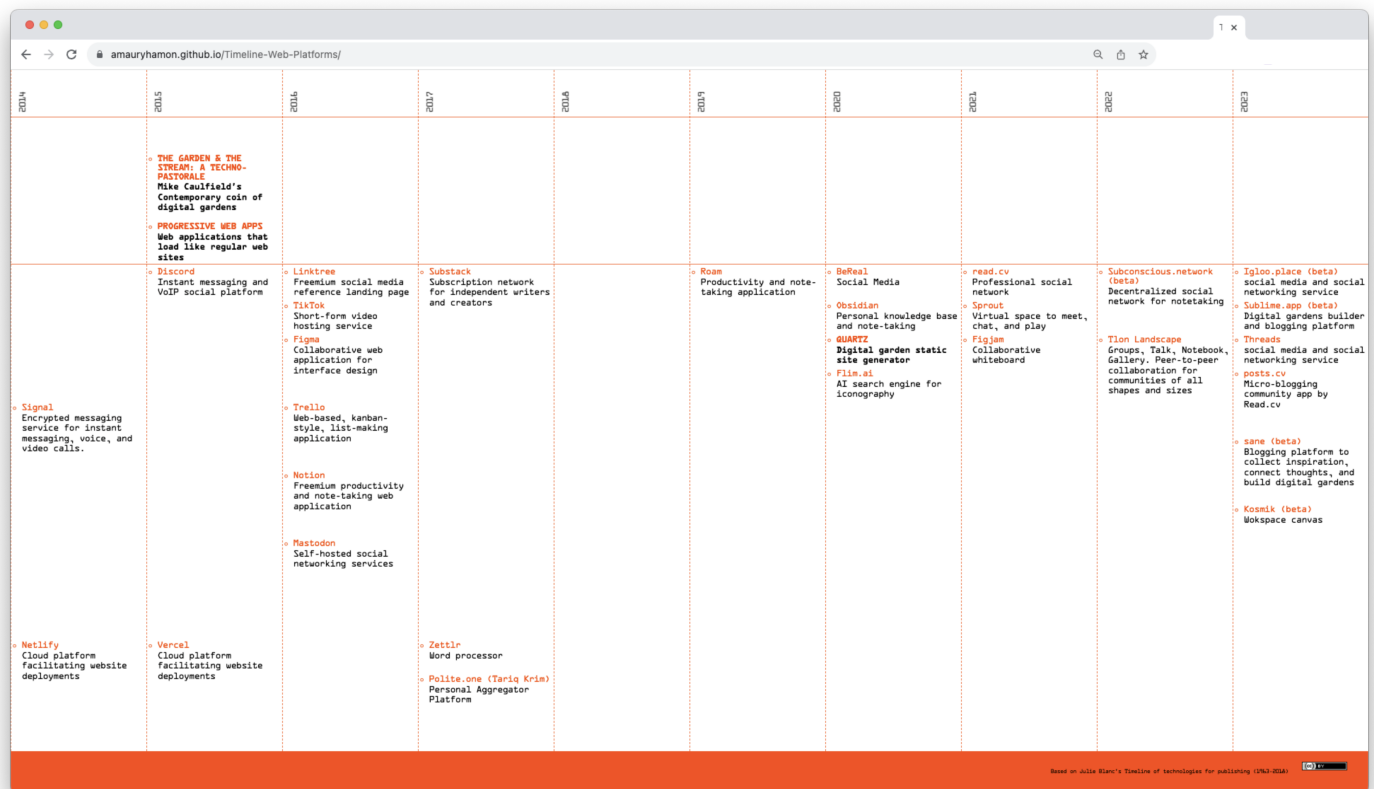
The following [timeline](#)¹⁸ aims to historicize the evolution of digital platforms and archives, from Ted Nelson's Hypertext (1963)^[f] to the proliferation of current digital platforms forming the Centralized Enclosed corner of the Corporated Web. In this timeline are emphasized: major technology and platform evolutions, platforms related to creative processes mentioned in the interviews. The overall reflects a rise of smaller independent platforms after the boom of major social networks.

18. HAMON, Amaury, 'Timeline of technologies and services for online creative research (1963-2023)', [online] <https://amauryhamon.github.io/Timeline-Web-Platforms/> [consulted: 2023.11.27]

14 PASS THE INFORMATION, EXTEND THE KNOWLEDGE

1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991		1992					
◦ ImageText and digital archives		◦ HYPERTEXT (TED NELSON) First published reference										◦ Project Gutenberg (Michael S. Hart) Digital library of books								◦ NoteCards (Xerox PARC) Hypertext-based personal knowledge base system				◦ HyperCard (Bill Atkinson, Apple) First successful hypermedia systems				◦ WORLD WIDE WEB (CERN, Geneva (Tim Berners-Lee))		◦ INTERNET Internet public, replacing Arpanet		◦ FIRST WEBSITE CERN, Geneva (Tim Berners-Lee)		◦ arXiv Repository of electronic preprints	
Web platforms																																			
Timeline of technologies and services for online creative research (1963-2023)																																			

↑ 'Timeline of technologies and services for online creative research (1963-2023).'



↑ 'Timeline of technologies and services for online creative research (1963-2023).'

Digital gathering methods as means to collect knowledge

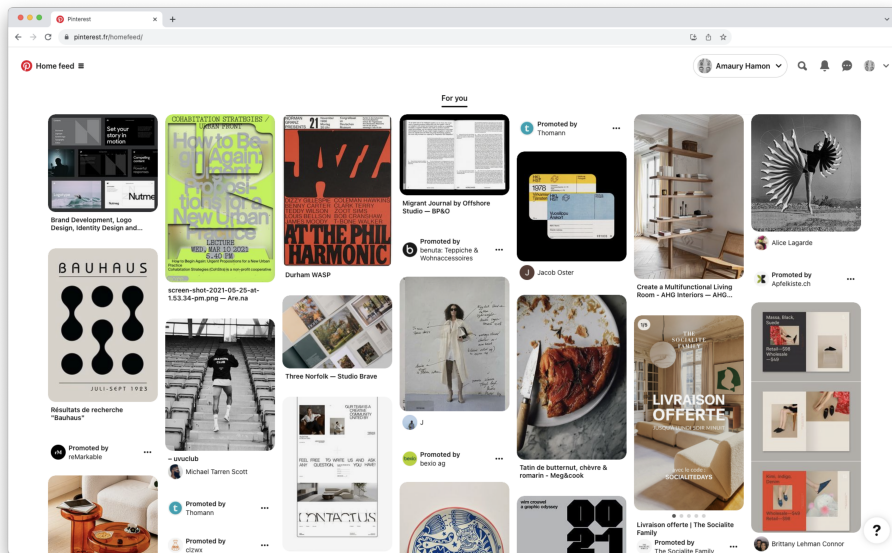
Interviews conducted with nine European-based creatives (artists, designers, developers) in the summer of 2023 highlight the diversity of digital gathering methods and motivations. Assessing the transformation of creatives' gathering methods into the digital landscape, they explored the shift from traditional to online gathering methods, emphasizing the role of UGC platforms or digital gardens in personal or collective knowledge curation, privately or publicly. Contrarily to the vertically defined classification of 20th century Paul Otlet's Mundaneum [9] analog knowledge archives, Some UGC Platforms allow interconnection of content, for users to freely constitute their curation into a self-labeled knowledge base, by either uploading or connecting any content found online either inside the platform or outside.

While browser tools, social media, journaling, and search engines are indeed recurrent within creative processes, a key typology of platforms for collection and curation refers to visual discovery engines, such as Pinterest with its masonry grid feed of images, Tumblr with its vertically-stacked stream of blog content, and Are.na, at crossroads between creative social network, knowledge management, and visual discovery platform. Those platforms for collection considerably help the gathering of visual culture, fostering creative endeavors, at varying degrees of curation quality and collaborative features (web-clipping, social features), depending on the community's content and use cases. This subset of UGC aggregated platforms could be neologized as User-Gathered Curated Collaborative Creative Content platforms (UGCCCC).

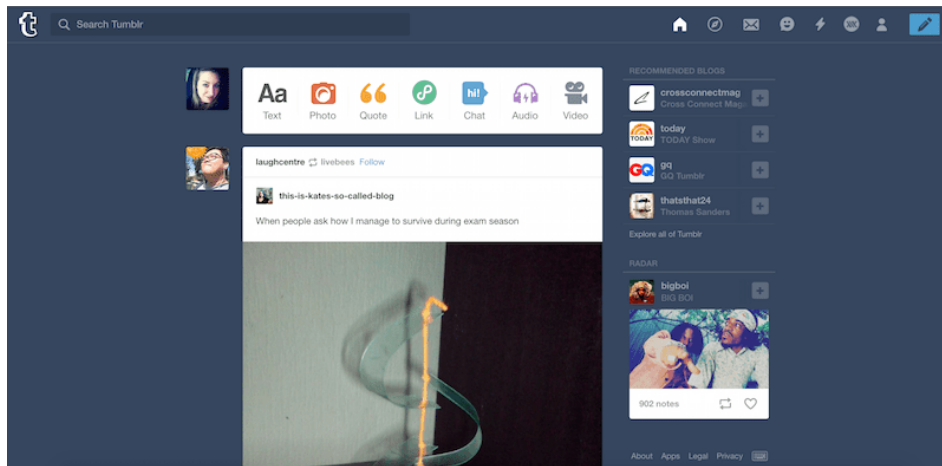
g



↑ 'Mundaneum', founded by Paul Otlet, 1919-34, Belgium.



↑ Pinterest Masonry grid overview.



↑ Tumblr backend stack interface overview.

In common sense, making a *collection* would mean bringing together elements due to their value, attractiveness, or interestingness, “over a period of time”, “for study, comparison, or exhibition or as a hobby.”¹⁹ A collection could bring quite disparate elements while sharing a few common points, or *associations*. Emphasizing the way of thinking, the connections, and associations, are key to considering how creative practices collect, and connect by association, to grow and organize knowledge over time, and to develop documentation, new skills, crafts, or ideas. As Swiss curator, critic, and historian of art Hans Ulrich Obrist²⁰ implies:

19. MERRIAM WEBSTER, ‘Collection definition’, Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2023, [online] <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/collection> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

20. OBRIST, Hans Ulrich, 2014. ‘Ways of curating’. First American edition. New York: Faber and Faber, Inc. ISBN 978-0-86547-819-0.

To make a collection is to find, acquire, organize, and store items [...]. It is also, inevitably, a way of thinking about the world—the connections and principles that produce a collection contain assumptions, juxtapositions, findings, experimental possibilities, and associations. Collection-making, you could say, is a method of producing knowledge.

—Hans Ulrich Obrist

Similarly to Obrist's definition of collection, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi defines *creativity* as expressing unusual thoughts and helping experience the world in novel ways, implying originality, and playfulness.²¹ *Creative processus* then, can be referred to as a form of inquiry and collection that goes beyond traditional, empirical methods and incorporates creative tactics and artistic exploration. Associated with fields such as the arts, design, and humanities, the goal is therefore not only to discover new information but also to generate novel ideas, perspectives, or expressions, to share information, through art-based production or building knowledge.

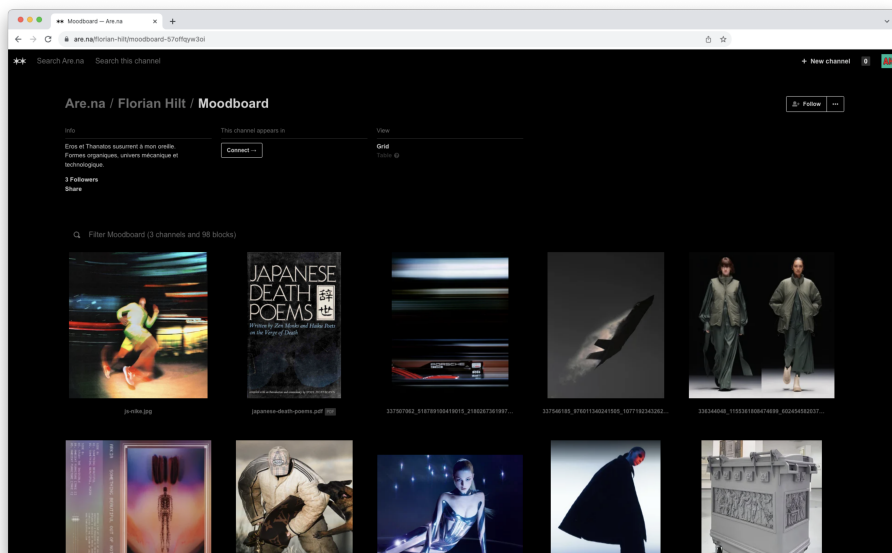
21. CSIKSZENTMIHALYI, Mihaly, 2013. 'Creativity: the psychology of discovery and invention'. First Harper Perennial modern classics edition. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics. ISBN 978-0-06-228325-2.

Perspectives from Creative Practitioners

TOOLBOX AND PROCESSES

This online gathering and collection-making process of creatives, as a means to fuel visual culture and generate knowledge, is firstly echoed in several steps by one of my interviewees, Florian Hilt, 3D artist and photographer based in Lausanne. By first pooling visual cues from a plurality of algorithmic feeds (Instagram, Twitter and TikTok), he then merges his findings into curated Are.na containers:

I'm based on a notion of micro-universes and the theory of attraction and repulsion. What interests me a lot when I have access to all this content is to be able to mix it together. It helps me to create projects as I'm building by association and repulsion of ideas.
-Florian Hilt



↑ Florian Hilt's public Are.na 'Moodboard' Channel.

UGCCCC platforms could therefore help creatives to create compatible containers for gathering and building their personal knowledge, free of imposed classification systems and norms. Yet, they raise challenges in the endeavors to manage and organize information across multiple platforms, sometimes leading to chaotic methods as artist Lucas Erin states:

I use several of them on a *seasonal* basis, but then I have a real problem mastering this data. My problem is that I have physical sketchbooks, I use Notes quite a lot on my iPhone and then on the other side I have a Pinterest folder and then a folder on Instagram, and then behind that there's Are.na. It's all a bit mixed up. Not to mention the InDesign documents in which I try to make pdfs mood boards... My use of platforms is completely chaotic.

–Lucas Erin

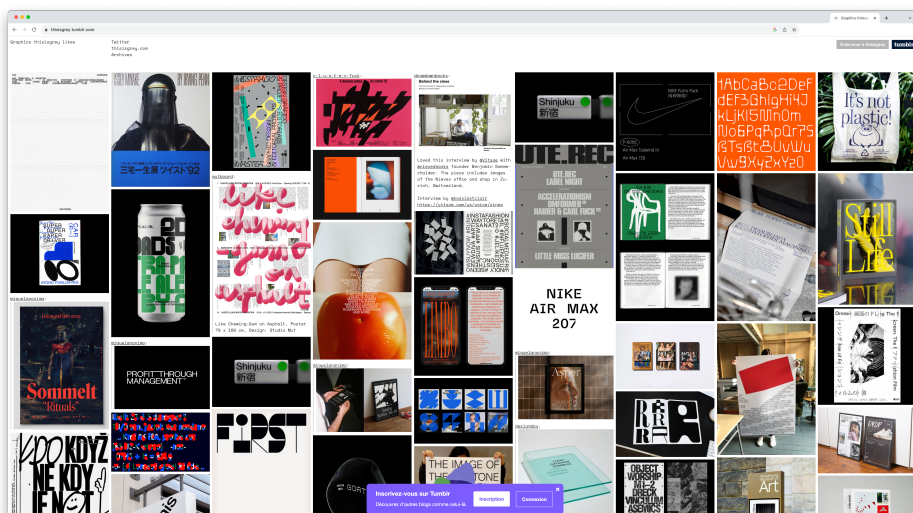
According to Jonas Pelzer, Berlin-based designer and developer, some platforms feel more suitable than others, while Daniel Robert Prieto, London-based Creative Director and curator of the graphic design-oriented Tumblr *This is Grey*, underlines the interface ease of use:

I tried multiple research tools in the past, but most of them don't exist anymore. But I always came back to a non-collaborative standard setup with bookmarks and notes before using Are.na, which is the first platform I'm really happy with. [...] In addition to my notes app and my analog notebook, I mainly use Are.na for research and organization. I also use Twitter, Mastodon and Instagram, but I don't consider them comparable. I sometimes look for specific resources on Twitter and Mastodon but that's as far as the research part goes.

–Jonas Pelzer

Tumblr. Why do I like it? Because it's just one big stream of images, it's so simple. There are tools for downloading the whole of Tumblr.

–Daniel Robert Prieto

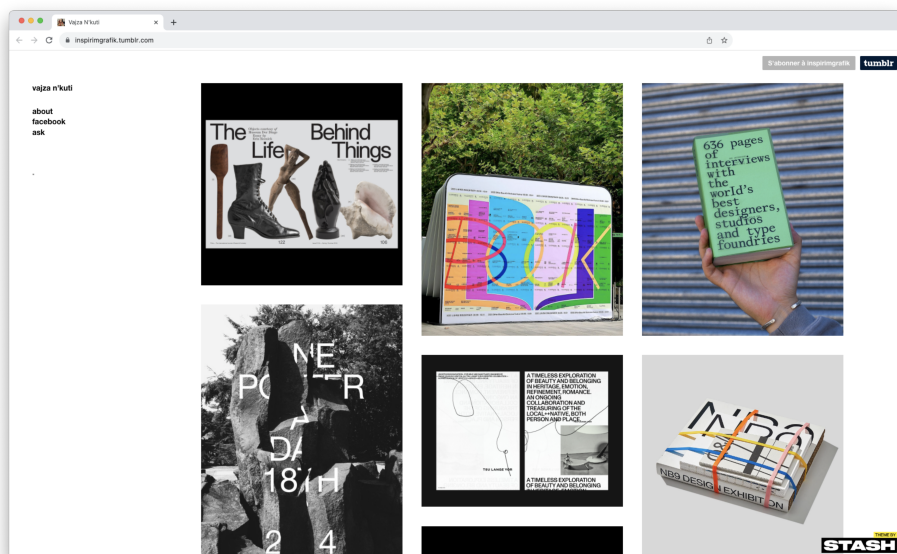


↑ Thisisgrey, Daniel Robert Prieto's Tumblr.

Some interviewees also quote recurrent platforms and sources of inspiration, using models of subscription, to maintain a controlled curated news feed center when subscribed pages update new content. Via RSS (Really Simple Syndication) technology for American artist Baker Wardlaw, or specific blogs via Tumblr for industrial designer Aurélie Vial:²²

There's a Tumblr I think I've been going to for ten years because it's a source that's reliable for me. It's still nurtured and active. And the quality of the image compilation is pretty constant. I mean, it's never disappointed me.

–Aurélié Vial



↑ VAJZA N'KUTI, Anita B.'s Tumblr visited by Aurélie Vial.

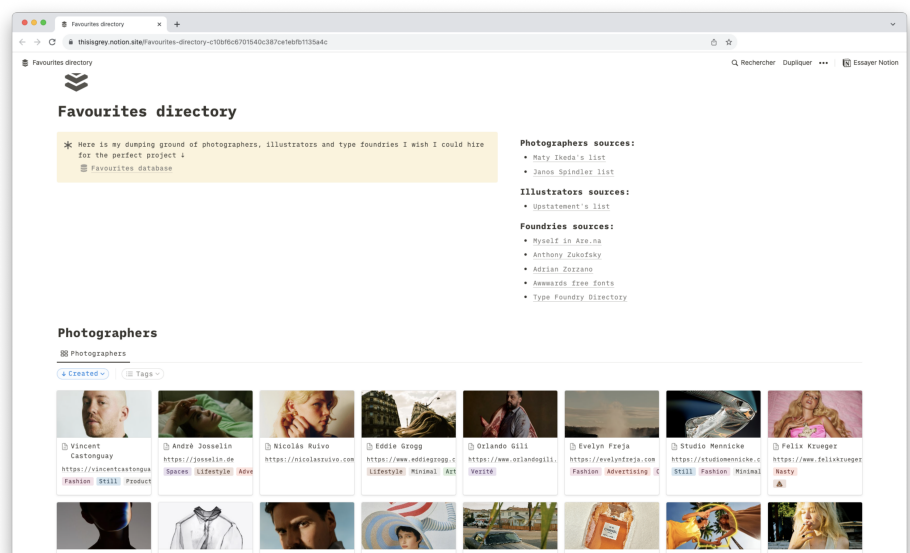
22. B. Anita, 2023, 'VAJZA N'KUTI' (Tumblr), [online]
<https://inspirimgrafik.tumblr.com> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

Using tools does not have to be by default and one may not suffice. Most of the interviewees generally research through a combination of platforms to develop a singular process. The choice of a specific platform can come out of curiosity about the latest tool, or some interviewees have a rather opinionated approach to selecting them, as explains Gemma Copeland, Lisbon-based Australian designer and member of Common Knowledge, a not-for-profit worker cooperative:

For Common Knowledge we use so many tools. Over the last couple of years, we spread out from wanting this big monolithic tool that does everything. This kind of generalist approach of trying to be this all-in-one thing is not the best because it doesn't do anything well. Tools that do one thing well, but are interoperable with other tools, I think that's the gold standard. We like tools that are quite opinionated, particularly those that are not about trying to get your attention all the time. So, for example, we don't use Slack.

