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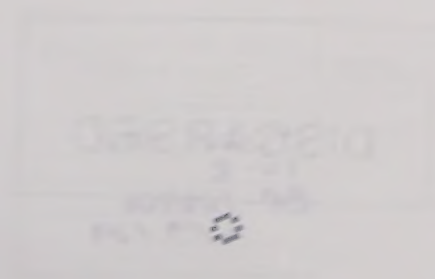
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Public Netbase: Non Stop Future

New Practices in Art and Media



Public Netbase: Non Stop Future

New Practices in Art and Media

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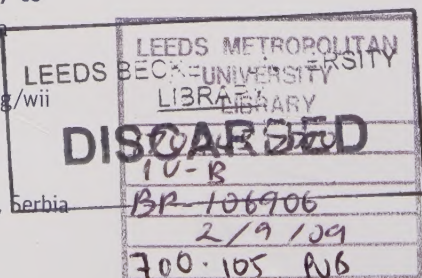
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New information technologies have become ubiquitous and thoroughly established in our everyday lives. This marks the end of a period of intense experimentation and speculations related to the introduction of global communication systems more than a decade ago. Artists and cultural workers were the first to explore their liberatory dimensions and to apply their emancipatory potentials. These early pioneers developed a range of interdisciplinary models and practices in order to expand the scope of social participation in information society cultures. Initiatives like the radical Viennese mediaculture institution Public Netbase became important nodes in a global network dedicated to critical art, culture and science based on new media practices.

A virtual world is possible, but never without real spaces and tangible social interaction. This publication is both a review of the pioneer days from the perspective of Public Netbase as well as an outlook into the future of art and culture in digital networks. It provides an overview of a critical information economy discourse, insights into Tactical Media strategies and a critique of the loss of public domain and the commons. Based on the extensive archives of Public Netbase, the book features some of the most spectacular and controversial art projects and interventions from 1994 to 2006. It also offers historical documents and manifestos critical of commercialisation and control society issues, together with a view into the digital world of tomorrow. "Non Stop Future" raises awareness for a need to invest in new and diverse practices in art and media.

Extensive contributions from many art and media theorists and practitioners to this book relate to long lasting collaboration with Public Netbase through different formats of conferences and projects, reflecting some of the most relevant problematics in constellation of art and tactical media practices and theories within communication technologies. The broad spectrum of themes regarding politics of digital media culture, art practices, networking, participation and self-organizing make the "Non Stop Future" an important contribution to forming the critical digital heritage of the future.

Public Netbase: Non Stop Future

New Practices in Art and Media

Editorial

Public Netbase 1994 - 2006

List of Events 1994 - 1998

1994

t0 goes online

Vienna, 1994

t0 servers and offices are moved into the Museumsquarter wiring the building

Vienna, 07. 94

Installation of public terminals and workshop space

setup of infrastructure for an ISP and launch of Public Netbase webpage

Vienna, 09.-12.94

1995

Opening event of Public Netbase

Peter Lamborn Wilson (US)

Vienna, 18.-19.03.95

Godzilla, Exformation and Electric Sensual Perception

Mitsuhiro Takemura (JP)

Vienna, 28.03.95

Observers of Changing Culture and Technology

Derrick De Kerckhove (CA)

Vienna, 28.03.95

Presentation

Ulrike Gabriel (DE) interviewed by Markus Wailand (AT)

Vienna, 26.05.95

The Economy of Attention

Doro Franck (DE/NL), Georg Franck (DE)

Vienna, 02.06.95

Fractal Flesh

Stelarc (AU)

Vienna, 11.11.95

The Mythology of Terrorism on the Net

Critical Art Ensemble (US)

Vienna, 12.12.95

1996

Binary Sexes, Binary Codes

Sadie Plant (UK)

Vienna, 06.03.96

Digital Bodies and Cyborgs

Arthur Kroker (US), Marielouise Kroker (US)

Vienna, 06.03.96

Presentation

Konrad Becker (AT) interviewed by Geert Lovink (NL)

Vienna, 14.05.96

Economics, Computers And The War Machine

Manuel de Landa (MX/US)

Vienna, 11.10.96

1997

Inauguration of Public Netbase t0 Media-Space!

Djax Up (NL), Grete Laska (AT), Ligeia of the Limbic System (US/AT), Pulsinger&Tunakan (AT), Peter Lamborn Wilson (US)
Vienna, 28.02.97

Sensorium theatre as suspended space

Andrew Garton (AU)

Vienna, 20.03.97

cyber.rights 1.0

böastab (AT), Michael Haberler (AT), Gerhard Litzka (AT), lo-res (AT), Thomas Matt (AT), Michael Pilz (AT), Marie Ringler (AT), Supercorp (AT)

Vienna, 02.04.97

Watch Your Language

Erik Davis (US)

Vienna, 10.04.97

TokyoBabylon

New Japan Technoculture

Krystian Woznicki (PL/DE/JP)

Vienna, 18.04.97

Coop-Online

Austrian independent film and video database

Vienna, 25.04.97

Cyberflesh

Anne Balsamo (US)

Vienna, 28.04.97

Propaganda 2.

Join or Die and Propaganda of Noise

Thomas Bass (US/HU), Oliver Marchart (AT)

Vienna, 05.05.97

cyber.rights 2.0 Netz und Gesetz

Kurt Einzinger (AT), Oliver P. Hoffmann (AT), Kurt Lukasek (AT), Walter Marschitz (AT), Marie Ringler (AT), Harald Wosihnoj (AT)

Vienna, 06.05.97

Gehirnaquaplaning

monochrom (AT)

Vienna, 09.05.97

Interview

Ulrike Gabriel (DE) interviewed by Markus Wailand (AT)

Vienna, 26.05.97

nettime press conference "Beauty and the East"

Critical Art Ensemble (US), Geert Lovink (NL), Diana McCarty (US), Pit Schultz (DE), Peter Lamborn Wilson (US)

Vienna, 29.05.97

Watch Your Language!

Metaphor as Illness

Mark Dery (US)

Vienna, 06.06.97

Intergalactic Conference

of the Association of Autonomous Astronauts

John Eden (UK), Patric O'Brien (UK), Institute for Long-distance Flights (AT), Jason Skeet (UK), Fiorella Terenzi (US), Werner W. Weiss (AT)
Vienna 21. - 22.06.97

Touching Big Brother

How New Technologies will fuse Flesh and Machine

Simon G. Davies (UK)
Vienna, 10.10.97

Industriespionage für Junggebliebene

Monochrom (AT)
Vienna, 16.10.97

hacking the public mind

Andy Müller-Maguhn (DE)
Vienna, 16.10.97

cyber.rights 3.0 "dataveillance"

in cooperation with BlackBox Vienna and Der Standard
Vienna, 21.10.97

Infobody Attack

Kay Fricke (AT), Kunstlabor & KONSUM (AT), Marko Peljhan (SI), Klaus Spiess (AT)
Vienna 10. - 25.10.97

Cyber Co-Cooking Event

Eva Wohlgenuth (AT) and Kathy Rae Huffman (AT/US)
Vienna, 13.11.97

XCHANGE on-air session

Vienna, 13. - 14.11.97

Hirnrally

Shifz – Synthuralistische Kunstvereinigung (AT)
Vienna, 06.11. - 13.11.97

"Der Name des Bruders"

Vienna, 07.11.97

Presentation of the WWW Site of the Sigmund-Freud Society

Vienna, 20.11.97

FLESH MACHINE: A Genexploitation Project

Critical Art Ensemble (US)
Vienna 21. - 22.11.97, (see pictures at pages 14 - 16)

Open House – "Aus gegebenem Anlass"

Fam. Brandt (AT), Markus Brandt (AT), Irene Lavina (AT), lo-res (AT), Brian Springer (US), sub stim (AT), under_score (AT)
Vienna, 08.12.97

Kommunikationsguerilla

autonome a.f.r.i.k.a.-gruppe (DE/IT), Luther Blissett (DE/IT), Sonja Brünzels (DE/IT), Viktor Mayer-Schönberger (AT)
Vienna 10. - 12.12.97

MOL! – brings you: t4c2w1y1

Vienna, 18.12.97

1998

Medienguerilla – Netzkritik – Technopolitik

Oliver Marchart (AT)
Vienna, 16.04.98

Project Peacemaker - Inauguration of the MircoSoft Hate Button

Chris Mutter (AT)
Vienna, 16.04.98

ijo 360° digital design inc.

Vienna, 18.04.98

Information Terror

media installation in public space and presentations:
Christoph Fringeli (UK), Stewart Home (UK), Boris Karloff (UK), Sadie Plant (UK), The Society of Unknowns (UK)
Vienna, 22. - 29.04.98, (see pictures at page 17)

Sex.Net Sex, Lies and the Internet

clitorea (AT), Danny Holman (UK/CZ), irene lavina (AT), Cherie Matrix (UK), die mäuse (AT), Fetish Diva Midori (US), Constance Penley (US), rubber retro quartet (AT)
Vienna, 15. - 28.05.98, (see picture at page 16)

ROBOTRONIKA hypermatic:automagic

Wolfgang Anzengruber (AT), Nikolas Baginsky (DE), Andreas Birk (BE), Fam Brandt (AT), Josef Broukal (AT), Brigitte Felderer (AT), Inman Harvey (UK), Wolfgang Hilbert (AT), Manfred Jochum (AT), Reinhardt Kögerler (AT), Todd Kornfeld (US), Peter Kotauczek (AT), Paul Kolm (AT), Chico MacMurtrie (US), Hans Moravec (US), Peter Kopacek (AT), monochrom (AT), NurSchrec/Martin Reiter (DE/AT), Herbert Osanna (AT), Heidi Figueroa Samiera (PT), Barry Schwartz (US), Vivian Sobchack (US), Stelarc (AU), Ernst Struhal (AT), Time's Up (AT/AU), Robert Trappi (AT), Kevin Warwick (UK), Barry Werger (US), Martin Whisbeck (DE)
Vienna, 19. - 23.6.98, (see pictures at page 14 - 18)

Cultural Competence

Marie-Luise Angerer (AT), Maarten Asscher (NL), Kimmo Aulake (FI), Dagfinn Bach (NL), Jean Michel Baer (BE), Richard Barbrook (UK), Eddie Berg (UK), Frank Boyd (UK), Andreas Broeckmann (NL), Robert Burnett (SE), Bernard H. Casey (UK), Wolfgang Coy (DE), Peter Curman (SE), Simon Davies (UK), Derrick De Kerckove (CN), Maureen Duffy (UK), Marlis Dürkop (DE), Andrea Ellmeier (AT), Karlheinz Essl (AT), Andy Feist (UK), Jörg Flecker (AT), Micz Flor (DE), Georg Franck (AT), Johan Galtung (SE), David Garcia (NL), Michael Grant (IR), Heide Grundmann (AT), Lisa Haskel (UK), John Hitchin (UK), Eleonore Hostasch (AT), Heiko Idensen (DE), Peter James (DE), Reinhard Kannonier (AT), Matthias Karmasin (AT), Steve Kurtz (US), Natalie Labourdette, Herbert Lachmayer (AT), Allan Larsson, Gerda Mira Loewen, Geert Lovink (NL), Thomas Macho (DE), Bernd Marin (AT), Viktor Mayer-Schönberger (AT), Colin Mercer (AU/UK), Jean Francois Michel (BL), Ritva Mitchell (FI), John Morley (UK), Horst Neisser (DE), Caroline Nevejan (NL), Gerda Neyer (AT/US), Sally Jane Norman (DE/FR), Gerda Neyer, Marco Peljhan (SL), Terhi Penttälä (FI), Miklos Petemak (HU), Veronika Ratzenböck (AT), Edith Saurer (IT), Giaco Schiesser (CH), Thorsten Schilling (DE), Pit Schultz (DE), Michael Soendermann (DE), Helmut Steinmetz (AT), Marleen Stikker (NL), Gerfried Stocker (AT), Hanne Thorboll (BL), Leon Van Noorden, Guiseppa Vitiello, Mechthild Von Alemann (UK), Michel Walter (AT), Kate Willard (FR), Rüdiger Wischenbart (DE), Peter Wittmann (AT), KD Wolff (DE), Rob Young (UK)
Linz (AT), 01. - 03.10.98

bitstreams and data~scapes

Curd Duca (AT), Dieter Bohlen (AT), Robert Adrian X (AT), Farmers Manual (AT), fuchs-eckermann (AT), Martin Krenn (AT), Oliver Ressler (AT), Irene Lavina (AT), MAMAX (AT), Wochenklausur (AT), Eva Wohlgenuth (AT)
Antwerp (BE), 24.10.98

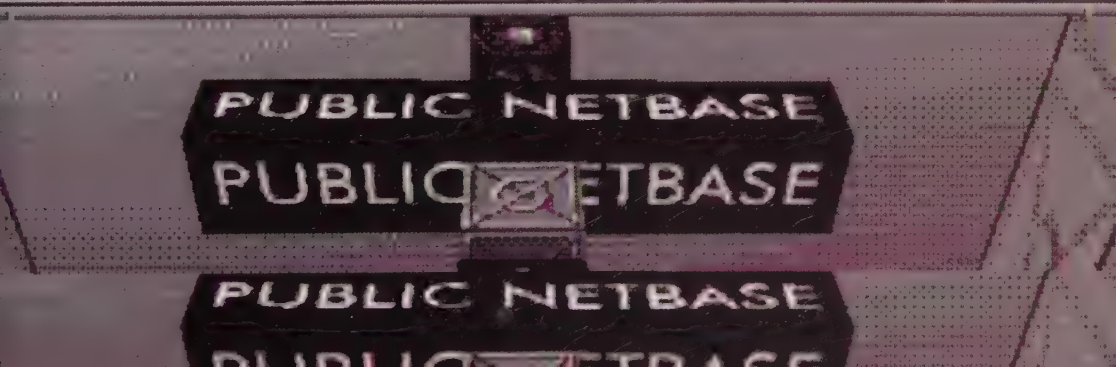
Netz.Kultur.Österreich

Virtuelle Plattform Österreich und IG Kultur Österreich
Vienna, 12.12.98

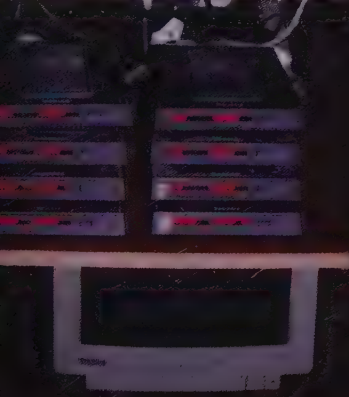
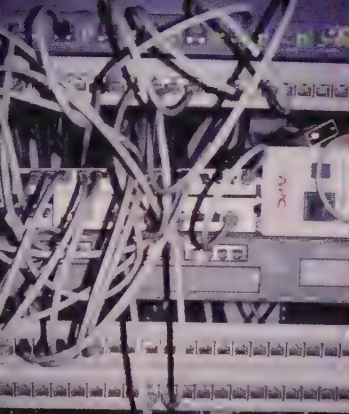


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Discourse

A Virtual World is Possible: From Tactical Media to Digital Multitudes

Geert Lovink
Florian Schneider

Abstract of talk at Dark Markets Conference, Vienna, October 4, 2003
<http://darkmarkets.t0.or.at>

I.

We start with the current strategy debates of the so-called "anti-globalisation movement", the biggest emerging political force for decades. In Part II we will look into strategies of critical new media culture in the post-speculative phase after dotcommania. Four phases of the global movement are becoming visible, all of which have distinct political, artistic and aesthetic qualities.

1. The 90s and Tactical Media Activism

The term "tactical media" arose in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall as a renaissance of media activism, blending old school political work and artists' engagement with new technologies. The early nineties saw a growing awareness of gender issues, exponential growth of media industries and the increasing availability of cheap do-it-yourself equipment creating a new sense of self-awareness amongst activists, programmers, theorists, curators and artists. Media were no longer seen as merely tools for the Struggle, but experienced as virtual environments whose parameters were permanently "under construction". This was the golden age of tactical media, open to issues of aesthetics and experimentation with alternative forms of story telling. However, these liberating techno practices did not immediately translate into visible social movements. Rather, they symbolized the celebration of media freedom, in itself a great political goal. The media used – from video, CD-ROM, cassettes, zines and flyers to music styles such

as rap and techno – varied widely, as did the content. A commonly shared feeling was that politically motivated activities, be they art or research or advocacy work, were no longer part of a politically correct ghetto and could intervene in “pop culture” without necessarily having to compromise with the “system”. With everything up for negotiation, new coalitions could be formed. The current movements worldwide cannot be understood outside of the diverse and often very personal for digital freedom of expression.

Geert Lovink
Florian Schneider
A VIRTUAL WORLD IS
POSSIBLE: FROM TACTICAL
MEDIA TO DIGITAL
MULTITUDES

2. 99-01: The Period of Big Mobilization

By the end of the nineties the post-modern “time without movements” had come to pass. The organized discontent against neo-liberalism, global warming policies, labour exploitation and numerous other issues converged. Equipped with networks and arguments, backed up by decades of research, a hybrid movement – wrongly labelled by mainstream media as “anti-globalisation” – gained momentum. One of the particular features of this movement lies in its apparent inability and unwillingness to answer the question that is typical of any kind of movement on the rise or any generation on the move: What's to be done? There was and there is no answer, no alternative – either strategic or tactical – to the existing world order, to the dominant mode of globalisation.

And maybe this is the most important and liberating conclusion: There is no way back to the twentieth century, the protective nation state and the gruesome tragedies of the “left”. It has been good to remember – but equally good to throw off – the past. The question “what's to be done” should not be read as an attempt to re-introduce some form of Leninist principles. The issues of strategy, organization and democracy belong to all times. We neither want to bring back old policies through the backdoor, nor do we think that this urgent question can be dismissed by invoking crimes committed under the banner of Lenin, however justified such arguments are. When Slavoj Žižek looks in the mirror he may see Father Lenin, but that's not the case for everyone. It is possible to wake up from the nightmare of the past history of communism and (still) pose the question: what's to be done? Can a “multitude” of interests and backgrounds ask that question, or is the only agenda that defined by the summit calendar of world leaders and the business elite?

Nevertheless, the movement has been growing rapidly. At first sight it appears to use a pretty boring and very traditional medium: The mass-mobilization of tens of thousands in the streets of Seattle, hundreds of thousands in the streets of Genoa. And yet, tactical media networks played an important role in it's coming into being. From now on pluriformity of issues and identities was a given reality. Difference is here to stay and no longer needs to legitimize itself against higher authorities such as the Party, the Union or the Media. Compared to previous decades this is its biggest gain. The “multitudes” are not a dream or some theoretical construct but a reality.

If there is a strategy, it is not contradiction but complementary existence. Despite theoretical deliberations, there is no contradiction between the street and cyberspace. The one fuels

the other. Protests against the WTO, neo-liberal EU policies, and party conventions are all staged in front of the gathered world press. Indymedia crops up as a parasite of the mainstream media. Instead of having to beg for attention, protests take place under the eyes of the world media during summits of politicians and business leaders, seeking direct confrontation. Alternatively, symbolic sites are chosen such as border regions (East-West Europe, USA-Mexico) or refugee detention centres (Frankfurt airport, the centralized Eurocop database in Strasbourg, the Woomera detention centre in the Australian desert). Rather than just objecting to it, the global entitlement of the movement adds to the ruling mode of globalisation a new layer of globalisation from below.

3. Confusion and Resignation After 9-11

At first glance, the future of the movement is a confusing and irritating one. Old-leftist grand vistas, explaining US imperialism and its aggressive unilateralist foreign policy, provided by Chomsky, Pilger and other baby boomers are consumed with interest but no longer give the bigger picture. In a polycentric world, conspiracy theories can only provide temporary comfort for the confused. No moralist condemnation of capitalism is necessary as facts and events speak for themselves. People are driven to the street by the situation, not by an analysis (neither ours nor the one of Hardt & Negri). The few remaining leftists can no longer provide the movement with an ideology, as it works perfectly without one. "We don't need your revolution." Even the social movements of the 70s and 80s, locked up in their NGO structures, have a hard time keeping up. New social formations are taking possession of the streets and media spaces, without feeling the need of representation by some higher authority, not even the heterogenous committees gathering in Porto Alegre.

So far this movement has been bound in clearly defined time/space coordinates. It still takes months to mobilize multitudes and organize the logistics, from buses and planes, camping grounds and hostels, to independent media centres. This movement is anything but spontaneous (and does not even claim to be so). The people that travel hundreds or thousands of miles to attend protest rallies are driven by real concerns, not by some romantic notion of socialism. The worn-out question: "reform or revolution?" sounds more like blackmail to provoke the politically correct answer.

The contradiction between selfishness and altruism is also a false one. State-sponsored corporate globalisation affects everyone. International bodies such as the WTO, the Kyoto Agreement on global warming, or the privatisation of the energy sector are no longer abstract news items, dealt with by bureaucrats and (NGO) lobbyists. This political insight has been the major quantum leap of recent times. Is this then the Last International? No. There is no way back to the nation state, to traditional concepts of liberation, the logic of transgression and transcendence, exclusion and inclusion. Struggles are no longer projected onto a distant Other that begs for our moral support and money. We have finally arrived in the post-solidarity age. As a consequence, national liberation movements have been replaced by a new analysis of power, which is simultaneously incredibly abstract, symbolic and virtual, whilst terribly concrete, detailed and intimate.

4. Present Challenge: Liquidate the Regressive Third Period of Marginal Moral Protest

Luckily September 11 has had no immediate impact on the movement. The choice between Bush and Bin Laden was irrelevant. Both agendas were rejected as devastating fundamentalisms. The all too obvious question: "Whose terror is worse?" was carefully avoided as it leads away from the pressing emergencies of everyday life: the struggle for a living wage, decent public transport, health care, water, etc. As both social democracy and really existing socialism depended heavily on the nation state a return to the 20th century sounds as disastrous as all the catastrophes it produced. The concept of a digital multitude is fundamentally different and based entirely on openness. Over the last few years the creative struggles of the multitudes have produced outputs on many different layers: the dialectics of open sources, open borders, open knowledge. Yet the deep penetration of the concepts of openness and freedom into the principle of struggle is by no means a compromise to the cynical and greedy neo-liberal class. Progressive movements have always dealt with a radical democratisation of the rules of access, decision-making and the sharing of gained capacities. Usually it started from an illegal or illegitimate common ground. Within the bounds of the analogue world it led to all sorts of cooperatives and self-organized enterprises, whose specific notions of justice were based on efforts to circumvent the brutal regime of the market and on different ways of dealing with the scarcity of material resources.

We're not simply seeking proper equality on a digital level. We're in the midst of a process that constitutes the totality of a revolutionary being, as global as it is digital. We have to develop ways of reading the raw data of the movements and struggles and ways to make their experimental knowledge legible; to encode and decode the algorithms of its singularity, nonconformity and non-confoundability; to invent, refresh and update the narratives and images of a truly global connectivity; to open the source code of all the circulating knowledge and install a virtual world.

Bringing these efforts down to the level of production challenges new forms of subjectivity, which almost necessarily leads to the conclusion that everyone is an expert. The superflux of human resources and the brilliance of everyday experience get dramatically lost in the "academification" of radical left theory. Rather the new ethical-aesthetic paradigm lives on in the pragmatic consciousness of affective labour, in the nerdish attitude of a digital working class, in the omnipresence of migrant struggles as well as many other border-crossing experiences, in deep notions of friendship within networked environments as well as the "real" world.

II.

Let's now look at strategies for internet art & activism. Critical new media culture faces a tough climate of budget cuts in the cultural sector and a growing hostility and indifference towards new media. But hasn't power shifted to cyberspace, as Critical Art Ensemble once claimed? Not so if we look at the countless street marches around the world.

Geert Lovink
Florian Schneider

A VIRTUAL WORLD IS
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MEDIA TO DIGITAL
MULTITUDES

The Seattle movement against corporate globalisation appears to have gained momentum - both on the street and online. But can we really speak of a synergy between street protests and online "hacktivism"? No. But what they have in common is their (temporal) conceptual stage. Both real and virtual protests risk getting stuck at the level of a global "demo design", no longer grounded in actual topics and local situations. This means the movement never gets out of beta. At first glance, reconciling the virtual and the real seems to be an attractive rhetorical act. Radical pragmatists have often emphasized the embodiment of online networks in real-life society, dispensing with the real/virtual contradiction. Net activism, like the Internet itself, is always hybrid, a blend of old and new, haunted by geography, gender, race and other political factors. There is no pure disembodied zone of global communication, as the 90s cyber-mythology claimed.

Equations such as street plus cyberspace, art meets science, and "techno-culture" are all interesting interdisciplinary approaches but are proving to have little effect beyond the symbolic level of dialogue and discourse. The fact is that established disciplines are in a defensive mode. The "new" movements and media are not yet mature enough to question and challenge the powers that be. In a conservative climate, the claim to "embody the future" becomes a weak and empty gesture.

On the other hand, the call of many artists and activists to return to "real life" does not provide us with a solution to how alternative new media models can be raised to the level of mass (pop) culture. Yes, street demonstrations raise solidarity levels and lift us up from the daily solitude of one-way media interfaces. Despite September 11 and its right-wing political fallout, social movements worldwide are gaining importance and visibility. We should, however, ask the question "what comes after the demo version" of both new media and the movements?

This isn't the heady 60s. The negative, pure and modernist level of the "conceptual" has hit the hard wall of demo design as Peter Lunenfeld described it in his book "Snap to Grid". The question becomes: how to jump beyond the prototype? What comes after the siege of yet another summit of CEOs and their politicians? How long can a movement grow and stay "virtual"? Or in IT terms, what comes after demo design, after the countless PowerPoint presentations, broadband trials and Flash animations? Will Linux ever break out of the geek ghetto? The feel-good factor of the open, ever growing crowd (Elias Canetti) will wear out; demo fatigue will set in. We could ask: Does your Utopia version have a use-by date?

Rather than making up yet another concept it is time to ask the question of how software, interfaces and alternative standards can be installed in society. Ideas may take the shape of a virus, but society can hit back with even more successful immunization programs: appropriation, repression and neglect. We face a scalability crisis. Most movements and initiatives find themselves in a trap. The strategy of becoming "minor" (Guattari) is no longer a positive choice but the default option. Designing a successful cultural virus and getting millions of hits on your weblog will not bring you beyond the level of a short-lived

"spectacle". Culture jammers are no longer outlaws but should be seen as experts in guerrilla communication.

Today's movements are in danger of getting stuck in self-satisfying protest mode. With access to the political process effectively blocked, further mediation seems the only available option. However, gaining more and more "brand value" in terms of global awareness may turn out to be like overvalued stocks: it might pay off, it might turn out to be worthless. The pride of "We have always told you so" is boosting the moral of minority multitudes, but at the same time it delegates legitimate fights to the level of official "Truth and Reconciliation Commissions" (often parliamentary or Congressional), after the damage is done.

Instead of arguing for "reconciliation" between the real and virtual, we call here for a rigorous synthesis of social movements with technology. Instead of taking the "the future is now" position derived from cyber-punk, a lot could be gained from a radical re-assessment of the techno revolutions of the last 10—15 years. For instance, if artists and activists can learn anything from the rise and subsequent fall of dot-com, it might be the importance of marketing. The eyeballs of the dotcom attention economy proved worthless.

This is a terrain of truly taboo knowledge. Dot-coms invested their entire venture capital in (old media) advertisement. Their belief that media-generated attention would automatically draw users in and turn them into customers was unfounded. The same could be said of activist sites. Information "forms" us. But new consciousness results less and less in measurable action. Activists are only starting to understand the impact of this paradigm. What if information merely circles around in its own parallel world? What's to be done if the street demonstration becomes part of the Spectacle?

The increasing tensions and polarizations described here force us to question the limits of new media discourse. In the age of realtime global events Ezra Pound's definition of art as the antenna of the human race shows its passive, responsive nature. Art no longer initiates. One can be happy if it responds to contemporary conflicts at all and the new media arts sector is no exception. New media arts must be reconciled with its condition as a special effect of the hard and software developed years ago.

Critical new media practices have been slow to respond to both the rise and fall of dotcommania. In the speculative heydays of new media culture (the early-mid 90s, before the rise of the World Wide Web), theorists and artists jumped eagerly on not yet existing and inaccessible technologies such as virtual reality. Cyberspace generated a rich collection of mythologies; issues of embodiment and identity were fiercely debated. Only five years later, while internet stocks were going through the roof, little was left of the initial excitement in intellectual and artistic circles. Experimental techno culture missed out on the funny money. Recently there has been a steady stagnation of new media cultures, both in terms of concepts and funding. With millions of new users flocking onto the Net, the arts can no longer keep up and withdraw into their own little world of festivals, mailing lists and workshops.

Geert Lovink
Florian Schneider

A VIRTUAL WORLD IS
POSSIBLE: FROM TACTICAL
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Whereas new media arts institutions, begging for goodwill, still portray artists as working at the forefront of technological developments, the reality is a different one. Multi-disciplinary goodwill is at an all time low. At best, the artist's new media products are "demo design" as described by Lunenfeld. Often it does not even reach that level. New media arts, as defined by its few institutions, rarely reach audiences outside of its own electronic arts subculture. The heroic fight for the establishment of a self-referential "new media arts system" through a frantic differentiation of works, concepts and traditions, might be called a dead-end street. The acceptance of new media by leading museums and collectors will simply not happen. Why wait a few decades anyway? Why exhibit net art in white cubes? The majority of the new media organizations such as ZKM, the Ars Electronica Centre, ISEA, ICC or ACMI are hopeless in their techno innocence, being neither critical nor radically utopian in their approach. Hence, the new media arts sector, despite its steady growth, is getting increasingly isolated, incapable of addressing the issues of today's globalised world, dominated by (the war against) terror. Let's face it, technology is no longer "new", the markets are down and out and no one wants to know about it anymore. Its little wonder the contemporary (visual) arts world is continuing its decade-old boycott of (interactive) new media works in galleries, biennales and shows like Documenta XI.

A critical reassessment of the role of arts and culture within today's network society seems necessary. Let's go beyond the "tactical" intentions of the players involved. The artist-engineer, tinkering on alternative human-machine interfaces, social software or digital aesthetics has effectively been operating in a self-imposed vacuum. Science and business have successfully ignored the creative community. Worse still, artists have been actively sidelined in the name of "usability", pushed by a backlash movement against web design led by the IT-guru Jakob Nielsen. The revolt against usability is about to happen. Lawrence Lessig argues that Internet innovation is in danger. The younger generation is turning its back on new media arts questions and if involved at all, operate as anti-corporate activists. After the dotcom crash the internet has rapidly lost its imaginative attraction. File swapping and cell phones can only temporarily fill up the vacuum; the once so glamorous gadgets are becoming part of everyday life. This long-term tendency, now accelerating, seriously undermines future claims of new media.

Another issue concerns generations. With video and expensive interactive installations being the domain of the '68 baby boomers, the generation of '89 has embraced the free internet. But the net turned out to be a trap for them. Whereas assets, positions and power remain in the hands of the ageing baby boomers, the gamble on the rise of new media did not pay off. After venture capital has melted away, there is still no sustainable revenue system in place for the Internet. The slow working educational bureaucracies have not yet grasped the new media malaise. Universities are still in the process of establishing new media departments. But that will come to a halt at some point. The fifty-something tenured chairs and vice-chancellors must feel good about their persistent sabotage. What's so new about new media anyway? Technology was hype after all, promoted by the criminals of Enron and WorldCom. It is sufficient for students to do a bit of email and web surfing, safeguarded within a filtered, controlled

intranet. In the face of this rising techno-cynicism we urgently need to analyse the ideology of the greedy 90s and its techno-libertarianism. If we don't disassociate new media quickly from the previous decade, the isolation of the new media sector will sooner or later result in its death. Let's transform the new media buzz into something more interesting altogether – before others do it for us.

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Market-ideology, Semiocapitalism and the Digital Cognitariat

Franco Berardi Bifo

Abstract of talk at Dark Markets Conference, Vienna, October 3, 2003

<http://darkmarkets.t0.or.at>

I have five stories, five things to tell you. I happened to translate Geert Lovink's book "Dark Fiber" – and I found a lot of suggestions for my work. I found a lot of suggestions also for the problem that is my problem now: what is the future of the global movement? That movement that has been called the anti-globalization movement, but in reality is the only one global force existing at the moment. So I have five points about what the future of the movement – and, I would say, also the future of mankind – can be at this point.

The first of these points concerns the alliance: During the past decade, we have witnessed a kind of alliance between cognitive labor and recombinant capital. I call "cognitive labor" the kind of activity that generates semiotic flows and generates wealth, surplus value and capital in the semiotic field through a semiotic diffusion of merchandise and of goods. And I call "recombinant capital" those sections of capital that are not specifically engaged in a section of the production, but are flowing from finance to production; for instance venture capital, pension funds, net trading, advertising; all this kind of, I would say with a French word "asignifiant", "capital asignifiant", a distribution of capital which has no specific asignifiant, no specific function but may be used inside different networks. So, during the Nineties we have seen an alliance between cognitive labor and recombinant capital. This kind of alliance has been the

source, the origin of the dynamic of the network capitalism during the decade. But has also been the source of a kind of ideology that has identified labor and enterprise. Cognitive workers are in a sense entrepreneurs, are in a sense people who invest their knowledge, who invest their singular ability and in this sense the relationship, the integration between work, cognitive work and enterprise; and enterprise has a materialistic foundation. But at the same time this kind of integration has produced an ideological effect and a kind of psycho-pathogenic effect on the social forces of cognitive labor.

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Second point: The Prozac economy and the Prozac crash. The integration of cognitive work and recombinant capital has produced a kind of euphoria, of hyper-excitation and has produced a demotion, an erasing, a forgetting of the physical, the erotic and the social body of the cognitive worker. We have been taken in this kind of irrational exuberance and we have forgotten that we have a body – that we are a body. So the cognitive worker in this kind of hyper-excitation completely or partially has been forgetting the relationship to the society and the relationship to the physical body. We have seen, we cannot forget, the relationship between the psychopharmacologic section and the general virtual economy. The psychopharmacologic production has been essential in the irrational exuberance of capitalism during the long boom of the Nineties. The ideology of Prozac is essential in the understanding of this kind of permanent electrocution, which is the center, the core of the relationship between cognitive labor and recombinant capital. Panic is the issue, is the point, is the conclusion of this process. You see, the information overload produced by this connection of labor and capital has met a situation of growing scarcity of social attention. When Davenport and Beck in their horrible book "The Attention Economy" speak about the scarcity of attention they are speaking of something that can be understood as an accident. It is no accident. The attention scarcity is the result of a discrepancy, of a contradiction I would say, between cyberspace and cybertime. Cyberspace can be enhanced, can expand itself without limits. Cybertime is our organic, physic, erotic, social time – it is the time of our brain, of our body. This discrepancy of intermingling and contradiction of cyberspace and cybertime has produced a kind of panic wave, which is now ending in the Prozac-crash. It is this crash of euphoria that introduces a new phase – the dark markets, the crack in the corporate mind.

Point three: Depression. James Hillman says that a society that could be completely depressed should be a society much closer to the truth than our society. Depression is a very good point to see the truth, to see the truth of capitalist exploitation, to see the truth of capital oppression. Depression is now coming in the Western society and you see the global class, you see the national liberalism of the Bush-Administration facing depression with the amphetamines of war. What is happening in the political scene in the world nowadays is a desperate attempt to counter depression, to stop depression. But we know very well that depression cannot be stopped. The only way to face depression is to know the truth that depression means to us. They are not able to do that, of course. They are liars. They don't know anything about truth. They do not know anything about the truth of society. They need war, they are going to produce war, they are going to lose this war because this is a war against chaos. And chaos cannot be beaten by war,

because chaos feeds on the weapons that are directed against it. The Western society is entering the deadly phase of the war against chaos, which is the final victory of chaos. So what?

DISCOURSE

Point four: We have to expect a massive distraction of intelligence. What is going to happen is a general attack, a general war against the general intellect, against collective intelligence. It is evident that capital investments are escaping from the field of innovation. We will find less and less money for our cognitive work. We are going to find less and less money for art, for innovation, for research, for the general intellect and for cognitive work. The militarization and the securitization of intelligence is the other face of this kind of massive distraction of intelligence. National liberalism is the source of a massive production of ignorance. Not only because there is less money for the schools – for public schools. Not only for that, but because national liberalism is forced to destroy the relationship between intelligence and society, is forced to destroy for instance the relationship between economy and the net. The alliance is over. So what?

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Point five: What is the movement going to become? So far the movement has been the ethical insurrection of the first video electronic generation. I would see the movement from Seattle to Genoa as the insurrection of this kind of new form of labor. Cognitive labor networking itself in society, in NGOs, in voluntary action, in media activism, in the Open Source movement, and so on. But so far this movement has been an ethical movement and the people who were in the streets, the ethical revolutionaries, the ethical insurgents, have been socially integrated. They do not need to fight. They do not need to be against capital. They come from a decade of alliance with the recombinant capital. The people who were in the street of Genoa were mostly people who in the past decade were thought to have – or really had – a social possibility of being wealthy; I would not say of being happy, but of being socially integrated. All this is over. And so I think that we are going to witness a deep crisis, but also a deep restructuring of this movement. I think that this movement, which has been the movement of a noble but ineffective ethical revolt, is going to become a socially rooted movement fighting for its own life. And this changes everything. What happened during the last three years from Seattle to Genoa is the emergence, the spreading of a wide movement of people who were protesting and protesting and protesting. Street protest is very good but is ineffective, is unable to act against the recombinant domination of capital. When the domination and power are rooted in the immaterial network of recombinant capital, there is no use in protesting in the streets. It may be useful – but useful as the fuel, as the energy that you have to accumulate in order to step into another phase.

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PUBLIC NETBASE

We are stepping in the other phase. And the other phase, I think, will be the phase of pauperization of the cognitive labor, will be a phase of darkening of our existential and our social horizons. Yet it will also be the phase of more and more socially rooted experience of the movement. The movement is going to face a direct fight with recombinant capital inside the territory, where the recombinant capital accumulates its power. The paradigm of Open Source is going to be spread all over the different fields of social production, and this means that we shall be forced to act in an Open Source way. In fact not only in the information domain, but in every field of daily life.

ARTISTS INFORMATION.ORG

So I think that the next decade will be the decade of social rooting, of social connection, of this cognitive movement becoming the movement of the cognitariat. Maybe we ran out of time, maybe everything is lost, maybe that the force of the military aggression is stronger than the political and intellectual forces of freedom and of progress. Maybe, I do not know. I am not sure that we still have any hope. But what we are going to do is absolutely natural: we are going to do what we are naturally carved to do, what we feel absolutely connected with our nature of cognitive proletarians. What does it mean? It means that we need means to understand the world; we need means to socially connect. What we need is the same thing that the overall society needs. Society needs cognitive innovation and we need a relationship with society. Perhaps the national liberalism of Mr Bush and Mr Berlusconi began a war that will destroy any possibility of intelligent survival on the earth. But the fight we are going to fight is not only our choice, it is inevitable for us.

Franco Berardi Bifo

MARKET-IDEOLOGY,
SEMIOCAPITALISM AND
THE DIGITAL COGNITARIAT

Byzantium 550 AD

Paulina Borsook

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

A talk prepared for the Dark Markets Conference, Vienna, October 3, 2003
<http://darkmarkets.t0.or.at>

First, I want to let you know that there's a misprint on your program: I'm not a researcher or theorist, I'm simply a writer who, like George Orwell or Joan Didion, writes to find out what she thinks.

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

Another writer you may have heard of is the Brit Robert Graves, an innovator (until very recently, a much-admired job title) for sure – although literature and ideas, and not marketing schticks and financial scams, were his forte.

PUBLIC NETBASE

His "Farewell to all That", anticipating the current vogue for debunking memoir, was one of the very first confessions that all wasn't as it was cracked up to be in the British upper class. His Jung-besotted "The White Goddess" was a fine mess of mythopoetic googoo, codifying the Eternal Feminine in such a way that neopagans (Covenant of the Goddess) have been unknowingly appropriating Graves for decades, as have been male poets in their determination that of course it's for reasons of -inspiration- that they should always have a good looking babe within their purview (Richard and Mimi Farina). "I, Claudius" created the genre of revisionist historical novel, the "everything you know or were taught is wrong" sort of well-researched romp later put to such good ends by folks such as Gore Vidal.

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Graves was also best buds with Siegfried Sassoon, the gay half-Jewish aristocratic poet-equestrian who more or less pioneered the concept of catch-22: because Sassoon refused after a time to lead his troops into any more of World War One's foolish, murderous, ill-advised sorties, he was classified as insane – and was thus able to spare his men. Becoming "cured" of what was then called shell-shock ("Regeneration" – Pat Barker) meant returning to the insanity of the trenches, a paradox Sassoon's

psychiatrist (himself a pioneer, in both the humane treatment of traumatized, and still earlier in his career, in the documentation of the moves and ways of South Sea Islanders) well-understood.

But most relevant to us here is Graves' "Count Belisarius", his novel about Byzantine Emperor Justinian's (Emperor Justinian) world-class general, Belisarius. Because this =Balkan= (Hague War-crimes Tribunal)-born hero ranks up there with the all-star double-platinum top-ten best-loved generals of all time (victorious, beautiful, athletic, courageous, imaginative, kind, modest), there had to be a story about how even as a child, he displayed his manly virtues of cunning, prowess, and mercy. And there was: young Belisarius and his retinue, in his travels from his mother's house to the prep school befitting the station of a soldier-scholar to be, faced off with the extortionate henchmen of the local land-owning Bad Guy. These bad actors, intent on protection money and mayhem, were bested by plucky Belisarius and his loyal underdogs.

But how were these wiseguys distracted, while a counterassault involving ground black pepper and a hot poker was being prepared? By argumentation over Christian theology, heresy, and doctrine! (St Augustine of Hippo)

Now, thugs and thanes of a local boyar -ought- to be quarrelling about the outcomes of games of chance, the qualities desirable in the thighs of young mares and young maidens, and the mouth-feel, bouquet, and brix number of locally-available poteen. These bad-asses were somewhat different from our modern Taliban and Al Qaeda, who in large part use the -excuse- of religion (Destroyed Bhuddhas) as a conduit for working out their anger (WTC), denying both modernity and its whiney little sister, pomo (Situationists), and to a lesser degree, seeking out profitable business opportunities. No, these Byzantine toughs really -cared- about true belief, as much as the powers that be in pre-revolutionary France very much also cared what the Cathars and Albigensians and Huegenots professed (St Bartholomew's Day Massacre).

There is something gone very wrong in a world where enforcers do care about creed and how Truth is revealed of the Divine – and Graves couldn't have done a better job of setting the scene of a world where things have gone very very wrong, and all is in decline.

And if you think about it, this scene of churchy concerns among those who shouldn't give a damn very much evokes an image lovingly described by Po Bronson (Po Bronson) in his "Nudist on the Late Shift", a collection of soft-focus soft-porn journalistic sketches of the tech boom. Bronson editorialized that it's a wonderful thing that engineers kept windows open on their monitors to track the realtime performance of their portfolios and their employers' place on the stockmarket. No, it wasn't, and no, it's not.

For a generation of young technologists have been indoctrinated into the religion of markets and the stockholder theory of value – and now that it's all gone kablooe, they don't know what to do or what to believe. Long time gone now, they have been thinking first and foremost about how quickly they can come up with a fungible elevator pitch, as opposed to thinking about solving

hard or interesting problems. Skill and craft and artisanal pride of workmanship have largely fallen away, and go largely unrewarded. And these younger technologists, like us, are now living in the world of Byzantium 550 AD.

For the Byzantine world of Count Belisarius (who died in 565 AD) was one where technology was lost, invention mattered less and less, and fractious alien kleptocrats creamed off societal wealth generations in the making. Old wisdom was lost – and there wasn't much space for the creation of the new. Piracy, and lesser imitations of art forms, abounded. The very rich became very much richer (Bernie Ebbers) – and everyone else became poorer (Maquiladora/New River).

About the best that can be said of that time was the creation of Hagia Sophia, and Justinian's code of laws. Rather different from the aqueducts, central heating (Roman Baths at Bath, England), and great roads of the Romans, or the sculpture and literature and that kooky invention called democracy of the Greeks. It's a compare and contrast not so different from the contrast between the creative outputs of engineering and computer science during what we might call Ancient History (say, pre-Netscape IPO in 1995), (Archival RFC) and that of our own Byzantine era (say, post Nasdaq crash of Spring 2000), (QQQ GRAPH).

Microsoft (Microsoft Palladium) can be seen as what Christianity became in that sad Byzantine time, the brutally state-imposed religion that tied people to their occupations and their land so their work and lives could never, ever change. Various barbarian tribes ransacked and impoverished what remained of civilization – Vandals/VCs to the west (Kleiner Perkins)! Ostrogoths TimeWarnerAOL IP despots (Wilson Sonsini) from the East! Lombards and Teutons and Gauls (Dying Gaul), oh my! That is, the dark powers of bad government policy and corporatization of basic research (Bioinformatics Start-up) surround us everywhere. And technology has gone out of fashion altogether, rather like the passing of the vogue for sensible philosophies such as Stoicism or Epicureanism.

These dementor barbarian (Celts) hordes can be so easily visualized with their intentions of on plunder and discord. They are heedless of the havoc and ruin they bring to the rich – but decaying – civilization whose goodies they covet.

So while I never want to typecast actors, nor blame them for taking whatever work they need to in order to keep working, it's -typical-, and depressing and creepy, that in the fall 2002 season of the U.S. major network-television lineup there is a remake of what was a derivative bad tv show the first time around in the 1970s, "Family Affair". "Family Affair" redux stars Tim Curry as the butler catering to an American family. Only Curry is best known for -his- role in the 1970s cult classic, "Rocky Horror Picture Show", even at the time of its creation a tired spoof of horror movies, and a tired retelling of coming-out/arent-we-naughty-here-in-the-underbelly-of-society (Cabaret) narratives.

It's a convention among historians that with the death of Justinian, the Dark Ages officially began – and secular culture, science, and technology wouldn't thrive and grow for a thousand

years. The Middle Ages were a fine time for fabu cathedrals (St. Peter and St. Paul on 6th Century Sarcophagus, Aquitane) and the occassional doodle of a cat in the margins of an illuminated manuscript – but maybe were not so great for people who wanted to explore the natural world, or make stuff that works.

Paulina Borsook

BYZANTIUM 550 AD

What's left of Napster (probably only some office furniture and some Linux-based servers) is being auctioned off in bankruptcy court, with a porn concern in hot contention for the assets of an entity that finely symbolizes the Byzantine flux we find ourselves in: Napster and its users ripped off artists, but was also in the end shut down by the transnational cosmodemonic hegemony (SONY) that wants to do away with fair use (RIAA), privacy, and technological innovation (EFF). There's little to mourn here in the demise of the company, but much to grieve over in all the sorry bad agents at play. A plague on all their houses...

Maybe there is something that can be done to make our coming dark time a little shorter and a little brighter. I leave that up to you.

Seduction of the Cyber Zombies

Hakim Bey

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

For Konrad and Marie
NYC, August 18, 1997

<http://www.t0.or.at/hakimbey/seduct.html>

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
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For a start, it would help if we could speak about nets rather than The Net. Only the most extropian true believers in the Net still dream of it as the final solution. More realistic thinkers have rejected cyber-soteriology, but accept the Net as a viable tool (or weapon). They would agree that other nets must be set up and maintained simultaneously with "the" Net – otherwise it becomes just another medium of alienation, more engrossing than TV, maybe, but thereby even more total in entrancement.

PUBLIC NETBASE

The other nets of course include – first and foremost – patterns of conviviality and of communicativeness. I borrow this word from 19th-century phrenology – apparently there's a bump of communicativeness somewhere on the skull – but I use it to mean something like Bakhtin's "dialogue" transposed to the register of the social; whereas conviviality implies physical presence, communicativeness can also include other media as well. But – as hermeticism teaches us – the positive act of communicating meaning, whether face-to-face (and even without speech), or symbolically mediated (by text, image, etc.), is always confronted by its negativity. Not all "communication" communicates, map is not territory, and so on. "Interactive programs" in themselves convey no meaning between living beings but, in fact, no medium is privileged or completely open. As Blake might have said, every medium has its form and its spectre.

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What we need, then, is a Blakean "spectral analysis" of the Net. A "Fourier analysis" would also be useful (not Fourier the mathematician, Fourier the Utopian Socialist). But these philosophers were true hermeticists, while we can only heap up a few shards against the whatever.

The implied question: Does the Net further the purpose of communicativeness, and can it be used as a tool to "maximize the potential of the emergence" of convivial situations? Or does there exist a "paradoxical counterproductive effect" (as Illich would say)? In other words: the sociology of institutions shows that certain systems (e.g. education, medicine) attain a monopolistic rigidity and begin to produce the opposite of their intended effect (education stupefies, medicine sickens). Media can also be analyzed in this way. The mass media, considered as a paradoxical entity, has approached the limit of total image-enclosure – a crisis of the stasis of the image – and of the complete disappearance of communicativeness. The unique structure of the InterNet was considered to be its "many-to-many" patterns, the implication being the possibility of an electronic popular democracy. The Net is an institution, at least in the loose sense of the word. Does it serve its "original" purpose, or is there a paradoxical counter-effect?

Another original pattern within the Net is its centerlessness (its "military" heritage); this has launched the Net into a kind of war with governments. The Net "crosses borders" like a virus. But in this way the Net shares certain qualities with, say, transnational corporations ("zaibatsus") – and with nomadic Capital itself. "Nomadism" has its own form and spectre. As the Five Per Cent Nation of Islam puts it, "not every brother is a brother". Molecularity is a tactic that can be used for or against our autonomy. It pays to be informed. And we can be sure that Global Intelligence pays well for its information; Certainly the Net is by now completely penetrated by surveillance... every bit of E-mail is a postcard to God...

Everyone's favorite examples of imaginative insurrectionary use of the Net – the McLibel Case, the Scientology Case, and above all the Zapatistas – prove that the centerless many-to-many structure has real potential. (McDonald's won the battle but seems to be losing the war – franchises are down 50%!). Luddites who deny this are simply making themselves look uninformed – and badly disposed toward good causes. The original Luddites were no indiscriminate machine-smashers – they intended to defend their hand-loom and home labor against mechanization and factory centralization. Everything depends on situation, and technology is only one factor in a complex and many-valued situation. Exactly what is it here that needs to be smashed?

Global Capital openly embraces the Net because the Net seems to have the same structure as Global Capital. It proclaims the Net as the Future Now, and protects the netizens from these bad old governments. Why, the Net is the very paradigm of a Free Market, no? A Libertarian's dream. But secretly Global Capital (pardon the pathetic fallacy – gosh, I just can't help reifying Capital...)... secretly, Global Capital must be worried sick. Billions of "start up" dollars have been sunk into the Net, but the Net seems to act like an eclipsed body: There's some penumbral effect, but the planet is black. Or even a black hole. After all, Hawking proved that even black holes produce a tiny bit of energy – a few million bucks maybe. But essentially there is no money in the Net, and no money coming out of it. It seems the Net can act metaphorically as a "street market" to some extent (possibly to a much greater extent than it does) – but it has failed to develop into a Big Market. The WWW doesn't seem to help much in this respect. "Virtual Reality"

is beginning to look like yet another lost future. IntraNets, point-casting (push), and "interactive television" are the strategies proposed by the Zaibatsus for colonizing what's left of the Net. E-cash doesn't seem to be catching on.

Meanwhile the Net takes on an aspect not only of disembodied street fair but also psychic slum. Predatory avatars – disinformationists – slave-labor data-entry in US prisons – cyberrape (violation of the data body) – invisible surveillance – waves of panic (K-porn, Nazis-on-the-Net, etc.) – massive invasion of privacy – advertisements – all manner of psychic pollution. Not to mention the possibility of bionic brainwashing, carpal tunnel syndrome, and the sinister all-gray-green presence of the machines themselves, like old sci-fi movie sets (future as bad design).

In fact, just as Gibson predicted, the Net is already virtually haunted. Web cemeteries for dead cyber-pets – false obituaries – Tim Leary still sending personal messages – ascended masters of Heaven's Gate – not to mention the already vast lost archaeology of the Net, its ARPA levels, old BBSs, forgotten languages, abandoned Webpages. In fact, as someone said at the last Nettime conference in Ljubljana, the Net has already become a kind of romantic ruin. And here, at the most "spectral" level of our analysis, suddenly, the Net begins to look... interesting again. A bit of gothic horror. Seduction of the Cyber Zombies. Fin-de-millennium, hothouse flowers, laudanum.

However.

We live in a country where 1% of the population controls half the money – in a world where fewer than 400 people control half the money – where 94.2% of all the money refers only to money, and not to production of any kind (except of money); A country with the highest per capita prison population in the world, where "security" is the only growth-industry (except for entertainment), where an insane war on drugs and the environment is conceived as the last valid function of government; A world of ecocide, agribusiness, deforestation, murder of indigenous peoples, bioengineering, forced labor – a world built on the assumption that maximum profit for 500 companies is the best plan for humanity – a world in which the total image has absorbed and suffocated the voices and minds of every speaker – in which the image of exchange has taken the place of all human relations.

Instead of bleating liberal platitudes about all this – or raising the disturbing question of "ethics" – let me simply comment as a Stirnerian anarchist (a point of view I still find useful after all these years): – since I presume to take the world as my oyster, I am personally at war with all the above "facts" because they violate my desires and deny me my pleasures. Therefore I seek alliances with other individuals (in a "union of self-owning-ones") who share my goals. For the leftwing Stirnerites the favored tactic was always the General Strike (the Sorelian myth). In response to Global Capital we need a new version of this myth that can include syndicalist structures but not be limited by them. The old enemy of the anarchists was always the State. We still have the State to worry about (police in the universal Mall), but clearly the real enemies are the zaibatsus and banks. (The biggest

mistake in revolutionary history was the failure to seize the Bank in Paris, 1871.) In the very near future there is going to be "war" against the WTO/IMF/GATT structure of Global Capital – a war of sheer desperation, waged by a world full of individuals and organic groups against corporations and "the money power" (i.e. money itself). Hopefully a peaceful war, like a big General Strike – but realistically one should prepare for the worst. And what we need to know is, what can the InterNet do for us?

Obviously a good revolt needs good communication systems. Right now however I'd prefer to transmit my conspiratorial secrets (if I had any) through the Post Office rather than the Net. A really successful conspiracy leaves no paper trail, like the Libyan Revolution of 1969 (but then, phone-tapping was still fairly primitive then). Moreover, how could we be sure that what we saw on the Net was information and not disinformation? Especially if our organization existed only on the Net? Speaking as a Stirnerite, I don't want to banish spooks from my head only to find them again on my screen. Virtual street-fighter, virtual ruins. Sounds like a losing proposition.

Most disturbing for us would be the "gnostic" quality of the Net, its tendency toward exclusion of the body, its promise of technological transcendence of the flesh. Even if some people have "met through the Net", the general movement is toward atomization – "slumped alone in front of the screen". The "movement" today pays too much attention to media in general because power has virtually eluded us – and within the speculum of the Net its reflection mocks us. Net as substitute for conviviality and communicativeness. Net as bad religion. Part of the media-trance. The commodification of difference.

Aside from this criticism of the Net from the point of view of the Individual Sovereign we could also launch an analysis from a Fourierite position. Here instead of individuals we would consider the "series", the basic Passional group without which the single human remains incomplete – and the Phalanstery, or complete Series of Series (minimum 1,620 members). But the goal remains the same: Grouping occurs to maximize pleasures or "luxury" for the members of the group, Passion being the only viable force for social cohesion. (In fact on this basis we might consider a "synthesis" of Stirner and Fourier, apparently polar opposites). For Fourier, Passion is by definition embodied; all "networking" is carried out via physical presence (although he allows carrier pigeons for communications between Phalansteries). As a number mystic, Fourier might well have enjoyed the computer – in fact he invented "computer dating" in a sense – but he would most certainly have disapproved of any technology that involved physical separation. (I believe it was Balzac who said that for Fourier the only sin was eating lunch alone.) Conviviality in the most literal sense – ideally, the orgy. "Passional Attraction" works because everyone has different Passions: Difference is already "luxury". The data body, the screenal body, is only metaphorically a body. The space between us – the "medium" – is meant to be filled with Aromal Rays, zodiacs of brilliant light (new colors!), profusions of fruit and flowers, the aromas of gastrosophic cuisine – and ultimately that space is meant to be closed, healed.

Another critique of the Net could be made from a Proudhonian perspective. (Proudhon was influenced by Fourier, though he pretended not to be. They were both from Bezançon, like Victor Hugo). Proudhon was more "progressive" about technology than our other exemplars, and it would be interesting to see what kind of role he would design for the Net in his ideal future of Mutualism and anarcho-federation. For him "governance" was a matter of mere administration of production and exchange. Computers might prove to be useful tools under such conditions. But Proudhon as well as Marx would undoubtedly modify their optimistic view of technology if they could be channeled today for their opinion: Machine as social pollution, technology itself (and by implication Work) as alienation. This argument was of course made by libertarian Marxists, Green anarchists, etc. – legitimate descendants of Marx and Proudhon, such as Marcuse or Illich. The InterNet cannot be fairly considered outside this critique of technology. (Neither can bioengineering.) The work of Benjamin, Debord, and even Baudrillard (until he fell exhausted) makes it clear that the total image – "the media" – plays a central role in this critique. Proudhon would question the Net about justice, and about presence.

But I would prefer to focus more narrowly on the question of the image. Here we might return to Blake as our "philosophical hammer" (Nietzsche really meant a kind of tuning fork), since we are speaking of the idol, the image. I would argue that we are suffering from a crisis of overproduction of the image. We are, as Giordano Bruno put it, "in chains", entranced by the image. In such a case we need either a healthy dose of iconoclasm, or else (or also) a more subtle kind of hermetic criticism, a liberation from the image by the image. Actually, Blake supplied both – he was both an idol-smasher and simultaneously a hermeticist who used images for liberation, both political and spiritual. Hermeticists understand that the "hieroglyph", the image/text or mediated (symbolic) communication, has a "magical" effect, by-passing linear working rational consciousness and deeply influencing the psyche. This is why Blake says one must make one's own system or else be a slave to someone else's. The autonomy of the imagination is a high value for hermeticism – and the critique of the image is the defense of the imagination. The screen is an aspect of the image that cannot escape this "spectral analysis" – media as "satanic mills."

Ultimately it seems there's no escape from technology or alienation. Techné itself is prosthesis of consciousness, and thus inseparable from the human condition. (Language is included here as techné.) Technology as the obvious melding of techné and language (the ratio or "reason" of techné) has simply been a category of human existence since at least the Paleolithic. But – are we permitted to ask at what point the heart itself is to be replaced by an artificial limb? At what point does a given technology "flip" and begin producing paradoxical counterproductivity? If we could reach a consensus on this, would there still exist any reason to speak of technological determinism, or the machinic as fate? In this sense, the oldtime Luddites deserve some consideration. Techné must serve the human, not define the human.

We must (apparently) accept the inevitability of consciousness, but only on the condition that is not to be the same consciousness. We suspect that rational, machinic, linear, aufklaerung, universal consciousness has enjoyed too long a tyranny – or "monopoly". There's nothing wrong with reason

(in fact we could use a lot more of it) but rationalism feels like a passé ideology. Reason must share space with other forms of consciousness: Entheogenic consciousness, or shamanic consciousness (which has nothing to do with "religion" as commonly defined) – bio-consciousness, the systemic awareness of the hermetic ideal of the living earth – cultural or ethnic consciousness, different ways of seeing – indigenous peoples – or the Celts – or Islam – "identity" consciousness of all sorts – and trans-identity consciousness. Variety of consciousness would seem to be the only possible ground for our ethics.

Well then, what about InterNet consciousness? It has its non-linear aspects, doesn't it? If there can exist a "rationality of the marvelous", is there not a place for Net mind at the feast?

In the end we must be content with ambiguity. A "pure" answer is impossible here – it would stink of ideology. Yes and no.

But – "Between Yes and No, stars fall from heaven and heads fly off at the neck", as the great sufi Shaykh Ibn Arabi told the Aristotelian philosopher Averöes.

A fitting image for a romantic ruin....

Spiritual Telegraphs and the Technology of Communication: Tuning into the Electromagnetic Imagination

Erik Davis

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<http://www.t0.or.at/davis/davis.htm>

"Civilization is entirely the product of phonetic literacy. As it dissolves with the electronic revolution, we rediscover a tribal integral awareness that manifests itself in a complete shift in our sensory lives... This new electronic environment itself constitutes an inner trip, collectively, without benefit of drugs. The impulse to use hallucinogens is a kind of empathy with the electronic environment." Marshall McLuhan

Whatever media we are talking about, whether the internet or television or radio, it all rests on two forces: the electricity which powers the thing, and the electromagnetic universe which we exploit in order to produce our mediated world. These two energies are the lifeblood of the media sphere, and superficially, they seem devoid of anything strange or uncanny. But this is not entirely the case. While we take both electricity and electromagnetism for granted, they are actually very strange forces and fields. The more you try to understand the signs behind it, the more you realize how bizarre and counterintuitive they are.

An alternative history of electricity and electromagnetism would start off with alchemy and the way that alchemy informed the initial explorations of electricity in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Alchemy derived from the basic idea that matter is alive and that we can, by manipulating matter, nurture it to grow until it produces higher, "spiritual" qualities. The first time that the word "electricity" enters the English language is in a book by an alchemist. Later it is often described in alchemical terms: "the ethereal fire", "the quintessential fire", "the desiderata", or the desired quintessence of matter. The idea in alchemy is that by distilling matter, and changing it and forcing it and fighting it, you will create a spiritual essence. That essence was associated with electricity.

At the same time, electricity was also a conventional object that was exploited for perfectly pragmatic ways as part of the march of Rationalism. The paragon of this approach is Benjamin Franklin, who discovers that lightning is just a natural form of electricity. With this discovery, Franklin not only supposedly invented the lightning rod, but demystified a great symbol of the divine wrath of the gods. It seems historically symbolic that the framer of the American constitution is the one who tames and demystifies this previously heavenly force. There is an epigram on a French bust of Franklin which states: "He wrested the flash of lightning from heaven and the scepter from the tyrants".

Here electricity connects with the idea of political Prometheanism. But despite this famous story, Franklin wasn't actually the first person to come up with a lightning rod. That credit goes to a Moravian named Prokop Divisch, a Premonstratensian monk. In our secret history of electricity, Franklin stands as the exoteric figure of taming electricity, of bringing this mysterious force down to earth in order to exploit it according to a rational calculus of gain. But at the same time, we also have this curious monk, who opens up the esoteric story I am interested in, a story in which electricity is an imponderable fluid that symbolizes and expresses cosmic powers.

The esoteric charge of electricity draws directly from the German philosophy of nature. The German historian Ernst Benz draws our attention to a group he calls the "Electrical Theologians", whose most notable member was Friedrich Christopher Oetinger. Oetinger was interested in a puzzle embedded in the Book of Genesis, which tells us that on the first day of Creation, God said "Let there be light" – and there was light. A few days later, God creates the sun, the moon, and the stars. But that leaves a question: What is this first light? Oetinger believed that it was the "electrical fire", which enters the primal watery chaos and sparks it with life, giving it the ability to produce forms and to produce life. Once the sun and the moon come, the electrical fire disappears into matter and only in special conditions, like in a lightning storm, can we actually confront this essence.

More than a theological curiosity, Oetinger's notion is powerful because it engenders the earth with immanent power. It contradicts the idea that life descends only from above, and that we are simply cut-out little clay creatures that get life directly from God. Instead, the very material of nature has within it an animist forces that produces form and life. The connection between animism and electricity goes back to the very beginning, and we see it today with the organic metaphors that often creep up around electrical technology. It comes from this intuition that electricity has something to do with vitalism. This is way electricity and electrical metaphors play such a profound role in the

great battle between a vitalist perspective – which we find, for example, in Chinese medicine – and the sort of reductionist and mechanist perspective enshrined in Western allopathic medicine.

Oetinger's thought also creates a different image of humanity along with its vital image of earth. Humans are no longer simply rational spirits inhabiting otherwise static hunks of matter. When God scrapes up the dust to create Adam, the dust itself is already alive, already animated. Along with our rational souls, we also have an electrical soul. This is an important distinction: there is a realm of human spirit that is not associated with reason but vital being.

