

EXCESSIVE RESEARCH  
A Peer-Reviewed Newspaper  
Volume 5, Issue 1  
2016  
Free

**Christian Ulrik Andersen**  
**Mitra Azar**  
**Elisavet Christou**  
**Geoff Cox**  
**Aideen Doran**  
**Kristoffer Gansing**  
**Pablo Velasco Gonzalez**  
**Lone Koefoed Hansen**  
**Nathan Jones**  
**Joasia Krysa**  
**Graziele Lautenschlaeger**  
**Lyndsay Mann**  
**Cornelia Sollfrank**  
**Wolfgang Sützl**  
**Marie Louise Juul Søndergaard**  
**Cansu Topaloglu**  
**Scott Wark**  
**Tessa Zettel**

Colophon:

Peer-reviewed Newspaper  
VOLUME 5, ISSUE 1, 2016

Edited by all authors

Published by Digital Aesthetics Research Center, Aarhus University  
in collaboration with transmediale, Liverpool John Moores University and Liverpool Biennial.

Design by The Laboratory of Manuel Bürger, Manuel Bürger & Hendrike Nagel

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EAN: 9788791810275      ISSN (PRINT): 2245-7593  
ISBN: 7-91810-27-2      ISSN (PDF): 2245-7607

Publication supported by

Centre for Participatory Information Technology, Aarhus University

## **EDITORIAL** WHAT HAPPENS WHEN RESEARCH IS LESS ABOUT EXCHANGE AND MORE ABOUT EXCESS?

EXCESSIVE RESEARCH relates to the announcement of transmediale 2016, 'Conversation Piece' which highlights the compulsive actions of digital culture, and how we are constantly encouraged to stay active, to make, to share and to secure. In this newspaper the authors delve into the nature of these actions and their limits.

The compulsory actions of a networked society are paradoxical. While idealised by hackers, the actions are at the same time the conveyors of new agile innovation strategies, and modes of economic and symbolic exchange. They are constitutive for our cultural being, and at the same time they can be a threat.

A culture of sharing, for instance, is evidently one of the most fetishised activities of the network and describes how value is now created. 'Sharing is caring', goes the catchphrase, but by its inclination of excess, loss and indebtedness, sharing also challenges the very logic of accumulation, and hence it must be domesticated and normalised. Through corporate social network platforms that promise to deliver a coherent neoliberal subject (through sharing, making, acting, securing), we are not just carrying out social activities but also social reproduction. In other words, 'info liberalism' conceals a simple process of exchange behind a façade of compulsory actions that all seem to be for the social good.

### What is excess?

In order to expand our understanding of these actions, and how we create communities of action, we need to look beyond our existing terms of exchange to the realm of excess; embracing anti-economic, political and existential meanings. Making reference to the French writer Georges Bataille, media theorist Wolfgang Sützl has argued in the recent article "On Sharing", that expanded possibilities (i.e., also the possibility of acting, sharing, making, differently) relates to an inclusion of the visceral, the erotic, and the primeval.

Excess is not simply a description of an amount beyond what is considered normal, sufficient or permitted (as with insurance or business), but in its etymological link to ecstasy, it is linked to the realm of pleasure, Bataille argues. The notion of excess is elementary to Bataille's view of a 'general economy' based upon the intentional production of non-utilitarian goods such as luxuries or spectacular displays of wealth and weapons systems. The general economy is where expenditure (waste, sacrifice, or destruction) is considered more fundamental than the restricted economies of production and utilities that are based on scarcity. He describes, for instance, how the sun freely expands energy without receiving anything in return. If people intend to be free (from the imperatives of capitalism, for instance) he recommends they should pursue a general economy of expenditure (giving, sacrifice or destruction). Only then will they escape the determination of existing imperatives of utility and normative production. For Bataille, people are necessarily beings of excess; full of exorbitant energy, fantasies, need, drives, and heterogeneous desires.

The notion of 'excess' energy is central to Bataille's thinking. He takes the superabundance of energy, beginning from the infinite outpouring of solar energy or the surpluses produced by life's basic chemical reactions, as the norm for organisms. In other words, an organism in Bataille's general economy, unlike the rational actors of classical economy (Capitalist and Marxist alike) who are motivated by scarcity, normally has an excess of energy available to it. This extra energy can be used productively for the organism's growth or it can be lavishly expended. Bataille insists that an organism's growth or expansion always runs up against limits and becomes impossible. The wasting of this energy is a 'luxury' characteristic of any society. 'The accursed share' refers to this excess, destined for waste.

### Researching Excess

Given how institutionalised research itself is bound to artificial scarcity and its own brand of compulsory actions (the requirement to produce articles, to network, to cite, to secure patents and (continues p.15)

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## **CONVERSATION SHARING – THE RISE OF A CONCEPT**

Cornelia Sollfrank in conversation with Wolfgang Sützl.

Liverpool, 5.November 2015

Cornelia: Your recent research has revolved around the notion of "sharing," and I would like to get a better understanding where this interest comes from and how it is embedded in the larger context of your work.

Wolfgang: This interest in sharing has resulted from my research on media activism. In the course of a research project at University of Innsbruck, we realised that "sharing" plays an important role in many activist communities – while its actual meaning seems to be rather vague. It obviously relates to the then very topical phenomenon of file sharing, but there seemed to be other impli-



## **X** When data circulates, it opens up the unanticipated.

Oversharing is a concept of excess.

The excessive circulation of cultural content, such as memes, reveals an anxiety to share. Through humour and irony, (over) sharing of cultural content points to inherent values in society, one such example is how racism and sexism is expressed ironically in memes. Irony makes it possible to address difficult issues and even taboos, but might also fail to cope with their seriousness.

*Periodshare* (a research-through-design project made in Spring 2015) speculates on the future value of body fluids as an ironic and critical investigation of today's self-tracking culture where everything can be quantified and exchanged. *Periodshare* is a speculative design product featuring a wearable, wireless menstruation cup connected to an app. The system automatically tracks the period and shares it on social networks, hereby making it easy for the subject to inform her partner, boss, and friends about her period. She can even live-tweet her menstruation data, hereby making something very private a public issue. *Periodshare* explores the boundaries of inside-outside, private-public, and material-representational data. More importantly, *Periodshare* questions the status quo of menstruation; what is the value of menstruation in a post-digital age? A number of artists contest the censorship of this body fluid on social media, while start-ups and the tech industry invite menstruation into new operating systems. In this sense, menstruation is a hot topic but on very different terms: artists aim to break the taboo and the tech industry aims to monetize it. *Periodshare* is situated as an ironic critique inside consumer culture, and the project included a Kickstarter campaign as well as a presentation at an Internet fair as a performative intervention, where I performed as a start-up looking for funding.

### Excess as Sharing

In *The Accursed Share*, Georges Bataille presented a utopian society where human activity should not only be judged by its use-value. Rather, uselessness should be considered an important, sovereign form of human life, in erotic as well as economic systems. Bataille's notion of excess confronts the traditional idea of exchange as the only valid system, by highlighting the fact that in every system, there is expenditure, waste, which can only be spent on unproductive activities. These, Bataille argues, are the greatest enemy of capitalism. Wolfgang Sützl points to Bataille's notion of excess as an important critique of today's 'sharing economy', and argues that sharing as we know it has more in common with capitalistic, rational notions of exchange, than with the principle of the gift.

In the process of changing menstruation from seemingly useless excess—the waste of the bodily system—to useful, exchangeable data representation, menstruation suddenly seems to have become a new sort of useful activity. Statistics could be made. Diseases might be tracked. It might even be possible to compete in menstruation! However, the quantification of menstruation leaves us with several concerns. Firstly, subjectivity is problematized, since the embodied phenomenological experience of how your period feels is lost in quantification, which potentially also loses any subjective understanding of the workings of your inner body. Secondly,

## **X** Sharing the Abject in Digital Culture – Marie Louise Juul Søndergaard

Comments:

NN:  
What role does this work play in relation to gender? Perhaps there is a link here to the performance of gender?

NN:  
Why is menstruation data more intimate than other data? It is possibly that this is the last thing we haven't shared (or quantified)?

NN:  
Menstruation as data (in *Periodshare*) can be commodified or integrated to capital flow and, at the same time, menstruation as matter remains 'dirty'. What I mean is that exactly the step of representing matter into data allows to take advantage of the data as a product and use it (in its numerical form, at least) as a quite aseptic layer to keep menstruation materiality buried.

NN:  
It is easier to talk about e.g. a percentage of garbage or death tolls, while avoiding banana peels and bodies.

NN:  
Methodologies that gather data from fluctuating and dissimilar devices, allow governments to generate an 'individuality' of a datafied citizen, a quite different kind of subjectivity.

NN:  
In turning menstruation into a commodity, is it not also a way to make it unpowered, a banality? How can empowerment be addressed in the context of consumption?

menstruation is in many ways still a taboo and the numerical representation of menstrual blood does not change the view that material blood is disgusting and abnormal. The data produced by *Periodshare*, despite its apparent quantification, is somehow always "too much" for its rational absorption into a commercial stream, also on social networks that are built on the principle on sharing social life.

### Menstruation as Dirt, Data as Purity

To engage in a discussion about the relation of menstruation blood as dirt and menstruation data as purity, means to also consider menstruation as a culturally embedded phenomenon that also includes self-governance and subjectivity. Data is an object of purity; something you cannot touch or smell. Menstruation quantified to data is still also an intimate thing that lies outside of what most women will share with their network. One reason for this is found in the long cultural history of menstruation as taboo.

### Matter out of Order

In a very literal sense, menstruation is an excess of the bodily system. It is associated with non-reproductive sex, but also with death, as menstruation has the impossible status of a dead being who never lived. In particular, menstruation is what Julia Kristeva terms 'abject'; something that is neither me nor recognizable as a thing (2). The abjection of menstruation, Kristeva argues, points to the liminality of the subject itself as the abjection of menstruation comes from her own body, and consequently leads to the abjection of self. Whereas Kristeva builds her menstruation analysis on the psychoanalytical notion of the abject, Mary Douglas's analysis is grounded in social anthropology and in a structuralist understanding of dirt. Here, menstruation as dirt is a matter out of order (Douglas 44). If the European culture understands menstruation as dirt, it is not (only) as a symbol of bad hygiene, but rather, and more importantly, as a symbol of an inappropriate element in a systematic ordering and classification of matter. As such, the menstruating woman does not fit in a European conception of the female, as she neither equals sex, nor reproduction.

### Ambiguous Data

This distinction between dirt and purity is of high relevance when we consider menstruation and data. Like menstruation, data is in a transitional state between being an extension of my body and being representational, incorporeal. In this sense, data can also be seen as abjection, but we have come to understand data as pure. Contrary to menstruation, there is no shame or disgust in data. Also there seems to be no ambiguity in data. Even if both can be contested. However, when it comes to menstruation data, it is clearly not true. Menstruation data is too tabooed to be shared, and thus points to ambiguity in data. The information in menstruation data is a matter out of order; it is dirt on social media, still haunted by the symbolic value of menstruation itself – as excessive information. So menstruation might be quantified and made exchangeable, but it does not overcome its excessive character. Menstruation is *informe*, and so is the data. When shared, menstruation data becomes very explicit and the act of sharing it becomes an act of oversharing. As "too much information", this excess of information is inappropriate and a non-productive act. It has no use-value. But maybe it is exactly by making the exchangeable menstruation data redundant through sharing

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cations as well.

Media activism was not just brushing media against the grain, but also intervening in the socio-economic structure of the media and tech industries. This involved questioning the notion of scarcity. If you can make digital content available to many people for free, why not do it? In an interview I did with Eben Moglen, a co-founder of the Free Software Foundation, he asked: if you could provide everyone with enough food to eat by pressing a button, what would be the moral argument for denying people that food? Activists realized that digital media had this potential of functioning outside an economy of scarcity. To examine such questions, we organized a conference, *Cultures and Ethics of Sharing*, in Innsbruck, and later I co-organized an ICA preconference on digital sharing with Nicholas John (Hebrew University). Since then my research has been mainly concerned with the conceptual dimension of sharing.

