

Nico-ish platforms in the West and in China

It is a good feeling to be as an Academic research project up speed with Wired (US edition)². A recent article introduces Nico nico Douga to the West, and focuses in large parts on Hiroyuki. It gives a useful introduction into 2channel as well as Nico Nico Douga in English. However, I am not sure about the Wired-ish idea to call Nico Nico Douga "the beginning of the Japan's web 2.0 boom" – I tend to agree with the Nico Chuu, who see themselves far beyond this.

Oregon-based tech blogger Marshall Kirkpatrick has also posted an introduction into Nico Nico Douga on ReadWriteWeb. The article compares Nico Nico Douga favorably to Youtube Annotations, which allows uploaders to add comments to their own videos. Youtube annotations is at its beta stage. Comments can include links. Basically, it is a kind of Nico Script (which allows uploaders to add links) without Nico Nico Douga (which allows all users to comment, among many other new interactive features).

He also compares Nico Nico Douga to <http://viddler.com>, where all users can add comments in little popup windows directly on the videos, together with their user ID. Marshall Kirkpatrick argues that Nico Nico Douga achieves, what Viddler does not: Comments are “an integral part of the user experience” and “not intrusive”. For me it becomes even clearer, how important the absence of user IDs in the comments is: Comments with IDs disturb the viewing experience –

¹ In this series of short and preliminary (!!) texts we publish first results of the Metadata Project's ethnographic research on Nico Nico Douga. You can find more under “output” on <http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/media-research-centre/project2.php> and on our research blog: <http://d.hatena.ne.jp/metagold/>.

² http://www.wired.com/techbiz/people/magazine/16-06/mf_hiroyuki?currentPage=1

they ad too many personalities and too little group. What remains to be found out is, whether this is a problem of the interface, or of the Western mind in general.

Talking about comments... Just as useful as the post itself are the comments that Marshall Kirkpatrick's post has received. Here you can find further services: Some of them are still online (<http://omnisio.com>³), some if them are now deceased (<http://mojiti.com/>), some of them are designed for collaboration of work teams <http://protonotes.com/>).

Nigel Pegg suggests an application that allows you to synchronise video watching in small groups, which then interact with each other. So this is not live broadcast, but user-controlled sychronisation of streamed video. The idea is still at prototype stage. It is a bit like an automated version of the shared video watching practices in the early 90ties on Japan's Nifty (see the last post on Hikawa-san). We heard in our focus groups here in Japan, that some users combine a hand-made synchronous start of Nico videos with Skype. Users already make the effort. So the combination of user-controlled sychronisation and streamed comments (or other forms of communication) might indeed be a smart idea.

It was only a matter of time until the idea of Nico Nico Douga would be taken up in Mainland China. Now, a website seems to do exactly this. You can access *AcFun.cn* directly without becoming a member. As you can see, it is still early days. It is a very basic version of Nico Nico Douga. Interestingly enough, most videos seem to be taken from Nico Nico Douga as well. Here is one example, that blew my mind this morning: <http://www.acfun.cn/html/zmad/20080602/1983.html>

³ Three weeks later after I first posted this, Omnisio was sold for 15 mio to Google/Youtube

The whole video is taken from Nico Nico Douga. So let's look at its background: The melody is taken from an opening song of a popular Japanese anime. The female singer of this opening song made a promotional music video, and the images you can see are taken from this promotional video (including all the red kitsch). However, the voice is different. In the original version the voice was female (the voice by the girl you can see on the video). What we can hear here is a male voice singing the same melody with lyrics with gay content.

This voice was created on Nico Nico Douga. It's lyrics are gay, because it is mainly used for Abe dance videos. So the voice and the lyrics was created for videos, where a group of three gay avatars dance in a camp way to the same melody. Someone must have taken this voice and the new lyrics, and added it to the original video. Now the original singer sings the original melody, but with a fake male voice and gay lyrics.

This then in turns has been downloaded in China, and then uploaded again on the Chinese AcFun, the new Nico Nico Douga rip-off in Mainland China. A red star produced in Japan, combined with a pretty girl singing with a male voice gay lyrics to a pseudo-Russian melody ... This might indeed gain a whole new meaning in China. I would love to be able to read the Chinese comments on the video!

While I am writing this, there is a (rare) live broadcast on Nico Nico Douga – Hiroyuki, Koizuka-san, Sugimoto-san and some other key figures of Nico Nico Douga are reflecting on Nico Nico Douga "live on air", and make lots of jokes, while users comment on the screen, and ask them to do the "Ran Ran Ruu". Feels like Nico Nico Douga on speed.