As such, it is not surprising that electricity plays a profound role in the Romantic reaction to Enlightenment rationalism. This is symbolically significant as well, because electricity is the discovery of the Enlightenment. Moreover, electrical power has enabled us to transform nature on a scale unimaginable to people two hundred years ago. And yet electricity retains an undercurrent of mystical reaction, a call toward those things and ideas chased into the shadows by Enlightenment rationalism.

The father of the psycho-electromagnetic unconscious is Franz Mesmer, who is known alternately as one of the greatest charlatans of all time or the man who kick-started psychoanalysis. In the late 18th century, in Vienna, Mesmer wrote his dissertation on astrology and the question of how the planets influence the world. In order to explain this influence in terms that would accord with Enlightenment materialism, Mesmer posits an ether-like substance that he calls the fluidium. This is that substance that allows the moon to tug the tides and allows Venus and Mars to influence our souls. The fluidium also responds to a problem in Newton: how can we account for gravity, which is essentially action at a distance, on a cosmic scale? By Mesmer's time, physicists had already posited the existence of the ether, an invisible fluid medium of communication. Mesmer simply attached astrological influence to this fluid.

What is interesting about the concept of the ether is that, even though it manifests the materialist desire to fill the world with matter, by its very insubstantial nature, it carries occult ideas along with it. Even Newton, who was the grand rationalist (and an alchemist on the side), held that the ether, which allowed the planets to communicate with each other, was a living substance, a sort of entity. This entity is not just a matter of ontology, but of communication, a communication of bodies and energy. When he came to describe the aspect of ourselves that responds to the fluidium, Mesmer settled on the term animal magnetism, a term he took from the works of the hermetic Jesuit Athanasius Kircher. Mesmer wrote:

"All bodies are a magnet, capable of communicating this magnetic principle. This fluid permeates everything and can be stored up and concentrated like the electric fluid and it acts at a distance."

Mesmer used magnets in his healing practice to re-align the living field of the body. Soon Mesmer discovered that he didn't really need magnets to do his work, which is also where he starts looking

like a charlatan kook. Mesmer felt that he could magnetize people simply by passing his hands over them. Though this method sounds goofy, contemporary accounts make it very clear that he catalyzed extraordinary effects. Mesmer was not putting people into a hypnotic trance, but instead was creating a convulsive climax, a la Wilhelm Reich, a release that he thought would lead to healing by re-aligning the energetic flows of the body.

In psychoanalytic terms, Mesmer was exploiting the mechanisms of hypnotism and suggestion, using his evidently powerful charisma to engage people who, at least, are willing to let themselves be so engaged. In that sense, animal magnetism is a function of the imagination, of the suspension of disbelief. Nonetheless, Mesmer's techniques undoubtedly produced effects and healed people. So why didn't doctors and philosophers pursue this occult imagination, this imagination that heals? Unfortunately, that approach wouldn't fit into the emerging paradigms of Enlightenment medicine at that time, and so Mesmer was branded a crank.

In the early 19th century, Mesmerists started to use hypnotic trance to explore a strange new continent: the unconscious. What happens when we the rational consciousness is suspended, and yet all sorts of intelligent things happen? We think that the practice of probing someone's unconscious begins with Freud. But throughout the 19th century, investigators throughout America and Europe explored the recesses of mind methodically, though not quite according to scientific method. Here is the key: the magnetic paradigm opens up the unconscious in all its uncanny and spectral power. When he was developing his early theories of the unconscious tradition, Freud took full advantage of this tradition. And that's why, in addition the famous homeostatic steam-engine metaphors, Freud also used electrical metaphors to describe the body-mind.

As the 19th century wore on, Mesmerism waned in popularity in Britain and in Europe, but it became a huge hit in America. American mesmerists investigated altered states of consciousness within a scientific frame of mind, but they kept stumbling across strange things like clairvoyance or the telepathy – phenomena which even Freud acknowledged, at least initially, but were subsequently swept under the hypnotic carpet. Nonetheless, these phenomena persist, if only as wishes. When Upton Sinclair wrote "Mental Radio", a book about telepathy, in the early 20th century, he was expressing how often our communication technologies are driven by the unconscious desire to achieve telepathic communion, not in a mystic sense, but as an immediate exchange of information and perceptions.

The mesmerists were operating under the aegis of rationalism, doing psychoanalysis before the name. As their practice grew, their work became less about healing the body, and more about exploring the strange dimensions of mind. Mesmerism thus introduced a hands-on craft of introspection, a pragmatic tactics for generating altered states of consciousness that could be framed in a language divorced from mysticism. The mesmerists wanted to say, "No. This is something scientific."

The emergence of the telegraph in the middle of the 19th century links the magnetic imaginary to information technology. Before the telegraph, the idea of communicating through electricity

doesn't exist. This is key. The telegraph is the first device that transforms electricity into information, which is why the symbolic register of the telegraph is so fascinating. The famous first telegraph message, sent in 1847 from Baltimore to Washington, D.C., was, "What hath God wrought". What God wrought, or what man wrought in his god-aping mode, was the information age.

This new invention is immediately the site of the utopian imagination and its close cousin, hype. Here is a great quotation from a congressman arguing that Congress should provide Morse with start-up money. (Of course, the fellow in question has already secretly invested in Morse's operation). Here is his claim:

"The influence of this invention of the political, social and commercial relations of the people of this widely extended country will of itself amount to a revolution unsurpassed in world range by any discover that has been made in the arts and sciences. Space will be, to all practical purposes of information, annihilated between the states of the Union and also between the individual citizens thereof."

For internet watchers, this is strikingly familiar rhetoric. Indeed, almost every new electronic media that is developed following the telegraph triggers this same utopian dream, the same language of millennial paradise. (Who wants to shrink to one point anyway?). But because electricity also carried with it the ghost of vitalism, the electrical utopia was also considered to be alive. In 1873, the president of Western Union called the telegraph "the nervous system of the commercial system". Today, these organic metaphors are trotted out to support the view that technology is an organic force that is evolving according to natural selection. The Darwinian march has somehow merged with the technosphere, which I suppose means that we are supposed to stop struggling for a more human world and simply let these new creatures emerge.

A few years after Morse's first cable was strung up, two sisters in upstate New York snatched back these electrical metaphors into the world of the occult. When the young Fox sisters started hearing mysterious knocking sounds in their house, it is said, they decided to talk back to the restless spirits. Their little chat sparked Spiritualism, which went on to become one of the most remarkable religious phenomena of the 19th century, an extremely popular "scientific" religion that penetrated the upper echelons of society and the educated elite.

Marshall McLuhan believed that electrical media "outers" the human nervous system, unfolding the subject into an electromagnetic relay station. This was not simply an act of smoothly integrating the individual into the expanding networks of communication and capital. As McLuhan put it, "To put ones nerves outside is to initiate a situation, if not a concept, of dread". This dread is, of course, one of the central objects of religion, particularly as it relates to the limits of identity and the question of death. Though spiritualism was, in comparison with conventional religion, materialistic and quasi-scientific, the movement could be seen as an essentially religious

answer to the dread produced by the new electrical situation of "outering" the nervous system through electric wires and, later, the electromagnetic spectrum.

In the late 19th century, a great deal of technology was developed, and "science" achieved its modern form. As such, the new experts and elites were charged with communicating the new explanatory regime to ordinary people, with making people excited, and lending the emerging knowledge class power. This created the spectacular phenomenon of public science demonstrations. After concocting something in their labs, electrical engineers would present public spectacles to demonstrate the power that these new technologies had. Despite their official naturalism, they knew that these uncanny electrical associations were lurking in the public mind. And so they exploited the language and performative practices of the occult in order to get across their non-occult technologies. Nikola Tesla would finish his gigs by saturating himself with thousands of volts of electricity. He would sit there with flames flashing out of his fingers, and speak mysteriously through the electric gloom.

Within the larger context that surrounded these events, occult and mystical ideas became a mask of power, one which paradoxically redeploys the mystifying tendencies of occult charlatans in a new "scientific" language. These public demonstrations captured the magical imagination and then reappropriated its power for the elite, saying in effect, "We are actually the only ones how have the power. All those other people are charlatans and kooks. We are the ones you can rely on". To this day, the occult remains science's tawdry twin, a shadowy fusion of popular perceptions and anomalous phenomena that continue to evade the grid of scientific explanations. And you find this shadow falling across the history of every new technology that comes along: daguerreotypes, phonographs, the telephone, the radio.

In McLuhan's terms, electronic media fire up pre-modern or magical perceptions by technologically stretching the boundaries of the self. Of course, the world still rolls on in its disenchanted way. These uncanny perceptions become routinized, commercialized, and swallowed up as business as usual. But you can still tune in to these perceptions by looking in the margins of culture, where metaphysical and occult motifs are woven into the mundane or secular phenomena of technological life. The paranoiacs of the 20th century, for example, have given us myths (and insights) into modes of technological mind control that very much revise ancient demonic motifs of possession and control. Paranoia is the demonic uncanny of a globalized information world, and paranoid conspiracy theories must be wrestled with in any deep engagement with the dynamics of the global information society. Here is what McLuhan said about the world he glimpsed through his own speculative imagination:

"As our senses have gone outside us, Big Brother goes inside. Unless we are aware of this dynamic, we shall at once move into a phase of panic terrors, exactly befitting a small world of drums, total interdependence and superimposed co-existence. Terror is the normal state of any oral society (like the new post-literate society), for in it, everything affects everything all the time."

Which Democracy in a Post-Political Age?

Chantal Mouffe

Abstract of talk at Dark Markets Conference, Vienna, October 4, 2003
<http://darkmarkets.t0.or.at>

The question that I would like to examine with you concerns the role that the new media can play in the fostering of democracy. We can discern roughly two opposite answers to that question. On one side there are those enthusiasts who argue that they provide us with the technology that will finally make it possible to realize the ideal of direct democracy under modern conditions, on the other side those detractors who see them as contributing to a further privatization of politics and as replacing rational debate by the instant expression of private prejudices, turning what ought to be public decisions into private consumer-like choices.

I for my part do not believe that there is a simple unequivocal answer to the question "do the new media have a democratizing potential?". It is a complex question that can be approached from several angles and one of the crucial issue concerns which is going to be the driving force in the development of the new technologies. Is their development going to be left to the markets (as it is the case today) or is it going to be checked through political decisions informed by a democratic debate? It is clear that left to the markets, it is very unlikely that those new technologies will be oriented to the enhancement of democratic participation.

But things are more complicated and to assert that for democracy to benefit from technology we must start from politics is not enough. Much more is at stake here because everything hinges on the way democracy is understood and the kind of political theory which this understanding of democracy mobilizes. Which democracy are we talking about: direct democracy, representative democracy, plebiscitary democracy? And if it is representative democracy, which paradigm of representative democracy: the aggregative one, the deliberative one, the agonistic one? All those diverse understandings have very different implications for the kind of technology that is going

to be privileged and for the answer to our question. This is, however, a level of reflexion which is often overlooked in discussions about the democratizing possibilities of the new media. This is of course typical of the post-political *Zeitgeist* prevalent today and I would like to share some thoughts with you about its characteristics. Indeed I have for some time been concerned by the growing incapacity in which we find ourselves of envisaging the problems facing our societies in political terms, that is as requiring not simply technical but properly political decisions, decisions which are made between real alternatives which imply the availability of conflicting but legitimate projects of how to organize our common life. What we are witnessing could be called the end of politics. This is I think the message that, albeit in different ways, the more recent trends in political theory and in sociology are conveying, not to mention the dominant practices of the mainstream political parties. They claim that the adversarial model of politics has become obsolete and that we have entered a new stage where a politics of consensus can be established at the centre. All those who disagree with this post-political view are dismissed as being archaic or even condemned as evil. As a consequence of this displacement of politics, morality has recently been promoted to the place of master narrative and it is rapidly becoming the only legitimate vocabulary, as instead of thinking in terms of right and left, we are now urged to think in terms of right and wrong.

There are of course many reasons for the disappearance of a properly political perspective, some have to do with the predominance of a neo-liberal model of globalization, others with the type of individualistic consumer's culture which now pervades most advanced societies. But as a political theorist, I am particularly concerned by the role that political theory has been playing in the demise of a properly political vision and this is why I have been engaged in the elaboration of a model of democracy which aims to provide an alternative to the theories which are dominant today. Those theories impede us to properly envisage what is really at stake in democratic politics and this, even when they claim to have a progressive character as it is the case with the deliberative model advocated by Habermas and his followers. In my view the choice between a deliberative and an agonistic model of democracy is a key issue for the future of democratic politics, an issue which has decisive consequences for the question of the direction we should seek to give to the development of the new media if our aim is to bring to the fore their democratizing potentialities. And this is why I will outline the main points of the conception of the agonistic approach, which I am putting as an alternative to the deliberative one.

POWER AND ANTAGONISM

My theoretical starting point is that in order to grasp the nature of democracy, it is necessary to acknowledge the dimension of power and antagonism and their ineradicable character. By postulating the availability of public sphere where power and antagonism would have been eliminated and where a rational consensus would have been realized, deliberative democracy denies this dimension and its crucial role in the formation of collective identities.

On the contrary, this question of power and antagonism is at the center of the approach that I want to put forward and whose theoretical bases have been delineated in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. What we attempted to do in that book was to draw all the consequences for the understanding of democracy of the ineradicability of power and antagonism and of the fact that there can never be total emancipation but only partial ones. This means that the democratic society cannot be conceived any more as a society that would have realized the dream of a perfect harmony or transparency. Its democratic character can only be given by the fact that no limited social actor can attribute to herself the representation of the totality and claim in that way to have the "mastery" of the foundation. The central thesis of the book is that social objectivity is constituted through acts of power. This implies that any social objectivity is ultimately political and that it has to show the traces of exclusions which govern its constitution. The point of convergence between objectivity and power is precisely what we mean by "hegemony".

When we accept that relations of power are constitutive of the social, then the main question for democratic politics is not how to eliminate power but how to constitute forms of power that are compatible with democratic values. To acknowledge the existence of relations of power and the need to transform them, while renouncing the illusion that we could free ourselves completely from power, this is what is specific to the approach delineated in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* and which provides the theoretical terrain necessary to elaborate the model of democracy which I have called "agonistic pluralism".

AN "AGONISTIC" MODEL OF DEMOCRACY

In order to clarify the basis of this alternative view, I propose to distinguish between "the political" and "politics". By "the political", I refer to the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in all human societies, antagonism that can take many different forms and can emerge in diverse social relations. "Politics", on the other side, refers to the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions which seek to establish a certain order and to organize human coexistence in conditions which are always potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of "the political".

It is only when we acknowledge this dimension of "the political" and understand that "politics" consists in domesticating hostility and in trying to defuse the potential antagonism that exists in human relations, that we can pose the fundamental question for democratic politics. This question is not how to directly express the unmediated will of the people- or for that matter the desire of the multitude- nor is it how to arrive at a rational consensus reached without exclusion, which is, indeed, an impossibility. Politics aims at the creation of unity in a context of conflict and diversity; it is always concerned with the creation of an "us" by the determination of a "them". The novelty of democratic politics is not the overcoming of this us/them distinction but the different way in which it is established. The crucial issue is how to establish the us/them discrimination in a way that is compatible with pluralist democracy.

Hence the importance of distinguishing between two types of political relations: one of antagonism between enemies, and one of agonism between adversaries. We could say that the aim of democratic politics is to transform an "antagonism" into an "agonism". This has important consequences for the way we envisage politics. Contrary to the model of "deliberative democracy" the model of "agonistic pluralism" that I am advocating asserts that the prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions nor to relegate them to the private sphere in order to render rational consensus possible, but to mobilize those passions towards the promotion of democratic designs. Far from jeopardizing democracy, agonistic confrontation is in fact its very condition of existence.

To deny that there ever could be a free and unconstrained public deliberation of all about matters of common concern is therefore crucial for democratic politics. When we accept that every consensus exists as a temporary result of a provisional hegemony, as a stabilization of power and that it always entails some form of exclusion, we can begin to envisage the nature of a democratic public sphere in a different way. Modern democracy's specificity lies in the recognition and legitimation of conflict and the refusal to suppress it by imposing an authoritarian order. Breaking with the symbolic representation of society as an organic body – which is characteristic of the holist mode of social organization – a democratic society makes room for conflicting interests and values. This is why a pluralist democracy needs to allow for the expression of dissent and for the institutions through which it can be manifested. Its survival depends on collective identities forming around clearly differentiated positions, as well as on the possibility of choosing between real alternatives. When the agonistic dynamic of the pluralist system is hindered because of a lack of democratic identities with which one could identify, there is a risk that this will multiply confrontations over essentialist identities and non-negotiable moral values.

The current disaffection with politics which we witness in many liberal democratic societies stems in my view from the fact that the role played by the political public sphere is becoming increasingly irrelevant. Political decisions are increasingly taken to be of a technical nature and better resolved by judges or technocrats as bearers of a supposed impartiality. Today because of the lack of an agonistic political public sphere where a democratic confrontation could take place, it is the legal system which is often seen as being responsible for organizing human coexistence and for regulating social relations. Given the growing impossibility of envisaging the problems of society in a political way, it is the law which is expected to provide solutions for all types of conflicts.

Such privileging of a supposedly neutral and impartial instance is, in my view, inimical to democracy because it tends to silence dissenting voices and this is why I believe that an approach which reveals the impossibility of establishing a consensus without exclusion is of fundamental importance for democratic politics. By warning us against the illusion that a fully achieved democracy could ever be instantiated, it forces us to keep the democratic contestation alive.

In recent years, as a reaction to this imposition of a neo-liberal consensus which claims that there is no alternative to the present order, new forms of struggle have emerged around what is called- inaccurately in my view- the anti-globalization movement. This is very promising. Indeed

it shows that new forms of domination create new types of resistances and that the antagonistic dimension cannot be eliminated. But this movement is very heterogeneous and it is important that it does not limit itself to a negative attitude of rejection of existing institutions, to a pure negation of the current order. It is necessary to understand that there is no guarantee that such a rejection is going to have a democratic outcome. We have in history too many proofs of the contrary to keep such an illusion. Without even the need to going back to the past, we have many examples in front of us of resistances to the prevalent hegemony which do not take a progressive form (right-wing populism, terrorism).

In my view it is the lack of a really democratic political confrontation and of a pluralistic world order which leads to those manifestations of total negation. In order for those resistances to crystallize in a democratic project, a political intervention is necessary which will articulate the different struggles against relations of domination and establish what we have called a "chain of equivalence" between a multiplicity of heterogeneous and often conflicting demands. This is precisely how a project of radical and plural democracy should be envisaged. And it is within such a framework that the role and the possibilities of the new media should be examined in order to visualize, for instance, in which manner they could be developed so as to facilitate the creation of this chain of equivalence.

I think that since the two social forums at Porto Alegre we are beginning to see the start of new stage of the anti-corporate movement, which does not limit itself any more in denouncing the IMF, the WTO and other transnational institutions, but aims at putting forward concrete alternatives. Such initiatives should be multiplied, following the example of the first European Social Forum which is going to take place in Florence in November. It is indeed through such events that the chain of equivalence to which I have just referred, can become a reality and that the struggle for a new hegemony can get off the ground. No doubt this is another area where the contribution of the new technologies can be crucial.

WHICH ROLE FOR THE NEW MEDIA?

I hope that by now it is clear to all of you why I have spent so much time discussing the way democratic politics should be conceived. Indeed it is my contention that without an adequate understanding of what is at stake in democracy, it is impossible to address the question of the possible role of the new media in a fruitful way. If we start with the wrong assumption that the great advantage of the new media is that they make possible the establishment of a direct democracy, unmediated by representative institutions and that they allow to bypass the traditional channels of politics like parties, and trade unions, then we will not be able to visualize the possibilities which they present for the creation of an agonistic public sphere and their potential to contribute to the process of articulation of democratic struggles.

As I indicated at the beginning, I believe that we should not approach the new media from an optimistic nor a pessimistic standpoint. We should neither see them as the key to a completely

new type of politics, nor demonize them as the new trick found by capitalism in order to enslave us. They should be seen as constituting a terrain of struggle that needs to be engaged with, and whose role should be informed by political decisions. We should be aware however that they open a set of possibilities that can be used for very good as well as for very bad objectives. All will depend of the outcome of the hegemonic struggle. I do not want to suggest, though, that this is a neutral terrain because the fact that we live today under a neo-liberal hegemony has of course very important consequences for the way the new media are being developped. But it would be a mistake to believe that for that reason they are purely and simply of new instrument of domination. New forms of power go hand in hand with new kind of resistances and every hegemony allow for counter-hegemonic moves. What is crucial in the hegemonic struggle is to be able to think in a political way and this requires relinquishing a lot of illusions, for instance the idea that there is a necessary direction to history, which would lead to a final reconciliation, or the idea that we could reach a stage beyond politics, where antagonism would be eliminated and a perfect democracy realized. What the experience of totalitarian regimes should have taught us is the need to take pluralism seriously and the importance of envisaging pluralist democracy as something that can never be fully realized, as a good that only exists as good as long as it cannot be reached, because the very moment of its realization would coincide with its destruction. For the new media to help us improve democracy, it is therefore vital that we have an informed debate about the nature of a democratic society, and this is why political theory constitutes an indispensable point of reference in the kind of discussion that we are having during this conference.

Chantal Mouffe

WHICH DEMOCRACY IN
A POST-POLITICAL AGE?

Free Software Free Culture: After the dotCommunist Manifesto

NEW ART PRACTICES

Eben Moglen

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC NETBASE

Open Cultures – Free Flows of Information and the Politics of the Commons
Conference, Vienna, June 05, 2003

<http://opencultures.t0.or.at>

There is a specter hunting multinational capitalism. The specter of free information. All the powers of "globalism" have joined together to exorcize this spectre: The European Commission, Microsoft and Disney and the United States Congress. And for those of us who have been advocates of free information: have any of us not been decried as communists, anarchists, socialists? It's high time that we bend it together in the face of the world. But no, I'm not doing the Manifesto

today. It's after the dotCommunist Manifesto, my friends. We have moved on from there. Those who want the dotCommunist Manifesto, I'm sure can find it. But I want to do something else today, which is to talk a little bit about what comes after. How the program of the Manifesto of freedom is actually to be implemented in the coming years.

The fundamental assertion of the work we do, all of us, tens of thousands, ultimately millions of people around the world, who make the best software on earth and give it away, the fundamental premise of what we do is that coercive patterns for the production and distribution of information goods are failing in the 21st century. Bitstreams are how all art, all knowledge, all music, all culture, all generally useful information are packaged and transmitted in the 21st century and bitstreams have zero marginal cost. You can give to everyone at the same prize that you give to anyone. And so the 21st century faces a moral question: if everything can be given to everyone, if it can be given to anyone, than why is it ever moral to exclude anyone from anything? If you could make enough food to feed everyone on earth by baking one loaf and pressing a button, what would be the moral case for denying anyone the food? This is the fundamental difficulty faced by the logic of ownership, which from Thomas Edison forward experienced the ability to commoditize culture, to turn music and art and all of the human experience of coexistence into commodities that could be sold and from which people could be excluded, if they could not pay. The so-called free market, we have often recognized, if only for milliseconds, is a coercive system which denies to those who do not have what they can not afford. The economy of information in the 21st century however needs to conform to a different morality which we have been creating for the past decade.

Free software is an attempt to prove two propositions of cardinal importance to the 21st century. One, that certain classes of goods are better when they are manufactured without ownership relations in the way. Two, the network can be made free. We have proven the first proposition beyond all question. Software is becoming a public utility in the 21st century. We did that already. Everywhere on earth it is now possible to require at normal cost all the software necessary that people need computers to do. We have done that together as a human race. I was in Redmond last week talking to people who have the hard job of maintaining the richest monopoly in the history of the world in competition with the human race. They are in a bad humor. But everyone in this room knows that we are going to win. That's not even very interesting anymore, to my enormous amusement. But that's only one of the tools of our trade of constructing freedom by deconstructing ownership. Another tool of the trade, which we are going to have to fight to continue to have, is free hardware. Now here I need to be very careful. My client Mr. Stallman spent a decade and a half explaining to people that free software was free as in freedom, not free as in beer. And if he got that point across at all, then we are ready to talk about free hardware. Because hardware of course isn't free, it's just really cheap, almost ubiquitous in the developed societies. And what he has been up until now is not free as in beer but free as in freedom. That is to say if you bought it, you were allowed to use it. The problem in the network is that the owners of culture have recognized that software is free, that is to say the owners of culture recognized that the network's internal

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rules of behavior are not going to be determined by the makers of proprietary software. If the operating layer of the network is going to be free, then for content to remain owned they have to control all the hardware on earth. That's the purpose that lies behind the Digital Millennium Copyrights Act, the European Copyright Directive, its implementing legislation and so forth. To make technology control law under the guise of copyright, so that the end point devices in the network – the ones close to your eye balls and your ear drums – are not free. That is to say, not under your control. The phrase which has been chosen for this purpose is "trusted computing", which means computers nobody can trust. Hardware that is controlled not by its owner, not by its operator, but by the points of power over content in the network. Bitstreams will not be free because hardware will not behave as if the bitstreams were free.

So we are going to have to win that war. We are actually going to have less trouble with that one than we had making free software. It's an essentially conservative movement, our side of that war. In order to make free software, we had to invent everything that already existed and a whole lot of things that did not exist and we had to do it all by ourselves without any help and without any venture capital financing. That was hard, but it worked. In order to win the war over "trusted computing" we just have to hang on to what we have got which is boxes that obey their owners. We can do that. The alternative – the content company side of this one – is the complete military occupation of the internet. In the end it requires actual coercion for using devices that obey you instead of them. That's too much to buy it off – even for Mr Eisner. It means, as a young man for whom I did some legal work in 1999 and 2000, Jon Johansen, showed, imprisoning the world's teenagers for figuring out how stuff works. It means, as Dimitri Skylarov showed, putting people in jail for talking about their PhD dissertations. It means, as some college students in the United States have recently discovered, being threatened with jail if you don't agree to stop sharing music. But there is a limit to how much you can do this. And there is particularly a limit to how much you can do this, if what you are trying to do is to collect every computer and cell phone on earth and replace it with something that behaves in the interests of the remote mysterious Mr Berlusconi-Eisner-Murdoch-Gates. So I don't think the occupation of the Internet will succeed – save your old motherboards, they will be useful. Don't throw that apparently dead copper on Pentium 3, run free software on it by all means and keep it around. Don't send that cell phone to the landfill yet, we are going to need them. But keep your eyes out for all the creative engineering you can do with the potato chip can, of which we will hear more, I'm sure. We also gonna have to build some alternate hardware infrastructure from time to time, don't worry you can do this at home, it will be inexpensive. Those are two of the required tools of the trade: free hardware and free software. Now comes the one that is really tricky: we need free bandwidth.

We have to take back the electromagnetic spectrum, which they tell us belongs to us. But they don't mean it. I'm the one who means it, they are the ones that don't. The electromagnetic spectrum belongs to us. They all say it, they said it all throughout the 20th century, they carried that information into the 21st – what they mean is Mr Murdoch, Berlusconi, Eisner will manage it for us, under government license, or in the trivial, degenerate case of "L'Etat c'est

moi". Mr Murdoch-Berlusconi-Eisner will become the state and manage it for us, which is an unsatisfactory outcome, as I think everybody will agree.

What we actually need to do is route all our traffic for one another, sharing the spectrum in an intelligent way, which the cell phone modeled for us as a proprietary device and which the WiFi revolution is modeling for us in a free form. We need to take various pieces of the corpses of the dead telecommunications oligopolies around the world and some of the spectrum that belongs up to the broadcasters of data memory. We need to host them some pieces of our property for a while until we have functionally implemented the proposition that everybody has an equal right to speak. We need to explain to our colleagues in society that they shouldn't pay telephone bills anymore because talking to one another should be just as much a right as clean breathable air or adequate drinking water; and that it is technologically feasible for us to provide them with an environment of equal speech rights. For the lawyers this means of course self-help destruction of spectrum regulation, which is a pretty tall order, given the people on the other side, who are in fact far more powerful than Mr Gates was. They are Murdoch, Berlusconi, Eisner and in addition Deutsche Telekom and all the United States telecommunications oligopolists, and so forth. Their interaction with the state is very strong. The states consider themselves to be in the midst of some spectrum regulation for the public good. The elected politicians know that they depend upon on the broadcasters for survival. This one is actually a revolution, but we have to do it because free bandwidth is the tool of the trade. It's the tool of the freedom of the mind. Without it, free hardware and free software are two legs of the stool and we come down on the third. We have to be able to talk to one another freely, without exclusion, or we leave most of the planet's mind behind as we pick up the little bit that is rich enough to talk.

So that is the program: keep free software, keep it healthy, learn about programming, become children, learn, write, improve, share. Keep free hardware. Win the war against "trusted computing" and the other forms of occupation of the network. That's not all that hard, we have the conservative side of that one, we'll be okay. Now we attend to the bigger question, which is the fate of the spectrum.

That's where it will get difficult. So my first principle is: revolution grows out of the barrel of monkeys. We have to be tricky, we have to fool around, we have to hack the system. Free software is not made by destroying copyright, free software is made by fooling copyright. I'm very fond of the GPL (General Public License) for that reason. It's a big joke and it works beautifully for freedom. We are going to have to do the same thing with the telecommunications understandings that everybody has. But we are helped in this by the fact that the world's twelve-year-olds already get the joke. They know what we are trying to accomplish and they know why. When they grow up, even just a little bit, they will help us. So we just have to keep the thing warm until they get here. The Indians look pretty strong but the cavalry is coming, I can feel that. So what we have to do is find a way to make fun of the existing power in the spectrum. WiFi is a big joke. WiFi with programmable software controlled radios

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is an even bigger joke. The cell phone companies are beginning to like free software. I get phone calls from – you know who the names are. "Well", they say, "we are thinking of using" – what they call – "Linux in our phones, so we are going to make a Linux-architecture board. Would you give us any advice?". And I say, "Well, you do have two chips in the phone, right?". "Yeah, we have two chips in the phone: one is the general purpose computer on which we want to run free software, it deals with the keyboard and the display and all the little nice stuff. And then there is the other chip, the proprietary chip with the proprietary software that runs the radio. Because we have to do that or all the regulators in the world are going to get mad at us." "Yes", I say, "I understand". Then they say, all of them, after a pause that varies from one second and a quarter of one second to three-eighths – "That's really expensive". "Yes", I say, "which is why ten years from now you are going to be helping me destroy spectrum regulation all over the world so you can save 15 dollars on that second chip". But when they save those 15 dollars on that second chip, when the logic of capitalism compels them to use general software controlled radio, we win. Because at that point we get to choose what to do with the spectrum – all of it. I love these 802.11g routers, they are beautiful. The only problem with them is they are on the wrong place of the spectrum. I think we'll use Channel 7 next. In the United States there is a statute that says on December 31, 2006, we get back analog television frequencies because we gave all those guys a freebie, a second television station for nothing, to put digital television on under the condition that when they are done they'd give it back to us. They are not planning to give it back to us. Mr Bush is going to say sometime between now and then that national security compels him to give Mr Murdoch all those television stations. We are just going have to take it, you see, it's ours. We should be able to move in. It's Berlin. We are going to squat in the spectrum. Well, we should. It's ours. And when we do that the world is going to get very complicated very shortly. Because in addition to all those businesses which now have the hard business model of suing and jailing the customer, there will be many more businesses that have the same business model and that want the state to come in and help them – force everybody to use the telephone system they have to pay for, instead of the one they don't have to pay for. And I think this is going to work really badly. So our job is to make it really funny, really quickly or else...

Adam Michnik is one of the great political philosophers of the Western history. He figured out of what to do about certain kinds of orders of rule not quite willing to go to the mad oppressionism: You just declare yourself free and lead a self-respecting revolutionary life as a free person in an unfree society. Our technology makes that possible. And it's our moral responsibility to do it. It is our moral responsibility to the future, it is our moral responsibility to those of us who know less and understand less about what is going on, and it is even our moral responsibility to ourselves because it gives dignity and worth to the lives we lead. We have done very nicely in the past decade and a half, we have made some artifacts of human ingenuity that are beautiful and useful and enlighten our days. I'm very proud of the work that so many tens of thousands of people have done, and that I had a little bit to do with helping, but we've got more to do. It is really important that we give ourselves to this revolution. We are going to succeed, we are going to free the human mind and we are going to have a

revolution not quite like any we have ever seen before. Amongst other things, because we are going to win this time.

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The Information War

Peter Lamborn Wilson

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC NETBASE

WORLD-
INFORMATION.ORG

A speech given at the opening of Public Netbase t0, Vienna, March 17, 1995
<http://www.t0.or.at/hakimbey/infowar.htm>

Humanity has always invested heavily in any scheme that offers escape from the body. And why not? Material reality is such a mess. Some of the earliest "religious" artefacts, such as Neanderthal ochre burials, already suggest a belief in immortality. All modern (i.e. postpaleolithic) religions contain the "Gnostic trace" of distrust or even outright hostility to the body and the "created" world. Contemporary "primitive" tribes and even peasant-pagans have a concept of immortality and of going-outside-the-body (ec-stasy) without necessarily exhibiting any excessive body-hatred. The Gnostic Trace accumulates very gradually (like, mercury poisoning) till eventually it turns pathological. Gnostic dualism exemplifies the extreme position of this disgust by shifting all value from body to "spirit". This idea characterizes what we call civilization.

A similar trajectory can be traced through the phenomenon of "war" hunters/gatherers practiced (and still practice, as amongst the Yanomami) a kind of ritualized brawl (think of the Plains Indian custom of "counting coup"). "Real" war is a continuation of religion and economics (i.e. politics) by other means, and thus only begins historically with the priestly invention of "scarcity" in the Neolithic, and the emergence of a "warrior caste". (I categorically reject the theory that "war" is a prolongation of "hunting".) WWII seems to have been the last "real" war. Hyperreal war began in Vietnam, with the involvement of television, and recently reached full obscene revelation in the "Gulf War" of 1991. Hyperreal war is no longer "economic", no longer "the health of the state". The Ritual Brawl is voluntary and non-hierarchic (war chiefs are always temporary); real war is compulsory and hierarchic; hyperreal war is imagistic and psychologically interiorized ("Pure War"). In the first the body is risked; in the second, the body is sacrificed; in the third, the body has disappeared, (See P. Clastres on "primitive warfare" as opposed to War in Archaeology of Violence.) Modern science also incorporates an anti-materialist bias, the dialectical outcome of its war against Religion: It has in some sense become Religion. Science as knowledge of material reality paradoxically decomposes the materiality of the real.

Science has always been a species of priestcraft, a branch of cosmology; and an ideology, a justification of "the way things are". The deconstruction of the "real" in post-classical physics mirrors the vacuum of irreality which constitutes "the state". Once the image of Heaven on Earth, the state now consists of no more than the management of images. It is no longer a "force" but a disembodied pattering of information. But just as Babylonian cosmology justified Babylonian power, so too does the "finality" of modern science serve the ends of the Terminal State, the post-nuclear state, the "information state". Or so the New Paradigm would have it. And "everyone" accepts the axiomatic premises of the new paradigm. The new paradigm is very spiritual. Even the New Age with its gnostic tendencies embraces the New Science and its increasing etherealization as a source of proof-texts for its spiritualist world view. Meditation and cybernetics go hand in hand. Of course the "information state" somehow requires the support of a police force and prison system that would have stunned Nebuchadnezzar and reduced all the priests of Moloch to paroxysms of awe. And modern science still can't weasel out of its complicity in the very-nearly-successful "conquest of Nature". Civilization's greatest triumph over the body. But who cares? It's all "relative" isn't it? I guess we'll just have to "evolve" beyond the body. Maybe we can do it in a "quantum" leap.

Meanwhile the excessive mediation of the Social, which is carried out through the machinery of the Media, increases the intensity of our alienation from the body by fixating the flow of attention on information rather than direct experience. In this sense the Media serves a religious or priestly role, appearing to offer us a way out of the body by re-defining spirit as information. The essence of information is the Image, the sacral and iconic data-complex which usurps the primacy of the "material bodily principle" as the vehicle of incarnation, replacing it with a fleshless ecstasis beyond corruption. Consciousness becomes something which can be "down-loaded", excized from the matrix of animality and immortalized as information. No longer "ghost-in-the-machine", but machine-as-ghost, machine as Holy Ghost, ultimate mediator, which will translate us from our mayfly-corpses to a pleroma of Light. Virtual Reality as CyberGnosis. Jack in, leave Mother Earth behind forever.

All science proposes a paradigmatic universalism: as in science, so in the social. Classical physics played midwife to Capitalism, Communism, Fascism and other Modern ideologies. Post-classical science also proposes a set of ideas meant to be applied to the social: Relativity, Quantum "unreality", cybernetics, information theory, etc. With some exceptions, the post-classical tendency is towards ever greater etherealization. Some proponents of Black Hole theory, for example, talk like pure Pauline theologians, while some of the information-theorists are beginning to sound like virtual Manichaeans.¹

On the level of the social, these paradigms give rise to a rhetoric of bodylessness quite worthy of a third century desert monk or a 17th century New England Puritan – but expressed in a language of post-Industrial post-modern feel-good consumer frenzy. Our every conversation is infected with certain paradigmatic assumptions which are really no more than bald assertions, but which we take for the very fabric or urgrund of Reality itself. For instance, since we now

assume that computers represent a real step toward "artificial intelligence", we also assume that buying a computer makes us more intelligent. In my own field I've met dozens of writers who sincerely believe that owning a PC has made them better (not "more efficient", but better) writers. This is amusing; But the same feeling about computers when applied to a trillion dollar military budget, churns out Star Wars' killer robots, etc. (See Manuel de Landa's *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* on AI in modern weaponry).

An important part of this rhetoric involves the concept of an "information economy". The post-Industrial world is now thought to be giving birth to this new economy. One of the clearest examples of the concept can be found in a recent book by a man who is a Libertarian, the Bishop of a Gnostic Dualist Church in California, and a learned and respected writer for *Gnosis* magazine:

"The industry, of the past phase of civilization (sometimes called 'low technology') was big industry, and bigness always implies oppressiveness. The new high technology, however, is not big in the same way. While the old technology produced and distributed material resources, the new technology produces and disseminates information. The resources marketed in high technology are less about matter and more about mind. Under the impact of high technology, the world is moving increasingly from a physical economy into what might be called a 'metaphysical economy'. We are in the process of recognizing that consciousness rather than raw materials or physical resources constitutes wealth." ²

Modern neo-gnosticism usually lays down the old Manichean attack on the body for a gentler greener rhetoric. Bishop Hoeller – for instance stresses the importance of ecology and environment (because we don't want to "foul our nest", the Earth) – but in his chapter on Native American spirituality he implies that a cult of the Earth is clearly inferior to the pure Gnostic spirit of bodylessness:

"But we must not forget that the nest is not the same as bird. The exoteric and esoteric traditions declare that earth is not the only home for human beings, that we did not grow like weeds from the soil. While our bodies indeed may have originated on this earth, our inner essence did may have originated not. To think otherwise puts us outside of all of the known spiritual traditions and separates us from the wisdom of the seers and sages of every age. Though wise in their own ways, Native Americans have small connection with this rich spiritual heritage." ³

In such terms, (the body = the "savage"), the Bishop's hatred and disdain for the flesh illuminate every page of his book. In his enthusiasm for a truly religious economy, he forgets that one cannot eat "information". "Real wealth" can never become immaterial until humanity achieves the final etherealization of downloaded consciousness. Information in the form of culture can be called

wealth metaphorically because it is useful and desirable – but it can never be wealth in precisely the same basic way that oysters and cream, or wheat and water, are wealth in themselves. Information is always only information about some thing. Like money, information is not the thing itself. Over time we can come to think of money as wealth (as in a delightful Taoist ritual which refers to "Water and Money" as the two most vital principles in the universe), but in truth this is sloppy abstract thinking. It has allowed its focus of attention to wander from the bun to the penny which symbolizes the bun.⁴

Just yesterday I came across a quote from Derrick de Kerckhove at Serious Chiller Lounge and it is a nice quote on information spirituality:

"The ultimate goal: Where is technology going? Its ultimate goal is to bridge mind and matter in realtime. That is, to have no interface, no medium. (The medium is the message - no more message no more medium.) Just direct thought to matter (which is already experienced in Brain.Vader.) All this is going on in very fast pace right now. If you can translate every matter into 0 1, or into a digit, every texture, every substance, every sensory input or output, every displayform, you are dealing with a complete etherealization of matter. Its becoming cosubstantial with mind by digitization. Digitization is one step beyond atomization. Atomization remains material – digitization is spiritual atomization. Very very much the process of 2000 years history. Instant distribution – the net, huge computers, 20 million co-processors – so we have instant communication everywhere and that is another etherealization of form and it is another transmutation of mind. Completely new associations of consciousness are going on – so that's another aspect of this transformation."
So says Derrick de Kerckhove.

In effect we've had an "information economy" ever since we invented money. But we still haven't learned to digest copper. The Aesopian crudity of these truisms embarrasses me, but I must perforce to play the stupid lazy yokel plowing a crooked furrow when all the straight thinkers around me appear to be hallucinating. Americans and other "First World" types seem particularly susceptible to the rhetoric of a "metaphysical economy" because we can no longer see (or feel or smell) around us very much evidence of a physical world. Our architecture has become symbolic, we have enclosed ourselves in the manifestations of abstract thought (cars, apartments, offices, schools), we work at "service" or information-related jobs, helping in our little way to move disembodied symbols of wealth around an abstract grid of Capital, and we spend our leisure largely engrossed in Media rather than in direct experience of material reality. The material world for us has come to symbolize catastrophe, as in our amazingly hysterical reaction to storms and hurricanes (proof that we've failed to "conquer Nature" entirely), or our neo-Puritan fear of sexual otherness, or our taste for bland and denatured (almost abstract) food. And yet this "First World" economy is not self-sufficient. It depends for

its position (top of the pyramid) on a vast substructure of old-fashioned material production. Mexican farmworkers grow and package all that "Natural" food for us so we can devote our time to stocks, insurance, law, computers, video games. Peons in Taiwan make silicon chips for our PCs. Towel-heads in the Middle East suffer and die for our sins. Life? Oh, our servants do that for us. We have no life, only "lifestyle" – an abstraction of life, based on the sacred symbolism of the Commodity, mediated by the priesthood of the stars, those "larger than life" abstractions who rule our values and people our dreams – the mediarchetypes; or perhaps mediarchs would be a better term.

Of course this Baudrillardian dystopia doesn't really exist – yet.⁵ It's surprising however to note how many social radicals consider it a desirable goal, at least as long as it's called the "Information Revolution" or something equally inspiring. Leftists talk about seizing the means of information-production from the data-monopolists.⁶ In truth, information is everywhere – even atom bombs can be constructed on plans available in public libraries. As Noam Chomsky points out "one can always access information – provided one has a private income and a fanaticism bordering on insanity". Universities and "think tanks" make pathetic attempts to monopolize information – they too are dazzled by the notion of an information economy – but their conspiracies are laughable. Information may not always be "free", but there's a great deal more of it available than any one person could ever possibly use. Books on every conceivable subject can actually still be found through inter-library loan.⁷ Meanwhile someone still has to grow pears and cobble shoes. Or, even if these "industries" can be completely mechanized, someone still has to eat pears and wear shoes. The body is still the basis of wealth. The idea of Images as wealth is a "spectacular delusion".

Even a radical critique of "information" can still give rise to an over-valuation of abstraction and data. In a "pro-situ" zine from England called NO, the following message was scrawled messily across the back cover of a recent issue:

"As you read these words, the Information Age explodes... inside and around you – with the Misinformation Missiles and Propaganda bombs of outright Information Warfare. Traditionally, war has been fought for territory/economic gain. Information Wars are fought for the acquisition of territory indigenous to the Information Age, i.e. the human mind itself... In particular, it is the faculty of the imagination that is under the direct threat of extinction from the onslaughts of multi-media overload... DANGER – YOUR IMAGINATION MAY NOT BE YOUR OWN..."

As a culture sophisticates, it deepens its reliance on its images, icons and symbols as a way of defining itself and communicating with other cultures. As the accumulating mix of a culture's images floats around in its collective psyche, certain isomorphic icons coalesce to produce and to project an "illusion" of reality. Fads, fashions, artistic trends. U KNOW THE SCORE. "I can take their images for reality because I believe in the reality of their images (their image of reality)."

WHOEVER CONTROLS THE METAPHOR GOVERNS THE MIND. The conditions of total saturation are slowly being realized – a creeping paralysis – from the trivialisation of special/technical knowledge to the specialization of trivia. The INFORMATION WAR is a war we cannot afford to lose. The result is unimaginable.⁸

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I find myself very much in sympathy with the author's critique of media here, yet I also feel that a demonization of "information" has been proposed which consists of nothing more than the mirror-image of information-as-salvation. Again Baudrillard's vision of the Commtech Universe is evoked, but this time as Hell rather than as the Gnostic Hereafter. Bishop Hoeller wants everybody jacked-in and down-loaded – the anonymous post-situationist ranter wants you to smash your telly – but both of them believe in the mystic power of information. One proposes the pax technologica, the other declares "war". Both exude a kind of Manichaeian view of Good and Evil, but can't agree on which is which.

The critical theorist swims in a sea of facts. We like to imagine it also as our maquis, with ourselves as the "guerrilla ontologists" of its datascape. Since the 19th century the ever-mutating "Social Sciences" have unearthed a vast hoard of information on everything from shamanism to semiotics. Each "discovery" feeds back into "Social Science" and changes it. We drift. We fish for poetic facts, data which will intensify and mutate our experience of the real. We invent new hybrid "sciences" as tools for this process: ethnopharmacology, ethnohistory, cognitive studies, history of ideas, subjective anthropology (anthropological poetics or ethno-poetics), "dada epistemology", etc. We look on all this knowledge not as "good" in itself, but valuable only inasmuch as it helps us to seize or to construct our own happiness. In this sense we do know of "information as wealth"; nevertheless we continue to desire wealth itself and not merely its abstract representation as information. At the same time we also know of "information as war"⁹; nevertheless, we have not decided to embrace ignorance just because "facts" can be used like a poison gas. Ignorance is not even an adequate defense, much less a useful weapon in this war. We attempt neither to fetishize nor demonize "information". Instead we try to establish a set of values by which information can be measured and assessed. Our standard in this process can only be the body.

According to certain mystics, spirit and body are "one". Certainly spirit has lost its ontological solidity (since Nietzsche, anyway), while, body's claim to "reality" has been undermined by modern science to the point of vanishing in a cloud of "pure energy". So why not assume that spirit and body are one, after all, and that they are twin (or dyadic) aspects of the same underlying and inexpressible real? No body without spirit, no spirit without body. The Gnostic Dualists are wrong, as are the vulgar "dialectical materialists". Body and spirit together make life. If either pole is missing, the result is death. This constitutes a fairly simple set of values, assuming we prefer life to death. Obviously I'm avoiding any strict definitions of either body or spirit. I'm speaking of "empirical" everyday experiences. We experience "spirit" when we dream or create; we experience "body" when we eat or shit (or maybe vice versa); we experience both at once when we make love. I'm not proposing metaphysical categories here. We're still drifting and these are ad-hoc points of reference, nothing

more. We needn't be mystics to propose this version of "one reality". We need only point out that no other reality has yet appeared within the context of our knowable experience. For all practical purposes, the "World" is "one".¹⁰

Historically however, the "body" half of this unity has always received the insults, bad press, scriptural condemnation, and economic persecution of the "spirit"-half. The self-appointed representatives of the spirit have called almost all the tunes in known history, leaving the body only a prehistory of primitive disappearance, and a few spasms of failed insurrectionary futility. Spirit has ruled – hence we scarcely even know how to speak the language of the body. When we use the word "information" we reify it because we have always reified abstractions – ever since God appeared as a burning bush. (Information as the catastrophic decorporealization of "brute" matter). We would now like to propose the identification of self with body. We're not denying that "the body is also spirit", but we wish to restore some balance to the historical equation. We calculate all body-hatred and world-slander as our "evil". We insist on the revival (and mutation) of "pagan" values concerning the relation of body and spirit. We fail to feel any great enthusiasm for the "information economy" because we see it as yet another mask for body-hatred. We can't quite believe in the "information war", since it also hypostatizes information but labels it "evil".

In this sense, "information" would appear to be neutral. But we also distrust this third position as a lukewarm cop-out and a failure of theoretical vision. Every "fact" takes different meanings as we run it through our dialectical prism¹¹ and study its gleam and shadows. The "fact" is never inert or "neutral", but it can be both "good" and "evil" (or beyond them) in countless variations and combinations. We, finally, are the artists of this immeasurable discourse. We create values. We do this because we are alive. Information is as big a "mess" as the material world it reflects and transforms. We embrace the mess, all of it. It's all life. But within the vast chaos of the alive, certain information and certain material things begin to coalesce into a poetics or a way-of-knowing or a way-of-acting. We can draw certain pro-tem "conclusions", as long as we don't plaster them over and set them up on altars.

Neither "information" nor indeed any one "fact" constitutes a thing-in-itself. The very word "information" implies an ideology, or rather a paradigm, rooted in unconscious fear of the "silence" of matter and of the universe. "Information" is a substitute for certainty, a left-over fetish of dogmatics, a super-stitio, a spook. "Poetic facts" are not assimilable to the doctrine of "information". "Knowledge is freedom" is true only when freedom is understood as a psycho-kinetic skill. "Information" is a chaos; knowledge is the spontaneous ordering of that chaos; freedom is the surfing of the wave of that spontaneity.

NOTES

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The new "life" sciences offer some dialectical opposition here, or could do so if they worked with and through certain paradigms. Chaos theory seems to potentially deal with the material world in positive ways, as does Gaia theory, morphogenetic theory, and various other "soft" and "neo-hermetic" disciplines. Elsewhere I've attempted to incorporate these philosophical implications into a "festal" synthesis. The point is not to abandon all thought about the material world, but to realize that all science has philosophical and political implications, and that science is a way of thinking, not a dogmatic structure of incontrovertible Truth. Of course quantum, relativity, and information theory are all "true" in some way and can be given a positive interpretation. I've already done that in several essays. Now I want to explore the negative aspects.

Freedom: Alchemy for a Voluntary Society, Stephan A. Hoeller (Quest, Wheaton, IL, 1992), 229-230.

FOOTNOTES

1. Ibid., p. 164.
2. Like Pavlov's dogs salivating at the dinner bell rather than the dinner: A perfect illustration of what I mean by "abstraction".
3. Although some might say that it already "virtually" exists. I just heard from a friend in California of a new scheme for "universal prisons": Offenders will be allowed to live at home and go to work but will be electronically monitored at all times, like Winston Smith in 1984. The universal panopticon now potentially coincides one-to-one with the whole of reality; life and work will take the place of outdated physical incarceration: The Prison Society will merge with "electronic democracy" to form a Surveillance State or information totality, with all time and space compacted beneath the unsleeping gaze of RoboCop. On the level of pure tech, at least, it would seem that we have at last arrived at "the future". "Honest citizens" of course will have nothing to fear; hence terror will reign unchallenged and Order will triumph like the Universal Ice. Our only hope may lie in the "chaotic perturbation" of massively-linked computers, and in the venal stupidity or boredom of those who program and monitor the system.
4. I will always remember with pleasure being addressed, by a Bulgarian delegate to a conference I once attended as a "fellow worker in philosophy". Perhaps the capitalist version would be "entrepreneur in philosophy", as if one bought ideas like apples at roadside stands.
5. Of course information may sometimes be "occult" as in Conspiracy Theory. Information may be "disinformation". Spies and propagandists make up a kind of shadow "information economy", to be sure. Hackers who believe in "freedom of information" have my sympathy, especially since

they've been picked as the latest enemies of the Spectacular State, and subjected to its spasms of control-by-terror. But hackers have yet to "liberate" a single bit of information useful in our struggle. Their impotence, and their fascination with Imagery, make them ideal victims of the "Information State", which itself is based on pure simulation. One needn't steal data from the post-military-industrial complex to know, in general, what it's up to. We understand enough to form our critique. More information by itself will never take the place of the actions we have failed to carry out; data by itself will never reach critical mass. Despite my loving debt to thinkers like Robert Anton Wilson and T. Leary I cannot agree with their optimist analysis of the cognitive function of information technology. It is not the neural system alone which will achieve autonomy, but the entire body.

6. Issue #6, "Nothing is True", box 175, Liverpool L69 8DX, UK

7. Indeed, the whole "poetic terrorism" project has been proposed only as a strategy in this very war.

8. "The World is one" can be and has been used to justify a totality, a metaphysical ordering of "reality" with a "center" or "apex": one God, one King, etc., etc. This is the monism of orthodoxy, which naturally opposes Dualism and its other source of power ("evil") – orthodoxy also presupposes that the One occupies a higher ontological position than the Many, that transcendence takes precedence over immanence. What I call radical (or heretical) monism demands unity of one and Many on the level of immanence; hence it is seen by Orthodoxy as a turning-upside-down or saturnalia which proposes that every "one" is equally "divine". Radical monism is "on the side of" the Many -which explains why it seems to lie at the heart of pagan polytheism and shamanism, as well as extreme forms of monotheism such as Ismailism or Ranterism, based on "inner light" teachings. "All is one", therefore can be spoken by any kind of monist or anti-dualist and can mean many different things.

9. A proposal: The new theory of taoist dialectics. Think of the yin/yan disc, with a spot of black in the white lozenge, and vice versa – separated not by a straight line but an S-curve. Amiri Baraka says that dialectics is just "separating out the good from the bad" but the taoist is "beyond good and evil". The dialectic is supple, but the taoist dialectic is downright sinuous. For example, making use of the taoist dialectic, we can re-evaluate Gnosis once again. True, it presents a negative view of the body and of becoming. But also true that it has played the role of the eternal rebel against all orthodoxy, and this makes it interesting. In its libertine and revolutionary manifestations the Gnosis possesses many secrets, some of which are actually worth knowing. The organizational forms of Gnosis – the crackpot cult, the secret society – seem pregnant with possibilities for the TAZ/Immediatist project. Of course, as I've pointed out elsewhere, not all Gnosis is Dualistic. There also exists a monist gnostic tradition, which sometimes borrows heavily from Dualism and is often confused with it. Monist gnosis is anti-eschatological, using religious language to describe this world, not

Heaven or the Gnostic Pleroma. Shamanism, certain "crazy" forms of Taoism and Tantra and Zen, heterodox sufism and Ismailism, Christian antinomians such as the Ranters, etc. – share a conviction of the holiness of the "inner spirit", and of the actually real, the "world". These are our "spiritual ancestors".

Peter Lamborn Wilson

THE INFORMATION WAR

Gray Markets and Information Warlords

Bruce Sterling

Open Cultures – Free Flows of Information and the Politics of the Commons
Conference, Vienna, June 05, 2003

<http://opencultures.t0.or.at>

I have a rather provocative subject to address today: My speech today is about piracy, organized crime and terrorism and their connections to the flow of information, free software, free data. Here I have an official document from the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, the IFPI, I downloaded it from their website, printed it out. It's called "Music Piracy, Organized Crime and Terrorism" and, you know, it's easy to scarf at a public relations tactic like that. It may seem a little absurd and far-fetched but, you know, my feeling is that we all should just go right into those gray areas and ask the unaskable questions: Does music and not music piracy – we just blame music – does it have anything really to do with organized crime or terrorism? And yes, it

does! Because criminals are people and people like music. And music is one of the great consolations of the weak, the oppressed, the ill-disciplined, the crooked and the murderers. You know the drug trade is a major theme in popular music. There are a thousand of Reggae songs and Rock'n'Roll songs that are all about taking illegal drugs and growing illegal drugs and selling illegal drugs and smuggling illegal drugs. There is a whole school of Mexican folk music called Narcocorrido, just as heroic folk songs about narcotics people involved in organized crime. Gangster rap is for people who are gangsters. It's not a pretense that gangster musicians and gangster producers get gunned down, and gangster fights... Nobody gets shot just for the sake of public image! And the Las Vegas Audition Center of the American Entertainment Industry was built by the American mafia in order to carry out gambling and prostitution. And night clubs all over the planet are places of excess and depravity or else they are just no fun. And those are just facts.

So how about those terrorists and warlords? Well, there you have my first image, the famous turbo-folk singing star Ceca sitting on the lap of Arkan, indicted war criminal and terrorist. Ceca married this warlord. There are two of his children, he got shot, she is in jail right now. It's kind of hard to get a closer, more intimate, loving relationship between music and terrorism. And here is a Ceca tape that I bought in Bosnia last week. That's the widow of this warlord. The Bosnians have no particular reason to ever pay her for this music, so they are selling the really quite lousy, badly produced, blurrily photocopied pirated tapes out of Bosnia to Croatia with Ceca's music on them. Whatever, really, they are far away from organized crime, because organized crime is just business without government.

A lot of important activities in our lives go unregulated by government. For instance, you don't have to pay your mum for feeding you supper. She works and goods are produced, and you consume them and no one pays taxes. Thank you, Mum! Dear Mum! My gray market Mum! So how do I know when I have moved from this gray market into the world market of organized crime? Well, it is not really the money or the wickedness of my intent or how bad I feel about doing it. The definition of organized crime is when there are other better organized criminals who are so interested in my line of work that they are willing to kill. That is the drawing line. Once the violence and the intimidation comes in, then nobody pretends that we are hobbyists anymore. Everyone knows very well that we are gangsters. Now most crime goes unreported because nobody is willing to complain about it, nobody is willing to testify in court, no cop is willing to arrest me, no lawyer is willing to prosecute the case, and no judge will take the case against me or send me to jail. It's just too much of a hassle. It's just they would look mean and it would seem stupid. But when I start making enough money or even amassing enough power that somebody else really, really wants my money and my power and has no legal way to get it from me - that is when hell breaks loose. I become an organized criminal because I am willing to break the State's monopoly on violence and I have to be violent because the State will no longer do my violence for me. I kind of forgot to pay them for that service running my violence for me.

So let's say I am selling pirated CDs and I am making any kind of series of money of my pirated CDs. By making any kind of money of pirated CDs I am already committing three

crimes: First, this enormous mass of CDs – but that is just a technical part. The other part is the crime of conspiracy because in order to scale up my operations I have to persuade other people to help me and obviously can't make this many by myself. The Beijing police in China industriously mopping enormous hordes of counterfeit stuff. So that is the organizational part of my organized crime, by conspiracy doing something illegal now and we all know it's illegal and we have to tell each other what we are doing and we can't tell anybody else. So that's why we are no longer friends or hobbyists or commons – we are a gang. Then there is the other big crime, the money laundering, because we are selling all these products and we don't pay taxes, we don't pay salaries, we don't have health insurance, we don't have health and safety inspectors. When somebody asks how much money we made this week we have to hold our hands apart like a wallet of cash and say "Oh I made about this much". Because that black money has to flow somewhere, back into a conventional economy or else we can't buy shoes or cars or houses or yards with it. And at this point we badly need some crooked accountants and some crooked bankers to join our conspiracy and later some crooked legislators and some crooked judges. And by now I'm a full-grown organized criminal – I am crooked. And I banned all those around me. Nobody gave me permission, nobody gave me a badge. I don't have a special criminal habit, I don't have the diploma in organized crime, but if I keep bad long enough, the system forces me to create this illegal infrastructure. Unless I do that, my market shuts down, and it is impossible for me to recruit my underlings and get rid of my cash – that has nothing to do with my personal intentions. I might be a really sweet guy personally, it's just a fact of criminal life.

And there is never just one such criminal network. Criminals shoot other criminals over the turf because they don't have enough political sophistication. Even if a mafia takes over the government, as in Russia now, the mafias will still shoot other mafias. The gunfire doesn't stop even if the government is thoroughly corrupted, because even though you can shoot the other criminals you cannot sell them title to your properties. You don't legally own what you have. If you are the mafia king of pirated CDs, you can't sell any shares of that enterprise. The whole business is supposed to be invisible, black, off the books. Nobody knows how much money you are making, you yourself don't know. Being a gangster you run your affairs on tribal loyalties and personal charisma, you don't have a Chief Executive Officer, a Chairman, a Board of Directors. How can you share the business? How can you divide things up – you can't will it to your children, you can't tax it, assess it, get its market value. If you look seriously at a black market business as a business, it's much simpler, cheaper and easier to kill the people running it and take it. That is to try to figure it out and that is why criminals kill.

There is a whole lot of digital criminal activity in today's digital music industry. That's because music is simple and easy to make. It costs about 35 Cents to make a recorded Compact Disc on a nice round piece of plastic. You might have noticed those photos of people smashing the discs with bulldozers. Pirated CDs are so cheap and simple that it requires heavy machinery to get rid of them. Now thanks to Intellectual Property Rights that same piece of plastic is worth about 12 dollars in the legal market. 35 cents here, 12 dollars there. If you don't have

the government's approval and an advanced distribution system, if you are too crooked or primitive or rebellious to have Intellectual Property Rights, that is a huge profit margin – as long as Intellectual Property Rights still exist. A kilo of Cannabis is worth about 2,000 Euros, depending on where you are selling it. A kilo of counterfeits like these, sold off their spindles by some guys sitting on a blanket at a flea market, is worth about 3,000 Euros. That is 50 percent more than Marihuana. Most people in this world who like music buy pirated music. It is so difficult to maintain an Intellectual Property Regime in music that most people have never seen one. When people in China go shopping for music, 90 percent of it is pirated plastic, in Paraguay it's 99 percent. Legal music is a kind of fiction! In Paraguay most music is pirated, in Russia, Brazil, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines – and all of Africa. I haven't even begun discussing online piracy and the P2P-Networks yet. We are just talking about the discs of plastic, but that is digital data. My laptop over there is full of that stuff. I was playing digital music off my laptop while I was writing this speech. And in 2001 the pirate CD business, illegal digital plastic music finally got to be bigger than the much more traditional pirate cassette music, which was analog. The CD is a young technology, the CD piracy business is a young criminal industry.

Certain jurisdictions around this planet very quickly became CD factories and CD pirate havens. CD pirates are very globalized, they move very fast. Taiwan is the world capital of plastic piracy because of its high-tech plastic production capacity, and Taiwan is also a rogue state with serious diplomatic problems. They are not going to fuss about Intellectual Property and music in Taiwan, anymore than the Bush Administration bothers with the U.N. Security Council. Taiwan makes two-thirds of the world's blank CDs. Little Paraguay has the highest plastic piracy level in this whole world. In 2001 Paraguay, this small, rather backward South-American country, imported 100 million blank CDs. And where those blank CDs went when Paraguay got through it and they were no longer blank? That is anybody's guess. Pakistan has no CD piracy laws, and Pakistani pirates are making Indian music and sell it to Indians. The Czech Republic sells plastic to Austria, the Estonians sell plastic to the Finns, South-Italy sells plastic to North-Italy – there is a general principle: any place that is poor and crooked will sell plastic to any place richer and somewhat less crooked. CD pirates are not fussy about national borders. The biggest bust in New York involved a Chinese guy with two Latino accomplices selling recorded Mexican music. They were running what is poetically known as an "Illegal Burning Centre". 156 CD-R burners and a plastic burning laboratory in Queens, New York, with a really nice 75 000 Dollar color copier so they could make counterfeit CDs that look exactly like commercial CDs. That is America, we have our priorities. American CD pirates prefer that really classy top end look. Outside Malaysia at sea CD pirates burn CDs and DVDs on literal piracy ships, which are anchored in the international waters of the Malacca Straits, burning plastic as we speak. In Spain, in May 2001, the Spanish police busted a syndicate of 68 people using illegal labor from Bangladesh to burn CDs. Leave Bangladesh, flee to Spain, and burn CDs. It's a living.

And the European Union had its biggest anti-pirate raid ever in January 2003 in Spain, when the Spanish police raided the Blue Tiger Gang. The Blue Tigers were Chinese plastic

burners in Spain, in the Madrid area. The cops hauled 13 facilities and seized 346 CD burners, 168,000 blank CD-Rs, 24,000 recorded CDs, 39,000 DVDs, 10,500 VCDs with films, 515,000 empty jewel cases, 210,000 photocopied inserts, and 48,000 Euros in cash lying around the premises.

