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Shared Soundscapes: A social environment for collective music creation

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Background

The development of internet communication and computer devices leads to the appearance of a new domain of collective music creation. Both musicians and computer science engineers are working together in networked music, creating instruments that allow the emergence of what has been titled Shared Soundscapes (Barbosa, 2003). This collaboration brings out a new conceptual space for musical creation (Boden, 1990; 1996) that is being explored by these specialists. This new domain offers two very attractive features, from a creativity point of view. On the one hand its instruments are being built in a user-friendly way, on Internet. This allows that any interested person in any place can try and indeed be able to create music. On the other hand, and in accordance with l'esprit du temps, it is made to enable collective creation. In order to both understand and explore the real possibilities of this conceptual space, we will apply Csikszentmihalyi's Systemic Perspective of Creativity (1998).

Aims

The present paper aims to characterise the domain of networked music and identify the features that might aid or hinder collective musical creativity. We will to this by using Csikszentmihalyi concepts of Symbolic Domain, Social Field and Innovative Person (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998; Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi, 2001). According to this theory, creativity results from the interaction of these three factors. Providing a set of operational concepts for an integrated multidimensional analysis, this may well be an useful tool for assessing why creativity may or may not occur in networked music. Aditionally, to facilitate a deeper understanding of this new domain, we will present a case study of a networked music instrument: The Public Sound Objects (PSOs - Barbosa; 2002).

Main Contribution

This paper is a contribution to the literature on the social psychology of musical creativity. More specifically, it presents a contribution to the assessment of the social impact of different technological features on collective creativity in a developing domain.

Implications

These new musical instruments created within the framework of networked music may assume different functional characteristics related to composition or improvisation, communication and social interaction. We expect that from this work we can provide some strategies for exploring

these characteristics and thus contribute to the development of this new creative domain.

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