EPLEX
Evolutionary Complexity Research Group at UCF

Generative and Developmental Systems Tutorial

Kenneth O. Stanley
Department of Computer Science
University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL, USA
And
Uber AI Labs, San Francisco, CA, USA
Email: kstanley@cs.ucf.edu
Websites: http://eplex.cs.ucf.edu https://www.uber.com/info/ailabs/

http://gecco-2017.sigevo.org/

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Instructor/Presenter

- Ken Stanley's connections to Generative and Developmental Systems (GDS):
  - Co-author of 2003 GDS review paper, *A Taxonomy for Artificial Embryogeny*
  - Co-founder of GECCO GDS Track in 2007 and Co-chair of track from 2007-2009 (now integrated into "Complex Systems" track)
  - Co-inventor of NEAT, CPPN indirect encoding, and the HyperNEAT GDS algorithm
  - At least 20 GDS-related publications

K. O. Stanley and R. Miikkulainen. A taxonomy for artificial embryogeny. Artificial Life, 9(2):93–130, 2003.

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Course Agenda

- Part 1: Intro to GDS
  - Motivation
  - Classical Encodings
  - Dimensions of Development
- Break
- Part 2: Exploring Abstraction
  - CPPNs
  - HyperNEAT
  - Representations and theoretical issues

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Objectives of the Tutorial

- At the end, you will know:
  - What GDS is about
  - Motivation for GDS
  - Historical precedent
  - Popular approaches
  - Biological analogies
  - Recent approaches
  - Representational properties
  - Theoretical issues
  - Goals for the field

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Inspiration vs. Simulation

- Often confused in GDS
  - Simulation: Model biology to learn about biology
  - Inspiration: Abstract biology to create new algorithms
- This tutorial's perspective: Looking for *inspiration*
  - What from biology is *essential* to achieve what we want?
  - What can be ignored?
  - What should we add that is biologically implausible yet works better for our purposes?

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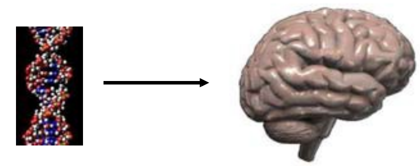
Goal: Evolve Systems of Biological Complexity



- 100 trillion connections in the human brain
- 30,000 genes in the human genome
- How is this possible?

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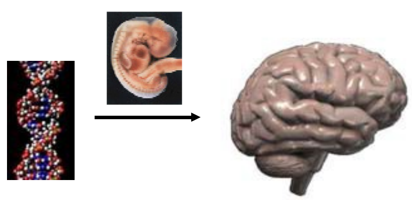
Development



(embryo image from nobelprize.org)

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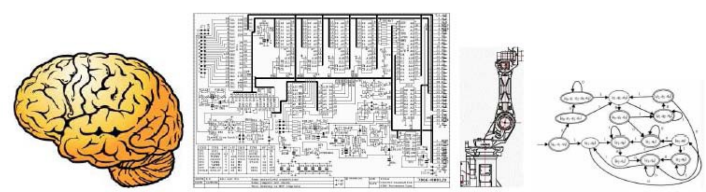
Solving this Problem Could Solve Many Others



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Historical Precedent

- Turing (1952) was interested in morphogenesis
  - Experimented with reaction-diffusion equations in pattern generation
- Lindenmayer (1968) investigated plant growth
  - Developed L-systems, a grammatical rewrite system that abstracts how plants develop

Lindenmayer, A. (1968). Mathematical models for cellular interaction in development: Parts I and II. Journal of Theoretical Biology, 18, 280–299, 300–315.
Turing, A. (1952). The chemical basis of morphogenesis. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B, 237*, 37–72.
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A Field with Many Names

- Generative and Developmental Systems (GECCO track)
- Artificial Embryogeny
- Artificial Ontogeny
- Computational Embryogeny
- Computational Embryology
- Developmental Encoding
- Indirect Encoding
- Generative Encoding
- Generative Mapping
- …

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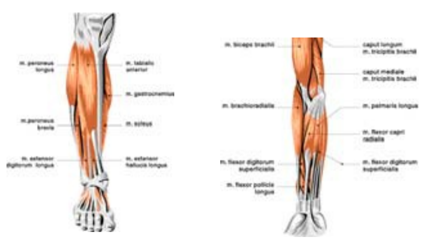
Development is Powerful Because of Reuse

- Genetic information is reused during embryo development
- Many structures share information
- Allows enormous complexity to be encoded compactly



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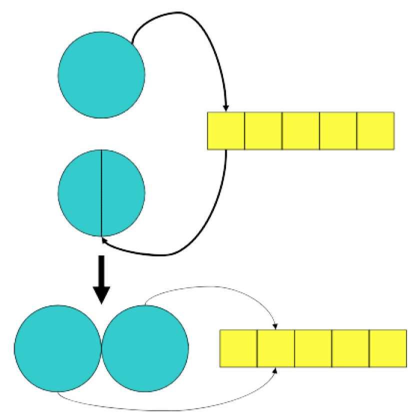
(James Madison University http://orgs.jmu.edu/strength/KIN_425/kin_425_muscles_calves.htm)

The Unfolding of Structure Allows Reuse



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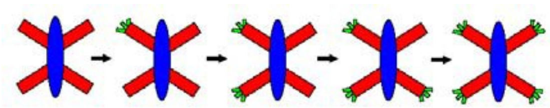
Rediscovery Unnecessary with Reuse



- Repeated substructures should only need to be *represented* once
- Then repeated elaborations do not require rediscovery
- Rediscovery is expensive and improbable
- (Development is powerful for *search* even though it is a property of the *mapping*)

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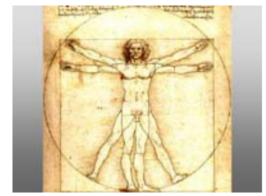
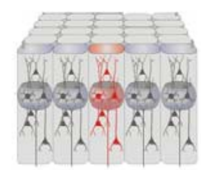
Therefore, GDS

- Indirect encoding: Genes do not map directly to units of structure in phenotype
- Phenotype develops from embryo into mature form
- Genetic material can be reused
- Many existing developmental encoding systems



Symmetry



Repetition

Repetition with variation

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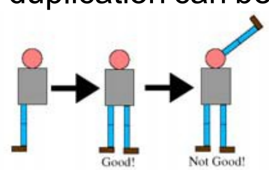
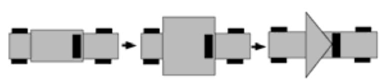
Some Major Issues in GDS

- Phenotypic duplication can be brittle



- Variation on an established convention is powerful



- Reuse with variation is common in nature

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Classic Developmental Encodings

- Grammatical (Generative)
  - Utilize properties of grammars and computer languages
  - Subroutines and hierarchy
- Cell chemistry (Development)
  - Simulate low-level chemical and biological properties
  - Diffusion, reaction, growth, signaling, etc.

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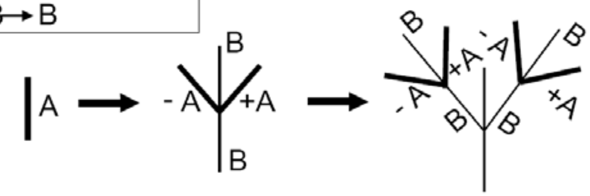
Grammatical Example 1

- L-systems: Good for fractal-like structures, plants, highly regular structures

A→B[- A][+A]B
B→B



Lindenmayer, A. (1968). Mathematical models for cellular interaction in development: Parts I and II. *Journal of Theoretical Biology, 18,* 280–299, 300–315.
Lindenmayer, A. (1974). Adding continuous components to L-systems. In G. Rozenberg & A. Salomaa (Eds.), *L systems: Lecture notes in computer science 15* (pp. 53–68). Heidelberg, Germany: Springer-Verlag.

L-System Evolution Successes

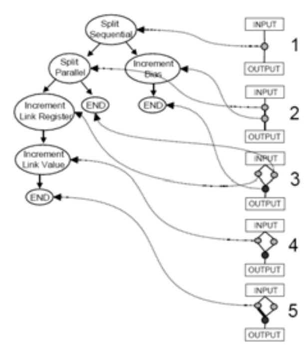
- Greg Hornby's Ph.D. dissertation topic (http://ic.arc.nasa.gov/people/hornby)
- Clear advantage over direct encodings

Growth of a Table

Hornby, G.. S. and Pollack, J. B. The Advantages of Generative Grammatical Encodings for Physical Design. *Congress on Evolutionary Computation*. 2001.

Grammatical Example 2

- Cellular Encoding (CE; Gruau 1993, 1996)



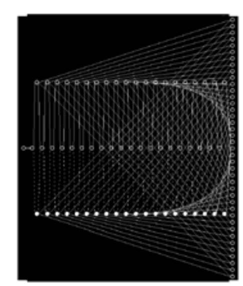
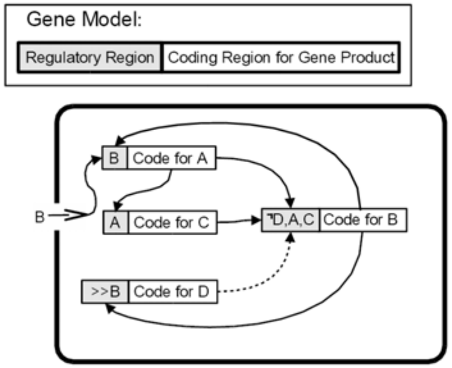


Figure 5.10: A neural network for the symmetry of 40 input units.

F. Gruau. *Neural network synthesis using cellular encoding and the genetic algorithm*. PhD thesis, Laboratoire de L'informatique du Paralllisme, Ecole Normale Supriere de Lyon, Lyon, France, 1994.