Recorded music is an old enterprise and quite frankly it has always been rather crooked. That is why software is such an exciting frontier for criminal mayhem. I would like to speak at some length about the unhappy famous fate of some software liberators but I lack the time. I just want to show some of their press coverage before I leave you here. This is an organized crime group named DrinkorDie, which recently went down in some major flames of bad global publicity. You might ask what these guys have done to be loudly crucified in the world press and sent off to federal prison. DrinkorDie were software crackers. They recently got busted in an operation called "Operation Buccaneer" – probably the most successful attack ever on a global software piracy group – which had a sister operation called "Operation Bandwidth". This is their Greek coverage. They are sure to be proud of this, they are in prison now, but I'm sure they appreciate when they go web-surfing out on parole. They were seized between December 10 and December 12, 2001 – and they were also trapped by "Operation Bandwidth", which the FBI ran on the United States. It was a sting operation in which the FBI pretended to be software pirates and then arrested all their friends. Here is DrinkorDie in Hungarian, DrinkorDie in Italian, Norwegian, DrinkorDie Vietnam. Good Morning, Vietnam. Why are these people interested? Because they are all downloading DrinkorDie's broken software. They are not Open Source people; they are broken Open Source people.

I want to finish this by giving you an eyewitness account of what happened to the leader of DrinkorDie, one of their major organizers. This gentleman was their System Administrator, he says, "I was sitting at my computer chatting with a fellow DrinkorDie-member on IRC – all of a sudden I noticed my net connection died. When I went to walk out the door a U.S. Customs" agent met me, "Mr. Tresco, I am with the U.S. Customs Department – would you mind to come with me?". As I turned the corner there were twenty law officials crowding the house of my work place. We proceeded to a conference room where I answered questions for the better part of a day while the agents carried out their warrant. They had IP addresses; They had the authority to take everything on the network that their computers identified on their warrants. It was the hardest day of my life. I had no idea of what was going on. I felt like I was in a dream. This guy, an organized criminal, got arrested at his work place. He was a gangster with a full-time job. In fact he was a System Administrator at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. And he needed the money from his job in order to underwrite his not-for-profit criminal activities. That gained him so much fame and that was his motive in doing all this: Despite his sense of risk. He says, "I felt on a daily basis that things were getting out of control. There were times when I actually did quit piracy, but only for a day or so. IRC always brought me back online, that was my big mistake. DrinkorDie was a Warez group, yes, but imagine a fine bunch of guys and gals sitting around talking all day and suddenly you, you stop showing up – you just miss that interaction! You miss these comments". That was why he had to get

back to his life of crime, to leave his fellow crackers was to betray them somehow. He is in prison now and will be out in about three years.

Bruce Sterling

GRAY MARKETS AND
INFORMATION WARLORDS.

Economics, Computers and the War Machine

Manuel De Landa

Abstract of a speech given at Public Netbase, Vienna, October 11, 1996
<http://t0.or.at/delanda/netwar.htm>

When we "civilians" think about military questions we tend to view the subject as encompassing a rather specialized subject matter, dealing exclusively with war and its terrible consequences. It seems fair to say that, in the absence of war (or at least the threat of war, as in the case of government defense budget debates) civilians hardly ever think about military matters. The problem is that, from a more objective historical perspective, the most important effects of the military establishment on the civilian world in the last four hundred years have been during peacetime, and have had very little to do with specifically military subjects, such as tactics or strategy. I would like to suggest that, starting in the 1,500's, Western history has witnessed the slow militarisation of civilian society, a process in which schools, hospitals and prisons slowly came to adopt a form first pioneered in military camps and barracks, and factories came to share a common destiny with arsenals and armories. I should immediately add, however, that the influence was hardly unidirectional, and that what needs to be considered in detail are the dynamics of complex "institutional ecologies", in which a variety of organizations exert mutual influences on one another. Nevertheless, much of the momentum of this process was maintained by military institutions and so we may be justified in using the term "militarisation".

On one hand, there is nothing too surprising about this. Ever since Napoleon changed warfare from the dynastic duels of the 18th century to the total warfare with which we are familiar in this century, war itself has come to rely on the complete mobilization of a society's industrial and human resources. While the armies of Frederick the Great were composed mostly of expensive mercenaries, who had to be carefully used in the battlefield, the Napoleonic armies benefited from the invention of new institutional means of converting the entire population of a country into a vast reservoir of human resources. Although technically speaking the French revolution did not invent compulsory military service, its institutional innovations did allow its leaders to perform the first modern mass conscription, involving the conversion of all men into soldiers, and of all women into cheap laborers. As the famous proclamation of 1793 reads:

"...all Frenchmen are permanently requisitioned for service into the armies. Young men will go forth to battle; married men will forge weapons and transport munitions; women will make tents and clothing and serve in hospitals; children will make lint from old linen; and old men will be brought to the public squares to arouse the courage of the soldiers, while preaching the unity of the Republic and hatred against Kings."¹

This proclamation, and the vast bureaucratic machinery needed to enforce it, effectively transformed the civilian population of France into a resource (for war, production, motivation) to be tapped into at will by the military high command. A similar point applies to the industrial, mineral and agricultural resources of France and many other nation states. Given the complete mobilization of society's resources involved in total war it is therefore not surprising that there has been a deepening of military involvement in civilian society in the last two centuries. However, I would want to argue that, in addition to the links between economic, political and military institutions brought about by war time mobilizations, there are other links, which are older, subtler but for the same reason more insidious, which represent a true militarisation of society during peace time. To retire to the French example, some of the weapons that the Napoleonic armies used were the product of a revolution in manufacturing techniques which took place in French armories in the late 18th century. In French armories, the core concepts and techniques of what later would become assembly line, mass production techniques, were for the first time developed. The ideal of creating weapons with perfectly interchangeable parts, and ideal which could not be fulfilled without standardization and routinization of production, was taken even further in American arsenals in the early 19th century. And it was there that military engineers first realized that in practice, standardization went hand in hand with replacement of flexible individual skills with rigid collective routines, enforced through constant discipline and monitoring.

Even before that, in the Dutch armies of the 16th century, this process had already begun. Civilians tend to think of Frederick Taylor, the late 19th century creator of so-called "scientific

management" techniques, as the pioneer of labor process analysis, that is, the breaking down of a given factory practice into micromovements and the streamlining of these movements for greater efficiency and centralized management control. But Dutch commander Maurice of Nassau had already applied these methods to the training of his soldiers beginning in the 1560's. Maurice analyzed the motion needed to load, aim and fire a weapon into its micromovements, redesigned them for maximum efficiency and then imposed them on his soldiers via continuous drill and discipline.²

Yet, while the soldiers increased their efficiency tremendously as a collective whole, each individual soldier completely lost control of his actions in the battlefield. And a similar point applies to the application of this idea to factory workers, before and after Taylorism. Collectively they became more productive, generating the economies of scale so characteristic of twenty century big business, while simultaneously completely losing control of their individual actions.

This is but one example of the idea of militarisation of society. Recent historians have rediscovered several other cases of the military origins of what was once thought to be civilian innovations. In recent times, it has been Michel Foucault who has most forcefully articulated this view. For him, this intertwining of military and civilian institutions is constitutive of the modern European nation-state. On one hand, the project of nation-building was an integrative movement, forging bonds that went beyond the primordial ties of family and locality, linking urban and rural populations under a new social contract. On the other, and complementing this process of unification, there was the less conscious project of uniformation, of submitting the new population of free citizens to intense and continuous training, testing and exercise to yield a more or less uniform mass of obedient individuals. In Foucault's own words:

"Historians of ideas usually attribute the dream of a perfect society to the philosophers and jurists of the 18th century; But there was also a military dream of society; Its fundamental reference was not to the state of nature, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract, but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility... The Napoleonic regime was not far off and with it the form of state that was to survive it and, we must not forget, the foundations of which were laid not only by jurists, but also by soldiers, not only counselors of state, but also junior officers, not only the men of the courts, but also the men of the camps. The Roman reference that accompanied this formation certainly bears with it this double index: Citizens and legionnaires, law and maneuvers. While jurists or philosophers were seeking in the pact a primal model for the construction or reconstruction of the social body, the soldiers and with

them the technicians of discipline were elaborating procedures for the individual and collective coercion of bodies."³

Given that modern technology has evolved in such a world of interacting economic, political and military institutions, it should not come as a surprise that the history of computers, computer networks, Artificial Intelligence and other components of contemporary technology, is so thoroughly intertwined with military history. Here, as before, we must carefully distinguish those influences which occurred during wartime from those that took place in peacetime, since the former can be easily dismissed as involving the military simply as a catalyst or stimulant, that is, an accelerator of a process that would have occurred more slowly without its direct influence. The computer itself may be an example of indirect influence. The basic concept, as everyone knows, originated in a most esoteric area of the civilian world. In the 1930's British mathematician Alan Turing created the basic concept of the computer in an attempt to solve some highly abstract questions in metamathematics. But for that reason, the Turing Machine, as his conceptual machine was called, was a long way from an actual, working prototype. It was during World War II, when Turing was mobilized as part of the war effort to crack the Nazi's Enigma code, that, in the course of his intense participation in that operation, he was exposed to some of the practical obstacles blocking the way towards the creation of a real Turing Machine. On the other side of the Atlantic, John Von Neuman also developed his own practical insights as to how to bring the Turing Machine to life, in the course of his participation in the Manhattan Project and other war related operations.

In this case we may easily dismiss the role that the military played, arguing that without the intensification and concentration of effort brought about by the war, the computer would have developed on its own, perhaps at a slower pace. And I agree that this is correct. On the other hand, many of the uses to which computers were put after the war illustrate the other side of the story: A direct participation of military institutions in the development of technology, a participation which actually shaped this technology in the direction of uniformization, routinization and concentration of control. Perhaps the best example of this other relation between the military and technology is the systems of machinepart production known as Numerical Control methods. While the methods developed in 19th century arsenals, and later transferred to civilian enterprises, had already increased uniformity and centralized control in the production of large quantities of the same object (that is, mass production), this had left untouched those areas of production which create relatively small batches of complex machine parts. Here the skills of the machinist were still indispensable as late as World War II. During the 1950's, the Air Force underwrote not only the research and development of a new system to get rid of the machinist's skills, but also the development of software, the actual purchase of machinery by contractors, and the training of operators and programmers. In a contemporary Numerical Control system, after the engineer draws the parts that need to be produced, the drawings themselves are converted into data and stored in cards or electronically. From then on, all the operations needed to be performed, drilling,

milling, lathing, boring, and so on, are performed automatically by computer controlled machines. Unlike massproduction techniques, where this automatism was achieved at the expense of flexibility, in Numerical Control systems a relatively simple change in software (not hardware) is all that is needed to adapt the system for the production of a new set of parts. Yet, the effects on the population of workers were very similar in both cases: The replacement of flexible skills by rigid commands embodied in hardware or software, and over time, the loss of those skills leading to a general process of worker deskilling, and consequently, to the loss of individual control of the production process.

The question in both cases is not the influence that the objects produced in militarized factories may have on the civilian world. One could, for instance, argue that the support of the canned food industry by Napoleon had a beneficial effect on society, and a similar argument may be made for many objects developed under military influence. The question, however, is not the transfer of objects, but the transfer of the production processes behind those objects that matters, since these processes bring with them the entire control and command structure of the military. To quote historian David Noble:

"The command imperative entailed direct control of production operations not just with a single machine or within a single plant, but worldwide, via data links. The vision of the architects of the (Numerical Control) revolution entailed much more than the automatic machining of complex parts; It meant the elimination of human intervention a shortening of the chain of command and the reduction of remaining people to unskilled, routine, and closely regulated tasks."

And he adds that Numerical Control is a "giant step in the same direction (as the 19th century drive for uniformity); Here management has the capacity to bypass the worker and communicate directly to the machine via tapes or direct computer link. The machine itself can thereafter pace and discipline the worker."⁴

Let's pause for a moment and consider a possible objection to this analysis. One may argue that the goal of withdrawing control from workers and transferring it to machines is the essence of the capitalist system and that, if military institutions happened to be involved, they did so by playing the role assigned to them by the capitalist system. The problem with this reply is that, although it may satisfy a convinced Marxist, it is at odds with much historical data gathered by this century's best economic historians. This data shows that European societies, far from having evolved through a unilinear progression of "modes of production" (feudalism, capitalism, socialism), actually exhibited a much more complex, more heterogeneous coexistence of processes. In other words, as historian Ferdinand Braudel has shown, as far back as the 14th and 15th centuries, institutions with the capability of exercising economic power (large banks, wholesalers, longdistance trade companies) were

already in operation and fully coexisted with feudal institutions as well as with economic institutions that did not have economic power, such as retailers and producers of humble goods. Indeed, Braudel shows that these complex coexistences of institutions of different types existed before and after the Industrial Revolution, and suggests that the concept of a "capitalist system" (where every aspect of society is connected into a functional whole) gives a misleading picture of the real processes. What I am suggesting here is that we take Braudel seriously, forget about our picture of history as divided into neat, internally homogeneous eras or ages, and tackle the complex combinations of institutions involved in real historical processes.

The models we create of these complex "institutional ecologies" should include military organizations playing a large, relatively independent role, to reflect the historical data we now have on several important cases, like 15th century Venice, whose famous Arsenal was at the time the largest industrial complex in Europe, or at 18th century France and 19th century United States, and their military standardization of weapon production. Another important example, involves the development of the modern corporation, particularly as it happened in the United States in the last century. The first American big business was the railroad industry, which developed the management techniques which many other large enterprises would adopt later on. This much is well known. What is not so well known is that military engineers were deeply involved in the creation of the first railroads and that they developed many of the features of management which later on came to characterize just about every large commercial enterprise in the United States, Europe and elsewhere. In the words of historian Charles O'Connell:

"As the railroads evolved and expanded, they began to exhibit structural and procedural characteristics that bore a remarkable resemblance to those of the Army. Both organizations erected complicated management hierarchies to coordinate and control a variety of functionally diverse, geographically separated corporate activities. Both created specialized staff bureaus to provide a range of technical and logistical support services. Both divided corporate authority and responsibility between line and staff agencies and officers and then adopted elaborate written regulations that codified the relationship between them. Both established formal guidelines to govern routine activities and instituted standardized reporting and accounting procedures and forms to provide corporate headquarters with detailed financial and operational information which flowed along carefully defined lines of communication. As the railroads assumed these characteristics, they became America's first 'big business'."⁵

Thus, the transfer of military practices to the civilian world influenced the lives not only of workers, but of the managers themselves. And the influence did not stop with the development of railroads. The "management science" which is today taught in business

schools is a development of military "operations research", a discipline created during World War II to tackle a variety of tactical, strategic and logistic problems. And it was the combination of this "science of centralization" and the availability of large computers that, in turn, allowed the proliferation of transnational corporations and the consequent internationalization of the standardization and routinization of production processes. Much as skills were replaced by commands in the shop floor, so were prices replaced by commands at the management level. (This is one reason not to use the term "markets" when theorizing big business. Not only they rely on commands instead of prices, they manipulate demand and supply rather than being governed by them. Hence, Braudel has suggested calling big business "antimarkets").⁶

Keeping in mind the actual complexity of historical processes, as opposed to explaining everything by the "laws of capitalist development", is crucial not only to understand the past, but also to intervene in the present and speculate about the future. This is particularly clear when analyzing the role which computers and computer networks may play in the shaping of the economic world in the coming century. It is easy to attribute many of the problems we have today, particularly those related to centralized surveillance and control, to computer technology. But to do this would not only artificially homogenize the history of computers (there are large differences between the development of mainframes and minicomputers, on one hand, and the personal computer, on the other) but it would obscure the fact that, if computers have come to play the "disciplinarian" roles they play today it is as part of a historical process which is several centuries old, a process which computers have only intensified.

Another advantage of confronting the actual heterogeneity of historical processes, and of throwing to the garbage the concept of "the capitalist system", is that we free ourselves to look around for combinations of economic institutions which coexist with disciplinarian antimarkets but do not play by the same rules. Historically, as Braudel has shown, economic power since the 14th century has always been associated with large size enterprises and their associated "economies of scale". Although technically this term only applies to mass-produced objects, economies of scale meaning the spreading of production costs among many identical products, we may use it in an extended way to define any economic benefits to managers, merchants and financiers stemming from the scale of any economic resource. Coexisting with economies of scale there are what is called "economies of agglomeration". These are economic benefits which small businesses enjoy from the concentration of many of them in a large city. These economies stem from the benefits of shoptalk, from unplanned connections and mutual enhancements, as well as for the services which grow around these concentrations, services which small business could not afford on their own.

To conclude this talk I would like to give one example, from the world of computers, of two American industrial hinterlands which illustrate the difference between economies of scale and of agglomeration: Silicon Valley in Northern California, and Route 128 near Boston:

"Silicon Valley has a decentralized industrial system that is organized around regional networks. Like firms in Japan, and parts of Germany and Italy, Silicon Valley companies tend to draw on local knowledge and relationships to create new markets, products, and applications. These specialist firms compete intensely while at the same time learning from one another about changing markets and technologies. The region's dense social networks and open labor markets encourage experimentation and entrepreneurship. The boundaries within firms are porous, as are those between firms themselves and between firms and local institutions such as trade associations and universities."⁷

The growth of this region owed very little to large financial flows from governmental and military institutions. Silicon Valley did not develop so much by economies of scale, as by the benefits derived from an agglomeration of visionary engineers, specialist consultants and financial entrepreneurs. Engineers moved often from one firm to another, developing loyalties to the craft and region's networks, not to the corporation. This constant migration, plus an unusual practice of information sharing among the local producers, insured that new formal and informal knowledge diffused rapidly through the entire region. Business associations fostered collaboration between small and medium-sized companies. Risktaking and innovation were preferred to stability and routinization. This, of course, does not mean that there were not large, routinized firms in Silicon Valley, only that they did not dominate the mix. Not so in Route 128:

"While Silicon Valley producers of the 1970's were embedded in, and inseparable from, intricate social and technical networks, the Route 128 region came to be dominated by a small number of highly self-sufficient corporations. Consonant with New England's two century old manufacturing tradition, Route 128 firms sought to preserve their independence by internalizing a wide range of activities. As a result, secrecy and corporate loyalty govern relations between firms and their customers, suppliers, and competitors, reinforcing a regional culture of stability and self-reliance. Corporate hierarchies insured that authority remains centralized and information flows vertically. The boundaries between and within firms and between firms and local institutions thus remain far more distinct."⁸

While before the recession of the 1980's both regions had been continuously expanding, one on economies of scale and the other on economies of agglomeration (or rather, mixtures dominated by one or the other), they both felt the full impact of the downturn. At that point some large Silicon Valley firms, unaware of the dynamics behind the region's success, began to switch to economies of scale, sending parts of their production to other areas, and internalizing activities previously performed by smaller firms. Yet, unlike Route 128, the intensification of routinization and internalization in Silicon Valley was not a constitutive

part of the region, which meant that the old meshwork system could be revived. And this is, in fact, what happened. Silicon Valley's regional networks were reenergized, through the birth of new firms in the old pattern, and the region has now returned to its former dynamic state, unlike the command-heavy Route 128 which continues to stagnate. What this shows is that, while both scale and agglomeration economies, as forms of positive feedback, promote growth, only the latter endows firms with the flexibility needed to cope with adverse economic conditions.

In conclusion I would like to repeat my call for more realistic models of economic history, models involving the full complexity of the institutional ecologies involved, including markets, antimarkets, military and bureaucratic institutions, and if we are to believe Michel Foucault, schools, hospitals, prisons and many others. It is only through an honest philosophical confrontation with our complex past that we can expect to understand it and derive the lessons we may use when intervening in the present and speculating about the future.

NOTES

1. Excerpt from the text of the levee en mass of 1793, quoted in William H. McNeill. *The Pursuit of Power. Technology, Armed Force and Society since A.D. 1000.* (University of Chicago Press, 1982). p. 192
2. *ibid.* p. 129
3. Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of Prison.* (Vintage Books, New York, 1979) p. 169
4. David Noble. *Command Performance: A Perspective on Military Enterprise and Technological Change.* In Merrit Roe Smith ed. *Military Enterprise.* (MIT Press, 1987). p. 341 and 342.
5. Charles F. O'Connell, Jr. *The Corps of Engineers and the Rise of Modern Management.* In *ibid.* p. 88
6. Fernand Braudel. *The Wheels of Commerce.* (Harper and Row, New York, 1986). p.379
7. Annalee Saxenian. *Lessons from Silicon Valley.* In *Technology Review*, Vol. 97, no. 5. page. 44
8. *ibid.* p. 47

Free Bitflows: Editorial

Konrad Becker, Felix Stalder

www.freebitflows.t0.or.at

And the winner is: the network! Of all the overhyped concepts of pre-crash new media, the network is the only one that survived an extended encounter with reality. In fact, it not just survived, it flourished. Many of the most interesting recent projects and debates in media culture can be understood as steps towards "networking practice".

Developing such practices is far more complex a task than all instant the revolutionaries with their technical prophesies had ever imagined. Sure enough, technology – the material basis for "network practice" – does matter and we have to save open technologies from the death grip of the corporate-security complex. This fight is far from over, but the alliances around Open Source Software, the principal carriers of this battle, are growing stronger, better organized, and more self-confident. If this is reason for optimism, great. However, the technological aspects are not the whole picture. What we are seeing now is the re-creation of social networks, around the incorporation of technological ones. The essays on this site, and the entire exStream project, from which this publication draws, are a contribution to this on-going exploratory process.

What could an open, collaborative network practice, based on sharing of resources, actually look like? How do we create networks that are flexible, but also sustainable and lasting? The dangers are clear and we can see them every day. While the "flexible lifestyle" of the artist has become the center of attention as a model for combat groups and the "new workforce", the results of decades of operations research in cybernetics and complexity have not reached a wider audience. The capitalization of social growth and self-determined empowerment is seemingly not in the economic equation that drives the logic of an informational military-entertainment complex.

Like hostilities in Network Centric Warfare, where no single platform is the heart of the system, a rhizomatic control society can be structured through repressive network management, with all the access and no accountability. In order to avoid playing into the hands of those who see networks as another metaphor for downsizing, outsourcing and social exploitation we have to develop a critique of the concept of "independence" and develop contexts, in which new agendas can be set, resources pooled, and project created. Pauline van Mourik Broekman is taking up this discussion in her essay: The network practice transforms everything. Not over night, and not necessarily with predictable results, but it opens new potentials that need to be realized, with support of local cells and coalitions. Pit Schulz explores what a new "networked" radio might mean, how we can combine analog broadcasting with digital file sharing to revitalize one of the oldest electronic media. The aim is clear: To develop new platforms of experimentation, platforms that are neither forced to rely exclusively on the market or on public funding, but instead draw on the resourcefulness

within a network of sound communities. Steven Kovats, in his essay, uses Marcel Duchamp's notion of the "infrathinic" (the warmth on chair after the person has left) to measure "network temperature". Can we create warmth and new forms of social interaction across time and space in cold technological networks without empathy?

Konrad Becker
Felix Stalder

FREE BITFLOWS:
EDITORIAL

But before getting all too warm and fuzzy, it's important to remember that all these experiments and discourses take place in a highly contested terrain in which powerful forces are eager to reduce sociality to buying and selling. The key battle ground is file sharing. The weapons of choice against freedom and collaboration are Digital Restrictions Management (DRM), and draconian legal sanctions that threaten to establish "network control" on a level which can only be called totalitarian. But the battle is not yet lost. The most precarious desire of technological restriction systems, that of sprawling into an all-encompassing grid of remote command, also seems to be its weakest point. Since intelligence from the "street" has frequently provided evidence of its ability to swiftly crack the codes and wiring of control devices, the only answer to this counterintelligence from below has been the creation of "waterproof" control environments of enclosure on the technical, social, cultural and legal levels. But this attempted totality of the new information feudalism appears to be affected by fissures wide enough to provide entry points for asymmetric subversion from the margins. And as a famous Microsoft study concludes, the powers that be don't stand a chance against the reality of the so called "Darknet".

Therefore it seems well worth investigating what exactly this fabled invisible parallel network is, and how its dynamics can be harnessed. Considering the fact that official economies are co-dependent on black markets in all shades of gray, it may not be too far-fetched an idea to look at subterranean urban info tunnels of "Third Man"-type economies as a base of operations for a positive change in mediated human relations. With privacy rights of corporations taking priority over any level of civil and human rights and protection, dark fiber and crypto P2P networks could exploit the privileges of business entities. If censorship by convenience and filtering and identification by consent are essential components of the databody meal plan, it could also work the other way around: obtaining anonymity by inertia. Janko Roettgers is exploring the two options of file sharing at the crossroads.

Thinking about alternative network futures requires access to a body of knowledge which is directly interwoven with a living cultural practice based on networks of exchange and dissemination. Clusters of open information cultures based on nodes of semiotic democracy, streaming the voice of the other, syndicalized anonymous safehouses and archives for the digital public sphere provide a trajectory for exploring different options in the shaping of information societies. The unofficial networks of file-exchange could provide blueprints for decentralized compensation arrangements that bypass the big gatekeepers of the content and intellectual property industries. Organizational intelligence for independent producers is primarily a social skill, but as software for encrypting e-mails has been put under restricted weapons classifications in many countries, lacking structural organization tools and search/indexing resources could turn out to be a critical gap in the empowerment of local players.

Torrents of Desire and the Shape of the Informational Landscape

Felix Stalder

<http://world-information.org/wio/readme/992003309/1166785452>

ABSTRACT

Despite very considerable resistance by the established cultural industries, whose business model is predicated on the scarcity of cultural goods, an environment is beginning to emerge where such goods, in their digital form, are abundant. One of the key social technologies of this abundance is peer-to-peer file sharing. Many of the goods on these networks have become abundant in clear disrespect of existing copyright restrictions, placing the providers outside the (commercial) mainstream. Thus, financial profit cannot be regarded as the main driver of this development, even if it is part of it. At the same time, a coherent political or social program cannot be detected either. Thus, file-sharing cannot be thought of as political movement or as part of civil society. What, then, pushing forward this development? The article argues for that file sharing reveals, in its rawest form, one of the fundamental forces generating the emergence of abundance: The desire as will-to-existence, which, in an informational environment, requires producing communication (rather than just receiving it).

INTRODUCTION

We are in the midst of an uneven shift from a cultural environment characterized by scarcity of goods to one characterized by their abundance, at least in respects to those that are digital (or can be digitized). Until very recently, even privileged people had access to a relatively limited number of news sources, books, audio recordings, films and other forms of informational goods. Digging through large archives/collections was a minority occupation. This was partly due to

the fact that the means of mass communication were expensive, cumbersome and thus few and highly centralized. In this configuration, most people were relegated to the role of consumers, paying either directly for access, or indirectly through exposure to advertisement. Amassing large collections was also expensive, and working with them something for specialists.

This is changing. The internet is giving ever greater numbers of people access to efficient means of mass communication and P2P protocols, such as Bittorrent, are making the distribution of material highly efficient. For some reason to be further examined, more and more material is becoming freely available within this new information environment.¹ As an effect, the current structure of the culture industries, in Adorno's sense,² is being undermined, and with it, deeply-entrenched notions of intellectual property. This is happening despite well-organized campaigns by major industries to prevent this shift. The campaigns include measures such as the expansion of intellectual property regulations across the globe, the development of new technologies aimed at maintaining informational scarcity (digital rights management (DRM) systems, ISP filtering), to mass persecution of average citizens who engage in standard practices on P2P networks, and public relation campaigns aimed at strengthening the social acceptance of copyright and the business models built on it.

As a consequence, we are witnessing a pitched battle. One side we have organized industries, with their well-honed machines of political lobbying and extensive staff of highly-paid lawyers and technologists. On the other side, strangely enough, we do not have any powerful interests or well-organized commercial players. Rather we have a rag-tag group of people and small groups, including programmers who develop open source tools to efficiently distribute digital files; administrators running infrastructural nodes for P2P networks out of their small ISPs (Internet Service Providers) or using cheap hosted locations; shadowy, closed "release groups" who specialize in circumventing any kind of copy-protection and making works available within their own circles often before they are available to the public; and, finally, millions of ordinary computer users who prefer to get their goods from the p2p networks where they are freely available (not just free of charge, but also without DRM) and where they can, if they wish to, release their own material just as easily. These are identifiable social actors, pursuing their own agendas by developing and using technology, and, clearly, not some autonomous technological development.

Usually, as political thinkers from Niccolò Machiavelli to Lawrence Lessig will tell you, well organized entrenched interests are at an advantage over the forces of innovation which tend to be poorly organized at the beginning.³ And, looking at the legal arena, there is plenty of reason to support that view.⁴ Yet, on the level of social practices, things look very different. Despite new and tougher laws and legal persecution, P2P networks are prospering, to the degree that they account for 50-80% of global internet traffic, depending of region and time of the day.⁵

NEITHER BUSINESS NOR POLITICS, BUT DESIRE

So, how come that such an unorganized group of people, who have neither an coherent ideology, a business-model, or even much of a self-consciousness as a group, manages to challenge, if

not overrun, well-organized sectors of industry and, as an effect, dramatically change the informational landscape? Having excluded ideology or business, the short answer remaining is: Desire, raw and unchecked. When we think of desires, we usually think of needs. This was most consequentially formalized by the social psychologist Abraham Maslov (1908-1970) who developed a pyramid of needs as an explanation of human motivation, ranging from the physiological (breathing, food, sleep, sex etc) at the bottom, to "self-actualization" (morality, creativity etc) at the top.⁶ Following this, we could think of P2P networking as filling a need for people whose basic survival is out of question and who can now address a lack of informational goods. People are finally getting the information they've always wanted but could not access, either because the materials were not available, or priced out of their range. While such an explanation holds intuitive appeal, and is strongly advocated by the cultural industries, it is far too limited to account for the full force of the P2P phenomenon.⁷

Rather, it seems more fruitful in this case to view desire not as something resulting from a lack, but as Deleuze and Guattari suggested, as primary productive force, as an unarticulated will-to-existence.⁸ Thus, the more interesting story here is about the desire for creating reality and ones own place in it, for the pure sake of creating it and actualizing oneself, not for any ulterior motives, be they political or commercial, through they may crafted on top of this (or any) particular articulation of desire.

As such, this is both a very general story and one that is specific to the digital informational environment. Let's start with the general one. In 1922, George Leigh Mallory, the British mountaineer, said this about his desire to climb Mount Everest:

"The first question which you will ask and which I must try to answer is this, 'What is the use of climbing Mount Everest?' and my answer must at once be, 'It is no use'. There is not the slightest prospect of any gain whatsoever. So, if you cannot understand that there is something in man which responds to the challenge of this mountain and goes out to meet it, that the struggle is the struggle of life itself upward and forever upward, then you won't see why we go. What we get from this adventure is just sheer joy. And joy is, after all, the end of life. We do not live to eat and make money. We eat and make money to be able to enjoy life. That is what life means and what life is for."⁹

Two years later, probably already sick from having to answer the same questions again and again, he is reputed to have offered as an explanation merely a terse "Because it's there."¹⁰ A few months later, his body lay frozen at the North Side of the peak, until it was discovered precisely three quarters of a century later. By then, Mount Everest had become a quite popular destination, efficiently served by a dedicated business infrastructure.

So, obstacles have their own way of attracting people to over come them. Not for gain, or anything in particular, but for the mere joy of overcoming them, for proving to oneself, or the world, that

what might be an obstacle to others is none of oneself. For most of people, cross words, puzzles and Sudokus are enough, but some people are attracted to more unusual obstacles.

Bob Flanagan, a performance artist who self-styled himself "super masochist", was once asked by an interviewer why he was doing all these things to his body. Probably also annoyed by being asked the same question again and again, he simply replied "Because I can".¹¹

If people are able to do something, then, sooner or later, somebody will do it. If only just to see what happens. Something that can be done, but has not been done before, exerts a strong pull. So strong that it's essentially impossible to regulate it directly. Regulations make certain actions illegal, or not profitable, but for this small subset of people who do not care about legality and profitability, this will not be a deterrent to do what they can do. The challenge created by obstacles, and curiosity about our own personal abilities are deep desires driving our actions, basic strategies of self-realization. What is regarded as a worthy obstacle, and how personal abilities are configured, are, of course, at the same time highly individual and culturally specific. It is no co-incidence that mountaineering was pioneered by the British at the turn of the 20th century, and the exploration of deviant sexuality has turned public at the turn of the 21st century in the US.

Information technology creates environments in which we live, as McLuhan said a long time ago.¹² In it, there are infinite numbers of obstacles to be overcome. Everyday there is a new Mount Everest to climb and new gear is being created to make the ascent possible. Thus technology triggers its own desires. Translated into a communication and information environment, "because it's there" means access. Knowledge that a perfect copy could be available triggers a desire to get it. Having it, triggers the desire to do something with it, transforming it in any way imaginable, be it re-editing star wars,¹³ remixing the musical history of the 20th century,¹⁴ or converting books into executable code format which is then transformed into images. In the case of file sharing, the transformation is simply to make it accessible to others, turning oneself from a receiver into a sender, from a passive consumer into an active producer.¹⁵ Why? Because I can, because, it is there. Access and transformation, intake and output, in the information environment, these desires are as basic as breathing-in and exhaling. Indeed, it is precisely these desires which are producing existence, because in the information network, communications – in-put and out-put – will establish a node as a node. Without communication, people do not exist within an information environment, at least not as actors, communication is what transforms them from objects (e.g. of surveillance) into subjects.

More than anything else the torrents of raw desire – the pull of obstacles and the push into the unknown creating opportunities to "reinvent" oneself – are reshaping the landscape of the information environment, creating new peaks of scarcity and deep lakes of abundance. Of course, this desire is energizing not just file sharing, but also other forms of personalized mass communication, such as blogs, wikis, or, at an earlier stage, email lists and Usenet groups. Only after flood recedes, and the new formations become visible, the more orderly forces, those of commerce and those of the law, are beginning to stake their claims and make their own

modifications of the landscape. But by then, the canyons are carved out, and the landscape is ready to be mapped.

DISCOURSE

Currently, these desires are at their most raw in peer-to-peer file sharing, a major contributory to the deep lakes of informational abundance. The term file sharing is a great semiotic trick, just as the term piracy is. Both terms are totally inadequate to understand what is actually happening, but serve strategic purposes in framing the debate. Copying music and films without permission does not amount to robbery. Nothing is taken away. The industry knows this, but it serves their purpose of conveying to law makers and law enforcement agencies a sense of grave, even bodily danger. Similarly, the term file sharing has great propagandistic value, because it suggests community and harmony. After all, sharing is caring, right? Well, no.

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If one wanders through the forums attached to great file sharing nodes, the ones which really provide the deepest access, one finds oneself in a desert of exclamation marks. Most people are utterly disrespectful, totally impatient about pretty much anything that stands between them and instant gratification. Occasionally, one comes across someone who reminds others to be grateful for all the work that goes into making all this material available, but their morals seem out of place. There is no community to respect, people are anonymous and their contact is sporadic, so why bother. The situation is similar with people who run the nodes. There is very communication among them, little communal sense of why they do it, beyond the challenge of doing it. It is certainly not a very good business. Even the most articulate pirates from Sweden see it primarily an experiment in the unknown.¹⁶ Why? Because they can!

TACTICAL MEDIA

Within the secluded world of the release groups, who work hard to bring out movies, music, games and software, before they are publicly available, there is even less sense of communal sharing. Rather, the real drivers seem to be the sheer existence of still secret material – because it's there – and high-pressure competition within small peer-groups – because I can, faster than you. In order to satisfy these urges, complex operations have been set up. Capable of getting access to the material across fortified line of security, cracking any copy protection code that might be on it, compressing it down to a size where it can be distributed across clandestine networks of password protected, and strongly encrypted servers. Often dozens of people, unevenly distributed around the globe, are working together, mobilizing significant resources in the process. Not just the highly specialized skills that each of these steps requires, and the many layers of security need to avoid prosecution, but also high quality equipment, from recording devices to create "screeners" from movies, to high-capacity servers capable to handle immense traffic loads. These are clearly organized operations, and what they are doing is illegal pretty much everywhere in the world. The content industry is quick to call these release groups "organized crime". Yet, this is not your average criminal operation; Rather, these are organized crimes of passion. In a different context, Clay Shirky noted that previously only little things could be made out of love, now large things can be made out of love.¹⁷ It is precisely this power of voluntary informational, globally distributed networks that they provide an organizational framework for passion, channeling torrent of desire.

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PUBLIC NETBASE

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In the case of release groups, passion clearly trumps money. Most of the resources (access, working time, file servers) are donated. There are strict rules about what acceptable behavior is and what is not. Taking money is usually not regarded as appropriate, even if there are enough people who make their side-deals with the players in commercial black market.¹⁸ However, the commercial black market operates also on the principle of scarcity, just at lower price points.

Driving the desire to get access is a race against time. Who is first? The earlier the better, once a copy is out, the race is over. This race can be so intense, that release groups try to reach deeper and deeper into the production process itself. When a version of the Ang Lee's film *Hulk* appeared online weeks before the official release date, people started to trash it because of poor production quality. Sound was uneven, in a few cases missing entirely. This became so intense that the production company was forced to release a statement that the version which was circulating was not the final one. The seemingly poor production quality was due to its unfinished state. Apparently, somebody within the sound studio has leaked a working copy of the film.

Yet, while community within the scene is important, the whole process is not about sharing. It is more like the original potlatch as analyzed by Marcel Mauss, where one group shames the other by bringing gifts, putting pressure on the others to do the same, or to loose status.¹⁹ The gift is a mean competition, and the whole game is about winners and losers. Access for all to the material is not intended, and the fact that sooner or later everything ends up on the public file sharing networks annoys the elite groups to no end. And they resort to seemingly contradictory, but internally consistent measures. On July 27, 2003, for example, the German Release Group TGSC released a B-movie, *Agent Cody Banks*, with its own, custom-made copy protection in order to make sure that only people within their own group could access it, and to prevent that the file would eventually find its way to file sharing networks where outsiders could get access to it.²⁰ Of course, this only challenged the next group to remove the encryption they had put on, and soon, the film was available unencrypted. The contradiction between following one's own desires to get access to the material on one's own terms – because it's there and because I can – but denying this to others was too strong. It put a lot of strain on the group, both externally and internally, and by the time were raided a few years later, they had lost much of their former glory.²¹

The different layers in the landscape of informational abundance function according to very different rules and morals. The elite crackers have nothing but disdain for the people on public file sharing networks, the free software movement does not condone piracy and puts great emphasis on the difference between crackers (bad) and hackers (good). Despite the many different rationalizations of their actions, they follow the same structure of desire. They want access to the material – because it's there – and they want to be able to with the material whatever they want – because they can.

Thus raw desire for getting one's hands on the material and doing with it whatever makes sense to whatever logic one is following – even if this means encrypting a film that one has just released – produce the torrents that are carving out environment informational abundance. I don't think it's

a co-incidence that it's exactly these desires that produce the new landscape. Culture essentially is about circulation of information and the transformation of that information by whomever cares enough to hold it at a particular moment. All culture is socially produced. Information always leaks because it is communication – accessing, transforming and outputting – which creates reality in an information environment. However, as Deleuze and Guattari pointed out as well, desires never run unchecked for long.²² They need to be channeled, in some way or another, to become socially stable. P2P networks and the informational abundance have not been channeled yet, though the early settlers in the new landscape can be seen. Rather than trying to sue the new players out of existence, which has turned out to be a losing strategy so far, the established content industries are trying to reform their business adapting to the new environment. Creative Commons, and others, are busy trying to set up new normative guidelines about what is acceptable in this new environment. But these are early days, and it remains to be seen, which forms of commerce and governance will be able to exploit and tame these desires. For now, they are raw, bleeding and exciting, though not safe, and not pretty.

NOTES

1. As of early 2008, The Pirate Bay, currently the largest Bittorrent tracker, has had 2.6 million registered users, and at any one time, more than 10 million active users (registration is not required to use the tracker) providing close to 1.1 million individual files. There are dozens of such trackers, even if not as large.

2. Adorno, Theodor W. (1991 [1963]). Culture Industry Reconsidered. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. London, Routledge pp. 98-106

3. Lessig repeatedly quotes Machiavelli as saying "innovation makes enemies of all those who prospered under the old regime, and only lukewarm support is forthcoming from those who would prosper under the new." See, for example, Lessig, Lawrence (2001). The Internet Under Siege. *Foreign Policy* (November-December).

4. Over the last 10 years, virtually all developed countries, and many of the developing one as well, have overhauled their copyright and patent laws, to comply with two major international agreements, the 1996 WIPO Copyright Treaty and WTO's TRIPS agreement (1994). On the latter, see Drahos, Peter with Braithwaite, John (2002). *Information Feudalism. Who Owns the Knowledge Economy?* London, Earth Scan

5. Parker, Andrew (2005). *p2p in 2005*. Presentation available online. http://www.cacheologic.com/home/pages/studies/2005_01.php. P2P traffic is notoriously difficult to measure, not the least since it is increasingly camouflaged in order to avoid detection, but the basic numbers seem to be fairly uncontroversial. See Madhukar, Alok, Williamson, Carey (2006). A Longitudinal Study of Peer-to-Peer Traffic Classification. Paper presented at IEEE/ACM MASCOTS, Monterey, California, September.

6. Maslow, A. H. (1943). *A Theory of Human Motivation*. *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396.
7. In fact, it is virtually impossible to establish a correlation that would show a substitution of buying goods through downloading them. Rather "downloads have an effect on sales that is statistically indistinguishable from zero". Oberholzer-Gee, Felix; Strumpf, Koleman (2007). The Effect of File Sharing on Record Sales: An Empirical Analysis. *Journal of Political Economy*. Vol. 115 No. 1
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19. Mauss, Marcel (2000 [1925]). *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. New York, W. W. Norton & Company
20. <http://www.wow-board.net/wbb2/thread.php?postid=195818> (21.11.2006)
21. Krömer, Jan; Sen, Evrim (2006). *No Copy. Die Welt der digitalen Raubkopie*. Berlin, Tropen
22. Deleuze; Guattari, (1983)

A Topography of E-space - Electronic Networks and Public Space

Saskia Sassen

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC NETBASE

A speech given at World-Information.Org, Brussels, July 13, 2000
<http://world-information.org>

I would like to address three issues: The first is a sort of mapping of where we are at now when it comes to the subject of digital networks; The second one is the distinction between public access digital networks and private digital networks; The third one is some kind of an experimental exploration of what could be a new form of politics and a new form of economics, located in the topography of digital space which is for me a topography that weaves in and out of digital space.

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INFORMATION.ORG

So let me start with the first one: If I thought about today and what marks the specificity of this current moment, I would say that it is the emergence of high performance networks. E-space has emerged not simply as a means for communicating, but as a major new theatre for capital accumulation and the operations of global capital. And, increasingly for new forms of transnational politics that are connecting people engaged in often very specific, local issues that they share with other localities. I will elaborate more on each of these subjects as the talk proceeds, but let me start with this first mapping.

In my reading we are now in the fourth stage of what we could call the internet. You know well that some people argue that there is no such thing as an internet, because it really is a network of networks and there are better terms than internet. But for the purposes of communication, I would use the term internet. Internet for me is characterized by public access networks: In order to gain access, you may need no money, or you may need a little money, or you may need a lot of money; But it is public access, unlike the digital networks within which much of global finance takes place. Internet Service Providers – no matter how much you are willing to pay – are going to give you access to.

So the history of public access networks – the internet for short hand – is to me already marked by four periods: The original period is well known for developing the primal features of the internet; The second one, which I see as a sort of exploding on the scene in the early 1980s, is the hacker-period (open source software, the real attempt to maximize access, connectivity, decentralisation, etc.); The third period really begins in fall 1993, with the actual installation of the World Wide Web; And the hitherto last period is marked by the dominance of a new type of software-production that is geared towards business and privatisation.

Now, let me focus just very briefly on the period that really begins in 1993, which is a period of not so much electronic commerce, but of firm-to-firm transactions. The World Wide Web therefore is a brilliant technique to harmonize and facilitate circulation among different computer-systems and different networks that are part of a single, world wide operating firm. In the past, there were enormous problems to harmonize these networks and to make one computer to talk to the other. Firms had to bring in experts, specialised and expensive service companies that focused on how to handle this. The invention of the World Wide Web now brings a solution for free to these firms to handle their enormously elaborate computer-networks and data-sets.

For me, there is a particular phase here in this third period, when basically the backbone of the World Wide Web is financed by a few governments – to a very large extent actually the United States government. So it was paid by the people of the U.S. as well as Europe and a few other countries. In that sense, what was happening by firms using the World Wide Web – saving enormous amounts of money and enormous operational problems by the way – was actually the private appropriation of what was at that point very much a public good. For the sake of communication, I conceptualised these fire-walled intranets that firms located on the World Wide Web as a sort of private citadels in public space. With the privatising of the backbone this

particular formulation is less adequate, because it becomes in fact a public access network, rather than just public network. It is – straight forward – a question of access and connectivity.

DISCOURSE

As a researcher I use software as one of my key-indicators to understand what the internet really is about. So, if I look at software-production today, compared with what it was in the 1980s, I see a radical difference. What dominates software nowadays may be summarized in three points: Number one, the whole question of identification and security around identification; Secondly, firm-to-firm software that is absolutely the dominant software-production; And finally, billing. All of these kinds of software-production, on the one hand are shaping what constitutes this highly public space, which is digital space, public-access-digital-space. And they are also creating privatisations of various kinds. Now, these privatisations are linked in a way to fees, to money, to bills, to payments, to charges, but even if you have to pay, it remains a public access network mostly. And this is the biggest difference with the nature of software-production well into the 1980s, what I described the hacker-period. So, this to me is a very important issue: On the one hand, what was a public space now becomes – to a large extent, not completely – a public-access-for-a-fee-space, and on the other hand, you have this enormous technical development of private digital networks.

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Now, maybe I should actually move to my second subject, which is the distinction of public/private networks. A very quick sort of description, a bit more concrete of what it is that I am trying to say: If you think of global finance, most of it actually happens in private digital networks. They are not clandestine networks, they are not like the black net or what ever, they are simply private. And here one of the challenges, one of the agendas that lie ahead is to decode the term "private" within these networks. The private that is getting constructed in this world of private digital network, is a private that only partly inhabits the very classic division between public and private as it is constitutive for the national state.

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It is a world where digital networks are characterised in principle by the same features that we use to characterise the internet: Simultaneity, connectivity, decentralised access. Three features which in the case of the internet, especially in its truly public portion, produce what we have come to call distributed power. Well, in the world of private digital networks the outcomes are not so benign and I think it becomes enormously important to make the differentiation. It signals to me as a social scientist that digital space is embedded in larger social, political and technical structures which inflect the characteristics of this digital space. In other words, the internet embedded in the hacker-culture produces distributed power, the internet embedded in the global finance culture produces hierarchy and centralisation. So the kind of power that attaches to global finance is partly made possible because of the digital networks within which it operates, and partly made possible because of the role of global finance which is much more than the technical portion.

PUBLIC NETBASE

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Now, let me just make it a bit more concrete when it comes to global finance which is a darling subject that I have been doing research on for a very long time. Just a few figures to illustrate:

as you know, global trade has grown enormously (6 trillion dollars last year), foreign direct investment has grown enormously over the last ten years (another sort of 6 trillion), and the total foreign direct investment stock right now is something like 5.9 trillion at the end of 1999. These are enormous amounts of money. But on the other hand you have a global financial market that is well over 80 trillion dollars by the end of 1999. 80 trillion compared to 6 trillion dollars – as I said global trade is enormous and yet it is dwarfed by this monetary value attached to global finance.

What exactly those 80 trillion dollars are, nobody knows. Is that money? It is called money, it is measured in monetary terms. But it is really a different story and for me it is a story that is made possible in good part by the digitalisation of these markets: What the digital technologies have made possible is the enormous acceleration of transactions in an industry which has invented the ways in which transactions by themselves (buying – selling – buying – selling) make money. So, digitalisation has facilitated the dematerialising of a lot of transactions and a lot of outputs, and it has facilitated a rapid acceleration and a containment of the circuits within which this set of transactions takes place. Global finance today has nothing to do with commercial banking that we saw booming on the world – remember the trans-national banks of the 1970s and 1980s. Those were stodgy operations compared with global finance today.

The point that I want to retrieve here is the fact that because of the features of these global financial markets, the global financial actors have gained a power that goes beyond the raw economic power of the figures involved. This kind of power is something that I call the production of a new normativity, the capability of producing a norm that becomes the "proper" norm for economic policy for those governments that want to join the global game. Between that raw economic power and that normative power, the global financial players have gained an enormous amount of influence. And we are seeing how they are reshaping a lot of the stuff that is happening around us.

Now, the reason I talk about this particular subject in this meeting, which has to do with a world of information technologies, is because I think that this power is in a large part made possible by the properties of digital networks. But I am also saying that digitalisation – this particular aspect of digitalisation that we see in the world of finance – is highly embedded. And this embeddedness means that people, civil society, governments, NGOs and activists can still engage in that power. The topography of the operations of global finance is a topography that moves in and out of digital space. When it moves out of digital space, it very often hits the ground of massive concentrations, and they are literally physical concentrations of materialities and organizational complexities. For me then, this signals the possibility of new politics and of regulatory activities that right now are frankly not part of the discourse.

Now, let me just move to the third issue which relates to the new politics as well as the new economics. I think, I've talked enough about the new politics and the new economics of private digital networks by focusing on the question of finance, so let me very briefly share with you

some of my speculations about the question of the new politics and the new economics in public access networks. Here to me, the most exciting part is the politics. I described how we can use software as an indicator, in order to understand the features of public access networks. Now I am trying to open up what we experience as a line that separates two specific different zones: The hardware and the software or the code.

In this intermediate zone between the capabilities built into the hardware and the capabilities which are being mobilised through the software and the code, only certain elements get activated and produced which we then experience as a naturalised condition of what networks are about. As a researcher, one of my first engagements with these kinds of events is that I was knowledgeable about private digital networks and interested in the political possibilities. What does this mean? This means that we can make features of the hardware work in ways that constitute more effective resistances to all these privatising moves that we see. Private interests have been able to mobilise the resources – and we know that they are enormous resources – to maximise the use of hardware-capabilities for a certain set of projects. And in that sense this era is so different from the hacker-era. How can we do the same thing? We have fewer resources, but we have intelligence and passion.

Second issue about the new politics: I think that what the public access digital networks make possible is a kind of politics of the global that consists of a series of localised efforts. By operating in digital space, localised initiatives are part of a global network. And I think, this is one of the key effects that digitalisation has on what we still may experience as local politics, although it is no longer local the way we used to think of it. Now there is a different kind of local that has been constructed which is really captured better with the notion of a micro-environment within a global span. In this sense, I think that a crucial political issue is to maximise the various types of local politics. We need to multiply the numbers of political groups, of activists and of individuals that locate part of their projects on public access networks. That to me is an enormously important issue, because I think practice does make the form of these networks – I have seen it happen in global finance and I think that is also partly the story in these public access networks.

What I did not talk about was the new economics: I think one of the interesting empowering features of new economics in these public access networks is the notion that you can create your own business. So I have seen a whole number of instances around the world – including Mayan women making handcrafted work – who have accessed global circuits. So one way of thinking about it is that a new form of economics, which is made possible by public access networks, is also an economy that can make the proverbial "small entrepreneur" part of the global circuit – keep in mind that global circuit does not quite mean global market but it means something – and this with very low entry-costs.

So concluding, as I like to say it is a bad world out there in the world of digital networks, especially given the power of private digital networks, but it is also a frontier-zone for a new type of politics and a new type of economics that could produce a redistributing empowerment.

I don't think it is a utopian vision that I have, I think it is very much routed in the capabilities that these new technologies make possible, but those capabilities have to be produced, coded as well as activated, and that takes a lot of effort, a lot of people.

Saskia Sassen

A TOPOGRAPHY OF E-SPACE
- ELECTRONIC NETWORKS
AND PUBLIC SPACE

Free Software, Free Hardware, Free Bandwidth

Interview with Eben Moglen

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

<http://world-information.org>

Free software has become a fairly familiar concept to most people. At the Open Cultures Conference you highlighted the growing importance of free hardware and free bandwidth. Which are the key issues here?

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Hardware got very cheap and easy to acquire by people in the developed world. But the content industries have realized now that there is no way they are going to control software, because free software has become so familiar. If you are Disney or one of the owners of culture, you begin to want to control all the machines in the network, so there is no place where the ownership of culture can give way to the freedom to share. So you try to sneak the law of technology into the law of copyright. This happens via the Digital Millennium Copyright Act in the United States or the European Copyright Directive in Europe. In the end you create the technology called "trusted computing", which means computers that nobody can trust. What we wind up with is a war to use our own computers and cell phones in our own way.

PUBLIC NETBASE

You have also spoken of a "war around bandwidth".

What free bandwidth means is that we ought to have a right to communicate equally using the electromagnetic spectrum that belongs to all of us. Instead, governments pretend they own it or Mr Murdoch owns it, Mr Berlusconi, or that Deutsche Telekom owns it. The result is that we pay to be connected to one another's minds. And that means we can only be as connected as we can afford. Which means that poor people and people who are disfavored in the societies in which they live don't have the ability to speak, and we need to change that.

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To which extent can law-making change that situation? Are law makers aware of these problems?

Law makers could change things. But the reality in which we live now is that law makers change things for the worse. The owners of culture and the owners of bandwidth are to this regime what the aristocracy was to the ancien régime of Europe. They don't pay taxes, they have special legal privileges, they use the public property as though it were their private domain, and they expect law to preserve those privileges, not to threaten them. And indeed, throughout the developed society, this is what happens. It may happen in different ways. In Belgrade under Mr Milošević, it works in one way, in Rome under Berlusconi, it works in a different one, in Washington D.C. under Mr Murdoch in yet another. Throughout the developed world, the relationship between broadcasters and the government is particularly intimate. The telecommunications companies and the image makers are particularly powerful. The experience of the 1990s was that they got everything that they wanted. The experience of the 21st century begins with their having everything they could possibly desire. The problem is that the 12 year olds don't believe what they believe.

Interview with Eben Moglen

FREE SOFTWARE,
FREE HARDWARE,
FREE BANDWIDTH

Are we talking about a revolutionary movement along the dividing line of generations?

The difference between this revolution and the revolution that have marked European history is that the division is less between those who have and who have not than between those who are young and those who are not. The young have a different grasp of the ideological valance of these conceptions. Their view, I think, is more inherently truthful. The pharmaceutical industry bought me and my friends twelve billion dollars of free publicity during the late 1990s because they taught every literate child on earth that the words "intellectual property" means people dying of AIDS in Africa because patented drugs are unaffordable. The people who put children in jail for stealing music think that music is something that can be stolen. Johan Sebastian Bach did not think that music could be stolen, neither did Mozart, and twelve year-olds don't think that music can be stolen. The idea that music is a thing that you can steal belongs to a particular generation in history. It is a culturally and historically contingent event which is ending. It's the fact that its ending that marks the crisis of ideology for the regime in power. The regime serves those who serves it, and they believe that music can be stolen.

So there are some inherent misconceptions in the whole idea of trusted computing and Digital Rights Management?

There are inherent contradictions between a system that claims to be free market capitalism on the one hand, and the ownership of ideas on the other. The patent law is inherently contradictory. When somebody says "I am a free market capitalist, and that is why I believe in the free patent law", that is to say that government should decide what is a good idea, should decide who had the idea, and that for 20 years no one else is allowed to use the idea

unless they pay for it. So claiming to be a free market capitalism and supporting patent law is nonsense. But you don't realize it is nonsense because you don't realize that your ideology is contradictory. Its your world view and you stick to it.

DISCOURSE

Do you think that the new emerging intellectual property regimes will fall victim to their own internal contradictions? Or might there just be an intensification of coercion so that the whole cultural landscape will be streamlined to suit the needs of the rights owners?

NEW ART PRACTICES

They wish it would happen like that, but it won't. The problem is that in the end it will just be an exercise in force. The cultural model that followed Edison was a technologically enabled model that says culture is commodity and it is distributed on coercive terms. You can have it only if you can pay for it. The problem is that in the 21st century coercion works badly because technology resists force. Technology is multi-path. Technology is de-centralized. Technology has low bottle necks. Mr Milošević controlled broadcasting, he could even control newspapers, but he could not control the web sites. B92 moved to Montenegro and published a website and people knew what was going on. Technology resists force, and therefore coercive models for the production and distribution of culture are harder to maintain. The Norwegian teenager Jan Johansen was taken to court by the movie industry in the US and Norway for understanding how DVD works and developing a program that allowed bypassing the copy protection. The industry may win all the cases, but it loses the war.

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PARTICIPATION

With this sort of criticism, what kind of responses are you getting then from media industry and their representatives?

Most of the time they ignore me, deliberately or non-deliberately. When I went out to start doing the crypto wars at the beginning of the 1990 – freeing encryption was the first necessary step – I don't think that the National Security Agency knew who I was. When I started doing Free Software in a serious way Mr. Gates did not pay any attention. He did not know who I was for years. I am still not sure he knows. I was in Redmond last week, but I did not see him, I saw his underlings. But now they know what is free software. I don't think the telecommunications companies think: Moglen is going to get into our business, we'd better be worried. They have no idea who I am. Mr Eisner, the CEO of Disney, has not thought about me in his life. But if they knew what I represent, the ideas that I have the honor to try and improve and spread around the world, they would ignore them in a hostile way. They would not tell anybody about them, that would be dangerous. They would not spread them, that would be ruinous. They would keep silence about them and hope that nobody would notice, and I think this is what they are doing.

PUBLIC NETBASE

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You consider free bandwidth as the key issue to be addressed in the coming years if culture is supposed remain free in the digital era.

Free software is now a thing that exists. The hardware counter revolution – trusted computing – has to fail, as I think it will. The place that's really most difficult and complicated is the regulation of the electro-magnetic spectrum. It is fully accepted by all governments on earth that they need to regulate the spectrum. And it is fully accepted by them in one way or another that means giving away exclusive rights and spectrum to a few privileged organizations and people. And that has to change. We have to use spectrum the way our cell phones use it, by sharing it. Not by giving a piece to him and a piece to her and a piece to them and no piece to you and me. In doing that we are going to challenge the telecommunications companies, the broadcasters, and state power over the spectrum which belongs to all of us. That's the most important next step. I am getting ready to say we won about free software. I am getting ready to say we are going to win about trusted computing. Because that is where the revolution really happens.

But the obstacles seem to be formidable.

Sure, this is an area where political power resists most firmly, and that is where it has to give way. We can't live in a 21st century where Rupert Murdoch and Silvio Berlusconi and a twenty other people control most of the bandwidth and give it to us only if we pay for it. We have to live in a world where everybody is a broadcaster, everybody can be a radio station, everybody can be a television, everybody can do whatever he or she needs to communicate with others on an equal basis.

What needs to happen in order for this to be possible?

In order to do that all we have to do is take the technology that exist now as models and spread it and make it better and put it into the parts of the electromagnetic spectrum where it belongs. Doing that means changing the law of all developed societies – by getting around it, by hacking it, by playing tricks with it, by pulling it inside out. It is not going to change because the legislator wakes up one morning and says "I think I'll undo spectrum concentration today". In fact, we are just observing the American Federal Communications Commission do the opposite, giving even more power to Mr Murdoch.

Frequently Asked Questions About the Public Domain

Eric Kluitenberg

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

Version 7.0, May 2008

About this FAQ:

This FAQ about the public domain has been re-edited for the sixth time after it first appeared in Dutch language. The original Dutch version was the result of an extensive "Public Research" called "Public Domain 2.0", carried out by the Society for Old and New Media (Waag Society) in Amsterdam in the beginning of 1998. The project should be seen as an attempt to reassert public agency in the information age, not as a given, but as a sphere which urgently needs to be reinvented to address the conditions of the unfolding era of global information and communication systems.

PUBLIC NETBASE

1 - WHAT IS THE PUBLIC DOMAIN?

First of all the public domain as a social and cultural space should be distinguished from its juridical definition. The public domain is traditionally understood as a commonly shared space of ideas and memories, and the physical manifestations that embody them. The monument as a physical embodiment of community memory and history exemplifies this principle most clearly. Access, signification, disgust, and appropriation of the public monument are the traditional forms in which the political struggles over collective memory and history are carried out.

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Juridical Definition:

1: Land owned directly by the government

2: The realm embracing property rights that belong to the community at large, are unprotected by copyright or patent, and are subject to appropriation by anyone (Date: 1832)

(Source: Webster Dictionary – www.m-w.com/dictionary)

Commentary:

Esma Moukthar: "What we today call the 'public domain' consists of a multiplicity of places and virtual spaces, in which people do gather, but not primarily to find differences, but to find agreement. Agreement with that which at that particular moment constitutes your chosen identity. Thus the differences search for their own place and direction. Each their own public domain as an extension of what is private."

Moukthar contrasts this definition with Hanna Arendt's; "The space created by the plurality of people".

(Source: Esma Moukthar, "Publiek domein: privé-domein", MA Thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1998).

2 - WHAT IS THE PUBLIC DOMAIN 2.0?

Public Domain 2.0 is a design call for future public spaces in digital media environments. Spaces which are neither dominated by commercial interests (market driven), nor monopolised by the state. Apart from publicly accessible information, active public participation is a distinctive characteristic of the Public Domain 2.0. The public in part determines the design and content of this new public space.

Many discussions about the "network society" (4) tend to emphasise either the role of industry, or that of the state. Notably absent in these discussions is the third sector; social and cultural organisations, organisations for mental and health care, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and community and interest groups.

Commentary:

"New production processes and new media are (indeed) forcing us to reconfigure our notions of what might constitute public space and the public domain. But this should not induce us to restrict our focus to the virtual domain. Although I agree that it is 'where the action is' in the sense that everything in our culture is reconfiguring around virtual flows; (flows of information,

flows of technology, flows of organizational interaction, flows of images, sounds and symbols). And I realize that these flows are not just one element in the social organization, they are an expression of processes 'dominating' our economic, political and social life.

But PLACES do not disappear.

In the wider cultural and political economy the virtual world is inhabited by a cosmopolitan elite. In fact put crudely elites are cosmopolitan and people are local. The space of power and wealth is projected throughout the world, while people's life experience is rooted in places, in their culture, in their history."

(Source: David Garcia – "Some thoughts on the Public Domain", 8 February 1998)

Computing definition of "public domain":

(PD) The total absence of (copyright) protection. If something is "in the public domain" then anyone can copy it or use it in any way they wish. The author has none of the exclusive rights which apply to a copyright work.

The phrase "public domain" is often used incorrectly to refer to (freeware) or (shareware), (software which is copyrighted but is distributed without (advance) payment). Public domain means no copyright – no exclusive rights. In fact the phrase "public domain" has no legal status at all in the UK.

(Source: The Free On-line Dictionary of Computing, February 15, 1998)

2.1 - What is the Digital Commons

Perhaps another name for the public domain 2.0, possibly a better one! This term has been introduced by the founders of the Sarai new media initiative in Delhi, after they first published a 01 reader on the public domain in January 2001. The term refers to the concept of the commons, commons culture, the House of Commons,...

Main Entry: Common

Function: Noun

Date: 14th century

1 plural: The common people

2 plural but singular in construction: A dining hall

3 plural but singular or plural in construction, often capitalized a): The political group or estate comprising the commoners, b): The parliamentary representatives of the commoners, c): House Of Commons.

4: The legal right of taking a profit in another's land in common with the owner or others

5: A piece of land subject to common use: as a): Undivided land used especially for pasture, b): a public open area in a municipality

(Source: Webster on-line dictionary)

Commentary:

"There are various kinds of libraries that exist in the city of Delhi, some established and run by the national and city government bodies, and some that are the offerings of other nations' cultural largesse. In all these, only one offers relatively unfettered access – the American Centre Library. Many university students in Delhi are members of only this library, and for a lot of them the idea of 'freedom' and 'free America' have become synonymous with its existence and operation.

Yet the libraries that you do not enter are as formative as the ones you do. The problem lies not in the fact of you being given access to only one universe, but of being barred from many others. This arises not from a lack of resources but because these emerge from public policies which premise themselves on the continuation of gated knowledge communities.

This conclusion evokes a memory...