Cornelia: Before we talk about the phenomenon of sharing in the context of digital networks – which obviously is the field in which it has been rediscovered and has proliferated most in the twenty



it that it becomes an act of resistance against quantification. Could technology provide us with the tools of resistance, not by resisting the exchange economy and hiding our datafied self, but instead creating an excessive amount of information only to exploit it?

#### Exchangeable Menstruation

A product of neoliberal rationalism, self-tracking is part of the exchange economy that has led the principle of exchange to establish itself in our bodies and minds (Sützl), and as such, the quantification of menstruation takes self-tracking to the extreme. With *Periodshare*, menstruation is no longer bodily excess or waste, but instead the project asks what happens with the symbolic value of menstruation in this extreme shift from excess to exchange.

As a conversation piece, *Periodshare* invites us to ask questions instead of solving a pragmatic or theoretical problem. Understood through the notion of excess, it questions and reflects upon the symbolic value of menstruation in an exchange economy, and more precisely the concerns of taboo, subjectivity, and oversharing. **Is technology opening up new ways of oversharing?**

**X** The literature of our time would seem to suggest so. The instrumentalisation of intimacy by social media, is reflected in the popularity of contemporary genres which contain deeply personal disclosures – such as Autofiction and Alt Lit. This tendency has implications in the personal lives of those who share, or are shared. The excessive autobiographical content in Karl Knausgaard’s trilogy *My Struggle*, or Tao Lin’s *Taipei* for example, have resulted in accusations of abuse from people connected to the authors, their wives and girlfriends in particular. Knausgaard has described the sacrifice of family relationships he made in achieving success with his book as a “Faustian pact”.

This burden of oversharing is productive of what Franco Berardi identifies as the emotional and psychic strains of the flow connecting cognition and finance: “The field of desire has been invaded by anxiogenous flows: the acceleration of the infosphere has expanded expectations, semiotic stimulation, and nervous excitement up to the point of collapse.” (Berardi 109)

This point of collapse is sustained by our deep enmeshment with the boundless capacity of the internet, and even a modest personal computer – to register, store and move textual matter, along with interface illusions such as the infinitely scrolling page – meaning it becomes ever more implausible to think of a limit to the reach, scale and speed of the techno-linguistic apparatus. Leaving aside the substantial gender roles at work in the case of Knausgaard and Lin, this article is interested in a form of address which problematises the fluency of the stream of language which connects semiotics to finance.

#### Posthuman Subject

After Donna Haraway, Katherine N. Hayles designates a posthuman realm in which bodily language is submitted to sampling and quantification – codification – in return for its entry into the data stream. The basis of the relation between meaning and word in language-as-code, Hayles argues, is radically shifted from that of the “Lacanian ‘floating signifier’”, in which words are located in relation to meanings, to the “flickering signifier”, where meaning is only ever a degree of probability (Hayles

## X The Testimony of Structure: Codecs and Contemporary Poetry – Nathan Jones

Comments:

NN:

Flickering – a moment that flickers, Hayles talks about how the world is restructured in terms of pattern and noise, and the ‘flickering signifier’ emerges between the two. Computer logic is re-expressed mangled, an unlikely cyborg, an imperfect mix.

NN:

Reminiscent of generative works, relationship between method, disorganising principle, and outcome – if only seeing the poems without knowing the underlying principles or machinic logic, how do they relate?

NN:

Later glitch art often failed to address the structural component of technologies, the vernacular of file formats – on a structural or material level it was more about glitches. When, on metaphorical level or poetic level, is it still a glitch? Information is still transmitted, but is not broken down in material way.

NN:

Symbolic poetry, rupturing between syntax and semantics, and what is happening in the financialisation in society, generates excess that has been datafied and commodified. Glitch and excess, in the comments on the blog, an excess of semantics is forcing the syntax and revealing itself, and vice versa, and potentially creating a new space for poetics and politics.

29). That is, language moves from affirming presence and absence in relation to the bodily and physical, to existing as a flickering play of pattern and randomness, having to do with the numerical aspects of probability – the statistical array. Berardi suggests that this transformation from the structure of presence/absence to that of pattern/randomness was performed firstly in symbolist poetry. He connects the symbolist project’s separation of signifier from signified explicitly to the way that markets moved from physical to semiotic labour:

“symbolist poets enhanced the connotational potency of language to the point of explosion and hyperinclusion. [...] This magic of post-referential language anticipated the general process of dereferentialization that occurred when the economy became a semio-economy.” (Berardi 18)

#### Contemporary Testimony

Conversely, what Berardi calls for in poetry – implying perhaps a new kind of poetry – is an enunciation of the sensuous, which he designates variously as “the voice” or “excess” of language.

What concerns us is the enunciation – as “pure event of language” – and specific form of enunciation in testimony, as the moment in which the subject is located in the split between the sayable and unsayable (Agamben, *Remnants* 139). We are interested in a *contemporary* testimony which articulates the speaking subject as a combination of the human-being and the technological which together form the posthuman subject.

Agamben describes the contemporary as someone who is able to see, and reveal, formally withdrawn aspects of their time: “To perceive, in the darkness of the present, this light that strives to reach us but cannot” (Agamben, “The Contemporary” 50). Withdrawal is essential to Heideggerian ontology, and Agamben has previously used the term to affirm a distinction between the human open-ness and animal self-withdrawal of which he says the human-as-animal is composed (Agamben, *The Open* 71–75). We can now posit a similar move in considering the boundary of human open-ness and technological self-withdrawal which makes up the posthuman writing subject. The excess of language is defined by the codification and sensuous meaning, whose relation normally withdraws itself in allowing for the enunciation to take place.

#### Codecs and Glitch

The model for contemporary enunciation in the context of the infosphere, I argue, is that of codecs. The codec (coding-decoding) is a process which allows for the most salient features of new media – namely that singularly sensuous present/absent meanings can be categorised in the generic form of the statistical array. In the codec process, the storage format of data and the structuring interface used to make that data immanent, withdraw themselves in their revealing.

Glitch artists such as Rosa Menkman and Nick Britz have forced the codec to disclose itself, by editing the source code of the data or interface in order to produce situations wherein they fail to articulate or ‘stammer’ their media. The resulting media then literally exceed their data, being added-to by patterns, colourings, warps from the interface; while also becoming diminished, half-withdrawing from view in favour of the ‘darkness’ of their structure.

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years – I would be interested in learning more about the intellectual roots of this concept. You have looked at a number of philosophers who might be useful in order to conceptualise the notion of sharing – one of them being Georges Bataille and his idea of the excess...

Wolfgang: Bataille is of particular interest in this regard, because he developed outlines of an anti-economy that starts from surplus rather than scarcity. He focused on what we do to expend resources, rather than make them. He felt that Marxism was not radical enough, buying into the notion of scarcity which is at the heart of the capitalist economic model. He defined a boundary to economic exchange, with expenditure being that which can no longer be exchanged, that which no longer yields anything and cannot be recycled into additional growth. He calls this *The Accursed Share*, which is also the title of the book he wrote in 1949. And just like Bataille’s expenditure, sharing is not something that can be used towards growth. The concept of a “sharing economy” does not make any sense.



## Mean Free Path

Ben Lerner's *Mean Free Path*, is a book which appears to have been produced from older source material – “In a cluster of eight poems, I selected /... / I decided to change everything” (10) – and has a similar aesthetic approach to the enunciation of source data. In the title poem's testimony we are faced with a corrupted syntax which cannot be separated from the structuring apparatus which allow for it – namely because the difficulty of mediating a human response to love and war via the contemporary infosphere is precisely what it testifies to. This poem is ostensibly the perfect post-human enunciation of the infosphere, delivering its content through a modular, re-sampled structure – however, the system of relations between what is sayable and unsayable in this poem, is continually deferred by the refusal of the structure to withdraw and reveal its content.

The most notable form of this deferral is this permutational quality, by which its stanzas host phrase units which have been used elsewhere in a different manner. Each stanza in the poem therefore performs an infinitely regressing hermeneutics on those that have gone before, drawing from the same source material in recombinant ways, while bringing more units of text through the cracks in its surface.

“There are three hundred sixty-two thousand And that's love. There are flecks of hope Eight hundred eighty ways to read each stanza Deep in traditional forms like flaws” (Lerner 43)

The poem thereby embraces its slide into the statistical, while stammering over the insistence on the presence/absence of meaning produced in the syntactical breakages – these “traditional forms like flaws”. The exemplary writing of excess in *Mean Free Path* therefore, does not explode into (and therefore gesture at) limitlessness, breaking down boundaries of intimacy, rapidity, scale, for example, but rather flickers at the limit of what has and hasn't been said – stammering between the condition of the unsaid, and the continuation of saying it.

**“There must be an easier way to do this I mean without writing, without echoes Arising from focusing surfaces, which should Should have been broken by structures” (Lerner 40)**

**X** This text follows a series of honey trades conducted by Plan Bienen as a form of artistic research outside (or in excess of) academic structures. Part of an ongoing project to investigate real and speculative relationships between dual crises in bee ecologies and economic systems, they help us begin thinking through the limits of dominant, defuturing modes of exchange, and towards a conception of what might lie beyond them. The trades took place in Berlin over a summer in residence at the ZK/U - Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik, unfolding as an informal network of beekeepers willing to exchange honey for non-monetary things – from translation services and singing lessons to help with the honey harvest. Here we focus some of our encounters with limits around labour, value and inter-species relations.

Sociologists Lisa Jean Moore and Mary Kosut note that “only when bees vanish do they tangibly appear to us” (517). The phenomenon of ‘Colony Collapse Disorder’ swept through the US pollination industry some years ago, prompting fears that this sudden threat to *Apis Mellifera* would

## X Plan Bienen: Sharing (in) the more-than-human city – Tessa Zettel & Sumugan Sivanesan

Comments:

NN:

How does the project escape the capitalistic nature of the existing sharing/DIY economy in Berlin?

NN:

Would be interesting to focus further on the honey-producer who did not want to engage with the Plan Bienen project? His disengagement from the project/refusal of the project is an interesting position to take.

NN:

Might the idea of bees going on strike be aligned with the phenomena of colony collapse disorder – colony collapse as a withdrawal of bee labour? What is the political economy of bee labour?

NN:

Are you suggesting an alternative economy? And what is the economy of the bees? What analogies does the bee/honey ecology/economy have to media theory more generally (with reference to Jussi Parrika's Insect Media?)

NN:

Who are the actors privileged enough to participate in this economy? It would be interesting to reflect on your own privileged position, as an artist, in being able to make this work.

NN:

The bee is symbolic of a certain kind of industriousness, ceaselessly working (with a Stakhanovite work ethic!). The state symbol of Utah is a beehive, for example. Is there anything in your conceptualisation that addresses the ‘work-ethic’ of the bees, as constant industrious producers?

NN:

I am reminded of the critique of Bourdieu by Ranciere. A critique of ‘speaking for the worker’ and assuming that the worker cannot speak for themselves and needs Bourdieu to speak on their behalf. What would the bee say if we let it speak? It would say that it is a commodity. You seem to let the bee speak for us, rather than ourselves (speaking for ourselves) – there's an irony here in that the non-human speaks for the human. Is this a humorous comment or a real Plan B, an alternative economy to capitalism?

jeopardise the future of many food crops (and by extension our own). An indicator of systemic breakdown, the vanishing of entire colonies was attributed to a convergence of new insecticides (neonicotinoids) with factors like monocultures, mites, constant moving of hives, effects of climate change and immune systems weakened over generations by the replacement of sugar syrup for extracted honey, drawing worldwide attention to the living and working conditions of this little co-habitant of the world-within-a-world that we humans have constructed (Fry). Though bees have long been cast as model capitalist (or even collective communist) producers, the logic of maximum yield had apparently found the limits of the labouring insect body.