—Gemma Copeland

All-in-one organizational tools such as Notion (2018) or Linear (2019) were mentioned by Frederik Mahler-Andersen, Gemma Copeland, and Daniel Robert Prieto, whether it is for project management, note-taking code snippets, agenda, or maintaining personal CRM.²³



↑ Daniel Robert Prieto's Public Notion compiling a directory of creatives as contact list.

23. PRIETO ROBERT, Daniel, 2023, 'Favourites Directory', Thisisgrey (Notion), [online] <https://thisisgrey.notion.site/Favourites-directory-cl0bf6c6701540c387celebfbl135a4c> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

Online browsers already allow native functionalities such as bookmarking and saving images on local folders on one's device, which in my own experience was the very first method I used while starting my studies in Art and Design. In addition, search engines such as Google Images search—heavily used by Aurélie to source images found on UGC platforms—are also one of the most basic approaches to practice visual discoveries, before accessing more specific photo-sharing platforms such as Flickr (2004) or visual search engines platforms such as Pinterest, more convenient for creatives to develop visual culture. As Brussels-based designer Émilie Pillet states:

I record a lot of references. It's a lot easier to create this sort of local library on my computer and remember where things are than an online platform where I'll quickly forget what I've seen.
—Émilie Pillet

In addition to a preference for more tangible containers of inspiration, Émilie emphasizes the printed objects inspiring her “more than platforms”, as better curated flows of references, redistributing the value of her used platforms for storage, if not made on her computer. Daniel Robert Prieto reflects on his pre-WWW early print-only gatherings:

When I was 18, 20, the only way was design books. I spent an insane amount of money just buying design books [...] spending days and days in the design library, going through books, buying, sharing, with other friends, exchanging books, that was the place to eat design, absorbing design. [...] The book in itself is curated, in an order, it is selected, and it's around a topic. You take that for granted, you think that reality is like this. When you go to the internet, that curation doesn't exist. It's a bucket.
—Daniel Robert Prieto

CHALLENGES OF PASSIVE GATHERING AND CONTEXT COLLAPSE

Social media such as Instagram (2010), X (Twitter, 2006), TikTok (2016), and Fediverse Mastodon (2016) propose endless algorithmically filtered streams of time-bound content. In those, the use of features such as recommender systems, likes, favorites, hashtags, comments, and followers can be used to store references and connect with their creators. As Florian Hilt states, his gathering method passes through the passive visual trigger of the like button, helping him to maintain a history of his latest liked posts: “On Instagram, you can access your likes, up to three hundred, which I find quite good for my methodology because it allows me to renew myself and not go back too far in time.” Similar visual trigger methods—between obsessive consumption and productive death-scrolling—were discussed by Daniel R. Prieto regarding his navigation of the Tumblr feed:

The reason I was using Tumblr was the shortcuts. I could go with "J" and "K". I think "K" was to save it, and I could go very quickly. I couldn't go with the mouse.

—Daniel Robert Prieto

Similar time-bound feeds of content can be seen in chat applications, in which Discord (2015) and Meta's WhatsApp (2009) for example, can be used to share references and interact with people about them. Lucas Erin for example, regularly sends to fellow practitioners references through chat to later on create moments of discussion in real life. To further add possibilities of chat exchanges of references, WhatsApp iOS ²⁴ rolled out this year features such as text detection in images, allowing for instant lookup and translation.

Algorithmic feeds are designed to stimulate the constant use of an application and maintain the attention of the user through ever renewing what is shown to the user. With advances in algorithms, feeds using recommender systems moved out of initial chronological manually curated feeds, which could lead to feeling trapped in aesthetic bubbles, and losing personal need for control in curation expressed by Émilie:

24. LABUSCHAGNE, Hanno, 2023.03.16, 'WhatsApp adds text detection feature for images', MYBROADBAND [online] <https://mybroadband.co.za/news/software/484119-whatsapp-adds-text-detection-feature-for-images.html> [accessed: 2023.11.25]

I would never use Pinterest, for example, to look for references. I have the impression that with all the platforms, it sends back the same references and the same aesthetics.

–Émilie Pillet

The mentioned platforms are not without detriments to creativity. Specific issues of context collapse are widely expressed from the overwhelming consumption of content tending to lack source and context.

According to Daniel, “Images on the internet don’t have any context. They don’t have a story. They don’t have a client. They have nothing. They’re almost like in an empty museum.” Aurélie states that on Are.na: “everything is set up so that you caption your images and source them. That’s why I don’t use Pinterest when it’s really about looking at these images and feeding yourself with something because it scrambles my brain.” Questioning the recommendation aspect, Lucas remains centered on contextualizing content outside of platforms and making it his own internally:

I feel that part of my job is to go and find it. So I wonder how it's offered to me, and if it's offered to me, is it offered to everyone else? [...] I like the idea of being a bookworm to find information. And the question isn't necessarily whether it's true or not, it's rather what I do with it and how I transform or use it.

–Lucas Erin

Gemma suggested her blogging as a radical alternative, not only to better contextualization but also to better appropriation of her references, and escape from the platform feeds by having a fully-owned space. Using whatever platform exists, even if multiple, is indeed radically different than having your own. Gemma’s blog²⁵ is not aiming to “necessarily produce original ideas because nothing is original, everything’s a remix. But at least, to kind of draw out those threads and spend a bit more time on them and go further with the curation.” As she states:

25. COPELAND, Gemma, 2023, 'Writing', GEMMA COPELAND [online] <https://gemmacope.land/writing/> [accessed: 2023.11.25]

Part of wanting to build a blog was that my practice was too much just collecting and consuming, and it felt in a way passive, and not ever working through in greater detail what I thought about things, almost going too far onto this kind of intuitive collecting and not enough synthesis and articulating my own point of view.

–Gemma Copeland

This informs that gathering could remain seen as passive on existing platforms compared to more active processes of journaling or note-taking, recurrent across most of the interviews. Apps such as Apple Notes used by Lucas Erin and Baker Wardlaw, can sometimes bring further context. In a context also marked by the emergence of contemporary productivity software, Gemma Copeland and Baker Wardlaw invested in personal knowledge base (PKB) management systems such as Obsidian (2020) or Roam Research (2019), to build interconnected notes as a digital garden and experiment with a wiki information architecture to enhance associative thinking:

In my personal practice or, as I'm working on Common Knowledge projects, it's mainly, [Are.na](#) for references and then Obsidian for note-taking, which is also like a digital garden.

–Gemma Copeland

In exploring gathering processes on online knowledge networks and user-aggregated platforms, it becomes evident that platforms such as Pinterest, Tumblr, and Are.na, play a transformative role in creative practices. They enable the pooling of visual cues, the creation of compatible containers for knowledge, and the construction of personal knowledge bases for visual culture to be digested, and appropriated, helping to build new ideas and learnings. In turn, creatives developed combinatory methods across various online platforms, ranging from passive to active.

From passive consumption of context-collapsed content to more active processes of contextualization and gathering through collection-making, curation, notes, blogs, and ultimately networked knowledge of digital gardens, those processes of online gathering and of making sense of their developing visual culture reshape the narrative of individual ownership to the collection, including references as a sum of influences, which creatives could be more public about.

Another question is crucial regarding the collaborative online practice of sharing or not. It is symptomatic of different ways of considering the act of gathering or collection: as a personal process that should be kept behind the scenes, as a personal creative process, or is it considered as part of a community sharing knowledge stance?

Sharing or Gatekeeping?

Gauging collaboration in gathering methods

This chapter delves into the collaborative aspects of gathering, exploring the transition from individualistic creative processes to more inclusive models of collaborative commons within user-generated content platforms. Despite the platforms' tendency towards privacy, they paradoxically promote the interconnection of external sources. The chapter emphasizes the broader themes of sharing, open-access culture, and reconsideration of ownership. It draws insights from interviews to scrutinize platform challenges, including cultural shifts, the balance between individual ownership, and the push for public access in resource sharing. Additionally, it examines the initiative to build handmade digital gardens outside platforms, which critically assess ownership and sharing in a public environment. Economic implications, such as the impact of shared creative processes on competition, professional development, and job opportunities, are explored, highlighting the potential for collective knowledge growth.

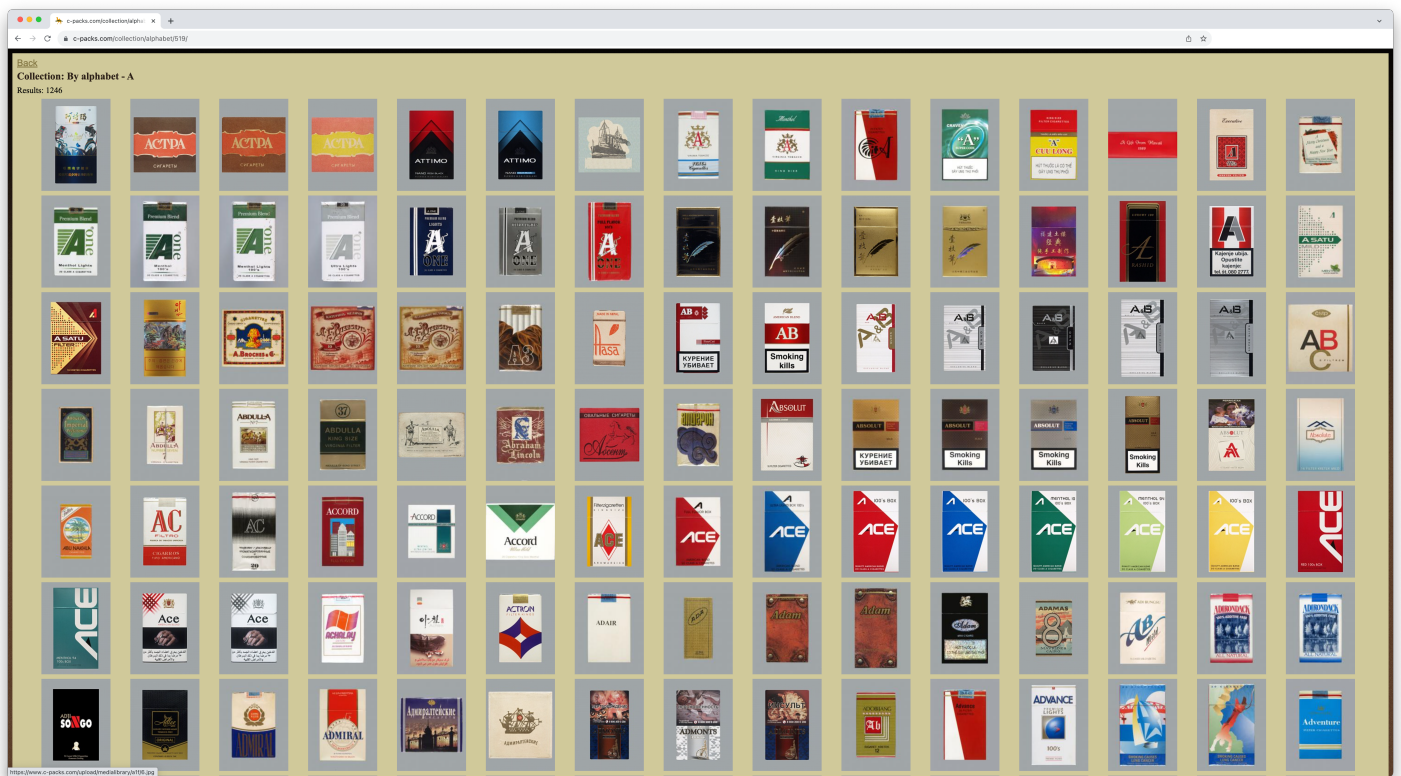
Collaborative Challenges in UGCCCC Platforms

UGCCCC platforms can raise a question about the collective benefits of having so many resources gathered in one place. How can we leverage the power of community and shift towards a mindful sharing and interconnection of resources online? With contributing features to other gatherings, curating containers in teams, or simply showcasing public resources, gathering may take a more critical step in building and sharing knowledge. While the gathering of some interviewees can remain private or *single-player*, they would not be able to really gather if the whole community was about gatekeeping, turning the walled garden into private individual vaults.

According to Daniel Robert Prieto, the broader posting on the Web through extraverted UGC platforms leads to the following issues, compared to early personal collection websites:²⁶

The problem is not technical, it's cultural. There was a culture before of people posting for the sake of posting because they wanted to do something good with the world. I remember one guy that I downloaded the whole site, that was collecting cigarette packs. He had a collection of like fucking thousands on the shittiest website you could imagine. And the guy just posted it there. That spirit is what's missing these days. We have that insane technology. Nobody's posting dog shit on anything. And when they do, everything is too self-conscious, too self-promotional. Very few people are just doing things for the sake of like, "Oh, it's beautiful things". That's the problem. Everybody is hustling. And that sucks. Fuck hustling.
-Daniel Robert Prieto

26. CHERNISHEV, Innokenty, 'Private Collection of Cigarette Packs', C-PACKS [online] <https://www.c-packs.com/> [consulted: 2023.11.25]



↑ Innokenty Chernishev's private collection of cigarette packs.

Émilie acknowledges that while keeping everything private: “As I’m following people I’m interested in, I figure that if they were private too, it would make the whole thing a lot less interesting. I have to admit I’m not comfortable with the idea of making public my own research or things I’ve spent a long time finding out.” According to Danish designer and developer Frederik Mahler-Andersen: “There are a lot of people who share a lot of things, with a lot of goodwill, which is great. But there are also a lot of people who have so many private things, I imagine.” For Jonas, despite acknowledging the benefits of “such a big pool of knowledge you can easily access [...] the collaborative part is not essential” as he wants “sole control over the curation.”

Dismantling individual ownership in collections

This desire for sole control of curation reveals a priority of ownership and privacy rather than access and transparency toward creative research. According to Florian, the process of research only speaks to him and would lack context if shown publicly, implying that the result of research through creation is what matters most: “I don’t see what this would bring to someone else in the sense that it would just speak to them visually or textually. For me, it’s really ideas put together in my head that means something in my head. [...] Is there any point in me giving my tips on how I make certain images when in fact the result is the image?” Lucas expresses a similar point of view to his artistic practice: “I’ve never felt the need to communicate a universe. For me, my universe is internal, it’s intimate, and afterward, I convey it differently because it’s directly in the work and I don’t need to use it or describe it to someone.”

Intimacy towards one’s research can either be felt as fearful or fascinating. According to Lucas, “When you see the library of someone you don’t know or someone who isn’t there, you’re making a form of judgment.” Whereas for Daniel, when looking at someone’s research and profile channels, “You start getting a sense of what the aesthetics of the personality of the person like selecting or whatever, but you need to see like 300 images to be able to see that. It’s like you’re scavenging through their brain and their soul.”

While acknowledging the sharing of resources beneficial in mediation contexts, Lucas depicts the overall sharing of research outside of this use case as detrimental to originality in art production:

There's a culture of singularity, wit, genius, talent, and so on, so to have an album in which all the references are accessible, must scare a lot of people because it kills the idea of originality. Even if reproduction is completely assumed in all contemporary discourse in the art world, and there's nothing new anymore, it certainly remains a fantasy.

-Lucas Erin

Control over curation is similarly emphasized by Florian, who would only gather publicly with an already existing team of collaborators through a trusted and familiar shared-space environment. On Aurélie's side, it is more about not being a participative person on social networks, while she acknowledges indirectly contributing to the platform by feeding outside content into it. According to Daniel, it is more a contributing ratio equilibrium: "Collaborating with someone, I've tried it a couple of times, it never worked. Also because I'm too insane, in the sense of like, I post a lot. And then, people post just two things. It's the rhythm. I would need to find someone who posts just as much as me. And there are not that many people."

Contextualizing together

To combat with issue of context-collapse collaboratively around the overwhelming passive accumulation of references, interviewees also mentioned how video conference tools such as Zoom (2011), used by Daniel Robert Prieto, and collaborative canvas such as Miro (2011), used by Florian Hilt in commercial projects, can help contextualize references and discuss them:

If you're going to collaborate with other people, it's less about the dumping of shit and more about communication. So what I've found is, just spend more time on Zoom, exchanging images.

–Daniel Robert Prieto

Similarly, for Design Researcher Maggie Appleton, Digital Gardens, similarly to Wikipedia's wiki architecture, embraces Hypertext as a “richly linked landscape that grows slowly over time.”²⁷ This allows us to consider Digital Gardens as contextual knowledge containers, emancipating from time-bound streams and walled gardens of UGC platforms.

While digital gardening was first output by developers with coding skills, it soon drew the attention of plenty of writers, researchers, and note-taking enthusiasts. The growing communities of PKB practitioners and advances in Web development allowed more and more gardeners to join the movement. Web technologies like Vercel (2015) or Netlify (2014) and static-site-generators (publishing webpages out of plain text files) helped to keep the pain out of development and focus on seeds of content, while proprietary platforms like Roam, TiddlyWiki (2004), Notion (2018) and Obsidian (2020) progressively proposed no-code alternatives to publish digital gardens online, yet limiting its users to standardized layouts.

27. APPLETON, Maggie, 2020, 'A Brief History & Ethos of the Digital Garden', Maggie Appleton [online] <https://maggieappleton.com/garden-history> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

Shifting to a Collaborative Commons Model

Gemma Copeland argues existing models of contribution, public sharing, and open-source culture could help fight a climate of competition within the creative sector:

I think this kind of approach of the commons, open source, and collectivity means that you create this kind of shared abundance, where you can all get something and be happy and enjoy your work, etc. And you're not trying to fight each other.

–Gemma Copeland

This shift from a somehow capitalist model of scarcity (i.e. limited resources) and knowledge gatekeeping towards a post-capital model of abundance can lead to emerging alternative ideas of governance, such as the collaborative commons, in which we all have to gain how resources are held in common, and how they can be collectively managed. Applied to creative processes, *Commons in Design*²⁸ emphasize “knowledge-based peer commons” such as sharing references, designs, techniques, workspaces, or infrastructures, therefore coinciding commons “with the repositioning of designers and the self-understanding of their discipline, ways of working, and education.”

An example based on digital content and intellectual property is for example the Creative Commons licensing system (2001), adopted by many digital companies such as Flickr, YouTube, SoundCloud, and Wikipedia, which helps abandon traditional copyright laws and patents, for enhanced collaboration, innovation, and research. As Christopher J. Dew states:²⁹

28. SCHRANZ, Christine (ed.), 2023. 'Commons in design'. Amsterdam: Valiz. ISBN 978-94-93246-31-7. [online] <https://valiz.nl/images/Commons-in-Design.pdf> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

29. J. DEW, Christopher, 2015, 'PostCapitalism: Rise of the Collaborative Commons', MEDIUM, [online] <https://medium.com/basic-income/post-capitalism-rise-of-the-collaborative-commons-62b0160a7048> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

Capitalism is designed to manage resources within a closed system of scarcity, and it is thoroughly ineffective at organizing the economic life of a society in which access is valued over ownership, transparency over privacy, and collaborative co-creation over competition.

–Christopher J. Dew

Sharing knowledge and ownership on collaborative platforms should help remodel our creative processes towards more solidarity and cohesion within creative communities. For Gemma Copeland, it is indeed about embracing the network:

It just all boils down to my inherent hatred of individualism and ownership. With Common Knowledge, all these things I'm interested in, it's about shared ownership and creating a commons and recognizing that we're not individuals, we're part of a network.

–Gemma Copeland

As stated by Schranz, “well-known examples of socially supported commons projects are the free encyclopedia Wikipedia or the open maps of OpenStreetMap. One of the reasons why these projects are so successful is that they rely on the participation of users and are self-regulating, constantly revised, and further developed collectively.”

Collaborative commons as shared actions (commoning) in a creative practice can also give a sense of balance, in which at some point, learning what is accessible to you could be then retransmitted to peers instead of keeping to oneself, as Frederik implies for his learning to code process, and desire to develop open sources projects:

Looking for stuff in the source code taught me how to do a lot of things. And in the end, you want to give something back that's been useful to you. It's like with P2P downloading, there are seeders and leechers, and I think I'm more of a seeder than a leecher unfortunately, but I'd like to change my ratio [...] to do things that wouldn't necessarily end up in a project or a mandate, but which could be open source code or plugins.

–Frederik Mahler-Andersen

Economic and Professional Implications

When research gets intertwined with models of competition, scarcity, and individual ownership, the economic value of creative research online acts as a competitive skill to preserve. According to Aurélie from a designer's perspective, knowing how to develop one's visual culture is part of the work and should remain confidential, as "a kind of professional secret."

On these sites where you archive things, I can see how my ability to search for images has evolved, and I think it's an important skill in my work. Not everyone can do good image research. And so, I have the impression that there's a part of it where you have to preserve it from the outside because it's a job. Not everyone has the same ability to do good reference research and to be well-referenced.

—Aurélie Vial

According to Daniel, one of the biggest sharers of resources among the interviewees, the competition in a design practice remains prevalent despite enhanced access to inspiration: "Economically, no. Zero percent. [...] Don't make friends with designers if you're trying to get clients [...] But in terms of inspiration, of course, 100%." Daniel further argues that sharing developed through maturity gained over the years:

When I was younger, I was much more protective of my links, and my discoveries. But then at some point, you start realizing it doesn't really matter. You share it, it's even better. You meet people, you help other people, who cares? It's not like they're going to steal your findings because they are just there.