Cell Chemistry Encodings



Cell Chemistry Example: Bongard's Artificial Ontogeny

Bongard, J. C. and R. Pfeifer (2001a) Repeated Structure and Dissociation of Genotypic and Phenotypic Complexity in Artificial Ontogeny, in Spector, L. et al (eds.), *Proceedings of The Genetic and Evolutionary Computation Conference, GECCO-2001*. San Francisco, CA: Morgan Kaufmann publishers, pp. 829-836.

Bongard, J. C. and R. Pfeifer (2003) Evolving Complete Agents Using Artificial Ontogeny, in Hara, F. and R. Pfeifer, (eds.), *Morpho-functional Machines: The New Species (Designing Embodied Intelligence)* Springer-Verlag, pp. 237-258.

Cell Chemistry Example 2

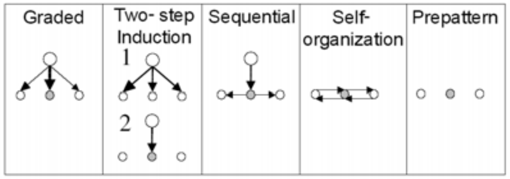
- Federici 2004: Neural networks inside cells

Daniel Roggen and Diego Federici, Multi-cellular development: is there scalability and robustness to gain? In: *Proceedings of PPSN VIII 2004 The 8th International Conference on Parallel Problem Solving from Nature*, Xin Yao and al. ed., pp 391-400, (2004).

Differences in GDS Implementations

- Encoding: Grammatical vs. Cell-chemistry vs. Other (coming later)
- Cell Fate: Final role determined in several ways
- Targeting: Special or relative target specification
- Canalization: Robustness to small disturbances
- Complexification: From fixed-length genomes to expanding genomes

Cell Fate



- Many different ways to determine ultimate role of cell
- Cell positioning mechanism can also differ from nature

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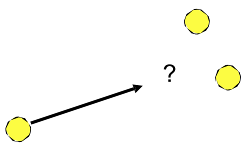
Targeting

- How do cells become connected such as in a neural network?
- Genes may specify a specific target identity
- Or target may be specified through relative position



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Canalization

- Crucial pathways become entrenched in development
  - Stochasticity
  - Resource Allocation
  - Overproduction

Nijhout, H. F., & Emlen, D. J. (1998). Competition among body parts in the development and evolution of insect morphology. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA*, *95*, 3685–3689.
Waddington, C. H. (1942). Canalization of Development and the Inheritance of Acquired Characters. *Nature*, *150*, 563.

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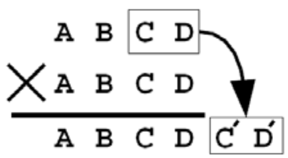
Complexification through Gene Duplication



- *Gene Duplication* can add new genes in *any* indirect encoding
- Major gene duplication event as vertebrates appeared
- New *HOX* genes elaborated overall developmental pattern
- Initially redundant regulatory roles are *partitioned*

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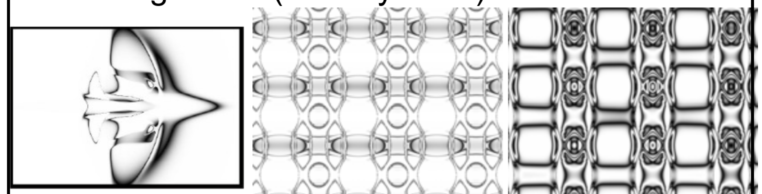
Break

- Take break
- Resume in 10 minutes

High-Level Abstraction: Compositional Pattern Producing Networks (CPPNs)

- An artificial indirect encoding designed to abstract how embryos are encoded through DNA (Stanley 2007)



Symmetry Repetition Repetition with variation

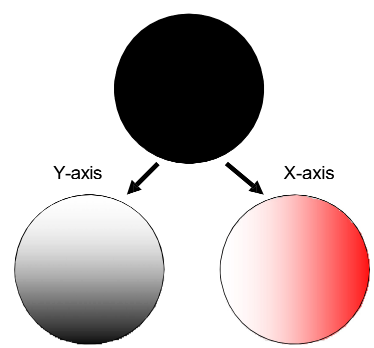
Kenneth O. Stanley. Compositional Pattern Producing Networks: A Novel Abstraction of Development In: Genetic Programming and Evolvable Machines Special Issue on Developmental Systems 8(2): 131-162. New York, NY: Springer, 2007

What is Development Really Doing?

- A plan upon a plan upon a plan
- Each layer lays a groundwork for the next
- A structure is built in a coordinate frame
  - First the axes must be defined
  - Then the core structure is situated
  - Then further axes are defined
  - And so on

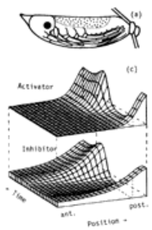
Gradients Define Axes

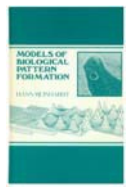
- Chemical gradients tell which direction is which, which axis is which



Cells Know Where They Are Through Gradients

- Therefore, they know who needs to do what, and where
- Because *where* is now defined
- Gradients form a *coordinate frame*





(1982)

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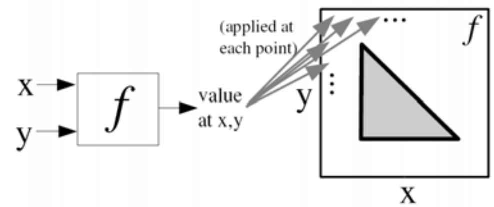
A Novel View: The Phenotype as a Function of Cartesian Space



- Coordinate frames are chemical gradients
- Function is applied at all points

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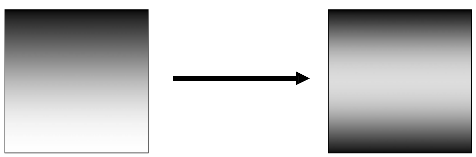
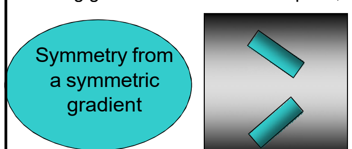
Higher Coordinate Frames are Functions of Lower Ones



$f(y) = y$ $\qquad$ $g(y) = |f(y)|$

Using g and x as a coordinate space, we can get h:



$$h(x,y) = func[x, g(y)]$$

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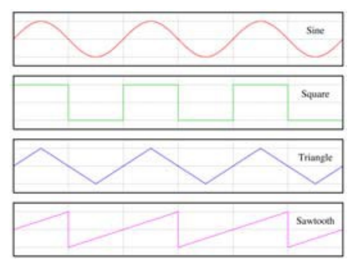
Segmentation is a Periodic Gradient



(Wikimedia commons)

- *f*(periodic function) = repeating pattern
- Periodic functions mean repeating coordinate frames

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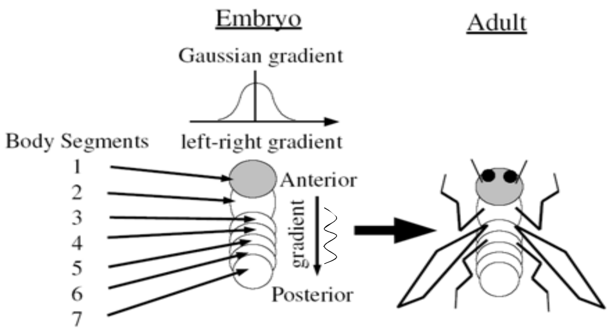
Gradients Define the Body Plan



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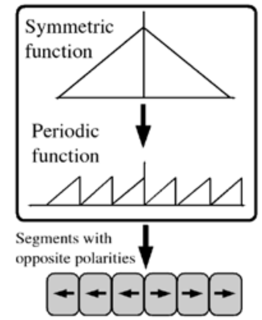
Gradients Can Be Composed



- ❖Is there a general abstraction of composing gradients that we can evolve?

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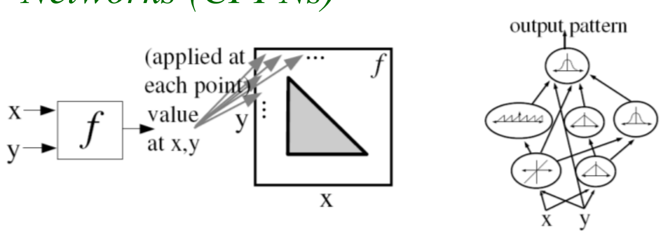
Compositional Pattern Producing Networks (CPPNs)



(a) Mapping (b) Composition

- ❖A connected-graph abstraction of the order of and relationship between developmental events (no growth!)

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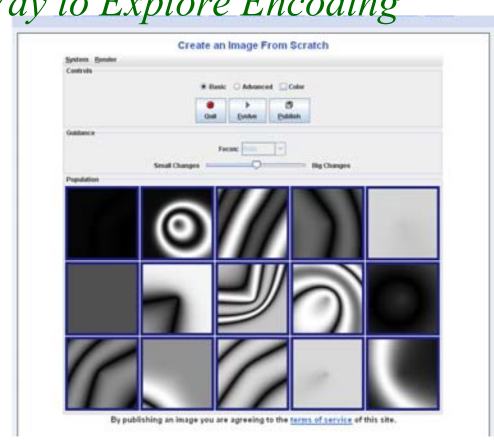
Interactive Evolution: A Way to Explore Encoding