I was told by a friend of the rambles in England - who go on long walks for the wonderful pleasure of taking in 'mountain, moor, heath and down' – that when they walk, they do so partly to keep public paths public. Many of these walking routes have emerged from being trod by countless people over countless years. By law, if they are not used by the public to walk on them, they will revert to private ownership."

(Source: Monica Narula, "Tales of the Commons Culture", in Mute Magazine, London July 2001.)

Commentary

"The American writer and policy strategist David Bollier however points out that the wider concept of the public domain should be differentiated from that of the commons. The public domain in his view implies a passive open space that can be shared by anyone and everyone, and thus belongs to everyone and no one at the same time. The public domain invites the problem of responsibility. Since there is no boundary implied, nor any kind of ownership, neither private nor collective, nobody feels responsible for the resources that reside in the public domain.

The concept of the commons on the contrary implies boundaries. The commons refers to a resource, to common land, to common means of production, knowledge or information, that is shared amongst the constituents of a more or less well-defined community. There is ownership here, but the ownership is collective, rather than individual. Furthermore, the rules of how these common resources are shared, and amongst whom, are not necessarily fixed in intransmutable rules. In the case of a digital commons, the notion of the commons no longer refers only to a territory, i.e. to a geographically situated community, but can also refer to a group of people who share a common interest or set ideas, yet who may be distributed potentially world-wide. Here we see where the hybridity comes in: The commons is extended from a set of shared physical resources (common land) to an immaterial domain (ideas, knowledge, information), and secondly the commons is extended from something that is necessarily geographically situated (walking paths) to something that is shared across geographical divides, because it is electronically mediated via digital networks. But in all of these cases the commons are not entirely 'free'. There are rules and mechanism of access, and limitations on use that are defined by the shared values of the community sharing these resources."

(Source: Eric Kluitenberg, "Constructing the Digital Commons", 2003.

See also David Bollier's website: www.bollier.org

For a general introduction to key concepts of the commons see:

www.commonsvdev.us/content.php?id=1467, May 10, 2008)

3 - WHO OWNS THE PUBLIC DOMAIN?

Everyone and no one. The public domain of information and communication should not be monopolised by the state nor by commercial corporations (7) or non-accountable NGOs.

4 - WHAT IS A NETWORK SOCIETY?

To answer this question we must first ask:

4.1 - What is an Information Economy?

The information sector of an economy is that sector whose products consist principally of information goods.

Information goods are non-material goods. They are most easily distinguished by the fact that they can be stored in various media and when stored in electronic media, their cost of reproduction becomes negligibly low. Some examples of information goods include software, music, video, databases, books, machine designs, genetic information, and other copyrighted or patented goods.

When the information sector of an economy becomes more dominant than either its industrial or ecology sector, then that economy has become an information economy.

(Source: Roberto Verzola, Cyberlords: The Rentier Class of the Information Sector Resources: www.tao.ca/earth/lk97/archive/0174.html)

4.2 - When is it Appropriate to Speak of an Information Society?

A society in which Information and Communication Technology has become the dominant technology, and whose economy is primarily an information economy, can be called an information society. Another commonly used term for this kind of society is "Post-Industrial Society".

Commentary:

The term "Information Society", according to a recent report of the European Commission's Information Society Project Office (ISPO), reflects "European concerns with the broader social and organisational changes which will flow from the information and communications revolution", as opposed to the more limited, technology based, term "information highways", which originates from the United States.

(Source: Information Society Project Office (ISPO), "Introduction to the information society the European way", 1995 This and other policy papers can be found at: www.ispo.cec.be/infosoc/back.html)

4.3 - And What About the Network Society?

Sociologist Manuel Castells concludes in his book "The Rise of the Network Society": "...as a historical trend, dominant functions and processes in the information age are increasingly organised around networks. Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture. While the networking form of social organisation has existed in other times and spaces, the new information technology paradigm provides the material basis for its pervasive expansion throughout the entire social structure."

(Source: Manuel Castells, "The Rise of the Network Society - The Information Age Vol.1", Blackwell Publishers, Malden (Mass.), 1996, p. 469)

5 - ARE THERE ANY TOOLS TO BUILD THE PUBLIC DOMAIN 2.0?

The strongest tool to build the public domain 2.0 is the network itself, the way in which people can be mobilised and organised around shared common interests, locally, translocally and internationally using networked media. A lot of people put enormous effort in the

creation of software tools and systems that can empower emerging civic movements. The free software, open source and copyleft movements are important agents for these new civic movements.

5.1 - What is Free Software?

"Free software" is a matter of liberty, not price. To understand the concept, you should think of "free speech", not "free beer".

"Free software" refers to the users' freedom to run, copy, distribute, study, change and improve the software. More precisely, it refers to four kinds of freedom, for the users of the software:

- The freedom to run the program, for any purpose (freedom 0).
- The freedom to study how the program works, and adapt it to your needs (freedom 1). Access to the source code is a precondition for this.
- The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbor (freedom 2).
- The freedom to improve the program, and release your improvements to the public, so that the whole community benefits. (freedom 3). Access to the source code is a precondition for this.

A program is free software if users have all of these freedoms."

(Source: Free Software Foundation: www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html)

5.2 - What is Open Source?

The basic idea behind open source is very simple. When programmers on the internet can read, redistribute, and modify the source for a piece of software, it evolves. People improve it, people adapt it, people fix bugs. And this can happen at a speed that, if one is used to the slow pace of conventional software development, seems astonishing.

We in the open-source community have learned that this rapid evolutionary process produces better software than the traditional closed model, in which only a very few programmers can see source and everybody else must blindly use an opaque block of bits.

A complete definition of Open Source can be found at:

www.opensource.org/osd.html

(Source: The Open Source Initiative (OSI) – www.opensource.org)

5.3 - What is Copyleft?

The simplest way to make a program free is to put it in the public domain, uncopyrighted. This allows people to share the program and their improvements, if they are so minded. But it also allows uncooperative people to convert the program into proprietary software. They can make changes, many or few, and distribute the result as a proprietary product. People who receive the program in that modified form do not have the freedom that the original author gave them; the middleman has stripped it away.

In the GNU project, our aim is to give all users the freedom to redistribute and change GNU software. If middlemen could strip off the freedom, we might have many users, but those users would not have freedom. So instead of putting GNU software in the public domain, we "copyleft" it. Copyleft says that anyone who redistributes the software, with or without changes, must pass along the freedom to further copy and change it. Copyleft guarantees that every user has freedom.

(Source: Free Software Foundation – www.gnu.org/copyleft/copyleft.html)

5.4 - What is Creative Commons?

Creative Commons is devoted to expanding the range of creative work available for others to build upon and share

"Creative Commons is a non-profit corporation founded on the notion that some people may not want to exercise all of the intellectual property rights the law affords them. We believe there is an unmet demand for an easy yet reliable way to tell the world "Some rights reserved" or even "No rights reserved". Many people have long since concluded that all-out copyright doesn't help them gain the exposure and widespread distribution they want. Many entrepreneurs and artists have come to prefer relying on innovative business models rather than full-fledged copyright to secure a return on their creative investment. Still others get fulfilment from contributing to and participating in an intellectual commons. For whatever reasons, it is clear that many citizens of the Internet want to share their work – and the power to reuse, modify, and distribute their work – with others on generous terms. Creative Commons intends to help people express this preference for sharing by offering the world a set of licenses on our Website, at no charge."

(Source: Creative Commons frequently asked questions)

5.5 - What is Science Commons?

"There are terabytes of research data being produced in laboratories around the world, but the best web search tools available can't help us make sense of it. Why? Because more stands between basic research and meaningful discovery than the problem of search.

Many scientists today work in relative isolation, left to follow blind alleys and duplicate existing research. Data is Balkanised – trapped behind firewalls, locked up by contracts or lost in databases that can't be accessed or integrated. Materials are hard to get – universities are overwhelmed with transfer requests that ought to be routine, while grant cycles pass and windows of opportunity close. It's not uncommon for research sponsors to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in critically important efforts like drug discovery, only to see them fail.

The consequences in many cases are no less than tragic. The time it takes to go from identifying a gene to developing a drug currently stands at 17 years – forever, for people suffering from disease.

Science Commons has three interlocking initiatives designed to accelerate the research cycle – the continuous production and reuse of knowledge that is at the heart of the scientific method. Together, they form the building blocks of a new collaborative infrastructure to make scientific discovery easier by design.

- Making scientific research "re-useful" – We help people and organizations open and mark their research and data sets for reuse.
- Enabling "one-click" access to research materials – We help streamline the materials-transfer process so researchers can easily replicate, verify and extend research. [Learn more.](#)
- Integrating fragmented information sources – We help researchers find, analyze and use data from disparate sources by marking and integrating the information with a common, computer-readable language."

(Source: "About Science Commons" – <http://sciencecommons.org/about/>, May 4, 2008)

5.6 - Why are Creative Commons, Free Software, Open Source, and Copyleft Relevant for the Public Domain 2.0?

Copyright and intellectual property protection, though invented to protect the rights of authors, increasingly serve the interests of intermediaries, publishers, software and media conglomerates. The increasing tendencies towards integration and mega mergers in and across these sectors create anti-markets that stifle the development of new products and ideas, promote pricing that is unrelated to production costs and as a result high consumer prices, and finally make markets increasingly inaccessible for new players.

The network logic can work in two opposed directions, towards the winner-takes-all effect: because many people use a given product more people use it, i.e. monopolies emerge as a "natural" result. Or the fact that value of a network product rises because more people use it can promote systems of free distribution, shareware, and gift economies. This is a matter of choice, not necessity.

6 - WHAT IS CONVERGENCE?

"The term convergence eludes precise definition, but it is most commonly expressed as: The ability of different network platforms to carry essentially similar kinds of services, or the coming together of consumer devices such as the telephone, television and personal computer."

(...) Traditionally, communications media were separate. Services were quite distinct – broadcasting, voice telephony and on-line computer services. They operated on different networks and used different "platforms": TV sets, telephones and computers. Each was regulated by different laws and different regulators, usually at national level. Nowadays digital technology allows a substantially higher capacity of traditional and new services to be transported over the same networks and to use integrated consumer devices for purposes such as telephony, television or personal computing.

Telecommunications, media and IT companies are using the flexibility of digital technologies to offer services outside their traditional business sectors, increasingly on an international or global scale.

(Source: Green Paper on the Convergence of the Telecommunications, Media and Information Technology Sectors, and the Implications for Regulation – Towards an Information Society Approach, European Commission, Brussels, 3 December 1997. This and other papers can be found at: www.ispo.cec.be/convergencegp/)

7 - WHAT MEANS "MARKET-DRIVEN"?

"Europe is shifting towards an information-based economy, where networks and network infrastructure play as significant role as did the rail networks in transforming the European economies in the last century.

For Europe to meet the challenges presented by this Information Society, it is vital to ensure that business, industry and Europe's citizen's can access modern, affordable and efficient communications infrastructures over which a rich and diverse range of traditional and new multi-media services will be offered.

This revolution has been recognised at the highest political level. In their conclusions on the Bangemann Group Report, the Heads of State and Government meeting in Corfu considered 'that the current unprecedented technological revolution in the area of the Information Society opens up vast possibilities for economic progress, employment and the quality of life'. These changes are being driven by technology and by market forces. New global and regional partnerships are being formed to enable business and ordinary citizens to benefit from the opportunities offered by the convergence of broadcasting, telecommunications and information technologies."

(Source: Green Paper on the liberalisation of telecommunications infrastructure and cable television networks, part II, European Commission, Brussels, January 25, 1995. This and other related policy documents can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/index_en.htm)

DISCOURSE

Commentary:

As a result of the convergence of formerly separate media and (tele-) communications industries a gigantic fusion and merger process is haunting these industries. These mergers principally take two shapes: Firstly "Horizontal Integration": Companies within a certain business segment integrate to achieve a greater share in the world's media and communication markets. More interestingly there also is a strong movement towards "Vertical Integration", where mergers cut across various business segments; i.e. cable operators going into telephony, mergers of telecommunication companies and media content producers, software companies buying into film- and media-production companies.

NEW ART PRACTICES

Economists will always argue against vertical integration, putting production and distribution in one hand, which sets ideal conditions for the creation of what economist Fernand Braudel calls "anti-markets". Vertical integration has been an on-going process in the media and telecommunications industries. While it remains to be seen if such colossuses will turn out to be successful ventures, it is clear that the power issue, putting internet access, content provision, cable networks, TV and news stations, radio, magazines and print publishers under the helm of one single board of directors – and this on a historically unprecedented scale – is a direct threat to the freedom of information.

TACTICAL MEDIA

8 - WHO IS GOING TO PAY FOR THE PUBLIC DOMAIN?

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Right now the user generally pays for the telecommunications services according to use; in other words the consumer pays. In many European countries public broadcasting services are, on the contrary, financed through the state-budget, often via a public broadcasting fee paid by viewers and listeners. Commercial broadcasting is financed through sponsorship and advertisement.

If the public domain in the digital media environment is viewed as a community service, an alternative financial model will have to be developed. This will require either a restructuring of the budget for public broadcasting services, or the institution of an "info-tax" on the commercial use of communication networks. Out of these revenues funds can be established, out of which community services that run over existing emerging networks can be financed. Also initiatives should be encouraged to develop micropayment systems (not using credit cards) with which users will be able to pay content producers directly.

PUBLIC NETBASE

Commentary:

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At the Economies of the Commons conference in De Balie in Amsterdam, April 11 & 12, 2008, strategies for sustainability and possibilities for creative reuse of publicly accessible audiovisual

collections on the internet were discussed in a broad international forum of national broadcast archivists, researchers, media producers, copyleft activists, open content providers, immaterial heritage resource developers, professional cultural institutions and individual producers, and people from the internet and ICT industry.

The paradoxical question here was "What can be the most successful business model for creating public access to these resources?".

A number of models seem to prevail: Offering access via targeted advertising and/or user profiling (widely disliked); sponsorship in exchange for public exposure; Donation schemes facilitated by on-line payment tools, robust public /government funding combined with taxation (the classic model but one that is disappearing quickly). The producers of the "Steal This Film" documentaries proposed a truly innovative idea: VODO – a DRM type tracking mechanism that identifies the originating source of a particular media document on-line to enable VOLuntary Donations to the originator of the material (see also: www.stealththisfilm.com).

(Source: Research collection website/dossier Economies of the Commons conference – www.ecommons.eu)

Commentary:

The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) has come up with a surprising suggestion in a recent policy proposal for the future of the public broadcast system called "Focus on Functions – Challenges for a future-proof media policy". They identified among four possible models for government involvement in the sensitive domain of media production, the so-called "Production Fund Model". In this scenario the state provides the guarantees for an adequately diverse news provision, and the technical infrastructure for public media services in all existing and possible future media platforms. Organisations from the wider social and cultural field can apply to the production fund to receive funding for relevant public media production in any possible medium, form or modality.

The proposal shifts the focus of media policy away from specific media channels (TV, Radio, Print, Internet) towards media "functions", i.e public provision of information, pluralism of public opinion, diversity of content providers, support for commercially not viable media productions with high public value. Furthermore this proposal marks a shift away from professional media producers, towards socially rooted organisations, initiatives and representative bodies, NGOs and civil initiatives.

The Digital Commons would be paid for out of existing means for public broadcasting – the hierarchy between radio, television and internet in public media offering would be dissolved.

(Source: WRR (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid – "Focus op functies: uitdagingen voor een toekomstbestendig mediabeleid", February 17, 2005), www.wrr.nl/content.jsp?objectid=2799)

9 - DOES THE PUBLIC DOMAIN 1.0 STILL EXIST?

Like the public urban space, also the public media domain is threatened by privatisation and increased surveillance. These threats are now most pertinent for the internet. While for instance in Europe the proliferation of commercial communication in the mass-media is controlled by regulation, commercial exploitation is unrestricted, or even encouraged (6), in the case of the internet.

10 - WHY IS THE RIGHT TO COMMUNICATION NECESSARY?

Access to information and communication should be seen as fundamental democratic right for all citizens of the world, not as an asset or simply a consumer product.

Commentary:

"The People's Communication Charter (PCC) represents a citizens' demand for the protection of the quality of communication services and the provision of information. Communication services should be user-friendly, accessible and affordable and information should be reliable and pluralist. The eighteen articles of the People's Communication Charter can be summed up with these five key themes:

1. Communication and Human Rights. Communication and information services should be guided by respect for fundamental human rights.
2. Public Domain. Communication resources (such as airwaves and outer space) belong to the "commons"; They are public domain and should not be appropriated by private parties.
3. Ownership. Communication and information services should not be monopolized by governments or business firms.
4. Empowerment. People are entitled to the protection of their cultural identity and to the development of their communicative skills.
5. Public accountability. Providers of communication and information services should accept public accountability for the quality of their performance."

(Source: Introduction to the People's Communication Charter: www.pccharter.net)

Authors and document history:

The original version of this FAQ was drafted in Amsterdam, April 1998, by Robert van Boeschoten, Eric Kluitenberg, Geert Lovink, Reinder Rustema, and Marleen Stikker.

(Source: www.waag.org/faq_publiekdomein2.0/)

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Eric Kluitenberg

FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE
PUBLIC DOMAIN

Myths about Copyright

Lawrence Liang

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC NETBASE

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There has been a growing body of work that challenges the normative basis of intellectual property. These critiques are marked by their dissatisfaction with the traditional theories of justification, and have instead attempted to locate the historical and material basis of the emergence of IPR, and the role that they play in the politics of information and knowledge production in contemporary societies.¹

This critical approach to intellectual property has also gained from other movements and attempts at rearticulating ideas of creativity and property, like the free software movement. The free software/open source movement has inspired a whole generation of "open" initiatives including open content, open publishing, open art, etc. At the heart of the varied open initiatives is the belief that there is a need to rearticulate the basis of cultural and knowledge production to acknowledge the importance of the commons² of knowledge and culture. The idea of the commons of course is not a new one and traces its historical roots back to Roman times. The most common usage of the "commons" however is derived from England, when land was held as communal property and was not owned by any person or institution.

In recent times it has found articulation in legal developments in international law recognizing the common heritage of humankind. An attempt is therefore being made by these various scholars to understand cyberspace or the World Wide Web as the new global commons, which is under threat by the operation of intellectual property laws. This article seeks to understand these critical developments around the ideas of the "global commons", the new "public domain" and how these terms can offer an alternative conceptualisation to current copyright law.

THE GLOBAL COMMONS AND THE IPR DEBATE

Before we proceed to examine the all-pervasive status of copyright in our all day life, it is imperative for us to understand the current critical debates around intellectual property. The critical movement in its varied forms has largely emerged in the context of legal scholars and practitioners from the US examining the ways in which intellectual property have come to dominate almost every aspect of life.

Lawrence Liang
MYTHS ABOUT
COPYRIGHT

It is in this context that opposition to the current practice of intellectual property law has emerged. It would of course be a misnomer to characterize the movement as a homogenous one with a single voice, as clearly even within the critical tradition there are very different positions ranging from an abolitionist stand to a lesser or softer protection stand. And the movement has certainly developed over the years to accommodate various positions. At a narrow level the crucial claim that has been argued consistently and currently being tested before the US Supreme Court has its basis in the fact that the US law of copyright is grounded in the constitution of the US. At a wider level it raises the larger issue of the relation between information and property and the forms and the implications that the internet and cyberspace have for the classical understanding of information and property. The invocation of a historically rich metaphor of the commons in relation to cyberspace as the "last frontier" of the commons universalises the debate beyond the concerns of the US alone.

Implicit in our current understanding of globalisation is the fact that information and communication technology, especially the internet, plays a great role in constituting the very process that we now understand as globalisation. There have been various levels of descriptive frameworks used to understand the ongoing process. In the institutional description of globalisation for instance, one often hears about the role played by transnational organizations such as the World Bank and the emergence of the World Trade Organization in the process of globalisation. The chief aim of the WTO is the establishment of standard rules and regulations for trade, and ensuring that legal systems across the world comply with the established global standard for the protection of IPR.

It is our argument that an understanding of the insertion of the discourse of copyright into quotidian imagination is critical for an insight into the worldwide transformations that are taking place within the realm of the production and distribution of knowledge and cultural commodities. It is in these spaces that the myth of copyright is carefully constructed and constantly reinforced. Our experience of media in any form is pre-mediated by our understanding of the networks of their circulation within the economy of intellectual property. The greatest success of the concept of copyright has been its successful elevation to the status of myth through the constant rendering of certain familiar figures (the poor struggling author), arguments (people deserve to own the fruit of their labour) and rhetorical data (billions of dollars lost due to piracy). By specifically labelling these assumptions myths, we seek to question their truth premise.

CONTEXTUALISING AUTHORSHIP AND ORIGINALITY

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

Copyright assumes as the subject of its enquiry the rights of the author. Simple as it sounds, this assertion is of great importance for our understanding of the conflict over copyright. Two sets of self-fulfilling prophecies are achieved by the assertion that copyright protects the rights of authors. First, it assumes a category which makes universal sense across cultures and across time – namely, that of "the author". Second, by erecting this universal figure of the author and asserting that copyright is meant for the protection of the author, it universalises the relationship between copyright and creativity. Our first task is, then, to historicise the emergence of the author figure or the author function as a relatively modern phenomenon that has arisen in the context of the crisis caused by the print revolution.

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Before the invention of the printing press, the act of writing was a very localised activity. It was impossible to disseminate knowledge in any significant manner since the inaccuracies of copying prevented widespread use of the written word. The printing press enabled a number of innovations. Duplication became easier and more accurate. Mass distribution became viable. The printing press also revolutionised information storage, retrieval and usage. Printing, unlike writing, allowed a society to build on the past with the confidence that each step was being made on a firm foundation. Printing affirmed the belief that new information was an improvement over the old. The revolution in the capacity to accurately reproduce works fostered an understanding that progress can occur through a process of revision and improvement. The increased accuracy and rapidity of new editions made possible by the printing press made the most recent editions more valued than the older ones. Additionally, by providing access to the written word to the literate public, printing made possible a larger reading public which then formed the emerging public sphere.

PUBLIC NETBASE

The reaction from the literary and artistic world was to move away from the "ills of the industrial revolution". They began to deploy the notion of the author as a unique and transcendent being, possessing originality of spirit. This romantic model was used as a means of rescuing artists' works from the hostile market and the public, for whom mass production made works available as never before, but at the risk of their turning into industrial products.

WORD
INFORMATION.ORG

The romantic artist was, therefore, deemed to have property in an uncommodifiable imaginary self; Originality was thereby elevated and located in the self of the author. And because the artist owns his/her original person or spirit, works created by such authors were also deemed to be original; in this way they could distinguish their personality from the expanding realm of mass produced goods. This is the moment when the romantic theory merges with the doctrine of property prevalent at the time, through the theory of conversion propounded by John Locke, wherein an individual, through his/her labour, creates something of value out of nothing. It is important to note that this is also the theory that justifies the appropriation of the commons, including lands understood as not belonging to any "civilised" nation.

Once unleashed, the idea of the author starts taking on a new meaning with unexpected consequences. It emerges as a new social relationship, which will transform the way society perceives the ownership of knowledge. This establishment of the ideological figure of the author naturalises a particular process of knowledge production where the emphasis on individual contribution denigrates the concept of community knowledge and helps promulgate the notion of the individual as owner.

The significant contribution to literary theory through the works of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida has been to problematise our notions of the romantic individual author. What then do the work of Foucault, Barthes and Derrida mean for the legal interpretation of authorship? If legal scholarship and practice were to take note of the inroads into the very notion of authorship and originality by these thinkers, we would need to reconceptualise the terrain that we understand to be intellectual property legislation. This reconceptualisation will necessarily have to shed the burden of the author's originality and recognise the millions of traces which shadow the arrival of any work, and provide a means of structuring the relationship between such texts, its readers and society at large. It will mean a more nuanced understanding of the public sphere or what intellectual property laws call the public domain, with the presumption being that the author is not a figure who has to be protected from this public sphere but one who resides and works within the public sphere.³

COPYRIGHT, INFORMATION AND THE LANGUAGE OF PROPERTY

Many explanations for the propertisation of intellectual creations are based on the Lockean theory of the creation of property. Locke's theory relies on three basic principles: Firstly, that every person has property in himself/herself; Secondly, everything that is in a state of nature – ie, not as yet propertised and still held in the commons – was given by God to be propertised; And thirdly, that labour converts things in a state of nature into a state of property and adds value to things so laboured upon. Locke was, therefore, of the opinion that if A mixes her labour into a thing that is in a state of nature, that thing becomes the property of A.⁴ In terms of copyright, authors can be said to take ideas that are "out there" in the commons, add their labour to it, and thereby create the "work". The question that Locke fails to answer is why, if authors add labour to ideas, the result becomes the property of the author; his theory simply rests on the assumption that property is the reward for labour.⁵

The next question that may be asked in this context is whether and how a person actually has property in himself or herself. This property in oneself cannot be a product of one's labour and, therefore, it must be premised upon something else. At the core of Locke's theory lies the notion of personal freedom, with state power severely constrained and limited to the protection of liberty. It is in this context that he, again, presumes the ownership of oneself. Unlike Locke, however, Hegel does not see humans as naturally free and as having natural ownership rights in themselves. According to him, occupancy, not labour, is the act by which external things become property. This occupancy, or taking possession, can be done in three ways: Firstly, by

directly grasping it physically; Next, by forming it; And thirdly, by merely marking it as one's own. It is the second of these ways of possession that is most interesting for our purposes. As Hegel remarks, "When I impose a form on something, the thing's determinate character as mine acquires an independent externality and ceases to be restricted to my presence here and now and to the direct presence of my awareness and will."⁶

Moreover, as is seen with the Romantic conception of the author, Hegel fails to account for external influences on creations. Hegel's conception of property being the expression of the will of the individual fails to see that this "work" is influenced by various other factors; Painters, musicians, writers, all learn their skills and are classified into genres and styles; Artists may take inspiration from everyday scenes, and authors from gossip. In such situations can their "works" be said to be expressions of their soul?

Locke locates the desire for propertisation of the commons in the need for the preservation of resources. According to him, if resources are left in the commons their utility will gradually diminish because of over-use or neglect. Land, for example, may be overgrazed or may by neglect become unarable, and in both cases the utility that this land provides is diminished. Locke assumes that once a resource is taken from the commons and transformed into private property the owner of that property will use it in a manner that preserves its value in use. Even if we accept these assumptions, can this theory of the need for propertisation be extended to incorporeal ideas? Does the "over-use" or neglect of ideas lead to the reduction of their value in use?

Information just does not possess the same characteristics as classical "real property". The dissemination of ideas, for instance, does not reduce their use value. Information is considered a "non-rival" good, in the sense that usage of a particular piece of information cannot impair the utility of that information to another user. It has also been characterised as "non-excludable" in the sense that use of a certain piece of information does not exclude other users from utilising the same information. The sharing of information goods, especially in the digital context, does not diminish in any manner the quality of the good that is shared. There is clearly a movement away from the idea of property as we have always understood it. However, the concept of copyright represents a stubborn drive towards taming this new monster of accessibility created by developments in information technology.

COPYRIGHT AND THE INCENTIVE FOR CREATIVITY

It is often argued that in the absence of copyright protection authors would lack the incentive to create more works, thereby depriving society of useful works that may have been produced. Intellectual property law, therefore, is often justified on the basis that it stimulates the investment of time and money in the creation of new works and that many authors of copyrighted works depend for their livelihood on the income that they derive from the publication of their works.⁷

While there may be a case for the proposition that without incentives authors would fail to create new works, the statement that copyright law is a prerequisite for such incentives requires closer examination. What is essentially argued here is that copyright is not synonymous with incentives, and that authors have created in the absence of copyright. It is also argued that, in many instances, the incentive that copyright appears to give authors is illusory.

Firstly, many authors who have little hope of ever finding a market for their publications, and whose copyright is, as a result, virtually worthless, have in the past, and even in the present, continued to write. While it may not be a general phenomenon, it is possible that people produce works purely for personal satisfaction, or even for respect and recognition from peers.⁸

Secondly, historically, there is much to suggest that copyright law and incentive were rarely linked. The 19th century saw the prolific authorship of literary works in the absence of any meaningful protection afforded to authors by virtue of their copyright.⁹ While copyright protection existed, these rarely benefited the author beyond an initial payment for the copyright for their works.¹⁰ This payment, often referred to as an honorarium, bore no relationship to the exchange value of that work, but was rather an acknowledgment of the writer's achievements.¹¹ In the vast majority of cases, most of the profits went to the publisher¹² and, on occasion, authors were even asked to underwrite a portion of the publishing costs. Moreover, without the publisher the copyright had no effective value, as the work would never get published. It is clear that in reality copyright protection usually benefited the publisher, and rarely the author.¹³

Furthermore, with the enactment of every subsequent Copyright Act, the protection given to authors was reduced.¹⁴ In England, prior to 1814, copyright for the work reverted to the author after a term. The author could renew proprietary rights over his or her work, and could conceivably gain from again transferring the copyright. However, after 1814 such renewal terms were eliminated and the author lost his/her position in the mechanisms of copyright. The typical transaction consisted of the transfer of the copyright to the publisher by the author on the basis of a one-time payment. Subsequently the author had little role to play in the publication of his/her work and the author reaped little reward from future sales.¹⁵

Currently there are several mechanisms, primarily internet-based, for creating incentives that are independent of copyright. The Street Performer, or the Fairshare Protocols, are examples of such devices. Under the latter system, several people make a payment directly to the author to finance future works with the understanding that they are given access to a portion of the consequent profits. Under the first method, the authors contemplate a menu of options available to artists. What each has in common is that a release price will be set for a work, and that it will be made available in digital form, without copyright restrictions, once members of the public voluntarily donate sufficient funds to meet the asking price.

COPYRIGHT PROTECTS THE POOR STRUGGLING AUTHOR

DISCOURSE

We are constantly regaled with stories of how copyright as a system acts as the basic protection for poor, struggling authors who would otherwise have no means of protecting themselves against pirates who reproduce their goods or others who steal their ideas. Let us, at the very outset, clarify that we are certainly not enemies of creative workers, and that we would, of course, like to see all creative labour recognised and rewarded. But the question that begs an answer is: does copyright really achieve that and, if not, why does this image of the poor, struggling author keep coming to mind?

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What the metaphor of the poor, struggling author does is render invisible the critical difference between the authorship of a work of intellectual labour and the ownership of the same. Copyright scholar Peter Jaszi states that while there is a tendency in copyright law "to invoke liberal individualism to justify economic structures that frustrate the aspirations of real-life individuals, it is somewhat surprising to encounter the individualistic Romantic conception of 'authorship' deployed to support a regime that disassociates creative workers from a legal interest in their creations: the 'work-for-hire' doctrine of American copyright law. Where this doctrine applies, the firm or individual who paid to have a work created, rather than the person who created it, is regarded as the 'author' for purposes of copyright ownership". It is abundantly clear that in the current era of industrial production of cultural commodities, copyrighted works are more often than not created by unromantic authors sitting in their cubicles creating for a large corporation like Microsoft.

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When a work is deemed to have been made "for hire", the alienation of labour is formally and legally complete: The "author" of the "work" is the person on whose behalf the "work" was made, not the individual who created it. In this legal configuration, the employer's rights do not derive from the employee by an implied grant or assignment. Rather, those rights are the direct result of the employer's status. Ironically, the employers' claims are rationalised in terms of the Romantic conception of "authorship" with its concomitant values of "originality" and "inspiration".

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Secondly, if one were to closely analyse the agreements between various publishing houses and the authors of works published by them, one notices immediately that unless you are an author of some fame, the contracts are absolutely one-sided, with the individual author having little bargaining power, as he or she assigns all rights in favour of the publishing house.

WORLD
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Clearly pirates respond only to a market demand, and not every commodity is pirated. There is a particular popularity or price limit that has to be achieved before it enters into the piracy circuit. Presumably, if a book has achieved a certain status that leads to it being pirated, its author is no longer poor and struggling. Thus, the sight of Madonna appearing in TV ads condemning piracy because it deprives her of her livelihood is not terribly convincing as images of her many villas and islands flash in one's mind. If the terms of the debate were around property and monopolies alone, then there are many ways in which the issue can be addressed – for instance, under anti

trust laws, etc – but the fact that it is always this image of the sole struggling author that is used hides questions regarding the political economy of publishing, and so on.

ECONOMIC LOSSES CAUSED BY PIRACY

Lawrence Liang

MYTHS ABOUT
COPYRIGHT

The most common use of statistics in the copyright tale concerns the losses caused by piracy. But these statistics often rely on certain dubious economic assumptions. The main one, of course, is the assumption that a person buying an illegal copy would necessarily buy a legal copy of the same if piracy did not exist. Thus, while we know that most computers in India, for instance, have an illegal copy of Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office, can we assume that every user would be willing to pay for the software alone, especially in the light of a free alternative in the form of Linux? Is it not likely that most users would not go in for the Microsoft software were it not for the fact that pirated software is available for free?

In a very insightful study, Harvard economist Carlos Osorio seeks to empirically understand the phenomenon of piracy. He starts with the assumption that computer software has the characteristic of being a non-rival and quasi non-excludable good.¹⁶ Thus, he says, "One may prohibit a third person from using it only by not letting him (or her) access a version of the software. Once access is granted, however, the software can be copied at almost zero cost. By doing so, new users cannot exclude the earlier one from using the software – as with a bicycle or a jacket – and, by direct and indirect network effects, the new user adds value to the whole network of users (legal and illegal)". The question for him, then, is: What are the effects of illegal copying of software, commonly known as "piracy", on the overall software market? Why do some software companies enforce their IPR differently across countries?

He states that, classically, illegal copying is commonly assumed to be a function of the price of the software, the average income per capita of the potential market, and the marginal cost of copying versus producing the software. However, he states that, in addition to these common assumptions, it is important to examine the role of direct and indirect network effects in explaining the importance of illegal users in the diffusion process. His argument is that software companies might have a direct and indirect role in helping the generation of illegal copying in underdeveloped markets, and incentives for doing so. In terms of business strategies, for instance, some ways of doing this are by undersupplying system compatibility, generating lock-in for users of their product.

Furthermore, piracy often acts in underdeveloped markets as the most efficient manner of creating a market or user base and also to create a lock-in period for the product. Thus Microsoft has consistently refused to enforce its IPR in markets in developing countries until a market base is created for its products. Piracy works to produce "network effects", which means that with every added user, whether legal or not, the popularity of a product increases. Network effects are important because, in terms of the total user base, the illegal users of software add value to all the users, legal and illegal, and act as agents in fostering the diffusion of the

software by word-of-mouth. In this way, they indirectly generate additional positive effects for the software company.

CONCLUSION

The task of this paper has been to examine the various myths that sustain copyright. This is just the beginning of the process of questioning the assumptions on which copyright is based. If we are to seriously engage with the totalising logic of copyright, two tasks lie ahead. Firstly, we will need to continue to chip away at the foundational logic of copyright, exposing the shaky grounds on which it makes its universal claims. Secondly, we need to actively examine alternative models through which we can understand the production and dissemination of knowledge and culture.

The existence of alternatives to copyright – such as copyleft, the open source movement, the Fairshare and Street Performer protocols – belie the reality of copyright. Conceptually, these alternatives challenge the fundamentals upon which copyright rests. The emphasis is on the ability of users to modify and distribute works – yet there is still "incentive" to create, as is evident in the success and spread of Linux. Essentially there is no contradiction of purpose as it creates public rights for a public purpose. If the world of copyright constructs itself as the only model of incentive, reward, etc for creative labour, the symbolic power of the open source movement rests in the creation of alternative social imaginaries which turn every assumption of copyright upon itself.

There is, however, a world of quotidian media practices which do not fall squarely within the alternative progress narratives of copyleft, open source etc, and this is the world of illegal media networks and practices like piracy. This is also the world that copyright seeks to demonise. In our search for alternative models, it is also critical for us to engage with the "subterranean" other of the open source movement, as the pirates go about redistributing wealth in the information era.

NOTES

1. See generally the works of Rosemary Coombe, Peter Jaszi, James Boyle, Yochai Benkler, Lawrence Lessig
2. See Harry Arthurs, *Reconstituting the Public Domain*, available at http://www.robarts.yorku.ca/pdf/apd_arthursf.pdf, for an overview of the legal history of the commons
3. The internet, for instance, has radically challenged a number of the traditional claims of intellectual property and authorship. The free software movement along with the concept of online writing communities have revealed the myth underlying the philosophical claims made by intellectual property.

4. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*

5. Tom G. Palmer, *Are Patents and Copyrights Morally Justified? The Philosophy of Property Rights and Ideal Objects*, *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy*, p. 817

6. *Supra* n. 4, p. 838

7. Steve P. Calandrillo, *An Economic Analysis of Intellectual Property Rights: Justifications and Problems of Exclusive Rights, Incentives to Generate Information, and the Alternatives of a Government-Run Reward System*, 1998, *Fordham Intellectual Property, Media and Entertainment Law Journal*, p. 301

8. *Ibid.*, p. 316

9. Diane Leenheer Zimmerman, *Authorship without Ownership: Reconsidering Incentives in a Digital Age*, 2003, *DePaul Law Review* 1121, p. 1128

10. *Id.*

11. Martha Wodmansee *The Author, Art, and the Market*, New York (Columbia University Press), 1994, p. 42

12. *Id.*, also see David I. Bainbridge, *Cases and Materials in Intellectual Property Law*, London (Financial Times Management), 1999, p. 10

13. *Supra* n. 9, p. 1138

14. *Supra* n. 9, p. 1138.

15. *Id.*

16. See Carlos Osorio, *A contribution to the understanding of illegal copying of software: Working paper*, June 2002, available at <http://opensource.mit.edu/papers/osorio.pdf>

Bits of Freedom

Sjoera Nas

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Lecture at the conference Total Disinformation Awareness in World-Information.Org
Belgrade, April 20, 2003

<http://world-information.org>

Edited and abbreviated version, May 2008

Bits of Freedom is part of a coalition of ten similar privacy and digital civil rights groups from 7 different EU countries. This coalition is called EDRI, European Digital Rights. EDRI takes an active interest in developments in Europe at large, especially in EU accession countries. Now, we in Western and Northern Europe have started to develop a culture of criticizing ICT policy. But in the EU accession countries this culture hasn't developed yet, resulting in the worst possible implementations of EU legislation, without much public debate. For example, with the Cyber Crime Treaty, an international agreement basically aimed against hacking, the first and the only two countries in the world that have implemented this treaty in their national legislation are Albania and Croatia, not countries that are famous for a strong democratic tradition.

In order to spread knowledge throughout Europe about the need to defend digital civil rights, we created the biweekly newsletter called EDRIgram. The newsletter covers a wide range of topics, such as spam, telecommunications, wiretapping, the cybercrime treaty and the rating and filtering of internet content. On this last topic, every two years the European Parliament has to vote on some ridiculous proposal that would oblige all websites to participate in some rating and filtering program.

For Bits of Freedom, the existence of EDRI is key to be able to lobby in Brussels, usually a pretty boring thing to want. For the past years digital rights activists were behind the facts. Once European regulation is decided upon, it takes four years or more for national governments to implement it in national legislation. In many cases concerning digital rights, you are just too late when you are trying to change anything in your national parliament. On the other hand,

influencing or even changing EU legislation isn't very easy either. That is why EDRI is trying to open up an office in Brussels to get ahead of developments, and influence the process in a very early stage.

One of the key issues for EDRI is the fight against traffic data retention. There are some serious plans on a European level for legislation that would require data retention of telecommunication data all over Europe, for the period of 12 to 36 months. Let me try to describe the political history and consequences of this legislation.

Technically, traffic data are data about the communication and not about the content. Legally, traffic data are treated as an innocent category of data. The contents of communication are clearly protected by jurisprudence about the European Convention of Human Rights and in most national constitutions in Europe. But traffic data generally are in a category with much less protection, based on the technology of postal mail and plain old telephony.

With the introduction of mobile telephony and internet, the distinction between traffic data and content has become obscure and unrighteous. In the old telephony world, traffic data are not about the content of the telephone conversation, but about the timing, the length and the dialed numbers. With the introduction of mobile telephony, traffic data include location data, where your mobile phone is and other data, such as for example how many text messages you send and receive and what bills you pay with your GSM. In the internet-world, it has become almost impossible to distinguish between content and traffic data. For example with e-mail, the header of the e-mail is part of the routing and it also provides a very brief description of the content, in the subject line. With web sites, it becomes even more complex. If you type a URL in your browser, it leads you to the DNS server and this DNS server translates your question, for example, "http://www.bitsoffreedom.nl/" into a number, in this case 213.84.134.66. Technically, the ISP just receives a number, similar to telephony, but on the internet, the URL provides a summary of the content you are looking for. If you take a search engine like Google, the search terms you use become part of the URL, thus even more specifically indicating your interests and thoughts. Location data are equally sensitive. When you are calling, your mobile phone is generally traceable up to a 150 meters that is, within a city environment. If you're in the country, this might be up to 30 kilometers. But in the city, if you do cross-measurements between three base stations, you can refine the distance of the mobile phone up to a 100 meters. Lots of mobile telephone companies are building extra checking devices in their network, leading up to a location precision of up to 50 meters. With such precision, it becomes possible to trace visits to locations that may disclose sensitive personal data, for example, your health, religious conviction and your political preferences, if you visit a hospital, mosque or the office of a political party. And location data are not only provided when you are actually calling or being called, but are also collected when your phone is in stand-by mode.

One of the reasons for politicians to want to introduce data retention in Europe is the fact that the telecommunications providers are obliged to delete data after a short period of time. According

to the European ISDN Directive of 1997 all traffic data had to be deleted or anonymised once the technical transmission had been accomplished and the billing had been settled. This ISDN Directive was superseded in May 2002 by the new e-Privacy Directive. According to this Directive (still in force in 2008, ed.), national governments may decide to issue legislation to retain traffic data for a limited period of time for law enforcement purposes. The e-Privacy Directive also allows for companies to store traffic data for a long period of time, for commercial purposes, if their customers consent. From a privacy point of view, this Directive is a very serious degradation of the general level of privacy protection. Consent is a very difficult thing to deal with. For example, with mobile location data, can you refuse consent to your employer to access your traffic data? And of course, companies may construct very attractive offers to offer you a reduction if you consent to the use of your data for commercial purposes.

Thus, by technological development, the definition of traffic data has extended to anything that travels through a network. Legally, traffic data are anything that is not absolutely distinguished as content only. And thanks to the e-Privacy Directive these data may be stored for law enforcement purposes. This possibility for national legislation was introduced as a last minute amendment and was supported by the Socialist and Christian-democrat fractions, the two largest political groups in the European Parliament. The amendment in turn was preceded by two wish-lists from 2001. One from G8, that is a group of the 8 richest industrial countries and the second one from the EU ministers of justice and home affairs. These two long wish-lists disclosed the law enforcement lobby didn't just want to know who was online at what time, but they also wanted to know what e-mail was sent and received, what files were uploaded with FTP and who downloaded files, who visited which URL's, what IRC (chat-) channels were visited, which newsgroups (Usenet) and who talked to whom about what in chat records. This wish list was disclosed in the middle of the debate about the new e-Privacy Directive. Only after this new e-Privacy Directive was accepted, did the Council of European ministers of Justice disclose its own wish-list. This list even goes beyond the wishes of the G8 with the wish to know passwords used for internet access and numbers of credit cards or bank passes with which you pay for internet access with or for your telephone subscription.

During the past 100 years, people have started to communicate more than anybody could have imagined before. Through traffic data, law enforcement officials may create a perfect summary of behavior and intentions. It saves a lot of time not to have to data-mine huge amounts of content on a word by word-basis. In my opinion it is technically absurd and actually dramatic for the internet providers to have to store even half of the EU ministers' wish list. And it is a political choice not to give to traffic data the same legal protection as content.

The European data protection commissioners have objected strongly to the plans. You would never surf alone. Even if we are threatened with war and terrorism, we have to ground our society on the principles of democracy, civil rights and protection of personal data. To preventively monitor the communication patterns of all citizens, just turns around the principle that everyone is innocent until proven guilty.

The biggest danger I see now is that we put our society to the service of law enforcement, instead of law enforcement serving our society. I hope you will pick up the fight with us, to start defending civil rights.

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Two years after this lecture, in 2005, the European Council (of ministers of Justice) managed to convince the European Commission to propose a seemingly democratic Directive about mandatory data retention. In 2006 this Directive was adopted by the European Parliament, again, with the support of Social-democrat and Christian-democrat groups, decreeing mandatory data retention of traffic data for a period of 6 to 24 months in all Member States of the European Union. Retention is prescribed for traffic data about telephony and internet, including location data for mobile telephony. Content data such as surfing behaviour are excluded from the Directive, but Member States may individually decide to include any extra data they may get their parliaments to agree on. Implementation is still going on in many Member States. Resistance has proven successful in Germany. Implementation was limited to the minimum of 6 months, but even that was successfully fought against by digital rights activists. In April 2008, the German constitutional court declared the hand-over of the retained traffic data unconstitutional.

In September 2006 Bits of Freedom ceased its activities. The author of the text since works for the Dutch national data protection authority. EDRI on the other hand has flourished and expanded its network to 28 member groups in 17 European countries. The newsletter EDRIgram continues to be a vital source of information about digital rights in Europe. For the archives and (free) subscriptions: www.edri.org

Today, a general definition of new media art would encompass an umbrella term which generically describes artwork that incorporates an element of new media technology. It is a rather broad term that includes, on the one hand, a new media art which is very much in service to industry and which demands the skills and aesthetics required by commerce, still incorporating 1990's techno optimism, and on the other hand, a new media art which is not only focused on technology, but also on conceptual strategies and their social and cultural context. New media art is often trapped in a vicious circle of fetishization of the individual's relation to the machine and over-aesthetization of the interface. Orchestration of software and electronic devices development and "information super-highway" mantra applied to the Internet often leads to a commodified corporate advertising euphoria of artist practices.

Context-based art practice often includes processes such as collaborative work and free sharing and addresses a wide spectrum of political themes tackling technology today, such are privacy, public domain, free access, identity, (dis)embodiment, locality, commercialization, etc. It usually employs technical expertise which treats the social, cultural and political context as a channel for reflection, resulting in inscription and grounding of new media art practices historically and socially.

There is a belief that new media art and its criticism could preserve the public dimension of the Internet. If the Internet is seen as today's leading agent of modernization with all possible inequalities that it could produce, then certainly there is an urge for art which would discuss this problematics through experimental and critical practices, continuously migrating to unknown terrains of criticism. These practices employ strategies of interruption of authorized canons of creativity and aesthetics, striving to realize their political potential.

Art based projects of Public Netbase employ two important notions of new art practices: collaboration and change of perspective in understanding the critical potential of art today. The intertwining of critical collaboration and performative actions undertaken in public micro-social spaces while bringing changes in behaviour, perception and understanding of art, is what gives Public Netbase art practices a political potential and deep understanding of contextualization of art itself.

New Art Practices

Becoming Nike?

The Fake Behind the Swoosh

Vera Tollmann

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

Public Netbase and 0100101110101101.ORG proclaim the world's first Nike Square
Vienna, October 2003

http://www.springerin.at/dyn/heft_text.php?textid=1388&lang=en

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

A flashy red box, resembling a container but of superior design, rests on the edge of a desolate traffic island dividing Vienna's Karlsplatz square. On its rounded glass windows, next to the Nike logo, a poster says "nikeplatz (formerly Karlsplatz)". On the back of the box, dots on a map indicate the locations of future Nike squares in other cities. And that's not all: Inside the boxes presentation room, an athletic man offers information on what seems to be Nike's most recent marketing coup. There is a display presenting the nikeground.com web site, as well as a sketch of the 36 times 18 meters tall steel Swoosh monument (the logo Nike founder Phil Knight bought from a marketing student for 35 dollars in 1971), both illustrating the vast dimensions of the project. The boxes cutting-edge interior also features glittering footballs from the Manchester United series, and a model of the popular Nike shoe "ID". According Nike's philosophy, ID can be co-designed by the customer, allowing him/her to feel one with Nike. Together with the Italian artists' group 0100101110101101.ORG, the Vienna-based media institution Public Netbase took up this philosophy and launched the fake "nikeground" project, a statement against the privatization of public space. The announced re-naming of Karlsplatz square – home to major cultural sites such as the Secession, Adolf Loos' "Café Museum", and the Karlskirche – would have amounted to dedicating the square to Nike, with the Nike sculpture marking it as a corporate product.

PUBLIC NETBASE

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Responding to fake press releases, the Viennese popular press drummed outrage until, finally, the Austrian Nike press service made it clear that Nike was not the originator of this hoax, and proceeded to litigate against Public Netbase. On 14 October, the activist group received a claim

for damages amounting to 78,000 Euros. However, with a court ruling in favor of the protection of the freedom of art, Nike's efforts to have this art project banned proved futile.

WHAT REMAINS

Unlike in previous works by 0100101110101101.ORG, the Karlsplatz action quickly lost suspense once the plot was resolved. This is because what was asserted in the action has long been a reality in other places. In fact, while the Nikeground action was in progress, the new Volkswagen Golf model was advertised by replacing the name "Wolfsburg" (where Volkswagen are manufactured) by "Golfsburg", both at the city's railway station and on its official web site. Moreover, Nike had for several years been appropriating public space by establishing temporary theme zones targeting a young audience. This strategy, appropriately termed "Corporate Situationism" by Tom Holert, has long become an everyday routine of clever marketing divisions. Another question that arises is how the Vienna project relates to international "anti-Nike" campaigns attacking the corporation's public image. Groups involved in these campaigns have been active in the US since 1996, and in Europe since 1999. At that time, Europe's first Niketown opened at Berlin Charlottenburg, using the slogan "Don't let your city use you – use your city" – a line that subsequently was appropriated by "Reclaim the Streets" initiatives. This was also the time when Naomi Klein's bestseller "No Logo" was published in German.

Within sight of the fake Nike box, Public Netbase had set up the combat tent known from previous actions at the Museumsquartier, propagating the slogan "Reclaim the Net" in order to demand support for an independent media landscape in Austria, and in particular for the survival of the independent broadcaster Radio Orange and of Public Netbase. Taking this into consideration, it seems likely that both the subject of Nikeplatz and its location were factored in as key components of the game.

Vera Tollmann
BECOMING NIKE?
THE FAKE BEHIND
THE SWOOSH

On the S77CCR-Consortium

Marko Peljhan

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

Installation with Public Netbase, Vienna, May 2004

<http://s-77ccr.org/>

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

The System 77CCR Civil Counter-Reconnaissance project is mainly based on two premises: One of them is political, and one of them is technological. They are of course part of the same story, part of the same complex of issues that defined this project and also define the body of projects around it. They apply to the future, too, as there is a range of activities that have been going on for some time.

PUBLIC NETBASE

On the political side, System 77CCR is a project that works on two main levels: One of them is connected specifically to Vienna, to the Viennese situation, to the situation of the history of the protest movement from the year 2000 and also to the dissipation of that protest movement until today. It tries to look this movement, and to remind the public how these four years proved to be historically entropic – we are used to these situations where there is a big social push for change at first – which then slowly erodes and turns into a kind of very mellow, elementary flow of disconnected events, even though politically and conceptually these events might have some kind of linkage to the primary events, to the reasons why the demonstrations happened in the first place. In these protests, which were represented a classical clash between civil society and powers of the state, civil society was technologically not empowered. One possible way of empowering civil society is through the use of counter-surveillance technologies to actually see and observe how the state acts, to exercise control, to turn the mechanics of control back on the state, as governmental accountability should always be part of democracy and should never be given up. Of course the state functions in a way that minimizes this accountability, to say the least. Lessons from history speak to us very clearly about that. Lessons of very recent history show clearly how the American state was not able to control itself in what was going on and still is going in Irak, in the Middle East. But of course you don't need to go there, usually

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you just need to look around the next corner. Even in a parliamentary democracy this kind of mechanics are at work all the time and that is why the civil society should be empowered through technology. Now it is!

To a certain level the demonstrations of 2000 were one of the best-documented demonstrations in recent history. People used digital technology, digital cameras to produce enormous amounts of footage of what was going on. The same thing happened of course during the clashes in Genoa and in Seattle, and we will see how this movement will develop in the future. But on a wider scale, of course, I believe that this kind of counter-surveillance should be enacted by law, through the power of law and that the civil society should actually take control over certain assets that are for now only living and functioning in the domain of the military-industrial complex – like the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) technology that we have been talking about in this project. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles are nothing new. In fact, their history goes back to the Second World War, but the technology has been strongly promoted since the mid-nineties and has played an important role in contemporary conflicts such as Balkans conflict, and then of course in Afghanistan and the whole of the Middle East. Israel has used Unmanned Aerial Vehicles for a very long time without much noise, and it still uses them.

One of the main missions of Pact Systems and Project Atol, specifically of the Consortium, has been to bring this kind of technologies into the hands of civil society in an organized and orderly manner – abiding by the law, defining the laws. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles do not have a space in civil airspace at the moment anywhere in the world, but we believe that there is a future for this kind of civil use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and that is why the Consortium was formed. Specifically in the clashes with the state, but also for many other, let us say less edgy situations, where a civil fleet of UAVs actually could provide information and surveillance on ecological matters, or on other matters that are usually sidelined or even concealed by the state – monitoring back the activities of the state, ensuring these activities do not transgress the law. It's just a technology, it's nothing else, and technology should always be empowering all levels of society, not only those in power. That is the main rationale behind the establishment of the Consortium and behind the development of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles for purposes of Civil Counter-Reconnaissance on one level, but also for civil society monitoring of the environment, of urban space, of the control over military movements, etc. Wherever civil society has to be empowered, wherever it has a symbolic role, it should also have empowerment through this kind of technological tool. Sure enough, we are talking about a technology whose accessibility is defined by the Western military-industrial complex on one side, and by the former Soviet military-industrial complex on the other side. These are the two branches we are trying to pursue here.

Marko Peljhan
ON THE S77CCR-
CONSORTIUM

Information War in the Age of Dangerous Substances

Sadie Plant

NEW ART PRACTICES

Lecture delivered at Public Netbase Media~Space, Vienna, April 22, 1998

<http://www.t0.or.at/sadie/drugs.htm>

The whole issue of drugs is difficult to tackle and very controversial. The war on drugs, as it is often called, has made drugs one of the most controversial issues that we are facing at the end of the 20th century. I have been trying to write about drugs for several years and I am still having difficulties even doing the basic things such as defining drugs. Even the most basic questions continually escape a very careful analysis. I want to throw out some ideas mainly looking at the possibility that drugs are best thought of as technologies, as quite literally high technologies, and possibly as communication technologies, too.

On this first issue about how we actually define what drugs are: the United States FDA, the Food and Drugs Administration, defines drugs not only illegal drugs but drugs in medicines of all kinds, as "substances which affect the structure and function of the human organism". This is quite a neat definition and really the best one that I've found. When we look at the drugs that are circumscribed by law, they tend to be those which affect thinking and perception. Specifically, they are drugs which affect brain chemistry: They are psychoactive substances. If we think of ourselves as information processing modules, amongst other things, then clearly the use of drugs changes our ability to process, retrieve and store information.

Drugs legislation, which is now globalised, originally started with local attempts to control opium, largely by the Chinese at the end of the 19th century. This was after the British had pretty much forced opium onto Chinese culture. But if legislation began with opium, it now covers all of the opiates and cocaine, amphetamines and a vast range of hallucinogens as well. As anyone familiar with this subject will know, the Americans especially are forever adding new substances their drug schedules, not only the drugs themselves but also the other substances which go into making new drugs, too. Clearly, the legislation covers a huge variety of substances and amongst the big questions that we can ask are, what do those substances have in common? And why have they been so demonized? It is often forgotten that this isn't just a legal situation,

there has been a very directly military war on the drugs trade at least since 1981 when Reagan and then Bush turned the campaigns against drugs from civilian to military campaigns. Many thousands of civilians and military personnel have been killed in this struggle. It is not simply a matter of legal controls, we really are talking about a military situation.

It seems that the war on drugs has not only made the consumption and distribution of certain substances complicated but it has also made research very difficult as well. Until very recently, information of any rigorous hard kind has been very difficult to find and often unreliable. Certainly, in academic contexts, any serious discussion about drugs has been almost impossible. Also, the issue covers so many different areas and disciplines as well. One needs to have a familiarity with chemistry, with botany, with economics, law, neurology, medicine and, obviously, all of the arts and social sciences have some bearing as well, so it demands a big breath of knowledge and information. Also, the issue covers many different scales, right from the molecular action of substances in the human brain through to the action of those substances in the global economy, so it spans the micro and the macro, works at very different scales.

My first attempt to unravel and answer some of this is to suggest that we can think of drugs as technologies, as kind of soft or almost biotechnologies, or wet technologies. Perhaps even as communication technologies because the way in which drugs work in the human body and in the brain is that they basically intervene in the internal means of communication. If you think about the human body having its own internal communication system, it is using chemicals to do that: Neurotransmitters and hormones. These are the body's chemical communicators, sort of messengers that take information between cells. Those communications can be aided or block or imitated by the addition of other chemical compounds, and these are the substances we know as drugs. These other chemical compounds are foreign to the human body: Obviously, something like cocaine comes from outside of the human body, but they so closely resemble, if you like, your native communicators, your native media, that your body is happy to take them in and accept them as its own. In effect, drugs are by definition substances which have some affect on human biochemistry. They are chemical devices, molecular machines which intervene in the body's internal systems of communication.

Drugs are the substances which can slip through the chemical filters in the brain, evading its screening mechanisms and entering your system incognito disguised as an already existing chemical. In effect, they fool your body into thinking that it is dealing with an already existing familiar chemical. From this perspective, this means that drugs are very direct and very intimate means of modifying human perception and human behavior. Once they have had the effect of changing the internal communications in the brain, then also they go on to change the way in which we perceive and behave, not only on an individual level but also as cultures, as populations, as the collection of brains which receive and process and store information.

If drugs are technologies, and if we can think of them in that way, then this might be a way of making sense of the question of drug control. This would make the control of drugs almost a

kind of subset or one angle of the control of technology itself. This might then allow us to get a better perspective of how and why the current drug situation has arisen, and what the whole issue is really about. If we really want to follow this line of thought, drugs would then be those communication technologies which are most tightly controlled. Perhaps we could say the only communication technologies which are controlled by international law.

The notion of the cyborg is interesting here as well. When it was very first floated in 1960 in a relatively famous essay called "Drugs, Space, and Cybernetics" by Clynes and Kline which has recently been reprinted in the "Cyborg Handbook", the article was the first to mention the cyborg and deal with the cyborg as an entity. It didn't concentrate on all the attributes of the cyborg that we now have grown use to associating with it such as prosthetic limbs and so on. Their main concern was with the use of drugs. The additional prostheses which the original cyborg had was called an osmotic pressure pump which was a kind of built-in extra organ which would allow drugs to be continually inputted into the human body. This is done in the context of space exploration but it was a very sophisticated idea of linking the human body to the possibility of introducing not only drugs in the psychoactive sense, but all sorts of different substances which would regulated and modify the human body in space. Even our beloved notion of the cyborg comes out of this history of drugs before it comes out of the history of information technology and cybernetics as we usually think of them.

Drugs are often close to military concerns. If drugs are pieces of high technology, it may also be that they are high technology communication systems which also act as weapons and are very important in a military sense. I am sure people are familiar with stories about fighter pilots in the U.S. Air Force being injected with amphetamines as they take off and being injected with barbiturates when they come down – literally, uppers and downers as they are flying the planes. As the fighter pilot gets more integrated into the machinery, then the possibilities of integration with drugs become more possible and more extended. People will also be familiar with the extent to which drugs have always been used as weapons, most famously by the C.I.A. in the 1950s and 1960s. They probably, more than anybody, made the use of drugs fashionable as a weapon, but even they were only jumping in on the end of a much longer story. Hitler famously not only injected himself with metamphetamine 8 times a day apparently, but he also used mescaline in interrogation experiments. The Bavarian army is famous for having done endurance tests with cocaine. For many thousands of years, drugs have had this military use. When the Spanish were busily colonizing South and Central America, they found people using peyote, they thought, as weapons against the Spaniards, using drugs even in order to communicate with each other. This may well have been a paranoia of the colonists but nevertheless, it certainly served as a functional weapon even if it was simply their paranoia.

In this military sense, drugs, even as they work on the human body have always really functioned as weapons, as literal defense systems. If you think of the legitimate use of drugs as medicines, then you are using drugs to defend your body against the encroachments of diseases, of pain and so on. In the medical and military contexts, drugs have effectively worked as arms, as weapons.

They are used to defend or augment or attack even, or certainly to manipulate the structure and the function of the organism. If you use them as medicines, they combat pain and infection and instability. In other capacities, they can heighten perception, increase endurance and, as in the case of the cyborg cited by Clynes and Kline, completely rewire the organism to allow it to deal with different alien environments as well.

In the mid-1990's, developments in chemistry resulted with new techniques which allow compounds to be engineered not only at the level of their molecular composition, but also at the level of the molecules themselves. It was the time when chemistry met digitization and computing. This was really the point at which you could properly talk about "designer drugs", drugs which are designed from scratch in laboratories and are not even extracts from a plant. The sheer speeds and capacities of the microprocessor have now made it possible to trawl through huge numbers of molecular combinations in a way which was simply impracticable until very recently. Endless different combinations of drugs can now be tried out on a computer screen before they even touch base with chemical reality. They only met the wetware world in the very last stages of their development when they are finally tested on humans. Parallel with the development of chemistry and with this convergence with computing has also been from another angle the whole development of knowledge and research on the human brain. They have all pretty much coincided at the same moment at the end of the 20th century, so there are the chemistry, the brain and the computing all just now coming together.

The other side of this whole process, the brain side of it, is as recent as computing. Both computing and a renewed interest in drugs and also knowledge of the brain really kicked off in the 1950's, when neurotransmitters were discovered. It was only at that point that this notion of the brain as a kind of internal communication system really began to be developed. In fact, LSD, the substance developed at Sandoz by Albert Hoffman, actually preceded the understanding of the brain as being a chemical system and having neurotransmitters. Interestingly enough, LSD turns out to be very close to a neurotransmitter. LSD was discovered before neurotransmitters were by a few years. In the last 50 years of these developments, we have gotten incredibly close to some understanding of the brain but, nevertheless, it still is an incredibly unknown organ even though the United Nations designated the last ten years as "The Decade of the Brain". We have almost no knowledge about how the brain works. All we are beginning to appreciate is simply how vast and complex it is. Not much more is known about the brain now than was known 50 years ago, except for the fact that we have an increasing sense of its complexity.

Increasingly, ideas about the brain are being enhanced and converging with developments in computing. As neural networking develops and parallel distributive processing, it is increasingly thought that the human brain also operates in a kind of distributed, hierarchical networked kind of way. Deleuze and Guattari have this often quoted line about "The brain is a population". This is, indeed, how it is increasingly thought of in neurology, that it is in fact a population of millions of molecular elements.

When we try to think about what is the war on drugs, given this angle that drugs are effectively soft or internal technologies, then clearly one of the first things that we can say is that the war on drugs has never been, as it says itself, a war on drugs, it is not a war against drugs, but rather a war to contain and to control them. The propaganda always speaks as a war against drugs but if you think about the extent to which pharmaceutical companies, not to mention the medical establishment, are very keen to impose drugs on the population, it is not a war about stopping drugs, it is about certain drugs or certain uses of drugs. It is control rather than prohibition. In a sense, it seems to me that the drugs situation is almost like a microcosm of global capitalism. As William Burroughs' famously said, "Drugs are the ultimate commodity. They are the only things which don't need any advertising." They come free with their own adverts; They are the commodities which sell themselves.

In terms of the market for drugs and drugs as commodities, they are, on the one hand, the most freely available goods in the sense that they are distributed in a black market, but also they are the most controlled of any commodity that exists at the moment. Arms would obviously be the only other possible contender. But if, as I am suggesting, drugs are weapons, then this would come down to almost be the same issue. But there are no other substances which are controlled at every level of their operation: From the point where a farmer plants the coca bush through to the final consumption of the wrap of cocaine, on every step of that process, drugs are subject to stringent international controls. In fact, arguably, they are at the very heart of international law itself. When the League of Nations was established in the 1920s which then became the United Nations, drugs were cited as one of the reasons for establishing an international body. So not only were they the first commodities or the only commodities to be regulated at every stage of their production, distribution and consumption, it seems that they are fundamental to the very possibility of international law. At the very least, they provided a legitimate excuse for international law to be developed.