For Viennese philosopher Fahim Amir, today's newly visible urban bees are the “emblem of green capitalism”. He waves towards the hives on the roof of Berlin's Haus der Kulturen der Welt to show how ‘naturecultures’ are put to work in the neoliberal city. Here bees produce honey to be sold in the gift shop as a boutique locavore product in the service of eco-friendly public relations. Just as their pollinating activities produce conditions desirable for us to live in, their presence on prominent skylines performs a kind of symbolic labour, assisting the city in re-branding from urban playground and post-communist social experiment to green ‘lifestyle capital’, attracting investment capital and facilitating the march of gentrification. This dynamic plays out a little differently in the *Schrebergarten* of Oliver Rudzick, a physicist-turned-Apiarist who sells jars of honey over his hedge to people on the street, and is the first participant in our honey trades. Oliver sees his bees as performing an important public relations role in protecting the *Kolonie* from threats of being sold off by the landowners next door; this is desirable real estate in a city not accustomed to such speculation.

Stretching Amir's provocation, we can understand city bees as ‘insect working class’ whose labours are both utilitarian and abstract. It is tempting then to imagine the disappearance of bees from industrialised hives as a kind of workers' strike—or as Amir has put it, a ‘zooperatism’—a declaration of insolvency in the form of strategic political action undertaken to sabotage the human-centred mechanisms of expansionary global agribusiness production in which they are deployed.

At Berlin's annual Stadt Honig Fest, amongst the city's expanding apiarist community we meet Heinz Risse and Rainer Kaufmann, who both practice beekeeping in ways that allow for bees to be as industrious, or not, as they choose. Heinz and Rainer collect only minimal amounts of honey, after winter when it is no longer required for the brood, and don't offer sugar syrup to sweeten the deal. Rainer declined to participate in our micro-honey exchange network since his garden already provides everything he needs, and anyway his honey is too precious to trade. Beekeeping campaigner Erika Mayr was however enthusiastic – she already uses honey from the bees on her rooftop to pay her dentist and the DJs in her bar. Honey, like jam, always circulates within a gift economy, which is not to say that there are no sticky multi-directional transactions involved. In this city, cultures of DIY economies and radical social formations evolved in post-

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Cornelia: What also comes to mind when thinking about sharing is its embeddedness in Christian culture. How much is the positive connotation of sharing due to this religious origin?  
Wolfgang: The New Testament contains many references to sharing, the most widely known is perhaps the Feeding of the 5000, where Jesus and his followers share what seems to be a ridiculously small amount of food. This happens after Jesus tells his disciples not to send people to the surrounding villages to buy food, that is, he stops them from engaging in economic exchange. What seems key to me here is not so much that by sharing a large crowd is fed from a few loafs of bread and some fish, with everyone getting enough. The point is that there are several baskets full of food that remain uneaten. There is a surplus that comes from sharing, and it is, just like Bataille's “accursed share,” a surplus that cannot be recycled into further growth. This is a model of an anti-economy that also underlies the demand to offer the second cheek. The positive connotation of sharing, its “niceness,” comes perhaps from the idea of equality and togetherness in sharing. This is very different from the formal equality enjoyed by participants in a market, and the hierarchies that are created or strengthened through almsgiving...



reunification conditions of monetary scarcity. Times having clearly changed, such activities are now framed by the global ‘sharing economy’ which Cameron Tonkinwise critiques as “overwhelmingly an antiregulatory, precariat-creating way of monetizing social interactions”. At last year’s OUIShare summit, platform capitalism jostled with groups like a cargo bike-share network, the citizen-science project Open Source Beehives, and *LebensmittelRetten* (foodrescue), an organised operation partnering with BioCompany, who manage a network of public fridges distributing waste food across the city. The fridges fit into well-established modes of circulation and exchange that are in a sense built on the material failures of an economic system driven by constant growth and ‘wasted’ surplus. As Tonkinwise puts it, sharing is about the messy negotiation of access to goods, which in the interests of futuring necessarily become scarcer. One value he finds in sharing systems today (their potential for shifting values) lies in the friction caused by new socialities not defined by the alienated service roles of work, in other words “capitalism is an alienated way of handling those negotiations; sharing forces you to negotiate with aliens” (Tonkinwise). In economic relations with ‘social thickness’, in which resource flows are placed upfront in a novel social relation, value must be negotiated person-to-person, sometimes awkwardly. In our honey trades, the value of a jar had to be determined outside monetary equivalence, and an assessment made of one’s capacities to meet the needs of others – human and non-human – that we share our cities with. Partly as a way of capturing the excess artistic labour needed to facilitate such a micro-interaction, each trade was commemorated in a special *notgeld* (emergency bank note). *Notgeld* was a form of local currency dating from the German economic collapse of the 1920s used alongside commodities like coal and butter that were inherently less unstable than money (which as economic historian Winfried Bogon reminds us, is nothing more than a system of trust that functions only as long as everyone believes in it). Our *notgeld* were printed in editions of 3, one for each human trader and one for the bees, all equally use-less in a non-art economy but functioning semiotically to revalue the role of the bees within the exchange. Elsewhere in Germany today, non-human agency is manifested via the activist association Mellifera e.V., who work to “interfere politically on behalf of the bees”, recently securing a temporary ban on neonicotinoids in the EU. Biologist Herbert Lohner is also preparing a ‘white paper’ recommending state ‘green infrastructure’ legislations such as a minimum number of *kleingarten* for every newly-built apartment, invoking the right to a certain kind of green space, a commons that involves interspecies sociality and provides a value not fully quantifiable in monetary terms. Moore and Kosut write of our limited ability to ‘know’ bees using human senses, terms and concepts, advocating instead ways of standing back, *intra*-acting and ‘being with’—essentially following the bee through its social transactions with objects, humans and insects, apprehending it as operative within its own world of meaning. They also recognise other kinds of agency that bees have in the formation of engaged alliances within urban landscapes, through their

## X Superabundance logics in Bitcoin mining – Pablo Velasco

Comments:

NN:

The various operational logics work well here (like blockchains as paradigm) to draw out some useful correlations between cryptocurrencies and how accepted notions of abundance and scarcity can be conceptualised. How does this change our understanding of bitcoin? Is there anything new revealed here in terms of the various energies that are wasted and perhaps more importantly how we understand financialisation after the removal of the gold standard when money became virtual?

NN:

You haven’t said much about who owns these mines, how they are connected to other forms and flows of capital and power might be worth addressing. Also I’m interested in the proliferation of other cryptocurrencies – how variable are they, how bitcoin fits into that landscape, and compares with something like Faircoin, might also be relevant. And what the relationship is between these kinds of currencies and the already dominant digital (cashless) economy.

NN:

A fascinating reversal of ‘excess’ here (in the other articles, mine included, there has been a tendency to think about excess as a way of undercutting capitalism’s appropriatory tendencies). The article lays out very clearly the rapid ascent into excess as a mode of generating finance through bitcoin. I wondered if you would be interested in using this knowledge of the structure involved in bitcoin to propose a different model which would find a socialist way of distributing scarce non-duplicable tokens using blockchain technology? Are there other flavours available?

NN:

Thinking of a homeostatic system as a system consuming huge amount of energy to become stable (a bitcoin) might be an interesting concept to develop.

embodied labour (pollination) even constituting us physically as a species, describing “an ontological murk of relations” that replaces clear distinctions between species and their surroundings with a relationship that is “enmeshed and porous” (Moore and Kosut 525). According to Massimo de Angelis, the present economic crisis is a capitalist crisis of social instability, in which ‘commoning’ becomes an imperative of social production – a process of “socialization, communication and the transformation of subjectivities and social relations”, in which “the other is no longer alien but a co-producer of life in commons” (de Angelis 140). Moore and Kosut’s practice of ‘intra-species mindfulness’ in which ‘human’ and ‘other’ disintegrate as cultural constructions, may thus have value in reconsidering how we organise together in urban communities (Moore and Kosut 520). In referencing an imagined (or imaginary) ‘exit strategy’ to relations subsumed under capitalism, Plan Bienen traces the trajectory of the bee towards a kind of thinking that aims to undo the human, to re-configure our relationships with other species and the common lifeworlds that we coproduce.

**The buzz of nonhuman entities makes noise in different directions. Cryptocurrencies are modes of exchange that are successfully challenging centralization and human agency. They are, too, arguably the product of a crisis, a unique born digital emergency-money. But Bitcoin, unlike other insect-mediated exchanges, replicates “the failures of economic models driven by wasted surplus and constant growth” in their production system. In order to maintain an artificial scarcity model, new bitcoins are mined based on a logic of digital superabundance. The machine working class of cryptocurrencies, swarming in its own digital topology, emerges here in the form of miners and hashing algorithms.**

**X** Miners are machines that verify each transaction within the Bitcoin network and which validate these into blocks in a public registry (i.e. the Blockchain). The job for successfully validating and packing the transactions produces new tokens for the miner, and generates a Proof-of-Work. The latter is the result of a ‘puzzle’, which can be then easily checked by any other machine in the network. Since the design of the system seeks a controlled pace, if the coins are generated too fast (because there are more and/or stronger miners) the ‘puzzle’ becomes harder (Nakamoto). However, the analogy of a puzzle is only appropriate within its algorithmic dimension; this means it must be understood not as a toy or a game, but as a problem that must be solved by following a set of rules. It consists of generating aleatory hashes (a string of numbers and letters with a defined length) until one of them fulfils the requirements of the variable ‘difficulty’ level (in the case of Bitcoin, a number of zeroes at the beginning of the resulting hash). Due to the random non-repeatable number involved in the operation it is especially difficult to create a ‘desirable’ hash. Difficulty is hence, in this context, associated with probability and far from tribulation. Regarding Bitcoin, difficulty is an algorithmic adversity. Difficulty, at this point, translates in simple and numerical terms, in almost 2 quintillion [19,909,640,081,173,010,000] tries for one successful attempt. The only way to deal with the odds involved in this

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Cornelia: Together with Bataille and his notion of expenditure, the multiplication of loaves and fishes suggests a parallel to what we have been experiencing with digital networked media: abundance instead of scarcity. I would be interested in how you think these two schemes together.

Wolfgang: Bataille applies the word excess to practices that waste energy without return, including sacrifices, luxury, war, and non-reproductive sex. To him, wealth is a matter of expending what cannot be recycled into growth, and it is up to us what form this expenditure has. In principle, digital networked media can be seen as excessive in this way because digital objects are infinitely reproducible, so that in a sense there is always too much, there is always more than we can productively use. However, the commercialization of the internet has led to the paradoxical situation where this excessive availability fuels the growth of Facebook, Google, etc. A few years ago, media activists started virtual suicide platforms that allowed users to delete their profiles, a kind of sacrifice, if you will, that is reminiscent of Bataille’s thinking.



operation is to have a machine capable of generating as many number of attempts per second as possible.

The logical layer of mining immediately transforms itself in a material overflow of energy and waste. From the deployment of the device up until the middle of 2010, mining was a task that any modern CPU could handle, even though the process would push it to its limits and heavily reduce its lifetime; until mid-2011 the workload moved to GPUs, but was rapidly surpassed by FPGAs (Field Programmable Gate Arrays), which reduced energy consumption while achieving more hashes per second (Taylor). At least since 2013, mining requires the use of ASIC (Application Specific Integrated Circuit) machines. Pools of miners (or farms, if they share the same physical space), contribute their processing power to calculate a block. Last year a paper estimated that the mining network consumed about the same electricity as Ireland (Malone and O'Dwyer), and its numbers have doubled in the last year. The energy consumed by farms is also noteworthy, a single one can use 1.5 thousand times more than an average USA household. Mining, at this point of the evolution of the device, is a race, and reducing the energy footprint is not grounded in pollution awareness, but in cost cutting. And while mining units become progressively more energy efficient, they simultaneously become more obsolete. A constant refill of state-of-the-art equipment is necessary to stay in the race. But unlike trendier gadgets, mining units do not suffer from a short life because of their hardware resistance, cheap materials or fashionable ideologies of consumption (Guiltinan), 'planned obsolescence' for ASICs resides in the scarcity model of Bitcoin's design. After their useful period, they become completely worthless, they go directly from life to waste. Since there is no second hand market for mining units, they rapidly add up to High Tech trashing problems (Puckett and Smith). Units by themselves are not more threatening than a colossal mountain of used smartphones, what is menacing is the mono-task logic that produced them. Tokens have a fixed limit (21 million) and are getting harder to mine, so the fast production and consumption cycles of the hardware are intrinsic to the system.