—Daniel Robert Prieto

There is no single end goal for creative activities on such platforms, and why interviewees practice collection on UGCCCC platforms. For Aurélie, it is mostly for individual gain, as much a personal curation need, as a professional skill, while for

Daniel, it is a means to an end for self-reflection and tending an obsessive need to accumulate visual culture and stay afloat of the latest trends:

I compile mood boards to convince clients to go in one direction or another. For me, visual inspiration is not just reference but also a means to convince my clients.

—Aurélie Vial

When you have a very long career, you look five years behind, and then you're like, oh my god, I'm so bad, or my style was so shitty, but then it's cool, you see the growth, you see the progress, and it makes you reflect. [...] I don't do it with a goal. I just do it because I have a stupid impulse of collecting shit and organizing stuff into pockets. I don't have a research system. I just look for the stuff. I pick what is beautiful and what is interesting.

—Daniel Robert Prieto

From a developer point of view, within active communities of open-learning, code-sharing forums and platforms, and open-source programming resources, Frederik gauges the ownership of ideas and skills as less important than collaboration:

On a commercial level, the stakes for someone who's a developer or graphic designer are different. If someone were to steal that, you're so much into GitHub code-sharing that the notion of copyright is less present. I'm not at all afraid of someone stealing my references.

—Frederik Mahler-Andersen

For Gemma, her positioning towards sharing and collectivizing research is to fight individualistic practices:

I guess one of the continuous lines of thinking that I've been interested in over the years is trying to move away from this idea of designers as individual geniuses. Instead, recognizing you're kind of a sum of all these influences, etc. I try to be quite public about who those influences are for me.

—Gemma Copeland

The sharing and collaborative gathering certainly can make a better-produced research or creation, while proposing a shift for the collective growth of knowledge. Yet encompassing how creatives build their visual culture can remain considered as valuable soft skills, making the difference in a creative market driven by competition of ideas, offering opportunities on both private and public gathering methods.

Are.na, what type of digital garden?

Defined as an "enclosed area for public entertainment," the term "Arena"³⁰ not only denotes physical space but also symbolizes a "sphere of interest, activity, or debate". Within the domain of UGC platforms, data often resides in secluded silos, restricted behind access barriers. Exploring the distinctive realm of collaborative knowledge creation, this chapter unveils the profound impact and intricate design of Are.na—a platform reshaping the landscape of creative processes and information sharing—considered by many as a digital community garden³¹. While featuring use cases from the interviewees, it is pertinent to note that I am an active member and advocate of this platform.

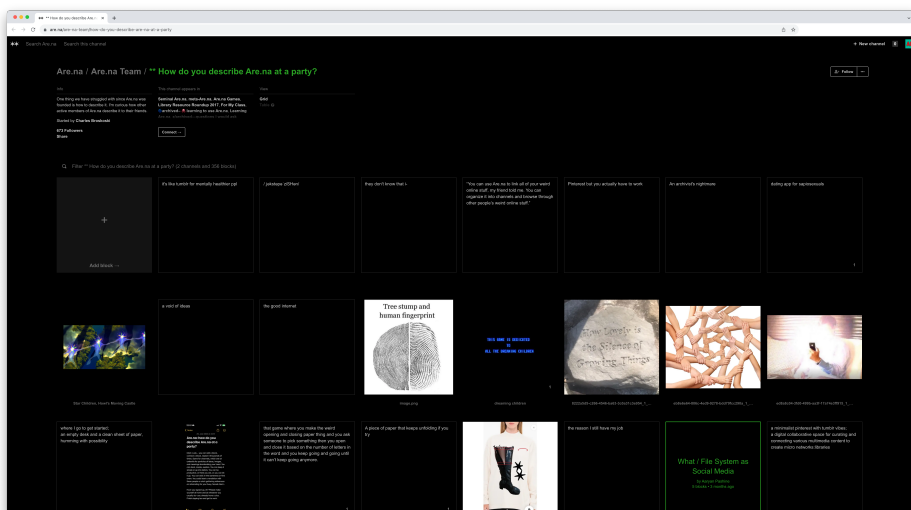
30. MERRIAM WEBSTER, 'Arena definition', Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2023, [online] <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/arena> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

31. ARE.NA TEAM, 'How do you describe Are.na at a party?' Are.na (Open Channel) 2021, [online] <https://www.Are.na/block/14492467> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

Are.na: an indie social network for creatives

Are.na is a niche independent online social network and creative research platform brought by artists, for artists, featuring niche high-quality curated content, founded in 2014 by artists and designers Charles Broskoski and Daniel Pianetti, among others. Private and free to use (for limited use and functionalities), it is solely financially sustained by its paying members. Are.na stands out from the current market of UGC platforms by offering an ad-free environment, without recommender algorithms and user data collection, allowing its members to exit algorithmic feeds. Are.na states on their website: “We are the only social media company whose only customers are the people who use it.”³²

Described on its landing page as a “more mindful place [...] to structure your ideas and build new forms of knowledge together”³³, and by members as a “Social media that doesn’t damage your brain”, “Pinterest for nerds” or “A garden of ideas”,³⁴, Are.na essentially involves in collection-making and curation for creatives, building knowledge solo or in company.



↑ Are.na Open Channel: ‘How do you describe Are.na at a party?’

32. ARE.NA, ‘About’, Are.na [online] <https://www.Are.na/about> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

33. Ibid.

34. Are.na TEAM, ‘How do you describe Are.na at a party?’ Are.na (Open Channel) [online] <https://www.Are.na/Are.na-team/how-do-you-describe-Are.na-at-a-party> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

Instead of being an all-in-one tool that doesn't do anything well, Are.na relies on a few key introverted features: connecting blocks (images, URLs, texts, pdfs, etc.) and channels (gathering containers) into other channels—either by uploading, web-clipping (via browser extension), or linking other users' content.

Channels can either be private, closed (publicly visible, restricted edit) or open (contributable). Asking for a slightly more cognitive load by design, Are.na emphasizes better contextualization of the content, while omitting extraverted typical social features such as “likes,” “favorites,” or “shares,” to encourage active use of the platform.

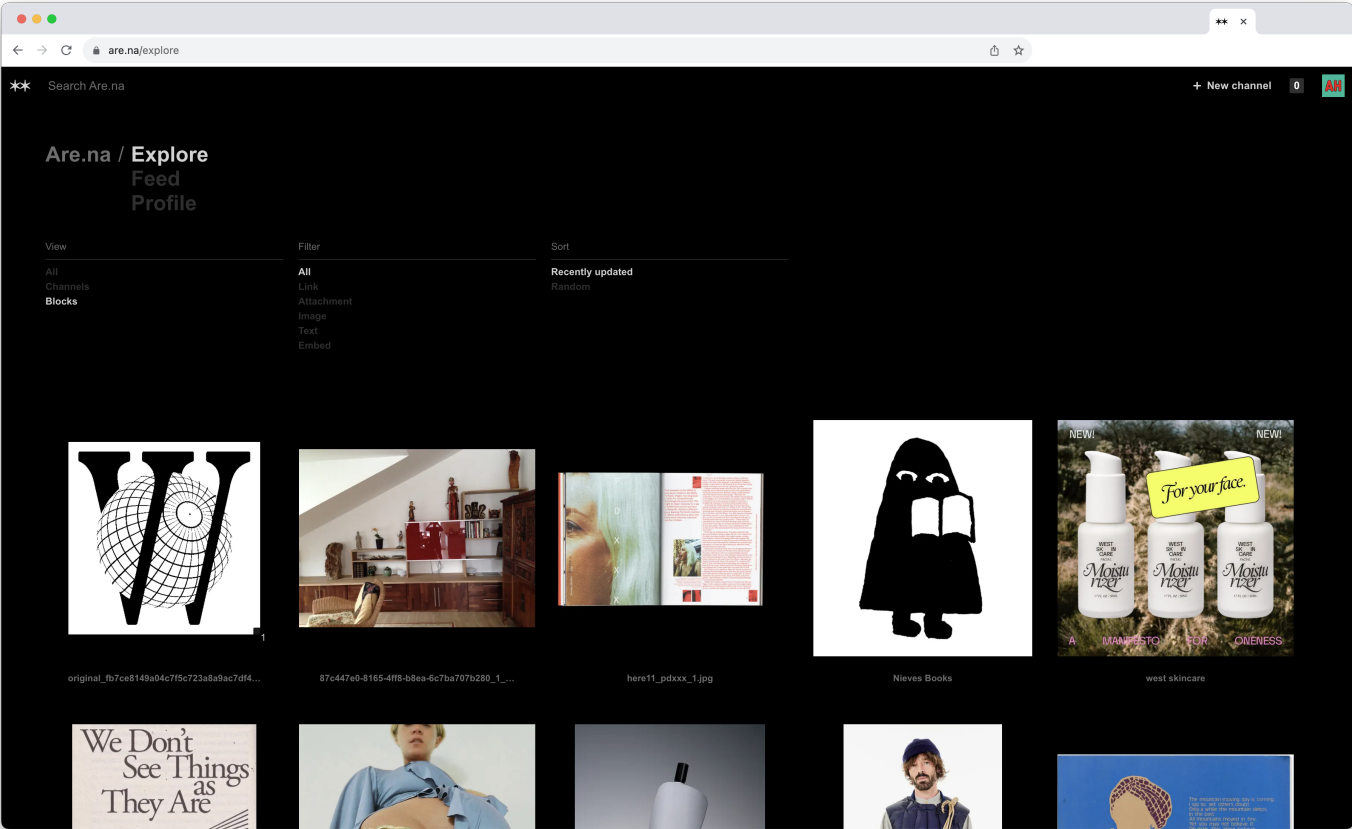
Radically distinctive by its withdrawn minimalist monochromatic design and its default Arial typography, the interface features a calm and distraction-free environment, favoring content over form.

Main pages such as *Explore (grid-view)* and *Feed (stack-view)* feature chronologically ordered blocks pooled from either all users or the ones you follow. The *Profile* and channel pages list content in modular views to choose from (channel rows, blocks only, channels only, table, index).

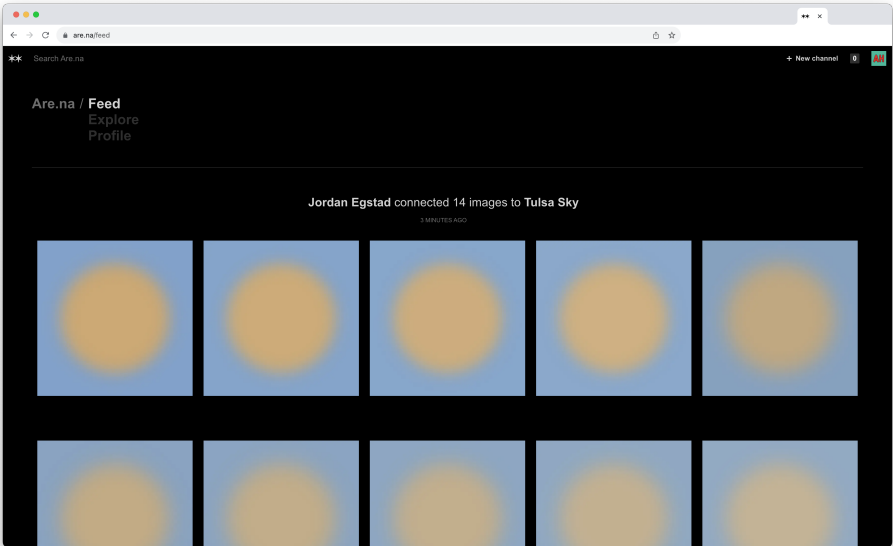
A detailed view of a block showcases all the channels it is branched in, along with metadata (source, connected by and date) and secondary features to comment on. The minimal UI is exhaustively puzzled out as a *mise en abyme* by David Reinfurt in an open channel *a-r-e-n-a*.³⁵ According to Daniel, simplicity and reliability are what makes Are.na distinctive:

You know why I like to use Are.na? Because you can take a hundred images and drag them up on the screen. And it works. You need tools that are stupid simple in the sense that they're incredibly reliable.
—Daniel Robert Prieto

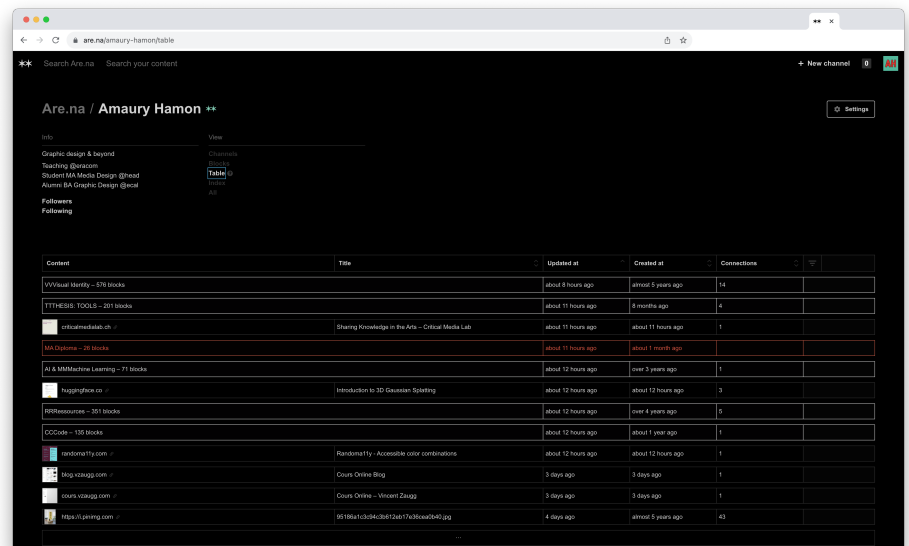
35. REINFURT, David, 2023, 'a-r-e-n-a', *Are.na* (Open Channel) [online] <https://www.Are.na/david-reinfurt/a-r-e-n-a> [consulted: 2023.11.25]



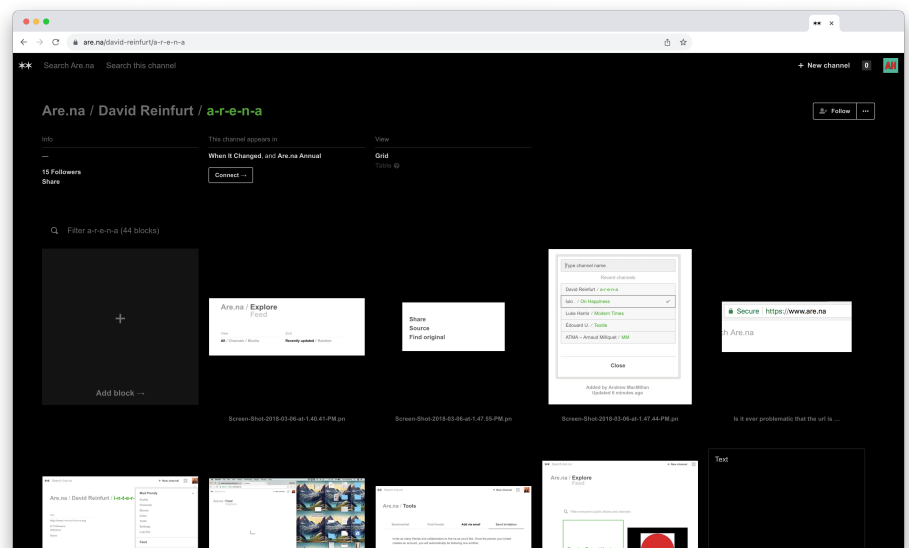
↑ Are.na Explore page featuring the latest connected blocks and channels from the members.



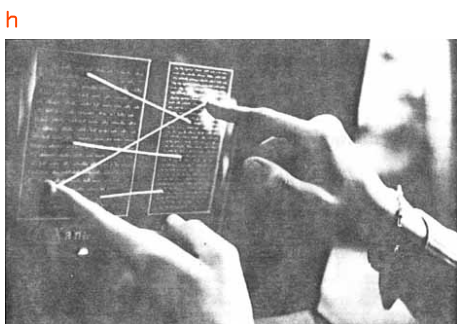
↑ Are.na Feed Page featuring the activity of following members.



↑ Are.na Table View of a profile.



↑ Reinfurt's 'a-r-e-n-a' channel depicting Arena's UI.

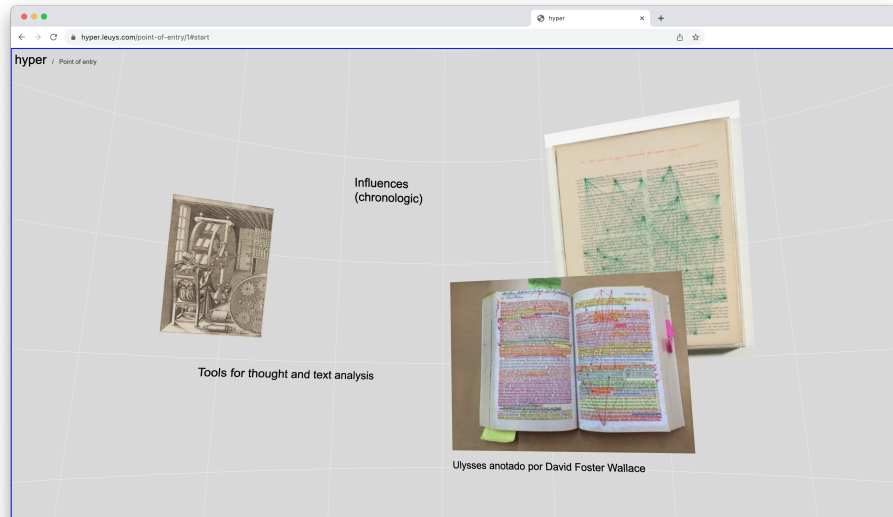


↑ Project Xanadu, Ted Nelson, 1960.

Reminiscent of hypertext *Project Xanadu* (1960)^[h], serendipity and networked thoughts are enhanced thanks to the bi-directional linking of blocks & channels. The information architecture is rendered as a folder structure, yet underneath the hood, it works rather as a nodal view. Whether you go single-player or collaborative, blocks and channels are fully interconnected to other members' channels, proposing a glimpse into the brains of other creatives.

Open Source by default while remaining private, Are.na allows its members to export their data as flat text or image files, and also .csv, .html or .pdf files (or .json through the API), and therefore exit its enclosed silo. Copyright-wise, the platform offers source search features, as well as the possibility to credit wherever possible original sources to further contextualize

the content curated by its members. In addition, the platform released a free API ³⁶, allowing the creation of custom tools, such as *Hyperchannel* ³⁷, 3D graph channel visualizer, *Are.na-to-Print* ³⁸, *Are.na-to-Slides* ³⁹, etc.



↑ hyperchannel.net Introduction, 2023.
→ <https://vimeo.com/787301494>

Metrics set the platform as quite a niche compared to bigger mainstream platforms. Currently composed of 27391 monthly active members, 13617 of them are paying members, and the platform generates 1.21 million monthly connections. Its self-sustainability model currently generates a monthly revenue of \$80841, allowing for the maintenance costs, and remuneration of the small team in charge of full-time and part-time positions in engineering, product and operations, editorial events, and merchandising. This smaller scale factor allows its dedicated members to sense better ownership (through feedback channels, community events, and publications).

- 36. PASHINE, Aaryan, 2023, 'Arena API Playground', [online] <https://playground.a-p.space/> [consulted: 2023.11.29]
- 37. BRÜNING, Joscha, UNTERLUGGAUER, Benjamin, 2022, 'Hyperchannel' [online] <https://hyperchannel.net/> [consulted: 2023.11.29]
- 38. SEU, Mindi, BROSKOSKI, Charles, IJEOMA, Ekene, 2017, 'print.are.na' [online] <https://print.Are.na/> [consulted: 2023.11.29]
- 39. TINY FACTORIES, 2023, 'Arena-2-slides', [online] <https://arena2slides.herokuapp.com/> [consulted: 2023.11.29]

Use cases from interviews

Being an open-ended platform, Are.na does not restrict specific uses to its members. A channel from the *Are.na Commons* proposes members to add in their use cases.⁴⁰ The open-endedness of a tool allows for more exploratory and intuitive approaches such as Aurélie's use of Are.na:

It's pretty hard to know what the real purpose of the people who created these platforms is, I've never looked. There must be instructions for use, I don't know. I've never thought about it. I just intuitively did what was most useful for me.