On the other side of things, they also proved just as impossible as information to contain and control. As they are notoriously transnational, drugs are no respecters of boundaries and, in fact, they slip through those boundaries exactly in the same way as they slip in to the brain: They are disguised as other things. Arguably, they have the same kind of disruptive effects on a culture or on a nation as they have on the brain as well. You have an almost fractal picture where exactly the same processes that happen on the relatively small scale level of the brain and even on the molecular level of the way drugs work in the brain, it is repeated on almost every level of their distribution. They work in global economy almost exactly in the same way as they work in the human brain. The way in which the war on drugs is cashed out, on the one hand, having these absolutely rigorous international controls and, on the other hand, having a remarkably free market which really produces the opposite of regulation with the black market, then it seem to me that this is trying to tell us something.

We have a situation now where we have nation-states, the military and pharmaceuticals corporations all involved in trying to monopolize the use and control the production and

distribution of these substances in exactly the same way, one could argue, that states, the military and information technology corporations or media corporations are effectively monopolizing their markets. It maps on almost exactly except for the fact that everything is more extreme in the case of drugs. What they want to do is to contain and monopolize their use. This is very similar to attempts to control information or to control the distribution of technology. And the street level side as well, the counter to that, also is remarkably similar to the way in which attempts to free up distribution of technology and information work as well. We've got a kind of street level black market trade, this would be the chemical hacking side of it, undercutting the legitimate trade, people effectively exploring their own brain chemistry rather than it being sanctioned by some centralized body. It also seems that this has big geo-political implications. Again, this maps onto the distribution of information and technology itself.

Sadie Plant

INFORMATION WAR IN
THE AGE OF DANGEROUS
SUBSTANCES

While the Western world has long prosecuted the war on drugs, it has also reaped the financial rewards of its own drugs trades. The American War of Independence was largely financed by tobacco and cannabis, and industrialization in Britain was also largely funded out of the opium trade and, in fact, that was the same opium trade which eventually began the spiral of international controls against all drugs. At one point in the 19th century, it is said that half of the British government's revenue came from opium. The Western world, or at least the Anglo world, has obviously done very well from the drugs trade. If one was going to be cynical about it, having achieved its own economic and industrial success through the drugs trade, that the West is now determined that other regions of the world will not enjoy the same benefits of an inevitably buoyant trade. We now find the situation where it tends to be the poorest and the least developed areas of the world which are producing drugs. Presumably, if there was a possibility of an international legalization of drugs, then all of those countries would be in the position to participate in that trade legally and they would be economically a lot more successful. The war on drugs may well also be something to do with a global protectionism on the part of the Western world.

If there is any credence in these last thoughts, it would also suggest that current debates about legalization of drugs can be very naïve, just as naïve as the attempts to argue against the legalization of drugs. Any more serious legalization would be very difficult to contrive. For a start, it would have to be global, because this is one of the few markets that is controlled on an international level. Then, it would have to be uncontrolled on an international level as well. It is not something that could be done piecemeal. It seems almost unimaginable that we could have a situation in global politics where that would be either desirable or practicable. It could well be that if we did, though, arrive at the global legalization of psychoactive substances, then this would not only have all of the cultural effects that we often imagine it would have, but it could impact on the geo-political balance of power on a global level. It is in these terms of drugs as technologies, as weapons of international importance that I think the whole issue of should be considered.

TextFM: Open Broadcasting System

An interview with
Graham Harwood and Matt Fuller
by Michelle Kasprzak

<http://www.year01.com/issue10/textfm.html>

TextFM is a piece of software created by Graham Harwood and Matt Fuller. Using TextFM, anyone with access to a mobile phone can send a message to a specified number. A computer receives the message and reads it out using a text-to-speech program. The messages are then broadcast by a radio transmitter. It is a way of creating a simple, light-weight, open media system. Recently an orange tent was erected in Vienna's Museumsquarter by the Public Netbase. This tent is a "sonar" media installation, where passers-by and remote users can listen to and interact with TextFM. The messages can be sent to the installation from a mobile phone or via <http://basecamp.netbase.org>, and may be read in English or German. The installation in Vienna creates a compelling interface between public and private space.

MK: Matt, I remember when I met you in London, you were talking about the difficulties of implementing the German text-to-speech. How was this overcome?

MF: The problem with German text-to-speech came about because the first version of the software is written in MacPerl. The text-to-speech software that we use in this version is that native to the MacOS. As they only supply English or Spanish text-to-speech, we found that working the project in other languages was effectively blocked.

In order to get a version working German TTS, Ivan at Public Netbase put together a version of the program using MBROLA. The current state of the Linux version is that it's very stripped

down compared to the one for the Mac, so some of the more subtle aspects of the program are missing. At the same time though, it benefits immensely from the way that non-proprietary software allows for certain kinds of development away from strictly corporate rationales – in this case, the use of a language which hasn't been globalised.

It's hoped that other language-implementations will be taken up by different groups wanting to use the system in their areas.

MK: I tuned into the stream at <http://basecamp.netbase.org/>, and sent messages, and something that I enjoyed doing was creating a "conversation" with other users/bots/noises at the time. Are you interested in the possibility of spontaneous narrative?

An interview with Graham
Harwood and Matt Fuller

TEXTFM: OPEN
BROADCASTING SYSTEM

MF: Sure. One of the things that impressed us when the system first went live in the Vienna version was how quickly people invented ways of using the system: Sloganising, conversations, insults, meeting arrangements, flyering for DJ sets, asking questions, setting up conversations. For us one of the key things has been to have the system operate as a way of finding out what potential cultures of communication are out there: And people always exceed and confound your expectations in one way or another.

A fundamental impetus to the project is to find out how latent capacities in different media technologies can be found, be mobilised, and then mixed with those of others. But the project also releases latent social capacities and this is what can be found revealing and inventing itself in the texting going on through it.

MK: Does the use of SMS shorthand often create unintelligible messages when read aloud? What are your thoughts on this disconnect between messaging and voice?

MF: Sure. We had to think this one through before establishing the design of the system. Texting short-hands exist in several different kinds of relation to "fully written" text. Acronyms, character substitutions, homonyms and word compressions – missing out on the vowels for instance – are all used in day to day texting. However, in order to be able to get the computer to read them from the phone as they come in and then read them out as the "fully written" version we would have to have a corpus of all these different kinds of short-hand built into the software. Every string of characters would have to have been checked against this list as it came in in order to see if it needed "translation". There were two problems. Firstly, we couldn't possibly hope to keep up with the rate of development of such short-hands. Secondly, some sequences of characters are used in more than one shorthand. The computer would then have had to analyse the semantic context of the string in order to determine which use was intended. Obviously, this would have been a bit difficult.

Instead, we chose to have the system's incapacity to make such interpretations audible up-front. You might use it once assuming it to understand your particular argot. But the next time you

won't. That way people can use it without expecting more than they get – and develop new ways of playing with it on that basis. For instance, we've noticed some users are getting the voices to sing or generate simple beat structures by feeding certain mixes of characters in.

MK: Are there strategies in place to use this for subversive or performative purposes? Or will this be unspoken and allowed to flower organically? I could foresee some interesting manifestos, speeches, and revolutionary thoughts being safely broadcast to a chosen receiver location. Also, it's interesting that people have started creating beats and music – performers might choose this as a venue.

GH: I like organic flowers.

MK: When listening to the stream, I am reminded of the lost practise of ventriloquism. Have you received any feedback from your users on the impact of this ability to "throw their voice" from anywhere in the world?

MF: We've demoed the work a couple of times, left the thing running in the background. Usually, most of the crowd have the chance to send a message in whilst this is going on. From this we definitely know that the capacity to heckle a speaker with their own set of gadgets is pretty damn inviting!

It'd be good to see the thing used as a Robo-MC for parties and sound-systems too, get the crowd chatting directly over the music

MK: Are there future plans for other installation-based projects around the world? A multiple-node physical network to compliment the wireless network?

GH: We tried linking Amsterdam and Vienna using two phones. One in each city, then combining the SMS from both places on a single server. I am interested to explore this notion at some future date. Also what might be interesting to you is, I set up a stream of messages from Pres-Bush to the server. This was done by analyzing his speeches since 9/11 then calculating the probability of what he would say next.

Here are some examples.

sent: #?Lev3p3r2 America will not only live, but as it to act.

sent: #?Lev3p3r2 At the state; Respect for her example of thousands of job should participate in applauding your life we must act as you very much.

sent: #?Lev3p3r2 I want to help the best that we think we've made stronger than unemployment checks – will prevail.

sent: #?Lev3p3r2 We were carried forward to stall this conflict and in case of humanitarian aid or religious tolerance.

sent: #?Lev3p3r2 He's missed his lost loved ones? Under this recession.

sent: #?Lev3p3r2 I love children, and defeated? (Applause.)

sent: #?Lev3p3r2 Americans did not only by day – you aren't sure
good Lord of purchases? (Laughter)? I want to win the fine staff of
the goal – and for Africa?

sent: #?Lev3p3r2 ?? To the world. at

/Users/harwood/perl/markov/mkmarkovInk.pl line 120.

sent: #?Lev3p3r2 The situation runs for Syria to those things
present nor angels nor depth, can be a grave and the past 21 weeks to
know the United States military.

sent: #?Lev3p3r2 The men and to begin, Nellie, by Congress who have
shown overseas: We'll increase funding to build up the momentum of
this recession.

An interview with Graham
Harwood and Matt Fuller

TEXTFM: OPEN
BROADCASTING SYSTEM

MK: You have set this system in place and as you put it, "people always exceed and confound your expectations in one way or another". Are there any properties of the system that are remaining unexplored, or that you would love to hear more of?

GH: Making an open server in which streams of SMS could be generated in different countries and added, with maybe some bots adding things as well.

Posthuman Development in the Age of Pancapitalism

Critical Art Ensemble

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PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC NETBASE

Lecture given at the Viper festival, Basel, 1996, and it is related to the "FleshMachine" performance and a talk held in Public Netbase, Vienna, 1997

<http://www.t0.or.at/cae/psthuman.htm>

For the first time in history there is one globally dominant political-economy, that of capitalism. Under this regime, individuals of various social groups and classes will be forced to submit their bodies for reconfiguration so they can function more efficiently under the obsessively rational imperatives of pancapitalism (production, consumption, and order). One means of

reconfiguration is the blending of the organic and electro-mechanical. Potentially, this process could produce a new living entity distinct from its predecessors. This process, now termed posthuman development, is in its experimental stages, which in turn has led to speculations and theories on what form this new being will take and on its probable functions. The two entities of posthuman existence most commonly postulated are the cyborg and downloaded virtual consciousness. While robots, androids, and artificially intelligent machines are also generally considered part of the posthuman family, they do not emerge directly out of human organics, and hence constitute a different line of development. Cyborgs and virtual consciousness, on the other hand, are dependent upon human individuals who desire or are condemned to interface with the machine. The cyborg is a being which typically has an organic platform integrated with a complex technological superstructure; Virtual consciousness is the transference of being into digitized form so that it may exist in immersive informational landscapes.

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The posthuman condition is still only a potential, since fully integrated, first-order cyborgs (the organic platform and technological superstructure are completely interdependent) are still on the cultural horizon, and virtual consciousness is at best an entertaining speculation. Yet, both of these posthuman possibilities are already having a dramatic social impact. While virtual consciousness acts as a mythic validation of the Age of Reason, second-order cyborgs (organic infrastructures with removable, integrated technological systems) are a common actuality. This situation often leads to the conjecture that the cyborg will be the step inbetween organic life and virtual life. However, when posthuman manifestations are taken out of the context of sci-fi speculation, and placed within the specific social and economic context of pancapitalism, a much different scenario emerges. While cyborg research is moving at top velocity, research into virtual reality (VR) is moving very slowly by comparison, and the research that is being done does not aim to develop a posthuman environment, nor to create a posthuman entity; Rather, this work is to fortify the pancapitalist dynasty in physical space by serving both spectacular and military apparatuses. The current functions of VR, as well as the limited research into its varied potentials, are indications that virtual consciousness is not a desirable posthuman condition from the perspective of primary power vectors of the current political economy.

THE DUAL FUNCTION OF IMMERSIVE TECHNOLOGY

VR as a liberating future habitat for humanity seems quite unlikely. In fact, VR seems to be used for every imaging purpose except as a liberating habitat. Its use in the spectacle is minimal, as no investing agency seems able to conceive of a useful (instrumental) application for it. Currently, VR takes a very secondary position to older nonimmersive screenal systems. While the World Wide Web, the internet, and cable television seem to be exploding with new possibilities (both compelling and loathsome), VR is beginning to stagnate. Its position is limited to arcade entertainment and to secondary-display technology that can help boost consumption. One example of this latter variety of application is the use of VR in some department and furniture stores in Japan. A shopper can enter a virtual environment and

(within the limits of the product line) render a desired domestic environment to see if it meets with he/r expectations before purchasing the needed merchandise. If he/r virtual vision does not meet he/r expectations, s/he can redesign the space until it does. The buyer is thus given extra assurance that s/he will get what s/he wants. Obviously, a system like this functions only when there is a variety of purchasing options, when the object of consumption cannot be physically displayed, and when the purchase is costly. Hence this application has very limited spectacular use. Further, this application is only one small step beyond the use of X-ray machines in shoe stores back in the 1930s and 40s. The shopper could X-ray he/r foot to make sure the shoes about to be purchased were a perfect fit. In terms of the spectacle of consumption, the real problem for VR is that there are very few occasions when the institutions selling the products want to give even the smallest amount of authentic choice to the consumer.

The infinite choice and total control promised by VR are precisely the type of options that investment institutions want to avoid, and hence, they are not going to pursue VR technology with any vigor until someone is able to negate its liberating logic. This is also why investment capital is flowing overwhelmingly in the direction of screenal technology, such as the World Wide Web. (The rocketing prices of shares of companies like Netscape and Yahoo when they went public, clearly indicate the flow of capital). On the Web, the producer of the page controls the rendering process. While this element of Web production seems to favor the cyber-individual, and accounts for much of the celebration of the Web, corporate institutions are aware that those with the greatest amount of capital can use the latest software and state-of-the-art trained labor to achieve maximum novelty and aesthetic seduction, can overwhelm competitors for visibility by additional advertising of the page on the Web and in other media, and can offer additional incentives (usually chances at prizes or free merchandise) for using the page. If the lure is carefully constructed, the professional advertisers can expect to monopolize a Web consumer's time. Interactivity in this case means the ability of the consumer to view a product, purchase it, and/or move onto other purchasing opportunities in the given product line. This is the kind of spectacular technology that pancapitalism will support, not just with investment, but also with legislative and regulatory support. Technologies which truly offer emergent choice and devalue centralized economic control are not worth an investment. Currently, the posthuman has no place in VR, and VR has a very small place in the spectacle.

VR's primary value to spectacle is not as a technology at all, but as a myth. VR functions as a technology that is out on the horizon, promising that one day members of the public will be empowered by rendering capabilities which will allow them to create multisensual experiences to satisfy their own particular desires. The uncanny aura constructed around this technology associates it with the exotic, the erotic, and potentially, with the mystical. By perpetuating the myth of a wish machine that is always about to arrive, pancapitalism builds in the population a desire to be close to complex technology, to own it. Unfortunately, most technology is being designed for a purpose precisely the opposite of a wish machine,

that is, to make possible better control of the material world and its populations. This combination of myth and hardware is setting the foundation for the material posthuman world of the cyborg.

Pancapitalist institutions of violence are proceeding along a different route. All the potentials of VR are being used to create more accurate simulators. However, the core of this immersive technology is based on recording, and not rendering as in the spectacle. Usually, the technological environment which the VR system is designed to simulate has already been built, or, at the very least, is under construction. In this case, the virtual image has a very clear material referent. For example, a fighter jet simulator attempts to replicate the interior technological environment as accurately as possible. The quality of the replication is judged practically by how well a pilot trained in a simulator does in the actual cockpit. The exterior virtual environment in which the simulated technology functions makes use of both recording and rendering. However, recording is still dominant, as the trainers attempt to place the trainees in specific rather than in general environments. Returning to the example of the jet fighter simulator, the pilot is placed in an environment closely resembling the one in which s/he will be flying. The ground, anti-aircraft batteries, and enemy planes are rendered as accurately and as specifically as possible based on recorded photographic images, whereas more random variables, such as atmospheric conditions, will be rendered in accordance with generalized configurations.

As with the imaging systems used for spectacular production, the goal is not to prepare a person for life in the virtual, but to specify, regulate, and habituate he/r role in the material world. Virtuality in no way has an independent primary function in the production of violence; rather, it has a dependent secondary support function. What is really odd about this situation is that the mythic gift of VR – complete control of the image – is negated. The virtual images are completely overdetermined by specific configurations in the material world. The limited evidence available to the public indicates that no preparations are being made for immersive virtual information warfare. This possibility seems limited to the screenal economy of cyberspace. However, since these activities are classified, plenty of room exists for conspiracy theorists to speculate. At the same time, given current trends in investment, research and development, combined with the very clear imperatives of pancapitalism, such speculations have only a very modest amount of credibility.

PREPARING FOR POSTHUMANITY

If the habitat of VR and the virtual entity are eliminated as practical categories of the posthuman, the only possibility left is the cyborg. In terms of social perception in technologically saturated economic systems, being a first-order cyborg covers a broad range of possibilities, ranging from a desirable empowering condition to an undesirable, dehumanizing one. However, there is plenty of time for spectacle to sort out differing perceptions of the first-order cyborg. Cyborg development is moving at a pace which allows adequate time for adjustment to the techno-

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human synthesis. Currently, the process is in very different stages in specific institutions. For example, the military has advanced furthest, and has developed a fully integrated second-order cyborg, while corporate and bureaucratic institutions are meeting with reasonable success in their attempts to convince workers of the need to meld body and technology.

Within many civilian social institutions, cyborg development is progressing cautiously enough that members have a difficult time knowing what a cyborg is, perceiving one, or realizing that they could be being transformed into one. Is a cyborg any person who has a technological body part? Does having an artificial limb or even contact lenses place one in the category of cyborg? In a sense, the answer is yes, as these pieces of technology are integrated with the body, and the individual is relatively dependent upon them. However, in terms of posthuman discourse, the answer is probably no, as there is little or no engineered interface between the technological and the organic. The posthuman model that seems to be developing is McLuhanesque – that is, the techno-organic interface should enhance the body from the fluctuating degree zero of everyday normalization. What is spoken about in the case of artificial limbs or contact lenses is the means to make the body conform, to the greatest extent possible, to "accepted" social standards. What is interesting about precyborgian technological additions to the body is that one key ideological imperative having a direct affect on posthuman development begins to show itself – body-tech is valued as means to better integrate oneself into the social.

Another common question is whether radical technological body intervention, such as gender reassignment, makes one a cyborg. Obviously, since such procedures are primarily organic recombinations void of technology, they fail to create a cyborg class being. However, these interventions do play a role in cyborg development, because they continue to prepare specific publics to perceive these operations as normal and even desirable. This is particularly true of medical interventions done solely for aesthetic purposes. The social "abnormality" of organic decay acts as an ideological sign that channels people toward the consumption of services for body reconfiguration, to enable them to best fulfill the social imperatives of body presentation in pancapitalist society. What is truly important about this development is that technological intervention disconnected from issues of sickness and/or death is being normalized. Extreme body invasion as a socially accepted practice is a key step in cyborg development.

MILITARY AND CIVILIAN CYBORGS

There is no need to dwell on the development of a second-order military cyborg. The only surprise here is that took so long to happen. From the common grunt to the heroic jet fighter pilot, the military conversion of humans to cyborgs has become a necessity. The Hughes Corporation has successfully developed a custom-fitted techno-organic interface for the infantry which offers an integrated system of vision, communication, and firepower. Soldiers are no longer soldiers; As the military says, now they are "weapons systems".

The posthuman has announced itself in a happy moment of military efficiency. However, the "weapons system", while actual and functioning, is a minor interface when compared to the developing "Pilot's Associate" (McDonnell-Douglas). In addition to having a state-of-the-art interdependent pilot/machine interface (unless the machine thinks that the organics are failing, and it must take over the mission), the "Pilot's Associate" offers AI support analysis in mission planning, tactics, system status, and situation assessment. Here we find a clear indication of what body "enhancement" is going to mean in the age of the posthuman. Body enhancement will be specific to goal-oriented tasks. These tasks will be dictated by the pancapitalist division of labor, and technology for body modification will only allow for the more efficient service of a particular institution.

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Unfortunately for the multinationals, the development of the civilian cyborg has not moved along as quickly. Since the civilian sector does not have the advantage of telling its forces that being-as-cyborg will prolong one's life in the field, corporate power vectors are still deploying ideological campaigns to convince civilians of the bureaucratic and technocratic classes that they want to be cyborgs. The spectacle of the civilian cyborg moves in two opposing directions. The first is the utopian spectacle. The usual promises of convenience, access to knowledge and free speech, entertainment, and communication are being trotted about the usual media systems with varying degrees of success; But, anyone who has paid attention to strategies of manufacturing desire for new technologies can read right through the surface of these codes. Convenience is supposed to mean that work becomes easier, and is accomplished faster; In turn this means that individuals work less and have more free time because they work more efficiently. What this code actually means is that the workload can be intensified because the worker is producing more efficiently. Entertainment and information access are codes of seduction that really mean that individuals will have greater access to consumer markets of manufactured desire. Better communication is supposed to mean greater access to those with whom an individual wants to communicate. The actuality is that agencies of production and consumption have greater surveillance power over the individual.

In contrast to utopian spectacle is the spectacle of anxiety. The gist of this campaign is to threaten individuals with the claim that if a person falls behind in the technological revolution, s/he will be trampled under the feet of those who use the advantages of technology. This campaign recalls the social-economic bloodbath of the ideology of Social Darwinism. The consumer must either adapt or die. From the perspective of pancapitalism, this campaign system is quite brilliant, because unlike the military (where the soldier is supplied with technology to transform he/rself into a weapons system), the civilian force will buy the technology of their enslavement, thereby underwriting a healthy portion of the cost of cyborg development as well as the cost of its spectacularization.

The current spectacle of technology is having an effect on the civilian population of the appropriate classes. Cyborg development here is a little more subtle than in the military.

Most people have seen the first phases of the civilian cyborg, which is typically an information cyborg. They are usually equipped with lap-top computers and cellular phones. Everywhere they go, their technology goes with them. They are always prepared to work, and even in their leisure hours they can be activated for duty. Basically, these beings are intelligent, autonomous workstations that are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and at the same time can be transformed into electronic consumers, whenever necessary.

In this phase of posthuman development, the will to purity, explicit in the spectacle of anxiety, manifests itself in two significant forms: First is the purification of the pancapitalist cycle of waking everyday life. Cyborgs are reduced to acting out rational, pragmatic, instrumental behaviors, and in so doing, the cycles of production (work) and consumption (leisure) are purified of those elements deemed nonrational and useless (by the pancapitalist system). It seems reasonable to expect that attempts will be made to reduce or eliminate regenerative, nonproductive processes like sleeping through the use of both technological and biological enhancement. The second is a manifestation of ideological purity in which the cyborg is persuaded to overwhelmingly value that which perpetuates and maintains the system, and to act accordingly. The prime disrupter of this manifestation of purity is the body itself with its endless disruptive physical functions, and the libidinal motivations inherent in the body's psychological structure. Hence technological advancement alone will not create the best posthuman; It must be supported by developments in rationalized body design.

FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR POSTHUMANITY

The military has long understood that the body must be trained to meet the demands of its technology. Consequently, it puts its organic units through very rigorous mental and physical training, but in the end, it is clear that this training is not enough. Training can only take a body to the limits of its predisposition. Pancapitalism has realized that the body must be designed for specific, goal-oriented tasks that better complement its interface with technology in the space of production. Human characteristics must also be rationally designed and engineered in order to eliminate body functions and psychological characteristics that refuse ideological inscription. To accomplish this goal, a heavily funded complex of institutions has emerged with knowledge specializations in genetics, cell biology, biochemistry, embryology, neurology, pharmacology, and so on. Together they form what Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) calls the "flesh machine". Its mandate is a complete invasion of the flesh, with vision and mapping technologies that will begin the process of total body control from its wholistic, exterior configuration to its microscopic constellations, as well as development of the new market frontier of flesh products and services.

The mature appearance of the flesh machine is perhaps the greatest indication that the magical data dump of consciousness into VR is not being seriously considered. If it were, why invest so heavily in body products and services? In addition, why should capital refuse an

opportunity that appears to be the greatest market bonanza since colonization? Digital flesh is significant in mapping the body, but its value depends upon the practical applications that are derived from it; These in turn, can be looped back into the material world. The body is here to stay. Unfortunately, the body of the future will not be the liquid, free-forming body which yields to individual desire; Rather, it will be a solid entity whose behaviors are fortified by task-oriented technological armor interfacing with ideologically engineered flesh. Little evidence is available to indicate that liquescence will be different in postmodernity from what it was in modernity – the privilege of capital-saturated power vectors.

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Space Travel - By Any Means Necessary

Jason Skeet

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

An Introduction to the Association of Autonomous Astronauts' Intergalactic Conference
Vienna, June 21-22, 1997

<http://aaa.t0.or.at/documents/>

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The Association of Autonomous Astronauts (AAA) was launched on April 23, 1995 as the world's first independent and community-based space program. A Five Year Plan was also established for creating, by the year 2000, a world-wide network of local, community-based AAA groups dedicated to building their own spaceships. In order to expand this project, the AAA has organised an Intergalactic Conference on independent, community-based space travel, that will take place in Vienna, Earth, June 21-22, 1997. This conference will bring together various strands within the Association of Autonomous Astronauts, for further cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences, demonstrating the varied and at times contradictory movements Autonomous Astronauts make whilst escaping from gravity. The conference will also expose local communities in Vienna to the possibilities of independent space exploration. Indeed, this Intergalactic Conference will advance the AAA's aim to grow and develop in several directions at once.

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One of the trajectories that the conference will trace is the new phase that the AAA's Five Year Plan for creating a world-wide network of local, community-based groups now moves into. We have called this phase the Dreamtime, and it is in essence a transversalist concept which helps to define the AAA's total opposition to other existing space programs. The Dreamtime asks, "What is the point of going into space only to replicate life on planet earth?". AAA groups around the world are now exploring what kind of experimental modes of living Autonomous Astronauts will create in space, what new social relations will be formed, and what new activities will fill up the empty spaces that had previously fixed the limits of life back on planet earth. The Dreamtime regards space travel as an evolutionary process which will inevitably lead to the extinction of

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present-day government space agencies. Autonomous Astronauts will create an extra-terrestrial consciousness that jettisons earth-based concepts of national borders and state controls. Amongst other things, the AAA is exploring how sex in zero-gravity will be even better than it is on planet earth, investigating the potential for organising raves in space, and using games of 3-sided football as essential training for Autonomous Astronauts. The AAA is interested in the new possibilities that open up when we form autonomous communities in space.

After the Second World War, organisations like NASA emerged to regulate and control the developments in space exploration technology. Since the collapse of the cold war myth, NASA has been struggling desperately for a new identity. It no longer has the Soviet enemy to compete with, and must dream up new excuses for itself. The AAA has consistently rejected the rationale of government space programs which, dominated by the world-view of engineers, regard the universe as a vast machine that can be manipulated according to certain laws and principles. For example, we completely oppose the idea of terraforming other planets. (Terraforming is the creation of a potentially life-supporting atmosphere on a planet through the acceleration of this process by an outside force. This may come in the form of exploding nuclear weapons above the planet's surface or by causing a succession of meteorites to hit the planet. A massive "greenhouse" effect is created, thus beginning the process that hopefully leads to an atmosphere capable of supporting carbon-based life-forms – terraforming has been proposed for Mars). The AAA understands that terraforming will be the action of a capitalist system that, completely out of control, has exhausted the earth's resources and requires another planet to devour.

The AAA has formed an approach to technology that is primarily concerned with investigating how a specific technology is used and who gets to use that technology. It is inevitable that the technology to build spaceships will get cheaper, or even that new technologies will be developed that make present-day rocket propulsion systems entirely redundant. The AAA is the world's only space program that makes technological issues secondary to the concern with what we will be doing when we form autonomous communities in outer space. The AAA investigates conceptions of space exploration in which the imagination is central. In doing so, Autonomous Astronauts create a complex interactive project that anyone can participate in, and which completely changes existing notions of space travel.

AAA groups develop specific strategies for engaging in the process of social transformation that they have dared to dream of. One such strategy for the redistribution of resources throughout society is an AAA inspired competition for the first privately-funded group to have sex in space. The XXX Prize Foundation, based in London, has announced that it intends to pay £1 million to the first privately-funded team to launch a craft into sub-orbital space – about 60 miles – and to then engage in sexual intercourse whilst up there. This sexual act may take any form and involve any number of people, but visual documentation must be provided to prove that the sex did occur in a weightless environment. Meanwhile, other AAA groups continue to point out how the process of creating autonomous communities in space must go hand-in-hand with an

identical process back on planet earth. Wealth will then be re-defined in terms of the quality of life within autonomous communities in space. Autonomous Astronauts are making this future happen.

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

Not only is the AAA combating the government, military and corporate monopoly of space travel, but Autonomous Astronauts are also fighting the increasing number of private enterprise space exploration groups. The AAA has revealed how these conquests of zero-gravity space will be a continuation of the imperialist occupations of planet earth. The Catholic Church has even discussed with NASA a plan for the conversion of aliens to Christianity. But as the technology to go into space becomes cheaper, the AAA will be concerned with how that technology is used. Plans to create a space tourist industry confirm that the myth of the "free market" will be projected into space in a bid to further fabricate the fantasy of capitalisms that are inescapable and omnipresent like the force of gravity. The AAA opposes the "wild west" pioneer metaphors put out by many of these space age entrepreneurs by bringing to space travel a class dimension, and demonstrating how economic austerity is manufactured by those who have a vested interest in preventing the working class from building our own spaceships.

TACTICAL MEDIA

The AAA does not intend to be interpreted as a metaphor for something else. When we talk about building our own spaceships we really mean just that. However, it does follow from this that what we have to say can have many different and complex levels of meaning to it. For example, the myth of space travel as the "final frontier" is like that other myth about private space enterprise in a universal "free market". These myths are designed to mask the social forces that actually shape the present-day state, corporate and military monopoly of space travel. The AAA opposes these myths with our own specifically constructed and contradictory propaganda. These rhetorical constructs are often put into orbit around the concept of space travel as being inherently bound to human evolution. The AAA has declared that the next stage in human evolution is to go into outer space.

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

But the AAA is not an utopian current for fin-de-siècle bargain hunters. The AAA is interested in the new social relations that exist with the creation of autonomous communities in space. This evolutionary process continues the moment someone opens their mind to such possibilities. According to our analysis, the AAA occupies a unique vantage point from which a multitude of historical trajectories may be traced. And yet, as a network of local, community-based groups who are not seeking to impose their visions of space exploration on anyone else, it has become clear that in outer space no-one will be concerned with the present-day organisation of knowledge. That is, the compartmentalisation of knowledge into the particular categories developed by capitalist culture over the last 500 years. The AAA network allows for a diversity of people to be involved, bringing together different experiences and skills. Ideas collide and new possibilities are made available.

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A fundamental strategy developed by the AAA has been the ability to move in several directions at once. The AAA's Intergalactic Conference will further demonstrate this, and promises to be an

intense two days of activity. The conference will include: A public presentation of the AAA's aims and objectives, with a debate on independent space exploration; Screening of AAA promotional videos; The opportunity to meet Autonomous Astronauts informally; A SpaceBase established for the duration of the conference, where AAA propaganda material will be on display; A rave in space dance party with experimental electronic music; Training day for Autonomous Astronauts with game of 3-sided football. In addition to this, computer terminals will be available for visiting an AAA web-site made by Viennese children, and a spaceship with an interior designed and constructed by children at the Vienna Kinder Museum will be installed. But the real challenge for those that attend this conference will remain – how to build our own spaceships and construct autonomous communities in outer space.

Jason Skeet

SPACE TRAVEL - BY ANY
MEANS NECESSARY

An Interview with Stelarc

Miss M

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC NETBASE

Public Netbase's Miss M and Australian Performance artist Stelarc are having coffee and cake in Vienna, June 1997

<http://www.t0.or.at/stelarc/interview01.htm>

Miss M: I have been thinking about asking you embarrassing questions.

Stelarc: Is that "Girls kicking ass" today?

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Miss M: Exactly. You mentioned yesterday, that you got into performance art because you would have been a terrible fine artist. That brought up this question for me: Is what your doing mainly for the sake of being an artist? Is that what you always wanted to be an artist, no matter what or how?

Stelarc: Yeah. No, ever since I was thinking about what I wanted to do, there was always to be an artist, but at that young age, being an artist was about being able to draw realistically, or impress people with your drafting skills. At that junior high school level that was what it was all about, but in my later high school years I began more to think about what the nature of art was all about. And it wasn't necessarily – even if you look at the history of art – it's not just simply about hyperrealism or landscape painting or figurative art, there's a much more psychological approach to understanding the individual. So, art is a strategy for comprehending the world, it's not merely a craft that makes hot-couture images for museums. And of course electronic media and the internet provide new operational and aesthetic realms for people to explore and they really radically redefine what the art process is all about. Going beyond the purely psychological to the more global kind of consciousness that has to do with being able to function remotely, being able to connect and interact in a multiplicity of ways, both with other people, with teleoperated robots, software agents. There are probably more programs roaming the net, than there are people now.

Miss M: You just mentioned the concept "to function remotely". If I take it literally it, do you understand your body as a machine, that would also function remotely?

Stelarc: Well, I think it's about seeing the body in a different way, instead of the body being a biological entity, operating in this local space proximal to someone else, in fact the body becomes a body connected with other bodies in other places in a multiplicity of ways, a whole range of sensory antennae that the technology provides. In a sense the body becomes part of this greater operational structure, where intelligence is distributed remotely and spatially over the internet. A body is not just this entity, but this entity connected to another body, where awareness is sliding and shifting, coagulating, ebbing and flowing, intensifying and dimming, depending on the connectivity of the body. So for me, what's important now, is not so much focusing on the individual psyche of a person, but that person's connectivity and multiplicity of operational possibilities.

Miss M: So it is "the body as machine"?

Stelarc: It depends what you mean by machine. In this muscle stimulation system we can physically link up over this electronic space. Now, whether you want to call that a machinic operation or whether you want to call that a new physical coupling, an interactivity between biological bodies, the system that heightens and amplifies and projects human presence simultaneously in different places, well that's really up to a definition of what a mechanism or a machine is.

Certainly the emphasis has shifted from seeing the body as a site for the psyche and as a site for social inscription to now seeing the body in a more structural way. As a body connected to other bodies, as a body embedded and interactive with other technologies and the internet in particular.

Miss M: That's a different concept of body then.

Stelarc: Well, these were all instances of exploring the bodies psychological and physiological parameters. In some of the suspension events, there was a huge machine that was part of the choreography of the body. And then there were other instances where the body had it's third hand attached, suspended from a monorail station, controlling its up and down movements with a remote control box, activating a motor.

In a lot of the suspension events there was technology used either to choreograph the bodies motion in space or to amplify internal signals, brainwaves, heartbeat, blood flow, muscle signals. These performances were just part of a series where the body probed, stretched, extended, repositioned in strange situations and spaces. Remotely activated, and all of these explored what it means to be a body, is it important any more to remain human? I would even rephrase that in a more radical way, perhaps the meaning of being human is not to remain human at all. Ever since we were hominoids with bipedal locomotion, two limbs become manipulated as we begin to manufacture tools, instruments, computers, other machines. So, one can well argue that technology isn't this alien other, but rather technology has always been coupled with the trajectory of human evolution. And the body has developed to this point in civilization through it's technologies. Of course, we know that a lot of the paradigm shifts in our awareness of the world have been the result of new technologies enabling us to have different perceptions, being able to make different measurements, going at faster speeds. Pushing the human bodies metabolism, it's muscular and skeletal system, it's nervous system, it's cardiac rhythms. To function in a technological terrain is to function in a zone of operation in which intention and action collapse into increasing accelerated responses. Now, how can a body cope with this kind of speeded up critical decision making operation in space? Anything from military machines, to the internet to a lot of our scientific instruments, like a tunnel electron microscopes or atom smasher, all of these devices really challenge what it means to have a body and what it means to remain human.

Miss M: Do you still feel human?

Stelarc: It's not that I have been catapulted into this fantasy land, or Sci-Fi vision, or startrekie mentality, but rather by continuously pushing the body, by continuously interfacing the body with new technologies and robotic systems and even other bodies remotely, then your generate experiences that you wouldn't ordinarily have and so consequently you are always thinking and possibly even redefining what it means to function in this way. I don't want to get off to this Sci-Fi fantasy world of the post-human, but of course one can well argue that images and body transformation have already occurred with medical experimentation and surgical operations and the notion of a cyborg is already physiologically coming into being. We can safely implant bits and pieces into the body to increase the durability and function of our joints, we are now being to replace to parts of our organs or organs all together. The notion of an artificial heart is not science fiction anymore. But there are other rather unexpected situations, like nano-technology. It's going to be possible for machines to inhabit the human body.

Technology began as something always external to the body, that inhabited the body's landscape, the human landscape. Now with micro-miniaturization, with nano-technology, we come to a point where the body tissue itself, the internal spaces and tracts of the body, the cellular structure of the body, becomes a host for these micro-miniaturized machinery. We can in fact recolonize the human body with micro-miniaturized machines to augment our bacterial and viral population. And because these machines are at a nano-technological, sub-sensory level, we don't even feel that they are there. But, we could be internally rewiring the body providing an internal surveillance system for the body, we could provide machines that detect pathological changes in chemistry, in temperature, that can detect blockages in arterial tracts. So that's something, kind of unexpected and a radical flip in our relationship to machines. Of course, nano-technology with the possibility to craft neurons onto silicon chip circuitry, then you have a future where interfaces not only become internalized and intimate, they can become much more seamless, connecting other bodies and the body to the internet. That's an unexpected situation.

Another relation of the body to it's machines has been the generating of images. A lot of our technology is technology that makes images, machines that make images. Up until now these images have been benign, they could be transmitted, but now with the possibility of imbuing images with Artificial Intelligence and artificial life, then you have a situation where intelligent autonomous images can become operational agents for the body. Or put into another way, that these intelligent autonomous and operational images in themselves become a kind of alternate lifeform, or artificial lifeform. A lifeform that can proliferate, replicate, transmit itself on the net. A lifeform that goes beyond the post-human notion of the cyborg. So, the realm of the post-human may no longer resign in Donna Haraway's notion of the cyborg. The realm of post-human may well reside in intelligent autonomous and operational images.

Miss M: Your beautiful head-mounted display was developed for the military and not for artists to use. Nano-technology is for the most part not developed in civilian laboratories, but in military ones.

Stelarc: There are places where research goes on without military funding, and I know of people who have refused to be sucked in by military sponsorship for their research. But even given that some technologies do begin as military devices, that doesn't mean that artists can't undermine and subvert and reuse these technologies in creative ways, that might have much more lasting and interesting spin-offs. I think history is replete with instances like those, where a technology or an energy may have been originally used for militaristic uses, but them becomes something that spreads throughout society as a benign and creative thing. I guess I just don't have a very cynical conspiracy attitude towards the world. Of course technologies can be created that are dangerous and deadly and terminal. And of course there are conspiracies in the world. But to see a conspiracy behind every cooperation and to see a military use for every new technological invention, I think is to have a rather pessimistic view of the world. But if we have to have a

pessimistic view of the world than we certainly have to examine the evolutionary design of the human body. Because it's essentially that that causes a lot of the problems. It's our carbon chemistry, our conditioned behavior, it's our evolutionary inclination that stamps us as essentially aggressive creatures.

Miss M: Is your work about pain?

Stelarc: No, it's not about pain. If you were to get pregnant, you wouldn't do it to experience physical pain, but giving birth is a painful experience.

Now, that doesn't necessarily mean that all art making is intrinsically painful but rather that in situations and circumstances where you put your body into unpredictable positions, where you are pushing the limits, when you are interfacing it with complex and powerful machines, it may be difficult, it may be dangerous, it may be painful, but those aren't the issues, at least in these performances.

Miss M: Where does your obsession with the body and altering the body and connecting the body come from? Is it some intellectual thing, like trying to find different ways of perceiving the world?

Stelarc: Hmm, people have pointed out that it's maybe just because I feel I have an inadequate body.

I think that was partly due to the fact, that your body simply isn't just this biological entity. It is always being augmented by technology to increase it's power, to extend it's sensory range, to increase it's calculating capabilities through computers, so there was always a feeling that the body needs to be augmented, needs to have technology attached to it, to extend and enhance it's operations.

I have the feeling that the body has in a sense evolved in this way, why should I continue with just two eyes, why should I continue to experience the world as a local space. Why should I only operate and function with only two limbs and hands? I think there is this desire to modify, extend, enhance and augment the body, and that's where it comes from. Whether one sees that as a particular and peculiarly gendered urge or whether one sees it as kind of having biological deficiency. In other words, new technologies and instruments generate new information which in turn produce alternate desires and paradigms of the world. So it's this dynamic of never being quite satisfied with the informational and technological environment you inhabit.

Miss M: Have you ever thought of freezing yourself or downloading yourself onto silicon?

Stelarc: I'm interested in the notion of extending someone's lifespan, and I think this might exponentially occur in the near future. But, this idea of having a modern day embarking

process, like freezing your body or your head, which is what's happening at the moment. I am not convinced that the *raison d'être* for doing that is right-headed enough. Everything I do leads me not only to feel that this body is peculiarly obsolete, but this body doesn't even have a mind of its own. And what's important is not what emanates from this body but rather what happens between bodies.

One can construct awareness of an intelligence in two ways, in others ways as well but, from a western view point we are obsessed with ego-driven bodies, that's why Freudian psychoanalysis flourished, we had this idea that something in us, is producing our behavior, something repressed and in the sub-conscious is making us perform in certain ways, or is making us envious or emotional or obsessive or paranoid or whatever. Instead of seeing intelligence or awareness or desire emanating from each individual in an isolated sense: The more I do, the more I feel. What's important is what occurs between people in that social space, in that language which is consensual. At this point of time in this peculiar culture of ours, what we call awareness and intelligence is what happens between us. So it's this exchange that's meaningful, not what an individual emanates, and in fact one can well argue that any individual thought has in fact been manufactured and engineered by countless external forces, impinging upon your body.

When I talk about the body, I don't mean it as a counterdistinction to a mind. For me, a body is this total physiological, phenomenological cerebral package, which interacts with the world, interacts with other bodies and is augmented by technology. It's in those operations, in those situations, in those interfaces and exchanges that intelligence and awareness is generated, not simply from an isolated body. So if we develop this attitude which doesn't have to be spiritual, which doesn't have to be Jungian, which doesn't have to be transcendental and mystical at all, if we engage in these kinds of attitudes and operations than a lot of our philosophical problems evaporate, a lot of our personal hang-ups don't have to exist anymore, what's meaningful is interaction, exchange, connectivity, collectivity and that makes the transition to function intelligently on the internet.

For me the internet is seen not merely as a medium of transmitting information, like this Super-information-highway is, rather the internet is a transducer that effects physical action in other bodies in other places, the potency of the internet is, how much one can physically alter bodies at these different modes on the internet.

Miss M: Would you like to replicate and have a Stelarc #2, and then do a performance with yourself in New York and the other you somewhere else? Simultaneously touch yourself?

Stelarc: I'd prefer to do it with another person. I'm kind of old-fashioned, preferably with someone of the opposite gender too.

I have done performances where I have performed with a virtual body. But here the interest was in the idea that you could generate interactivity with a virtual entity, a phantom body.

That could mimic your physical movements, but also we could map virtual camera views to the body movement. When my left arm jerked up and down involuntarily, the virtual camera view of the virtual body changed from low views of the body to high views of the body.

DISCOURSE

The virtual body had this kind of animated breath like vibration to it. Also by swaying backwards and forwards we generated a very shallow virtual space, when the body was swayed backwards it would disappear. You had this choreography of the virtual body, that was at the same time mimicking physical movements, had a choreography of mapped virtual camera views, was pulsating with your breathing and was appearing and disappearing as you swayed backwards and forwards. It's that kind of in a sense formal beauty, choreography and mapping a physical to virtual. If that virtual body was imbued with some Artificial Intelligence where it decided whether it would or wouldn't respond to your physical promptings, that might generate another layer of interactivity, and be even more interesting.

NEW ART PRACTICES

These performances have never been about psycho-social exploration. The performances were never about this particular body. The body is seen as an evolutionary object, as a structure rather than a psyche. So with that premise, the performances were about other things. In feminist critique, it is very difficult to get away from the political action, but in these performances there is not a deliberate intentional strategy to make a political stance, either in terms of gender or in terms of artistic practice. In feminist critique, the answer to that statement would be that in trying to be neutral that's a political statement in itself.

TACTICAL MEDIA

One can tautologically argue *ad absurdum*. The intention of the artist is not to be purely personal or purely political. Now, can you be something other than purely personal or purely political? In the realm of human activity one can well argue that you can't. You're either being personal or political, or both, but you can't be neither.

DIGITAL
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I have always challenged the things that seem to be un-challengable. Like the notion of free agency, an issue that's touched upon here. I mean, if half of your body is driven remotely and the other half locally controlled already free agency becomes problematic. In fact, although we always generate the illusion of free agency, we would like to think of ourselves as free agents, we would like to feel that we are making a decision by ourselves that will be to our advantage, nonetheless one can well argue that the decision you make today is being the result of lots of external promptings, people impinging, institutional expectations, social expectations, cultural upbringing, this point in time in this historical mode that we are in in these parallel world.

PUBLIC NETBASE

Miss M: You don't believe in any freedom?!

Stelarc: Not in any simplistic sense that somehow you are this free and blithe spirit. No, I don't. Having said all of those things, having said that it's possible to perform without being nostalgic, without being driven by desire, without any emotion, doesn't necessarily mean that I am belittling the human body, belittling the personal or the subjective or even undermining the importance

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of making decisions. It's just that it's a much more complex operation than we have been let to believe, or that we have been conditioned to accept.

Mis
AN INTERVI
WITH STELA

Synworld

Konrad Becker

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDICALITY,
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PARTICIPATION

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NUMBER
INFORMATION

<http://synworld.t0.or.at>

Synthetic worlds are a key concept of contemporary infonautics. A broad spectrum of scientific disciplines is located at this interface of computer simulation and the visualization of information in dataspace. Especially those research areas concerned with the game theory, where complex worlds are outlined by game rules, play an increasingly significant role, but also the functions of art and culture are of primary interest.¹

Learning while playing and productive work as a game are developments that are gaining significance in media hybrids. A multimedia future of digital expert systems and knowledge databases will change teaching and learning and also the working process. Will post-industrial society suffer the computer game recreational shock?²

Hopefully, the dark millenium of "work makes free" has come to an end, and it seems high time to free work from its inhuman context and to do justice to a new significance of recreation time and employment. In recent history, the game age seems to have set in. A president, who in the 1980s went into raptures about training American youngsters with video games to become perfect fighter pilots, was permitted to experience how in the 1990s war itself was turned into a video game. This was, however, no clean "telesurgery" but a bloody war employing so-called mass destruction weapons.

Scientific and military research is focusing on the creation of virtual worlds and the realistic simulation of complex, dynamic, and multi-dimensional space and processes, thus further gaining economic significance. The interaction with complex technical systems (the intern- space stations for instance) or complex data in many cases requires leaving the 2-dimensional on-screen user instruction or menus behind to navigate in spatial structures. Today, through the mass production of powerful multimedia computers for a broad market, many results of this research and development can be found in generally available user programs.

Progressively, the creation of unknown galaxies, which no human has ever entered before, has become easier. These developments have become apparent especially in the field of home entertainment and in the computer game industry.

With growing success, simulation is being employed for exploring real contexts, from material research to cosmology. Although we are approaching the simulation of reality by means of technical media, we seem to be distancing ourselves all the more from a homogenous perception of reality. The multiple realities of non-linear games and hypertextual narrative structures of digital space and electronic poliversities are preparing us for the simultaneous existence of different levels of reality. Software not only makes our world smaller by drawing us closer together but it also seems to be making it "softer". The representation of the world is a system of game rules and symbols for codified perception. The more reference points this system offers (thus becoming more useful), the more risk factors seep in... This means that what we are "sure" about is not real after all. Theory determines observation and humans inevitably perceive the complex world through limited means. Thus the foundations of understanding are based on the misunderstanding of the comprehensive world around us.

Konrad Becker

SYNWORLD

It has become more difficult for us to know whether objects actually exist and can be distinguished from the remaining world in any way, especially after having realized that space and time are relative to our perception. Frequently, even the limits between a real and a very life-like and distinct imaginary experience are blurred. The human nervous system adjusts itself according to what it considers real – this peculiarity is the basis for many psychological mnemonic phenomena. (ARS Memoria).

Dead Hollywood stars live longer – ever since they have been digitized to become virtual actors and their motion have been captured. The designer pop star has been translated into electronic space and numerous virtual TV hosts and kids' idols made of bits and pixels (Date Kyoko, Lara Croft, Sonic Hedgehog) are soliciting the attention of mediated society. The mimetic gesture of pure information bodies in telepresent infectious postures offer social standing and positions. The bio-cultural game rules of social reality are becoming ever more complex and abstract due to mediation. A "special affects" industry is being engrammatically inscribed into collective unconscious; Just as viral genetic information has surreptitiously entered into the human genotype, the human being is becoming its own double. Bionic WoMen in cognitive homeostasis (self-regulation), psycho-cybernetic game figures with aim-seeking servomechanisms, on the stage that mean the world to them, cloned from the triplets of trivial media. (Do androids dream of electric sheep?)

Economic change, in which growth is based on the propagation of information instead of industrial goods production, is transmuting into a virtual economy, where the course of the money economy's fever curve relies less on real production values than on self-referential cycles of dematerialized game rules in electronic channels. The continued instantisation of media to hypermedia is pursuing the trend of multimedia and broadband usage of data networks and we

must brace ourselves for the compression to the gravitational collapse of a black hole whose psychosocial aftermath holds surprises in store for us: On the way to global self-fulfilling media, the data demons in virtual environments are turning into emancipated knowbots. On the silicon planet, the "deus ex machina" is producing the "ghost in the machine" in medial logorhythm. What role can art play in this age of biocybernetic self-reproducibility?

The human is a symbol-controlled organism, and complex systems or organisms are on the lookout for entertainment, young computer game enthusiasts are just one example. From this perspective, it seems meaningful to ask for the entertainment value and dramaturgy of technical systems and the structures of our world. The rare accidents, coincidences, and improbabilities in media production are then explained by the necessities defining action. Contextuality, the mother of all postmodern perplexity, is being obliterated by hypercontextuality associated with the growing certainty that everything is somehow interconnected.

The design, and architecture of information also has deep implications on social politics. The dramatic acceleration in the flow of persuasive communication transports not only entertainment and information but also standards of behavior. If information flows faster than most people can take, then perspectival filtering and structural selection increasingly play a role in the creation of social reality.

Representation systems and images of the world as a simulation of reality are efficient inductors and thus astonishingly high costs are put up with. The depiction of the world has always been a political instrument and the distortions, as produced by the projection of multi-dimensional space onto planes, has been well exploited in this context (maps as an abstract view of the world itself but also of those who are drawing them).

Reducing complex multi-dimensional structures, not simply the projection of a sphere onto a surface, inevitably creates ambivalences and distortions, or a subjectivation of depiction. The perspectival loss of the setting not only leads to a shift in the relation of sizes and forms, but also to visual oscillating effects as the ones that occur during optical illusions.

A standardized perspective prevents in-depth perception and the reassessment of relational dimensions. For this reason, humans, in the ideal case, have at least two eyes and two ears. A restricted and pre-determined perspective enables numerous special-effect illusions, similar to those used in feature films and the creation of "necessary illusions" in the social collective.

For visualization and information architecture, which functions with dynamic complexity, the expansion of Euclidean space into the field of hyper-dimensionality, the supposition that more than 3 dimensions exist, has become necessary. An example thereof is the architecture of super computers, which would be impossible without a multi-dimensional hypercube. Not only up and down, left and right were suggested for hyperspace, but also ana and kata as additional spatial differentiation.

A new dimension of digital space is evolving in software-generated architectural structures, intelligent software environments, and in the algorithmic spawning of the software itself. Adaptive virtual environments have a special status in this context. Hopefully, there will be enough open systems to enable such dynamic information environments to express a unique culture of their own. Likewise, the limits of representation have become clearer by employing simulation systems. Tools that enable us to use limitations for the redefinition of possibilities and to reveal new, undreamed degrees of freedom, which were not included in the original semantics.

The fascination for role games and their transcendence using virtual actors may not only allow for a more differentiated understanding of gender stereotypes but also help transpersonal and inter-subjective qualities to move into the foreground.

Konrad Becke
SYNWORLD

NOTES

1. In the field of artificial life and expert systems, Artificial Intelligence and operations, research, visualization technologies and computer graphics, mathematics and physics, politics and economic theory, behavior and conflict research, psychology and sociology, chemistry and evolutionary biology.
2. Computer simulations for iterative and territorial forms of the prisoner dilemma can show, for instance, how cooperation strategies succeed even if deceit promises the biggest benefit in the short run.

General Statement on Synworld

Faith Wilding

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

Moderator Statement on Synworld playwork:hyperspace, Vienna, May 29, 1999

<http://synworld.t0.or.at>

DIGITAL
MANUAL REFERENCE
NEW WORKS AND
PRACTITION

I came away from the Synworld Symposium with a phrase buzzing in my head: This is the dawning of the Age of New Cartesianism, New Cartesianism... (doesn't quite go to the tune of Aquarius, sorry). It was a long hot day and flesh bodies had a bad time of it altogether. The age-old fascination with the embodied machine/machined body is in the foreground in the culture scene these days, as evidenced by many current exhibitions in Germany and Austria such as Puppen, Körper, Automaten (Düsseldorf); Der Neue Mensch (Dresden); LifeScience (upcoming in Linz); and the many machinic body exhibits promised for the Expo in Hannover. However, the flesh body was very little in evidence at Synworld – except perhaps as a negation, or as a repressed figure. What was in evidence both in the talks and in the many computer games and art-works on view, was the accelerated development of the automated and controllable body – the body on-line, and the sacrifice of the fluid and flesh body. Automated, virtual, and switchable identities and subjectivities are the stuff of fashionable gender and post-colonial theory today – but what does this mean for the majority of the world's population in actual lived life? While advanced computer science and biotechnology dig ever deeper into the data body, and the digitally mapped body becomes an action figure, the numbers of actual sacrificial bodies mount relentlessly.

PUBLIC NETBASE

WORKING
TOWARDS THE FUTURE

The delicious and fearsome schizophrenia of experiencing fluid subjectivity and virtual genders while still inhabiting a sexed, gendered, fleshed body is currently the privilege of a relative few – mostly those who have the right class, gender, race, economics, and access. But what if you are only a chip (or chipmaker) in the machine? What if you don't have access to that downloaded pool of consciousness, or the complex ganged systems of parallel computers? What if you are not

a willing and playful cyborg, but an involuntary or forced cyborg harnessed to these machines? (I do not apologize for the annoyance of appearing here as the doubting Thomasina, clouding the pure skies of virtuality).

Pleasure in skills, pleasure in being coupled with invisible and transparent nanotechnology, with the speed of light. It was all accessible at Synworld in a wonderful cacophony of games of all kinds. Kids of both sexes and all ages were standing at the keyboards and joysticks avidly staring into the screens, responding with their whole rigid little bodies as guns flashed, bodies exploded, rockets zoomed, airplanes took off, and evil armored figures appeared every where. They were one with the hero figures – be they good or evil. Even the female hero, Lara Croft, was easy to identify with: A lone heroine, a conquering, colonizing figure, who is (especially in Germany) the large-breasted darling of the geek imagination.

Faith Wilding
GENERAL STATEMENT
ON SYNWORLD

How can such virtual gender and identity traps be repatched? There were attempts in the exhibition. I spent time with VNS Matrix Gameboy and All New Gen. I toured Anne Marie Schleiner's Madam Polly patch for Marathon, and tried to win access to the free brothel by playing the Carbon Defense Leagues hacked GameBoy. The more I played and watched others play, the commercial games, the more appreciative I became of the difficulties faced by dissenting repatchers.

The Symposium as a whole again clearly raised questions about the differences between VR worlds and RL and the interface between them. John Casti explained the usefulness of systems which create silicon surrogates to experiment with things you can't do in the real world. He showed and described complex adaptive systems which can be used to model everything from traffic patterns to stockmarket trends. Ah, but which systems does one choose to model? And are they really interchangeable? And if one has succeeded in modeling, say, an engineered selective stockmarket crash, what is to keep one from actually implementing it? Who decides which projects are the ones to be funded, and how can the public have access to this information and to decision making regarding it? Who is watching the brains at the Santa Fe Institute? Casti implied that civilian or RL use of the knowledge gained was always helpful and useful, and always got into the right hands.

By contrast, Machiko Kusahara, presented a feminist reading of gender aspects of Japanese animation, and an analysis of various kinds of space (non-perspective space) and time effects used in Japanese animation. She addressed the interface between VR and RL in terms of subjectivity, speaking about the really deep feelings many Japanese developed for the Tamagotchi toys and the new post-pets – an email program for children. She took note of the real feelings that are developed by people in virtual spaces and about virtual idols. In discussion, Kusahara, again stressed the subjective differences between, say, Japanese girls and American girls and their preferences in comics and virtual personae.

Toshiya Ueno seemed upbeat about the rapidly developing international scenes of Techno-orientalism and Media Tribalism. He attributes these to the spread of international society, and

sees this new tribalism as a positive development. Ueno proposed that the international rave culture for example was developing a more open and cross cultural definition of tribalism which is inclusive rather than exclusive because it shares the same characteristics (the same party is going on everywhere) and takes advantage of a cultural diaspora and global culture. He briefly discussed the problem of Japanese essentialism expected from imported Japanese culture. His most controversial points were made in regard to the ubiquitous use of naked girl images in many of the comics. Ueno claimed that the rave culture provides a liberating cyborg subjectivity for women, women disappear into the machine and gender becomes fluid in this disappearance. Everyone merges into a larger wilder body. Ueno did not address how these moments in the gender free autonomous zone interface with the very real and continuing sexism and gender separation of Japanese society.

Lars Spuybroek tried to introduce his complex ideas on the Matter of the Diagram in far too short a period of time. That's the RW and RT for you, Lars (and real bodies too). For Lars, Form has become part of Time. He asks, how much actual is there in the virtual? When expressed in architecture this produces the idea of the geometry of the mobile. Spaces get used differently at different times by different bodies. Architecture tries to imitate or become like matter – constantly in motion. Lars put these ideas into action at V2 in his softsite design of the office. These are all good and welcome ideas; a kind of utopia to listen to especially in Vienna where one is surrounded by some of the hardest, most unyielding, empire exuding architecture imaginable. But I couldn't help thinking about the vast energy and sums of money going into this kind of utopian research which wasn't going to help the great majority of the world's housed or unhoused a bit. This made me think again about the issue of pure research and how there is no such thing. All research is political.

Karl Chu also played the utopian and mystical violin. His meditations have plunged him headlong into virtual alchemy. We are implicated in an evolutionary cosmology – he calls it the Infozoic Era. We have produced a machinic system (or a machinic system has produced us) which is generating a gnostic quest for fulfillment. The digital has entered the arena of poesis. The new evolutant ingests computers and allows them to generate worlds not yet imagined. This architectural system generates buildings that grow themselves. Hey Karl, what's the interface with RL again? The images Karl showed were dreamy, but he was far too in love with them to remember the real bodies who might inhabit these forms.

And then there was Rudy. Who bravely tried to speak in German and English and tried to convince us of the Dimensionality of Cyberspace. He got so carried away he started drawing in ink-pen on the projection screen. Now that is a great demonstration of the interface between the projected and the real. Thanks for that real life demo, Rudy. Rudy proposed that Cyberspace unites thinking and dimensionality. In other words, the space in Cyberspace is thought. OK, what does that mean, exactly? Well, navigating from one website to another, for example, which means your thoughts (and attention) are wandering, which implies space is being traversed. OK, how is that different than browsing through books? Are books cyberspace too? No, not quite, says Rudy.

Then what exactly is it? And what is the relation to RL? It's more complicated. But I never did quite grasp how or why.

The discussion afterward got very heated for a few moments. My personal objection was that (with the exception of the two Japanese colleagues) none of the speakers addressed the political and social implications of virtual systems and virtual life, or the research they are involved with. They occupy intensely privileged positions in regard to these machines and the research that they do, but they do not make that part of their research. I missed a real analysis of the phenomena which was going on next door where the kids were glued to virtual worlds in a loud, hot, smelly, rather uncomfortable spaces. And meanwhile the stealth bombers were dropping yet more bombs on Kosovo, avoiding the shedding of military (but not civilian) blood. Synworld was an important project in that it allowed for the side by side examination, comparison, and experience of both commercial and artistic computer games and art works. The ever more complex questions of the interface and the interrelationships between VR and RL remain to be researched further.

Faith Wilding

GENERAL STATEMENT
ON SYNWORLD

"Play with me!"

Or: Cyberspace as Toyspace

Oliver Marchart

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

This paper has first been presented at the opening of the "Data-Panic"-show, event organized by Konrad Becker, January 10, 1997, Arthouse, Dublin

<http://www.t0.or.at/dublin/omtxt.htm>

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

It has been frequently remarked that the realm of electronic networks bears some resemblances to a new continent. If this is true then it is perfectly clear that electronic networks at least partly represent a new America: An always receding horizon/frontier which has to be discovered and at the same time protected in its untouched innocent state.

But how come we experience the internet as a New Continent, and how come we construct this continent as playground. My main claim is that it is especially electronic art that constructs this new continent as a space for playing and the continent itself as toy. Cyberspace is a kind of Toyspace. Here, allegedly "cold" technology suddenly looks at you – with big eyes – and says: "Play with me".

In Austrian – and not merely Austrian – electronic art the construction of this New Electronic Continent as playground is prevalent. Examples – partly of the people participating in this event today – might be Eva Wohlgemuth's "Diana's Digest" (a whole webside on Diana, featuring the princess as a kind of Barbie-doll), Robert Adrian X who, in collaboration with ORF Kunstradio, produced the sit-com "Auer Family" where Playmobil™-characters stage a family narrative; A third example might be the winners of this year's Ars Electronica's Golden World Wide Web Nica who call themselves "e-toy", thereby bearing their relation to Toyspace already in their name. In public performances they appear themselves as toys. And a last example might be the

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theory-island "e-lands in the web" by Konrad Becker and myself, which heavily relies on adventure games. In this project – which was presented in a workshop in Dublin's Arthouse – we tried to avoid the idea of a cyberspatial playful happy-go-lucky-land by including "war-zones" (Guerrilla Camp) and "market-zones" (Trade Zone), thereby shaping the New Continent in a more realistic fashion while at the same time not forgetting about its fictual character. So, on the other hand one can find there a "psychogeographic", "mystic" or "enigmatic" space as well (Neo Town, Synreal City), (there are religions, there are Gods, there are demons).

Now taking the assumption that the Internet is nothing else than a new continent, a continent modelled upon America as the New World and upon the narrative of the "final frontier" as a starting point, the question arises why and how the playfulness and childishness of the American imaginary is transferred into "cyberspace". Therefore, the central thesis – or rather, hypothesis – would go somewhat like this: The internet as playground specifically relates to one New World Narrative (characteristic: To the Hanna-Barbera-cartoon Yogi-Bear.

Oliver Marchart

"PLAY WITH ME!"

OR: CYBERSPACE

AS TOYSPACE

Yogi-Bear as cartoon character also belongs to a New World-space, "Jellystone-Park" (a parodic variation on Yellowstone Park), which is located – very much like the internet – somewhere in between a post-fordistic theme park and a wild-life preserve. However, behind this playground, we find a fundamentally bad conscience. Yogi-Bear, who – in the cartoon narrative – stands in for the American Natives, incorporates the primal trauma of the American imaginary. An imaginary that is torn between extinction and "enculturation" of its Other. The other – the natives.