The substantial empty computational work, energy usage, and e-waste produced in the chained mining operation has no other goal, and so far no other purpose, than to keep the machine running to produce secure, distributed, and artificial scarcity. The idea of waste is superseded by efficiency, and annulled in a scenario where the system is fully operative. In such a scenario the logical surplus of the system is not considered wasted, but a designed element of control. Jennifer Gabrys has argued that non-recyclable waste is what cannot be reintegrated to the production system, it is a remainder, a surplus that escapes capitalism's loop controls, and thus, modifies ecologies and economies (Gabrys). Tiziana Terranova, elaborating on Marx's idea that machinery develops productive powers that are not completely contained by the capitalist economy, also warns that alongside automation, new techniques to control and to reintegrate surplus are generated (Terranova). Cryptocurrencies are a good example of how the idea of unlimited resources gets embedded into automatized and instrumental apparatuses

## X Sensing and making sense in absence: An exercise on translation of materialities – Grazielle Lautenschlaeger

Comments:

NN:  
What are the reasons to choose the word 'translation'?

NN:  
On the political implications of the manipulation of the materialities and technology (references of racism on photographic film development and in face recognition software and the work of Zach Blas).

NN:  
I was also intrigued by your reference to Kittler and how understandings of RGB can be translated to a new understanding of the eye. I am reminded of Wendy Chun's book *Programmed Visions* (perhaps also relevant in other ways to you) and her explanation of the relation between analogue and digital. As I recall it, she claims that the digital builds on an analogy to processes of memory as structured around binary oppositions. Subsequently, this analogy becomes an explanation of nature: the analogy becomes an ontology. This is a slightly different view on 'translation' that perhaps is useful. I am not sure I do Chun's explanation justice here, but you can perhaps read more yourself.

NN:  
What is produced in this translation process? Also in genetic engineering and generative processes, what is added here or lost? Yet as much as there was a lot of attention to translation in the discussion of this paper, I wondered about the use of the term materiality: what kind of materiality are you talking about and from what disciplinary perspective? I liked your terms of sensing images and uncertainty, and the 'black box' of vision. The visual anthropologist I mentioned is Andrew Irving at Manchester. I think his research on accessing 'inner voice' in the public arena connects well with your ideas for sharing subjective viewing experiences.

that work to a greater extent as control systems.

At least to some degree this is underpinned by the idea that digital resources – production of hashes at high difficulty – unlike its more evidently material counterpart, electronic waste, *can't* be excessive. Immateriality has become post-digital: an idea of digital superabundance has become naturalized in our technology, and in our relations to it, to the point that questions of excessive computing power are redirected to the realm of performance. If a system works, the excessiveness becomes superfluous.

**There is a rationale of unlimited resources attached to the idea of the digital, in part because it is still understood as an immaterial virtuality. What is more, rather than becoming obviously material due to its more known relations to humans, waste, or servers, digital immateriality hasn't disappeared.**

X The neglect of digital materiality is also expressed in Media Art, essentially founded in some dichotomies: organic and machinic, virtual and actual, analogue and digital, among others. When renowned authors of the field, like Edmond Couchot, state that "the image-making processes are no longer physical (material or energy related)" (Couchot 182–3), all the existent materialities that the human senses cannot perceive are ignored.

The associations of Media Art to immateriality might have many reasons. Its place in the History of Art as performative or process-based artworks, rather than art objects is one of them. However, I consider that the main root is the historically and culturally constructed separation between the world of thinkers and the world of makers. Certainly we can find few examples of artists and groups that are successful in shortening the gap between conceptualisation and praxis, honouring the cross-disciplinarity of Media Art. Nevertheless, in order to put in check some aspects that usually reinforce the problem, and to further the discussions and production in the field, it is necessary to address this problem.

Regarding Simondon's concretisation perspective, building a genealogy of photosensitive elements (materials, organic matter and devices) related to Media Art, emerged as promising vector for investigation.

The ambiguity of the term 'sense' (sensory faculty or meaning attribution?) already explains how such objects of research bridges the physical and chemical phenomena and the abstract world of conceptual models. The relationships between photosensitive elements and their operations in aesthetic expressions also reveal the creative tension between presence effect and meaning effect, the materiality of communication (Gumbrecht 8) that characterises Media Art (Gumbrecht 79). Moreover, there are many examples of how the understanding of the natural world and the human ability for creating media and building machines are mutually influenced. One very close to our physical reality is the human eye, usually understood and modelled in physiology books as a metaphor of a camera. Photosensitive cells located in our retina (rod and cone cells) act as the light-sensitive colloids of films, or like the semiconductor materials of a CCD. Rods are responsible for the reception of small intensity light and for peripheral view. Cones are further

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Cornelia: If we continue this thought, and bring in the notion of sharing, it becomes necessary to distinguish more precisely between sharing and exchange as an economic transaction. Could you please generally explain the difference of these two concepts?

Wolfgang: Unlike exchange, sharing is not reciprocal. It does not consist of the mutual give-and-take that forms the structure of exchange, both of economic exchange, as in a market, and of symbolic exchange, as in the giving and returning of gifts, words, or other symbols. Baudrillard's *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976) showed the importance of symbolic exchange in capitalism, and takes the Marxist critique beyond the merely economic. Bourdieu has also developed a critique of symbolic exchange around his notion of cultural capital. But they both stop at the point where a formal representation of reciprocity is no longer possible, the point Baudrillard later theorized as impossible exchange, in his book of the same title.

Cornelia: It appears to me as if symbolic exchange was somewhere between economic exchange and sharing...



classified into three kinds of cells, each type responding to visible light of different wavelengths on the electromagnetic spectrum. Long cones respond to light of long wavelengths, peaking at the colour red; medium cones peak the colour green; and short cones are most sensitive to wavelength of the colour blue (Guyton and Hall 577-589). According to media theorist Friedrich Kittler, it is very likely that the development of colour images in media technology – the RGB system, as well as luminance and chrominance – only became possible after the discovery of such cells in our eyes (Kittler 36). His argument is that “we knew nothing about our senses until media provided models and metaphors” (Kittler 34).

To deepen the discussion, we shall observe a specific operation related to senses and sensors: the translation of materialities. Besides insights from my practical experience and from Swiss theoretician Rainer Guldin’s ideas about the work of Vilém Flusser, the technical definition of sensor by Fraden also supports me in using here the term ‘translation’. An example of such an operation is the discovery of the photosensitive element selenium. In 1880 at Bell’s Laboratory the telephone was invented, a telecommunication device that transmitted speech on a beam of light. The receiver was a parabolic mirror with selenium cells at its focal point. When sensitive materials are associated with electronics and digital processes, the creative possibilities of human beings are refreshed. When Vilém Flusser discusses the zero dimensionality of digital media, this means that they offer us the possibility of gathering all materialities in a lowest common denominator and, in a second step, transform them in other possible materialities. It is a play in the flux between the abstract and the concrete worlds. In other words, this aspect of digital media drives us to translation issues, once they theoretically allow us to translate anything into anything. Guldin suggests it is possible that Flusser’s media theory is a development of a more complex, unfinished theory of translation, an argument exemplified by the Flusser’s term ‘Mediumsprünge’ (Guldin 73). It might be possible then to look at the Media Art scene through the lens of translation. What kind of translation has been done? Why are we so obsessed with translating?

The Italian humanist Leonardo Bruni was probably one of the first modern thinkers to write a scientific treatise about the issue of ‘translation’ in the fifteenth century. Later in the twentieth century, other theoreticians discussed the topic, including Croce and Rosenweig, Benjamin (“The Task of the Translator”) and Steiner (“After Babel”). The interest of those thinkers in the topic is a sign that the importance of translation reaches beyond language to encompass ontological and philosophical territories. Moreover, it is not by chance that the concept is also used in Molecular Biology and Genetics, using the term translation for the process in which cellular ribosomes create proteins. Such a broad spectrum of uses leads us to understand translation as playing out in the middle space between distinct systems. *Genesis* (1999), by the artist Eduardo Kac, is an example that nourishes this topic in the realm of Media Art. The key element of the work is a synthetic gene translating a sentence from the biblical Book of Genesis into Morse code, and converting it again into DNA base pairs. The ‘Genesis

## X The Extended Mind – Lyndsay Mann

Comments:

NN:  
Does your understanding of voice lead us to another understanding of media as extended voices?

NN:  
The sound of the voice returned – is it a mediation of something that isn’t?

NN:  
... while walking in the night without a light through places which are a little difficult, ... use a stick in order to guide yourself; you notice that you were even able to tell through the stick whether the diverse objects around you were trees, or stones, or sand...

gene’ was inserted into a bacteria and the audience, via the internet, could turn on an ultra-violet light in the exhibition space to cause real biological mutations in the living organism, which at the end was re-translated into the Genesis book. Demonstrating the human obsession about translating and its implications, this artwork is very good at constructing the metaphors of the most current ‘problems’ of translation: ambiguity, noise, and subjectivity. As long as each system has its own structure, it is absolutely impossible to find exact correspondences in both universes. That also explains the difficulties in translating poetry. Arbitrarily the translators find the most convenient correspondents. And it is not different when this idea is transferred to the realm of materialities.

However, media artists maybe ignore their activity as translators, being responsible while manipulating means to recognise the otherness (Ricouer 25), and therefore the very materiality of their creative matter. Considering this, I see the challenge for the media artist today as discovering why we translate. Towards a ‘material philosophy’ or a ‘philosophic engineering’, I intertwine this conceptual framework with a practical experiment, creating a project called *Self-portrait of an absence*. Playing with the translation of materialities, would you like to hear the sounds of my blind eye? The *Self-portrait of an absence* is a sound generative eye-tracking device attached to my blind eye. The device is programmed to generate soundscapes of my subjective experience. It translates light into sound. The device shares an absence; **it translates an intimate experience into a universal experience. Voice transmutes an intimate experience into a political experience.**

**X** Voices are both the very texture of the social and the intimate kernel of subjectivity (Dolar 14). Voice is our internally housed, liminal technology; an embodied and richly dynamic media with the ability to communicate beyond the content of what is said. Voice is an inconstant material, and in this way it is responsive to, and experienced with, uncertainty. Embodiment is a fluid and negotiable experience in which bodily skills and action inform perception and thought. Body *image* describes our perceptions of, and emotional attitudes towards, our body. Body *schema* is a sensory-motor system that maps our body in space, enabling our capacity to carry out intended actions and movements, often without our conscious attention. Image and schema are closely related systems (Gallagher 24); they inform how we see others and ourselves. Body image is informed by our cultural and interpersonal relationships that contribute to our constructed sense of self, and in this way plays a role in body schema – in what we believe we have the capabilities for. Equally, *voice* image plays a role in our *voice* schema. How we perceive our voice impacts on our capacity for voice. As the tone, pitch, volume, gender awareness and other material qualities of voice inform our perception of it, I suggest, it is also possible to add to this a feeling of being heard, just as one experiences a bodily sense of being seen: “To see, then, is also, by implication, to be seen. Seeing entails having a body that is itself capable of being seen, that is visible” (Grosz 101). The conscious awareness of being heard can be presumed to play a significant role in our sense of self

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Wolfgang: Almsgiving, like gift-giving in general, is a form of symbolic exchange, which in Bourdieu’s thinking affirms and stabilizes social hierarchies. Symbolic exchange determines who is on top and who is at the bottom. By tipping a waiter you, and the waiter who accepts the tip, agree on this. This verticality of symbolic exchange explains why giving and receiving of gifts in relationships between people who want to be equal, such as the modern couple, is often such an awkward affair, sometimes resolved by giving up the idea of a gift altogether.