—Aurélie Vial

The interviews drew a diverse range of use cases about interviewees' gathering methods and creative research purposes. Florian creates private channels to stimulate the birth of a project while creating public channels on the side for more general mood boards.⁴¹ Most of Baker's and Gemma's are open channels, encouraging other members to contribute elements. Aurélie creates private collaborative channels teamwork mood boards which she can then share with her clients, stating: "I don't just take blocks, part of what I add is images I've taken from sites, from Google, from Pinterest. But I also, scan things from books or other sources and add them to *Are.na*." Jonas uses a lot the browser extension to web-clip content into Are.na "relevant to one of [his] ongoing research channels [...] with only two clicks." As Baker puts it in a broader perspective:

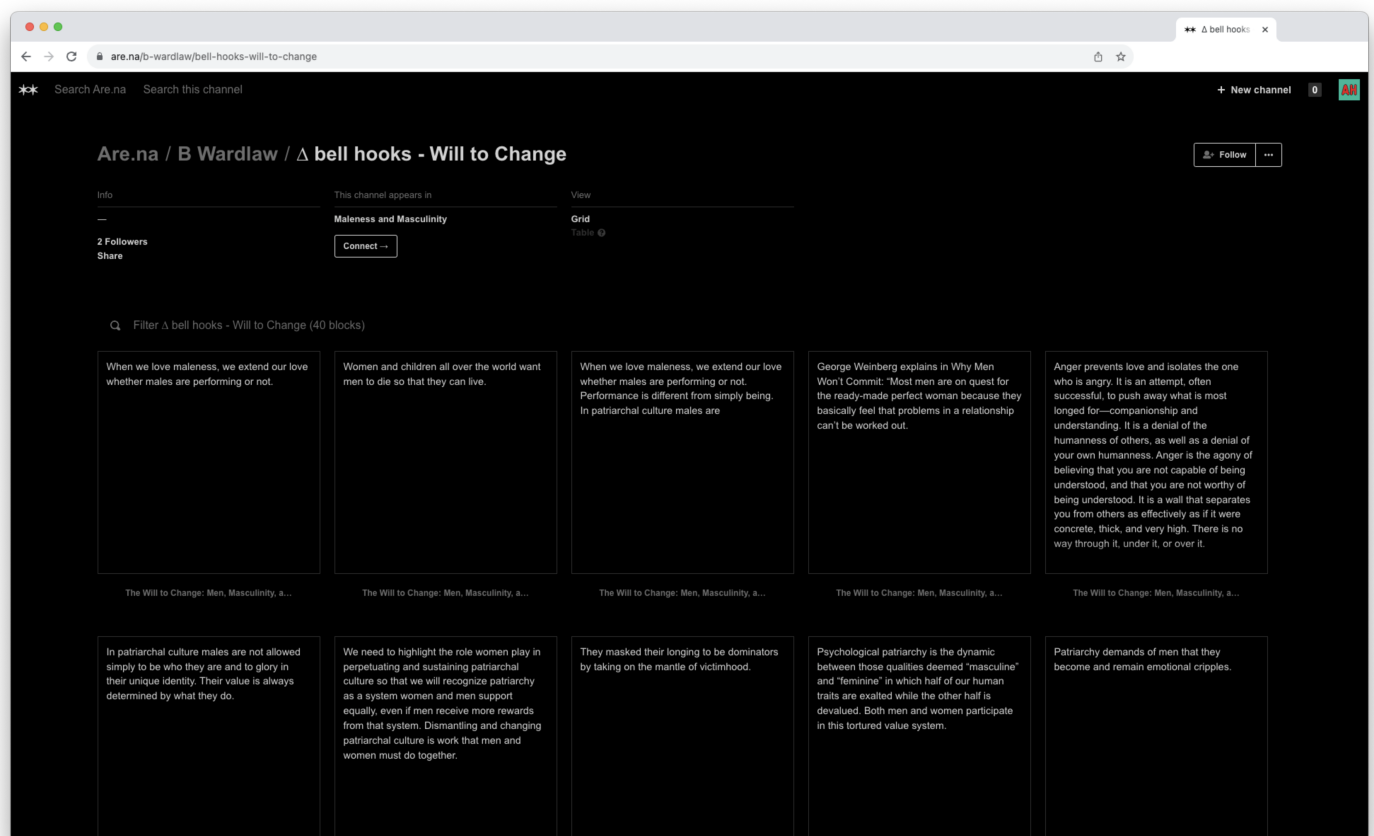
40. ARE.NA COMMONS, 2023, 'How do you use Are.na?', *Are.na* (Open Channel) [online] <https://www.Are.na/Are.na-commons/how-do-you-use-Are.na> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

41. HILT, Florian, 2023, 'Moodboard', *Are.na* (Public Channel) [online] <https://www.Are.na/florian-hilt/moodboard-57offgyw3oi> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

I wouldn't say that I hack Are.na, but I would say that I have a fairly conventional use of a tool that's relatively unconventional in the sense that the first time you show it to people, they are like "What's this thing?"

—Baker Wardlaw

Advanced use cases, such as the use of Are.na API was discussed. Baker uses a script to store quotes from his Kindle readings in a channel. ⁴² Gemma uses the API for her website, and publicly showcases her research channels as portfolio value on her website ⁴³, while also using Are.na as hosting for her website media.

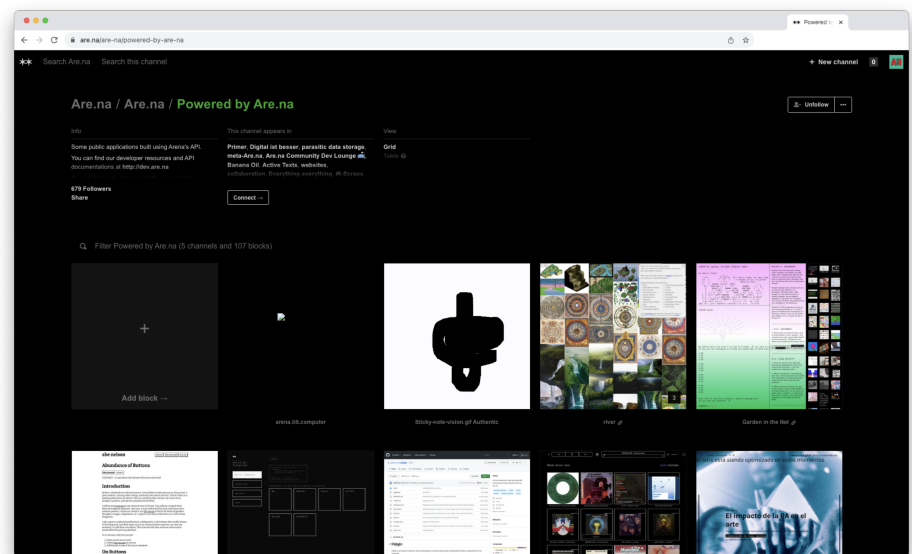


↑ Baker Wardlaw's Reading Quotes from a bell hooks book.

42. WARDLAW, Baker, 2023, 'Δ bell hooks – Will to Change, Are.na' (Public Channel) [online] <https://www.Are.na/b-wardlaw/bell-hooks-will-to-change> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

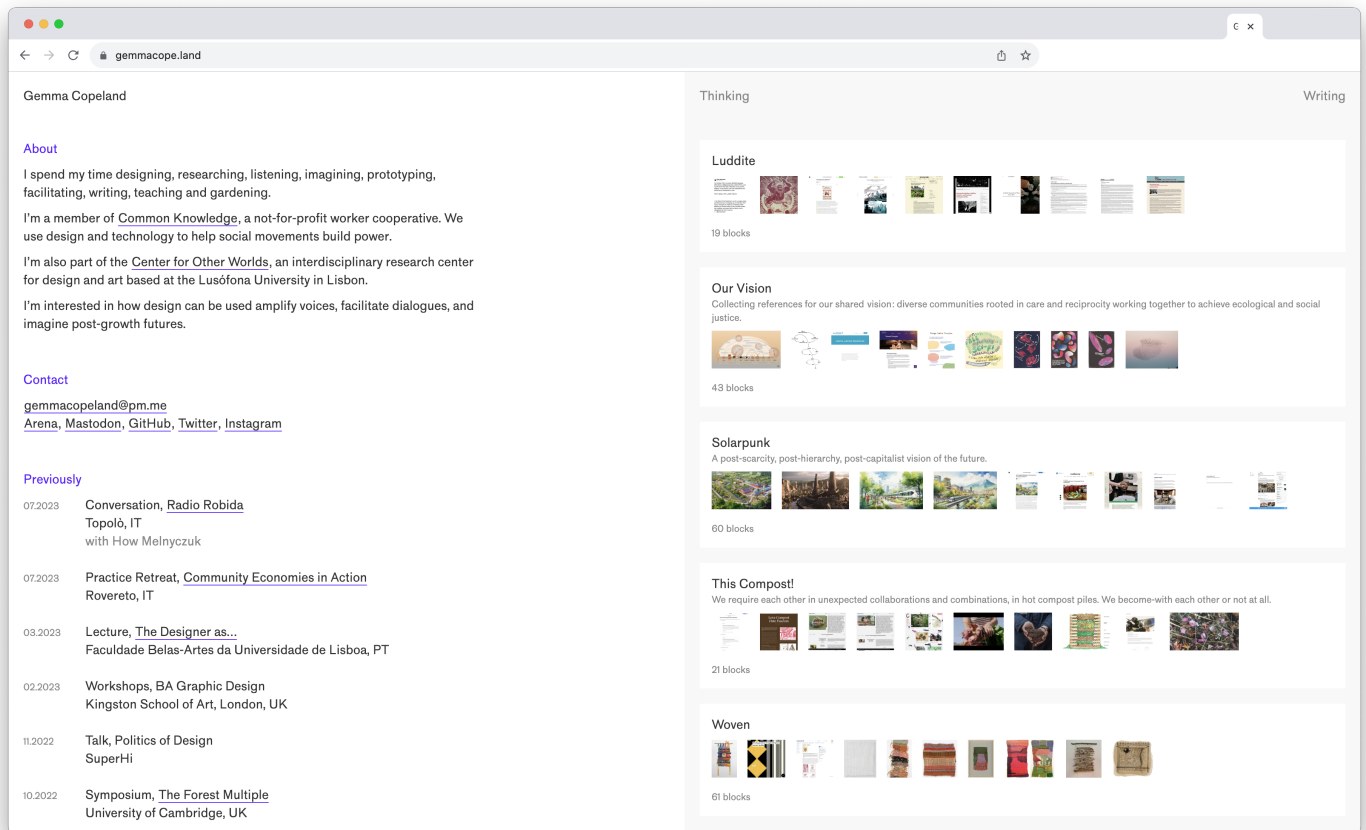
43. COPELAND, Gemma, 2023, 'Gemma Copeland' [Online] <https://gemmaCOPE.land/> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

Jonas created an online web design gallery connected to one of his channels.⁴⁴ As Jonas says: “I was collecting inspiring website designs for myself for two years already when I started playing around with the API and built this site. What was originally intended as a fun little experiment has now turned into quite a popular design showcase.” Similarly, Baker Wardlaw and the teaching staff of a visual arts course for architecture students at EPFL (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne) created an Are.na group⁴⁵ to gather references, publish students projects, and document the course through a website.⁴⁶

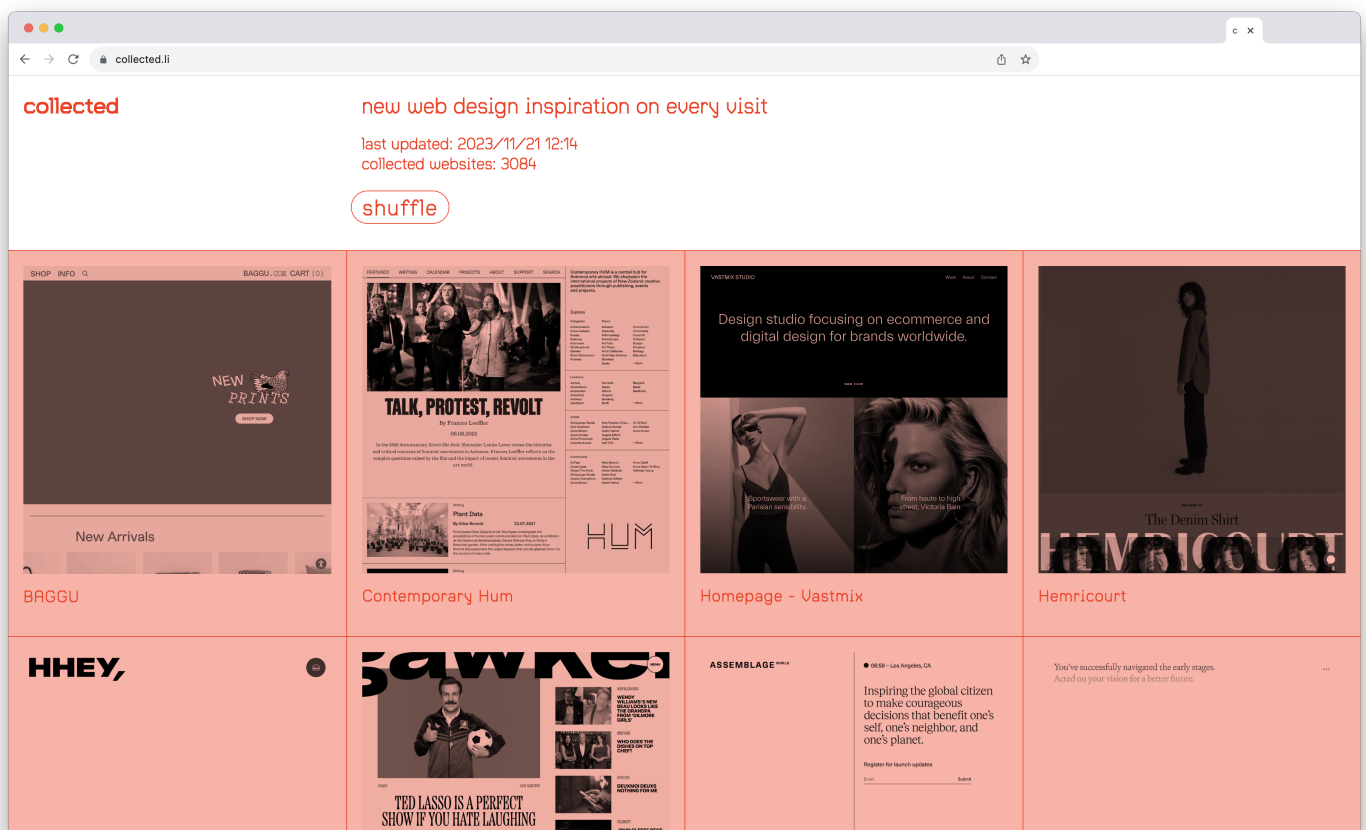


↑ 'Powered by Are.na', listing websites using the API.

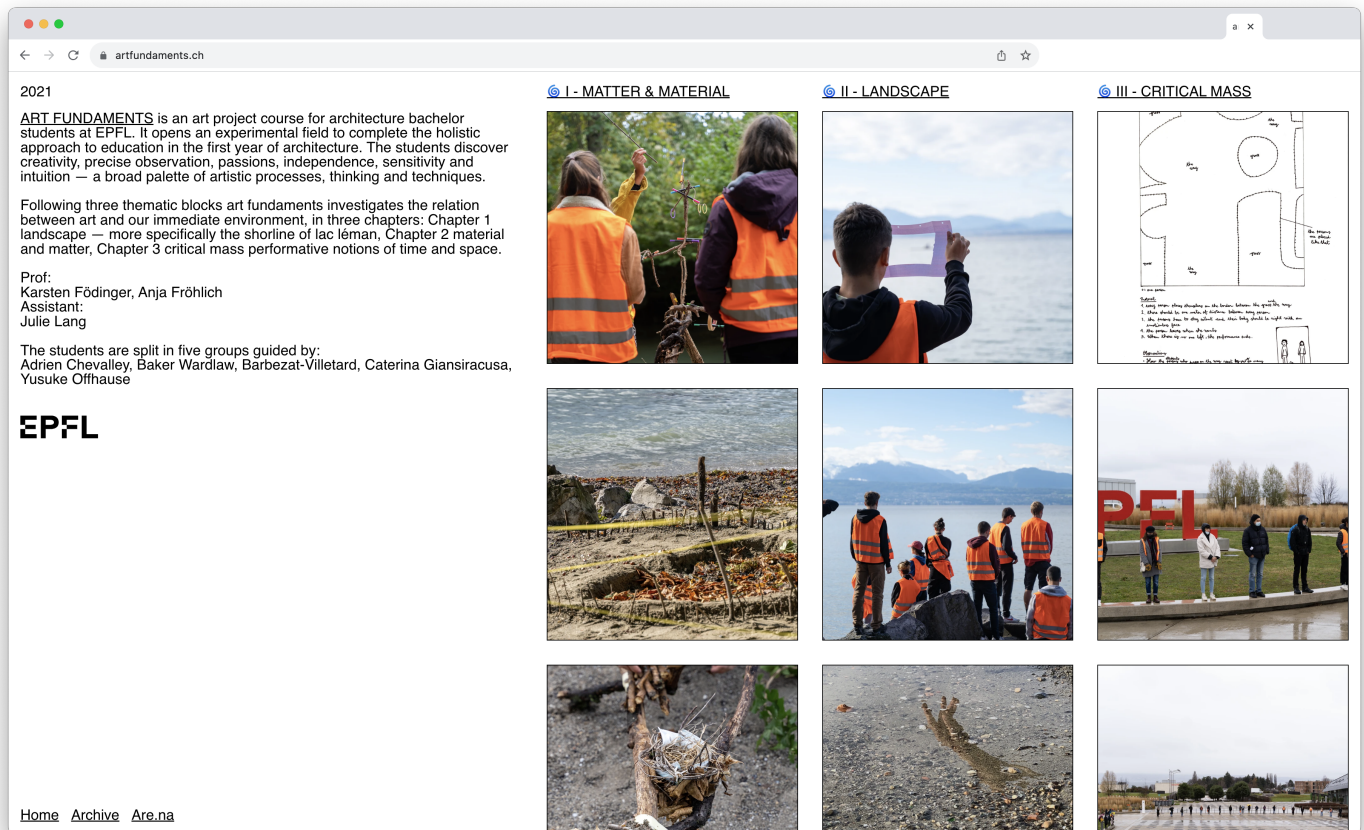
- 44. PELZER, Jonas, 2023, 'Collected', [online] <https://collected.li/> [consulted: 2023.11.25]
- 45. ART FUNDAMENTS, 2023, 'Art Fundaments', [Are.na](https://www.Are.na/art-fundaments/) (Group), [online] <https://www.Are.na/art-fundaments/> [consulted: 2023.11.25]
- 46. ART FUNDAMENTS, 2023, 'Art Fundaments', [online] <https://artfundaments.ch/> [consulted: 2023.11.25]



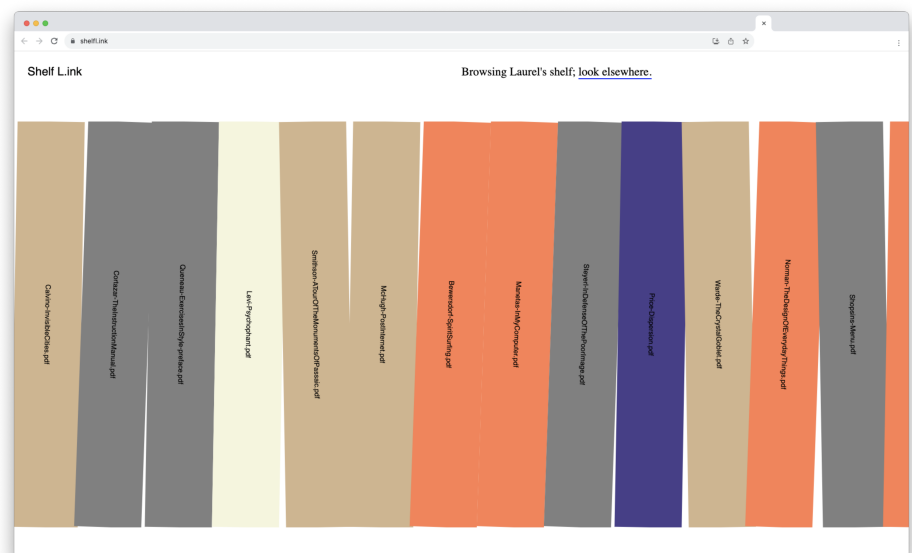
↑ Homepage of Gemma Copeland's Website showcasing a selection of her public Are.na channels.