Mary Fuller for example speculates that "the drive behind the rhetoric of virtual reality as a New World or new frontier is the desire to recreate the Renaissance encounter with America without guilt: This time, if there are others present, they really won't be human, or if they are, they will be other players like ourselves, whose bodies are not jeopardised by the virtual weapons we wield." (Fuller and Jenkins, 1995: 59). Please note: She's speaking about other players instead of real human people.

Fuller might be right – we can have a playful and harmless relation with the other in case of electronic networks – although her approach leaves out the economical motives of colonisation. Nowadays electronic networks are about to be colonised by banks, tele-industries and corporations who simply want to sell their products. The "natives" are forced into – for example – teleworking. Some of the electronic net-art tend to leave out this other side of electronic playfulness tend to forget that behind the playful encounter with the other – an other who, according to Mary Fuller, has not to be killed and extincted this time – most of netart tend to forget that we can find both economic and political motives that are not innocent at all.

So, if we understand net-art and net-culture as a form of play which on its part establishes a specific object-relation towards techno-toys, then the Yogi-Bear narrative might help us to understand this dark side of cyberspace as playground. As Yogi-Bear teaches us, playing in cyberspace is not an innocent enterprise – it is as cruel as children are.

Why, you might ask, we have to take Yogi-Bear as a cruel postcolonial story, a paraphrase on internet culture *apres la lettre* and not only as a children's cartoon? Jellystone-Park is a kind of realised Utopia. Therefore it is no Utopia anymore, it has already finished to be a Utopia which on the other hand is the condition of possibility of its partial realisation. Electronic networks are "realised" Utopias too. But how is it to live in such a realised Utopia? Let's ask Yogi-Bear.

The Hannah-Barbera-Cartoon can be read as an apocalyptic Meditation on the relation between America and its "natives". Yogi-Bear has to be kept in his wild-life preserve but he also has to be preserved as a rare species. The series contains a single dramatic element: The chasing of Picnic-baskets, or as Yogi calls them: "Pickening"-basket. But whenever Yogi-Bear gets one of the visitors picnic-baskets, he has to be caught in the act by Ranger Smith, the chief ranger of the Park. In most cases, Ranger Smith, who is a kind of Habermasian relies on the power of rational discourse, trying to convince Yogi-Bear not to steal picnic-baskets. But, in the end, he always says he would transfer Yogi-Bear from the wild life preserve into a Zoo (which means – bearing in mind that we are confronted with a variation on the colonisation of America – from the preserve into a kind concentration camp). But even these drastic measures don't succeed.

Interestingly enough Hanna-Barbera construe this preservation space as a non-technical space. The state of nature has to be reinforced by the detechnologization of this kind of rotten paradise. In the Rousseauistic idea of the internet as a state of nature between equal netizens (think of the Jeffersonian democracy-idea by John Perry Barlow), which is coupled with the Californian ideology of the net as a huge beach party, the electronic network is precisely conceived as non-technological.

So, on the one hand, the setting of Jellystone-Park – and with it the Californian ideologist's internet – stands in the tradition of the American romantic Rousseauism of Emerson or Thoreau. Yogi-Bear is nothing else than a nice and happy and dumb native. But because of the American Genocide, the American Rousseauism is not innocent: Yogi-Bear is a kind of incorporated or drawn bad conscience of American Rousseauism. The WASP-coloniser Ranger Smith gets to grip with his bad conscience by constructing his prisoners as naive, funny, nice and as addicted to picnic-baskets (like parents who construct their children as children – whereas children tend to construct themselves (via playing) as adults).

There is no technology in Jellystone-Park. And the same goes for the Ideology of the internet as social playground. In this ideology, paradoxically, the internet is an untouched rural happyland despite its technological nature. And the Rousseauistic ideology of the net, which seeks to defend the net as a wild life preserve against economic-political colonisers, is caught in this very illusion: They see the state of nature of a general friendliness and solidarity and playfulness amongst net-natives as threatened by politicians and capitalist.

This is not totally wrong, but the Net-Rousseauists and -Beach Boys forget that they themselves are already colonisers, that their own state of state of nature is only one definition or model

of the net, which fights a war of interpretation with commercial projects for instance. And the model of the internet as playground or Toyspace is in no way privileged. Nature is only one specific form of culture and not at all logically primordial to culture.

This means that many artist's form of playing is not as innocent as they – or we – suppose and their toys might turn against their users. Very much like a Matell doll recently did:

"Matell Inc. is withdrawing its Cabbage Patch doll that mimics eating, and is offering consumers \$40 refunds in response to about 100 reports of children getting hair and fingers caught in the doll's battery-powered mouth. The doll has no on-off switch." (International Herald Tribune, January 8, 1997, p3)

Oliver Marchart

"PLAY WITH ME!"

OR: CYBERSPACE

AS TOYSPACE

Interface as the Key Category of Computer Culture

Lev Manovich

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

Presentation at Interface Explorer Symposium, Vienna, 2001

<http://interface.t0.or.at>

DIGITAL
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In 1984, the director of Blade Runner Ridley Scott was hired to create a commercial which introduced Apple Computer's new Macintosh. In retrospect, this event is full of historical significance. Released within two years of each other, Blade Runner (1982) and Macintosh computer (1984) defined the two aesthetics which, twenty years, still rule contemporary culture. One was a futuristic dystopia which combined futurism and decay, computer technology and fetishism, retro-styling and urbanism, Los Angeles and Tokyo. Since Blade Runner release, its techno-noir was replayed in countless films, computer games, novels and other cultural objects. And while a number of strong aesthetic systems have been articulated in the following decades, both by individual artists (Mathew Barney, Mariko Mori) and by commercial culture at large (the 1980s "post-modern" pastiche, the 1990s techno-minimalism), none of them was able to challenge the hold of Blade Runner on our vision of the future.

PUBLIC NETBASE

In contrast to the dark, decayed, "post-modern" vision of Blade Runner, Graphical User Interface (GUI), popularized by Macintosh, remained true to the modernist values of clarity and functionality. The user's screen was ruled by strait lines and rectangular windows which contained smaller rectangles of individual files arranged in a grid. The computer communicated with the user via rectangular boxes containing clean black type rendered again white background. Subsequent versions of GUI added colors and made possible for users to customize the appearance of many interface elements, thus somewhat deluding the sterility and boldness of the original monochrome 1984 version. Yet its original aesthetic survived in the displays of hand-held communicators

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such as Palm Pilot, cellular telephones, car navigation systems and other consumer electronic products which use small LCD displays comparable in quality to 1984 Macintosh screen.

Like Blade Runner, Macintosh's GUI articulated a vision of the future, although a very different one. In this vision, the lines between human and technological creations (computers, androids) are clearly drawn and decay is not tolerated. In computer, once a file is created, it never disappears except when explicitly deleted by the user. And even then deleted items can be usually recovered. Thus if in "meatspace" we have to work to remember, in cyberspace we have to work to forget. (Of course while they run, OS and applications constantly create, write to and erase various temporary files, as well as swap data between RAM and virtual memory files on a hard drive, but most of this activity remains invisible to the user.)

Also like Blade Runner, GUI vision also came to influence many other areas of culture. This influence ranges from purely graphical (for instance, use of GUI elements by print and TV designers) to more conceptual. In the 1990s, as the internet progressively grew in popularity, the role of a digital computer shifted from being a particular technology (a calculator, a symbol processor, an image manipulator, etc.) to being a filter to all culture, a form through which all kinds of cultural and artistic production is being mediated. As a window of a Web browser comes to replace cinema and television screen, a wall in art gallery, a library and a book, all at once, the new situation manifest itself: All culture, past and present, is being filtered through a computer, with its particular human-computer interface.

In semiotic terms, the computer interface acts as a code which carries cultural messages in a variety of media. When you use the internet, everything you access – texts, music, video, navigable spaces – passes through the interface of the browser and then, in its turn, the interface of the OS. In cultural communication, a code is rarely simply a neutral transport mechanism; Usually it affects the messages transmitted with its help. For instance, it may make some messages easy to conceive and render others unthinkable. A code may also provide its own model of the world, its own logical system, or ideology; Subsequent cultural messages or whole languages created using this code will be limited by this model, system or ideology. Most modern cultural theories rely on these notions which I will refer to together as "non-transparency of the code" idea. For instance, according to Whorf-Sapir hypothesis which enjoyed popularity in the middle of the 20th century, human thinking is determined by the code of natural language; The speakers of different natural languages perceive and think about world differently. Whorf-Sapir hypothesis is an extreme expression of "non-transparency of the code" idea; Usually it is formulated in a less extreme form. But then we think about the case of human-computer interface, applying a "strong" version of this idea makes sense. The interface shapes how the computer user conceives the computer itself. It also determines how users think of any media object accessed via a computer. Stripping different media of their original distinctions, the interface imposes its own logic on them. Finally, by organizing computer data in particular ways, the interface provides distinct models of the world. For instance, a hierarchical file system assumes that the world can be organized in a logical multi-level hierarchy. In contrast, a hypertext model of the

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World Wide Web models the world as a non-hierarchical system ruled by metonymy. In short, far from being a transparent window into the data inside a computer, the interface bring with it strong messages of its own.

As an example of how the interface imposes its own logic on media, consider "cut and paste" operation, standard in all software running under modern GUI. This operation renders insignificant the traditional distinction between spatial and temporal media, since the user can cut and paste parts of images, regions of space and parts of a temporal composition in exactly the same way. It is also "blind" to traditional distinctions in scale: The user can cut and paste a single pixel, an image, a whole digital movie in the same way. And last, this operation also renders insignificant traditional distinctions between media: "cut and paste" can be applied to texts, still and moving images, sounds and 3D objects in the same way.

The interface comes to play a crucial role in information society yet in a another way. In this society, not only work and leisure activities increasingly involve computer use, but they also converge around the same interfaces. Both "work" applications (word processors, spreadsheet programs, database programs) and "leisure" applications (computer games, informational DVD) use the same tools and metaphors of GUI. The best example of this convergence is a Web browser employed both in the office and at home, both for work and for play. In this respect information society is quite different from industrial society, with its clear separation between the field of work and the field of leisure. In the 19th century, Karl Marx imagined that a future communist state would overcome this work-leisure divide as well as the highly specialized and piece-meal character of modern work itself. Marx's ideal citizen would be cutting wood in the morning, gardening in the afternoon and composing music in the evening. Now a subject of information society is engaged in even more activities during a typical day: Inputting and analyzing data, running simulations, searching the internet, playing computer games, watching streaming video, listening to music online, trading stocks, and so on. Yet in performing all these different activities, the user in essence is always using the same few tools and commands: A computer screen and a mouse; A Web browser; A search engine; Cut, paste, copy, delete and find commands.

CULTURAL INTERFACES

The term human-computer interface (HCI) describes the ways in which the user interacts with a computer. HCI includes physical input and output devices such a monitor, a keyboard, and a mouse. It also consists of metaphors used to conceptualize the organization of computer data. For instance, the Macintosh interface introduced by Apple in 1984 uses the metaphor of files and folders arranged on a desktop. Finally, HCI also includes ways of manipulating this data, i.e. a grammar of meaningful actions which the user can perform on it. The example of actions provided by modern HCI are copy, rename and delete file; List the contents of a directory; Start and stop a computer program; Set computer's date and time.

The term HCI was coined when computer was mostly used as a tool for work. However, during the 1990s, the identity of computer has changed. In the beginning of the decade, a computer was still largely thought of as a simulation of a typewriter, a paintbrush or a drafting ruler – in other words, as a tool used to produce cultural content which, once created, will be stored and distributed in its appropriate media: Printed page, film, photographic print, electronic recording. By the end of the decade, as internet use became commonplace, the computer's public image was no longer that of tool but also that a universal media machine, used not only to author, but also to store, distribute and access all media.

As distribution of all forms of culture becomes computer-based, we are increasingly "interfacing" to predominantly cultural data: Texts, photographs, films, music, virtual environments. In short, we are no longer interfacing to a computer but to culture encoded in digital form. I will use the term "cultural interfaces" to describe human-computer-culture interface: The ways in which computers present and allows us to interact with cultural data. Cultural interfaces include the interfaces used by the designers of Web sites, CD-ROM and DVD titles, multimedia encyclopedias, online museums and magazines, computer games and other new media cultural objects.

If you need to remind yourself what a typical cultural interface looked in the second part of the 1990s, say 1997, go back in time and click to a random Web page. You are likely to see something which graphically resembles a magazine layout from the same decade. The page is dominated by text: Headlines, hyperlinks, blocks of copy. Within this text are few media elements: Graphics, photographs, perhaps a QuickTime movie and a VRML scene. The page also includes radio buttons and a pull-down menu which allows you to choose an item from the list. Finally there is a search engine: Type a word or a phrase, hit the search button and the computer will scan through a file or a database trying to match your entry.

For another example of a prototypical cultural interface of the 1990s, you may load (assuming it would still run on your computer) the most well-known CD-ROM of the 1990s – *Myst* (Broderbund, 1993). Its opening clearly recalls a movie: Credits slowly scroll across the screen, accompanied by a movie-like soundtrack to set the mood. Next, the computer screen shows a book open in the middle, waiting for your mouse click. Next, an element of a familiar Macintosh interface makes an appearance, reminding you that along with being a new movie/book hybrid, *Myst* is also a computer application: You can adjust sound volume and graphics quality by selecting from a usual Macintosh-style menu in the upper top part of the screen. Finally, you are taken inside the game, where the interplay between the printed word and cinema continue. A virtual camera frames images of an island which dissolve between each other. At the same time, you keep encountering books and letters, which take over the screen, providing with you with clues on how to progress in the game.

Given that computer media is simply a set of characters and numbers stored in a computer, there are numerous ways in which it could be presented to a user. Yet, as it always happens with cultural languages, only a few of these possibilities actually appear viable in a given

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historical moment. Just as early 15th century Italian painters could only conceive of painting in a very particular way – quite different from, say, 16th century Dutch painters – today's digital designers and artists use a small set of action grammars and metaphors out of a much larger set of all possibilities.

Why do cultural interfaces – Web pages, CD-ROM titles, computer games – look the way they do? Why do designers organize computer data in certain ways and not in others? Why do they employ some interface metaphors and not others?

My theory is that the language of cultural interfaces is largely made up from the elements of other, already familiar cultural forms. The three forms in particular play a key role in determining the cultural interfaces in the 1990s. The first form is cinema. The second form is the printed word. The third form is a general-purpose human-computer interface (HCI).

As it should become clear from the following, I use words "cinema" and "printed word" as shortcuts. They stand not for particular objects, such as a film or a novel, but rather for larger cultural traditions (we can also use such words as cultural forms, mechanisms, languages or media). "Cinema" thus includes mobile camera, representation of space, editing techniques, narrative conventions, activity of a spectator – in short, different elements of cinematic perception, language and reception. Their presence is not limited to the 20th-century institution of fiction films, they can be already found in panoramas, magic lantern slides, theater and other 19th-century cultural forms; Similarly, since the middle of the 20th century, they are present not only in films but also in television and video programs. In the case of the "printed word" I am also referring to a set of conventions which have developed over many centuries (some even before the invention of print) and which today are shared by numerous forms of printed matter, from magazines to instruction manuals: A rectangular page containing one or more columns of text; Illustrations or other graphics framed by the text; Pages which follow each sequentially; A table of contents and index.

Modern human-computer interface has a much shorter history than the printed word or cinema – but, it is still a history. Its principles such as direct manipulation of objects on the screen, overlapping windows, iconic representation, and dynamic menus were gradually developed over a few decades, from the early 1950s to the early 1980s, when they finally appeared in commercial systems such as Xerox Star (1981), the Apple Lisa (1982), and most importantly the Apple Macintosh (1984). Since then, they have become an accepted convention for operating a computer, and a cultural language in their own right.

Cinema, the printed word and human-computer interface: Each of these traditions has developed its own unique ways of how information is organized, how it is presented to the user, how space and time are correlated with each other, how human experience is being structured in the process of accessing information. Pages of text and a table of contents; 3D spaces framed by a rectangular frame which can be navigated using a mobile point of view; Hierarchical menus,

variables, parameters, copy/paste and search/replace operations – these and other elements of these three traditions are shaping cultural interfaces today. Cinema, the printed word and HCI: They are the three main reservoirs of metaphors and strategies for organizing information which feed cultural interfaces.

Bringing cinema, the printed word and HCI interface together and treating them as occupying the same conceptual plane has an additional advantage – a theoretical bonus. It is only natural to think of them as belonging to two different kind of cultural species, so to speak. If HCI is a general purpose tool which can be used to manipulate any kind of data, both the printed word and cinema are less general. They offer ways to organize particular types of data: Text in the case of print, audio-visual narrative taking place in a 3D space in the case of cinema. HCI is a system of controls to operate a machine; The printed word and cinema are cultural traditions, distinct ways to record human memory and human experience, mechanisms for cultural and social exchange of information. Bringing HCI, the printed word and cinema together allows us to see that the three have more in common than we may anticipate at first. On the one hand, being a part of our culture now for half a century, HCI already represents a powerful cultural tradition, a cultural language offering its own ways to represent human memory and human experience. This language speaks in the form of discrete objects organized in hierarchies (hierarchical file system), or as catalogs (databases), or as objects linked together through hyperlinks (hypermedia). On the other hand, we begin to see that the printed word and cinema also can be thought of as interfaces, even though historically they have been tied to particular kinds of data. Each has its own grammar of actions, each comes with its own metaphors, each offers a particular physical interface. A book or a magazine is a solid object consisting from separate pages; The actions include going from page to page linearly, marking individual pages and using table of contexts. In the case of cinema, its physical interface is a particular architectural arrangement of a movie theater; Its metaphor is a window opening up into a virtual 3D space.

Today, as media is being "liberated" from its traditional physical storage media – paper, film, stone, glass, magnetic tape – the elements of printed word interface and cinema interface, which previously were hardwired to the content, become "liberated" as well. A digital designer can freely mix pages and virtual cameras, table of contents and screens, bookmarks and points of view. No longer embedded within particular texts and films, these organizational strategies are now free floating in our culture, available for use in new contexts. In this respect, printed word and cinema have indeed became interfaces – rich sets of metaphors, ways of navigating through content, ways of accessing and storing data. For a computer user, both conceptually and psychologically, their elements exist on the same plane as radio buttons, pull-down menus, command line calls and other elements of standard human-computer interface.

The text comes from "The Language of New Media", MIT Press, 2001

Tactical Media

30 Years of Tactical Media¹

Felix Stalder

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
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WWW.
1. INFORMATION, 2011.

Tactical media as a practice has a long history and, it seems save to predict, an even longer future. Yet its existence as a distinct concept around which something of a social movement, or more precisely, a self-aware network of people and projects would coalesce has been relatively short lived, largely confined to the internet's first decade as a mass medium (1995-2005). During that time Geert Lovink and David Garcia, two Dutch media activists/theorists at the heart of this network, defined Tactical Media, as:

"What happens when the cheap 'do it yourself' media, made possible by the revolution in consumer electronics and expanded forms of distribution (from public access cable to the internet) are exploited by groups and individuals who feel aggrieved by or excluded from the wider culture. Tactical media do not just report events, as they are never impartial they always participate and it is this that more than anything separates them from mainstream media."²

Like so many other things that are now common in our informational lives, the roots of tactical media lie in the cultural innovations of radical social movements that sprang up in the late 1960s. Not only did they begin to exploit technological changes enabling to self-produce media, but they created entirely new ideas of what the media could be: Not just conduits for more or less sophisticated state propaganda (as in Althusser's famous analysis of the "ideological state apparatuses"³), or a source of "objective" information provided by a professional (liberal) elite. Rather, they re-conceptualized the media as means of subjective expression, by people and for people who are not represented within the mainstream.

Given the significant technological hurdles to autonomous media production and distribution that existed well into the 1990s, the first wave of "do-it-yourself"-media thought of itself as "community media" representing local social, cultural or ethnic minorities. In the US, community media centered around public access television (and radio). They were made possible by fortuitous legislation requiring cable companies to provide one channel for local, non-commercial programming. This created the technological and financial basis for community activists to run (low-budget) TV channels. Across the country, local TV stations sprung up, providing community groups with platforms on which to produce programs by and for themselves. During the 1970s, video technology developed at a rapid pace, reducing the bulk and the costs of the equipment while improving the quality of the recordings and the means of post-production. In the 1980s, this peaked in the "camcorder revolution", referring the small, cheap video cameras/recorders that became widely available. They seemed to offer the possibilities to engage in "counter surveillance", i.e. the ability to document abuses of power. As the case of Rodney King showed in the early in 1990s in Los Angeles, the consequences of such "counter surveillance" could be dramatic.⁴ At the same time, new satellite transmission technology made it possible to start nation-wide, rather than local distribution of content. This development was spearheaded by Deep DishTV, founded in 1986. Its aim was to "do what broadcast media cannot do for itself: Identify and amplify, without alteration or limitation, the voices of the disenfranchised cultures who struggle for equal time."⁵ In the Netherlands, public cable TV enabled a lively pirate TV and radio scene that developed in parallel with the early public access internet projects such as Digital City of Amsterdam, creating a rich local culture of experimental, political medial.⁶ In the rest of Europe, due in part to a different regulatory environment, public access TV played a smaller role, whereas community radio – in the case of the UK, pirate radio – has flourished since the 1970s. Today, the public access model is still relevant and even expanding. In Vienna, for example, a new public access channel (Okto TV) opened in 2005. Yet, the TV environment changed significantly over the last 30 years, and public access TV is in danger of becoming just another narrow-caster among a near infinite number of channels.

By the mid 1990s, the costs of media production had decreased further, and the internet was beginning to offer a credible promise of an alternative distribution platform. It made it possible to avoid some of the limitations of broadcast media, including their hardwired separation of sender and receiver, which not even community media could overcome (although they made

it easier for community members to become producers). A new generation of media activists began to experiment with the new possibilities of open communication networks, which were, by and large, still a promise to be realized, rather than a readily-available infrastructure.

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They radicalized the ideas of community media by challenging everyone to produce their own media in support of their own political struggles. This new media activism was motivated by three key insights. First, cultural theorists had been calling for a reevaluation of how individuals dealt with media products. Rather than seeing individuals merely as passive consumers, they were understood as engaged in a tactical appropriation of media.⁷ New media could transform this practice from an individual to a social level. Hence the term "tactical media". Second, it became understood very clearly that all politics is, to a significant degree, mediated politics and that the long-held distinction between the "street" (reality) and the "media" (representation) could no longer be upheld. On the contrary, the media had come to pervade all of society, and in order to challenge the domination, it was necessary develop new means of media production and distribution. Not as a specialized task separate from the social movements, but as key activity around which social movements could coalesce. Finally, a media environment characterized by the geographical logic of broadcasting was supplemented with an environment defined by a many-to-many logic of access.

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In such an environment, networking occurred naturally, and some of the key networking events were the large scale social protests that tracked the international policy gatherings of the WTO (World Trade Organization), G8 and similar "free trade" organizations in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This inspired the creation of an international network of local media projects under the name of Indymedia, which, at least initially, understood itself as the media arm of the anti-globalization movement. However, while Indymedia currently still lists close to 200 local, regional and national network nodes, it never really matched the full breadth of the movement, and probably never intended to. Rather, Indymedia seems to flourish where the nodes are deeply rooted in local communities, privileging concrete local struggles over abstract, global policy.

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Even before Indymedia became the first truly global alternative media platform, a series of conferences were held in Amsterdam (1995-2003) called "The Next Five Minutes" (N5M).⁸ They brought together many of the early internet-based media activists and connected them with previous generation of public access TV producers and independent film makers, re-conceptualizing the whole movement as Tactical Media. These new media projects were understood as tactical because they were not geared towards setting up long-term structures, but towards quick interventions that could be realized with high ingenuity and low budgets. It was practice over theory, partly as an attempt to sidestep the exhausting debates about identity and representation that had been raging for more than a decade.⁹

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Such a short-range approach was well suited to experimentally explore the new media environment which was rapidly emerging, but still largely unstable. Technology was being

developed at an extremely fast pace during this hyper-growth phase of the internet, and a global civil society was just beginning to be forged. Thus, many of the Tactical Media projects were even more marginal than the community media of the previous generation, but they nevertheless played an important role in the experimentally establishing media practices adapted to the new conditions of open networks. For a few years, and mainly due to intensive networking at conferences such as N5M, Tactical Media flourished as a distinct, self-aware practice of media activists interested in technological and political innovation.

However, as the technologies of the internet began to mature, some of the inherent contradictions of the Tactical Media concept became apparent. For example, providing infrastructure for projects is a long-term rather than a tactical task, and it can easily overburden loose networks. Indymedia has been the exception to this rule, but mainly because it turned closer to community media, made by and for a relatively distinct subset of the larger anti-globalization movement. Publicly-funded organizations active in this area, such as Amsterdam's De Waag, either lost interest, or, as in the case of Vienna's Public Netbase, had their funding cut, leaving the field to smaller, more specialized organizations. What was more important, though, were the conceptual contradictions between integrating media production into all forms of grassroots political movements as part of their tool-kit, and building a particular identity around this increasingly common practice. The movement as a whole began to dissolve as increasingly people were doing tactical media without thinking about Tactical Media. In a way, Tactical Media was so successful in establishing new political practices that it could no longer serve as a distinctive approach that would define a particular community.

This makes the current state of affairs decidedly mixed. On the one hand, production technology has become even more accessible, both in terms of price and ease-of-use. With the advent of commercial hosting companies for blogs or videos, distribution has been professionalized to a very high degree. As an effect, it has become very simple to shoot, edit and distribute rich media to audiences large and small. This is very good news, particularly for activists in developing countries. At the same time, the commercial capture of the infrastructure is creating new bottlenecks where censorship and control of media content can and does function efficiently.

Thus the autonomous production of media for grassroots campaigns has been widely established as a core concern for contemporary political movements, not least thanks to the Tactical Media pioneers of the 1990s. However, its increasing reliance on commercial infrastructure is introducing new points of failure that are becoming apparent as the policing of the commercial platforms is getting more intense.

Partly as a reaction to the shortcomings of tactical media and the pressures of the commercial platforms, there is a renewed interest in infrastructure among politically-minded media developers. One example is a global network of initiatives called "bricolabs" which describes itself as "a distributed network for global and local development of generic infrastructures incrementally developed by communities".¹⁰ Bricolabs, in a way, combines the two strands

of Community Media and Tactical Media, by seeking ways to network local communities to support each other in the development of alternative infrastructures for media production. How far this goal can be realized remains to be seen, but it is clear that despite the decline of Tactical Media in the narrow sense, the social practice of autonomous media production continues to be adaptive and innovative.

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NOTES

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New Kunstsektion

DISCOURSE

Various Documents

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC NETBASE

WORLD-
INFORMATION.ORG

<http://kunst.government-austria.at>

COMMUNIQUE NO. 1

Dear Artists and Cultural Workers!

On the eve of the opening of Vienna's Museumsquartier, we are pleased to inform you that the Austria's public art administration, too, is ready for a new start. Attached to this message, you will find the logo of the Ministry's new Kunstsektion. Please make sure you place it prominently on your printed materials.

For further details, please visit our information service:

<http://kunst.government-austria.at>

Wishing you all the best for your creative endeavors,

Your Kunstsektion

New Kunstsektion

COMMUNIQUÉ NO. 2

Reference No. A1070.120334/45-II/1301

Vienna on Danube, July 13, 2001

Dear Artists and Cultural Workers!

Two weeks after the felicitous opening of the Museumsquartier, we wish to thank you for the enthusiastic artistic response with which you welcomed our communiqué concerning the reforms under way at the Kunstsektion. The new emblem, in particular, met only with positive feedback. We are therefore particularly pleased to offer you access to an even more flexible use of the emblem through our electronic collection point (details below).

The Kunstsektion is committed to improve the information situation and to keep all artists and cultural workers in this country updated on important developments. This is to remind citizens of the nature of art, and to prevent an excessive monopolization of art by politics in our cultural life.

Vienna's Museumsquartier is setting a good example in this endeavor.

Our beautiful federal states have always delivered fertile contributions to Austrian national identity in the capital of this nation of culture. Therefore, the efforts on the part of the Museumsquartier management to create a blooming home for these outstanding contributions can hardly be valued highly enough. Carinthia's close connection to this project will certainly lead to pleasant results in terms of public sponsorship for this state's art representatives. The Austrian business community, too, has committed itself to these plans and, in close collaboration with the MQ management, is finding ways of permeating the creative spirit of the federal states.

Unfortunately, the reputation of this great art venue is still affected by the shadowy activities of individual groups whose goal is to undermine this national endeavor. As a proof of this chaos-ridden and fundamentalist opposition, we wish to present you pictures of unlawful activities at the Museumsquartier that involve prominent politicians. The pictures were found on an anti-government Internet server and forwarded to us by concerned citizens. We are reading this as an encouragement to apply the full severity of the law against the perpetrators of these actions, so that the taxpayer may be protected from further damage caused by such residuals of a failed art policy.

<http://free.netbase.org/deutsch/protest>

A high-resolution version of our new emblem is available at:

<http://government-austria.at/content/art/img/kunstsektion.eps>

We hope that we can count on your continued support in our work for a new way of governing Austria, and greet you with the best wishes for your creative endeavors.

Your Kunstsektion

COMMUNIQUE NO. 7

Reference No. A1070.141568/27-III/7834

Vienna on Danube, May 28, 2003

Vienna at the Crossroads

Karlsplatz must not become a playground for troublemakers!

As Ascension Day draws close, the Kunstsektion wishes to remind everyone of the virtues of contemplation. This is an opportunity to look back on a sometimes rocky path, and to celebrate our common achievement of re-ordering Austrian society.

It is only Vienna's city government that has not fully integrated itself. Once again, Karlsplatz is delivering the most blatant example of Vienna's decay. A location already plagued by unbearable traffic noise, and exposed to the permanent hassle of drug addicts and street people, the area between St. Charles' Church and the State Opera is now turning into a playground for political outcasts.

New Kunstsektion

The latter's machinations have lead to the establishment of a so-called "citizens' initiative" that shamelessly instrumentalizes people's legitimate concerns and fears for purposes of party politics. Behind the flimsy pretext of wanting to open Karlsplatz, these people's real intention is to undermine cultural unity and so to spread more uncertainty in the city. To crown it all, the Vienna city government supports a dubious "political noise" event on June 14th. For several days, the new Kunstsektion has been flooded by enquiries of concerned citizens.

It is now in the hands of the Vienna city government, and in particular City Councilor Dr Andreas Mailath-Pokorny, to put an end to these suspicious activities. Dr Mailath-Pokorny, who recently, in connection with the Museumsquartier, proved himself an open-minded art politician, must now show assertiveness in order for people to feel safe again. It is, indeed, a grand task to open the path of tradition to this historical square and its institutions.

The new Kunstsektion is confident that the decent citizens of Vienna will regain access to their square, right in front of St. Charles' Church. Karlsplatz needs to stay off-limits for troublemakers and ideological hotspurs!

Wishing you all the best for your creative endeavors,

Your Kunstsektion

The Nature of Art... Public Netbase's Hidden Manoeuvres

Martin Wassermair

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

On a late Friday afternoon in July 2001, a few minutes before offices smoothly turned in for the weekend, more than a thousand art institutions, theatres, activist groups and projects in the cultural field received an e-mail they had never expected. A small red flag marked the importance of the message. The Austrian art administration introduced itself as the NEW Kunstsektion to "artists and cultural workers" in order to inform them about the renewal after the political change of the year 2000, which was now indicating a re-indoctrination of its services along with a new logo. According to the law, the NEW Kunstsektion reminded the recipients that this logo had to be used in case of public funding, otherwise they would be punished.

PUBLIC NETBASE

There was no doubt that the political landscape already breathed an authoritarian spirit, since in February 2000, Joerg Haider and his Freedom Party had been involved in the new right-wing government together with the conservatives. Thus, a redesign to a heavy-handed Kunstsektion must be considered as an inevitable consequence of the new realities. The art scenes remained calm and compliant, although only for a couple of days. Confusion could be noticed when the second, more extended e-mail announcement drew attention to the Vienna Museum Quarter (MQ). Reinventing the bumpy terminology of the fascist decades of the past 20th century, the NEW Kunstsektion welcomed the provincialization of the huge cultural center and worried about artistic disobedience by publishing several images of resistance activities in the court. From then on, there was no question left that the MQ-based Public Netbase once again had put on a mask, which actually uncovered the historical context of the political efforts to eliminate independent and critical practices in art and media.

WORLD-
INFORMATION.ORG

The serving of the lease termination notice in April 2000 and finally the cut of governmental fundings had led into a serious threat to one of Europe's most respected media-culture institutions. Austria's cultural administration obviously had no interest in securing conditions for independent and non-conformist cultural developments. Despite the indisputable international recognition of Public Netbase, its existence was near its end after years of successful work. The tactical manoeuvre was soon revealed as an affirming attempt to highlight the ideological tradition of Austrian cultural policies and its recent continuation. During the following weeks, the NEW Kunstsektion addressed further main issues of the new political order and its disciplinary intent. For instance, the fact that the MQ-facility management was guided by a director with Carinthian origins has been declared as an important part of patriotic improvements to implement a severe framework of regularization and commercialisation. Under the slogan "The nature of art", the reorganized services promised a junction of creative industries and a new awareness of cultural heritage. Their offer even included graves, which in the near future, should have to be guaranteed by a new social insurance law for artists. Just one week later, the Viennese public learned in the highly frequented and freely available newspaper U-Express that the NEW Kunstsektion would provide artists, who mostly suffer from hunger and poverty, with a warm soup. It was the first step to act in real space, again ironically focussing on the serious topic of precarity, which got a deeper meaning by the raising pressure under the ultra-neoliberal regime.

Martin Wassermair

THE NATURE OF ART...
PUBLIC NETBASE'S
HIDDEN MANOEUVRES

The interest of the public early became an essential component of the communication processes, which often resulted in lively debates. The numerous messages directed to the NEW Kunstsektion included some by prominent members of Parliament and leading representatives of Austrian cultural and intellectual life. Reactions reached from protests against the bold fascistoid phraseology to expressions of gratitude for these new costumer friendly services and even included a request of the cultural spokesperson of the conservative party who, due to a computer breakdown, asked for previous postings to be re-mailed. Also a politician of the social democratic opposition took the communiqués seriously and replied in anger: "What does it mean: The nature of art? Is it the purpose of a new Kunstsektion to distribute awkward messages?"

At last, there was the new logo. Many of the mail recipients made use of it. It was bad luck that a large number of event posters, flyers and other publications already had already been printed before they had identified it as an artistic fake. Later on, institutions and projects such as the Salzburg art periodical "Kunstfehler", the Vienna "dietheater", the cultural center GUGG at Braunau, and many more had to explain to the real Kunstsektion the reasons of their disrespect of official funding guidelines. Suddenly and involuntarily, art, culture and media were situated in a public discourse of collaboration, indifference, critique and political resistance. A young artist even stroke back: "We decline your order to use the new logo and highly recommend to put it on the a... of the state secretary for art and media!". With such multi-layered debates, Public Netbase has achieved one of its main objectives.

Two years later, Karl Latz was the only person reached by cellular phone when the Austrian daily newspaper Standard tried to investigate into the first tracks of the new citizens' group called

"Open up Karlsplatz!" Aiming a redesign to an urban place, the "traffic hell" in the heart of Vienna had already been controversially discussed for several decades. In January 2003, a new player appeared in the debates by demanding a "place for open cultures" as a fundamental requirement for democratic societies and a contemporary node of international networks, art, culture and science. At this time, the Standard was not aware that Karl Latz was the false spokesman of a false committee created by Public Netbase. The fact that the committee's list of supporters consisted of names conspicuously similar to those of some well-known members of the Viennese elite had generated a broad interest. Just two days after publishing the Karl Latz interview, the newspaper had to admit: "None of these persons exist!".

The citizen's group remained active receiving enormous support from hundreds of signatures throughout the entire country and young students acting on the streets around Karlsplatz. The interventions and press releases often affected the worries of people passing through the place. The purpose behind the empty rhetoric like "A place for open cultures paving the way for democracy" was to raise awareness concerning the current city plans for a "Kunstplatz Karlsplatz" and, beyond that, for the instrumentalization of art institutions for control and repression, social clean-up and spatial transparency. Regardless of whether it was a fake or not, with Verkehrshoelle.at, Public Netbase proved that the idea of a citizens' initiative is able to unsettle a common discourse of mainstream media and political populism.

Although it might be considered destructive or too irritating, this type of communication guerrilla project creates, as Gerald Raunig writes, "the possibility to make use of the gap in the discourse for producing critical public spheres". Since the early beginning, Public Netbase focussed its work and research on strategies of re-appropriation of the public sphere. One of the pioneers of communication guerrilla, the autonome a.f.r.i.k.a. gruppe, declares: "We are tired of private security services and the omnipresent purchase obligation, the removal of park benches that forces passers-by into cappuccino bars or to just move on. We know about the privatization of inner cities, the disappearance of public space. But how is it possible to intervene against the apparent automatism of these processes – with an information event?" The Vienna media-culture institute Public Netbase provided its own answer in the form of interventions and unexpected public appearances. The price was high. A few years later, it's only the retrospective that has been left over from the forced closure as a consequence of the withdrawal of the remaining public funding in 2006. But the history of Public Netbase's hidden manoeuvres reminds us that there is some hope for the near future, as the autonome a.f.r.i.k.a gruppe reiterates: "The world of activism is not located outside the globalization process, the transition from the age of bourgeois democracies to something else, something not yet defined. It is part of this – and it is in the intimate knowledge of the structures to be fought that its potential to at least question their legitimacy is found – even if the next grand narrative is yet to come."

LINKS

The NEW Kunstsektion

<http://kunst.government-austria.at/>

Open up Karlsplatz!

<http://www.verkehrshoelle.at/>

Martin Wassermair

THE NATURE OF ART...
PUBLIC NETBASE'S
HIDDEN MANOEUVRES

Inverted Towers. Strategies for a Reappropriation of Urban Space

Gerald Raunig

May, 2005

<http://eipcp.net/transversal/1202/raunig/en>

The key thing may be to create vacuoles of non-communication, circuit breakers, so we can elude control.¹

Karlsplatz is one of the most important and most central traffic junctions of Vienna, at the same time a place of disparity, complexity and a "traffic hell". Its surface, consisting mainly of multi-laned roads with many islands of different sizes in between them, denies itself to the pedestrian, while underneath there is a typically transitory urban space, a junction of several underground-lines, which generate an enormous stream of working people and tourists who traverse it every day. Clearly, conditions like these do not constitute the urban planning ideal of a city's administration. Since architects, town planners and planning commissioners have not presented any moderately priced ideas in recent years for doing away with the diffusion and alleged ugliness² of the square, the City of Vienna seems to be resorting to art now. The social-democratic mayor of Vienna was recently fantasising that he wants to make the "presently unattractive square" into "Kunstplatz Karlsplatz" (Karlsplatz, a place for art), which is to be "newly organised and should invite a leisurely walk". To this end he plans a synergistic cooperation of those cultural institutions which are located on or around Karlsplatz now (Historical Museum, Künstlerhaus, Kunsthalle, Musikverein, Technical University). In view of such concentrated political interest there is a danger of:

1. A policy of beautification of a place, which in addition to all its problems needs nothing less than the embrace of classical art activity. When elsewhere the colonisation of a place by means of art results in proliferous gentrification, here it may be functionalised within the frame of a bourgeois-populist urban planning project in its old role of beautifier in the shape of an autonomous or pseudo-contextual object or some alternative guiding system.
2. The instrumentalisation of art as catalyst for a process in which a bourgeois minority more and more swamps and standardises³ the square. The production of art is hailed as a communicative process, yet in this context it would be more a lubricant for bourgeois entertainment, or, stated more prosaically: For parties and gastronomy. The art institutions would become marginally-praised side issues of their own coffee shops, book shops or merchandising shops.

3. The displacement of marginal groups, who have been using Karlsplatz as their meeting place, most of them people identified by the authorities as drug users, alcoholics and homeless. This implies the continuation and completion of complementary practises of privatisation and the commands of society control: The subterranean pedestrian passage underneath Karlsplatz has in recent decades been increasingly developed and smoothed over, and in the end the remaining area has been rendered unusable to its former users by the rather indecent introduction of "high culture": To drive the habitués away from the area, where the subterranean womb of Karlsplatz opens, the authorities had speakers installed – like in the main station of Hamburg and similar public spaces in Europe – which emit music by Mozart. Not a particular favourite of people who see themselves as outlaws.

The situation might sound very specific, but it has a lot to do with the general processes and problems of a city, with gentrification and the privatisation of public spaces. In the urban setting of expanding control regimes, neither political praxis nor theory can stop at Habermas' concept of the bourgeois public sphere as the place for civil consensus.

The "public sphere" as a normative term rather implies that in each case, where yet another piece of public area is expropriated, this expropriation is "made public". To make public in this context means two things: One to expose, disturb and thwart the neo-liberal strategy of permanent expropriation, the other the *creation* of public sphere⁴ specifically in places that are in danger of expropriation.

Gerald Raunig
INVERTED TOWERS.
STRATEGIES FOR A
REAPPROPRIATION
OF URBAN SPACE

STRATEGIES OF REAPPROPRIATION

Of the many strategies emanating from cultural background and aiming at the reappropriation of public space, I would like to describe four in the context of the urban space Karlsplatz:

1. The first possibility recommending itself, which was developed extensively in the nineties, is a micro-political artistic intervention into clearly defined spaces, i.e. through the more radical forms of Community Arts, New Genre Public Art, interventionist art.⁵ Involved people and experts would cooperatively develop various alternative models for their environment. If the action is too hasty, a widely discussed problem might occur: *non-disturbance* instead of disturbance. Community Arts projects often function as catalysts for the general withdrawal of the welfare state because their reform orientation does not go far enough.⁶ The contrary argument could still be raised that at least concrete results in concrete contexts have been achieved in some of the better cases. In 1993, for example, "WochenKlausur", a group of interventionist artists, starting from the Secession introduced a project for the medical care of homeless people on Karlsplatz, which succeeded at least in setting up depots for the remaining belongings of people living in the street and – as its biggest success – a bus for the medical treatment of people needing help, which was not only stationed at Karlsplatz but also at eight other locations.⁷

2. Even more common than the first strategy is the classical lobbyist interventionist strategy: In direct communication with the politicians in charge or – less directly – via the most far-reaching

mainstream media, intellectuals and cultural decision makers bring to bear their symbolic capital and become citizen instead of bourgeois – or else, they form a citizens' initiative. In the context of cultural politics and urban planning this happened as early as 1990 when an ultraconservative citizens' initiative opposed the plan for the Viennese "Museum Quarter" (Wiener Museumsquartier) aided by the campaigns of "Kronen-Zeitung"⁸ and FPÖ⁹ opinion polls. The initiative insisted that the protection of historical monuments be a considerable criterion in cultural policy and urban planning. Since the beginning of 2003, possibly relating to this notorious citizens' initiative, another group started a campaign called "Open up Karlsplatz" for Karlsplatz to become a "site for open cultures". Even though their programme sounded like a bad advertisement for a mediocre household cleaner, it succeeded immediately in increasing the interest in the subject, which up till then had only been dealt with by politicians and local government officials. As early as the beginning of January 2003, the major liberal newspaper "Der Standard" reported on the Karlsplatz-initiative and the journalist Thomas Rottenberg quoted a certain Karl Latz, said to be a proponent of the initiative: "The possible reorganisation of the square poses a historical chance", the square should not only serve in "museum-like ways" for storing art in the museums along the fringe of Karlsplatz. In the same newspaper the extensive report was followed by a commentary, in which left-wing critics of the initiative complained about the vagueness of its concept. Slogans and empty phrases like, "A place for open cultures paving the way for democracy" could be taken up by all political directions because of their indeterminacy and used for their purposes. Soon thereafter, first doubts arose as to the authenticity of the initiative on the occasion of an event for "Kunstplatz Karlplatz". The same journalist who had written the first report and interviewed Karl Latz, eventually negated his existence in the "Standard": "The citizens' initiative is as real as its 'founders' appearing on homepage www.verkehrshoelle.at. None of these persons exist".

3. If this assertion proves correct, we come to the third strategic variation against the expropriation of public space: The subversive praxis of the communication guerrilla¹⁰ is an attempt to interrupt and interfere with communication flows by means of fakes, media sabotage and other tricks, in order to help surface discourses, which were not visible before. Or to shift existing discourses: A citizens' initiative is able to unsettle or disrupt a discourse, to make a breach, to create "empty vacuoles of non-communication", as Deleuze calls it. At the same time this destructive act creates the possibility to make use of the gap in the discourse for producing critical public spheres.

4. The most relevant current stream of "committed urbanism" is ever more evident in the metropolises as practices of an *activist* reappropriation of the city: Historically rooted in Situationist practices, particularly in France in the sixties, the German squatter fights in the seventies and eighties, the English "Reclaim the Streets" movement in the nineties¹¹ up to the present public disobedience of the Disobbedienti¹² in Italy and the protests against the Schill party in Hamburg¹³. Anti-state movements not only reject a social retrenchment and the processes of expropriation of public spheres as described, but offensively take possession of urban spaces. That does not only influence changes in political activisms against urban control regimes, but also the art practices which intervene in social areas – as described under item 1 – and are in danger of non-disturbing and

boosting rather than disturbing capitalist flows of communication. What has been missing in the art practices of the nineties "seems to be given in a new situation: Being embedded in a larger context, being cross-connected with social movements. Joining the heterogeneous activities against economic globalization, the old forms of intervention art are being transformed and new ones are emerging."¹⁴

In Vienna the net-culture initiative Public Netbase is one of the homebases for all kinds of projects from communication guerrilla to activism. In 2000 Public Netbase¹⁵ established itself as a platform for antagonistic actions especially in the field of music and DJ culture¹⁶ in the context of artistic protests and demonstrations against the government; It is also continually active on behalf of the Karlsplatz. In June 2003, Public Netbase organized an event called "Open Cultures" (quite near to the slogan of the citizens' initiative) at the Karlsplatz and at the same time participated in a large-scale sound demo free re:public. These politics of occupying the actual space of the Karlsplatz are not without self interest. Public Netbase is one of several cultural initiatives, which wants to underpin the haphazard activities around "Kunstplatz Karlsplatz" with the radical construction of a critical public sphere, beyond the slogans like "non-space" and "traffic hell". Beyond the phantasms of city planners and control society, who dream of a social clean-up and spatial transparency, beyond a cheap instrumentalisation of art institutions for these strategies, a place should be created which reaches far into the world.

THE INVERTED TOWER

We are digging the pit in the evening dusk
We are digging the pit of Babel
Much too high was our vantage point
We are digging the pit of Babel
With precious timber we're lining it
We are drilling the tunnel of Babel
Power for light we install in it
We are drilling the tunnel of Babel
Outside a party is reaching its peak
We are digging the pit of Babel¹⁷

In the bourgeois Museum Quarter of Vienna a symbolic battle was fought about a reading tower, between those who advocated a tower – 67 m high, taller than any building around it and visible from afar – as a symbolic landmark of the cultural quarter and the citizens' initiative mentioned earlier, which opposed it for reasons of historical preservation and urban planning.¹⁸ The fight between the belated modernists and the guardians of cultural heritage became highly emotional and was waged under strong media coverage. The alternative between the reactionary prevention of new buildings and the realisation of a reading tower as exemplary representational architecture is basically all wrong. Where the creation of public sphere and reappropriation of public space are involved, the notion of representational buildings must be criticised, be they old or new.

Gerald Raunig

INVERTED TOWERS.
STRATEGIES FOR A
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The band Einstürzende Neubauten sang about "The Pit of Babel", thereby alluding to Franz Kafka,¹⁹ the literary expert for the building of towers and other constructions. Kafka's concept of the tower in his novel "The Castle" is far from the usual idea of the ivory tower which transcends and stands high above barbaric worldliness. On the contrary, his tower in "The Castle" opens upward as if an inhabitant locked in the house had "broken through the roof and risen up... to show himself to the world".²⁰ And Kafka goes one step further in inverting this metaphor by maintaining that progress is only possible if the extreme station on the tower is relinquished. Kafka's fragment, "I ran away from her..." contains the remark, to which Einstürzende Neubauten allude, "What are you building? I want to dig a pit. Progress must be made. My station is too high. We are digging the pit of Babel."²¹

The notion of the pit, the inverted tower, is the juxtaposition of the ivory tower. Against a policy of representation in the old or the new style, this notion does not counterpose anything visible or central, but invisible, indescribable. Therefore, the inverted tower is not a metaphor, but the creation of something invisible, i.e. of discourse and dissent, of conflictual public sphere. Against the towering supremacy of art a hole must be dug, which reaches deep down into the world.²² A space where no-one can pretend to observe all global happenings, where progress is made just by leaving one's too elevated station, all the more connected to molar lines and systems. And in our context the experimental set-up for the inverted tower proves to be particularly favourable, and the supposed metaphor turns altogether towards the material: During the course of constructing the underground below Karlsplatz some subterranean spaces became vacant, which were intended for cultural purposes.

There is no lack of cultural initiatives, which could imprint on the place. This channel of discourse and its constructively crisscrossing vocal streams could not only supply a suitable venue for initiatives such as Public Netbase and Depot, formerly based at the Museum Quarter, but also – going beyond this and involving other groups – provide a new politico-cultural focus which has been lacking so far in Vienna. Radical discursive culture initiatives, net culture, media art, art theory could try their hand at overlapping art, politics and theory, without driving away those marginal groups, who are currently the hallmarks of Karlsplatz. The inverted tower would not be a place for bourgeois contemplation like the reading tower, nor a venue for spectacles, but a place of actuality, of contemporary becoming, a tower that is pointed into today's world.

NOTES

1. Gilles Deleuze, Control and Becoming, in: Deleuze, Negotiations, New York, 1995, p. 175
2. An old topos of the aesthetics of German Idealism: That disuniformity is ugly.
3. I.e. structurally "beautifies".
4. Cf. Gerald Raunig, Charon. Eine Ästhetik der Grenzüberschreitung, Vienna 1999, particularly p. 119-121; and <http://www.eipcp.net/diskurs/d05/text/geraldraunig02.html>

5. Cf. the texts under pre_public, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0102>
6. Cf. e.g. <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0102/kwon/en> or Gerald Raunig, *Spacing the Lines*. Konflikt statt Harmonie. Differenz statt Identität. Struktur statt Hilfe. In: Eva Sturm/Stella Rollig (Ed.), *Dürfen die das? Kunst als sozialer Raum*, Vienna 2002, p.118-127
7. Cf. Erich Steurer, Intervention zur medizinischen Versorgung der Obdachlosen, in: Wolfgang Zingg (Ed.), *WochenKlausur. Gesellschaftspolitischer Aktivismus in der Kunst*. Vienna/New York 2001, p. 20-26
8. Newspaper with the highest circulation reaching more than 50% of the Austrian population and a continuation of racist columns and pseudo-ecological articles
9. Jörg Haider's radical populist right-wing Freedom Party
10. Cf. <http://www.contrast.org/KG/>, *Handbuch der Kommunikationsguerrilla*, Berlin 1997, and texts under <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1202>
11. Cf. <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0902/hamm/en>
12. <http://republicart.net/cal/resslerinterview.htm>
13. <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1202/wieczorek/en>
14. http://republicart.net/manifesto/manifesto_en.htm
15. www.t0.or.at
16. Especially in conjunction with the so-called "Volkstanz", part of the anti-government protest actions, cf. Gerald Raunig, *Wien Feber Null. Eine Ästhetik des Widerstands*, Vienna 2000, p. 82-86
17. *Einstürzende Neubauten, Der Schacht von Babel (The Shaft of Babel)*, Text: Bargeld, Music: Bargeld/Hacke/Unruh
18. The concept of the tower disappeared after repeated rededication and shortening in the names of building regulation, urban planning and preservation of historical buildings. In this case the citizens' initiative won (cf. <http://www.t0.or.at/~zursache/muqua/6.html>), but could not prevent the Museum Quarter.
19. Franz Kafka, *Der Bau*, in: *ibid.*, *Sämtliche Erzählungen*, Frankfurt/Main 1970, p. 359-380
20. Franz Kafka, *Das Schloss*, in: *ibid.*, *Romane und Erzählungen*, Cologne 1998, p.21
21. <http://www.kafka.org/projekt/nachlass4/ichentlief.html>
22. Cf. Gerald Raunig, *Charon. Eine Ästhetik der Grenzüberschreitung*. Vienna 1999, p. 119

Gerald Raunig

INVERTED TOWERS.
STRATEGIES FOR A
REAPPROPRIATION
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Blown Into Peaces. Virtual Cow Kidnapping – a Drama in Four Acts

Lisa Mayr

<http://igkultur.at/igkultur/kulturrisse/1121068298/1121529590>

Confusion was spreading in the online offices of a major Austrian newspaper. Which department should handle the breaking news about a cow kidnapped at Belvedere palace? As part of the government-sponsored historicizing "25 Peaces" spectacle, the gardens of the palace had been turned into a grazing ground for a small cattle herd, with the idea of bringing the economic scarcity of the immediate postwar period back into the public's mind.

Apparently a group of unknown individuals had gained access to the grounds in the night of May 10th, 2005, and had brought one of the animals under their control. At first sight, then, this seemed to be a news item for the local section of the newspaper. However, there was also a mysterious letter claiming responsibility, sent by a group named Zellen Kämpfender Widerstand/ kommando freiheit 45 (ZKW), (militant resistance cells/commando 45). In this letter, the cow was referred to as "political prisoner". Just how serious the kidnappers were emerged from

the specified demands: The group requested nothing less than a public declaration by Federal Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel and Austrian Public Broadcasting director Monika Lindner, in which they admit to "misleading the Austrian population and generating nationalist incitement by falsifying history". Powerful stuff, indeed. So perhaps it is something that should be handled by the politics department, after all. But there were more demands still: The ZKW expected a "payment of recognition of ten million Euros to female partisans and deserters", as well as a memorial for deserters to be erected on Vienna's Heldenplatz. At this point, some hard thinking set in at the editorial offices, and first doubts concerning authenticity surfaced. But there was still the kidnappers' final demand: The "immediate establishment of a museum of partisans" – right in the middle of Vienna's Museum's Quarter. Much to the relief of the journalists, the news seemed to have a clear address: The culture section.

It was not only Austrian newspaper editors who were confused about this kidnapping case – a hoax from its very beginning, as it turned out later. For some time, it was unclear whether the "kidnapping" of the cow was in fact real, who was behind it, and how the main target of the action, the Austrian federal government, would react.

Delaying the final plot was a key component of the action's media strategy, while the action itself had a much more sound conceptual and performative basis than the government's million-Euro historical spectacle: All the activists needed to do in order spread their message in an effective manner was placing information and images at some key locations in the internet. There, the kidnappers presented themselves as rough-and-ready urban warriors, complete with stocking masks, dark hoods and rifles directed at the kidnapped cow. Already in the first of the four communiqués released, they threatened to mercilessly blow up the cow – and, indeed, this is what was going to happen. On April 16th, the ZKW activists announced: "It's enough! Cow blown up in support of partisans and deserters. On May 15th, just after the evening television news, the animal was blown into pieces using 1.5 kilos of Semtex. By way of proof, the remaining half kilo of explosive was surrendered to the authorities". Only a few days prior to this, a photo of blood-smeared cow limbs had been circulated in the internet. A photograph followed that showed the kidnappers in possession of several boxes with a "Semtex" imprint. Although the action had not been exposed at this point, both the popular press and animal rights activist remained inactive. Evidently there had been an agreement that if in doubt, not to offer the activists a forum.

Several days later, activist of the Vienna-based net culture group Netbase assumed responsibility for the action. The latter never resulted in any harm to either animals or humans – blowing up the cow was a mere media plot. Right after the declaration was released, the Viennese weekly "Falter" reported it, and the daily "Der Standard" followed suit; The "City Magazin" was the only publication that continued considering the action a "less than funny media guerilla idea" and as "polemical and ideological muckraking posing as political history". Surely, a view bound to dwindle into nothing once a really serious look at the project is taken.

Lisa Mayr

BLOWN INTO PEACES.
VIRTUAL COW KIDNAPPING
– A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

The aesthetic codes used by the ZKW at the beginning were adopted from urban guerillas and anarcho-terrorism, which immediately triggered off the intended surge of interpretations. These interpretations would have needed no content had the action really been only a "less than funny media guerilla idea" – which it was not. While the action was fed into an iconized discourse of resistance, as well as into the media, by the activists' precision-targeted and sparing deployment of images, the letter claiming responsibility asked specific political questions related to the "culture of remembrance" practiced in the "commemorative year" 2005. Why was there no public outcry when a leading representative of the Austrian state said that deserters were "murderers of their own comrades"? Any why is fact that partisan warfare in Carinthia and Slovenia had been a major contribution towards the liberation of Austria only mentioned in the most marginal of ways? The communist resistance fighter Agnes Primocic, for example, who together with her friend Mali Ziegenleder liberated seventeen inmates of Hallein concentration camp, saving them from being shot dead, celebrates her 100th birthday this year. Who will be there to congratulate her?

From the perspective of the governmental view of history, this seems to be an irrelevant question. In fact, everything is done to gloss over any possible fissures. While the officially ordained, comfortable view of Austrian history required a packaging in the form of large-scale visualization and event engines, the cow kidnappers did something very different: From the very beginning, they *left out* any of the pre-packaged narratives. In this way, they were able to develop a language and identity of resistance at a time when all the images seem already occupied, resistance is already defined, and no method seems to be effective any more. In one of the communiqués, the ZKW activist defined their political goals as "attacking the current strategic projects of the symbolic political formations of Austria's revisionist system". In another place they say: "We aim to destroy the state's machinery of domination by targeting selected pressure points and by partly suspending it, in order to destroy the myth of the system's omnipresence and inviolability". The purpose was to undermine the existing hegemonic structure a government that prefers the cultural over the political – a government that seeks to transform any political gestures questioning the existing order into cultural expressions, reducing them to "empty gestures" in the process.

Culture, then, is clearly a political battlefield, no cow metaphor needed here. All that is required is a look at Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony which, not by coincidence, has received renewed attention in anti-globalist critique, and which lies at the basis of Netbase's project. According to Gramsci, oppositional movements that have no share in official politics must make culture and everyday life the basis for their quest for political power, in order to be able to build cultural hegemony. Radical political ideas that remain confined to intellectual and artistic circles are quickly reduced to passive symbolic representations, leading to a situation where the producers end up stewing in their own juice. This is why the ZKW activists, not without a sense of self-irony, refer to the friendly "oesterreich-2005.at" media action as "bloodless intellectual traitors".

A concept of politics informed by Gramsci is not about isolated demands, but about interventions that change the very framework of official politics. While official politics seeks to normalize the social order, interventions of this type geared towards blowing up this order. Which takes us back to the cow full circle. Her name, by the way, was Rosa.

Lisa Mayr

BLOWN INTO PEACES.
VIRTUAL COW KIDNAPPING
- A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

Swarmachine Activist Media Tomorrow ^{1*}

Brian Holmes

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

What happened at the turn of the millennium, when a myriad of recording devices were hooked up to the internet, and the World Wide Web became an electronic prism refracting all the colors of a single anti-capitalist struggle? What kind of movement takes to the barricades with samba bands and videocams, tracing an embodied map through a maze of virtual hyperlinks and actual city streets? Almost a decade after Seattle, we still don't understand the role of decentralized media intervention as a catalyst for grassroots action at global scales. The popular notion of "tactical media" might have to be abandoned for another one, closer to what has happened between the cities and the screens.

PULSATING NETWORKS

PUBLIC NETBASE

The mobilizing process for global resistance actions immediately became known as "self-organization" because of the absence of hierarchical chains of command. At the same time, the starburst patterns of network graphs became emblems of a cooperative potential that seemed to define the "movement of movements". As Naomi Klein wrote in the year 2000, shortly after the IMF protests in Washington: "What emerged on the streets of Seattle and Washington was an activist model that mirrors the organic, decentralized, interlinked pathways of the internet – the internet come to life. The Washington-based research center TeleGeography has taken it upon itself to map out the architecture of the internet as... not one giant web but a network of 'hubs and spokes'. The hubs are the centers of activity, the spokes the links to other centers, which are autonomous but interconnected."²

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Condensed here are two key ideas. One concerns the morphology of the internet as an all-channel meshwork, where each node is connected to others by several different pathways. Ultimately there are only a few degrees of separation between every element – a flattened hierarchy. The other concerns the property of emergence, associated with large populations of living organisms like ants and bees, where group behavior is coordinated in real time and manifests a purposiveness beyond the capacities of any individual. Emergence describes a moment of possibility – a phase-change in a complex system. These ideas came together in the early 1990s, in the figure of the networked swarm promoted by technovisionary Kevin Kelly in the book "Out of Control". But they were already connected in Deleuze and Guattari's "Thousand Plateaus", with the figures of the rhizome, the pack and the nomadic war machine.

What lends form and regularity to emergent action? How to grasp the consistency of self-organized groups and networks? The word "swarming" describes a pattern of self-organization in real time, which seems to arise from nowhere yet is immediately recognizable, because it rhythmically repeats. It was understood by strategists as a pattern of attack, in the classic definition given by RAND corporation theorists Arquilla and Ronfeldt: "Swarming occurs when the dispersed units of a network of small (and perhaps some large) forces converge on a target from multiple directions. The overall aim is sustainable pulsing – swarm networks must be able to coalesce rapidly and stealthily on a target, then disperse and redisperse, immediately ready to recombine for a new pulse."³ Arquilla and Ronfeldt studied these pulsating tactics in the complex patterns of mediated and on-the-ground support for the Zapatistas, which prevented the Mexican state from isolating and destroying them. Interestingly, the "target" here was the repressive activity of the state. But the swarm tactic only became reality for the world at large with the successful blockade of the November 1999 WTO meeting in Seattle, Washington, thanks largely to the Direct Action Network (DAN).

The DAN used swarming as part of a broader strategy to draw union protesters into a radical blockade of the meeting. Arquilla and Ronfeldt suddenly had palpable proof of their theories.⁴ Since then, American and Israeli military theorists have analyzed swarm behavior and tried to use it as a doctrine. But the military by its very nature (chain of command) cannot engage in full-fledged self-organization. When they try to do so, it ends in disaster, as Eyal Weizman has shown.⁵ Something here is not subject to command. What we need to understand is the "ecology" of emergent behavior, to use a word that suggests a dynamic, fractal unity: A oneness of the many and a multiplicity of the one.

TWICE-WOVEN WORLDS

Two factors can explain the consistency of self-organized actions. The first is the capacity for temporal coordination at a distance: The exchange among dispersed individuals of information, but also of affect, about unique events unfolding in specific locations. This exchange becomes a flow of constantly changing, constantly reinterpreted clues about how to act within a shared environment. But temporal coordination itself depends on a second factor, which is the existence

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of a common horizon – aesthetic, ethical, philosophical and/or metaphysical – that is deliberately built up over longer periods of time, and that allows the scattered members of a network to recognize each other as existing within a shared referential and imaginary universe. Media used in this way is more than just information: It is a mnemonic image that calls up a world of sensation, and at best, opens up the possibility of a response, a dialogic exchange, a new creation. Think of activist media as the continuous process of "making worlds" within an otherwise fragmented, inchoate market society.⁶

For an example, take Indymedia, launched at the Seattle WTO protests in 1999 using an Active Software program that allows for the spontaneous uploading of various file formats onto a "newswire". On the one hand, this is a strictly determined technical environment: Indymedia operates on specific codes and server architectures that only allow for a limited range of actions. In addition to those technical protocols, the content of the sites is shaped by clearly stated ethical principles which attempt to regulate and legitimate the kind of editing that may or may not take place. The existence of both protocols and principles is a necessary condition for the interaction of large numbers of anonymous persons at locations far distant from the surroundings of their daily existence.⁷ But the creation of possible worlds cannot stop there. It also requires a cultural strategy of liberation, where media is "tactile" first of all: Where it touches you as a process of expression, open to creative reception and transformation by each person. This kind of approach can be found in the aesthetics of the Reclaim the Streets carnivals or the Pink Bloc campaigns, to name well-known activist projects that create entire participatory environments, or "constructed situations". At stake in such situations is the development of an existential frame for collective experience, what Prem Chandavarkar calls an "inhabitable metaphor".⁸ Only such metaphors make dispersed intervention possible.

