

Syntegration Against the Platform

Experimentation with the *Team Syntegrity* protocol for viable institutional forms that counter the logic of algocracy in institutions of contemporary art

Volume 2 of 2

John Hill

Practical work submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Liverpool John Moores University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

<http://www.johnhill.xyz/phd>

Additional archived version is available at:

<https://conifer.rhizome.org/jhpdf/syntegration-against-the-platform/>

February 2021

Experiments

These four experiments, conducted between December 2016 and February 2019, work with different groups to implement different elements of Stafford Beer's *Team Syntegrity* in both discussion and collaborative art making.

Experiment 1 — *Reading and Thinging*



Figure 1 – Reading and Thinging, Liverpool, 2016 (credit: Object Liberation Front)

Reading and Thinging was an informal get-together that crosses a reading group with a ‘show and tell’ session – exploring different themes in philosophy, science and culture through a curated reading list and discussion of objects. The project was a collaboration between current FACT PhD researchers Alex Pearl and Sam Skinner, and FACTLab residents Thiago Hersan and Radamés Ajna, as an opportunity to make different areas of research, like philosophy, media theory and robotics, open and accessible, and to develop a community of readers, thinkers and thingers that mixes theory and making. The eighth and final meeting of this group was led by me, and was my first attempt at using Stafford Beer’s Team Syntegrity protocol to structure group interaction.

[Reading & Thinging #8: On Syntegrity](#) — images and audio recording of the workshop

Experiment 2 — *How to build a platform*



Figure 2 – *Beyond Dispute (installation view), Prague, 2017 (credit: Jan Vidlička/AVU)*

This experiment took place in spring 2017 during my residency at the Studio of the Visiting Artist at the Academy of Fine Arts, Prague. Working with 14 fine art students from three Czech artschools as well as Erasmus and International exchange students from China, Australia and the UK, the Team Syntegrity protocol to organise an 18-week collaborative project that resulted in a public performance and exhibition.

How to build a platform — online exhibition with Artycok.tv in 2018 to archive the project, including documentation of the group's final performance, component group-works, translations of exhibited works for the web alongside a new online performance with members of the original group and a new reflective text on my experience as the studio leader.

Experiment 3 — *FavourBank: Meeting0*



Figure 3 – Favour Bank: Meeting0 presentation, London, 2017 (credit: Diaspore)

In this experiment, a syntegeation was used to help decision making at the outset of a new project, FavourBank, conceived by myself in collaboration with artist Lou-Atessa Marcellin. Following an introductory presentation on debt and the commons—and a number of games designed to illustrate problems of trust and collaboration, including the prisoners dilemma—the syntegeation was used to agree details of how FavourBank would collectively manage a common-pool resource of people’s time and skills.

Learning to share: gifts, debt and the commons — introductory presentation delivered at FavourBank workshop / Favour Bank: Meeting0 — event details

Experiment 4 — *Conditions*

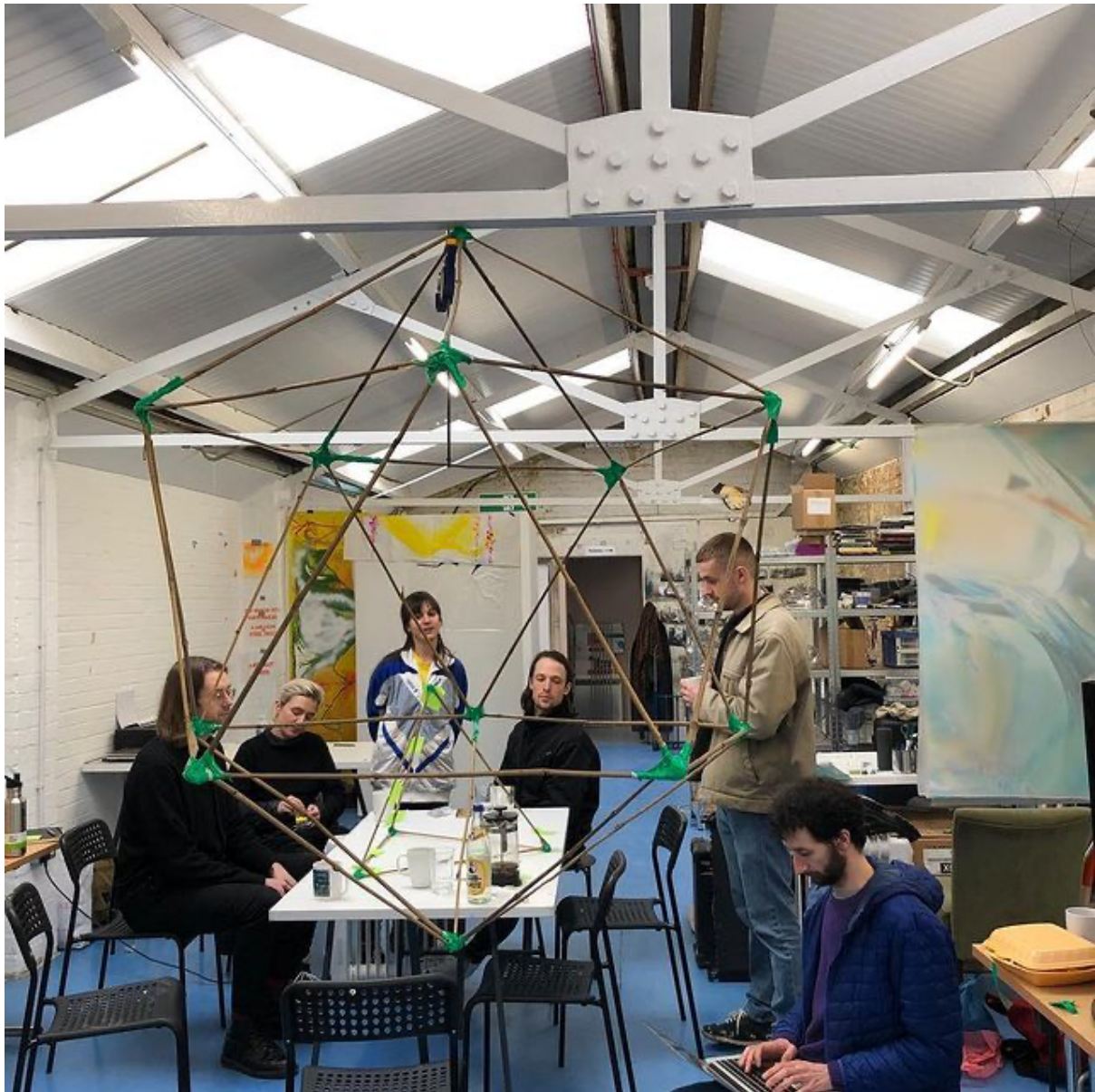


Figure 3 – Conditions, Croydon, 2019 (credit: Mathew Noel-Todd/Conditions)

This two-day workshop with artists from the Conditions studio programme used a syntegeation to structure discussion on the first day and collaborative making on the second.

[Images from day one](#) / [Video of a collaborative work from day two](#)