The relations embraced by Hyperhabitat are purely physical – those that make functional interactions between things possible. Any node on the planet can be physically linked to any other by way of networks, such as water supply, sewage, energy, data, transportation of people or goods, and waste.

The nodes are functional accumulators that make it possible to carry out an activity. Anyone and everyone is welcome to install any individual object, building or place on the planet. A series of similar objects (for example, a series of books in a neighbourhood) can be installed in order to create a community of books for sharing.
In a world of global connectivity, we are hooked up in an information superhighway. We are all networked. But what does this mean in terms of the spaces of our everyday lives, our habitats? How are these spaces programmed within a globalised system?

Hyperhabitat: Reprogramming the World was an installation directed by Vicente Guallart for the 11th International Architecture Exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 2008.

The project posited the need to reprogramme the structures with which we inhabit the world through the introduction of distributed intelligence in the nodes, networks and environments with which we construct buildings, cities and territories. It made visible the multiscalar relationships between each object and those on a higher scale (from the scale of an individual to that of our whole planet of 10 billion people), and displayed the ‘line codes’ that visitors were encouraged to propose. It also incorporated an Internet platform where visitors were invited to submit proposals for reprogramming the world by means of line codes that showed how relating things in different ways could result in urban systems that consume less energy and actively facilitate social interaction.

The installation involved the construction of a 1:1 scale replica of a floor of an apartment building with shared spaces being constructed in Gandia (Valencia), from the Sociopolis Sharing Tower. The furniture and appliances of the apartment were made of methacrylates with embedded micro-servers, which interacted with one another to generate relationships that were displayed as a large-format projection on which the line codes could be drawn to suggest relationships or between nodes. All of the objects in the house had an Internet 0 node – constituting the largest network of micro-servers assembled to date – with which they were directly interrelated with one another, just as neurons are in the brain.

Users were invited to create multiple habitats, spaces that related all of the possible functions that could be carried out in the world, on all possible scales: those of the neighbourhood, the city (useful for studying the urbanity of its relational form), the country or the planet. For a habitat to be operational, it was first necessary to upload nodes on multiple scales. A habitat could contain a specific set of objects, and be created to draw a line code to relate functional nodes.

Hyperhabitat: Reprogramming the World was a collaboration between Guallart Architects, the Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia, MIT’s Center for Bits and Atoms and the Bestiario software design consultancy. At a secondary level, then, the project articulated the forms of networking that are beginning to colonise architectural practice as a result of innovations in digital technology. Not only did it engage with advanced programming and digital fabrication in its design and construction; it also – in the very partnership forged to create it – expressed the forms of collaboration that have become increasingly prevalent within the building industry. In the highly digitised age of the 21st century, architecture has become so thoroughly enmeshed within a network of other disciplines that what we are witnessing are new hybrid, mutant forms of practice that serve to reinvent the discourse of architecture as we know it.

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