

The “Pushing Boundaries” Perspective Studio



Date: June 29 – July 4, 2025

Venue: Berghotel Tulbingerkogel near Vienna

Facilitators: Marcus Neustetter & Johannes Jäger

Participants: 27 diverse researchers and philosophers working on the topic of living organisation.

Objective - community building

The workshop “[Pushing the Boundaries: Agency, Evolution, and Emergence](#)”, brought together researchers from biology, neuroscience, and philosophy to advance interdisciplinary thinking on the nature of life, agency, and evolution - building a research community across disciplinary boundaries.

Unlike traditional scientific conferences, the event emphasized interactive formats, short discussion starters, and creative exercises to foster dialogue, collaboration, and fresh perspectives.

Key Themes and Studio Activities by Day:

Day 1 – Formal Approaches to Organization & Agency:

Introduced project results, including a critique of reductionist “machine views” of life and the proposal of a process-oriented, naturalist framework for understanding living systems and agency.

Day 2 – Complexity & Emergence:

Explored computational vs. organizational approaches to complexity, focusing on emergence, constraints, and the role of ecosystems.

Day 3 – Evolution & Constraints:

Examined how internal and external constraints shape open-ended evolution, highlighting organismic agency and the role of information, normativity, and complexity in biology.

Day 4 – Beyond the Age of Machines:

Discussed new frameworks for understanding agency, critiqued the free-energy principle, considered the role of ecology and history in biology, and explored reforming biological education.

Day 5 – Synthesis & Outlook:

Consolidated insights through a collective mind map, highlighted models as epistemic tools, and seeded future collaborations across disciplines.

Overall Outcomes:

The workshop challenged entrenched assumptions in biology, particularly mechanistic and reductionist perspectives.

It emphasized agency, emergence, and organization as central to understanding life and evolution.

The format successfully fostered creative, rigorous, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

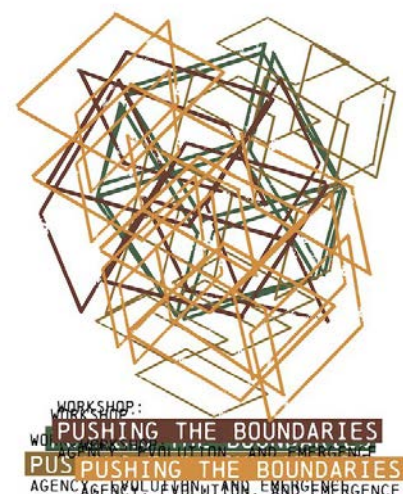
A new transdisciplinary research community began to emerge, committed to developing dynamic frameworks for the study of living systems.

Conclusion:

The event marked the beginning of a long-term effort to reshape how biology and philosophy conceptualize life. By adopting more process-oriented, situated, and interdisciplinary approaches, participants aim to build a richer and more nuanced understanding of organisms, evolution, and agency.

Souvenirs and Follow-up:

In addition to the documentation of the process and short films generated from the material each day, participants were welcome to take parts of the final installation and notes as a tangible reminder of their shared experience.





Day 1 – Formal Approaches to Organization & Agency

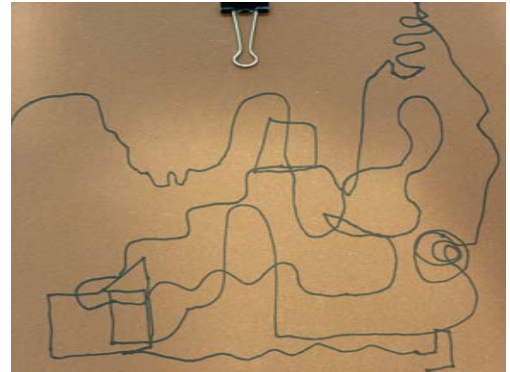
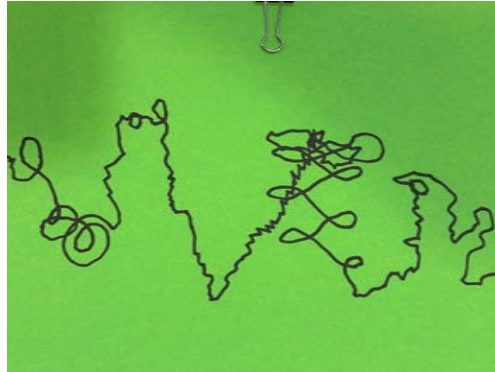
WORKSHOP:
PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES
AGENCY, EVOLUTION, AND EMERGENCE