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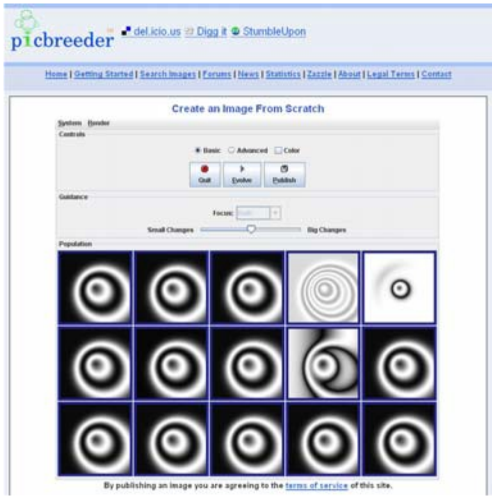
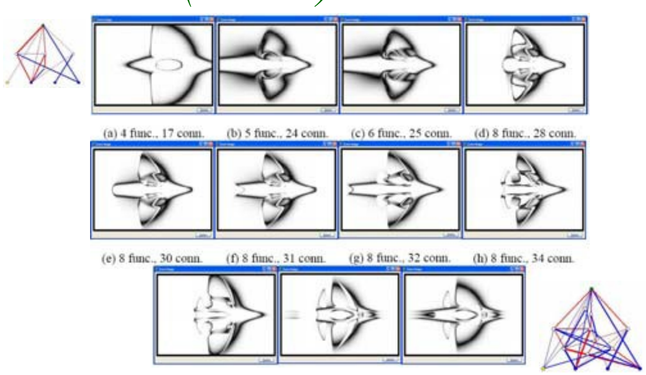
Parent



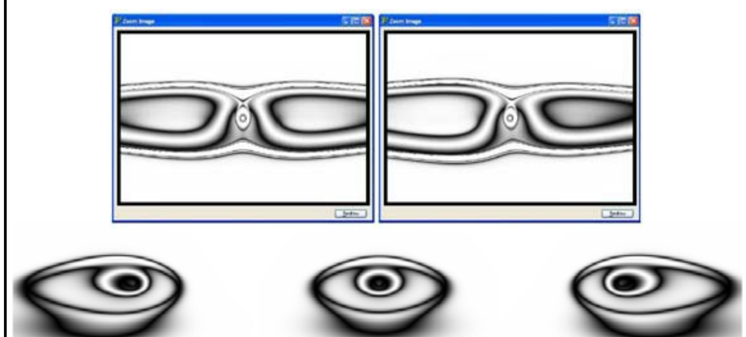
Parent

Compositional Pattern Producing Networks (CPPNs)



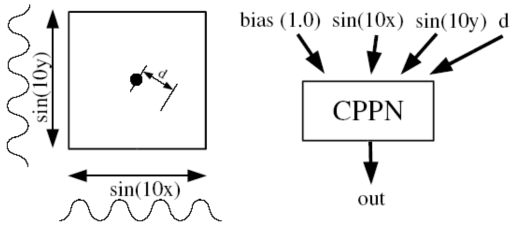
Evolutionary Elaboration

Imperfect Symmetry



- Gauss(x) and x provide both symmetry and asymmetry

Repetition with Variation



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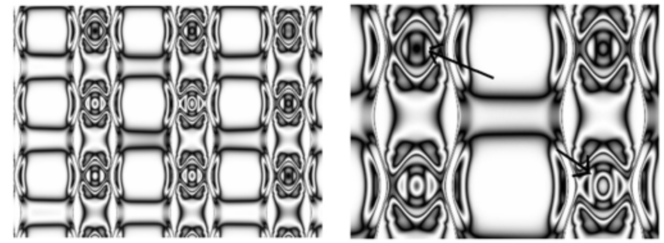
CPPNs:Repetition with Variation



- Seen throughout nature
- A simple combination of periodic and absolute coordinate frames
- A novel view: *not a traditional subroutine*

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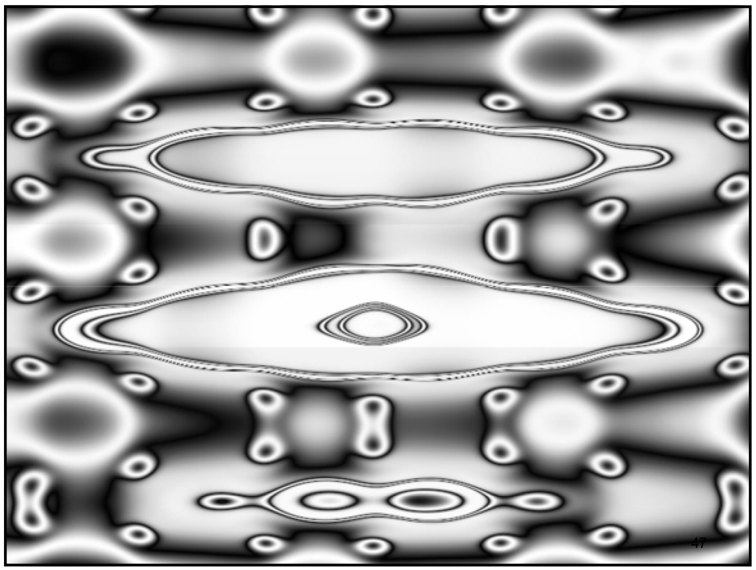

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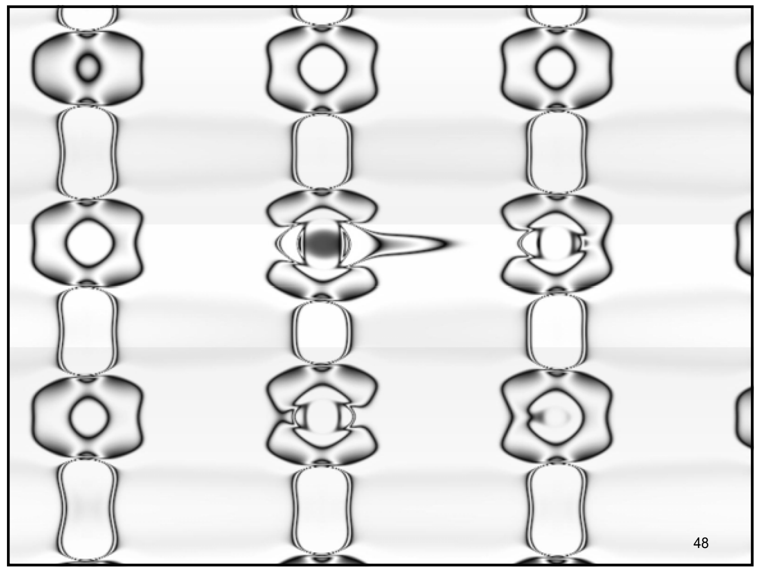

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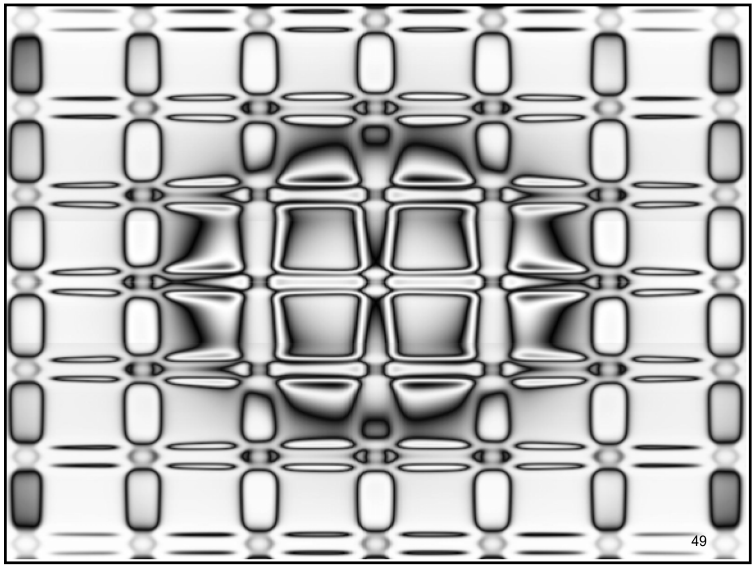

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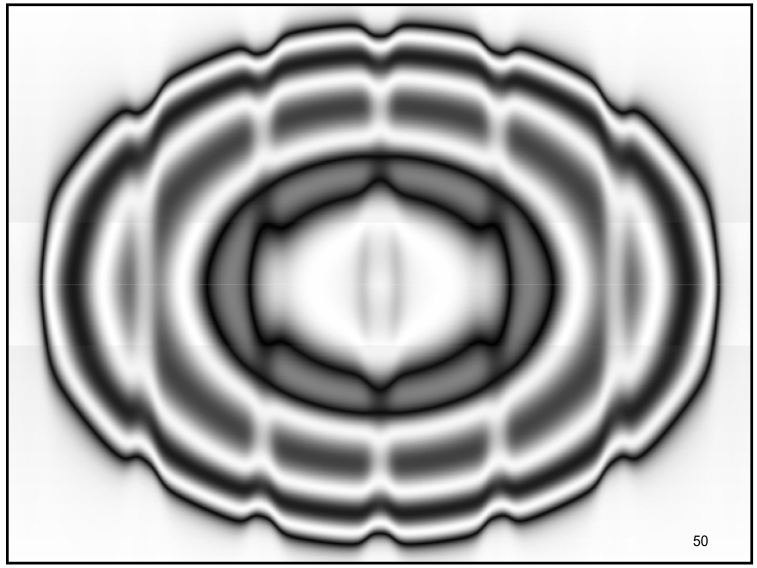

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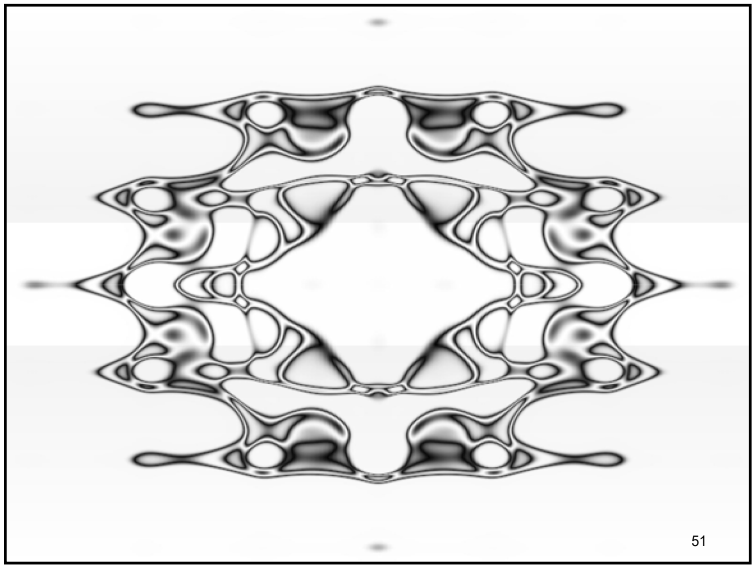