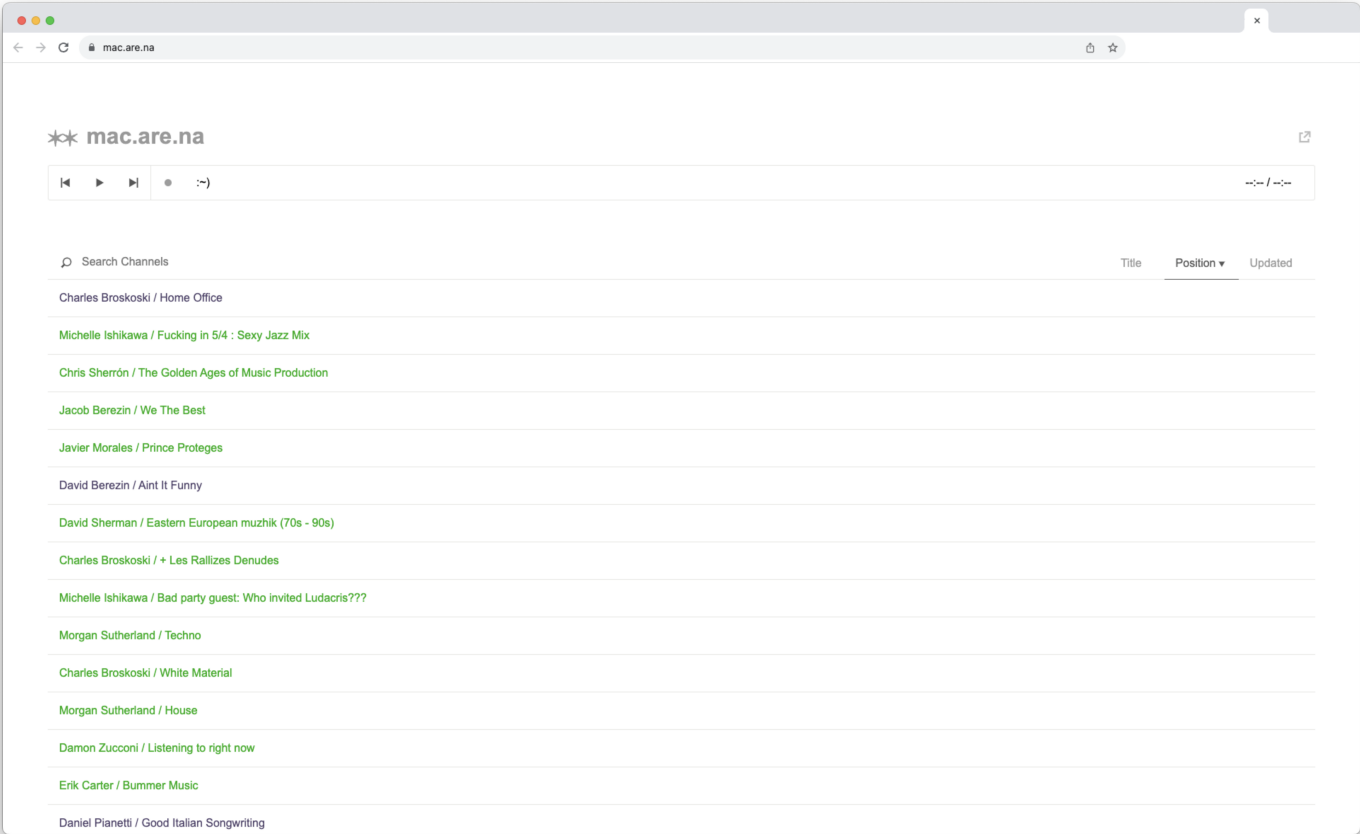
↑ Website gallery of Jonas Pelzer fed through a public Are.na channel.



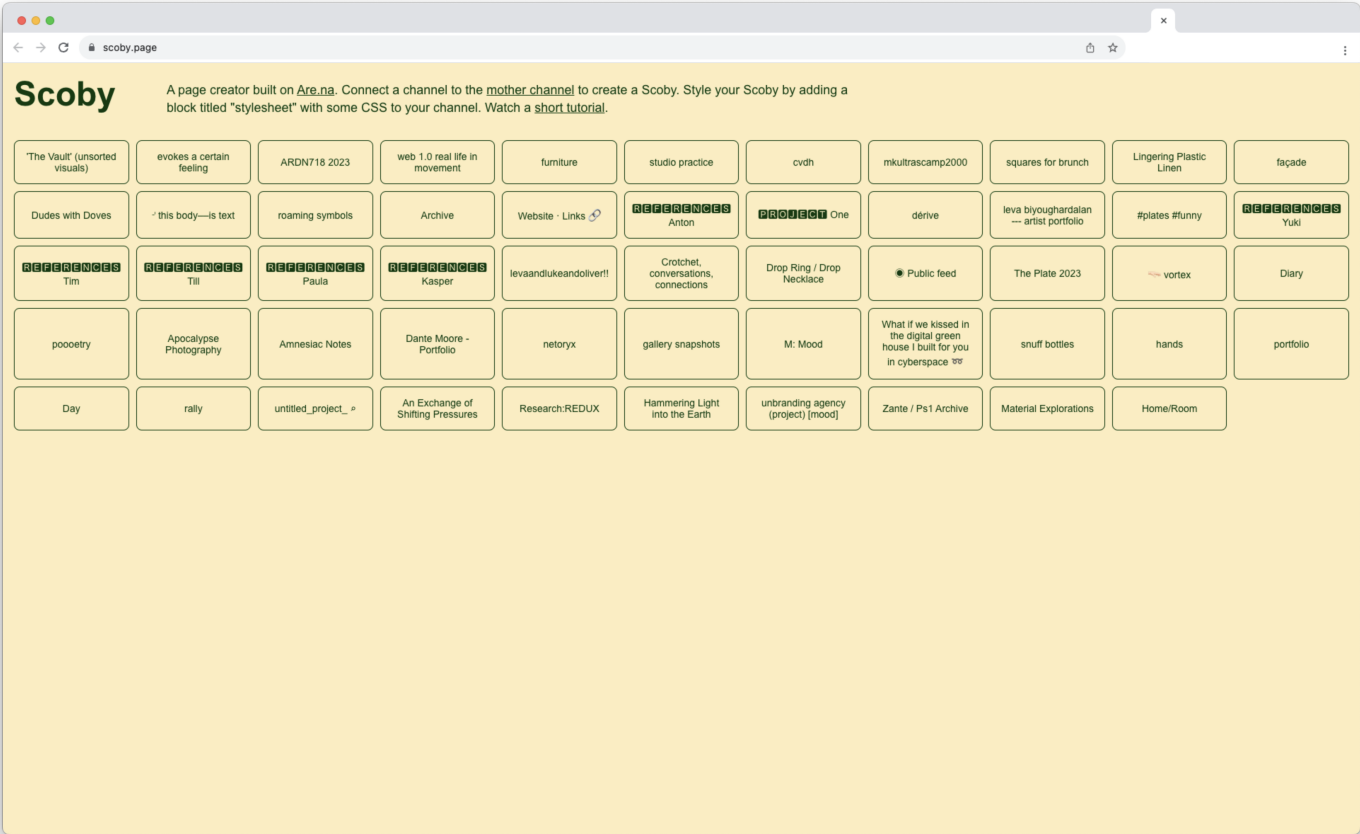
↑ Website of EPFL Architecture course of Visual Arts using Are.na.



↑ 'Shelflink', Online bookshelf website featuring blocks from an Are.na Channel.



↑ 'Mac.are.na', Music playlist Website featuring Are.na Channels as playlists.



↑ 'Scoby', Website creator using Are.na channels as children of a mother scoby.

Open-endedness Versus Limits of a Platform Impacting Creativity

From those interviews, three profiles were drawn: from fully private profiles to mixed feelings between sharing and gatekeeping specific channels, and to fully displaying publicly or allowing contribution to the channels.

They helped me draw out a tension point on originality and singularity of research compromised by a personal curation process within uniformized collective gatherings of inputs, or social bubbles.

Depending on who you follow and how many, Frederik draws parallels between Are.na and more mainstream social media feeds: “Are.na is also sometimes the same phenomenon as Instagram, it can be a bit “death scrolling” when you follow too many people. It starts to snowball, and then you lose track a bit.”

Passively scrolling through the content on Are.na without really looking at it, can indeed prevent its members from contextualizing what is shown before them as in any other platforms. According to Daniel, “What you need, it’s not information but the patience to look through them, and not many people have that.”

As Charles Broskoski stated in his 2019 conference, “The more you use Are.na the more you get out of it.”⁴⁷ But until when can this become overwhelming or too much?

Frequency of use is one identified tension point drawn from interviews, leading to both benefits of enhanced access to references and gathering, yet inconveniences of death-scrolling expressed by Frederik or Aurélie, or social bubbles of homogenized references according to him and Émilie.

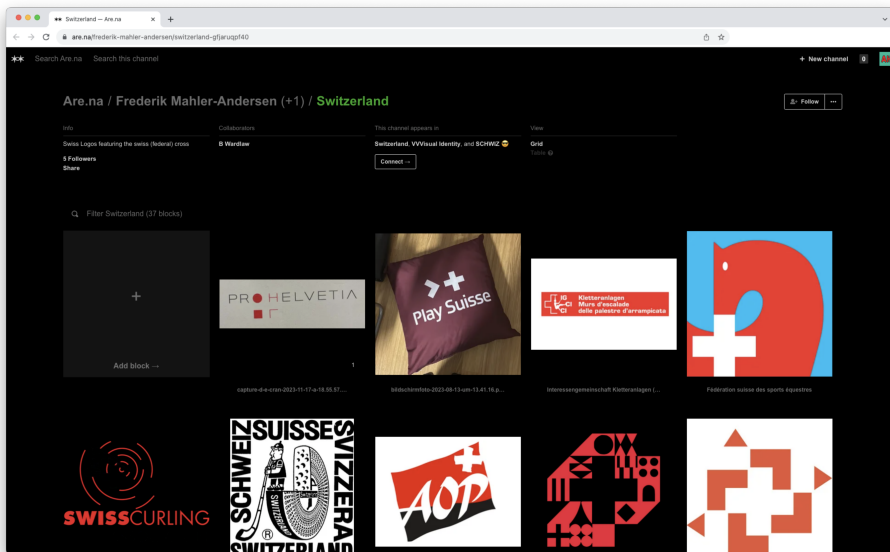
Frederik argues: “The people I follow on Are.na, apart from certain artists, etc., are a lot of people who do the same thing as me. So you end up in a spiral where you also see their references and make them your own.” This echoes Émilie’s *single-player* use of Are.na: “I’m going to try to find things more organically because I have the impression that on these platforms, there are a lot of people reposting, and as time goes by, the content

47. BROSKOSKI, Charles, 2019. ‘Creating the new social web’, The Conference [online]. Malmö, Sweden. 28 August 2019. Retrieved from : <https://videos.theconference.se/charles-broskoski-creating-the> [consulted: 2023.11.25].

becomes very polished and you can't find anything out of the ordinary." When looking outside of Are.na, in other platforms such as Pinterest, Aurélie implies: "you feel that it's a mass thing, and then the images, they come back all the time."

While Frederik remains partly open to sharing on a restrictive basis, he likes for some "to keep them public. I have this channel of Swiss logos⁴⁸ that I find quite funny, it's even open to contribute". His private channels need to be reviewed first before sharing, which he prioritizes in-real-life situations.

Daniel tests the quantitative success of a curated channel by waiting to gather sufficient content before it becomes a thing ready to publish: "If that river goes nowhere, it just dissolves. So then what I do with these things is keep them private." For Jonas, his channels are rarely open for contribution, only his "more general research ([...] graphic design or useful development resources) is public from the start. Project-specific research often starts private and is sometimes published later." He also had similar concerns to Frederik, about the potential lack of context in sharing project-specific research.



↑ Frederik Mahler-Andersen's open channel gathering logos intertwined with Swiss Cross.

The collaboration and contribution to channels are quite disparate from the results of the interviews. Baker and Gemma, on the other hand, are fervent members of the "Go Green" open channels, embracing contribution and the social network aspects of Are.na.

48. MAHLER-ANDERSEN, Frederik, 2023, 'Switzerland', Are.na (open channel) [online] <https://www.Are.na/frederik-mahler-andersen/switzerland-gfjaruqpf40> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

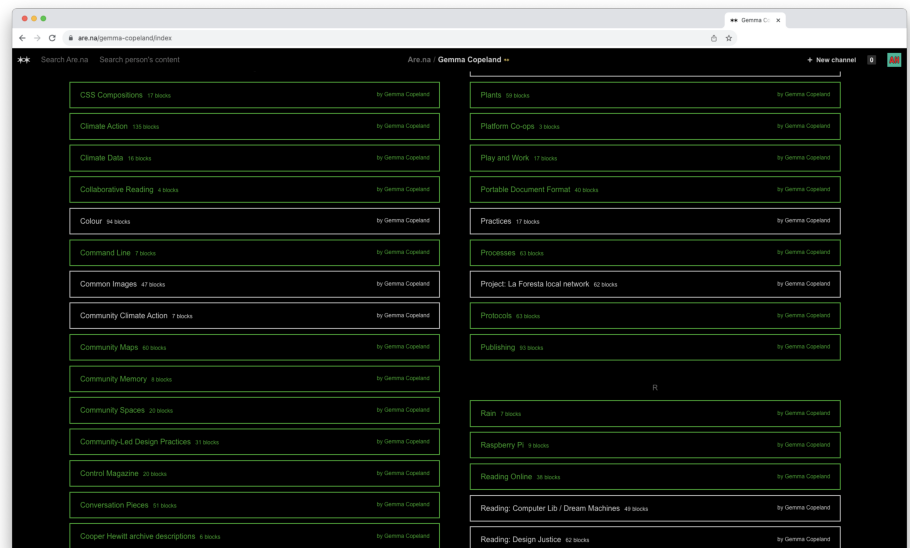
Having the channels open, was a decision I made a few years ago, in this idea of not trying to gatekeep or say "these things are my own" because, at the end of the day, it's a collection of other people's things. So why should I be "this is mine as the curator."

—Gemma Copeland

In her gathering process, Gemma states green channels as means of honesty in her research, and she always tries to look for existing open channels first before creating her own:

If I'm working on something and I want to keep the channel private, then it's also an interesting prompt for me to understand why, is it that I'm taking too much reference from these things and perhaps it would be better to make it open and make sure that you're not like secretly being derivative. I feel the public-private thing is interesting because it's also about honesty or making sure that you're not ripping people off or getting too influenced by things. "These are my deep cut, private references. That's my secret sauce for how I do cool design."

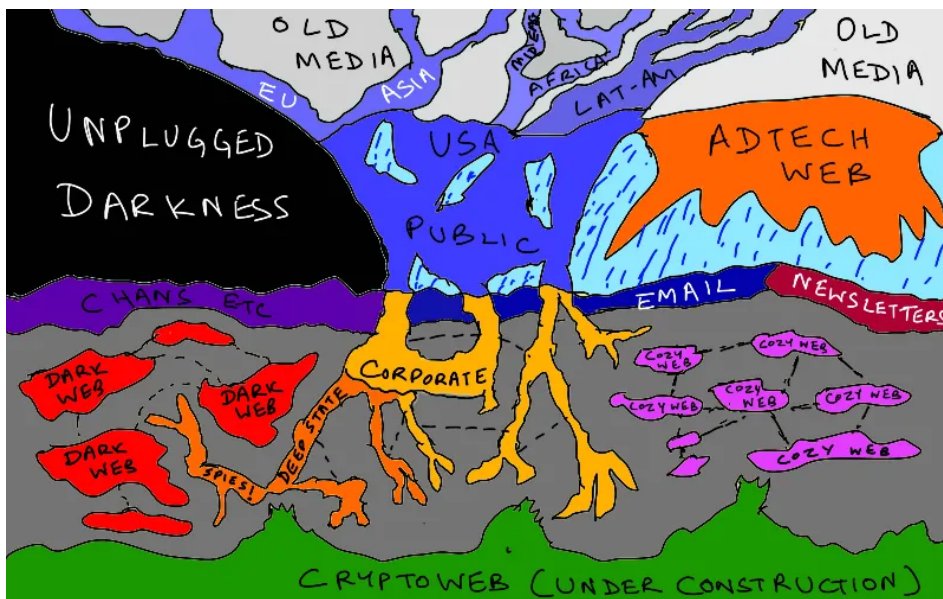
—Gemma Copeland



↑ Gemma's profile in table view gives a good overview of her sharing oriented approach.

Are.na, a Digital Garden in the Cozy Web?

This concluding part ventures into the similarities shared by Are.na with the realm of digital gardens while remaining distinct due to its enclosed platform nature—which Venkatesh Rao termed the *Cozy Web*⁴⁹. While Are.na is often likened to a network of interconnected digital gardens for creative individuals, its complete feature set and content accessibility remain confined within a paid community membership. In envisioning the contemporary web as a primarily privatized domain of walled gardens—dominated by massive information highways—digital gardens emerge as unique public and handmade alternatives transcending these walled confines, which piqued the interest of some interviewees within the creative community.



↑ Venkatesh Rao's cartography of the Web, 2019, [Link to article](#).

49. Rao, Venkatesh, 2019, 'The Extended Internet Universe', Ribbonfarm Studio [online] <https://studio.ribbonfarm.com/p/the-extended-internet-universe> [consulted: 2023.11.25]



↑ Quote from Paul Ford, 2016, *Reboot the World*, illustrated in *Sparrows talking about the future of the Web* by Laurel Schwulst for The Library of Practical and Conceptual Resources.

Caulfield's understanding of digital gardens earlier introduced, implies gardening is not about using specific technologies but rather how to rethink our online behavior towards information, through personal and explorable online space. As our Web navigation progressively delved into *streams* of collapsed information into single-track timelines of events—from social media feeds and chats—the lifespan of information is limited and not designed to be accumulated and grow over time as implies Gemma Copeland:

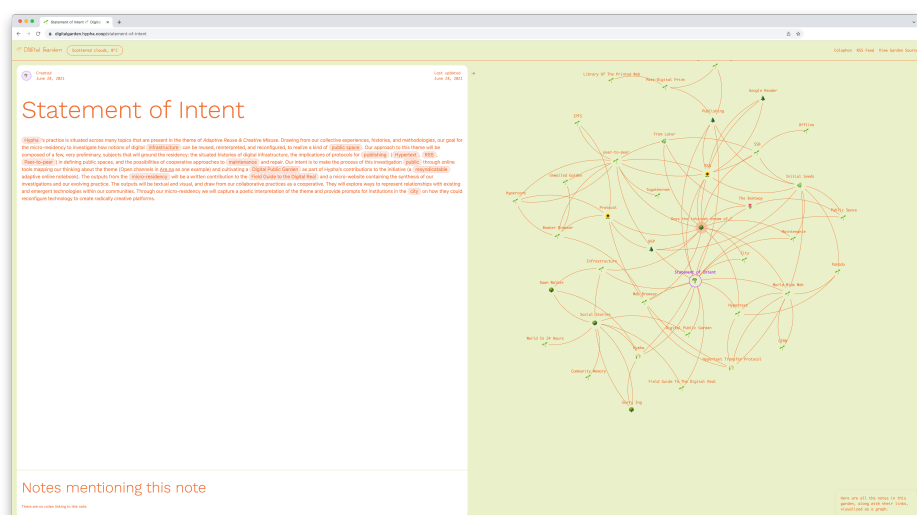
It's about not trying to use things that are always distracting you and also building that collective knowledge base over time. WhatsApp or Slack, everything gets lost in the stream. You're not building anything long-term, you're just chatting and it's chaotic.

—Gemma Copeland

Through its introverted interactions and interconnected architecture, Are.na constitutes a distinctive response to streams, which Gemma depicts as “such a polite platform, where people respect each other's little gardens that they're working on. Every now and again, people will add something to an open channel, and it feels like you've had this weird very quiet interaction with another person, which is super nice.”

DIGITAL GARDENS: NOT JUST A BLOG

Digital gardens, unlike traditional blogs and platform feeds, eschew the chronological or algorithmic confines of a timeline and instead, emphasize manual contextual relationships and associative links, similar to Are.na. In there, as the following examples I provided in this public Are.na channel⁵⁰, the structure isn't tethered to dates; rather, it thrives on interconnections between posts based on themes, topics, and shared contexts. Maggie Appleton aptly describes these gardens as having “many points of entry but no defined pathways.” HyphaCoop's digital garden⁵¹ is a good example showcasing interconnection as the background of the landing page:



↑ Hypha Coop's digital garden featuring in the background a nodal menu of all interconnected notes.