Baudrillard argues that symbolic exchange has many forms that support the functioning of economic exchange—for example, the law and the state, which intervene when economic exchange fails, as in bankruptcy, unemployment, or by setting base rates. This too shows how symbolic exchange is bound up with political power. Organized crime, black markets, or state-controlled economies function predominantly in this way.

Cornelia: That means we actually remain in a sort of economy with the gift-giving, while, as you have already indicated, sharing is something that leaves the realm of economic relationships



and attitude towards the validity of our voice. The experience of being heard, and the value the agent places on her own voice, provide a ground for what the agent perceives as possible, or within her capabilities.

In relation to voice we could consider that in everyday situations we know the capabilities of our voice, the range and audibility to an extent, and therefore our reach in common circumstances. When we speak we expect to be understood and this is broadly unchanging within our local environment, yet the circumstances of our speech (background noise or echo, one-to-one or group conversation) are in constant flux, and the voice must respond accordingly: to be heard, to be understood, to take account of the proximity of the hearer, etc. When addressing an audience, via the camera or directly, our voice image will contribute to our ease or dis-ease, for example, a self-conscious catch of our voice in our throat. These are the sounds of inexpert voice in my own work that my professional sound mixer suggested should be removed. These are richly dynamic properties of voice that do not attempt to emote or convince but rather openly acknowledge the subjective and inconstant negotiable experience of embodiment. Voices that divulge the inner and uncertain in this way, offer a potential route to disrupt the reliance on reason and certitude that arguably shapes current public and political discourse. Reason functions contrary to a principle of inconstancy and uncertainty. Reason is a method exploited within an ideology of excess to dismiss practices outside of established forms of power (Rose 260), and the hierarchies of address they adhere to. In the context of voice, reason translates to a lack of value afforded a voice that is not certain, solid or singular. Embodiment and extended mind work in tandem. Extended mind is a process of perceptual engagement of the mind and body with an external object that offers new opportunities for the agent, and which the brain has come to treat as part of the body (Clark and Chalmers). There are particulars of engagement that need to occur for the brain to consider an external object an object of extension. To consider voice as an object of extension in the context of excess, certain particulars of engagement can be explored through ‘address to camera’.

The subject-voice presents the agent in the moment of speech. The object-voice describes the subject-voice returned to the speaking agent in the moment of their speech. In address to camera, the object of extension is the voice: the voice is both absorbed (subject-voice) and simultaneously returned (object-voice) to the agent in the moment of speech by the mute, un-flinching lens. This returned object, which we could imagine the brain treating as part of the body through embodied recognition and sense of ownership of it, harnesses the subjective experience of the speaking agent. The extending object takes account of the relation of the speaking agent to the camera, of the architecture of the room, the agent’s bodily position within it, and of the position of the bodies of others. Voice as an object of extension is responsive to the content of what is said, and the context of what is said. The address between agent and camera inhabits an intimate dynamic. This physical dynamic could be compared to that cultivated in analysis, between analysand and analyst, where the intended hearer

## X Virtualization of the gaze and POV as a political battlefield – Mitra Azar

Comments:

NN:  
Look into the subjective point of view. Putting the viewer into the action is a cinematic convention. But nowadays there’s images produced not to be seen by a human gaze. How would you treat these images in relation to the POV crises.

NN:  
Selfies and protest combine – to produce new kinds of visualities and political subjects – new visual regimes based on online/offline circulationism, where POV becomes a kind of index to forms of power. What has changed from a politics of representation as articulated by 1970 film theory and post structuralism to current forms where new visualities are performed by machines and algorithms?

NN:  
You describe how an ontological problem turns into an epistemological problem. “Maybe the becoming CCTV of the POV (and viceversa), and the becoming geography of territory (and viceversa) is at the base of the confusion between fiction and reality.” I was wondering what this ‘maybe’ implies for you? One could simply argue that this \_is\_ (\_is not\_) the case, but perhaps the confusion (beyond the yes/no dialectics) is also part of your point? At least the indeterminacy of these phenomena’s status seem to be important to you.

of what is said is the speaking agent who hears herself through the silent listener. Address to camera facilitates hearing oneself back as the speaking agent accesses an imagined audience via the silent, listening camera. The imagined audience is the intended hearer of the voice, present at the time of address but only in the mind of the speaker, and in this way the speaker is talking to herself as other. In extended mind, the object of extension participates in a looped dynamic with the agent between mind, body and world. The agent’s behaviour and thinking is altered by the particulars of the perceptual engagement enacted across the looped dynamic, which produces a ‘new version’ of the agent. Fluency in these relational dynamics of address to camera could be said to produce a version of the agent that experiences a sense of being heard. For the experienced user, for example, the politician or spokesperson, the extended voice in address to camera produces an excessive version of the agent engaged in a looped dynamic with their self as other. Address to camera in this light predominantly adheres to established hierarchies of address, in providing opportunities for those experienced and engaged within the dominant discourse. Yet this intimate dynamic offers an opportunity for the individual agent to recruit their own voice as a political tool by extending “private voices” and “inner landscapes” (Rose 188), the openly subjective and fully embodied, into a public domain claimed and secured by reason. **Just as one experiences a bodily sense of being seen, to hear implies having a voice that can be heard. Just as one experiences a conscious awareness of being heard, the bodily sense of being seen is an equitable form of subjective return: to see implies having a body that can be seen.**

### X POV between pornography and politics

POV (Point of View) is not only an expression referring to a certain way of shooting porno movies. From an aesthetic perspective, POV and the notion of the embodied image and its excessive proliferation has also become nowadays politically relevant, especially in relation to the anonymity and frozen inscrutability of CCTV (Closed-Circuit TV) or Drone imaging as metaphors of a centralised (yet already mobile) panoptic gaze. Here, I’d like to start a post-phenomenological cartography of the processes of abstraction of the POV (and of the body), in relation to the virtualisation of the gaze within the compulsive proliferation of image production, especially in the context of a crisis. The process of virtualisation begins as a slippage of POV as an embodied relation between camera, *user* and audience, into FPV (First Person View), where POV is wirelessly remote from the POS (Point of Shoot), and the *user* controls the device “from the driver or pilot’s view point” (Wikipedia). When FPV frames from a microscopic perspective, medical imaging manifests itself as a very peculiar form of *gaze embodiment*, whereas when it frames from a macroscopic perspective, CCTV and Drone imaging manifest themselves as last degrees of actualised *gaze disembodiments*. POV, FPV and CCTV are indeed the macro-regime of visibility, with which to organise a post-phenomenology of the anthropo-technical mutation of the gaze, and of its online/offline circuiting.

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behind altogether. I think this is where we should continue talking about the philosophical concepts which you are exploring in order to develop the concept of sharing. And I’m thinking of phenomenology, for example.

Wolfgang: Once you realize you cannot theorize sharing in terms of exchange at all, you face certain problems that are similar to theorizing everyday experience. Sharing is indeed an everyday routine, as such it does not have its own truth, or at least it does not stand out as an object available to scientific investigation or to the aesthetic privileging that happens in art. Duchamp’s readymades were a response to this difficulty of the everyday. What would an artwork look like that is not set apart from the profanity of everyday experience? His answer was, perhaps like a urinal, perhaps like a bottle rack. Phrased in ontological terms, Heidegger undertook a similar enquiry in his *Being and Time* (1927), where he sought to understand being through everyday *Dasein*, the simple fact of our being-there that is always already assumed, whatever question we may ask.



### Google gaze circuit and POV disembodiment between colonisation and subversion

The *Google gaze circuit* is well visualised by the image of somebody taking a Selfie with his phone, while getting caught by a Google Car camera passing by exactly at the moment of the shooting, making the (POV) Selfie eventually available on Google Maps within the CCTV gaze of Google satellites and the FPV gaze of Google Car, as in the mostly unconscious net art performance by Nasr Bitar. On the other hand, especially the *Google Glass gaze circuit* emphasises the shrinking of the space of abstraction/conversion between POV/CCTV, now happening at a few centimetres from the *user's* retina. Here, POV and CCTV, along with *territory* and *geography*, collapse into each other. Here, *geography* starts generating *territory*, instead of the contrary. If in this type of *Google gaze circuit* it is possible to sense the attempt of colonising and normalising (CCTV-ing) a perceptive region intrinsically autonomous (POV-ing), and therefore potentially subversive, similar overlapping can produce quite opposite results, and POV disembodiment can become a form of resistance. As in the case of the first hologram protest held in Madrid, Spain, opposing the law banning demonstrations outside the government buildings, and portraying a crowd forced to fully disembody in order to exercise its right to protest.

More recently, Bryce Williams recorded with his phone his deadly gun shootings of two of his colleagues while *on air*, metaphorically sending a warning about the unpredictable and un-domesticable nature of POVs. Bryce's phone points at the cameraman and at the woman presenting, while approaching them, waiting the TV camera to frame her before shooting with his gun, and, thus, turning his POV into a CCTV/television-live feed.

### Politics of regimes of visibility and regimes of truth

It is worth noting that each of these regimes of visibility brings along a regime of *truth*. It is indeed possible to think about the processes of virtualisation of the gaze, not only as the transformation of POV into CCTV, and of *territory* into *geography*, but also in relation to their degree of *vérité*. In fact, from the *unter-testimony* of CAT scan, MRI and laparoscopic videos documenting the inside of the body from a non-human scale, to the dubious testifying status of certain (POV) Selfies, to the objectifying gaze of CCTV cameras and Drone imaging, to the *uber-testimony* of an hologram protest, one of the recurrent elements of these regimes seems to be the actual difficulty of defining their *vérité* status. Maybe the becoming CCTV of the POV (and vice versa), and the becoming *geography* of *territory* (and vice versa) is at the base of the confusion between fiction and reality. Selfies can act as a documentary POV with CCTV function, as in the case of Mastercard Selfie's technology for payment procedure, identifying the buyer and securing the shopping. But Selfies can also be ambiguous, as in the Selfies Abdou Diouf took of his illegal border crossing from Africa to Europe, accused of having been manufactured. At the same time, the different regimes of visibility and the technology making them available are more and more fluid, so that every state of POV embodiment and disembodiment can turn into another one almost flawlessly. Here, Drone imaging as the convergence of CCTV and FPV

## X Media Archaeologies of Digital Humanities: Mediation, Cultural Heritage and Archivology – Cansu Topaloglu

### Comments:

NN:  
The digital humanities is typified by overviews of massive scope rather than attending to detail and singular instances. DH as an umbrella category and hot-topic subject I think is influenced by the financial associations of Big Data.

NN:  
What in the history of culture is select/elected to become permanent and stored?

NN:  
“Media cross one another in time which is no longer history” (Kittler 1999, 115)

NN:  
What happens when all of our cultural heritage is mediated through a browser window, in a backlit screen at 1080x740 resolution? Does this imply a flattening of the 'texture' of these histories as they are framed in a uniform way? Does the 'interface effect' render it all surface and no substance?

becomes a 'Drony' – basically a (POV) Selfie with a Drone POS (Point of Shoot). The *turning into* a Selfie of a Drone imaging is matched by its opposite, the *turning into* a Drone of a Selfie, as in the case of 'Buildering', “the act of climbing on the outside of buildings and other artificial structures” (Wikipedia), and - I would add - taking (POV) Selfies on top of them, highlighting how the processes of POV disembodiment are simultaneous to those of CCTV (or Drone) embodiment.