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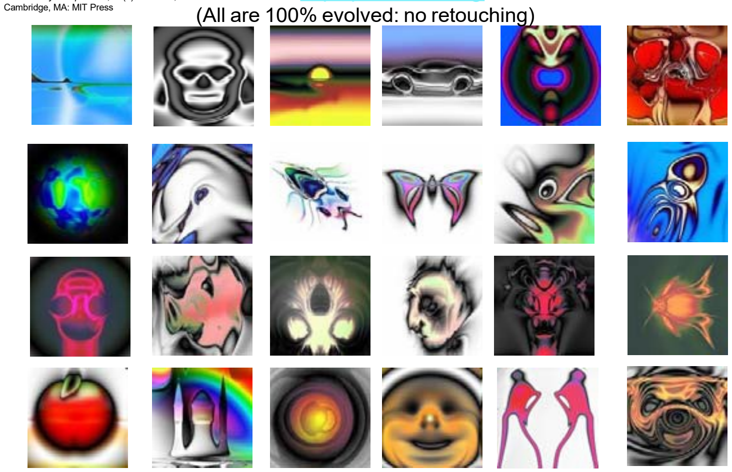
Jimmy Secretan, Nicholas Beato, David B. D.Ambrosio, Adelein Rodriguez, Adam Campbell, Jeremiah T. Folsom-Kovarik, and Kenneth O. Stanley (2011). Picbreeder: A Case Study in Collaborative Evolutionary Exploration of Design Space. *Evolutionary Computation*, 19(3): 345–371, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

CPPN Patterns

From http://picbreeder.org
(All are 100% evolved: no retouching)



Infinite resolution: CPPNs are mathematical expressions

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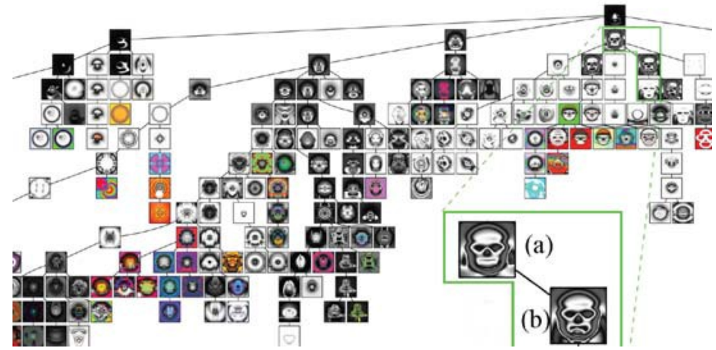
Picbreeder Phylogenetic Tree



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CPPNs Abstract Development out of Development!

- CPPN is decoded by querying each point in space *independently:* no local interaction
- The process of development need not be simulated
- Some Advantages:
  - Patterns stored at infinite resolution
  - Easily biased in fancy ways
  - Perfect regeneration of damaged structure

Is development really the essential property of developmental systems that we've been looking for? Or is there something more fundamental that is simply manifested through development?

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Are Unfolding Over Time and Local Interaction Essential to Development?

- What is lost if they are abstracted away?
- What is the role of local interaction?
  - "Where am I?"
  - If I know where I am, do I need it?
- Response to CPPNs:
  - Some are arguing that *intermediate information* during development can be exploited by evolution T.Kowaliw and W. Banzhaf, *Augmenting Artificial Development with Local Fitness*, In IEEE CEC 2009
- Still, CPPNs can be iterated over time
  - CPPNs can take environmental inputs

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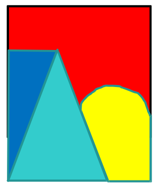
Representational Properties of CPPNs

- Compositionality
  - One pattern can be built upon another (output of one function fed into another)
- Fracture
  - Discontinuous variation of patterns
    "fractured problems have a highly discontinuous mapping between states and optimal actions."
    Nate Kohl and Risto Miikkulainen (2009). Evolving Neural Networks for Strategic Decision-Making Problems. *Neural Networks, Special issue on Goal-Directed Neural Systems.*
    – Define different regions
  - Builds incrementally over evolution



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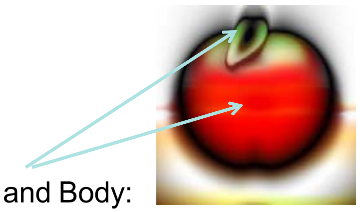
The Apple



Stem and Body:
Fractured Regions

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The Apple

How is it represented?

CPPN has 83 nodes, 264 connections
320 generations

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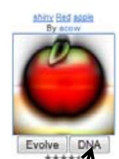
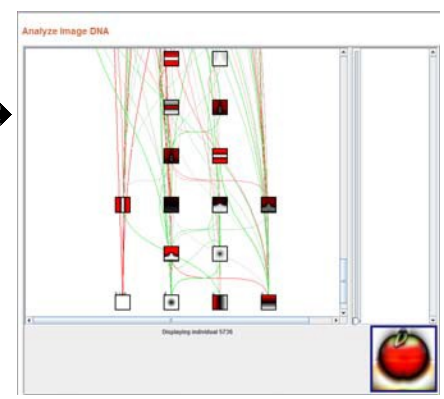
Image DNA Tool