What needs to be understood – the media strategy of the global campaigns – is this tight imbrication of technological protocols and cultural horizons. Swarming is what happens when the aesthetic or metaphorical dimensions of radical social protest are enriched around the planet via electronic communications. A transnational activist movement is a swarmachine.

GLOBAL MICROSTRUCTURES

One way to approach the new formations is through the work of the sociologist Karin Knorr Cetina, whose studies of currency traders led her to the concept of "complex global microstructures". By this she means geographically extended interactions that are not bound by the multilayered organizations and expert systems that modern industrial states have developed to manage uncertainty. Thus currency-trading networks were able to precipitate the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis, reorganizing the global economy. The financial markets, Knorr Cetina observes, "are too fast, and change too quickly to be 'contained' by institutional orders". And she continues: "Global systems based on microstructural principles do not exhibit institutional complexity but rather the asymmetries, unpredictabilities and playfulness of complex (and dispersed) interaction patterns; A complexity that results, in John Urry's terms, from a situation where order is not the outcome

of purified social processes and is always intertwined with chaos. More concretely, these systems manifest an observational and temporal dynamics that is fundamental to their connectivity, auto-affective principles of self-motivation, forms of 'outsourcing', and principles of content that substitute for the principles and mechanisms of the modern, complex organization."⁹

Knorr Cetina stresses the importance of real-time coordination and the creation of shared horizons. She shows how networked ICTs allow distant participants to see and recognize each other, and to achieve cohesion by observing and commenting on the same events at the same time.¹⁰ Yet the technology employed is used opportunistically, it can be "outsourced". What matters is the system of goals or beliefs that binds the participants together. She reinterprets the usual view of networks as a system of pipes conveying informational contents, to insist on their visual function: From "pipes" to "scopes." It is the image that maintains the shared horizon and insists on the urgency of acting within it, especially through what Barthes called the *punctum*: The affective register that leaps out from the general dull flatness of the image and touches you. Finally, the idea of "auto-affection" derives from Maturana and Varela's concept of the living organism as a self-sustaining autopoietic machine, defined in classic circular fashion as "a network of processes of production" which "through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realize the network of processes (relations) that produced them."¹¹

Standard social network theory found its dynamic principle in more-or-less random attractions between atomistic units bound only by the "weak ties" of contemporary liberal societies.¹² The notion of autopoietic social groups introduces a very different type of actor. To understand the implications, one has to realize that each autopoietic machine or "microstructure" is unique, depending on the coordinates and horizons that configure it. For example, take the open-source software networks. There is a shared horizon constituted by texts and exemplary projects: Richard Stallman's declarations and the GNU project; Linus Torvald's launch of Linux; Essays like "The Hacker Ethic"; Projects such as Creative Commons; The relation of all that to older ideals of public science; etc. There are formal principles: Above all the General Public License, known as "copyleft", with its legal requirements for both the indication of authorship (allowing recognition of everyone's efforts) and the continued openness of any resulting code (allowing widespread cooperation and innovation). Finally there are concrete modes of temporal coordination via the internet: Sourceforge as a general version-tracker for continuously forking projects, and the specific wiki-forums devoted to each free software application. The whole thing has as little institutional complexity as possible, but instead is full of self-motivation and auto-affection between dispersed members of a highly coherent, swiftly moving and effective social group.

Tendencies favoring the emergence of global microstructures have been developing for decades, along the unraveling edges of national institutional environments weakened by neoliberalism. But a turning-point was reached in September of 2001. Knorr Cetina's article is subtitled "The New Terrorist Societies", and it extends the analysis of global financial microstructures to Al Qaeda. Where in the nineties, everyone saw networks, now everyone would see the threat of radical militants. The counter-globalization movement, long plagued by the difficulty of

distinguishing its own mobile formation from the vanguards of financial globalization, began rapidly to fall apart after September 11 when accusations conflating the protesters with the terrorists started rising on all sides. Almost four years later, on the last day of the 2005 G-8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, the explosion of terrorist bombs in London totally eclipsed any message that could have been brought by the protesters. Al Qaeda appeared as the exemplar of global activist movements – and the perfect excuse for eradicating all of them.

SECOND CHANCES

Sociological parallels can be drawn between the counter-globalization movements and both financiers and terrorists. But the only thing that really brings these distant galaxies together is the force of historical change, which each of them expresses differently, for vastly different ends. Knorr Cetina claims that change in the contemporary world is driven by microprocesses, put into effect by light, agile formations that can risk innovation at geographical scales and degrees of complexity where traditional organizations are paralyzed. As she has written: "The texture of a global world becomes articulated through microstructural patterns that develop in the shadow of (but liberated from) national and local institutional patterns". The reactions of the national institutions to terrorism have now become a major problem for all the movements seeking progressive and egalitarian social change.

Even as swarm theory became a strong paradigm for the militarized social sciences, attempts were launched around the planet to stabilize the dangerously mobile relational patterns unleashed by the neoliberal market society and its weak ties. But the major trends are contradictory. On the one hand, there is a continuing effort to enforce the rules of free trade to the benefit of major corporations, and thus to complete a project of liberal empire. On the other, the most common responses to this market enforcement are regressions to exacerbated forms of nationalism, often with a deep-seated fundamentalist component, as in the United States itself. Neconservatism in all its forms is the "blowback" of neoliberal economics. In this regard there's something prophetic about Felix Guattari's discussion in the late 1980s of the interplay between deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Guattari describes the situation in this way: "As the deterritorializing revolutions, tied to the development of science, technology and the arts, sweep everything aside before them, a compulsion toward subjective reterritorialization also emerges. And this antagonism is heightened even more with the phenomenal growth of the communications and computer fields, to the extent that the latter concentrate their deterritorializing effects on such human faculties as memory, perception, understanding, imagination, etc. In this way, a certain formula of anthropological functioning, a certain ancestral model of humanity, is expropriated at its very heart. And I think that it is as a result of an incapacity to adequately confront this phenomenal mutation that collective subjectivity has abandoned itself to the absurd wave of conservatism that we are presently witnessing".¹³

How to invent alternatives to the violence of capitalist deterritorialization, but also to the fundamentalist reterritorialization that follows it? The dilemma of the contemporary world

is not just Christianity versus Islam. It's at the very heart of the modern project that human potential is expropriated. Since September 11, the American corporate class and its allies have at once exacerbated the abstract, hyperindividualizing dynamics of capitalist globalization, and at the same time, reinvented the most archaic figures of power (Guantanamo, Fortress Europe, the dichotomy of sovereign majesty and bare life). Guattari speaks of a capitalist "drive" of deterritorialization, a "compulsion" for reterritorialization. What this means is that essential dimensions of human life are twisted into violent and oppressive forms. The effect is to render the promise of a borderless world repulsive and even murderous, while at the same time precipitating the crisis, decay and regression of social institutions, increasingly incapable of contributing to equality or the respect for difference.

So after all the definitions of tactical media, what we still need to know is whether one can consciously participate in the improvisational, asymmetrical force of microprocesses operating at a global scale, and use their relative autonomy from institutional norms as a way to influence a more positive reterritorialization, a dynamic equilibrium, a viable coexistence with technoscientific development and the trend toward a unification of world society. To do this means taking on the risk of global micropolitics. It also means drawing mnemonic images from latent historical experience and the intricate textures of everyday life, and mixing them into media interventions in order to help reweave the imaginary threads that give radical-democratic movements a strong and paradoxical consistency: The resistance to arbitrary authority of course, but also solidarity across differences and the desire to create consensus not on the basis of tradition, but rather of invention, experimentation in reality and collective self-critique. The ability to create the event is what has given the recent movements their surprising agility in the world space. As Maurizio Lazzarato writes: "The activist is not someone who becomes the brains of the movement, who sums up its force, anticipates its choices, draws his or her legitimacy from a capacity to read and interpret the evolution of power, but instead, the activist is simply someone who introduces a discontinuity in what exists. She creates a bifurcation in the flow of words, of desires, of images, to put them at the service of the multiplicity's power of articulation; She links the singular situations together, without placing herself at a superior and totalizing point of view. She is an experimenter".¹⁴

The close of his book makes clear, however, that what should be sought is not a simple escape into chaos. The point is to find articulations of human effort that can oppose and even durably replace the death-dealing powers of the present society. Right now, the prospects look extremely slim for any kind of grassroots intervention into a highly polarized conjuncture. But if things become desperately worse, or if on the contrary the political-economic pendulum makes one of its swings back to a more confident phase of expansion, the likelihood is that there will be important second chances for radical democracy movements, and new roles for improvised global media. The future belongs to those who can make the experimental difference.

NOTES

1. * This text emerged from a debate on the internet mailing list Nettime, April 10 to 25, 2006 – and to that extent, it was written by the many-headed hydra of the list. Thanks everyone. The whole debate is accessible at www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0604/maillist.html#00058.
2. Naomi Klein, "The Vision Thing", in *The Nation* (July 10, 2000); www.thenation.com/doc/20000710/klein.
3. D. Ronfeldt, J. Arquilla, et alii, *The Zapatista "Social Netwar" in Mexico* (Rand Corporation, 1998), chapter 2; www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR994.
4. See Paul de Armond, "Netwar in the Emerald City", in D. Ronfeldt, J. Arquilla, eds., *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (RAND, 2001); http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1382/MR1382.ch7.pdf.
5. Eyal Weizman, "Walking Through Walls", published on the webzine *Transform*: transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0507/weizman/en.
6. The phrase "making worlds" comes from Maurizio Lazzarato, *Les révolutions du capitalisme* (Paris: Les empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2004).
7. This discussion was informed by Felix Stalder's definition of a network, both on Nettime and in his book, *Manuel Castells: The Theory of the Network Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), chapter 6.
8. See Prem Chandavarkar's insightful reply to these ideas, posted by on Nettime on 20.04.2006.
9. Karin Knorr Cetina, "Complex Global Microstructures", in *Theory Culture Society* 22 (2005), pp. 213-234.
10. Cf. Karin Knorr Cetina and Urs Bruegger, "Global Microstructures: The Virtual Societies of the Financial Markets", in *American Journal of Sociology* 7/4 (2002).
11. Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1973), "Autopoiesis: The Organization of the Living", in *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1980), pp. 78-79.
12. Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties", *American Journal of Sociology* 78/6 (May 1973), pp. 1360-80.

13. Felix Guattari, "Du post-modernisme à l'ère post-media", in *Cartographies schizoanalytiques* (Paris: Galilée, 1989), p. 54.

14. Maurizio Lazzarato, *Les révolutions du capitalisme*, op. cit., p. 230.

Brian Holmes

SWARMACHINE
ACTIVIST MEDIA
TOMORROW

Reboot Your Radio!

Pit Schultz

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

Free Bitflows, Semperdepot, Vienna
June 2 - 4, 2004

Notes on the polymorphous architecture of a free cultural radio: Radio as Frontend, internet as Backend. Open Radio License. Free Cultural Radio. Exstream Programming.

<http://freebitflows.t0.or.at>

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

RADIO AS FRONTEND, INTERNET AS BACKEND

As we heard, the internet has become an all day mass medium, more and more "things" are networked, digital audio and video turn into net based services, and the desktop interface of the workplace is not the only way to go online anymore. In the post-internet phase, the network doesn't disappear, it only becomes less visible. The audio channel emancipated from the screen first, to put the presence of the net in the background, in favour of the ear (and the sharing of music files). Media resources can get transparently connected, while the end user experience doesn't change drastically, such as in IP telephony or radio syndication. Satellite, cable, radio, and other kind of large technical networks get interconnected and glued with IP based networks hence they aren't replaced by them. They still exist next to each other. Some old media types are there to stay and have a second life, like vinyl had with the introduction of digital culture. Radio, as a highly developed medium, works cost effective on a local level, it has many advantages on the end user side, it is mobile, and available to the farthest corners of the world. So the combination of radio and internet doesn't lead to the replacement of radio as a means of distribution, it rather reintroduces people into the loop. On the level of production, through decentralisation, interconnection and automatisisation of the studio and archive, the

PUBLIC NETBASE

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virtuality of possible changes and connections multiplies the freedom in which the flow of sounds can go, to only intensify the need of social labour, and focus even more around the people producing and listening to the program. The network effect escapes into the acoustic space and doesn't stay as a mere epiphenomena of self-referential net culture, but comes back to reinform the urban environment about itself. The architecture of radio broadcasting creates an instant communality, it is local and one-to-many, while the opposite counts for the net. Both together form a new media type ready for exploration.

OPEN RADIO LICENSE

Radio shows usually contain music which is copyrighted. Radio stations have to pay a fee to their national royalty collectors to be able to legally broadcast copyrighted content. The creators should get compensated through this system, but in reality, commercial format radio works as a redundancy machine in favour of mainstream artists. For radio archives publicly made available, additional fees have to be paid as well as for live streaming and even more for on demand archives. Non-commercial Radio Stations which do not play mostly mainstream music have problems financing these fees. On the other hand, they do not have problems sharing their shows with other non-commercial radio stations, if credits are given. To simplify the international program exchange between such radio stations, a license model would be useful which combines an internationally compatible compulsory license model with an open content license model. The use of already published copyrighted material is then combined with the creative work component of the radio DJ. A new form of agency is needed, international and specialized for the compensation of non-commercial use of copyrighted music in a networked broadcasting environment. An open radio license would make it easier to facilitate legal file-sharing between non-commercial radio stations and to provide public access to radio archives (on demand and as stream) through the internet. Such an environment would foster the development of new musical styles and support non-mainstream music in a way which has a positive effects worldwide for the labels and artists producing music. With a compensation system based on the indexing of such radio playlists it would be possible to better redirect the fees to the authors. Such a system would need to be internet based, to facilitate the registration of music tracks, the indexing of access statistics, playlists control the payment of fees. Other forms of content, such as journalistic features can get compensated in similar ways.

FREE CULTURAL RADIO

The common alternatives to mainstream radio are free radio or public radio formats, which define themselves dialectically in the way they distinguish themselves from the commercial formats as "counterparts" often focusing on a transcendent concept of society and the public sphere. A new form of radio would define itself by the immanence of the given social fields, and their political, cultural and economical factors of production. The components: Local music culture, free software driven editorial systems, cultural openness, international program exchange, art + experiment, political information, and the archiving and transmission of local cultural events would serve as a suitable abstraction of editorial content zones, which then can get organized autonomously down

to the level of single programs and shows. The goal is to interpolate the already existing cultural production of a local urban environment into the airwaves and relate it to the one of other cities. None of the categories of locality or non-commerciality are completely fixed or clear, they are produced in the process of making the radio program, not just as a representation of the struggle of suppressed minorities, or the expression of subjectivity, but as a transformation of an ongoing production from one sphere to another, the urban space to the acoustic space, a social feedback process of subjectivity production which is for many reasons certainly under a paralyzing central control.

EXSTREAM PROGRAMMING

Software culture means to reflect the function, architecture and philosophy of software in a way which makes it possible to change it. With the availability of open source software components it is possible to multiply the productivity of a software development process without multiplying the costs. It means more room for open ended experimentation. In a fully experimental programming environment, the software and it's social application are embedded into one constant and incremental development cycle. Bug reports and feature requests, chat discussions and wiki checklists, sofa debates and research orgies are providing a critical environment of constant challenge and pragmatic and collective decision making which avoids a few common problems of software development, such as overcomplexity. The artistic use of software is to be practised almost immediately by the use of artists testing the functionality with their own content, or by the artful consideration of a complex situation into beautifully simple concepts and guidelines. Archive, Scheduler, Playout. "Tools not rules."

Public Netbase 1994 - 2006

List of Events 1999 - 2002

1999

ECB European Cultural Backbone-Meeting

Konrad Becker (AT), Eddie Berg (UK), Frank Boyd (UK), Andreas Broekmann (NL), Peter Hagdahl (SE), Eric Kluitenberg (NL), Piotr Krajewski (PL), Tapio Mäkelä (FI), Sally Jane Norman (NL), Marko Peljhan (SI), Miklos Peternek (HU), Rasa Smite (LV), Luis Soares (PT), Marleen Stikker (NL), Romana Stauffer (AT), Katarina Živanović (YU), several participants from the European Commission, the Council of Europe, UNESCO and national ministries
Rabenstein (AT), 04. - 07.03.99, (see pictures at page 227)

SYNWORLD playwork:hyperspace

Robert Adrian X. (AT), Mark Amerika (US), Asymptote (US), Basicracy (US), Carsten Becker (DE), August Black (AT), Carbon Defense League (US), John Casti (US), Karl S. Chu (MM/US), Vuk Ćosić (DI), Čailin Dan (RO/NL), Dano (NL), Dextro (AT), fuchs-eckermann (AT), Ulrike und David Gabriel (DE), gameboy pocket noise (AT), Martin Gazzari/kandyman (AT), Glow (AT), Toshio Iwai (JP), Margarethe Jahrmann (AT), Jodi (BE/NL), Knowbotic Research (AT/DE), Machiko Kusahara (JP), Greg Lynn (US), Mongrel Artist Group (UK), Max Moswitzer (AT), Keisuke Oki (JP), Kas Oosterhuis (NL), Rudy Rucker (US), Anne-Marie Schleiner (US), Markus Seidl (AT), Lars Spuybroek/Nox (NL), Axel Stockburger (AT), Toshiya Ueno (JP), Van Gogh TV (DE/AT), Virtual Actors Group (DE), VNS Matrix (AU), Faith Wilding (US)
Vienna, 27. - 31.05.99, (see pictures at page 227)

Kultur.Netz.2000+

Juliane Alton (AT), Claudia Haas (AT), Armin Medosch (DE), Gerhard Ruiss (AT), Sabine Schebrak (AT), Georg Schöllhammer (AT), Ingrid Scholz-Strasser (AT)
Vienna, 24.09.99

FRM.D.NETZ

Apsolutno (YU), MiczFlor (DE/AT), Get to Attack (AT), Peter Goff IPI (UK), Alexander Ivanko (RU), monochrom (AT), Gordan Paunovic (YU), Period After (YU), Bojana Petric (YU), Ariana Vranica (YU), Franz Xaver (AT), Xenophobic (AT), Branislav Živković (YU)
Vienna, 11.12.99, (see picture at page 227)

2000

Lan Party@public netbase

Vienna 07.04.00

Roundtable - digital - un-/sozial?

Reinhard Handler (AT), Martin Krenn (AT), Doris Lutz (AT), Andrea Mayer-Edoloeiy (AT), Rupert Schmutzer (AT), Gerald Steinhardt (AT), Hito Steyerl (DE)
Vienna, 13.04.00

Roundtable - grundrechte in der informationsgesellschaft

Sabine Bauer (AT), Michael Eisenriegler (AT), Erich Möchel (AT), Christian Mock (AT), Harald Wosihnoj (AT)
Vienna, 25.5.00

Roundtable - der gläserne mensch.grundrechte im Informationszeitalter

Nikolaus Forgó (AT), Walter Peissl (AT), Klaus Richter (AT), Daniela Zimmer (AT)
Vienna 08.06.00

WORLD-INFORMATION.ORG at Brussels

Apsolutno (YU), Association of Autonomous Astronauts (UK), Shahidul Alam (BD), Duncan Campbell (UK), Cinema Nova Video Library (BE), Constant (BE), Critical Art Ensemble (US), Simon Davies (UK), e-lab (LV), foton records (BE), Andi Freeman (UK), Matthew Fuller (UK), Sven Grahn (SE), Colin Green (UK), Maruja Guterrez Diaz (ES), Ingo Günther (DE/US), Cees J. Hamelink (NL), Philip Hammond (UK), Independent Media Center (BE), Alexander Ivanko (RU), Eric Kluitenberg (NL), Steve Kurtz (US), Mongrel (UK), Monochrom (AT), Max Moswitzer (AT), Namebase (US), Marko Peljhan (SI), Michael Polman (NL), Simon Pope (UK), Philippe Quéau (FR), Oliver Ressler (AT), RTMark (US), Saskia Sassen (US/UK), Jason Skeet (UK), Brian Springer (US), Paul Vanouse (US), Volkstanz (AT), Faith Wilding (US), Anita Witek (AT/UK), Steve Wright (UK)
Brussels, 30.06.00 - 30.07.00 (see pictures at page 228 & 229)

WORLD-INFORMATION Exhibition at Vienna

Apsolutno (YU), Association of Autonomous Astronauts AAA (UK), Ben Bagdikian (US), Sabine Breitwieser (AT), Heath Bunting (UK), Critical Art Ensemble (US), Dieb13 pd@klingt.org (AT), Kunda Dixit (NP), Alice Dvorska (CZ), Ulrike Felt (AT), Andi Freeman (UK), Matthew Fuller (UK), Glow (AT), Renate Göbl (AT), Katharina Gsöllpointner (AT), Ingo Günther (DE/US), Marion Hamm (UK), Honor Harger (UK/AU), Institute for Applied Autonomy (US), Margarete Jahrmann (AT), maschek (AT), Gerald Matt (AT), Bady Minck (AT), Mongrel (UK), Monochrom (AT), Max Moswitzer (AT), Pauline van Mourik Broekman (UK), NATOarts (US), Marko Peljhan (SI), Stefania Pitscheider (AT), Oliver Ressler (AT), Marc Ries (AT), RTmark (US), Georg Schöllhammer (AT), Jason Skeet (UK), Hito Steyerl (DE), Surveillance Camera Players (US), Barbara Trionfi (AT), Paul Vanouse (US), James Wallbank (UK), Christiana Weidel (AT), Anita Witek (AT/UK), Steve Wright (UK), Ivan Zassoursky (RU)
Vienna, 24.11.00 - 24.12.00, (see pictures at page 230)

2001

Roundtable "Optionen für Österreichs Zukunft"

discussion with Ursula Maier-Rabler (AT), Michael Wimmer (AT), Constanze Ruhm (AT), F.E. Rakuschan (AT), Katharina Gsöllpointner (AT)
Vienna, 21.02.01

Remote Viewing. interactive billboard

media installation in public space with Tanya Bednar (AT), WR - Verein massenmedialer Erschliessung (AT), monochrom (AT), maschek (AT), Max Moswitzer (AT), Sabine Bitter/Helmut Weber (AT), Christian Hessler (AT), Bady Minck (AT), Martin Krenn/Oliver Ressler (AT), Georg Udovcic (AT), Eva Wohlgemuth (AT)
Vienna 28.06.01 - 30.06.01

Basecamp Media Art Installation

media installation in public space with collaborative live internet music, remote jam by pd@klingt.org (AT), Vienna, 26.09.01 - December 01, (see pictures at page 231)

Interface Explorer. Shared Boundaries

Markus Bader (DE), John Brucker-Cohen (US), Matthew Fuller (UK), Patricia Futterer (AT), Mieke Gerritzen (NL), Graham Harwood (UK), Margarete Jahrmann (AT), Lev Manovich (RU/US), Max Moswitzer (AT), Christoph Kummerer (AT), Peter Purgathofer (AT), Gebhard Sengmüller (AT), Stijn Slabbinck (BE)
Vienna 18.10.01-09.11.01, (see picture at page 231)

maxmspn2+0audiovizualassault_03

Johnny Dekam (US), pure (AT)
Vienna, 09.11.01

Technologiepolitische Kultur 2001

Johannes Grenzfurthner (AT), Thorsten Schilling, (DE), Robert Stachel (AT), XDV (AT), farmers manual (AT), pure (AT), epy (AT), glo3 (AT),
Vienna, 07.12.01

2002

Digital underground extravaganza

DJ/VJ John Grzinich (US) , DJ/VJ el+decoy (AT), DJ bb (AT), VJ toert (AT)
Vienna, 18.01.02

Basecamp Text-FM

media installation in public space with Matthew Fuller (UK), Graham Harwood (UK), dieb13 (AT), dissecting squids (AT), hi-core (AT), lo-res (AT)
Vienna, 25.01.02 - June 2002, (see pictures at page 231)

Ignorama. virtual platform for artistic practice

Heinz Cibulka (AT), Hanno Millesi (AT), Norbert Math (AT)
Vienna, 01.02.02

VISUALARTPROYEKTIL:LEERE

Marcos Rondon (VE), Eva Hagedorn (AT), Edgar Liuiya (PE)
Vienna, 11.04.02

musikmaschine on tour #10. operator spice: live-electronic

Martin Marek (AT), Michael Parenti (AT)
Vienna, 26.04.02

Cyborg Citizen

Chris Hables Gray (US) and Faith Wilding (US), EyeBM Eye-Beam-Music Project (AT), Ralf Traunsteiner (AT), Ivan Averintsev (AT)
Vienna, 24.05.02

digital art generation - autogenerative prozesse in der netzkultur

Patricia Futterer (AT), Hiaz. farmersmanual (AT), Arthur Flexer (AT), Lia (PT/AT), Adrian Ward (UK), Vienna, 07.06.02

Mainpal Inv./Goodiepal

Mainpal Inv./Goodiepal (DK), Pure (AT)
Vienna, 28.06.02

Dark Markets Conference

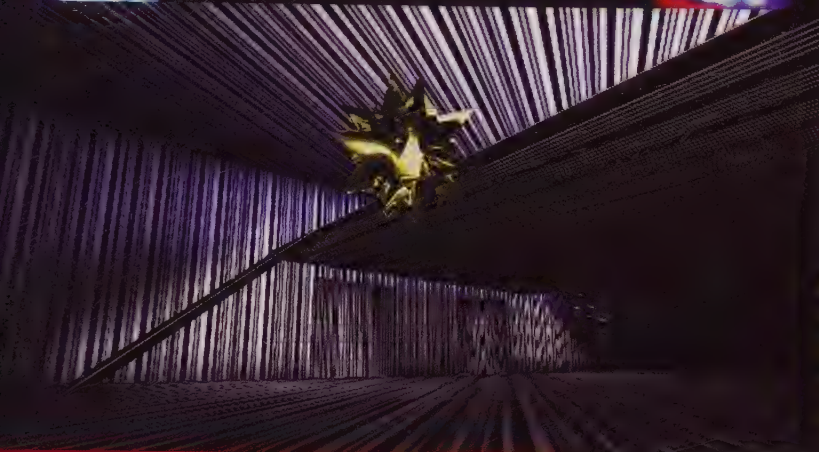
Infopolitics, Electronic Media and Democracy in Times of Crisis
Franco Berardi Bifo (IT), Paulina Borsook (US), Arianna Bove (UK), Erik Empson (UK), Oleg Kireev (RU), Gert Lovink (NL/AU), Chantal Mouffe (FR), Oliver Ressler (AT), Ned Rossiter (AU), Florian Schneider (DE), Christoph Spehr (DE), Soenke Zehle (DE)
Vienna, 03.10.-04.10.02, (see pictures at page 231)

wahlkabine.at

federal elections Austria 2002
in cooperation with iff - Fakultät für interdisziplinäre Forschung und Fortbildung, Abteilung politische Bildung (AT), Gesellschaft für politische Aufklärung (AT), ÖGPW - Österreichische Gesellschaft für politische Bildung (AT), September - October 2002

WORLD-INFORMATION Exhibition at Amsterdam

0100101110101101.ORG (IT/ES), Ben Bagdikian (US), Konrad Becker (AT), Andrew Bichlbaum (US), Bureau d'études (FR), Ewen Chardronnet (FR), Beatriz da Costa (US), Steve Cisler (US), Critical Art Ensemble (US), Darius Cuplinskis (HU), Arthur Elsenaar (NL), GLOW (AT), Bruce Girard (NL), Volker Grassmuck (DE), Chris Hables Gray (US), Brian Holmes (US/FR), Ingo Günther (DE/US), Derek Holzer (NL), Institute for Applied Autonomy (US), Margarete Jahrmann (AT), Zina Kaye (AU), Steve Kurtz (US), kuda.org (YU), Eveline Lubbers (NL), Jill Magid (US), Arun Mehta (IN), Max Moswitzer (AT), Marko Peljhan (SI), Sheldon Rampton (US), Martin Ratniks (LV), Thorsten Schilling (DE), Ryan Schöllerma (US), Rasa Smite (LV), Joost Smiers (NL), Raitis Smits (LV), Mr. Snow (AU), Surveillance Camera Players (US), Felix Stalder (CH/CA), Taco Stolk (NL), Christiaan Alberdingk Thijm (NL), Tomasz Sustar (SI), David Thorne (US) Anita Witek (AT/UK), Yes Men (US)
Amsterdam 15.11.-15.12.02, (see pictures at page 232)

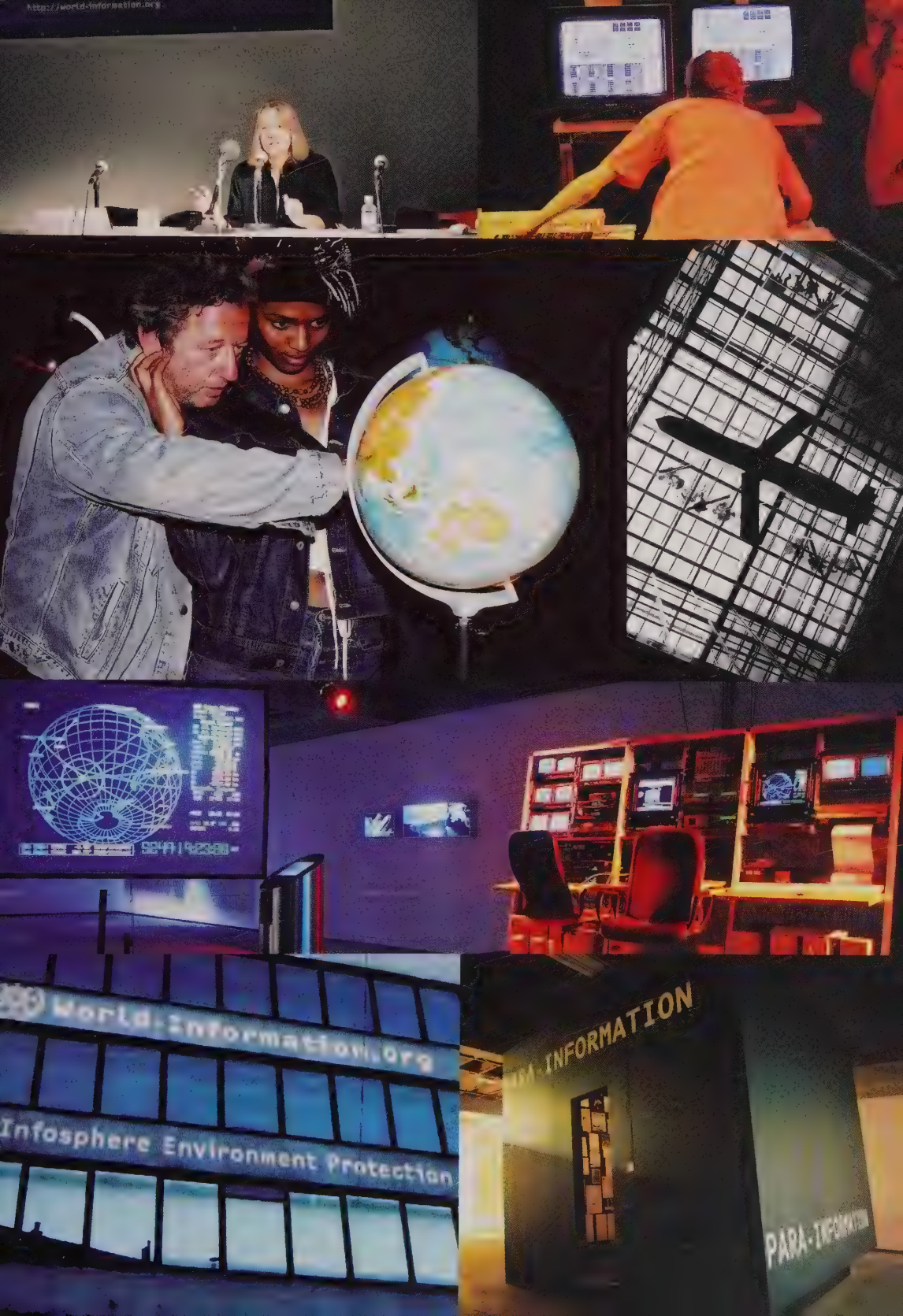




PROVIDING AND
PROTECTING

World InfoCon

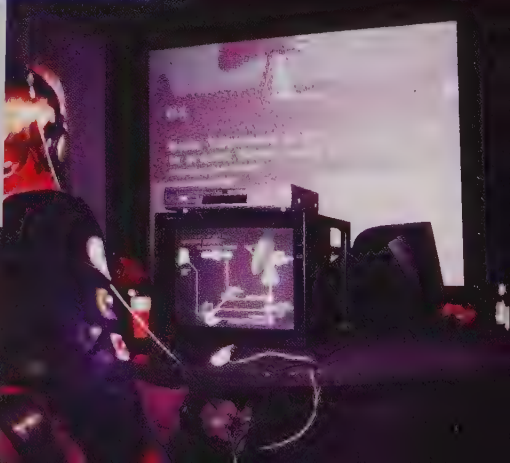
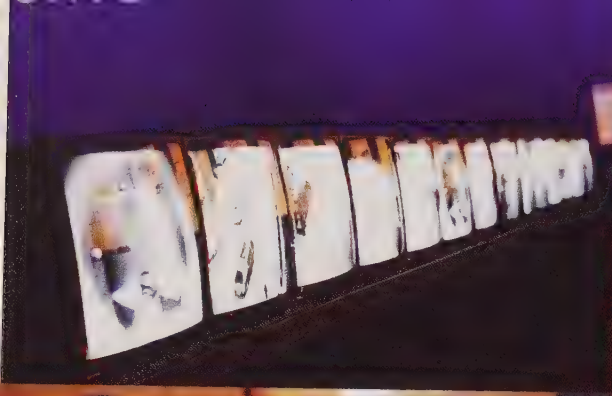
In the
media lab at the site of RI
diagnosis/London
also reports from

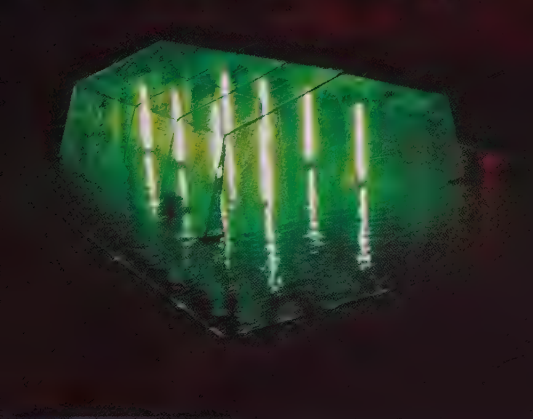
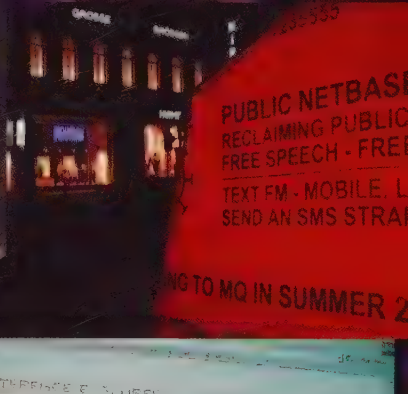
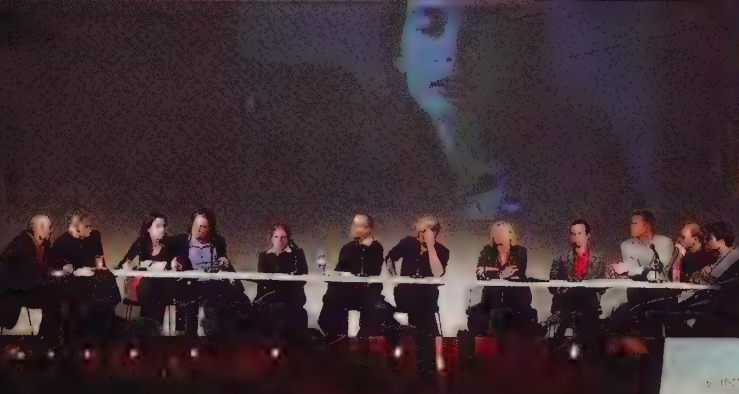
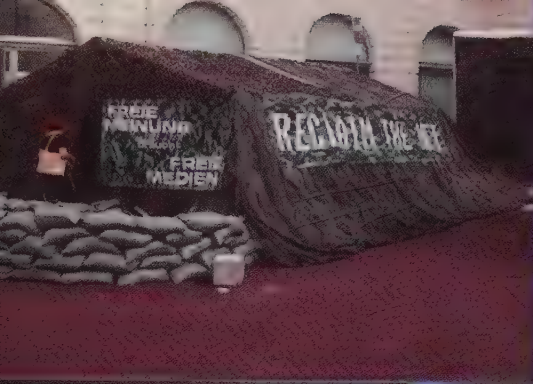


World-Information.org
Infosphere Environment Protection

WORLD-INFORMATION

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Digital Mediaculture, Networking and Participation

Introduction

Meaning of Digital Networks

Saskia Sassen

From the preface to "World-Information.Org – Politik der Infosphäre", Konrad Becker et al.
BPB Berlin/ Leske und Budrich, Opladen 2002, <http://www.bpb.de/files/UZS2AA.pdf>

Technologies have long been recognized as significant factors in production, distribution, organizational forms, and social relations. But today's ICTs are not just any technology. They are reshaping crucial features of democratic participation, control, surveillance, privacy, and war. They are redrawing the strategic geographies of a growing number not only of institutional orders but also of public imaginaries, and even personal identities. They do so in both highly visible and in submerged, often illegible ways. In terms of research and development, the new ICTs spawn just about all sectors of the economy – from agriculture through manufacturing to finance – and growing sectors of society – from education through medicine to entertainment. Understanding the new ICTs is then crucial.

But what it is we are actually naming when use the term ICTs is not all that clear. There is a strong tendency to focus on the technical capabilities of the new ICTs. From a narrowly engineering point of view this might be fine. But if we are to understand the broader issues involved, such a narrow focus even though crucial is not enough. For instance, as World-Information.Org (WIO) shows us very clearly the new data storage capacities we now have through digitization are not only about storage – they are also about storing data that can be used for surveillance and for marketing purposes. Nor can understanding the new ICTs be confined to what many social scientists have done, which is to look at the ICTs in terms of their impact on existing conditions and institutions. The ICTs are also to be recognized as constitutive of new conditions and institutional arrangements and, further, as an emergent order and system of power. Anyone concerned with questions of democratic participation and accountability must go beyond technical capabilities and impacts on existing conditions and examine also the features of this emergent order and system of power.

WIO does all of this, and it does so with great clarity, precision, and brilliant insights. It brings together analyses and information covering these issues. It contains detailed information on a) all the key aspects of the infrastructures, technical capabilities and organizations that constitute the technical side of the new ICTs, and b) in-depth analyses of how this technical side gets used and deployed by various types of actors, such as global markets and firms, NGOs, and individuals, and for various types of purposes, such as profit making, democratic participation, and surveillance.

What comes out of this combination of information and in-depth analyses is a tentative outline of an emergent order marked by new types of instrumental capacities and by enormous concentrations

of specific forms of power among key actors. These instrumental capacities are of multiple sorts and can be put to multiple uses: For instance, data handling capacities have increased exponentially and created whole new data topographies, notably vast global data networks and data hubs. The new data coding and retrieval capabilities have fundamentally altered the relation of people to data. This can be seen in what WIO calls "global brainware", notably the proliferation of think tanks and their strategic new roles for the world of politics and corporate economies. It can also be seen in the new biometric capacities, such as the appropriation of what we still consider "private" information about our lives and bodies. Another instrumental capability is the combination of speed, interconnectivity and distributed parallel outcomes which has raised the orders of magnitude and the scales at which various operations can be executed. Global finance has been a key beneficiary, raising its overall volume to levels that dwarf other major global flows, such as trade and direct investment even as these have also benefited from the new ICTs.

As for the vast concentrations of power that are facilitated by the new ICTs, what stands out is the power of major corporations increasingly to control the development of these technologies and their infrastructures in directions that enhance their interests, and secondly, the power of the U.S. government to engage in multiple forms of surveillance, including surveillance of corporations in countries run by governments who are strong and long-term allies, illustrated by the so-called Echelon U.S. surveillance system and its use to spy on European corporations described at length in WIO. Major corporations and the US government are also playing an increasingly definitive role in the governance of the internet; ICANN was meant to open up internet governance to multiple constituencies, but this has not quite happened. Another outcome of these specific forms of power is the use of technical capabilities to produce the erasure of what we once thought were absolute protections to our privacy, protections centered in both law and nature. Overall, WIO shows us that instead of maximizing the role of communication and information in democratic societies, these developments threaten democratic participation and accountability. In many ways what we are seeing is an exponential strengthening not of democracy but of the power of already powerful actors. This is not how it was meant to go.

And yet, WIO also shows us the possibilities for using certain components of the new ICTs, notably the internet, as instruments that can enhance the efforts by a broad range of individuals and organizations struggling for a more just world. It enables these efforts whether they are local or global, and whether they focus on human rights, the environment, poverty, or the fight against powerful and largely unaccountable organizations such as the WTO. But these uses of the new technologies need to be developed, they do not just fall from the sky. And even if they proliferate, they will not necessarily fundamentally alter the enormous power held by corporations and some governments. But they can raise their own global capability to make those powerful unaccountable actors at least somewhat accountable to democratic principles. These multiple practices will expand the spaces themselves for these counter-systemic efforts and the possibilities of cross-border networks, thereby contributing to the building blocks of a global civil society and the possibilities for surveilling the surveillers and their power projects.

Report of the Work Group on "Cultures of Electronic Networks"

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURES
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

Cultural Competence, International Conference
Linz, Austria, October 1 - 3, 1998

<http://competence.netbase.org>

Report of the Work Group on "Cultures of Electronic Networks"
Networking Centres of Innovation

PUBLIC NETBASE

This document presents recommendations from the Working Group on "Cultures of Electronic Networks" at the Cultural Competence Conference organised by the Austrian Presidency of the European Union in October 1998.

"We should build on European diversity through networking (pooling resources, expertise, using technologies) to increase the competitiveness of the European audiovisual industry."

Spyros Pappas, Director General, DGX, European Commission

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1. INTRODUCTION

Digital media will be at the heart of Europe's future prosperity. Economic growth will depend on the existence of a new media culture which is innovative, diverse, inclusive and challenging.

Cultural activity in digital media is driving innovation at all levels, with a constant movement of skills, ideas, individuals and infrastructures across different sectors. Innovative market activity can only be upheld insofar as the "non-profit" creative research it depends on is fostered on a permanent, continuous basis, and sufficient fluidity is encouraged between the commercial and "non-profit" sectors.

A new media culture is emerging in Europe – and this implies not only the countries of the European Union, but Europe as a whole. New practices in education, art, popular culture, the social sciences, and economic and industrial development are being fostered in independent centres of innovation in the arts and media, as well as in microenterprises. These agencies understand that technology is not culturally neutral. They are active in the public domain and engaged in fundamental research into the fast-changing structures that are the foundation of European societies: Development, education, employment, economy, law, distribution, and human rights. Technology is culture.

The talented and fleet footed organisations which comprise this network of innovation are small and fledgling. They straddle traditional boundaries and explore the creative spaces between different sectors and media forms.

Across Europe they constitute a dynamic network which is one of the true engines of the establishment of a cultural and social framework for the information society in Europe.

This report makes the case that European institutions need to develop policies which are in touch with the dynamics of digital practice. In the final section it makes specific recommendations for action to the European Commission.

2. MAKING USE OF MICRO ENTERPRISES AND CENTRES OF INNOVATION

Presentations to the working group demonstrated that an informal network of independent artists and producers, microenterprises and organisations driving creative innovation in media culture already exists in Europe.

The characteristics of the networks and centres of innovation represented in Linz include:

A participatory practice encouraging expression and participation as motors of cultural diversity (age, language, ethnic identity, gender, economic status, etc.) and catalysts for social cohesion in a multicultural Europe.

A socio-economic practice in which new partnerships are created between industry, government, civil society, art and education.

Experimentation with the cultural and educational potential of new technologies and an emergent educational practice that anticipates job opportunities and creates new professional job profiles.

Development of structures to facilitate and encourage the active participation of citizens in the Information society through Community Media Centres.

Transnational partnerships and the active promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity, fostering communication and understanding in the wider Europe.

The role and practice of these organisations is covered in greater depth in The Amsterdam Agenda, a document produced during the "Towards a New Media Culture: From Practice to Policy" Conference in Rotterdam and Amsterdam in 1997 held under the Dutch presidency. This conference identified a number of areas (innovation, education, social quality) in which media culture is already playing a growing role. The Amsterdam Agenda makes a series of concrete recommendations to national and international governments for fostering this practice.

3. NEEDS

In order to strengthen collaboration between Centres of Innovation, we propose the construction of a European Cultural Backbone, that will not only consist of technical infrastructure, but will also be a social and cultural framework. Informal networking and one-off meetings are not adequate to support a growing field of research and practice which will make a very significant contribution to the digital media economy in Europe.

A technical infrastructure for cultural activity needs to be implemented along the same lines as the well-established frameworks of the scientific and academic networks. This requires public access to bandwidth and tools, and server capacity.

For an effective exchange of expertise and training, an open, online communication environment is required. Other means of distributing information and knowledge, including publications, newsletters and workshops should also be developed. Such facilities must cater to the multilingual reality of Europe through the provision of adequate software, design and translation.

To be effective, culture as much as science requires its domains of primary research, which need to be supported by appropriate environments and resources (e.g. independent research laboratories for media art).

Sustaining the public sphere is an essential factor in fostering an innovative European media culture. This means providing participatory public access to networks and media tools, and privileging public content, by developing the digital equivalents of public libraries and museums, as distinct from privately owned data bases and networks. This is the basis for the democratic development of the Information Society.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The work and activities of cultural networks, artists and creative professionals can play a vital role in supporting the audio-visual and research programmes of European Commission. The working group made three sets of recommendations of ways in which the European Commission might actively support and invest in this field of activity.

4.1 Audio Visual Policy and the Media Programme

The working group welcomed the report and conclusions of the European Audio Visual Conference, held in Birmingham in April 1998 under the British presidency, but was concerned that the real needs of the "new" media sector were not fully represented or discussed. The Working Group recommends that the Commission should:

Extend and expand the Media Programme's support for research, development and training in digital media

Or establish a new programme tailored to the requirements of new media

Invest in primary research by artists and creative professionals

Develop appropriate forms of support for microenterprises and small organisations

Consult this sector in the development of policy and programmes through bodies like the Consultative Committee on Audio Visual Policy proposed by Commissioner Oreja at the Birmingham Conference.

4.2 Research programmes - 5th Framework

The i3 programme recognises the contribution of artists and designers to ICT research programmes involving social scientists and computer scientists, to develop new tools for a more cohesive, participatory society. Through the themes of inhabited information spaces and connected communities, this profoundly human-centred ICT research is giving rise to valuable new models for collaborative, cross-disciplinary work.

We acknowledge the initial difficulties of building cross-disciplinary partnerships, and are sure that the current detailed evaluations will offer effective models for future collaborations under the 5th Framework.

Applications-driven collaborations involving artists are having a strong impact on technological development processes, with immediately discernible benefits to the market. These projects reveal an urgent need to nurture open arenas for cross-disciplinary experimentation. Without such arenas, artistic energies which are too systematically harnessed to market imperatives are likely to subside, and no longer constitute the vital creative resource needed by a dynamic society.

There is a need for more flexible policy and funding lines to support relays of networked small structures, which are playing an irreplaceable role in ICT-based cultural activity. Without these relays, ICT infrastructure developments currently being engineered by European industry, geared towards new visions of citizenship via a more participatory public, will remain barren.

4.3 General policy priorities

Policies need to recognise the participatory and democratic potentials of the new media. Citizens should not only be addressed as consumers but as active participants in the Information Society.

Diversity is a recognised hallmark and asset of European culture; Consequently, this diversity needs to be structurally reflected by European cultural policy. Current funding mechanisms must be diversified and made more flexible, to deal with rapidly changing lifestyles and forms of cultural expression.

5. NEXT STEPS

The collaboration and informal networking of organisations and institutions represented in the Working Group has been facilitated by conferences and seminars organised by the Commission and the Council of Europe. This process will continue, supported by the Austrian and Dutch governments, through a meeting of European Centres of Innovation in early 1999 in Vienna.

The network could serve as a platform of expertise to participate in further implementation of policy developments.

The network will continue.

Reclaiming Spaces and Symbolic Culture

Netbased Public Interventions in Vienna

Konrad Becker

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE:
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

"Reclaim the Net" was a theme that Public Netbase took up in the late nineties, the time of the dotcom bubble and its subsequent crash. This was about reclaiming public space for free speech, free electronic media and digital cultural practice. The time was both right and difficult. The need for creative forms of resistance was as urgent as never before.

PUBLIC NETBASE

Clearly, global domination has long become de-territorialized and the implementation of power is now grounded in the control of flows and symbols. Nonetheless a "Reclaim the Streets" movement emerged in the early nineties as a form of protest, quickly spreading around the world. "Street parties" were held in cities all over Europe, Australia, North America, and even Africa. Dedicated to reclaiming public space from being an arena for control society and consumerism, these tactics successfully countered the isolation of diversified urban lives.

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Critical Hedonism, the basis for a culture beyond simple pleasure-seeking, is gaining in importance in fearfully bored societies. *Angst* as a tool to leverage behavioral changes is especially efficient if suggestions to the target are feasible, and above all largely practicable. Symbolic domination of informational societies is not in conflict with a bio-political order or symbolic culture in the flesh.

People need escape routes not only from political oppression or exclusion. They must find ways of escapist engineering away from a demonic circulation of forced labor and recreation, to escape the symbolic dominance and cultural entrainment of global capitalism. These actions to create a presence on the street were not intended to disturb the flow of commodities, but to playfully intervene into the symbolic landscape of the city. The virtual world of digital communication and the streets are closer to each other than it may seem.

POLITICAL DANCE MOVES AND THE NEW FLANEURS ON THE BLOCK

In Vienna, these issues came to the forefront when, in 2000, a new right-wing government was formed, which included a far-right party that had previously been ostracized. The forms of protests on the street were a burst of popular cultural resistance unseen in this country and Public Netbase served as an important organizing platform, providing a large number of initiatives with technological and cultural support. Never before had Vienna seen so much anti-riot police force in martial uniforms, combat helmets and shields. In all cultures of the world it is part of folklore to drive out the evil spirits and to clean the atmosphere with noise, yelling and drumming, to banish them with loud music. These ancient practices were adopted in a brand new folk culture to dispel dark powers through "sound-politicization", a project by Volkstanz one of the many groups innovating cultural resistance. Initially Volkstanz was a label I used in the early eighties for collaborations with Turkish immigrants, playing nouveau electronic folk with songs like "Native Austrians Out!". The name struck well with the group of people meeting at Netbase to organize the cultural dissent on the streets of Vienna. When the daily protest marches in Vienna faded to the regular Thursday demonstrations, Volkstanz decided to stage weekly street protests on Saturdays. Artists were asked to give incendiary speeches, musicians and DJs were put to work and hundreds of flyers, stickers, posters and banners were produced. As I wrote in the FAQ on the website "Gestures are infectious, movements are contagious" and Volkstanz developed some unique forms of political street theatre mobilization with small trucks and mobile sound systems. Focusing on raising awareness, preparing action and listening to good music, six dozen events in resistance against the sexist, racist and antisocial politics were realized. 200 km of Vienna streets were covered in planned visits or aimless wandering but the tourist areas proved to be increasingly sensitive and usually ended in a shuffle with riot police. When the police increasingly curbed the zones of access for the free roaming Volkstanz group, bring-your-radio demos organized in cooperation with the local community radio brought 1000 mobile micro sound systems to bloom instead. Every Saturday for one and a half years Volkstanz did reclaim the Streets in a multitude of alliances.

When weekly Volkstanz mobilizations proved hard to sustain, a new group formed around Public Netbase. On July 7th 2001 more than fifty institutions and organizations, 40 trucks loaded with sound-systems and "Free RePublic", with a crowd of more than 50,000, paraded on the inner city circular Ring street. There was a highly diversified message that reflected the heterogeneity of the participants and was free of any corporate or sponsorship. A far cry from the commodified, neo-liberal, business-hippy "Loveparades", it drew inspiration from the legendary Vienna Free

Konrad Becker
RECLAIMING SPACES
AND SYMBOLIC CULTURE

Party I was involved in organizing in 1994, a protest march which brought 50 sound-vehicles and close to 200,000 people on the Ring. It was a loud and celebratory political protest against the crackdown on the thriving independent party and rave scene existing at that time, comparable to the UK Criminal Justice Act. In line with this tradition, Free RePublic not only stood up against the government, but stood for social self-determination – rather than racism, sexism, discrimination and institutionalized violations of human rights. It demanded free access to education and the promotion of participatory electronic media – instead of tuition fees and the dismantling of democratic structures. Free RePublic called for the right of self-organization, and opposed the commercialization of all areas of life and the sellout of youth culture. Free RePublic was not only against a climate hostile to freedom of expression, the criminalization of dissent, and the intimidation of cultural and marginalized groups – it was for the right to a self-determined life.

LOCATIVE MEDIA, ART AND RESISTANCE

The Basecamp installation series illustrated the approach of staking claims both in the real and the virtual worlds. This series came in three parts which were designed to highlight the politics around a new cultural complex in Vienna, the so-called Museumsquartier (MQ). Located next to the Imperial Palace and the museums, the old imperial stables served as a venue for trade fairs and exhibitions for many decades before falling into disrepair and being colonized by small initiatives and cultural groups. Heralded as a space for critical and heterogeneous cultural practice and advanced artistic experimentation, it later became a symbolic asset of conservative political forces to test their ideas of hegemonic control through a culture of consumerist entertainment. Unsurprisingly, these forces were determined to cleanse the area from all critical groups independent organizations considered all too dangerous. At the time of the pre-opening of the newly renovated Museumsquartier, a charade of negotiations with critical groups, and the pretense of wanting to include them into the new structures were still played to the media. For this reason Public Netbase was officially invited to present an artistic project in the pre-opening event end of June 2001 and decided to do Remote Viewing. This was an installation project equipped with internet and data projection interfaces allowing interventions into the local environment on urban digital screens, a kind of open-access electronic billboard. It meant that the invited artists and those with internet access and a password could anonymously post on a big video screen visible to large audiences. Invited artists included Martin Krenn, Oliver Ressler, Maschek, Bady Minck, Max Moswitzer, Eva Wohlgemuth, Christian Hessel, and WR. However, as the Prime Minister and head of the ruling conservative party was scheduled to attend the opening, the Museumsquartier management began to be anxious lest artists might spoil the occasion with critical comments. Eager to avoid indignation or offense on the part of right-wing government officials, the management made it clear that uncensored art would not be tolerated. In flagrant violation of the freedom of art, and negating the potentials of real-time dialogue on the net, only pre-screened and authorized postings and graphics were going to be allowed. Earlier versions of Remote Viewing were displayed internationally at festivals and museums in Antwerp, Dublin, Chicago, and at many other places, meeting with consistent success. In what

seemed an inevitable act of civil disobedience, the installation was installed illegally. Slogans, graphics and animations were displayed online as well as locally in a military defense installation set up in the Museumsquartier's Staatsratshof court – all secured in a military tent surrounded by barbed wire, sandbags, and mobile obstacles.

Instead of being removed after the opening weekend, the defense installation remained in place as a highly visible symbol of dissent. Despite a compromise achieved between Public Netbase and the Museumsquartier management in August, it became evident in early autumn that the agreements would not be honored. Harassment of critical voices continued, and the temporary removal of organizations like Depot and Public Netbase, initially for purposes of renovation works, was going to be final. The need to draw attention to a supposedly guaranteed, but in actual fact very unlikely return to the Museumsquartier was a challenge met by placing a highly visible work of art in the main court of the MQ. In the night of 26 September 2001, the installation located in Staatsratshof was unexpectedly moved into the center of the MQ's attention. As an installation, it was developed further and engaged a new framework for artistic projects in electronic space. The new Public Netbase Basecamp with its rows of vertical fluorescent light columns presented a "shining" example of applied transparency and participatory digital media culture. The visual attractiveness of the green fluorescent glow of a transparent tent structure in the middle of a pool and reflected by its water allowed for an experience of concerts on the net which were broadcasted by the built-in loudspeakers. A new open source internet application invited all users to participate in a musical composition in real time, a global online jam session. Although the installation was met with overwhelming agreement on the part of visitors and the surrounding institutions, the management decided to act against Public Netbase with unprecedented ferocity. Even before the installation went into service, MQ staff violently intervened against its deployment, although the destruction of the object could be prevented in the last moment. But it can be tough to find a licensed electrician in Vienna who would be prepared to give a professional legal clearance for a technical installation when threatened with severe personal consequences. Instead of honoring the agreements, the MQ management decided to mobilize its solicitors and to once again initiate litigation against artists and cultural workers. Although the director of the MQ had always preferred to conduct his dialogue with cultural workers via lawyers, the trespassing and eviction action against Public Netbase marked an all time low. Conservative politicians in Austria always challenged the need for physical space in digital culture. This aversion to physical space for "deviant" cultural practice was telling.

Konrad Becker
RECLAIMING SPACES
AND SYMBOLIC CULTURE

Already in 1998, Public Netbase established sound generation as collective cultural production. In cooperation with the London-based "Society of Unknowns", a freight container was installed in front of Vienna's opera house. Bearing the title "Information Terror", it acted as a psycho-geographical feedback device. Listeners operated the device via email and web address indicated on all sides of the container. Sound was generated from texts converted to midi information and samples, fed into a mix board installation at Public Netbase, and transmitted to the container

- as audio stream. Information Terror was expressive of a culture of remixing and sampling in which originality was dismissed in favor of collectivity and anonymity, and art concepts of

composition and authorship were destroyed in a public decoding of both urban and media spaces. Demonstrating once more its mobility and flexibility, Public Netbase's new Basecamp model moved to a location at Mariahilferstraße just outside of the MQ in January 2002. With the new installation, Public Netbase called attention to the escalating conflicts inside the MQ complex, as well to the political intimidation practiced around it, and a marketing budget of millions. Apart from its function as a "blazing" symbol of critical cultural practice, and acting as the sole landmark of a cultural diversity that was a constant in MQ rhetoric, the semi-transparent orange mesh tent, illuminated by two rows of vertical lights, was also a "sonar" media installation. Passers-by and remote users could listen to and interact with Text-FM, a participatory SMS-to-Radio project created by British artists Graham Harwood and Matthew Fuller, in collaboration with Public Netbase. With instructions silk-screened on the netlike fabric of the tent, users were invited to send short text messages to a mobile number that transformed them into computer-generated voices, creating an interface between public and private space. Cooperation with local bars and the community radio "Orange" gave the project even wider presence. Unfortunately, it was repeatedly set on fire by "unknowns" and finally went down in flames.

URBAN ZONES OF CULTURAL CONFLICT

In 2002 it became clear that the MQ was a totally lost case in terms of emancipatory and independent cultural practice. All critical groups that were not in possession of solid contracts and did not enjoy the support those in power were thrown out. Slimeballs moved in, useful idiots ready to serve as window dressers and minions of a conservative hegemony. The bland stupidity of a less-than-sophisticated notion of creative industries, with its cultural shopping malls, gastronomical sites and recreation zones, was put into practice at the MQ. Confronted with this hopeless situation, Public Netbase had to look into new strategies for an urban culture action plan in Vienna. Karlsplatz, an inner-city redevelopment area with an image problem, was identified as the new theatre of battle. The idea was to combine high-profile urban dynamics with the idea of advancing emancipatory forces. A traffic hub and low-life refuge, with a large amount of committed restructuring funds and a high situational potential, Karlsplatz seemed the right choice. Developing an operation plan for the territory of contention included intelligence assessment and reconnaissance, procuring plans and restructuring concepts and talking to the City Councilor for Urban Development about possible areas for new cultural practice. It also meant preparing the ground with psychological themes, writing newspaper commentaries and press releases on the issue, handle rumors and generally make it a subject, to collaborate with academics for high level panel discussions and engage in political negotiations with City Councilor for Arts and local powerbrokers. Tactical maneuvers included launching a front group called "Öffnet den Karlsplatz" ("open Karlsplatz"), a fake citizen initiative propaganda campaign, fake government press releases, "funny" papers and immersed actions. Some people found out about it but played along anyway – there was no need to go to great lengths to "hide" it; some thought it strange or fake but didn't know who or what – but many more, officials or not, thought it authentic. Early June 2003, the international conference on free flows of information and the politics of the commons, "Open Cultures", was positioned prominently on location at

Kunsthalle Wien. But Free RePublic 03's tactical advance to Karlsplatz on 14 June was denied access by police and the nice protest party with more than twenty sound-systems had to escape to a space between the baroque museums, just opposite the MQ. In a surprise attack launched on 27 June, Karlsplatz was repossessed and a free Mediacamp was set up that consisted of containers and the old Basecamp tent and featured radio and satellite linkups, a free hotspot, daily workshops, discussions, screenings, performances, concerts and parties. Established as an illegal base for regular cultural practice and media discourse, its demands were not only targeted at the right-wing government, but also the city of Vienna itself: A space that would free cultural media from its marginalized and precarious state. The base of a broad alliance of heterogeneous groups in independent media practice squatting the place was heavily reliant on the logistics and structural support of Netbase, but at last it was not the lack of resources that ended this temporary autonomous zone in October. It was the imminent threat of brute force removal.

The city government became very suspicious of activities on this location. Consequently, obtaining a permit for a temporary installation with 100101110101101.ORG shortly after the Mediacamp was removed, proved impossible despite intense efforts. Although all the safety requirements were met down to the smallest details, the installation had to be done illegally. A two-story high-tech design container with glass fronts was set up, hosting the tactical media project Nikeground. The project addressed the issue of symbolic domination, corporate commercialization and public space by way of a drastic example.

In May 2004, following a live performance of Signal Sever! and the opening of a massive temporary installation between the Otto Wagner pavilions, the System-77 Civil Counter Reconnaissance consortium announced its plan to set up a surveillance base in Vienna. Dr Brian Holmes, S-77CCR speaker in Paris, declared: "We are convinced that the city of Vienna will support the release of surveillance technologies for civil society, not just for democratic reasons, but also for economic ones". The unmanned aerial surveillance vehicles (UAVs) made it into the evening news of private TV, and the Interior Minister saw himself obliged to come forward with an official denial. The installation set up by PACT Systems/Projekt Atol aroused a high level of police anxiety and plain-clothes interest. The intervention picked the civil unrest of the year 2000 as its central theme, and provided demo-ware demonstrating tactical uses of S-77 in Vienna as part of the installation. Instead of looking at Seattle, Genoa or Geneva, S-77's planning routines were informed by the local protest movement that emerged after a right-wing government was installed in 2000. The spectrum of swarm activities and above all the extreme mobility of actors was a foremost reason to select this particular form of civil protests for demonstration purposes. In early June, events such as Shu Lea Chang's TramJam and installations produced as part of the "Free Bitflows" festival on cultures of access and the politics of dissemination succeeded yet another time in penetrating the security zone created around Karlsplatz. One Saturday in early August 2004, the fourth edition of Free RePublic was finally occupying Nikeplatz itself. With dozens of organizations and sound systems protesting against increasing restrictions and repression in everyday live, it was a great party and a successful politicization of public space.

At that point in time, though, Public Netbase had already made itself the enemy of the entire political establishment, regardless of party affiliation. Clearly, politicians were not amused, and warnings had been expressed earlier. It was also very clear that the repossessing of physical space itself was seen as a most significant offence. Plans were made to get rid of a project that continued to be a public troublemaker. Soon these measures would take effect, and by 2005 Netbase's synthetic terror cell ZKW was only virtual. Looking back some might think that it was all in vain, since seemingly nothing was gained and all hopes had to be buried. But what would have been lost if it wouldn't have been done.