### The offline/online circuiting of the gaze between conjunction and connection

The processes of POV disembodiment can also be read as the Prometheic attempts of its own re-embodiment over the Internet, as the excessive pornography available online proves to suggest, as much as the number of absurd *challenges* (as with the #firechallenge, or #kyliejennerchallenge), where the *internauts* engage in extreme ways with their bodies, while taking Selfies. The regimes of visibility connected to the POV processes of abstraction can be observed under the lens of their online/offline circuiting, and POV disembodiment seems indeed to happen in parallel with another process, that of the *Internet embodiment* (IE) - offering the opportunity to conceptualise the Internet, not anymore as a simple interface, but rather as environment and behaviour. Selfies are not only the beginning of POV disembodiment, but also the consequence of the Internet's domestication of the gaze, and of its embodiment into offline behaviours, fully oriented to an uploading phase. The *conjunctive* as the offline modality of *becoming-other* and developing singularities by enhancing differences is replaced by the *connective*, the functional interaction of elements of a given relationship, according to principles of similarities and compatibility (Berardi), while the shrinking of the *offline space of appearance* open for a new online *space of appearance*, suggesting an ontological changing in the relation between reality and virtuality, *territory* and *geography*, offline and online.

The colonisation of the POV is a process that happens in the offline/online circuiting of the gaze, and in the *affordances* (Gibson) offered by the “military-entertainment complex” (Lenoir, Lowood). In this context, designing a cartography of the relation between the processes of virtualisation of the gaze, their *vérité* statuses and their offline/online circulation seems important in order to investigate how to elaborate a strategy of resistance and of being-together, in the perspective of the overwhelming narcissism and ontological onanism manufactured by a repressive use of the technology nowadays available. **“The Panopticon is a marvelous machine which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of power.” (Foucault)**

**X** Digitisation has opened up history and historical sources in unprecedented ways, yet the technology has not come without tensions, costs and unexpected set of alliances and demands for historians, educators, administrators, and the public. Digital archives are often themselves an interpretative model open for reading and inquiry, and the objects within them, whether marked-up texts or hypermedia maps, derive from a complex series of authored stages (Schreibman, Siemens and Unsworth). Through the scope of his understandings on humanities and media studies,

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He uses the term *Mit-sein* or being-with, to understand being as always already shared being. According to him, there is no way to understand the meaning of being other than as shared. As I find myself in the world, I have already shared this world with others. Being cannot be separated from sharing, and the others come into appearance as others because of this sharing. This is why sharing in the commons, as described by Ostrom, defines a political subjectivity. To me, it also offers a point of departure for understanding why an economy of exchange on the way to totalizing itself, as in the current advance of neoliberalism, has such difficulty with the notions of otherness or difference. Exchange must, in order to function, render otherness or difference meaningless – turn it into a “farce” as Žižek says. The only meaning that it leaves for otherness is the unrestrained negativity of random violence, which is just another caricature of a quest for meaning.

Cornelia: What is not nice about sharing?

Wolfgang: For one, once we understand sharing as a limit to economic expansion, an anti-dote to the economic principle itself, it questions a deeply held belief of Western culture. It represents



Friedrich Kittler investigates media systems for transmitting, linking and institutionalising information through ‘old media’ and investigating the functionalities of power in the age of technical media by providing interesting perceptions. In a Foucaultian sense, both genealogical and archaeological approaches are highlighted through Kittler’s prominence on the significance of the technical system of inscription (Parikka). Depending on Kittler’s theories, the process of mediation from traditional to digitised, investigating historical embodiment and conditions of knowledge expresses a significant matter. In a Deleuzian sense, digitisation of archival objects and scholarly journals are deterritorialised and this jeopardises the physical medium of the object. In accordance with the hybridity of medium specific analysis (MSA) through the scope of materiality, it is seen that a number of institutions follow certain rules which are limiting the access to their collections along with expanding their policies experimenting of ‘digital surrogates’ to be able to preserve both the original and digitised replica by the development of obtaining methods of reproducing original materials. Unquestionably, impending productions of historians (and potentially curators) are likely to be far more conversant than their ancestors with digital replicas and reproductions, which indicates the fact that they are expected to receive particular approaches to history, the decreasing contact to physical evidence of history are not likely to exist without consequences for notions of history (Newell).

#### Data and Network

The physicality of the digital technologies which signifies an essential constituent of archival nature, articulates itself through the “deterioration of the substrates of storage” (Parikka 129), in addition to the development of the digital. Through the scope of materiality of the medium, digital objects are not expected to be recovered/restored as stable objects; any attempt for constructing, in a machinic milieu and softwarised medium, a transformation, of the material and presents dynamics and particular modifications (Parikka). The PC revolution and the rise of the internet enhancing the speed and disk capacity of computational technology has led to another phase through the law of exponential increase. For historians, facilities were offered by the new computational medium following this phase by the advanced networking capacity of internet. A vast network of systems and data, personal computers and software has become widely common since information technologies have hugely advanced (Schreibman, Siemens, Unsworth).

The data immersion documented within interfaces is accepted as more advanced compared to traditional human apprehensions in terms of processing. In this regard, constructing data within a medium excludes human perception since calculational and sequential operations of cyber culture no longer require a subjective witness (Berry), which creates an irony with the notions of the human in the humanities of the digital age.

#### ‘History from Below’

Old Bailey and Bentham Projects – both of which are involved with volunteer individual activity to create a digital medium that encourages collective information and free resources enhancing community engagement through ‘archivological’ studies – represent computational linearity in terms of the materiality of a cultural

## X Power Users – Aideen Doran

### Comments:

NN:  
The dissimulation of the interface involves their becoming invisible while overlapping to the body. The endogenous, aggressive nature of the interface over the body.

NN:  
How does teporality figure here given your mention of just-in-time production? What is the time dimension of boredom?

NN:  
Is boredom what De Certeau would describe as a “tactic” which outmanoeuvres capitalism’s strategy of totalising instrumentalism?

heritage. Attempting to preserve historical objects referring to the concept ‘intangible cultural heritage’ indicates fundamental matters aligned to the ‘accessibility’ of archives.

The hyper-textual design and character of the background materials, hidden information construction modelling, and the system for capturing pictures and content was each made particular for this task, and was informed by the undertaking particular historiographical plans and aspirations for making a ‘history from below’ (people’s history) which emphasises the concept of a ‘history of the masses’ engaging with the notion of ‘accessibility’. The interfaces of the projects were deliberately intended to lead a mass open group of community into immediate and compassionate engagement with the social history of working individuals. It is accepted that these projects are indicative of the type of digital recourses which have been created for humanities researchers. The undertakings permit enhanced analytical methods and investigation of essential sources and data, encouraging a researcher in their errand and permitting better approaches to incorporate, compare and information (Warwick, Terras, Nyhan).

**It is in the nature of digital networks themselves to generate more than will be deleted, and that the use of data is divested from any consumption. In a digital network thus characterized, a system of equivalencies is impossible, and scarcity reveals itself as a social construction when access restrictions are technologically implemented.**

X The Internet as we know it today “arrived from two directions: one top-down and the other bottom-up” (Lanier 27), the cumulative result of military and governmental research alongside the efforts of independent computer scientists, programmers and entrepreneurs. To many the de-centralised nature and universality of the Internet, both expressions of the “universal and non-discriminatory” (Semeniuk 47) principles of its design, seemed to promise a wider decentralisation of power and the creation of a new global commons, as the collective knowledge of the world became universally available and creative and intellectual collaboration over the Internet became possible. The revolutionary potential of the Internet to usher in an era of the democratic and free exchange of global knowledge has been compromised by a counter-revolution of enclosure, surveillance and a concentration of corporate and governmental powers.

At the present time, the experience of living in the world where the Internet is a ubiquitous phenomena contrasts starkly with the utopian ambitions of the early network pioneers. We live with what the artist and writer Hito Steyerl calls an ‘Internet Condition’, in which the conditions of surveillance and monopolisation normalised on the Internet spill over into the ‘real’ world. The Internet, according to Steyerl, “is undead and it’s everywhere” (Steyerl, “Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?”). Every action we make online can be tracked, traced and stored, your location monitored, your life surveilled in the interests of both capitalist accumulation and state security. Moreover, there is another troubling aspect to digital network technologies as they exist now: the dissimulation of the interface. Artist and theoretician Olia Lialina has suggested that the boundaries between technol-

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an outside that can be scary because it cannot be regulated by law – because the law is also an exchange operation. Pirates, who did not recognize the law of the sea, had a strong sharing culture, which came back to life in digital piracy. Also, at the moment of sharing, we cease to be as self-contained individuals, and enter the sphere of intimacy. There is a vulnerability that comes with sharing that is expressed in the problem of “oversharing” on social media, where users offer intimate information to others they do not really know. Because of this, sharing as a practice was traditionally limited to smaller communities. And finally, we also share things like the exhaust fumes and noise of our cars or the crudeness of our advertising billboards. It’s not always nice.

Cornelia: Nvow, both of these concepts, exchange and sharing, exist in parallel – offline as well as online. I would like to ask you to describe and unravel this coexistence with regards to digital networked media and also talk about the – maybe intentional – confusions that are emerging from this.

Wolfgang: Today sharing is often confused with exchange because of the way we use the word in online communication and the hype around the sharing economy. This confusion is an easy one



ogy and us are becoming increasingly blurred: “Computers are getting invisible. They shrink and hide. They lurk under the skin and dissolve in the cloud.” (Lialina, “Turing Complete User”)

Computing processes are ubiquitous yet opaque. Computers are disappearing as discrete objects and are absorbed into all other objects, from watches to toasters, in the ‘Internet of Things’. An interface is no longer an interface but an experience. Many of the leading contemporary technology companies actively pursue the development of software interfaces that are both intuitive and ‘invisible’. When the interface disappears, the user too becomes invisible, when the term user is a useful reminder that a computer is a programmed system designed by another and is not neutral. To fail to recognise that a person is a user of a system puts in jeopardy the users’ right to question that system and to critique it. An interface designed to be invisible renders a device almost unrecognisable as technology: it instead becomes naturalised as a benevolent, non-human factotum, a familiar spirit. As Donna Haraway writes, “our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert” (152).

The experience of living with networked information technologies is intertwined with embodied and affective experience, yet the ways in which we engage with technology are more often framed as a disembodied experience, one that is structured by language and overwritten by an instrumental logic. In *The Question Concerning Technology* (1977), Heidegger describes how in a technocratic society all things “live under the rule of instrumentalism” (Bolt 71) in which the earth is a resource that can be mastered through technological means. However, to Heidegger technology is more than just means: it is a “challenging revealing” (16), a system of thought which orders the world and drives out other ways of thinking outside of its particular system of enframing (Bolt 75). The instrumentalising effect of this reduces the world and humanity to a “standing-reserve” of energy (Heidegger 17). In opposition to technological enframing Heidegger sets out poiesis, (10) a mode of bringing-forth presence that privileges “openness before what is” (Bolt 80) over ordering and mastery. Heidegger associates art with poietic revealing and also with *techne*, an ambivalent term between poiesis and technological enframing that is the etymological root of the word ‘technology.’ It is both its likeness to and its difference from the technological that gives art a unique power to unsettle an instrumental view of the world: arts’ “accursed share” of non-recuperable excess (Bataille).

A refusal to share in and engage with digital network culture can be a powerful statement. We are surrounded by anti-boredom devices and we can be bored as well as overwhelmed by information overload, but it’s a mediated form of boredom that allows no room for thought or reflection. The sociologist Siegfried Kracauer suggested that only “extraordinary, radical boredom” (Kracauer, quoted in Morozov “Only Disconnect”), as opposed to the “radical distraction” of a real-time news feed, could reunite us with our body and our heads. Boredom allows us to experience the world at different temporalities and to reimagine both our present and future conditions of existence. To Kracauer, boredom is not only our “modest right” (303) to do no more than be with

## X Art Exhibition Online: A Condition – Elisavet Christou

Comments:

NN:  
How do we define online art exhibitions? Maybe art online is just art on constant display and?