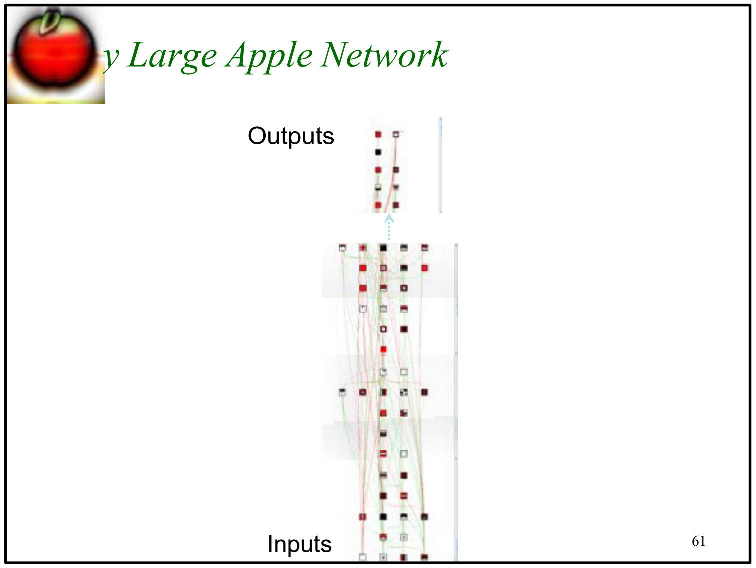


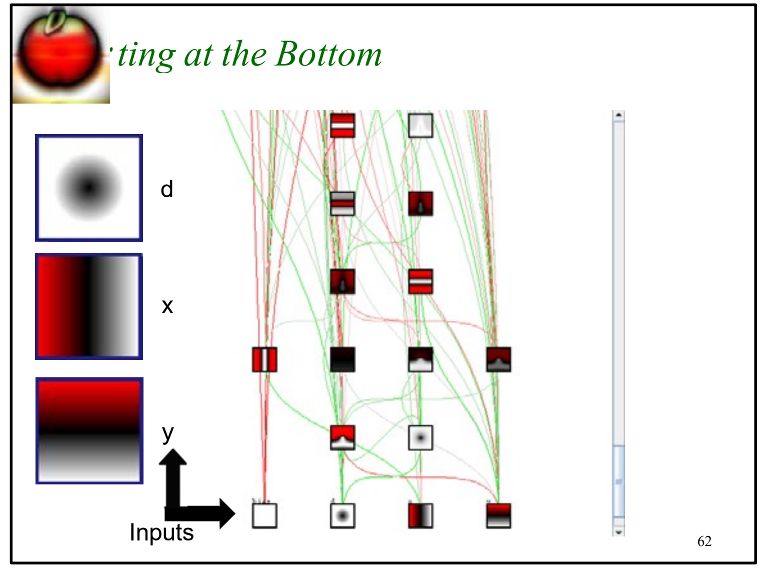


Press
here

- Allows browsing CPPN

60


y Large Apple Network
Outputs
Inputs
61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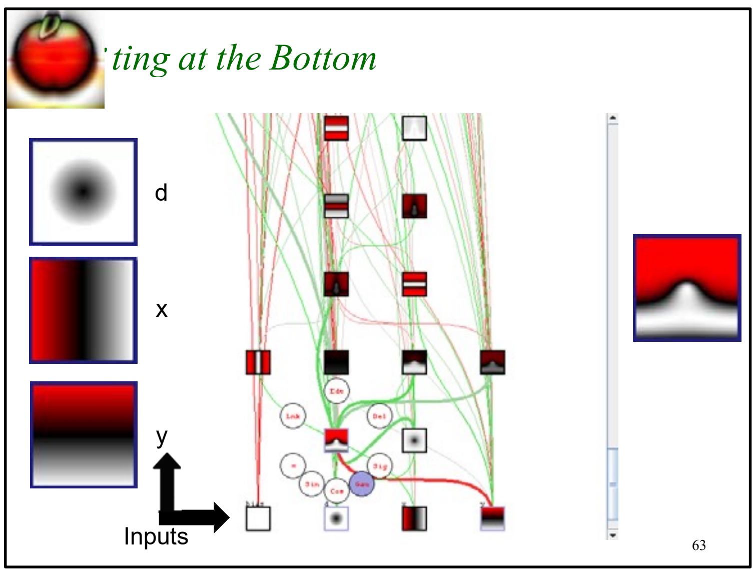
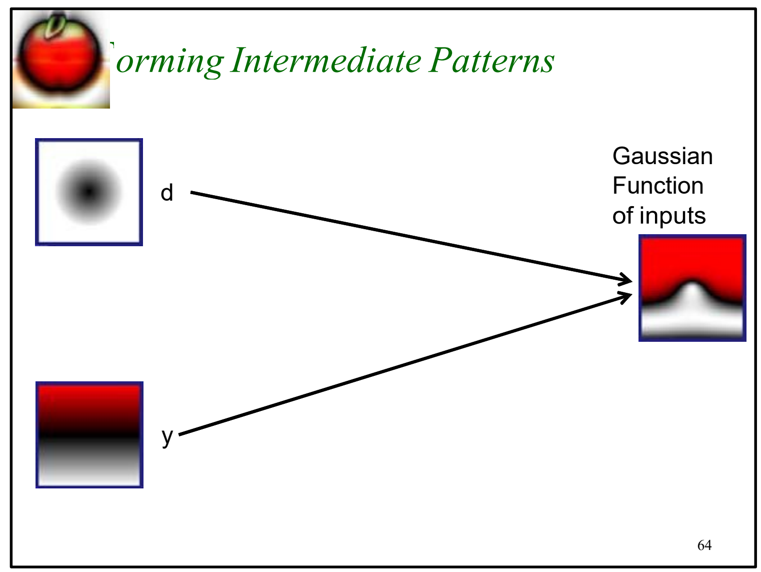
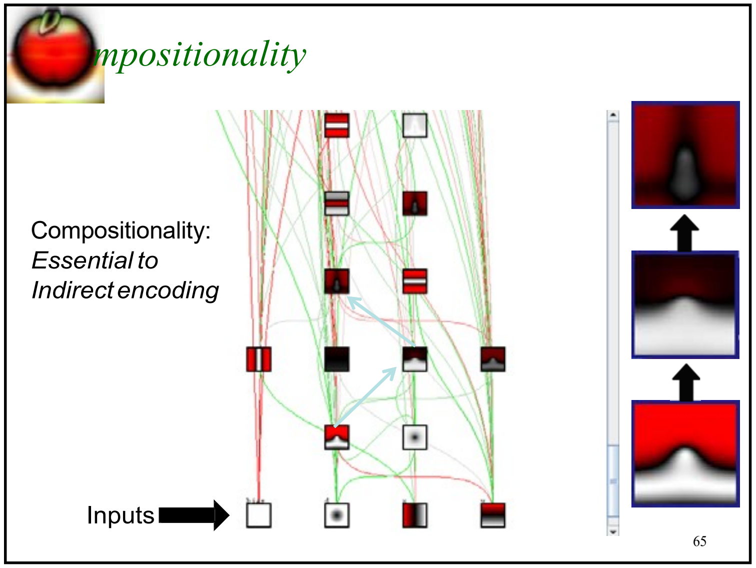
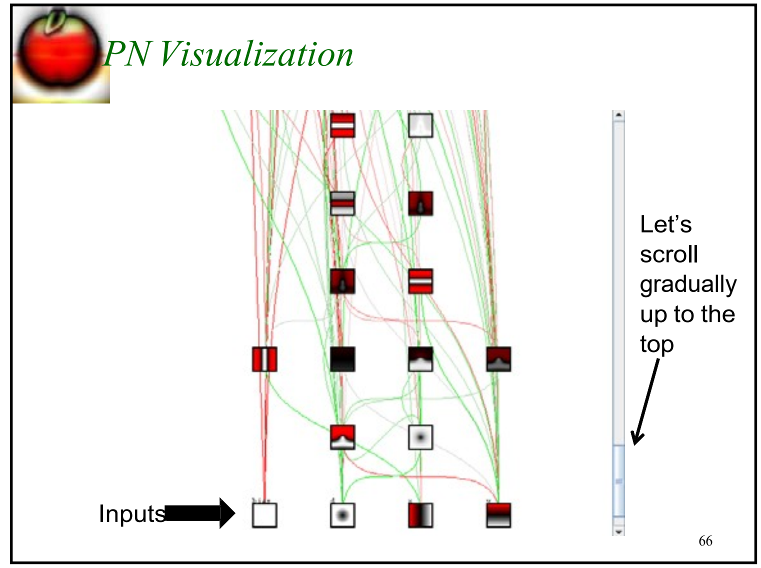
d
x
y
Inputs
62


ting at the Bottom
d
x
y
Inputs
63

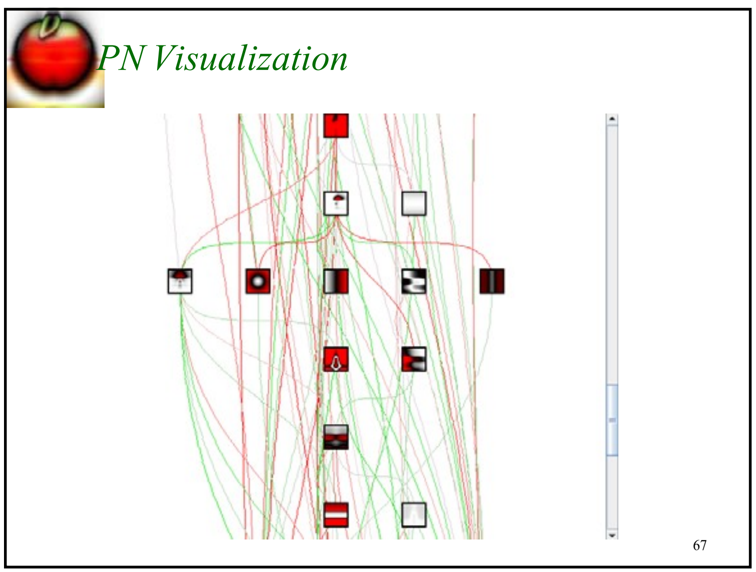

orming Intermediate Patterns
d
y
Gaussian
Function
of inputs
64



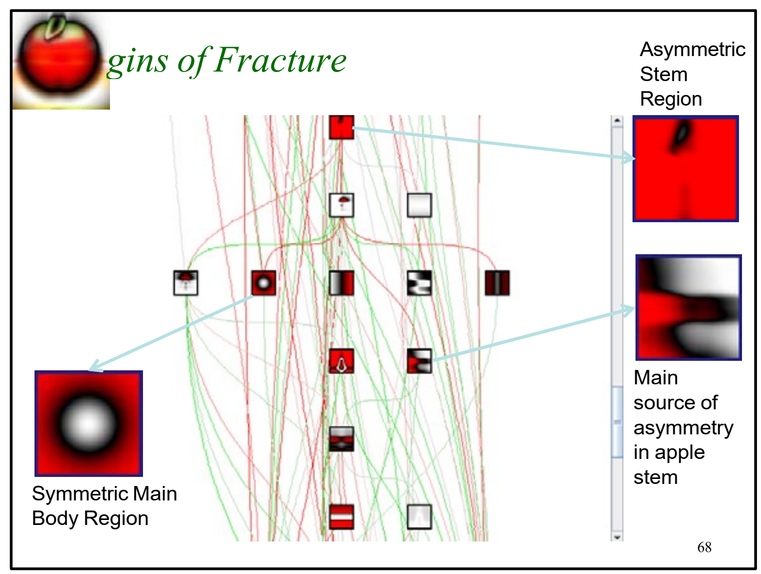
mpositionality
Compositionality:
Essential to Indirect encoding
Inputs
65



PN Visualization
Let's scroll gradually up to the top
Inputs
66

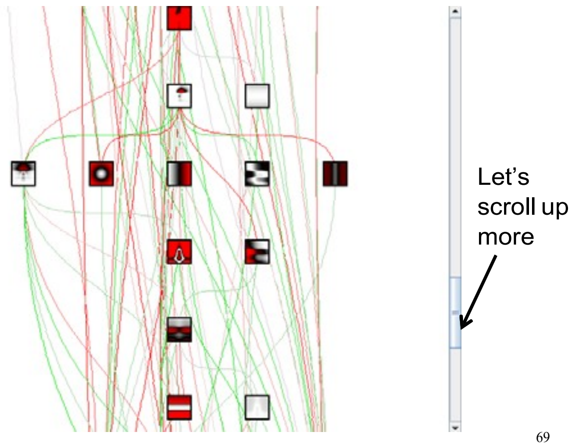


PN Visualization
67



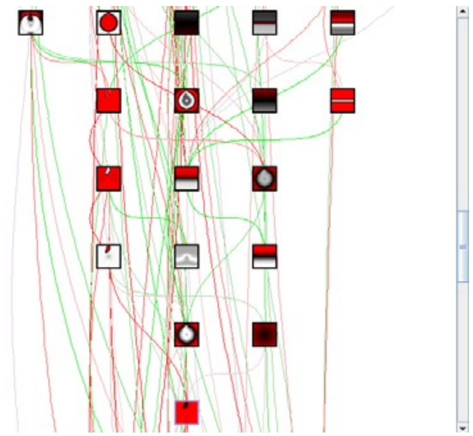
gins of Fracture
Asymmetric Stem Region
Main source of asymmetry in apple stem
Symmetric Main Body Region
68