This topology over a timeline allows digital garden readers to traverse content via bi-directional linking, thematic piles⁵², nested folders⁵³, tags⁵⁴, advanced search bars, and visual node graphs⁵⁵, creating a non-linear, explorative experience, while questioning the established norms of a *personal website*

50. HAMON, Amaury, 2023, 'Digital Gardeners', [Are.na](https://www.Are.na/amaury-hamon/digital-gardeners) (Open Channel), [online] <https://www.Are.na/amaury-hamon/digital-gardeners> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

51. HYPHA Coop, 2021, 'Digital Garden', [online] <https://digitalgarden.hypha.coop/protocol> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

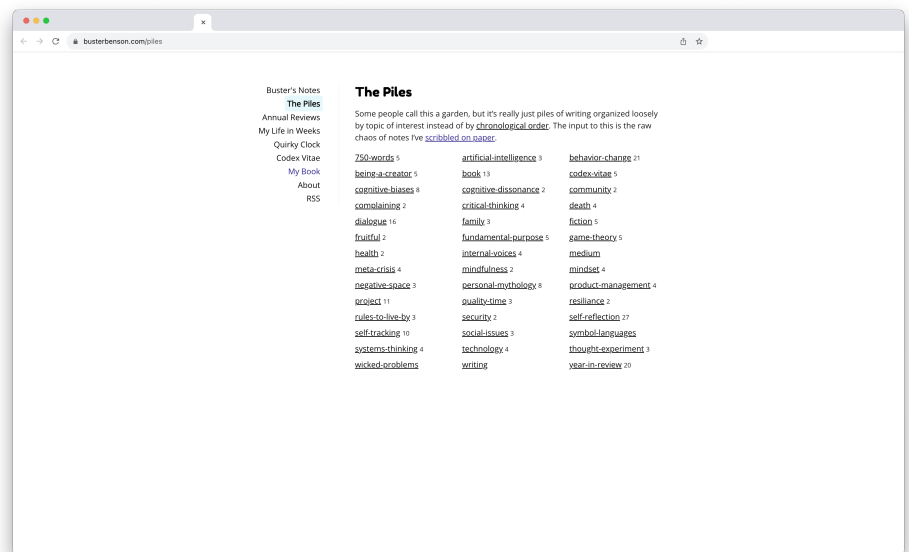
52. BENSON, Buster, 'The Piles', Buster's Notes, [online] <https://busterbenson.com/piles> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

53. CRITCHLOW, Tom, 'Welcome to wikifolder', Tom Critchlow, [online] <https://tomcritchlow.com/wiki/> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

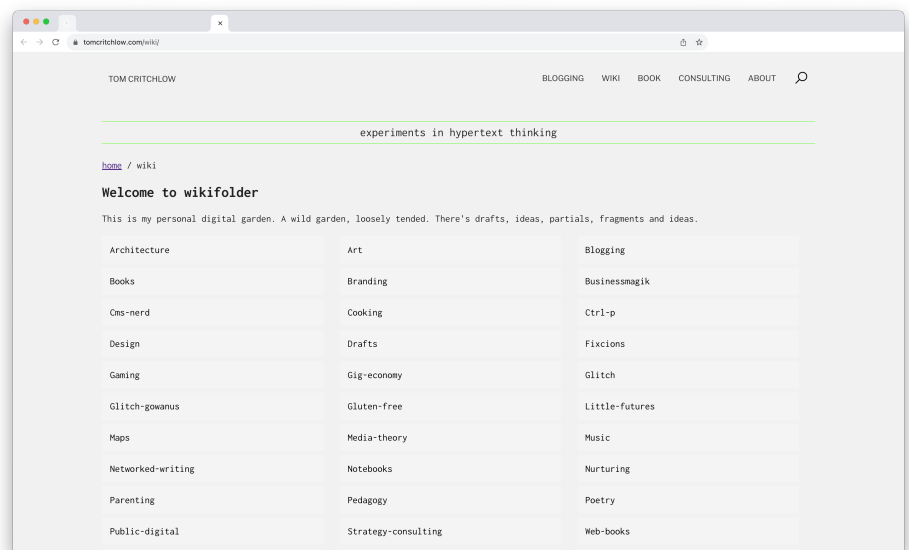
54. BISCARDI, Christopher, 'Digital Garden', All Chris' Writing, [online] <https://www.christopherbiscardi.com/garden> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

55. VOLOB0EV, Nikita, 'My Knowledge Wiki', Everything I Know, [online] <https://wiki.nikiv.dev/> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

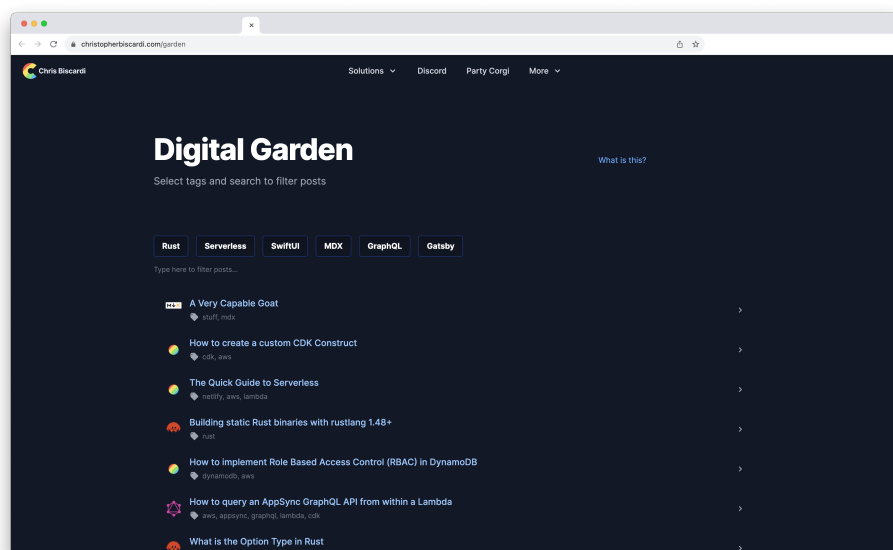
playfully. While Are.na does not use all of the above features, bi-directional linking and nesting channels in others certainly reflects this nonlinear exploration.



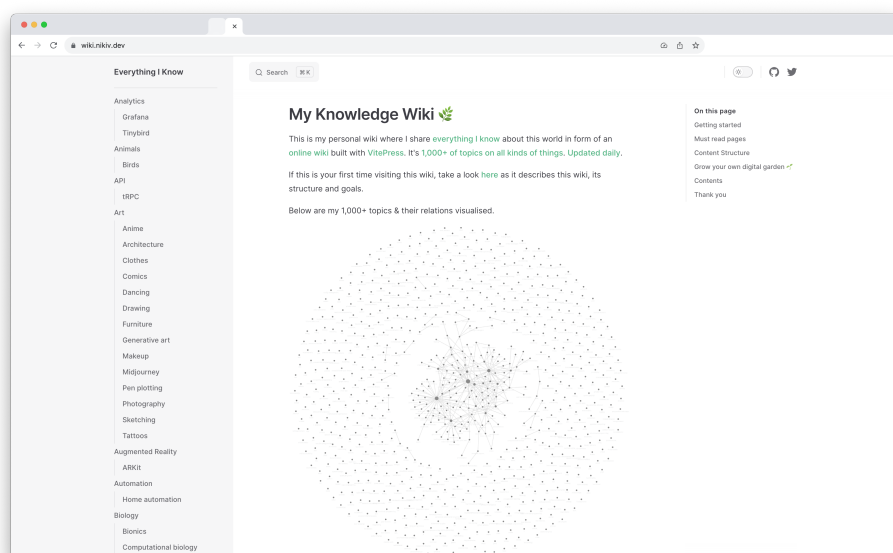
↑ Digital garden of Buster Benson featuring his piles of writings.



↑ Digital garden of Tom Critchlow indexing his notes in interconnected folders.



↑ Digital garden of Christopher Biscardi using tags for categorization.

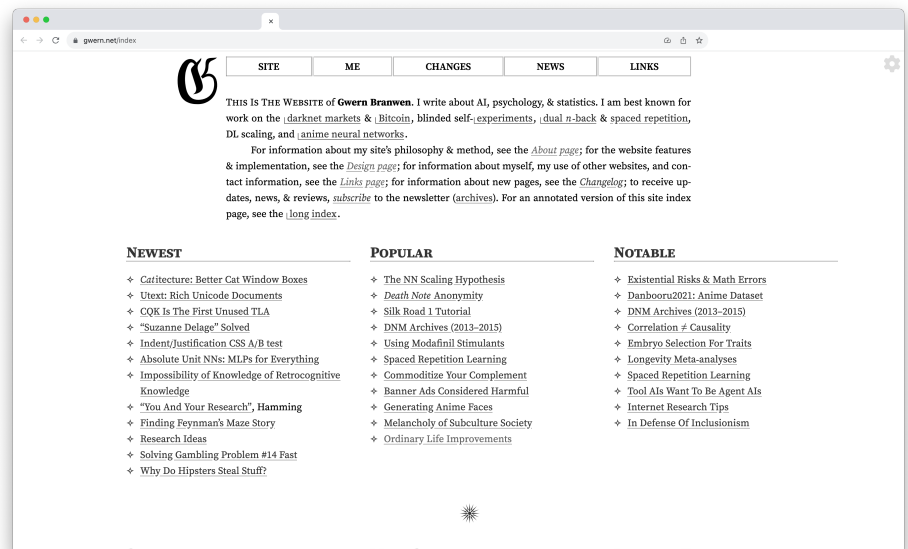


↑ Digital garden of Nikita Voloboev featuring a graph view of interconnected notes.

Continuous growth is fundamental to digital gardens, and Are.na. Unlike formal articles, essays, or presentation mood boards, these spaces evolve perpetually. Emphasizing editability, there's no notion of a final version—ideas are seeded, nurtured, and continuously tended, allowing for feedback, revision, and expansion. This fosters a low-pressure environment, promoting the organic evolution of thoughts and ideas over time, offering readers insights into the author's thinking process and embracing imperfection and growth. This corroborates with public and open Are.na channels.

The essence of learning in public is central to digital gardening, encouraging sharing and learning during the learning process, not as an *expert* or *individual genius* retrospectively,

which Are.na partly encourages, if members actively use open channels. Digital gardening is the *Domestic Cozy* response to the professional personal blog, both intimate and public, weird and welcoming. Responsibility is integral; notes can be categorized metaphorically as *seedlings*, *budding*, or *evergreen*, signifying their development stage. [Gwern.net](https://gwnet.net/)⁵⁶ exemplifies this with meta-reflections on each entry, including topic tags, dates, stage tags, certainty levels, and importance rankings.



↑ Digital garden of Gwern Branwen, which they assembled through expressing different levels of completeness.

These gardens challenge the norms of personal websites, aiming for deep contextualization amidst the chaos of the internet, for which Are.na has room for improvement. Yet both Are.na and digital gardens emphasize content diversity, welcoming various formats like podcasts, videos, images, tweets, and academic papers, fostering a rich multimedia environment.

Independently owning a digital garden is pivotal and radical; it ensures control and ownership, diverging from cozy walled gardens and platforms like Facebook or Twitter. None of these platforms are designed to help you slowly build and weave personal knowledge. Except for Are.na, most of them actively fight against it.

Additionally, as Daniel states, “[platforms] come and go, no matter how powerful or stable they seem to be”, your writing and creations can sink with it. Almost none of them have an easy export button. And they certainly will not hand you your data in a transferable format. This reflects the topics of Data and Privacy Concerns within Antitrust Laws about considerations

56. BRANWEN, Gwern, ‘Gwern.net’, [online] <https://gwnet.net/> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

of how dominant tech platforms handle user data. This involves examining whether the collection and use of data create unfair competitive advantages or harm consumer privacy.

While digital gardens currently end up being solitary endeavors, efforts are underway to create multiplayer spaces, which Are.na feels relevant for creatives as a community garden. For handmade gardens, *Webmentions*⁵⁷ is an alternative option to gather a community of personal websites.

In essence, digital gardens symbolize a shift towards a more intentional, less performative, yet engaging and personalized approach to sharing knowledge. They encapsulate the dichotomy between chaos and cultivation, embracing imperfection, continuous growth, and responsible sharing in a multimedia-rich, non-linear environment—all while securing ownership and control within the vast expanse of the internet. Are.na partly encapsulates such common interests and features of more radically handmade gardens, and serves as a walled doorway for how creatives got intertwined with the digital gardening narrative. In there, the choice is theirs to pivot from private to public collaboration and sharing.

57. PARECKI, Aaron, 'WEBMENTION' [online] <https://webmention.io/> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of how creatives gather and share resources within the broader landscape of private aggregated UGCCCC platforms, with Are.na as a case study, has revealed both appealing & unique attributes and the tensions influencing in turn their creative methods. Are.na, while remaining walled, brings features of digital gardening, community-scaled for creatives, and distinguishes itself by offering the creative community a mindful space for curation, context, and collaboration, bringing a commitment to user privacy and without the expected passive features of mainstream social media. Its high-quality curated content and collaborative features allow enhanced development of creatives' visual culture while offering offline professional opportunities, in which creative fields are not just a craft and know-how but a knowledge-based discipline.

Interviews with creatives shed light on a plurality of methods and approaches on used platforms, from gatekeeping to radical active ways of gathering and sharing, influencing in turn the overall practice of creatives. The beneficial enhanced access to inspiration with widespread visual culture leads simultaneously to context concerns, which depending on passive or more active methods, leads to either decontextualization, homogenization of visual culture, or deep contextualization. The balance between radical shared ownership of gathering and public sharing while preserving the intimacy of one's research emerged as a significant challenge, with diverse perspectives on the economic value of creative endeavors online in a market driven by competition. Gatekeeping, by nurturing scarcity instead of abundance models, tended through public curating, contributing, and sharing resources. This collaborative commoning approach to gathering and sharing is critical to pivoting default competition on originality into better collaboration and engagement with the creative community.

Through its steady growth, Are.na fostered a community of creative gatherers. The platform's design encourages a more open, thoughtful, and engaged approach to gathering in the digital age, through redefining ownership, bringing context, content curation, and fostering a unique sense of community among its members. Intersecting creativity and technology, these collaborative curation platforms continue to shape and reflect online culture, influencing in turn creative processes. The examination of specific cases like Are.na or digital gardens contributes to our understanding of the dynamics at play in fueling creativity within the digital realm. The case of Are.na used by creatives demonstrates the need for smaller-scaled communities, complexities, and intricacies inherent in UGC platforms, offering valuable insights into the evolving landscape of digital collaboration, curation, and contextualization of the Web drowned by algorithms and centralized private platforms.

Simultaneously to the writing of this thesis, to better understand the possibilities of digital gardening, and what were the possibilities and the limits of *UGCCCC* / Are.na platform, regarding a more radical creation, I experimented since the summer of 2023 with the customization of my own digital garden⁵⁸, using researcher Jacky Zhao's *Quartz*⁵⁹ Digital Garden Static Site Generator (SSG) and following his prompt: "How might we create infrastructures and technologies that empower the residents of the IXJeb to have access to the same tools as the architect?".⁶⁰ With Laurel Schwulst's 2018 essay on how websites could be⁶¹ and J.R. Carpenter's 2015 essay *A Handmade Web*⁶² in mind, my motivation was not only to address hands on the topic of this research but develop a learning in public educational space as a network of interconnected ideas and thoughts, growing over time, and to resist *wysiwyg* templates and enclosed platforms. Having such a public personal container for my gathered knowledge feels less centered on gathering visual culture, which to me Are.na excels

58. HAMON, Amaury, 2023, 'CODE 101', [online] <https://teaching.amauryhamon.com/> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

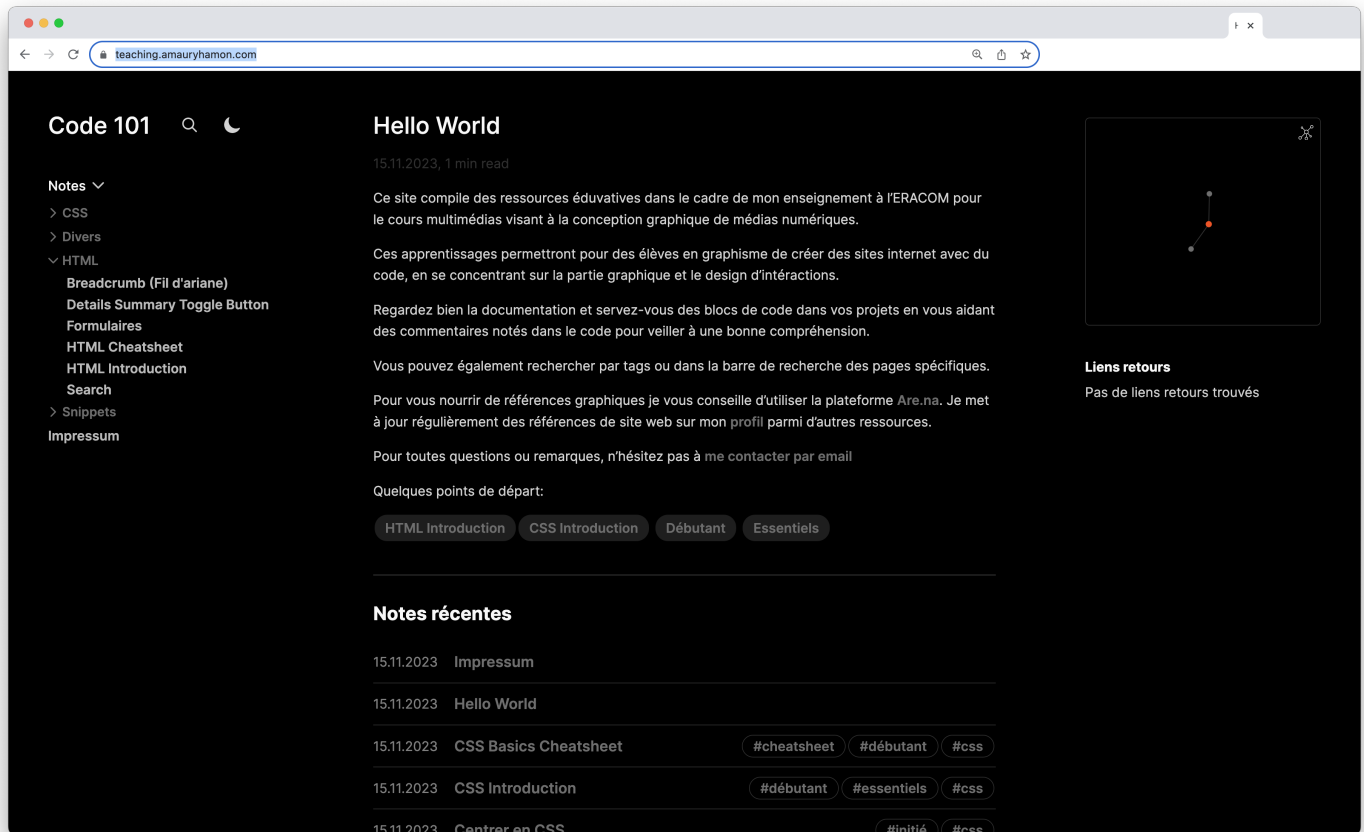
59. ZHAO, Jacky, 2023, 'jzhao.xyz', [online] <https://quartz.jzhao.xyz/> [consulted: 2023.11.27]

60. ZHAO, Jacky, 2023, 'Quartz 4.0', Quartz, [online] <https://jzhao.xyz/> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

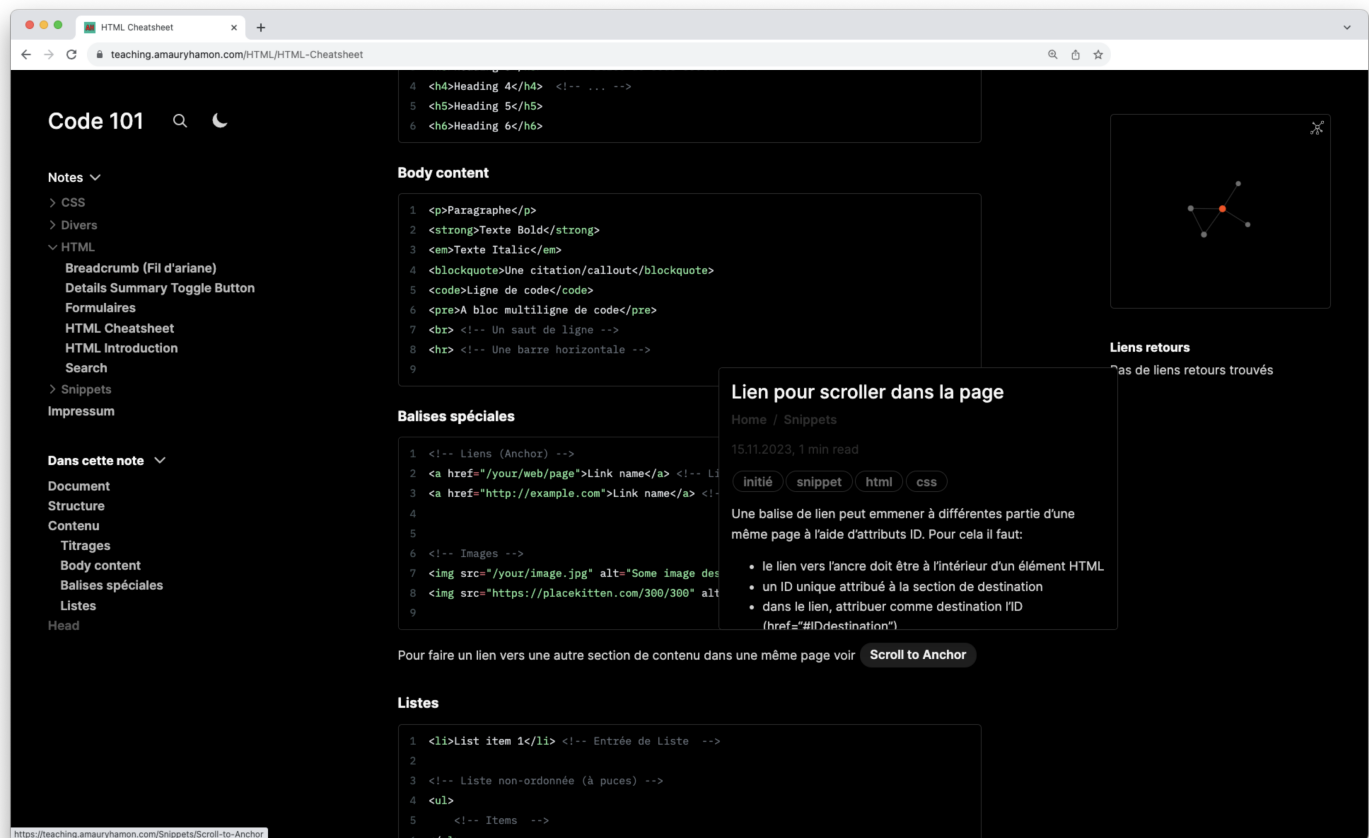
61. SCHWULST, Laurel, 2018, 'My website is a shifting house next to a river of knowledge. What could yours be?', THE CREATIVE INDEPENDENT, [online] <https://thecreativeindependent.com/essays/laurel-schwulst-my-website-is-a-shifting-house-next-to-a-river-of-knowledge-what-could-yours-be/> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