NN:  
How might the artist operate as exhibitionists (in a Freudian sense)?

NN:  
Ai Weiwei’s Lego case is a great example to use for the artist’s influence via social media.

ourselves, but also “the necessary precondition for the possibility of generating the authentically new” (301–2). If an individual is never bored, then they are also never really *present*. So if to be bored is to be *present* then radical boredom brings us back to Heidegger and his concept of *Dasein*, being in the world, wherein human existence is grounded in the body and in the specific place in which we live. ‘Radical distraction’ demands a permanent state of receptiveness, a temporal state radically different from the ‘being present’ of *Dasein*. The temporality of the network world is one of urgency, ‘just in time’ rather than ‘in the moment’. Zygmunt Bauman describes this as “the insubstantial, instantaneous time of the software world” (118), inconsequential time that immediately evanesces from experience into “exhaustion and fading of interest” (ibid). Exhaustion is the inevitable result of the over-participation and over-sharing demanded by the network world, yet withdrawal and recuperation are not necessarily solitary and isolated acts. As Jan Verwoert writes, “the exhibition of exhaustion produces public bodies” (107). **“With digital images, a radically different automatization mode appears. Let’s not forget that digital images have two fundamental characteristics that distinguish them from the images mentioned earlier[from photography to television]: they are the result of an automatic calculation made by a computer. There is no longer any relation or direct contact with reality. Thus the image-making processes are no longer physical (material or energy related), but ‘virtual’” (Couchot, 2006, pp.182–3). “Computers are getting invisible. They shrink and hide. They lurk under the skin and dissolve in the cloud...” (Lialina, “Turing Complete User”)**

**X** Traditionally an art exhibition is understood as an event. It is the space in which art objects meet an audience. It takes time and resources, it has a lifespan of a set time and it has an afterlife through documentation, evaluation, preservation, etc.. Physical exhibitions can be reproduced or travel yet their spatio-temporal lives are limited by physical and logistical laws. Such art exhibitions still constitute some of the major events (Biennale, Documenta, etc.) in the art world and produce great revenue for cultural organizations, institutions and the host cities. The life span of art exhibition however, has been massively affected by Web 2.0. Escaping the limitations of the physical world through digital reproduction (photos, videos, etc.) and sharing online, art can be exhibited and accessed anywhere, anytime and by anyone. At the same time art has long ago escaped its object form restriction (ex. performance art) and along with most recent examples of net.art and post-internet art, it has become immaterial. This creates confusion about what art exhibition online entails today, who is involved and where and when it takes place. As the digital world is mostly understood through our online experiences and interactions, I will attempt to highlight two effects of today’s Web culture together with two examples of art online that better describe art exhibition online as a condition instead of simply art being constantly on display via websites and social media posting and sharing.

The Network Effect: Audience and Artist  
Networked society’s online culture and its compulsory characteristics of exhibiting one’s work, actions and value by

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to make because of the very nature of sharing, but there is also an obfuscation that is part of the business plan of the digital media industry that considers sharing as a profitable form of “customer engagement.” The confusion is easy because sharing is a communal phenomenon: it is because our being is always already a being-with-one-another that we can share and experience meaning. This is also why Jean-Luc Nancy can say “meaning is the sharing of being.” But in corporate social media and the sharing economy, subjectivities are formed through structured forms of communication that providers prefer to call “sharing,” benefitting from the anti-economic potential of the digital (its excess) and the connotations of niceness that come with sharing. These subjectivities are shaped to match business plans, they form around the users’ status as customers, as subjects of exchange. But meaning cannot be exchanged, only shared. This is why so much of social media communication is either commercial, or trivial, as in the classic cases of cat videos. There is an erosion of meaning through the dominance of exchange, and a lot of sharing of meaningless content, because what matters to the provider is the profit that comes from customer engagement, from making users do things that affirm their status as customers. But this is



constantly sharing and participating in an effort to stay relevant, become formal measurements of effectiveness. If everyone is part of the networked society and you are not, how can you form connections, be visible and get noticed? If you can't form connections, be visible and get noticed how can you affect change? It is a matter of scale. The medium's ability of reaching massive audiences together with the systemic characteristic of network effectiveness based on popularity creates a network effect. For example, the more people already use a social network the higher is the chance that more people will start using it as well. This results to social networks becoming extremely valuable to individuals and communities as the more people use them the more valuable they become to each user. Thus, chances of being effective are higher within a medium used by everyone. This network effect makes acting outside these platforms a very hard choice.

Much of today's art success depends on reach and popularity via online social media and networks (Arora and Vermeylen 206). Online, every artist has an audience to find. Follower culture makes audience reaching easier and interaction between artists and audiences instant. Artists can have instant feedback on their work and themselves by using network and website analytics, effectively treating themselves and their work as brands. The artist becomes a public persona that depends on media exposure for audience interaction. From a practical perspective, exposure means popularity, bigger audiences and more possibilities of surviving the art world economy.

A famous artist such as Ai Weiwei has 297K Twitter and 146K Instagram followers. In October 2015 fans of the artist, including children, took to social media to donate Lego bricks, as Ai Weiwei's bulk order for his upcoming show in Australia, was refused by the company. Troy Taylor, Lego's head of marketing in Australia stated: "We refrain, on a global level, from actively engaging in or endorsing the use of Lego bricks in projects or contexts of a political agenda" (telegraph.co.uk). After a huge social media wave of support towards the artist, Ai Weiwei posted on Instagram: "Because of 'Lego's refusal and the overwhelming public response' I decided to make a new work 'to defend freedom of speech and political art', 'Ai Weiwei studio will announce the project description and Lego collection points in different cities' the post added. Then #LegosForWeiWei happened and as of this moment (11/05/2015), red cars outside museums and galleries around the world act as collection points with thousands of people participating.

#### The Mixed Reality Effect: Audience and Artwork

As technological innovations continue to extend our notion of the visible experience we now recognize ourselves as both the observer and the observed on a constant basis and we often understand this as a requirement for belonging. At the same time our notion of what is a visible experience has massively changed as visibility now belongs to both physical and virtual realms. These experiences are taking place in very distinct spaces online, that are both controlled public spaces and monitored private spaces – neither public nor private, neither here or there, they are 'heterotopic' as Michel Foucault describes them or 'interstitial spaces' as Paul Virilio describes them. These spaces are also

## X 0–9 Reasons Excess Will Change The Way You Think About Everything! – Scott Wark

### Comments:

NN:  
Would you understand the very empirical act of selecting and combining images and text, that usually have the goal to be funny, as an attempt to manipulate a distant abstract reality?

NN:  
What about the memes that circulate in other "milieus" than the WWW, and memes that are dead

what we call 'non-space'. Originally these non-spaces refer to spaces one travels through rather than inhabits. These are airports, hotel lobbies, shopping malls, etc.. Today non-space can describe the public/private, physical/virtual, instant/past and future spaces of online interactions. Heteropic, interstitial and non-spaces theories, fall under the more generic concept of the mixed-reality effect. Originally, mixed reality was used to describe the merging of real and virtual worlds that produce new environments where physical and digital objects co-exist (Ohta and Tamura 6). Today mixed reality theory is used in order to explore various phenomena of co-existence in both physical and virtual spaces. In Mark Hansen's *Bodies in Code* (139), all reality is mixed reality which means that instead of thinking of our digital identity and our real-space/physical identity as two separate things, today we understand reality as a fluid space of both the virtual and physical; both states are equally real and exist as one.

Amalia Ulman's 2014 Instagram and Facebook performance "Excellences & Perfections" is a great example of mixed reality's effects. Ulman's performance is a semi-fictional makeover that deals with issues of image making and self publishing. For several months the artist created a consumerist fantasy lifestyle through selfies and status updates that are a combination of three popular "hot babe" trends: the Tumblr girl, the sugar-baby ghetto girl and the healthy yoga type girl. The artist pretended to have breast augmentation, followed a strict diet and went to pole-dancing lessons. The first post read cryptically "Excellences & Perfections" and it received 28 likes and the final post, an image of a rose, read "The End-Excellences & Perfections" and received 129 likes while the Instagram account of the performance reached 65K followers none of whom at the time knew of the artist's performance.

#no #excuses #shameless #selfie #followme #work #it #bitch #grateful #namaste #love #me #thanksforeverything #wow #dawkinsNOTdawkinslol #doge #Massive #cool #content #media #matters #thecloud #swarmin #IDGAF #true-nottrue #giveitup

#### X 0. Instance

The archetypal meme is instantly recognisable: a cat, dog(e), or frog; a celebrity or pop cultural icon; hi def photoshop or lo brow MS Paint graphics; Impact font in ALLCAPS or primary-coloured clouds of Comic Sans text. Or: the limit-image, the GIF; the inspirational phrase; the looping vine; the embeddable audio clip. The meme has sloughed off its Neo-Darwinian associations. It's now the internet's minimal, circulating cultural unit.

#### 1. Excess

On the internet, to err is inhuman. Like Hito Steyerl's "poor image", the meme is, literally, an "errant idea" (32). The meme's movements expose us to massively distributed networks that are more akin to an elemental *milieu* than virtual spaces. Like Steyerl's poor image, the meme is, literally, "about reality" (44). Like the more strictly defined internet images that Marisa Olson describes, memes, literally, "circulate in excess" (280). This excess, the internet's, is what the meme indexes. Not only because it exploits network infrastructure to move internet culture, but because the meme is, literally, *in excess of itself*.

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due only to the commercialization of digital networks. It is not inherent to digital technology, as for instance the case of Wikipedia shows.

Cornelia: To conclude our little conversation, one could say that "sharing" as an essential form of being with others has gained a new dimension through digital technology. At the same time this new form of sharing in the realm of digital files and knowledge is dependent on a technology which is totally embedded in the cycles of capitalist production, i.e. exchange. I think here is one crack in the concept. Another friction I see in the fact that neoliberalism expands its logic of economisation into all possible domains of life and, through the sharing economy for example, has started to blur a clear distinction between sharing as a way of being or becoming subject and economic exchange. What is at risk here? What is it that drives your research?

Wolfgang: What drives me is the belief that with a better understanding of sharing we can gain more clarity about the limits of exchange. This is necessary, because the current neoliberal rationality sees a frontier instead of limits. This frontier is a temporary boundary to be pushed forward, a site of emerging markets and venture capital. Helped by the rise of corporate digital media and



## 2. Series

This excessiveness makes the meme hard to theorise. In her recent book, for example, Limor Shifman defines the meme through three characteristics. To paraphrase, the meme's a group, it's collectively created and it circulates (41). This definition is useful, but it also fails to resolve a basic aporia. The meme is always at least more than one; not least, that is, because its character is *double*. *Many meme. Much memes. Very memetics*. A Doge is both a Doge, an instance, and *the* Doge, the *series*.

## 3. Content

*What's the return on a meme?*

Shifman's meme-group nominalises the meme-series, adding up its instances to get the group. The meme-group is what Georges Bataille would call a "restricted", enumerable set (68). If a meme can't be limited to its constituents, what general-economic excess does it put in to play? The tendency to add the meme up is symptomatic. A meme is only a meme when it enters circulation. But, media studies so often fails to *define* what circulation is. Circulation – as spreading or moving *through* – is inscribed with its own media theory. It's usually understood as the circulation of content through a medium. But this is problematic. When we ask, "*what is circulated*", we get the answer: content. But if ask, "*what is circulation?*", we get a tautological answer: circulation is the circulation of content. "Content" is the ☠️💀 death mask of circulation. If the meme is reduced to content, it has no utility as a concept.

## 4. Circulation

*What does it mean for a meme to return?*

The impulse to reduce the meme to its instances does violence to the concept. It understands the meme as both informational, and so seemingly free to circulate, but also phenomenal, and so defined *through* and *for* us. It elides the meme's irreducible, nonhuman *movement*, its errancy, because it assumes that the economy of the meme produces returns that can be cashed in by human(s), individually or in the aggregate. Circulation is the process through which something returns – but not necessarily to us. *The meme that enters circulation returns to itself*.