PN Visualization



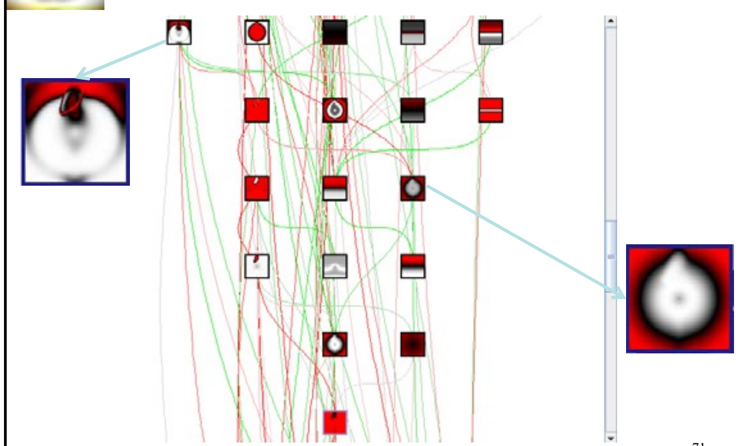
69

PN Visualization



70

her-Level Compositions



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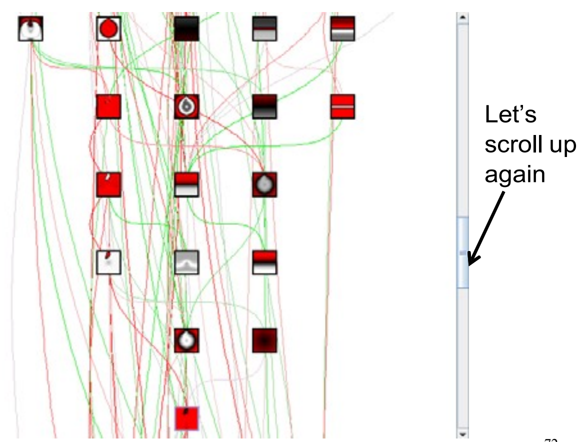
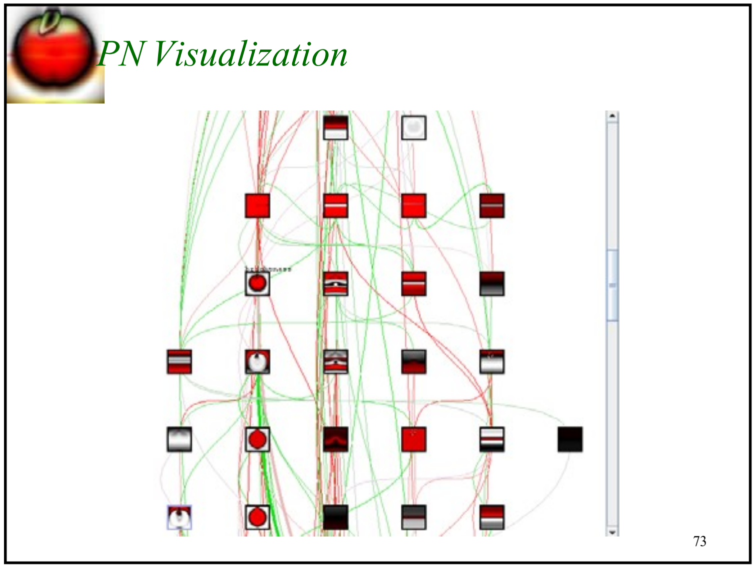
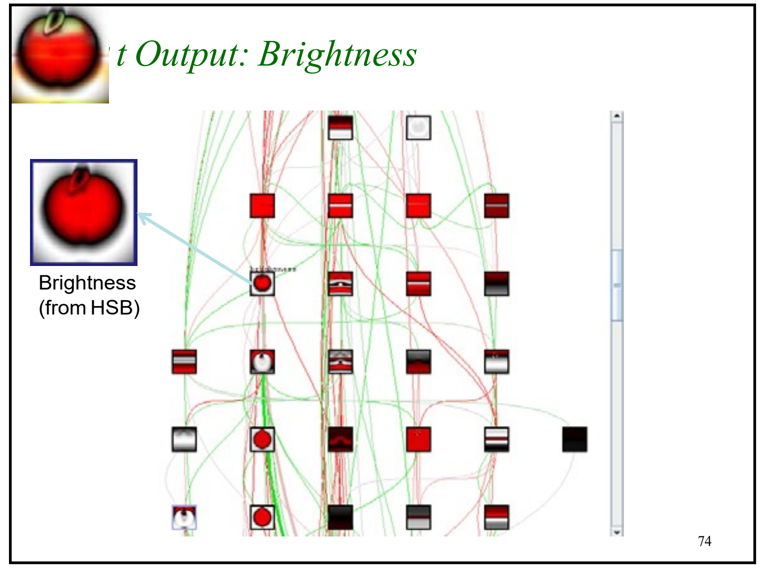
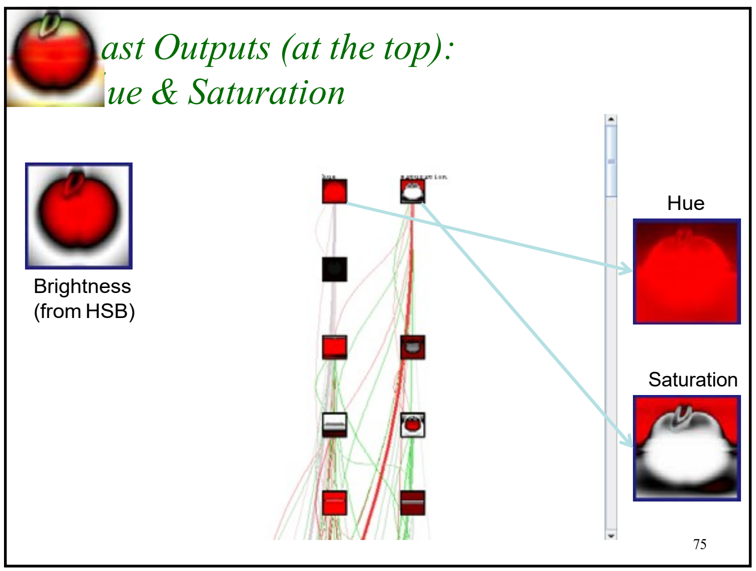
PN Visualization