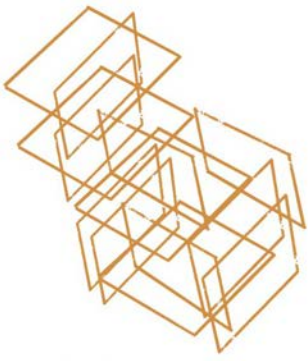




Day 2 – Complexity & Emergence

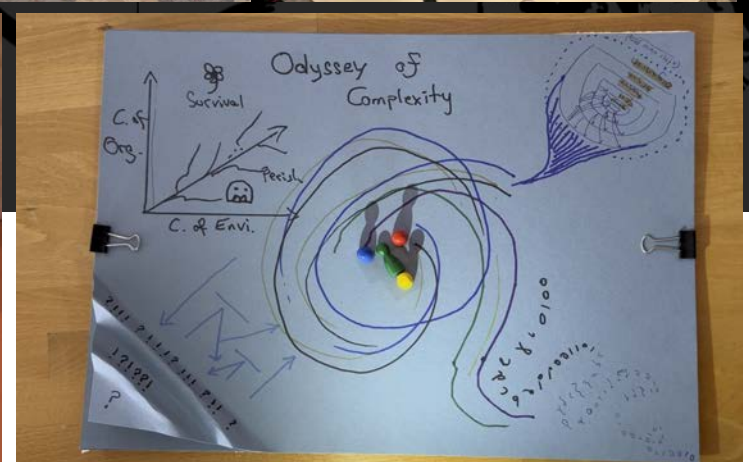
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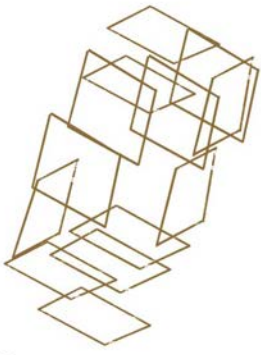




Day 3 – Evolution & Constraints

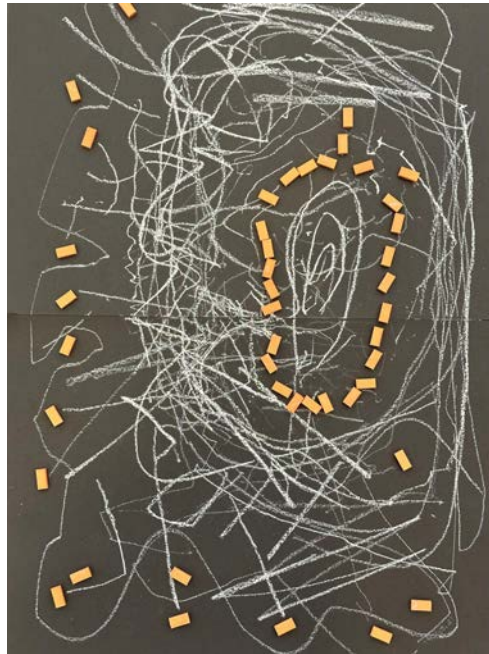
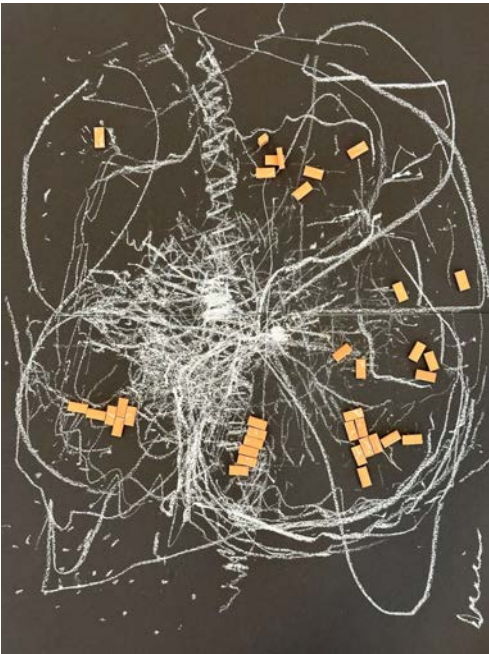
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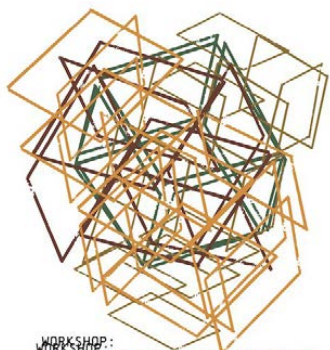




Day 4 – Beyond the Age of Machines

WORKSHOP:
PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES
AGENCY, EVOLUTION, AND EMERGENCE





Day 5 – Synthesis & Outlook

WORKSHOP:
PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES
PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES
AGENCY FOR URBAN EVOLUTION, EMERGENCE