## 5. Noitalucirc

*Share a meme.*

Karl Marx's concept of circulation can help us to think the meme's return. For Marx, the circulation of capital must be "grasped as a movement, and not as a static thing" (185). Internet culture isn't capital, but we can assume an abstract, structural homology between their processes. Circulation *forms a circle*, "autonomising" a process that is abstracted from its contents (185). Shorn from the dynamics of value creation, this process – *Verselbstständigung*, achieving an independent existence – puts the meme-series into circulation.

*The meme goes viral, but you don't!*

## 6. Medium/Mediation

*And: the meme mutates media.*

The instance is a retroactive epiphenomenon of circulation; the meme isn't reducible to its content. So, what kind of media is it? Bernhard Siegert has critiqued as media studies' tendency to reduce media to device or interface (87). Image, GIF, Vine, video, text, sound bite, audio loop: the concept exceeds this idea of *the* medium – and recodes *mediation*. Sybille Krämer argues that mediation "must be understood as radically extrinsic, as the

(never become alive, or die out)?

NN:  
It's important to consider too that memes are not restricted to being visual elements, but actions.

NN:  
We should also think about the aesthetics of the ugly. That is, how deliberate or ad-hoc is the use of low-res images and MS-Paint practices?

NN:  
Is the 'white male geek' behind the creative process [of meme making]?

back-and-forth of circulation itself" (54). The meme's "content", its *intrinsic* qualities, are secondary to its extrinsic quality: that it circulates.

*Or: the meme mediates because it mutates.*

## 7. Reality

(Mis-)apply Steyerl's analysis of the poor image to the meme. Realise what it's about is "its own real conditions of existence: [] swarm circulation, digital dispersion, fractured and flexible temporalities" (44). Return to what you said she said before about the poor image, but say it about the meme. She said: "in short: it is about reality" (44). Claim it's only possible for the meme to return to itself and so to exceed itself because of a *real abstraction*. Convince yourself that's not oxymoronic because Marx said it first.

## 8. Milieu

*What if "the cloud" was real  
And you could, like, really go there?*  
— Conspiracy Keanu (*n.d.*)

Maybe the cloud's not an improper concept of the internet. Maybe this fiction mobilises a pernicious ideology; but maybe the cloud is a bad abstraction that's also partly *real*. Maybe the cloud's also a *hyperstition*, having *become real through circulation* (see Hyperstition Blog). The internet envelops. We can theorise this if we let go of the cybernetic idea that it's something that data circulates *through*. Rather, it's what John Durham Peters describes as a wholly immersive *milieu* (46; Stiegler). If *medius*, or "middle", gives us medium, *medius locus* gives us "middle place". The fiction that the cloud is a *medium* is false. But, this fiction communicates the internet's immersive role as a *milieu*.

## 9. Matter

They say that data has matter because data occupies territory. What we call *the* internet is really a series of networks beholden to protocols, technologies, and *distance* (Dourish, 2015). Yet data's territory need not imply hard, *terrestrial* matter. Actual clouds give us a hint: they're *particulate*. So too is "the cloud". But this doesn't mean "the cloud" has to be *immaterial*. Not all matter needs to be *hard*. Perhaps what data has is *particulate materiality*. Memes that circulate condense particles *of data*. Forget "media", singularised. The cloud is a mediating *element*, a massively distributed *place* organised by a constantly "thickening" limit. Jacques Derrida calls this "limitrophy" (398): for us, circulating-movement condensing matter. Or: the matter of media as, in Gilbert Simondon's terms, individuating *in-formation* (1992).

## 0. Instance

The meme is now the internet's minimal, circulating unit. But what's this concept worth if it has no medium specificity and no content? *The meme memes*. As a *milieu*, the internet is what Peters calls a "means of existence" (49). It's enveloping, indifferent, oblique, *in excess*; and doesn't give, as they say, *any f\*\*\*s* (about us). The act of making memes might be a mode of Bataille's squander, an *expiation* or *offering* made to fictive, endless clouds of data. *The meme memes*. That is, the meme is circulation in-formation, made obliquely accessible. The meme *articulates* the internet as *milieu* rather than medium, jointing it up and presenting its particulate matter that's open to oblique manipulation using digital techniques.

**When data circulates, it opens up the unanticipated.** (continues p. 3)

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the disappearance of a serious alternative to capitalism, this frontier has advanced into the political sphere, into subjectivity, and into rationality itself. Wendy Brown offers a compelling analysis of this process in her latest book, *Undoing the Demos* (2015). What is at risk here is the possibility of forming meaningful political communities in the most basic sense of the word, and along with it the possibility to communicate anything political. Therefore, an improved understanding of sharing may help formulate a political argument against neoliberalism, which is the only type of argument that can be expected to be effective. And I agree, for an argument to be communicated, communication channels are needed that will not instantly turn the sharing of ideas into an economic transaction. We can still learn from the tactical media movement in this regard, and perhaps with the dominance of corporate social media and their business strategies, tactics is even more important than before. Digital media do still offer a real, non-utopian possibility of sharing, and simply remembering that is a first step. The fact that criticism of the sharing economy is becoming more widespread is also a positive sign. It opens some space for a real discussion of sharing.



copyright, and so on), we ask how research might embrace this realm of excess. How might research go beyond itself and its own systems of exchange that are ever more economised, ever more efficient, and that also make researchers ever more redundant? The newspaper is a call to identify the primeval pleasures and excess energies of research itself to the extent that it becomes a spectacular expression of luxury that also challenges the regulation of academia and limits the needs and desires of researchers.

Since 2011, Aarhus University and transmediale festival for digital art & culture have organised research workshops of this kind, as part of an ongoing collaboration with shifting partner organizations (Universität der Künste (“In/Compatible Research”, Berlin, 2011); Leuphana University of Lüneburg (“Researching #BWPWAP”, Lüneburg, 2012); Kunsthal Aarhus (“Post-digital Research”, Aarhus, 2013); School of Creative Media, City University Hong Kong (“Datafied Research”, Hong Kong, 2014)). Each of these workshops has applied a research angle to the thematic framework of transmediale, and with an open call for participation they have also sought to open the festival up to emerging academic and/or practice-oriented researchers. The outcomes have, as an experiment in new forms of scholarly publication, been presented in a series of peer-reviewed newspapers, as well as in an open access online academic journal, APRJA (A Peer-reviewed Journal About\_). This newspaper presents the latest outcomes of a workshop organised in partnership with John Moores University and the Liverpool Biennial. Through highlighting excess in research, we address what is otherwise destined for waste, and the potential transgression of economised exchange. In terms of the (neon) presentation of research into excesses energies – such as online exhibition(ism), radical boredom, use of selfies, archives, honey trading, the circulation of memes, menstruation, voice, poetry and human prosthesis – the newspaper also addresses the limits of digital culture’s compulsory actions themselves. In other words, the authors seek to reconfigure understandings of media technologies, use and practices, and in various ways explore how the benevolent confines of info liberalism can be transgressed, shared differently, and where excess energy can be identified and other fantasies activated.

#### Writing excess

In an essay on Bataille, Jacques Derrida highlights how a general economy of excess relates to the production of meaning; or, of a potential ‘sovereign silence’ which interrupts articulated language. “The writings of sovereignty conforms to general economy [...] it relates its objects to the destruction, without reserve, of meaning.” (342) Insofar as the language of research (of scientific form), encountered in this newspaper, envisages a general economy, it is not sovereign in itself (indeed, there is no sovereignty in itself, as it by its reference to loss, *is not*). However, if writing also defines certain formal limits of understandability, then how might we similarly look for means of escape from its determining effects? We are inspired by the way Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi identifies poetry as a means of exceeding the established meaning of words and the reduction of language to information (in *The Uprising: Poetry and Finance*). To him, “poetry is the excess of language”, disentangled from the actions and limits of symbolic debt and financialisation. When it comes to research writing, we similarly hope for alternative streams and concatenated forms where the research object and method take on a different character. If research is to escape the imperatives of a restricted economy of production and utility then let us begin to explore the creative and critical energies of excess.

Christian Ulrik Andersen, Geoff Cox, Kristoffer Gansing, Lone Koefoed Hansen, Joasia Krysa.

#### List of contributors:

Christian Ulrik Andersen (Aarhus University)  
Mitra Azar (independent)  
Elisavet Christou (Lancaster University)  
Geoff Cox (Aarhus University)  
Aideen Doran (Northumbria University)  
Kristoffer Gansing (transmediale)  
Pablo Velasco Gonzalez (University of Warwick)  
Lone Koefoed Hansen (Aarhus University)  
Nathan Jones (Royal Holloway, University of London)  
Joasia Krysa (Liverpool John Moores University and Liverpool Biennial)  
Graziele Lautenschlaeger (Humboldt University)  
Lyndsay Mann (Edinburgh University)  
Cornelia Sollfrank (independent)  
Wolfgang Sützl (Ohio University)  
Marie Louise Juul Søndergaard (Aarhus University)  
Cansu Topaloglu (Sussex University)  
Scott Wark (University of Warwick)  
Tessa Zettel (independent)

Thanks to Sally Tallant, Caroline Wilkinson, John Byrne, Mark Wright

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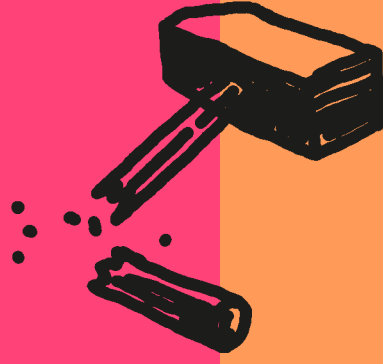
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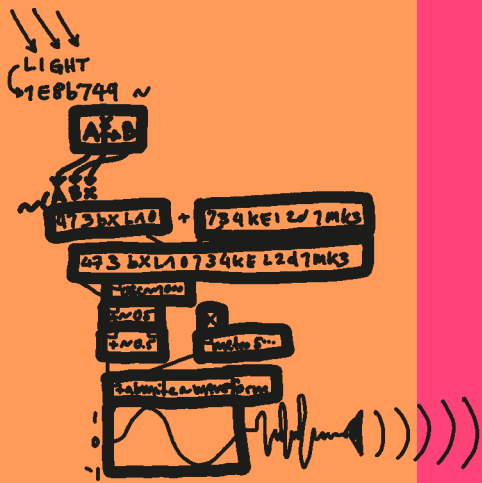
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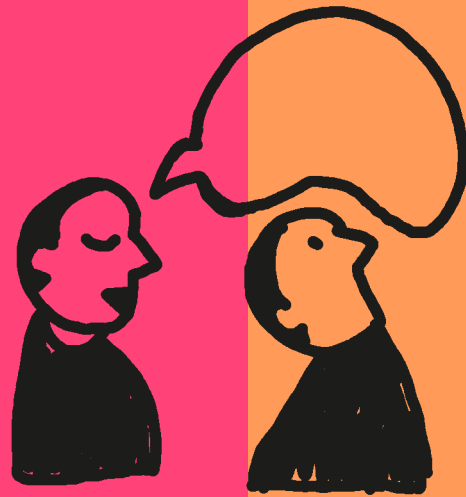
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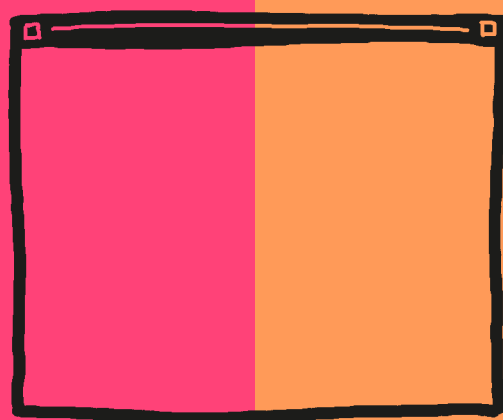
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