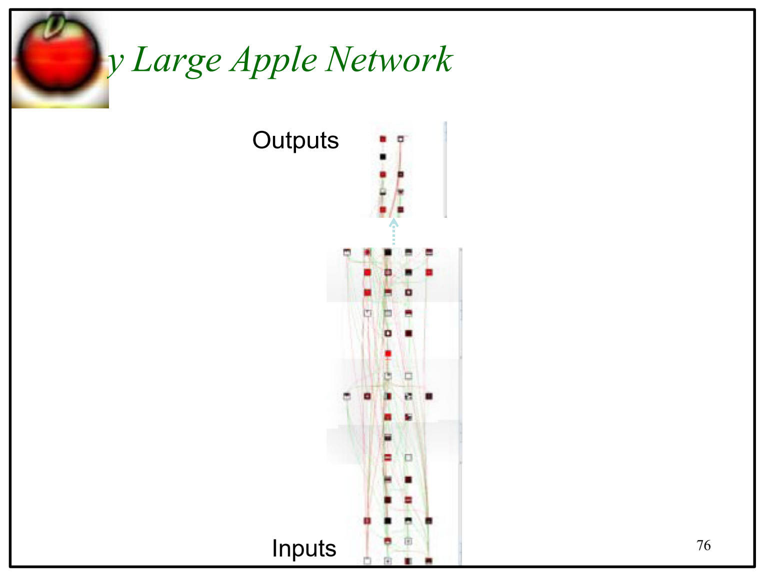


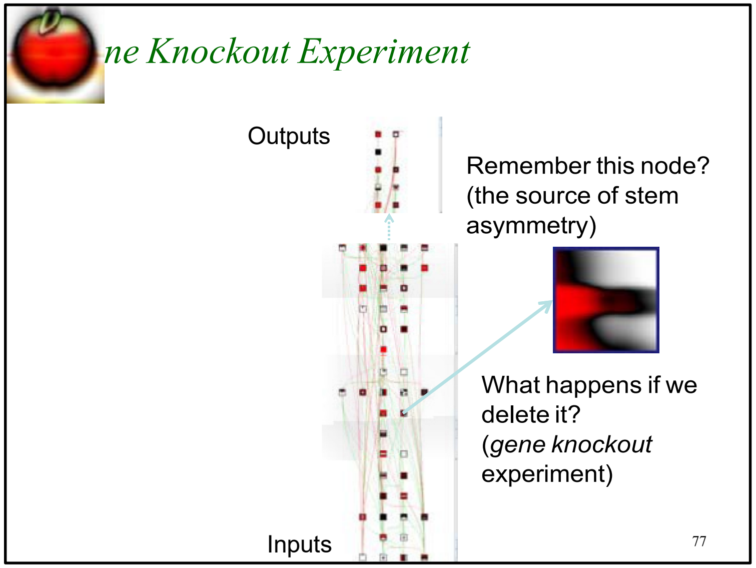
72

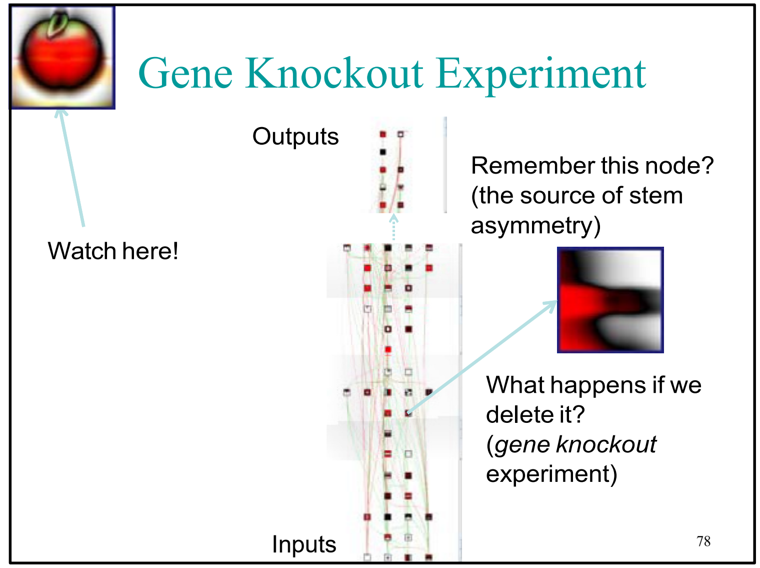

PN Visualization
73

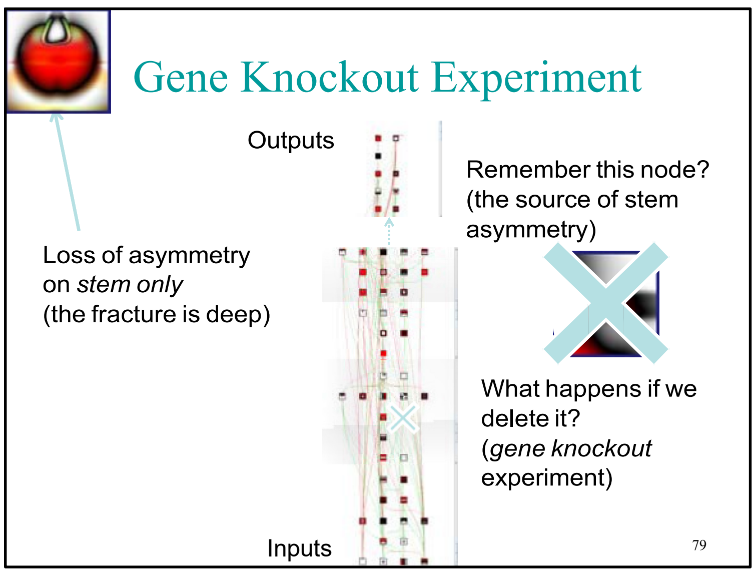

t Output: Brightness
Brightness
(from HSB)
74

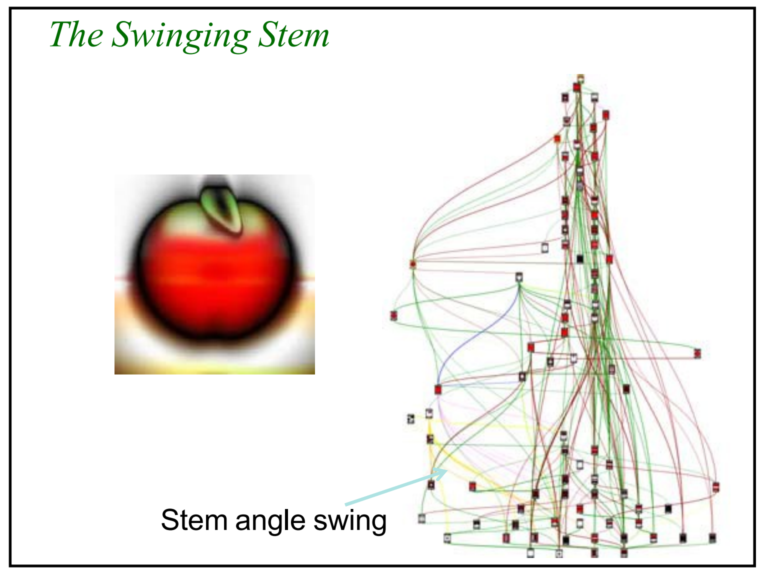

ast Outputs (at the top):
ue & Saturation
Brightness
(from HSB)
Hue
Saturation
75


y Large Apple Network
Outputs
Inputs
76


ne Knockout Experiment
Outputs
Remember this node? (the source of stem asymmetry)
What happens if we delete it? (*gene knockout* experiment)
Inputs
77


Gene Knockout Experiment
Outputs
Watch here!
Remember this node? (the source of stem asymmetry)
What happens if we delete it? (*gene knockout* experiment)
Inputs
78


Gene Knockout Experiment
Outputs
Loss of asymmetry on *stem only* (the fracture is deep)
Remember this node? (the source of stem asymmetry)
What happens if we delete it? (*gene knockout* experiment)
Inputs
79


The Swinging Stem
Stem angle swing

Other Notable Fracture

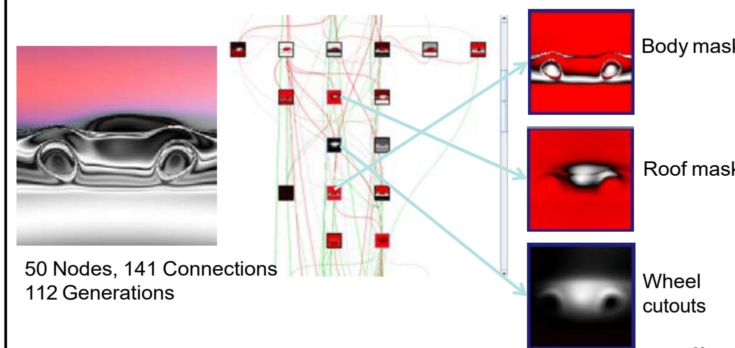
❖Where would you split this image?

50 Nodes, 141 Connections
112 Generations

81

Other Notable Fracture

❖Masks for different parts inside the CPPN

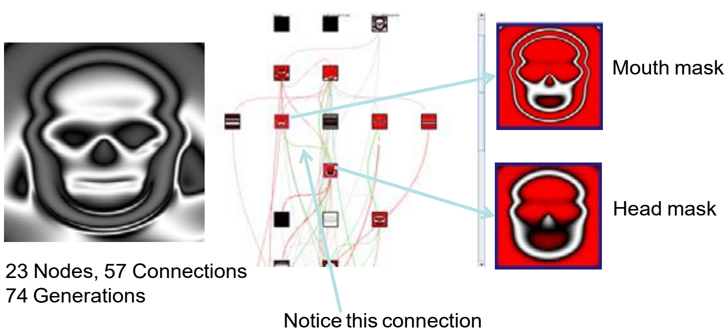


50 Nodes, 141 Connections
112 Generations

82

The Mouth of the Skull

❖Fracture is often surprisingly intuitive

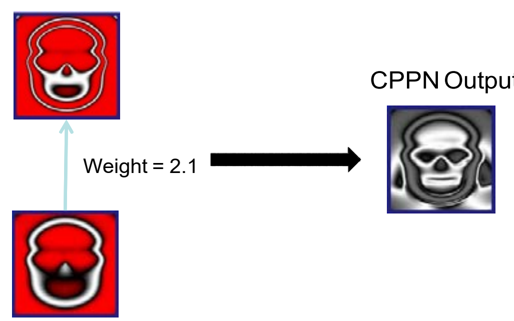


23 Nodes, 57 Connections
74 Generations

83

Scaling the Mouth

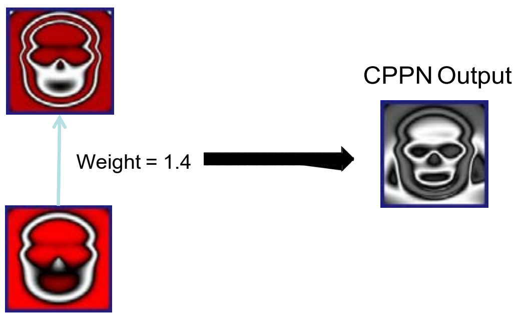
❖Single gene controls the mouth aperture



84

Scaling the Mouth

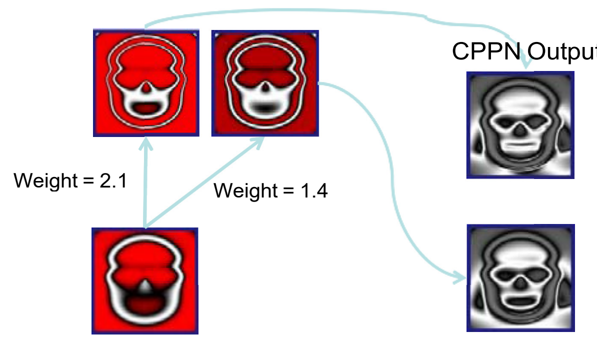
- Single gene controls the mouth aperture



85

Scaling the Mouth

- Single gene controls the mouth aperture



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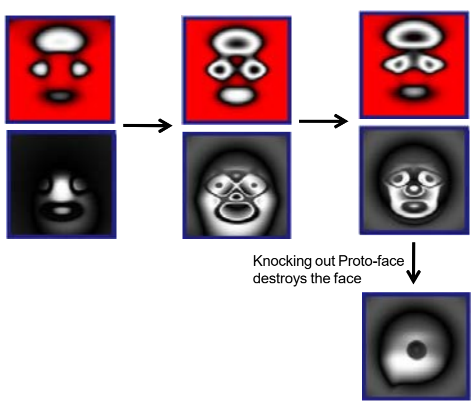
Many Faces "Conserve" the Same Proto-face Mask



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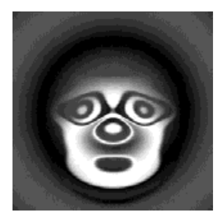
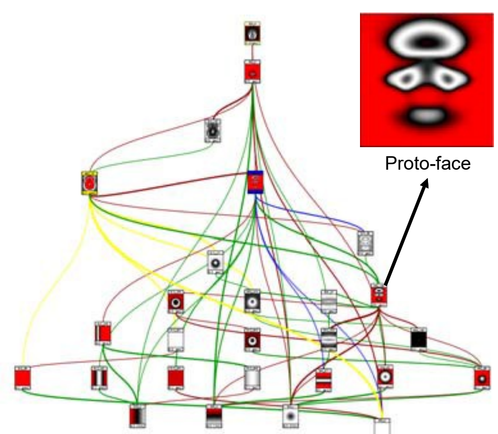
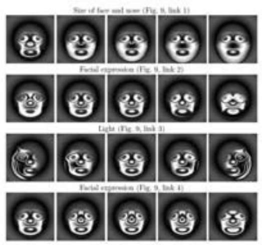
Cartoon Face





More Examples

- The Emergence of Canalization and Evolvability in an Open-Ended, Interactive Evolutionary System (Huizinga, Stanley, and Clune 2017) https://arxiv.org/abs/1704.05143



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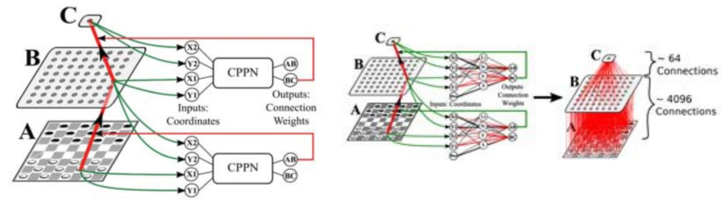
Hypercube-based NeuroEvolution of Augmenting Topologies (HyperNEAT)

- Evolving neural networks with CPPNs
- Insight: A connectivity pattern in 2-D is isomorphic to a spatial pattern in 4-D
- Result: Large-scale connectivity patterns



- See http://eplex.cs.ucf.edu/hyperNEATpage/HyperNEAT.html for more information and publication links

Kenneth O. Stanley, David B. D'Ambrosio, and Jason Gauci A Hypercube-Based Indirect Encoding for Evolving Large-Scale Neural Networks. *Artificial Life* journal 15(2), 2009.