62. R. CARPENTER, J., 2015, 'A Handmade Web', LuckySoap, [online] <http://luckysoap.com/statements/handmadeweb.html> [consulted: 2023.11.25]

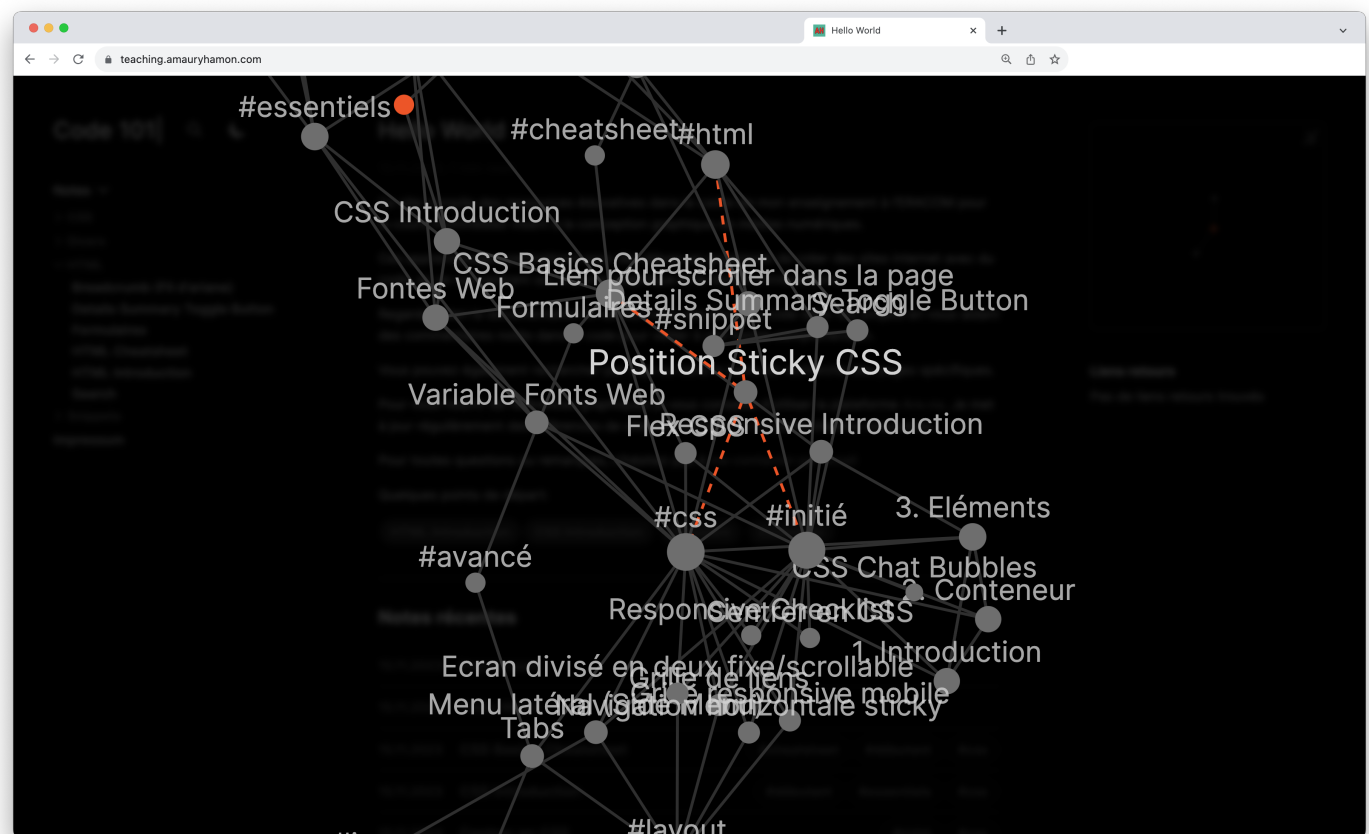
in, but more on note-taking in public, sharing beyond walls educational resources about design and code.



↑ My own digital garden, oriented towards sharing coding resources for pedagogical purposes, while gathering snippets of code I learn.



↑ Hovering a linked node inside a page, allows to preview its content.



↑ Opening the Menu toggles a nodal graph view overlay of the gathered resources since inception. Hovering a node, highlights its interconnected tags, folders and notes.

Design Notes

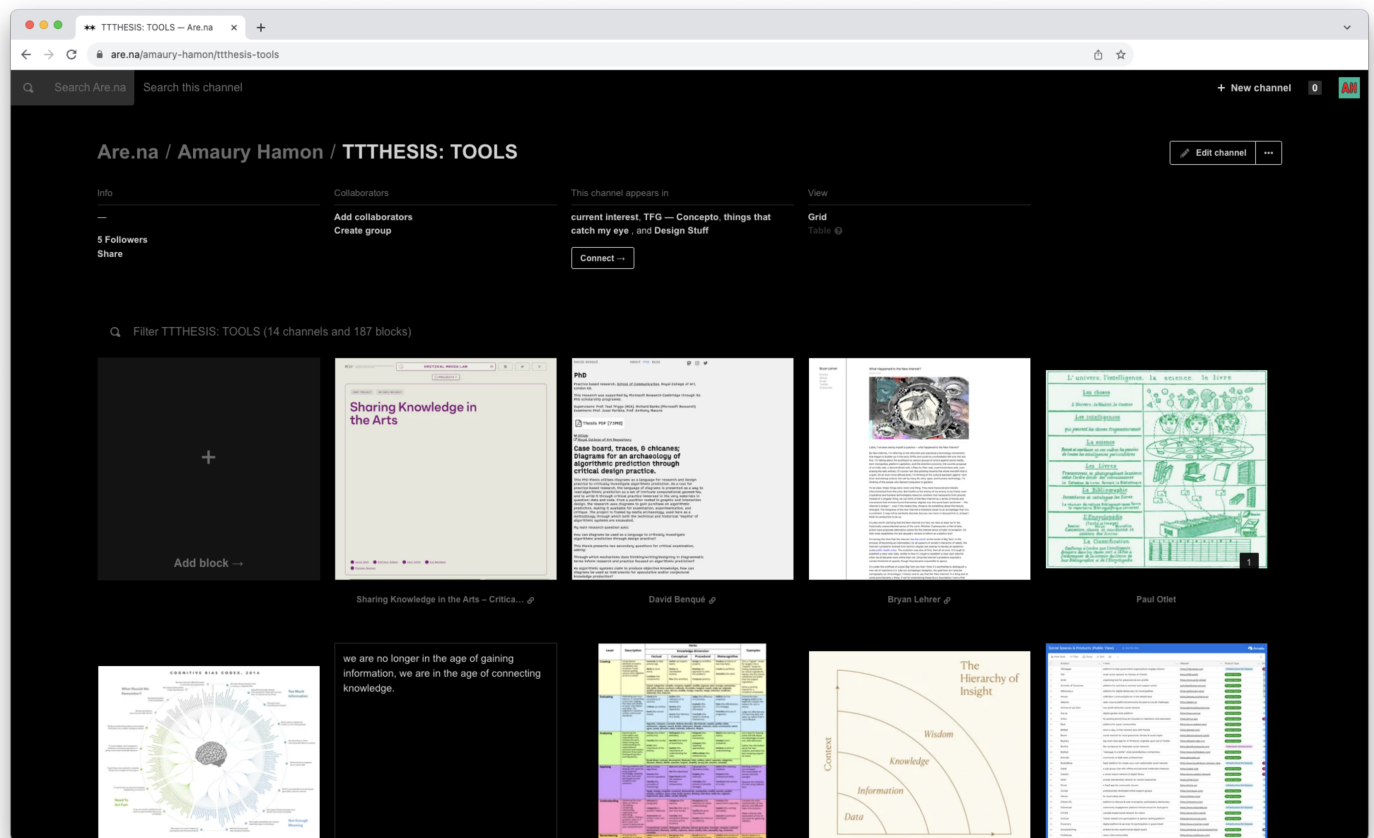
My MA Thesis was initially designed as a website, utilizing Paged.js and PageTypeToPrint to explore the concept of single-source publishing. This approach aims to centralize content management, minimizing errors, and leveraging web technologies to present content across various media formats.

The website is adaptable for printing in pocket book format (Work in Progress) and universal A4, catering to anyone with a printer. For accessibility, the web-based content integrates multimedia elements such as video, audio recordings from interviews, textual transcripts, and visual content.

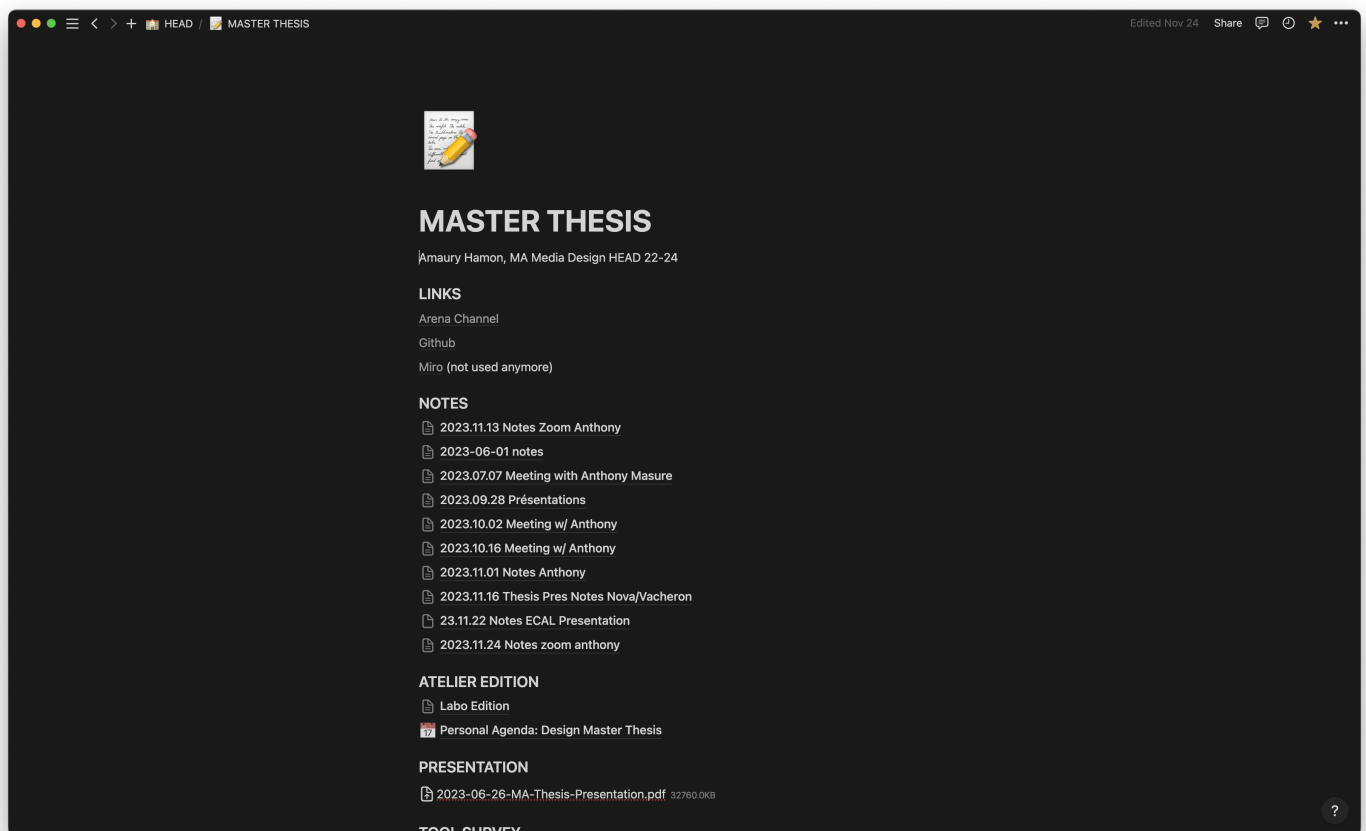
Additionally, this project serves as a personal experiment with alternative publishing and writing tools, diverging from standard corporate options. With a background in printed graphic design, my professional goal is to merge design with coding, moving towards a hybrid model of design and computation. I also prioritize supporting libre, open-source, and community-driven alternatives like collaborative writing pads and the paged.js library.

By harnessing web technologies like HTML's semantic markup, CSS for visual styling, and the functionalities of JS and PHP, Paged.js facilitated the production of both the website and its printed document in multiple formats.

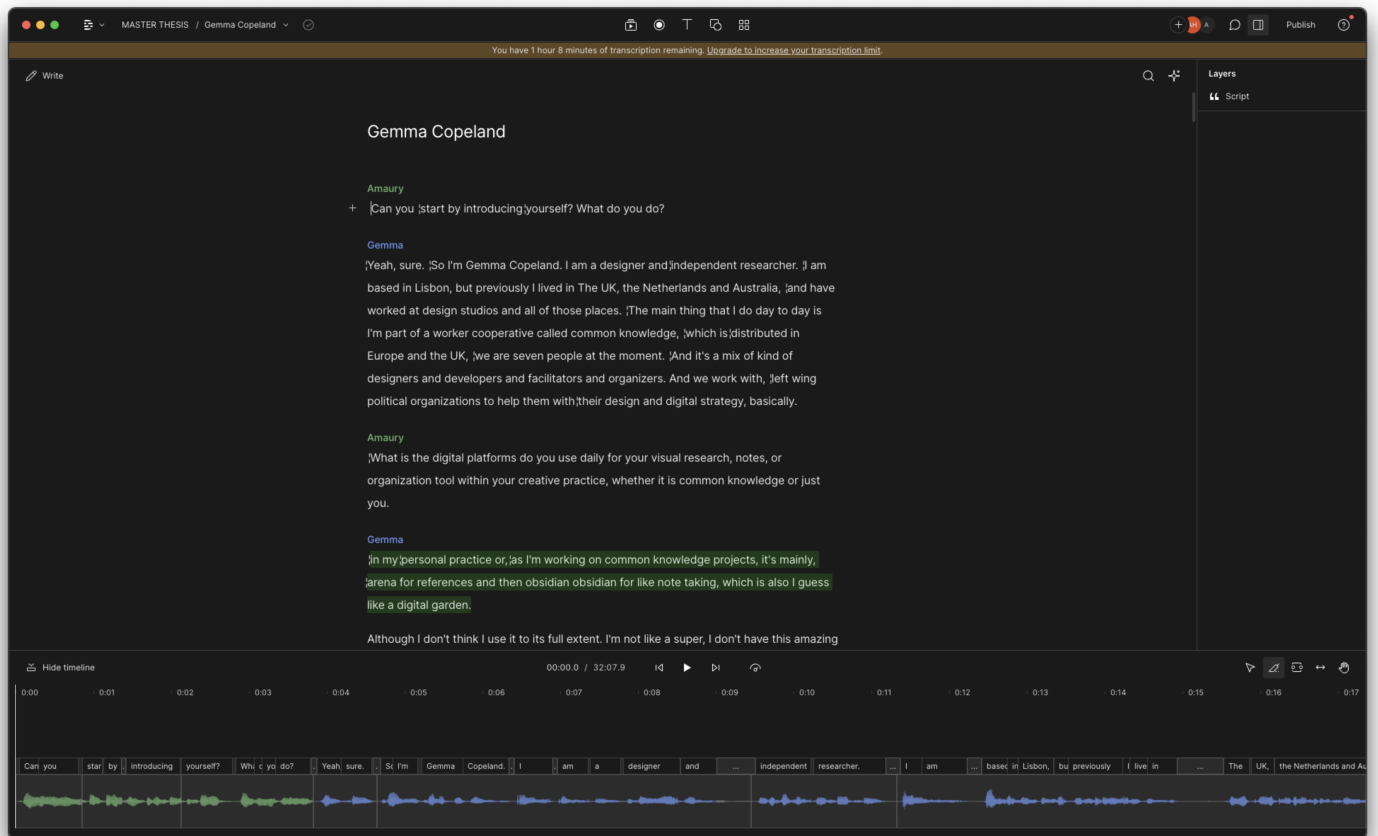
The design of this web thesis emerged serendipitously while exploring GitHub repositories for web-to-print resources. I stumbled upon PageTypeToPrint, a template developed by Julien Bidoret for ESAD Pyrénées School of Art & Design Master Thesis writings. I'm grateful for this open-source tool, which provided a foundation for the coding architecture. It allowed me to customize the design and functionalities according to my thesis needs, despite my initial limited coding skills—skills that have hopefully improved throughout this multimedia journey. The following screenshots offers a preview of the overall workflow.



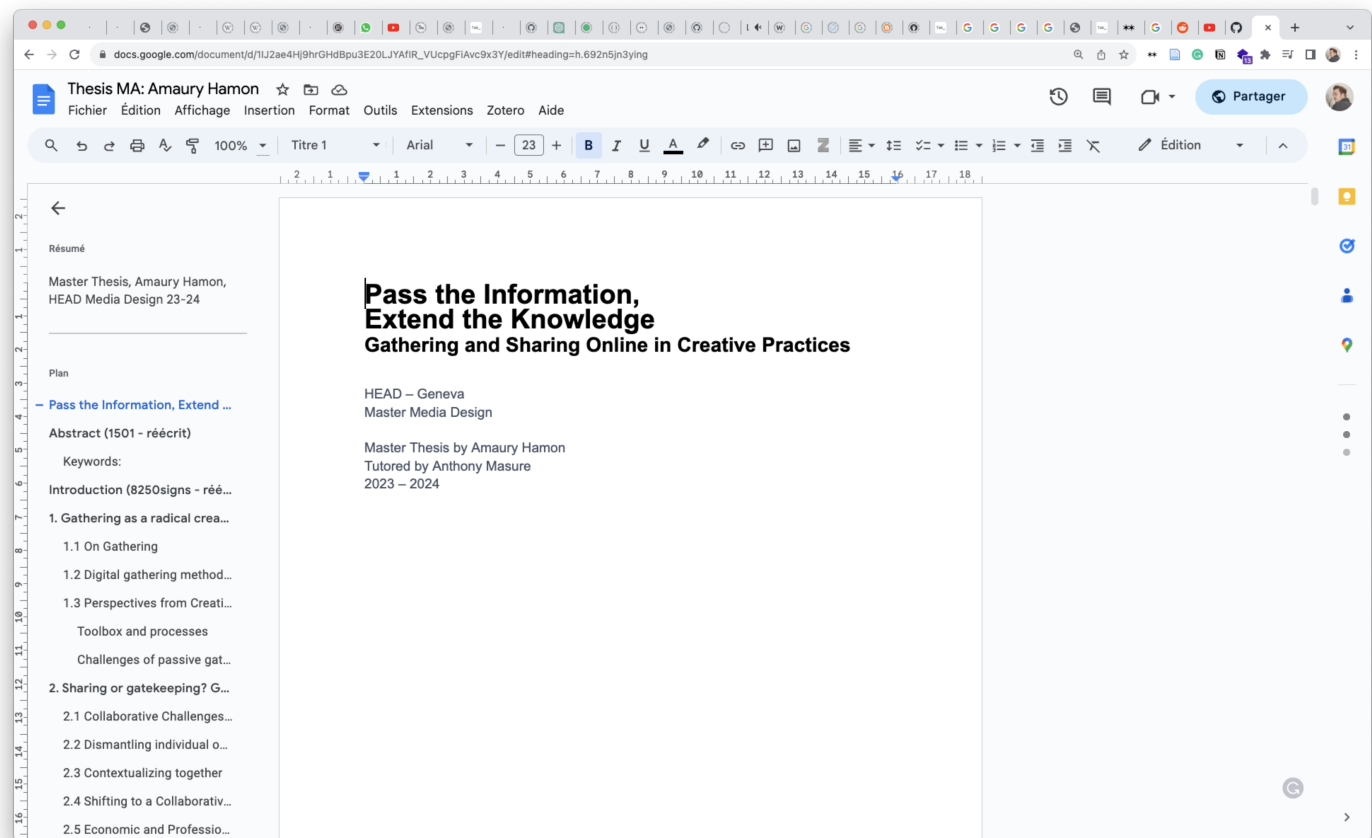
↑ Are.na was the gathering container of references browsed online and discussed during meetings with friends, interviewees and teachers.