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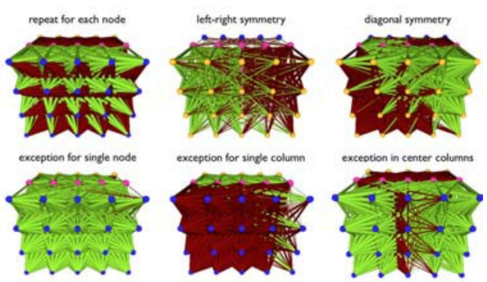
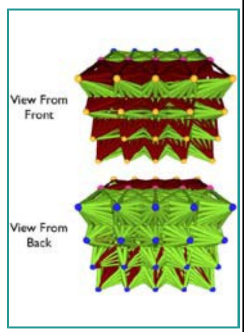
Similar Regularity and Fracture in HyperNEAT

- Just 4-D instead of 2-D





Clune J, Stanley KO, Pennock RT, Ofria C (2011) On the performance of indirect encoding across the continuum of regularity. IEEE Transactions on Evolutionary Computation. 15(3): 346-367.

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Fractured Neural Receptive Fields in HyperNEAT

Oliver J. Coleman, Evolving Neural Networks for Visual Processing, *Undergraduate Honours Thesis (Bachelor of Computer Science, University of New South Wales School of Computer Science and Engineering)*, 2010.

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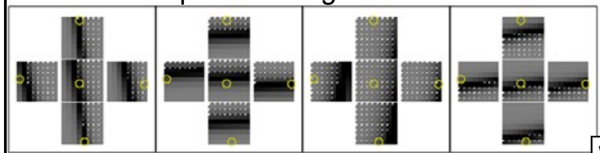
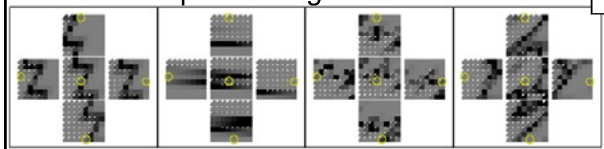
Geometric Patterns Inside Evolved HyperNEAT ANNs

Influence Maps of *more general* solutions



Influence Maps of *less general* solutions



We can see the difference

Jason Gauci and Kenneth O. Stanley (2010). Autonomous Evolution of

CPPN-encoded Creatures

Joshua E. Auerbach and Josh C. Bongard
Evolving Complete Robots with CPPN-NEAT: The Utility of Recurrent Connections. 2011 Genetic and Evolutionary Computation Conference (GECCO 2011). Dublin, Ireland, July, 2011.

Joshua E. Auerbach and Josh C. Bongard
On the Relationship Between Environmental and Mechanical Complexity in Evolved Robots
13th International Conference on the Synthesis and Simulation of Living Systems (ALife XIII).
East Lansing, MI, July, 2012.

Sebastian Risi, Daniel Cellucci, Hod Lipson (2013).Ribosomal Robots: Evolved Designs Inspired by Protein Folding.
To appear in: Proceedings of the Genetic and Evolutionary Computation Conference (GECCO-2013). New York, NY: ACM.

Cheney N, MacCurdy R, Clune J, Lipson H. Unshackling evolution: evolving soft robots with multiple materials and a powerful generative encoding. Proceedings of the Genetic and Evolutionary Computation Conference (GECCO 2013). Amsterdam, July 2013.

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A Word of Caution: The Objective Paradox

- *The full potential of an indirect encoding may not be revealed by testing whether it can evolve to satisfy a particular objective*
- Reason: Fundamental discoveries (like symmetry) that are essential for further progress may yield no objective improvement on task fitness (like “walk far”)

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***Example**: Evolve a Skull and a Butterfly with CPPNs*

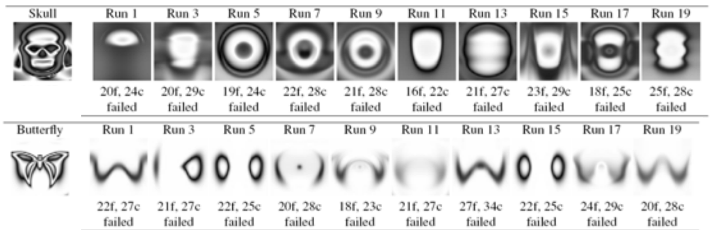
Target Image 1

Target Image 2

Results Are Terrible

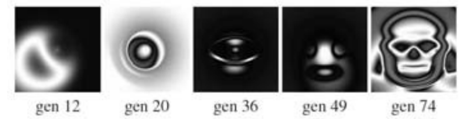
- Typical best results given 30,000 generations (only odd runs shown)

Brian G. Woolley and Kenneth O. Stanley (2011). On the Deleterious Effects of A Priori Objectives on Evolution and Representation. In: Proceedings of the Genetic and Evolutionary Computation Conference (GECCO-2011).



No: The Problem is the Stepping Stones

- Stepping stones in GDS are complex
- Stepping stones to a skull do not look like a skull:



- The objective-based experiment did not reveal the potential of CPPN-based encoding
- Moral: *Methods that aim for diversity (like novelty search or behavioral diversity) will be essential for GDS (even with DNA!)*

Joel Lehman and Kenneth O. Stanley (2011). Abandoning Objectives: Evolution Through the Search for Novelty Alone In: Evolutionary Computation journal (19):2, pages 189-223, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Mouret, J. B., & Doncieux, S. (2012). Encouraging behavioral diversity in evolutionary robotics: An empirical study. *Evolutionary computation*, *20*(1), 91-133.

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Where is GDS Useful?

- Problems with regularities
  - Board games
  - Visual processing/image recognition
  - Pictures
  - Music
  - Puzzles
  - Architectures/morphologies
  - Brains
  - Bodies
- Problems requiring high complexity
  - High-level cognition
  - Strategic thinking
  - Tactical thinking
  - Open-ended evolution?
- Regeneration and self-repair

Miller J. F. Evolving a self-repairing, self-regulating, French flag organism. Proceedings of Genetic and Evolutionary Computation Conference (GECCO 2004), Springer LNCS 3102 (2004) 129-139.

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Regeneration and Self-Repair

- A significant early focus in GDS research
- Is self-repair a side-effect of development?

Miller J. F. Evolving a self-repairing, self-regulating, French flag organism. Proceedings of Genetic and Evolutionary Computation Conference (GECCO 2004), Springer LNCS 3102 (2004) 129-139.

- In some encodings self-repair is not needed
  - In CPPNs every cell knows its role instantaneously from its position
  - However, some applications may not provide positional information

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Where is GDS not Useful?

- Problems without regularity
- Simple high-precision domains
  - Very small picture reproduction
- Simple control tasks
  - Go to the food
  - Balance the pole (5-connection solution)

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Long Term Issues

- What are the ultimate encodings?
- What are the ultimate applications?
- What application requires a structure of 100 million parts and actually utilizes the structure?
  - How can we formalize the problem?
- How can GDS combine with *plasticity*?
- How can we make progress despite the objective paradox?

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More information

- My Homepage: http://www.cs.ucf.edu/~kstanley
- NEAT Users Group: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/neat
- Evolutionary Complexity Research Group: http://eplex.cs.ucf.edu
- Uber AI Labs: https://www.uber.com/info/ailabs/
- Picbreeder: http://picbreeder.org
- HyperNEAT Information: http://eplex.cs.ucf.edu/hyperNEATpage/HyperNEAT.html
- Email: kstanley@eecs.ucf.edu

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Cheney N, MacCurdy R, Clune J, Lipson H. Unshackling evolution: evolving soft robots with multiple materials and a powerful generative encoding. Proceedings of the Genetic and Evolutionary Computation Conference (GECCO 2013). Amsterdam, July 2013.

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Clune J, Stanley KO, Pennock RT, Ofria C (2011) On the performance of indirect encoding across the continuum of regularity. IEEE Transactions on Evolutionary Computation. 15(3): 346-367.

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T. Kowaliw and W. Banzhaf, Augmenting Artificial Development with Local Fitness, In IEEE CEC 2009

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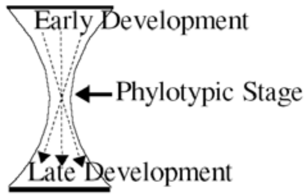
Extra: Heterochrony



- The order of concurrent events can vary in nature
- When different processes intersect can determine how they coordinate

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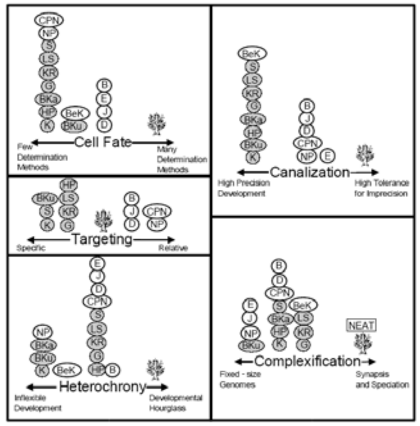
Extra: Exploring the Space of GDS (2003)



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