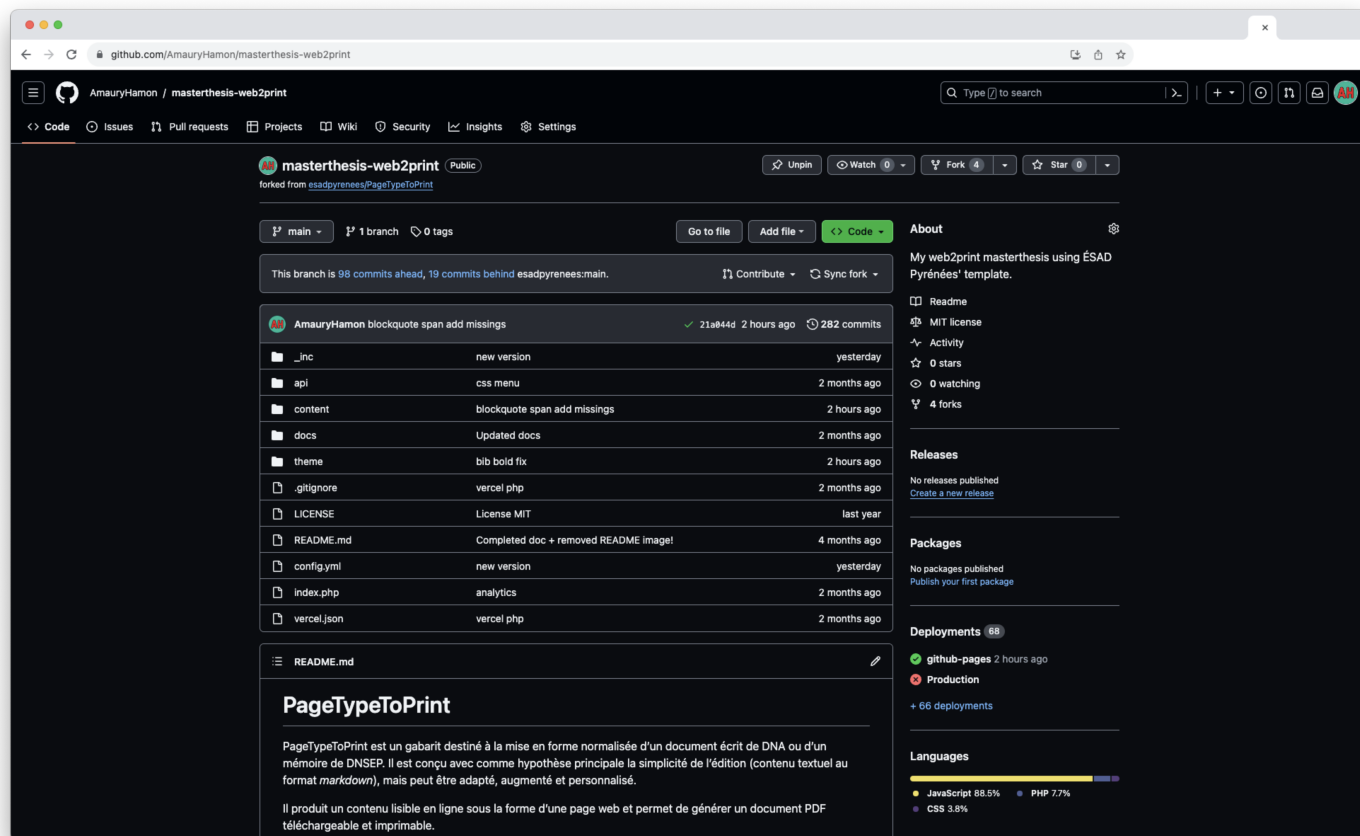
↑ Notion was used as note-taking and organization for the project timeline.



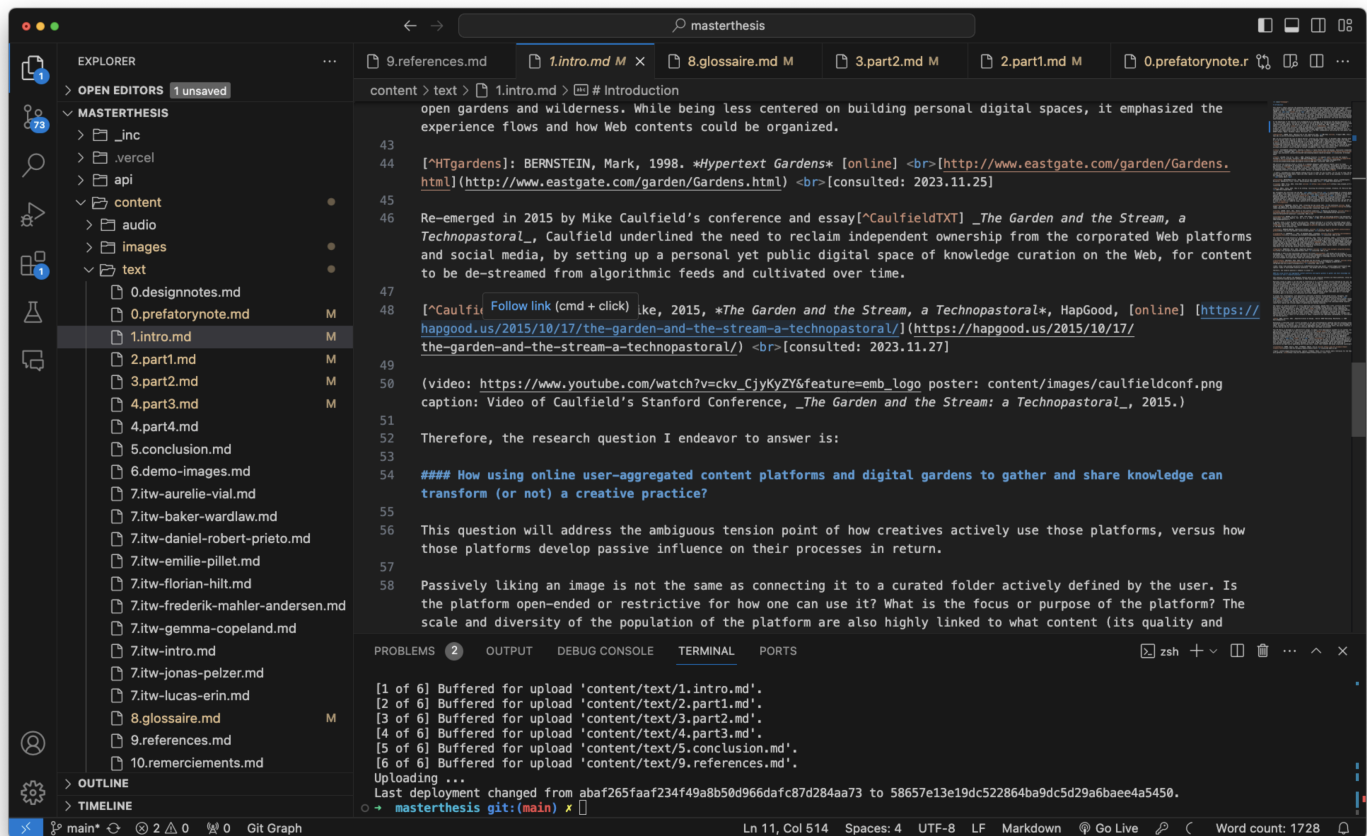
↑ Descript was used to import and edit recorded audio interviews and written transcript.



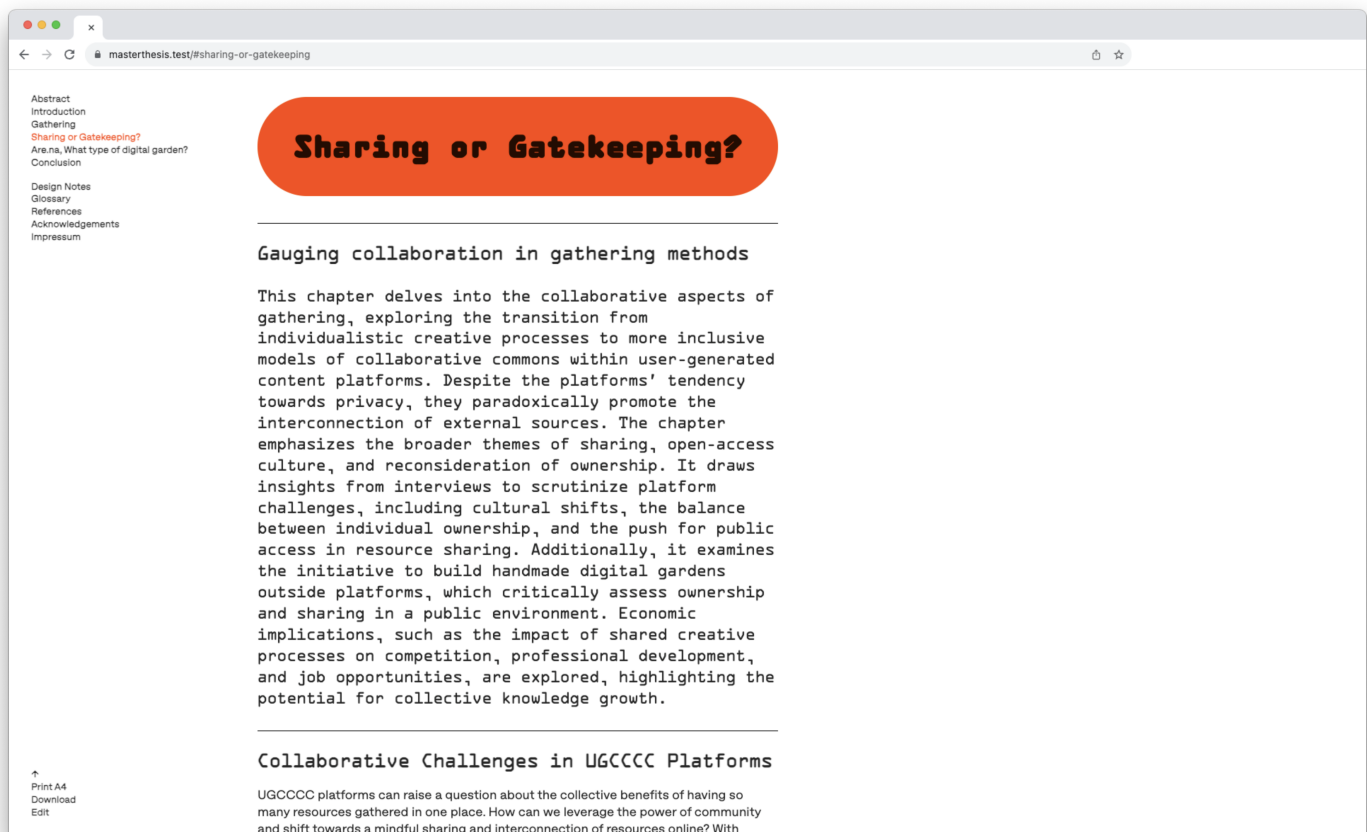
↑ Libre pads were experimented, yet Google docs allowed better collaboration. A Markdown conversion plugin was used for importation in the website.



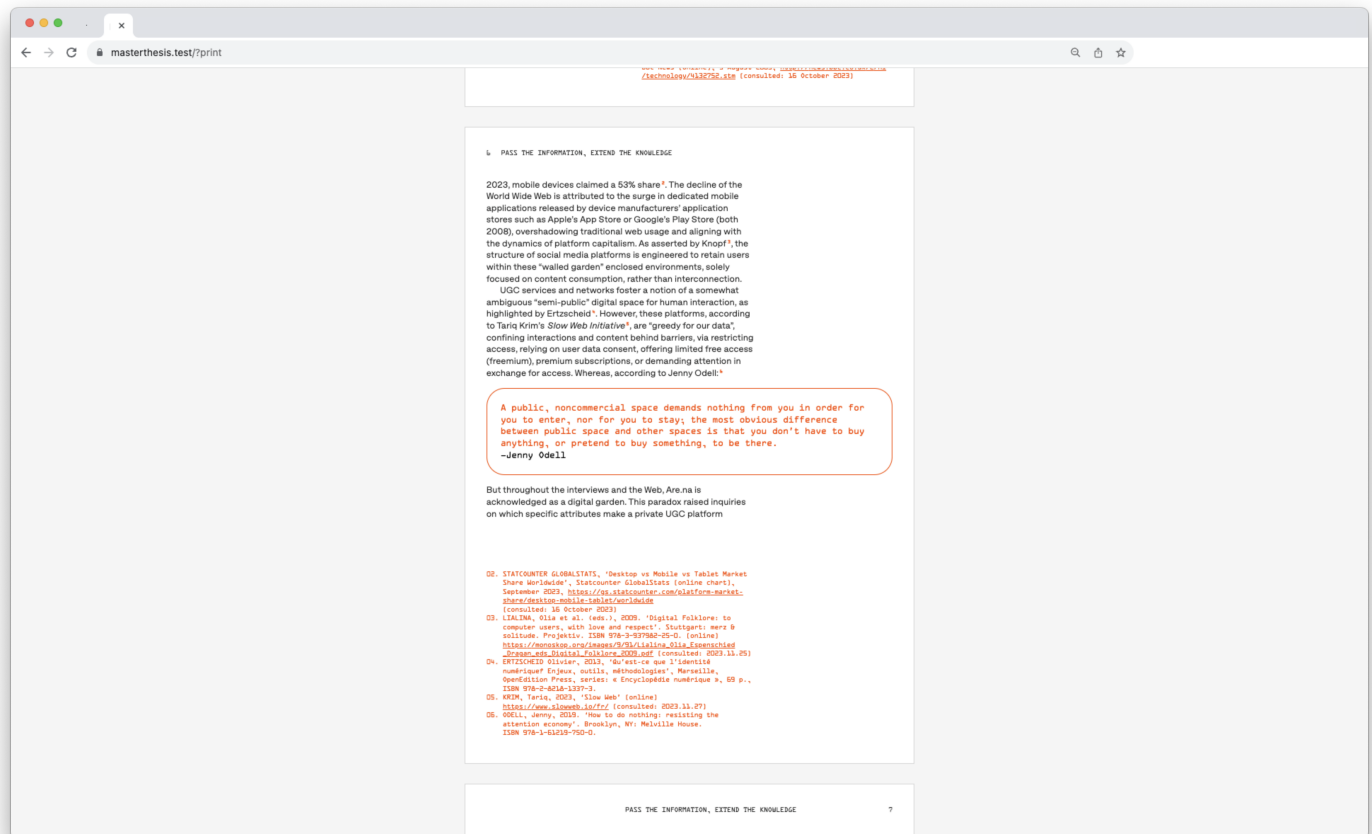
↑ Open Source Github repository of the project forked from Julien Bidoret's PageTypeToPrint template repository.



↑ Design, Development, Versioning and Deployment via Visual Studio Code.



↑ Desktop Web version of the project.



↑ Printable A4 version of the project.


Pass the Information, Extend the Knowledge

Gathering and Sharing Online in Creative Practices

MA Thesis by [Amaury Hamon](#) HEAD – Geneva, 2023–24
Tutored by [Anthony Masure](#) Master Media Design

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↑ Print command of the browser allowing to save the website as a custom-designed PDF.

Glossary

API (Application Programming Interface)

is a set of protocols, tools, definitions, and functionalities that enable different software applications or systems to communicate and interact with each other. It defines how different software components should interact, making it easier to integrate and access data or services from one to another.

Attention Economy

refers to the economic system in which attention becomes a scarce and valuable resource. In this system, companies compete for individuals' attention through various platforms and services, often relying on techniques like targeted advertising and addictive design to capture and hold attention for financial gain.

Collection

refers to a grouping or assembly of items, objects, or entities that share common characteristics or are gathered for a specific purpose. Collections can vary widely in their nature and can include physical objects, digital items, data sets, or abstract concepts such as groups of related ideas, concepts, or theories gathered together for a specific purpose. The term "collection" implies a deliberate act of gathering or organizing items together based on certain criteria or for a specific reason. Collections often serve as valuable resources for study, research, enjoyment, or reference, providing a curated set of items that share common attributes or themes.

Context Collapse

refers to a phenomenon in social media or online communication where different social contexts or audiences merge into one, causing challenges in managing privacy, self-presentation, and communication styles. It occurs when content intended for a specific audience or context is shared widely or made accessible to diverse groups, blurring the boundaries between social spheres.

Creativity

is the ability to generate original ideas, concepts, or solutions that are novel, valuable, and relevant in a particular context. It involves the process of thinking divergently, exploring new possibilities, and producing something unique by combining existing elements in innovative ways. Creativity often involves connecting unrelated or disparate concepts, ideas, or elements to generate innovative outcomes or insights. The creative process involves different stages, including preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification, although these stages can vary based on individual approaches and the nature of the creative task.

Curation

refers to the process of selecting, organizing, and presenting content, items, or information in a thoughtful and deliberate manner to achieve a specific purpose or goal. It involves sorting through available material, choosing the most relevant or valuable pieces, and arranging them in a meaningful way. In the digital realm, content curation involves gathering, organizing, and presenting digital content (such as articles, videos, images, etc.) from various sources on a specific topic or interest. Content curators often compile and share such collections through blogs, social media, or platforms.

Death-Scrolling (or Doomscrolling)

is a term used to describe the act of continuously scrolling through social media feeds, websites, or digital content for an extended period, often to the point of exhaustion or mental fatigue. This behavior can lead to spending excessive time consuming online content, resulting in negative effects on mental health, productivity, and well-being.

Digital Garden

is an evolving collection of ideas, notes, and resources interconnected that are organized and shared online. It serves as a platform for personal knowledge management and allows for non-linear exploration and collaboration.

Gatekeeping

refers to the practice of controlling, filtering, or regulating access to information, opportunities, resources, or communities by individuals or groups in a position of authority or influence. It involves determining what content, individuals, or ideas are allowed to pass through a particular gate or barrier, thereby influencing who gains entry or recognition within a specific field, industry, or community.

Gathering

refers to the act of assembling or collecting things, people, information, or resources together in one place or for a particular purpose. It involves bringing together various elements or individuals to form a group, collection, or assembly. With the advent of digital platforms, gathering can also take place virtually or online, where people come together through video calls, webinars, online forums, or social media platforms to share information, ideas, or engage in discussions, aimed at creating connections, sharing resources, or achieving common goals.

Knowledge

refers to the understanding, information, skills, and awareness acquired through learning, experience, study, or discovery. It encompasses facts, insights, principles, beliefs, and concepts that an individual possesses and can apply or use in various contexts.

Knowledge commoning

refers to the practice of collectively creating, sharing, and stewarding knowledge as a commons. It involves the collaborative and community-driven effort to generate and maintain a shared pool of knowledge resources, often through open and participatory processes that prioritize accessibility and collective ownership.

Sharing

refers to the act of giving, contributing, or distributing something with others, whether it's tangible items, resources, information, experiences, emotions, or ideas. It involves offering a portion of what one possesses or knows for the benefit or enjoyment of others. Sharing information involves disseminating knowledge, data, facts, or insights with others. It can occur through various mediums, such as digital platforms. In collaborative efforts, sharing refers to teamwork or joint contributions toward a common goal, where individuals pool their resources, skills, or efforts for mutual benefit. With the rise of the internet and social media, sharing has expanded to digital realms, where individuals share content, photos, videos, opinions, or thoughts through online platforms for others to see, engage with, or learn from. Sharing is often seen as a fundamental aspect of social interaction and cooperation. It fosters connections, builds relationships, promotes empathy, and allows individuals to contribute to the well-being of others. The act of sharing can bring about a sense of community, generosity, and mutual support among individuals or groups.

Social Media Fatigue

refers to a state of mental exhaustion, burnout, or reduced interest experienced by individuals due to prolonged or excessive use of social media platforms. It's characterized by feelings of overwhelm, disengagement, or dissatisfaction with the time spent on social media networks.

Post-Capital

refers to a theoretical framework that envisions a future beyond the capitalist economic system. It explores alternative models that prioritize sustainability, social justice, and collective well-being, aiming to address the inherent flaws and inequalities of capitalism.

Public Learning (Learning in Public)

refers to the process of acquiring knowledge and skills through open and inclusive educational practices that are accessible to a wider community. It emphasizes collaboration, shared resources, and collective participation to foster lifelong learning and empower individuals in a public setting.

Surveillance Capitalism

refers to the economic system where companies profit by collecting and analyzing massive amounts of personal data from individuals for targeted advertising and behavioral manipulation. It involves the exploitation of digital surveillance technologies to commodify and monetize people's private information.

User-Generated Content Platform

is an online service or platform where users can create, share, and interact with content, typically in the form of text, images, videos, reviews, comments, or other media. These platforms enable individuals to contribute their own content, which is then accessible to a broader audience. Examples of UGC platforms include social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube, where users can upload and share their own content with followers or the public. Additionally, forums, discussion boards, blogging sites, and certain apps focused on content creation and sharing fall under the UGC platform category.

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Thanks

FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO

Gemma Copeland
Lucas Erin
Florian Hilt
Frederik Mahler-Andersen
Jonas Pelzer
Émilie Pillet
Daniel Robert Prieto
Aurélie Vial
Baker Wardlaw

FOR THEIR ADVICE AND HELP TO

Clément Lambelet
Julie Lang
Anthony Masure
Nicolas Nova
Daniel Sciboz
Tibor Udvari
Joël Vacheron
HEAD Media Design 23–24 Gang

ORIGINAL DEVELOPMENT & DESIGN

This website exists thanks to the original work of [Julien Bidoret](#) who developed [PageTypeToPrint](#), a [paged.js](#) web-to-print thesis template for [ESAD Pyrénées](#), École supérieure d'art et de design des Pyrénées. [Original Source Code](#). Original design by [Perrine Saint Martin](#).

The timeline showcased in chapter 1 is based on Julie Blanc's [Original Timeline of technologies for publishing \(1963–2018\)](#), many thanks to her for allowing the share and remix through open-source code.

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SD-Walla, by Baptiste Lecanu (Spectrodrama).

OCR-X, by [Eurostandard](#), [Maxitype](#).

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