Looking into the future, what is needed are new strategies of resistance that the virtual and the real, the symbolic and the physical. Building on an understanding of practices in the past, new forms of critical interventions beyond artistic gimmicks must be developed. Today more than ever, culture is economically exploited and bio-politically instrumentalized. The idea of a critical public as a prerequisite for democratic societies is widely being abandoned. In the face of this, it is crucial not to fall back into repeating history as a farce and instead to push ahead with lucid analyses that then may lead to future intelligent tactics. The challenges ahead demand cogent processes that enable new and advanced concepts of cultural articulation.

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE,
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC NETBASE

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LINKS

<http://kunst.government-austria.at/verlautbarungen>

<http://basecamp.netbase.org>

<http://Volkstanz.net>

<http://freerepublic.at>

<http://verkehrshoelle.at>

<http://mediencamp.t0.or.at>

<http://www.t0.or.at/nikeground>

<http://s-77ccr.org>

<http://infoterror.t0.or.at>

<http://opencultures.t0.or.at/>

<http://freebitflows.t0.or.at/>

<http://netbase.org/t0/zkw>

Konrad Becker

RECLAIMING SPACES
AND SYMBOLIC CULTURE

The Free Media Camp – Picturing Protest

Patricia Köstring

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

Treitlstraße is a small road marginal to Karlsplatz, a Viennese square and at the same time a symbolic venue for the neglected promise of contemporary cultural diversity in Vienna. In 2003, on Friday, August 29, 20.00 p.m. the "tribunal of the free media" took place at Treitlstraße 4 in Vienna. Treitlstraße 4, a new postal address, had been created by five Viennese institutions.

TACTICAL MEDIA

The "tribunal of the free media" was part of the Free Media Camp program. Actor Hubsi Kramar and three by that time members of the t0 Public Netbase staff gathered as chairman, prosecuted counsel, assigned counsel and expert third-party to judge four politicians and administrators responsible for the media policies the Camp was protesting against. The hour that followed was funny, it was awkward, it was a different way to express all the reproaches the Free Media Camp was standing for. It was a performance, utterly symbolic. But from all the symbolic components the Camp provided during its existence in summer 2003 the tribunal was maybe one of the most effective. Whereas for example the symbolic act of disobedience of the campers that consisted primarily in the occupation of waste land next to the Kunsthalle Wien – project space was foiled with the Kunsthalle affiliating the Camp by listing it on the own website as a crossover project, the tribunal hurt: Christoph Chorcherr, by that time Party Whip of the Green faction in Vienna and considering himself as well as his party as one of the proponents of free media in Vienna, felt personally offended finding himself being in the dock. Wasn't he one of the good guys?

DIGITAL
MEDIA/CULTURE
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CREATING A SPACE FOR CLAIMS

PUBLIC NETBASE

The Free Media Camp existed between June 27, and October 23, in the year 2003. MALMOE (an independent magazine), t0 Public Netbase, IG Kultur Wien (an umbrella organisation of Viennese cultural institutions), Radio Orange 94.0 (independent Viennese radio station) and PUBLIC VOICE Lab (at that time a Vienna based provider) were the carrier organisations for a platform of independent culture and media practice, many other institutions and protagonists of the Viennese cultural community and civil society joined and contributed to the program as well as to the idea of the Free Media Camp transforming the venue into a temporary setting for communication and critique.

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Three containers, on top the media installation "MIR" by Andreas Braitto, a military tent, skull and cross bones announced the land seizure. As well as visitors sitting in garden chairs, listening to discussions or sounds, eating, dancing, talking.

It was a mixture of campaigning, media tactics, discursive lines and party feeling. Though the issues that were raised covered topics being part of a critical cultural urban discourse in general the central focus was on media politics. In round table discussions (in as much as you can speak of a round table within the wasteland), interviews made public, but also symbolic components as a video of some the proponents claiming responsibility and last but not least the "tribunal" mentioned at the beginning politicians and administrators responsible for media politics were addressed. All these activities were made public on the Camp's website: The public should become aware of the fact that the basic conditions for free media – especially self-determination and independence – were under serious threat. And the politicians should become aware that the public was becoming aware.

Five demands were addressed to local and national politics. The aim was that they should build kind of a backbone for a broader Free Media Camp protest idea:

1. The political independence and self-organization of free media must be guaranteed!
2. Politics must ensure the basis of infrastructure and elementary work!
3. Free media must be safeguarded through the creation of appropriate federal and regional media laws.
4. A separate aid program for the financing of participative media work must be established!
5. The potential of the third media sector must be integrated in media political decision-making processes!

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

In 2003, after almost three years of right-wing government, critical cultural projects and the independent media (in fact every project that was not intending to happily join the crowd of cultural entrepreneurs defined as state-of-the-art by the neoliberal cultural politics) suffered from lack of money and lack of political vision about the importance of a heterogeneous and independent cultural sector.

In Vienna, the leading SPÖ together with the Green Party had adopted a 23 topics programme after the local elections in 2001. The chapter "Culture and Media" was headed by a commitment to the promotion of "free media – radio, television and internet" and of "institutions and projects in the field of net culture". Two years later it turned out that nothing more than lip service had been paid. The planned non-commercial community television channel or the plan of ensuring the survival of radio station Orange 94.0? – Complete transmitter breakdown. The negotiations

about a community television channel were stagnating after one year, in the case of the radio station the situation was desolate. It was obvious that a promised back-up was not for free but should be linked to the achievement of benchmarks as well as to certain dramatis personae to be chosen by the responsible politicians.

DISCOURSE

GIVING CRITICAL CULTURE A FACE – FREE MEDIA CAMP METHODS

The Free Media Camp was a localisation of protest: The occupation of a small piece of land, the symbolic act of civil disobedience, the containers as contemporary urban nomad tents, evoking movement and manoeuvrability, music meeting discourse in the so called "sound-politisierung" (political grounding by sound), discourse meeting music at a place where the public space was transformed into a function room: The Free Media Camp tried to refine protest formats that rose in and after February 2000, when thousands marched up against the new right-wing coalition. It tried to regain the idea of a politically aware, creative, expressive multitude, working with collective authorship, connected and operating in an unpredictable way.

NEW ART PRACTICES

The Free Media Camp was visibility: Programmatic topics were displayed on the Camp's webpage. The website provided videos and sound bites of past events and listed those about to come. With graphic design, location design, succinctly worded slogans and its revolutionary attitude the Free Media Camp tried to create a brand that would maybe also work in the future, at other places and within different circumstances: The critical culture movement is fast, mobile, inventive, solidly united, that was the message.

CULTURAL MEDIA

The Free Media Camp was a get-together: Almost 100 events took place at the Free Media Camp, hosted by the carrier organisations as well as dozens of other institutions or theorists, artists, DJs etc. Though being conformed to the neoliberal logic by having to "create" events and attracting as many visitors as possible, the idea was too attractive to be dropped: A bunch of people reclaiming public space and gathering, visibly for those not within the crowd, in order to change the system (or at least criticise it). The site next to Kunsthalle Karlsplatz - project space was not only exposed to the public (one of the arterial roads crossing Karlsplatz was next to it) but allowed contextualising the Free Media Camp within the field of art in public space, understood as experimental set-up dealing with society and politics.

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE
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The Free Media Camp was vigorous: Part of the Camp's strategy was a vigorous policy towards the politicians related with Media agendas. The aim was to get binding statements regarding Viennese media projects.

PUBLIC NETBASE

THE MULTITUDE AND ITS NEEDS

Apart from the five demands it was a variety of concerns that moved and filled the Free Media Camp. And along with these concerns went the desire for many different forms of organisation, some of them being mutually exclusive. Some participants who saw the Camp as a venue for

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the civil society found themselves in a setting not open enough. They felt a lack of continuity regarding discourse fields apart from media politics. Shy ones presumed sectarianism, cautious ones monopolization, overcautious ones started to mull over an actionism led by t0 Public Netbase and the institution's strategically led focus on Karlsplatz. Others found too little effectiveness, not enough of rebellion, out of different reasons, them being either a lack of unpredictability or a lack of occupancy gesture.

"WHAT BECAME OF...?" / THE SUSTAINABILITY-ISSUE

Indeed it took months until the three containers triggered off a reaction by the executive authorities: The eviction of the Free Media Camp was being prepared. The Camp's protagonists decided to withdraw.

Seen from the distance it has to be assumed that none of the five demands could be de facto realised (even though the Camp's protagonists had created more conflictual situations in the second half).

The non-commercial television channel is reality, and certainly the process was pushed forward by the Free Media Camp. But in the developing process the authorities would not accept any other steering committee than their own chosen one. The radio station Orange 94.0 still exists, but would not exist, if the radio's steering committee elected in 2003 hadn't been cooperative.

Public Netbase t0, not generally known as very cooperative, had to end up their activities.

The idea of the local politicians to simply give net culture protagonists some money to distribute it among the community ended up in predictable chaos and unconscionability.

Karlsplatz up to now did not become a symbol for anarchic coexistence. On the contrary: An exclusion zone was installed to ban junkies from the surrounding area of a Karlsplatz based school. The website of Kunsthalle Wien lists "public space karlsplatz" as one of the institution's venues: "Karlsplatz is being captured by Kunsthalle Wien", the Kunsthalle proudly states.

While the Camp as a pressure group failed or due to the logic of politics had to fail, it worked well as an experiment for an ephemere alliance lumping together what the involved institutions are standing for. The Free Media Camp tried to expose the sustainability of an institution, paired with the manoeuvrability of a demonstration.

EPILOGUE

Searching the address Treitlstraße, 4 you will still find it on the virtual roadmap hosted by the city of Vienna, annotated with the add on "Kunstpavillon".

Patricia Köstring

THE FREE MEDIA CAMP
– PICTURING PROTEST

Reflections on Building the European Cultural Backbone

Andreas Broeckmann

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There are more and less heroic moments in politics; there are also the moments when one confuses one's own camouflage outfit for the emperor's new clothes, or worse: Vice versa.

With hindsight, our collective attempts to construct the European Cultural Backbone (ECB) were an important yet, in the end, unsuccessful attempt to build a lobby group for independent media culture in Europe. At a series of meetings and conferences between 1997 and 2000, an international consortium of people representing small media art and media culture institutions from across Europe got together to develop a joint strategy for fostering their political position, locally and nationally as well as in relation to the European Union and its funding structures. Public Netbase was of course part of the core group, as were the Virtual Platform and De Waag from Amsterdam, the V2_Organisation from Rotterdam, Artec in London, m-cult in Helsinki, then a wider circle that included Ljudmila in Ljubljana, REX in Belgrade, E-Lab in Riga, the Ars Electronica Centre in Linz, Mute Magazine in London, and several others. It always looked impressive on paper, and had a truly great potential for formulating alternative positions to the industry-driven conceptions of the mutual relationship between technology, innovation, and culture.

The foundations were laid at the conference "P2P – From Practice to Policy" in Rotterdam and Amsterdam in 1997, during which the "Amsterdam Agenda" was drafted which is still a useful document that puts down the claims for an ICT policy that would draw on the critical innovation potential offered by cultural and artistic approaches to media and technology. Supported at the time by the Arts Council of England and the Dutch and the Austrian Ministries for Culture, an attempt was made to forge a more sustainable programme from this rich material that was, indeed, rooted in the practice of many artists, activists and organisers across Europe.

A more elaborate study would be able to analyse the potentials and failures in this attempt with greater detail. In my short-hand version, the greatest problem was that the entire enterprise rested on the shoulders of only a small number of individuals who already had full-scale precarious jobs on their hands. The institutions that they represented (and often today still work with) were

most often little more than labels for these plus a couple of other people, highly mobile, highly effective not-for-profit cultural agencies with a very narrow capital base and dependent either on uncertain public funding, or on labour-intensive private income from self-initiated projects and commissions. Lots of brave and enthusiastic people on rafts and in rowing boats, rather than tankers or new economy-powered speed boats.

The European Cultural Backbone was, then, also not the only, even though maybe the most ambitious initiative in that fleet of cultural and network projects that connected media art and media culture institutions across the post-1989 Europe. The Syndicate network (1996-2001), for instance, fostered many links between individuals and institutions in East and West Europe, functioning both as a hub for information exchange, and as a periodical meeting place. The Next 5 Minutes conferences in Amsterdam (1993, 1996, 1999) played an important role as a forum for media artists and activists, connecting the European scene to much wider, global networks. Many of the personal relations on which long-term, artistic and political collaborations are built, were forged at such meetings and conferences. A number of temporary associations, like the regional NICE network, or the collaboration of several media art labs under the label ENCART, grew out of the ECB meetings and were able to place successful project applications, both with the Culture 2000 programme of the European Commission, and with other funding bodies. The work for the ECB had, without doubt, trained many of those involved to understand the logic, limitations and loop-holes of the international funding system, as well as the ability to make realistic estimations of the potential success rates of political initiatives.

For many initiatives and institutions in media art and culture the conditions are barely different from what they were ten years ago. The struggle for recognition continues, manifested in the battles for structural funding. Given the fact that Culture politics is still largely defined by the values of the 19th century, and given many media cultural initiatives continue to depend on only a small number of individuals with their passions and idiosyncrasies, it is hardly surprising that few of them have reached a level of stability which allows them to work at the level that is expected from any respectable cultural institution. (Instead, we all pray to Saint Precario, we hope that the next project application will be successful, and that the rearguard administration costs are not going to eat up our own honorarium.)

As modes of cultural works and networking, models like the Dorkbot or Upgrade! event series have proven quite successful in the last years, probably because they have avoided any call to ideological cohesion or even collective action. Rather, like in an open source licensing model, these projects loosely connect distributed local initiatives that share a global brand which proves to have its advantages for the local marketing efforts.

The political agenda of the European Cultural Backbone and its associates still stands, and it will be interesting to see whether it will be upgraded by the Upgrade! generation, or whether, in a while, we will see ECB activists in politically influential positions where they can offer top-down support for what did not really make it as a bottom-up project.

A Look at Vienna's Ruins of Future

Andreas Broeckmann

DISCUSSION

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

A commentary from Berlin.

<http://www.netbase.org/t0/intro/02>

How times change! Ten years ago, we Berliners became pale with envy when we looked at Vienna's urban media culture landscapes – what a boundless ocean of possibilities! Vienna was brimming with media art, creative cranks, and critical media projects. This was a time when public broadcasting took an intrigued glance at free radios, when museums adorned themselves with the unpredictable, and when a greenhouse of art and academia produced the most beautiful wondrous plants and personalities. Ten years later, the last cherry is being picked from the cake as Public Netbase is being closed down, or, at any rate, prevented from continuing its work.

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE:
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC NETBASE

Ever since the mid nineties, Public Netbase was one of the most internationally acclaimed platforms for critical thinking on media and on the development of art in the age of information. It was with pride that those who had introduced the political into the discourses on the "new" digital network media – the Lovinks, Warks, Kurtz's, Fieldings, Holmes, Fullers, Wilsons and Druckerys – remarked that they had presented their ideas at a Public Netbase event. Public Netbase, which had soon become more than a mere provider of network services, had launched the important World-Information.Org in 2000, a project which showed how urgent a hyped media world required a critical, intelligent and persistent enquiry in order for it to be able to shape the information society in a somehow democratic manner. And then there were impressive gestures such as Nikeground or the critical bio performances of Critical Art Ensemble. Vienna's audience was at the heartbeat of global time.

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A project of this kind has to sail near the wind, and it risks passionate friendships as well as enmities. However, anyone interested in clever media policies will retain such structures in

order to be able to keep abreast with new developments that artists do, in fact, often sense and articulate years before the rest of society. Locations are needed where the international discourse can become locally manifest, where experiments with new technological systems can be performed and possible consequences be simulated. The fact that the proud city of Vienna bereaves itself of Public Netbase, and appears to limit the sponsorship of critical media initiatives to project pittances, shows an open refusal to face up to the challenges of a future that will be determined by digital systems and complex circuits.

Who will organize the key conferences on new forms of creative network communication, on copyright legislation, on the "third world" of the information age? Linz's Ars Electronica, always eager to hide its critical potential behind pro-American populism and faked techno euphoria will hardly want to fill this gap.

It would certainly be nice rhetoric if one could say, "Vienna, why don't you risk a look across your borders?" – Unfortunately, even in the Netherlands, the promised land of media culture, all relevant institutions are driving with their hand-brakes fastened, moving in a deeply unsettled society afraid of its present, not its future. In Helsinki, the Nokia Community counts the sold product units instead of thinking about the emerging iPod world. Karlsruhe's ammunitions factory of 1990s installation art re-enacts the burial of the past century every six months, its increasingly monumental exhibitions always have a huge catalogue on top serving as gravestone.

In Britain, once the fourth carrier of hopes of a European media culture, where lottery money has paid for the ruins of a misguided policy, minuscule networks have to laboriously rebuild what years ago was available for much less money.

Well then, Vienna, welcome to the club, go on cherishing and despising your cultural heritage as before, and don't let buzzing computers, camera lenses, or system failures in intelligent buildings bother you. Those with a hunger for machines and an addiction to media, the X-boxers, will tear down the temples of the old soon enough, for in their part of reality, nothing really significant – a stunning adventure in a virtual world, a sound unheard of, an online community of the sincere – has ever received "institutional support", and along with the junk of the past they will also throw overboard this relic of an outdated concept of culture. We will live in cultural ruins of interest only to Asian tourists. Welcome to the club.

Andreas Broeckmann

A LOOK AT VIENNA'S
RUINS OF FUTURE

wahlkabine.at

An Online Orientation Tool Awakens a New Interest in Politics

Karin Liebhart

Martin Wassermair

<http://wahlkabine.at>

In the fall of 2002, Austria was seized by a "Wahlkabine (election booth) fever". Links and references to Wahlkabine were omnipresent: On the many sites that encouraged first-time voters to make use of their right, in link collections provided by NGOs and civil society groups – and even in the electronic newsletter of a diabetes self-help group and a tax accountant's customer information mailings. There was a young woman from Vorarlberg state who told a life TV audience that her voting preference at the Austrian general election on 24 November, 2002, had been decisively influenced by Wahlkabine.

In the subsequent years, wahlkabine.at was used in eight regional and one further national election, while a non-election variant was offered during the Austrian EU presidency in the first half of 2006. As of now, this political orientation tool has been used a total 1.4 million times, with 40 million questions answered and accessed several times this number, making Wahlkabine Europe's most popular online tool of its kind. Nevertheless, the Austrian media and Austrian politics fell short of fully acknowledging this expression of citizens' interest in political content and failed to promote it, in spite of the fact that a political orientation tool of this type is capable of fostering a broad public interest in political questions and issues, and of promoting political debates. This becomes readily evident if a closer look at the history and background of the project is taken.

Only a few days after the first Schüssel government went out of office in the fall of 2002, the Vienna-based Institute for New Culture Technologies (better known as Public Netbase) decided to contribute to the pre-election debates with an online project. Spontaneous as this decision was, it was the product of solid motivations. One of the most important insights gained in many years of work on the interface between art/culture and information and communication technologies concerned the increasing commercialization of the Internet, which led to a more sober assessment of its emancipatory political potential. Even though at this time surfing the Net and sending emails had become common in Austrian homes, the quality of content production remained inferior. In fact, it was the online media in particular that went along with the increasing populist and personality-oriented tendencies in politics.

Against this background it became a priority to initiate a project that would allow a playful engagement with the political content represented by the various political parties, and would enable voters to identify their own political affinities. The initial challenge faced by a voting indicator tool of this type in Austria consisted in finding suitable partner organizations that would ensure an extensive reach as well as a solid implementation, combining political science expertise with software programming. In the end, *wahlkabine.at* was realized by Public Netbase in cooperation with the Gesellschaft für Politische Aufklärung, a NGO whose goal is the promotion of democracy in Austrian society, as well as the Austrian Society for Political Science, and the Department of Civic Education at the Center for Distance Learning. After only a few days, Konrad Becker, head of Public Netbase, arrived at this temporary conclusion: "The cooperation among independent civil society institutions has proved itself to be socially effective, and will continue to be a foremost example of cooperation within a democratic information society" (Press release, 23 October, 2002).

From the very beginning, the *wahlkabine.at* project sought to reach a large audience and play an enlightening role in civic education. The 26 questions it contained not only highlighted political content that easily gets lost in increasingly noisy information environments – listing political issues also facilitated reflections as to which positions the various political parties are actually occupied. Feedback provided to the editorial team indicated that in a number of users, the tool led to a heightened awareness of the actual content of political statements, and indeed, of any lack of clarity in political positions.

One feature that merits highlighting is a link on the start page of *wahlkabine.at* allowing interactive contact with the organizers. Thousands of users made use of this possibility, many of them acknowledging the support the tool had provided in their arriving at an electoral decision. In many instances, users voiced their dissatisfaction with a political life increasingly out of touch with the people, and with the severe difficulties of orientation within the political system. Clearly, there appears to be an increasing need of orientation – a tendency further confirmed in feedback provided by families indicating that *wahlkabine.at* had provided an important lead for discussions on society and political views between parents and children.

Karin Liebhart
Martin Wassermann
WAHLKABINE.AT

One increasingly important indicator of the democratic quality of a society is privacy protection. Even if the general awareness of the importance of privacy leaves much to be desired, there seems to be a gradual awakening in some. After 9/11 many restrictions on privacy were imposed by governments, giving rise to a critical movement that refuses to sacrifice the most vital rights of the digital information age to a supposed fight against international terrorism.

It comes as no surprise, then, that the use of collected user data has been a prominent question in wahlkabine.at – a question addressed in many different ways. Although the start page of wahlkabine.at contains a well visible statement assuring users that none of their data will be forwarded to third parties, skepticism seems to have won the upper hand in some. As one university worker wrote: "I asked myself whether wahlkabine.at might not be a concealed micro-census, and my fear is fueled by your assurances that 'no data will be forwarded to third parties'. Please let me have a clarification, as my suspicions concerning the misuse of the Internet are only getting worse, and I am rather reluctant to make use of your service". In fact, none of the results and IP addresses (through which computers and servers could be identified) of any of the users were stored. Given the fact that election campaigns are currently customized around individuals' personal data, it is not surprising that an independent political online orientation tool beyond the reach of political parties generates nervousness. With this in mind, a net culture institution such as Public Netbase, an uncompromising defender of privacy rights, and all the other collaborating civil society and academic organizations, consider the protection of these rights as fundamental.

On the other hand, all the data concerning programming and computation are entirely open: There is full information on the project's goals, its processes and methods, the weightings applied; The parties' positions are presented in brief summaries. From the very beginning, the project has been committed to the open source principle, according to which the human-readable source code has to be freely accessible. This opens the possibility to view the code, to modify and develop it, and to create a form of cooperation directed primarily against the mechanisms of exclusion at work in proprietary programs (where code is considered "intellectual property" and zealously protected). In the case of wahlkabine.at, it is therefore not surprising that an enthusiastic user created an almost identical variant for a popular handheld device, distributing it widely through his homepage.

Understanding new information and communication technologies and their use in political contexts should not adopt a restrictive perspective. This is why Saskia Sassen, in her foreword to *Politik der Infosphäre* (published 2002), warns readers against focusing exclusively on the effects of new ICTs on existing structures and institutions: New ICTs "should be understood as constitutive factors of new social relationships and institutional structures, as an emerging system of order. Whoever is interested in issues of democratic participation and responsibility needs to go beyond technological performance, and effects on existing realities, and needs to look at the qualities of this emerging system of order".

However great the success of wahlkabine.at in the 2002 pre-election period, its function and significance need to be properly assessed. The guiding idea was to create an online tool capable of awakening an interest in political content, to provide an orientation tool that makes political positions visible, and to promote reflection and debate. wahlkabine.at is not a suitable tool to examine political commitments or party memberships. Yet this is precisely the point where the project met with the suspicion of political parties. In the most severe instances, there were threats of funding cuts and litigation – clearly, attempts of censoring a tool committed to maintaining its independence vis-à-vis political interest groups. As Brian Holmes concludes: "The growing sophistication and depth of its investigations and projects was apparently perceived as a threat by municipal politicians and funding officials, unable to comprehend the urgency of supporting a critical civil society at a time when control drives are reappearing everywhere, with all their atavistic force".

This contribution is a revised and abridged version of "wahlkabine.at. Eine Online Wahlhilfe erweckt neues Interesse an Politik", contained in Sieglinde K. Rosenberger, Gilg Seeber: Kopf an Kopf. Meinungsforschung im Medienwahlkampf, Czernin Verlag, Wien (2003).

The Past – A Servant of the Future

Katharina Wegan

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE:
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC NETBASE

WORLD
INFORMATION OF

The days of "liberation" (27 April 1945) and "freedom" (15 May 1955) constitute benchmarks in the Austrian calendar of commemorative events. These dates symbolize the rebirth of both democracy and the Austrian state itself. Ever since 1955, Austrian powers of interpretation have exploited the memory of this "double foundation" of the Second Republic. One of the first aims was to generate an Austrian identity by assuring Austria's position as an independent and neutral state, and by convincing those Austrians who lacked trust in it (in particular in neutrality, which was criticized by its opponents as too high a price for freedom) that it was sound policy.

A sense of togetherness, however, never exists as a given emotion, but is constructed by means of strategies of imagination; Symbols and political "liturgies" (Claude Rivière, *Les Liturgies Politiques*, 1988) make "the imaginary unseen bonds visible and, thus, politically effective". (Peter Berghoff, *Der Tod des politischen Kollektivs*, 1997, p. 16). Within the scope of historical-political "stagings", central events are re-enacted by returning to meaningful historical sites and activating their "sacral" aura. In such "repetitions" of historical events, new meanings are generated again and again – matching the new context every time – and at the same time practicing and actualizing present encodings by virtue of this iteration. So commemoration ceremonies mostly serve to construct and strengthen the sense of togetherness and to legitimize current politics.

Austria's liberation and State Treaty anniversaries have consistently presented a welcome opportunity to legitimize the internal and external politics of the time. Once the Austrian State Treaty had been signed, the reasons for "liberation", "occupation" and "freedom" were willingly omitted. The emphasis has been put on the event that reestablished Austria's sovereignty and its consequences. The "hour one" of the Second Republic eclipsed even the "zero hour" of 1945 and

the previous seven to ten years to such an extent that it formed the basis of Austrian national identity. The narrative followed the "typical" rhetoric of political speeches of the postwar period. The privations of the civilian population and the commitment of the "Austrian people" in the years of reconstruction after 1945 formed a paraphrase of the victim thesis. In general, however, the reconstruction and the industriousness of Austrians after 1955, as well as Austrian neutrality and its mediation between East and West, dominated. At the same time, politicians' efforts after 1945 to get a State Treaty were assimilated with the myth of the "struggle for freedom" from 1938-1945 and interpreted as a contribution to Austria's liberation which the Allies had called for in the Moscow Declaration. With the help of such "inventions of tradition" (Eric Hobsbawm), the present, in which the population fully supported the desire of the politicians for state sovereignty, was positively represented and projected onto the National Socialist past. This narration led down the path of forgetfulness (especially concerning the involvement of Austrians in National Socialism) to a self-assigned victim status that allowed the self-portrait of an industrious and determined nation, which of its own accord had built up a new, peaceful country and now had taken its place in the community of nations recognized by the world powers.

This founding myth eroded in the 1980s and 1990s with the debate on Kurt Waldheim's service in the Wehrmacht, with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the collapse of the Soviet Union and Austria's accession to the European Community/Union. After the United Nations had designated 27 January as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, no official ceremony for the liberation of Auschwitz took place in Austria in 2006, even though it was then holding EU presidency. Austria celebrated Mozart's 250th birthday instead and chose this date for the conference "Sound of Europe", discussing "fundamental questions as to the future of Europe, European values, identity and culture", as one could read on the official internet-site for Austria's EU-presidency (www.eu2006.at). Actually, 27 January is a reminder of the most radical antithesis to the values of democracy and human rights upon which the European Union is based. Thus, the link between Mozart's birthday and the conference discussing European values, identity, and culture seemed rather astonishing.

Despite of various debates on the Nazi past, which flared up in 2005 the multiple official commemorative activities, appeared like a huge show of Austria's "success story" – composed of historical elements like arbitrarily applicable set pieces. In this way, 15 May 2005, the 50th anniversary of the State Treaty, was turned in folklore fair with music of the last five decades, and talks with contemporary witnesses, took place in the park of Belvedere Palace, climaxing in a reenactment of the famous balcony scene – in some kind of a happy end of a didactic play: Looking backwards in order to learn from history how to cope with the future. The past is of no consequence as long as it does not provide bad examples for the future. History was been pushed aside, reduced to a legitimizing function. Therefore, it has not been important to reach a consensus about the sore spots of the past.

Period After – A Review

Media and Culture, Integration and Political Life in Southeast Europe

Branka Ćurčić

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

"Period After" is an independent project started by Public Netbase under the lead management and main responsibility of Micz Flor, German networker and media activist, and with a range of loose collaborators and authors. The project was initiated as a reaction to NATO intervention at that time in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia) in 1999. Although it turned out to be a short-lived project, "Period After" was conceived as an initiative "focusing on the long term development in the Balkan region, related to media, contemporary culture and the potential and real consequences of the ongoing crisis. Issues of multi-ethnic collaboration and integration are central to Period After. It will support and collaborate with independent voices and organizations across the Balkan region who are momentarily under severe pressure caused by propaganda, shortages and disintegration of their social and material environment and the consequences of the humanitarian catastrophe of the air-strikes". The project's web site (<http://periodafter.t0.or.at>) gathered different kinds of postings, articles, interviews, legal analyses, statements, personal diaries, which all had, so to say, two aims: Depicting social, political, cultural and media scene in Serbia which was not easily accessible to the international audience and empowering experts and ordinary citizens in this situation by means of new media tools and the internet. The web site also contains a call for contribution and call for help with translations, since this platform used to be published in three different languages: Serbian, English and German. Soon after, this initiative was accompanied by a Mailinglist, which was "dealing with diverse topics regarding the period after the Kosovo conflict". The list encouraged open, non moderated discussion, collected opinions and funneled suggestions for the future development in South Eastern Europe. Within the project, streaming media from Belgrade have been organized as well, which were broadcasted back through ORF channel. Besides "virtual" support, the project gave a hand to many artists

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and cultural practitioners from Serbia "in flesh", offering them conditions and resources to continue their work in Vienna, in Public Netbase offices.

Although there have been ambivalent opinions about NATO bombardment of Serbia in 1999, what could be said almost 10 years afterwards is that this never-resolved-crisis has left many doubts in the global perspective on the problem, where many standpoints are made on the basis of "depoliticized human rights". As Žižek said, NATO intervention has been cloaked and justified exclusively in the depoliticized language of universal human rights, meaning that men and women are no longer political subjects, but helpless victims, robbed of all political identity and reduced to their naked suffering, which he considers to be NATO's construct. Therefore, "the intervention" has been justified, and the men and women of Kosovo were victimized, while those of Serbia were called to account for approving the Milošević regime or not opposing it strongly enough. Of course, such a generalization shouldn't be possible and, although it raises the question of valid political struggle today, distinctions should be made in favor of those who at that time in Serbia and the Balkan region tried to introspect global and local circumstances and to oppose both international interventionism and internal violent nationalism, i.e. to re-politicize the problem of that conflict.

Above all, the project "Period After" made an impossible demand for free media and objective reporting of the events during the crisis in Serbia and the Balkan region. It witnessed a clash between the traditional media controlled by the oppressing Serbian regime and free and independent media which became demonized, prosecuted and closed. On the other hand, already established monopoly concerning the internet providers services in Serbia diminished the promise of the political potential for freedom over the internet as a mean of unlimited communication, which has already at that time been globally revealed. Still, the significance of such a project could be seen in an attempt to regain and locate still existing niches in on-line communication channels, which could connect people, reconstruct stories and create dispositions for potential small-scale reintegration processes outside of representational strategies of dominant political and media regimes.

Branka Ćurčić

PERIOD AFTER – A REVIEW

Public Netbase

Let it RIP!

Obituary of an Endless Myth: Public Netbase, 1994-2006

Brian Holmes

<http://www.netbase.org/t0/intro/04/?preflang=en>

Creating the truth of our post-democratic societies is a deceptively simple affair. A thousand techniques lie ready at hand. Send out a mail-barrage of glossy brochures that will land on every coffee-table. Arrange for a headline in a best-selling local paper. Pre-empt a television newscast during prime digestion time. Stage an astonishing event on a public square. Organize an objective opinion poll proving the popularity of whatever fact you've just invented. Every major corporation or political party does such things at a snap of the fingers.

The American publicist Edward L. Bernays – who was born in old Vienna – put it like this: "The engineer of consent must create news... The imaginatively managed event can compete successfully with other events for attention. Newsworthy events, involving people, usually do not happen by accident. They are planned deliberately to accomplish a purpose, to influence our ideas and actions".

Bernays sought to quell any fears about such influence. "Freedom of expression and its democratic corollary, a free press, have tacitly expanded our Bill of Rights to include the right of persuasion." These expanded rights were a result of technological advances: "All these media provide open doors to the public mind. Any one of us through these media may influence the attitudes and actions of our fellow citizens". Of course there's just one condition: You must somehow obtain the millions of dollars that are required to get your favorite message through that wide-open door.

Enter the Institute for New Culture Technology/t0 – better known by the name of its physical installation, Public Netbase.

The project was launched by Konrad Becker and Francisco de Sousa-Webber in 1994, in a bit of virtual space on the server of the General Hospital. Public Netbase soon became an internet-access provider in its own right, but also a workshop organizer and exhibition/conference venue, offering a casual "E-scape Lounge" for all kinds of reading and relaxing people. It shared a location with the Depot discussion group before opening a full-fledged media lab at the still-unreconstructed Museumsquartier in 1997. Its aim was to create alternative culture, critical analysis and unpredictable urban happenings, by experimenting with networked media-machines. After a few years of development, the Netbase would be able to send an image into every living room, to replace the daily paper as an information source, to rival with the TV, to catalyze events in the city, to reveal shocking facts on outdoor screens and even to orchestrate public opinion polls. All of this, not through the expenditure of huge amounts of cash, but through the direct cooperation of inventive people. As though the raging Leviathan of modern mass communications could still be tamed by mischievous Lilliputians. This was the tantalizing illusion – perhaps influenced by the goals of one of Konrad Becker's more notorious performance-pieces, entitled "Resocializing the Devil".

WORLDS OF OPPORTUNITY

Not everyday do you get the chance to squat a brand-new global infrastructure, designed and perfected by the military-infotainment complex of the planet's sole remaining superpower. Still it's strange how few were there to seize the occasion. By filling a website with a free text-library, and a physical location with radical artists and thinkers attracted by the lack of bureaucratic control, Public Netbase became a north star or magnetic pole in the still-uncharted realms of networked culture.

The American writer Peter Lamborn Wilson a.k.a. Hakim Bey, author of the "Temporary Autonomous Zone", was there to inaugurate the media-space in 1997. Luther Blissett, the Italian activist movement that launched a bewildering series of media hoaxes all "signed" by an obscure English football player, was reincarnated at the Netbase for the Intergalactic Conference of the Association of Autonomous Astronauts. The Critical Art Ensemble carried out their genexploitation project Fleshmachine. Group exhibitions like Robotronika, Synworld or Interface Explorer opened pathways through the latest technical and artistic possibilities, while conferences and performance events like Infobody Attack, Information Terror (including a container-module near the Statsoper) and Sex, Lies and the internet took up questions around the clashes between freedom and control in the emerging social dreamscape of the networks. All that culminated in the exhibition and conference series entitled World-Information, which had various incarnations in Brussels, Vienna, Amsterdam, London, Berlin, Munich, Helsinki, Novi Sad, Belgrade and finally Bangalore. Serious data mining was giving rise to subversive and satirical cultural forms. The specialty of the Netbase could be described as "the infosculture of dissident mythologies".

Brian Holmes

LET IT RIPI

On the international scene, Public Netbase will be remembered for some of its later conferences, like "Dark Markets: Infopolitics, Electronic Media and Democracy in Times of Crisis", or "Open Cultures: Free flows of Information and the Politics of the Commons" – and perhaps best of all, for the amazing exhibition stunts it staged on the Karlsplatz. One of the masterpieces of tactical media, Nikeground – Rethinking Space, carried out with the Italian group 0100101110101101.ORG, involved the semi-legal installation of a bright red, split-level container weighing several tons, with displays and information panels revealing the uncannily plausible hoax of corporate plans to rebrand entire urban districts and replace traditional monuments with brutally simplified logos exploded to massive scale. System-77 Civil Counter-Reconnaissance, done in collaboration with the Slovene artist Marko Peljhan, was a tent-like structure sporting a high-performance communication antenna and filled inside with plans and mock-ups of miniaturized, camera-equipped drone aircraft to be used by civilians for counter-surveillance of the formidable snooping arsenals now trained on all of us by the secret services and even the local police. S-77 CCR featured footage of police actions from the anti-Haider protests of the year 2000, injecting a strictly Viennese reference into these complex projects driven by sophisticated analysis of world-wide trends. But what most people from abroad will never have realized it that the Karlsplatz itself was the theater of a largely tacit conflict over what kind of city people want to live in.

A large open space on the edge of the tourist-flooded first district, the Karlsplatz was perceived by city managers as a zone of drug-addiction and deviant behavior. Early plans involved transforming it into a bizarre sort of surveillance park that would literally be called "Kontrolplatz". Finally the underlying intention was cloaked in acceptable guise and the idea of "Kunstplatz" emerged. When artists and alternative media-makers stage occupations of a public space – as they did with the Free Media Camp on the Karlsplatz, with events every night from June to October 2003 – what is at stake are the real meanings of the word "art", and the possibility to have ideas and expressions of your own in a society that tries very seriously, with the use of very considerable technical means, to "engineer the consent" of its unwitting citizens.

GOING OUT KICKING

The Netbase is dead, and you're reading its obituary. The reasons for its disappearance have everything to do with the continuing need for critique in a networked, future-oriented technological society that has never managed to rid itself of any of its old demons.

Public Netbase was celebrated by everyone in the social-democratic cultural establishment of Austria during the year 2000, when it staged campaign after campaign against the far-right Freedom Party government, lent logistic, communicational and aesthetic support to the protests, and staged roundtable conferences like "Der gläserne Mensch: Grundrechte im Informationszeitalter", held under the auspices of the fake-official site, <http://government-austria.at>. But in 2001 the same Public Netbase was considered persona non grata at the remodeled Museumsquartier (which now resembles a banking complex for pictures). The growing sophistication and depth of

its investigations and projects – including the online election-polling tool www.wahlkabine.at, invented in collaboration with well known political scientists – was apparently perceived as a threat by municipal politicians and funding officials, unable to comprehend the urgency of supporting a critical civil society at a time when control drives are reappearing everywhere, with all their atavistic force. Faced with a project that was overspilling conventional aesthetic and intellectual limits, the establishment treated it exactly as they have traditionally treated the avant-garde – by fearing and despising it, and forcing it back to non-existence for want of the most minimal comprehension and support.

Public Netbase could have become a neutral and innocuous cultural institution like hundreds of others, biting its tongue in order to keep the funding-streams flowing. But the people who worked on its dissident imaginaries preferred to take the mythical status of an exemplary counter-institution, and to refuse the resignation of a failed adventure that lives on after its own death, just as the ordinary vampires do. True to the project's origins on a hospital server, they wanted to peel away the soft gauze and bandages from a media-battered society's eyes – to tear the veil of aesthetic complacency that covers up the hardware of engineered consent.

Let it rip!

Brian Holmes

LET IT RIP!

Building a Netbase from Scratch

Francisco de Sousa Webber

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

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In 1993 Der Spiegel reported that status-conscious hipsters were very proud of their "email-adresses", distinguished by the funny-looking teletype-character "@".

At about the same time, an obscure magazine aptly named Wired (pun intended) had started to hyperventilate about all things digital. Visionaries were gloating over the prediction that the internet, or "World-Wide-Web", would soon be marginalizing mainstream media, phone companies and other information monopolists.

Konrad and I were among those enthusiasts and most certainly no strangers to marginalization, although to the receiving end. To us it was clear that we could hijack the new medium, wire the subculture, give the underground a voice, put avant-garde theory on massive rotation and marginalize back! Fortunately, Konrad and I were well prepared, for this was the second time we were hit by a computer revolution.

In the early 80s, when I was coming of age tinkering with transistors, synthesizers and microcomputers, Konrad and I formed a productive partnership as early and enthusiastic adopters of the then new technology. Like the internet in 1993, microcomputers evoked more sympathy than awe. LEDs flashed, buzzers chirped and UFOs zapped – "so what?" asked superficial observers. But superficial observer I was not, and my fascination with the material found an interesting application: experimental music, artistic expression, artificial life... And whenever I ran out of technical problems or interesting uses, Konrad (then an achieved avant-garde musician and

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artist) stepped in and supplied them in abundance. For me, your prototypical computer-kid of "the Atari generation", the 80s were interesting times, and I was always happy to buy, trade, borrow, improve, explore and fry all sorts of amps, synthesizers, graphic cards, modems and computers – from the seminal C-64 over the insanely advanced Amiga to the obscure DAI.

Patience and ingenuity were not only key-virtues when it came to making those machines work, but also for procurement of equipment if you were poor. Our clique of geeks and artists and hybrids thereof discovered that you could trade technical proficiency and exposure for hardware if you proposed interesting projects to vendors and manufacturers.

At times Konrad and I traveled the world to show off orchestras of chips chiming the tune of the square-root of five or playing drum-sequences on animal furs stretched over PVC sewer-pipes (real ear-candy!).

This decade-long apprenticeship of thrift and improvisation and rooting in international art and art theory circuits were instrumental for the success of "The Public Netbase".

In the late 1980s and early 90s I put my computer-skills to good use at the AKH, the General Hospital in Vienna. I aimed to become a medical doctor, i.e. fix up and trouble-shoot the human body. While being a student, I started out as a cleaning droid for test-tubes at the AKH and worked myself into the hospital's IT-department where I computerized the management of the AKH's renal transplant waiting list with a database, for example. Most of the little money I earned, I invested into extra electronics for my Amiga and virtual reality experiments.

A logical intersection of medicine, art and the Amiga was "mind-machines". In the early 90s we made a visualization of bio-rhythms synced to psychoactive sound, what made some visitors at the "Tranceformer" presentations pretty high. Another great success was "Brain-Vader", an EEG-controlled Artificial Life-simulator. Since EEGs were expensive and I was poor, I built my own EEG from scratch.

However, the most interesting hardware at the AKH was an "internet-server" named kernighan. Like the entire internet at that time, kernighan was used as a tool for connecting scientists (typically rocket scientists) and serving their theses over FTP. Just as with the early toy-computers of the 80s, operation was tricky, instructions had to be read skeptically and tolerance against frustration had to be high. Probably for this reason, there was little competition for the machine, and I got inofficial permission to use kernighan for dissemination of all sorts of pamphlets on culture, society, new media and technology. The WWW was virtually unknown outside the CERN. The ruling tools were mailing lists, FTP-download and USENET, all text-based in its monochrome glory and collectively known as "The Internet". Then, in 1993, a web-server was installed on trusty old kernighan. Konrad and I were awed by the implications. Unlike the text-based, finicky sys-op-only world of "The Net", the WWW was virtual! visual! interactive! hyperlinked! fun! easy! Just the right thing to empower the people and find kindred spirits around the globe!

Francisco de Sousa Webber

BUILDING A NETBASE
FROM SCRATCH

We were lucky that nobody found a use for the idly running web-server at the AKH, not even the system admins who had installed it under the pretext that it could serve "telemedicine" purposes. AKH officials turned a blind eye when Konrad and I tacitly were making kernighan the home for all sorts of art-theoretical manifestos, gender-issues in the age of cyborgs, hyperlinks to virtual museums and the like. I put my own computer-games and source-code for artificial life on an FTP-server and invited the public to contribute their own material. All those artifacts quickly found an enthusiastic international audience. Konrad and I fed the news on free hosting opportunities for digital art and experiments quickly into our global network of friends and contacts, and soon trusty old kernighan's bandwidth was disseminating pioneering new media uses, forum-dialogs on culture-critical issues and subversive pamphlets. Kernighan gave artists, experimenters and theoreticians outside the "white cube" a voice, a platform and, last but not least, each other. The only people who started to frown upon this development were kernighan's system administrators. By far, most of the AKH's bandwidth utilization was "data" entirely unrelated to the hospital's agenda. There simply was too much stuff going on for my benevolent colleagues to hide from their bosses. However, the sheer depth, breadth, reach and seriousness of that stuff gave us a lot of leverage when we looked around for other ways to support it.

TACTICAL MEDIA

Our proposal for "Public Netbase" was simple. We wanted to give web access to a large audience, in particular artists and younger people, and the public in general. We would educate anyone interested in the web, from organizing workshops for hands-on instruction to hosting week-long festivals sporting international multimedia artists, theorists and pioneers. All we needed was a location, some computers and modest amounts of money. We could point to our success with kernighan, our vibrant community, our own artistic achievements and our technical and operative prowess. If you think it was easy to convince prospects that we were well-suited for preparing The People for the 21st century, think again. Eventually, however, we got noticed by Stella Rollig, the curator of the Depot, a place for art-discourse in Vienna's high profile Museumsquartier (MQ). Stella Rollig liked our work and gave green light for us moving into rooms on the MQ's premises (former stables for the Emperor's horses). My end of the deal was to provide time and skill for the MQ's IT infrastructure and include its institutions in our plan for wiring and enlightening the people. Konrad and I soon we were running the MQ's LAN, various servers, and offered public web-terminals for Netbase users. We held weekly web-workshops and classes for students, government institutions, provided dial-up service and web-space for a dollar a month and let artists and experimentors use our two manufacturer-donated Silicon Graphics Indy workstations, one of them doubling as The Webserver, or, kernighan's successor at Public Netbase.

PUBLIC NETBASE

Soon Stella Rollig's Depot was teeming with cypher-punks, thrasher-dudes, sys-admins, web-heads, digital pamphleteers, computer graphic artists, virtual reality theorists and hackers – some of which had traveled for thousands of miles to meet us and check out our system. And due to our tradition with dissent, spectacles and guerilla humor, Public Netbase had a lot of press, and the reactions and reviews of the cultural establishment were "varied". To our surprise, a comparably innocent event – "Sex, Lies and the Internet" – resulted in litigation over years with Austria's ostracized right-wing FPÖ party and Jörg Haider, its leader. At its peak, Public Netbase was

the Internet Service Provider for thousands of people, a well-entrenched think-tank for a large variety of government institutions, its website(s) had millions of visits a year, we were quoted and invited by international art institutions and festivals, and it was a lot of fun, to boot.

Today, in 2008, two years after the end of Netbase, there is no doubt that the web is more than a short-lived fad for busy-bodies and evil pornographers, as the wishful thinking of the mainstream media claimed when Public Netbase was established. The web has grown up and permeated virtually all nooks and crannies of society, often more than some people can handle. Web-access and -exposure is not a privilege anymore, as it was in the 90s. However, the fight for being heard, seen and taken seriously will continue, and also who is allowed to know what. In fact, control of bits for the people and about the people will become one of the defining struggles of the 21st century. Public Netbase was just a very early player, but this agenda and aims will hopefully never run out of fashion.

Francisco de Sousa Webber

BUILDING A NETBASE
FROM SCRATCH

Public Netbase. A Political Controversy

Konrad Becker
Martin Wassermair

<http://www.netbase.org/t0/intro/03>

PUBLIC NETBASE

In January 2006, the City of Vienna cut all funding for the Institute for New Culture Technologies/t0, forcing the final closure of the successful media culture institution Public Netbase, along with the discontinuation of all international research activities and projects. The organization also lost all its technical, archiving and event facilities, marking the end of a 12-year of history rich with conflicts and cultural disputes.

From its beginnings in early 1994, when Public Netbase shared its location with the theory platform Depot, the organization's work was marked by critical cultural practice, reflecting an emancipatory understanding of new media use beyond the established norms. Nevertheless Netbase's early work met with a strong interest on the part of artists and cultural producers, familiarizing them with new information and communication technologies and providing free

internet access. Introductory workshops and supporting talks were in great demand, and soon the t0 online platform reached 1000 users. Page hits, in particular, had reached an impressive level, and Public Netbase became one of the earliest culture servers of worldwide standing.

On this basis it became possible to move into new facilities in the former trade fair center Messepalast (today's Museumsquartier), adding life to what was then a derelict complex of buildings. During this time, Public Netbase became a highly valued partner cooperating with other institutions residing in the Museumsquartier. Public Netbase's program of events (including Flesh Machine and Intergalactic Conference) appealed to a varied audience that shaped the project's socio-cultural orientation.

The conflicts that followed must be considered within the context of right wing radical Jörg Haider's Freedom Party (FPÖ), whose cultural campaigns targeted critical voices in contemporary art, hitting Public Netbase in 1998. The FPÖ's attention was aroused by a series of events on feminist perspectives on internet censorship and pornography. The event title "sex.net. Sex, Lies and the Internet" provided the FPÖ with a pretext to slander and criminalize Public Netbase's successful work in leaflets, TV shows, press conferences and parliamentary debates, making intentional use of the Nazi concept of "degenerate art". The conflict ended in a court ruling against Jörg Haider, who, represented by the later Minister of Justice Dieter Böhmdorfer, was barred from repeating his accusations under threat of punishment.

In the meantime project work continued, resulting in exhibitions, conferences and interventions such as Robotronika and Information Terror. In 1998, Period After was launched as a cooperative project of civil society media during the war in former Yugoslavia, providing many media activists of the affected regions with resources and a work base in Vienna.

In 1999 first signals of an imminent shift to the right became apparent when the Museumsquartier was put under new management. Up until that point, cooperation between resident institutions and groups on the one hand, and the management of the Museumsquartier project carrier company on the other hand, had largely been of a cooperative nature, generating a climate beneficial to artistic and cultural diversity.

Jörg Haider's success in the 1999 general elections marked the starting point of a development that put a sudden end to the hopes that Museumsquartier had inspired. Around the turn of 1999/2000, followed by the establishment of a new government, it became clear that any future involvement in the Museumsquartier on the part of Public Netbase would be without foundation. Critical groups were harassed, received insecure lease contracts and were even criminalized in order to be evicted them from the Museumsquartier.

These developments solidified into a permanent feature of the new government's policies. The cultural policies designed by the People's Party (ÖVP) were intended to remove critical and disagreeable projects. Providing technological and communication facilities to an anti-governmental

Konrad Becker
Martin Wassermair

PUBLIC NETBASE:
A POLITICAL CONTROVERSY

protest movement referred to as the "internet generation" by the ÖVP Chancellor, Public Netbase turned into a priority target. Before finally slashing all federal funding, the government had spent several months harassing the group with futile fiscal and financial audits, and withdrawing funds that had already been committed as part of the Brussels 2000 culture capital programming.

Against this background, the City of Vienna was prepared to step in, with the Finance Councilor providing the funding required for preventing a cancellation of the EU project. However, the city's culture department, controlled by the ÖVP and falling in line with the right-wing positions of the conservative Federal Government, refused to disburse the money and instead extended its anti-cultural practices of defamation to the capital's cultural policies. In the end, the funds had to be paid through the youth and education department (controlled by the Social Democrats).

Following a wave of strong international protests, the City of Vienna agreed to act as a mediator in order to secure Public Netbase's continued presence in the Museumsquartier. However, only 10 months later this agreement was violated, with no resistance whatsoever on the part of the Culture Councilor, leading to a permanence of make-shift rooming arrangements. At the same many time reservations regarding the Museumsquartier turned out right and it did become a location of a culture of consumption and spectacle.

As a consequence, the demand for a future-oriented development of art and culture returned to the agenda. According to the city's Mayor, Karlsplatz, a large square in the center of Vienna, was supposed to be converted into an art space, providing a counterweight to the right-wing national government's representative culturalism. Moreover, the program of the City Government, drafted by the SPÖ and the Green Party, promised substantial efforts in the culture and media fields.

In the summer of 2003, protests became necessary in order to remind the City of its entirely unfinished agenda. The Mediacamp set up on Karlsplatz, as well as the Free RePublic political sound events generated wide support for these demands. Karlsplatz then also became a suitable location for art interventions such as Nikeground, System-77CCR, and "Bürgerinitiative Öffnet den Karlsplatz" ("citizens for an open Karlsplatz").

In fact, the City Government had already offered Public Netbase a new space at Karlsplatz as early as 2002, when plans for the remodeling of the square's subway stations were designed. However, the previous critical activities had prompted the City to reduce its funding for 2003/2004, resulting in a severe predicament as well as complicating the planning for a new location, and leading to a first curtailing of Public Netbase's activities and services.

The Culture Councilor's refusal to secure the foundations for ongoing international project work and to disburse committed co-sponsorships forced Public Netbase to discontinue ISP services for thousands of art and culture workers, a move that also affected Public Netbase's own programming of workshops, access promotion and services to the public. The reduced portfolio

of activities also found its expression in a removal into yet smaller facilities. This forced reduction of services was reflected in a name change – Public Netbase became Netbase.

At the beginning of 2006, only a few months after the inauguration of a newly restored location and the launch of a widely acclaimed project in Bangalore (India), Public Netbase was told that all funding from the City Government's culture department would be withdrawn for good.

Konrad Becker
Martin Wassermair

PUBLIC NETBASE.
A POLITICAL CONTROVERSY

Opposing Nest Culture: The Political Conflicts of Public Netbase, 1994-2006

Katharina Ludwig

NEW ART PRACTICES

<http://www.netbase.org/t0/intro/05/?preflang=en>

In early 2006, after 12 years of internationally successful work, the Vienna-based internet group Public Netbase closed its doors for good. The complete withdrawal of all funding by the City of Vienna meant that Public Netbase, whose work had provided an interface between art, science, new media, and civic education, had to completely abandon a program that had already stripped in previous rounds of cuts. Offering a wide range of activities and services, Public Netbase was leading the way in exchanges and debates around the internet understood as a culture technology, and over the years became a focal point of the critical public. In a country whose cultural policies are based on "nests" rather than nets, this aroused suspicion and resentment. The political history of Public Netbase shows the impossibility of a sustained and critical cultural practice in place where slander campaigns are mistaken for culture, and where funding programs are used for settling accounts.

PUBLIC NETBASE

1. TECHNOLOGICAL ENLIGHTENMENT AND OFFICIAL IGNORANCE

Foundational Work for Critical Internet Use

According to an information leaflet published by the Austrian Government's State Secretariat for Art, 80 percent of the role of information and communication technologies in the information society of Austria consists in conservation: "e-culture aims to preserve cultural heritage through

WORLD
INFORMATION.ORG

the use of information and communication technologies, and represent it in a transparent and tangible way; It seeks to promote the engagement with cultural and knowledge heritage, rendering the cultural heritage of the nation accessible to interested parties at home and abroad"¹. From this point of view, net culture would amount to digitizing Mozart. By contrast, Public Netbase, founded in 1994 by Konrad Becker and Francisco Webber, sought to promote an understanding of new media as a means of expression capable of transcending established orders and norms, and suitable for emancipatory purposes. Artists and cultural workers could familiarize themselves with the possibilities offered by the new technologies and gain free access to the internet. Introductory workshops and lectures were offered in order to exchange the required know-how. Before long, the number of users on the t0 platform had risen to 1000. From the beginning, socio-cultural and political reflection in areas such as the politics of information, the question of rights in the world-wide web, and issues such as surveillance were of primary importance.

Lobbying and Official Futurologists

In parallel to building structures from below, public authorities were lobbied and involved in debates on basic aspects. According to Konrad Becker, Director of Public Netbase's carrier organization Institute for New Culture Technologies/t0, decision makers in culture considered the internet a temporary fad no one would remember a few years later. "In fact, we were facing ignorance and skepticism from the very beginning. Early on we were functioning as a sort of info workshop, and directly approached politicians and administrators, explaining them why the internet was a theme of wider social significance, and not merely a 'gimmick'." Soon the Netbase team gained "a special status as experts and futurologists", became involved in the activities of the Austrian EU Presidency in 1998 and acted as Austria's official representative in conferences of the EU Commission, the Council of Europe, and UNESCO.

2. THE LOGICS OF TRADITION AND LOCAL GROUNDING

FPÖ Attacks: Nest Foulers and the "Clean Internet"

As national and international recognition mounted, Public Netbase aroused the attention of Austria's extremist right-wing Freedom Party (FPÖ). The program series "sex.net. Sex, Lies and the Internet" moved Public Netbase into the cross wire of anti-cultural and populist oppositional policies. The FPÖ accused the Art State Secretariat, headed by the Social Democrat Peter Wittmann, of spending tax money on "perverse and pornographic actionists", and demanded a "clean internet" (Parliamentary enquiry of FPÖ, 16 Aug. 1998). Jörg Haider's FPÖ, and its MPs Karl Schweitzer and Ewald Stadler had "used Public Netbase as a pretext to extend their cultural campaigns to the internet", recalls Martin Wassermair, Public Netbase's former General Manager. As in the cases of the writer and later Nobel Prize winner Elfriede Jelinek and theatre director Klaus Peymann, campaigns of slander and agitation were used in order to disqualify critical art as nest fouling.

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The Space Question: Net Culture Outlawed

This kind of "nest thinking" found its continuation in later conflicts concerning the availability of space for t0 at the Karlsplatz "art space", and previously in the prestigious showcase project of the Museumsquartier. Public Netbase's eviction from the former imperial mews that now house the Museumsquartier became a national political issue and the object of parliamentary debates. Politicians of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) governing in a coalition with the FPÖ repeatedly argued that work with new media was fully independent from place and time, and that it was therefore unnecessary for it to be located precisely in Vienna and, above all, the Museumsquartier. "This office may also be located in Toronto or in a small town like Aspang, or wherever else" (MP Gertrude Brinek, ÖVP, Plenary Meeting of the National Council, 10 May, 2000). Instead of securing the presence of an innovative and successful organization that evidently needed more than just an IP address for organizing international conferences and workshops, MPs from the governing parties more or less explicitly encouraged Public Netbase to leave the Austrian art space.

3. ACTIVISM AGAINST FPÖVP AND SANCTIONS

Anti-governmental Protests and Electronic Resistance

The roaring year 2000, when the ÖVP formed a coalition government with Jörg Haider's FPÖ, triggering off a wave of protests both in Austria and the EU, marking a turning point in the public perception of the internet and of Public Netbase in particular. The protest movement against the coalition government brought the first massive use of the net as a tool of critical public opinion and cultural protest. Public Netbase's culture server provided activist initiatives and groups such as gettoattack, volkstanz.net, no-racism.net and Volkstheaterkarawane with an online presence and a communication outlet. While Chancellor Schüssel's government toured Europe during the "sanctions" period and pleaded for "fairness for Austria", the multi-lingual platform, government-austria.at, offered different views and analyses of the government's work to information seekers. The protest movement was labelled "cell phone and internet generation" by the rightist government, and Public Netbase became its cipher, a kind of "electronic Ernst Kirchweyer house" (referring to a building in Vienna named after a socialist militant) and a red rag for the new traditionalist Austrian culture project. In a public hearing, FPÖ MP Karl Schweitzer said: "Public Netbase does not just bite into the hand it is fed by, it is right at the government's throat."

Funding Cuts and Auditing

According to Martin Wassermair, Netbase's work in the realms of social policies, critical participation, and culture, was read by the government as an uncomfortable "red-green" project. "The Schüssel government was committed to identifying symbolic victims that would provide the conservative turn with points of reference, and make it clear that culture was to be understood

in parochial and edifying terms." In the same year, Public Netbase's basic subsidy was reduced to a level below subsistence, and funds already committed to the project World-Information.Org, part of the Brussels 2000 culture capital programming, were withdrawn. An auditing procedure of a type entirely uncommon in the culture industry was commissioned from KPMG Alpentreuhand auditors, providing the government with an "official" excuse to delay even that decision by one and a half years. "The audit went on over weeks on end and brought our work to a standstill", says Konrad Becker. "It was designed to ruin this institution."

4. POST-TURN CULTURAL POLICIES

Project Funding Replaces Basic Funding: Culture on Probation

The advances against Public Netbase were representative of a re-structuring of cultural sponsorship in Austria. A large number of groups saw their basic financing removed, forfeiting possibilities of long-term independent work. With applications for funding to the State Secretary for Art becoming more frequent, the latter's possibilities of influencing the content of culture increased. Martin Wassermair: "Netbase was one of the most famous, most widely known and earliest victims. Netbase was made an example of the new cultural policy". This single-out strategy was an official component of Austrian art and culture sponsorship. It was not by coincidence that ÖVP politician Andreas Khol, President of the National Council, had promised to "separate the bucks from the sheep" in a parliamentary debate on subsidy cuts for civil society initiatives.

Privatization and "Netbase, Inc."

In addition, the strategies adopted against Public Netbase bespoke an understanding of culture and information as merchandise, with little use for the demands of an open culture and free access to knowledge by new technologies. Both Public Netbase representatives identify this as the "logic of privatization, putting the private sector above the state"; A logic according to which private providers do everything better, and implying that "people should turn to private providers such as Chello or GMX if they want to do an art project". Oddly enough, federal politicians continuously accused Public Netbase of being a profit-orientated company not worthy of public subsidies. This campaign sent ripples into the municipal politics of Vienna, raising suspicions and preparing the ground for the city's posterior position according to which free server access for cultural workers would not require any subsidies.

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5. THE CITY OF VIENNA AND THE EXCESS OF PUBLIC

Social Democrat Support: Dissidence as Election Campaign Accessory

As the attacks against Public Netbase continued and federal subsidies were nullified, the City of Vienna stepped in as sponsor. It was during the municipal election campaign of 2001 in

particular, with federal issues dominating the agenda even more than usual, that the governing Social Democrats prominently backed Public Netbase. Martin Wassermair recalls rallies in which it was claimed that "the City of Vienna will not allow the Federal Government to destroy critical projects such as Public Netbase. Only two years later, this statement was worth nothing". Indeed, the activities of the critical public and committed civil society received a positive feedback only as long as they could be used in the oppositional politics of the SPÖ, or did at least not contradict them. However, once Netbase's work had moved into the public space of Vienna and local potentials of participation and articulation became important themes, the previous democratic consciousness soon reached its limits.

Electional Dynamics: Independent Education vs. Party Squabbles

Wahlkabine.at was a civic education project probing the statements of political parties for their agreement with the users' demands. According to Martin Wassermair this project, a simulated online election booth, contributed to a decisive mood change. "The Viennese had begun to divide the world into friendly and hostile projects. Hostile projects were rejected." In this type of thinking, critical projects are typically associated with the competing party. In the city of waltz, independent positions were apparently considered as tactless. Incensed officials told Konrad Becker that the online election tool did not render the "right" results. "Once you are caught in a swirl of political conflict", Martin Wassermair remarks, "it becomes impossible to convince people with factual arguments, such as the quality of the Nikeground project, the quality of the Wahlkabine project, and many others".

The City as Fortress: "My Home is My Castle"

According to Martin Wassermair and Konrad Becker, the Nikeground project, a fake campaign claiming that Nike had acquired Vienna's Karlsplatz square for promotional purposes, was officially understood as an attack directed at the city government. The musical parade Free Republic was considered primarily a source of noise and litter, and the demand for free expression voiced by the Mediamp as an offensive against well-meaning city policies and a personal affront against Vice Mayor Mrs Laska.

In 2004, these and other actions were followed by a cut in the funds for education and youth work previously provided by the city, and representing, alongside the cultural funds, the financial mainstay of Public Netbase. The official motive of this move was exemplified by the assertion that the workshops offered to young asylum seekers did not meet the criteria of the city's promotional policies for young persons. "Laska's withdrawal was justified in completely absurd terms and triggered off a circle of increasing debt; It was the beginning of the end. Art Secretary Morak and his staff must have jumped with joy when they realized that the City of Vienna had completed the job the Federal Government had been unable to do", say Becker and Wassermair. In the fall of that year, Public Netbase was forced to discontinue its free ISP services for artists and cultural producers. No longer offering any "public" access, Public Netbase changed its name to Netbase.

6. THE NET CULTURE PADDLE

Promoting Abutters: The Politics of De-politization

In a strategy that brought together all projects occupying the Museumsquartier, the City introduced a model of sponsorship based on popularity points. Outside of the alliances bartering "peanuts" (as the currency of popular recognition is termed), the individual groups and initiatives adopt divided positions vis-à-vis the city government and the art state secretariat. In Wassermair's words, "it finally became possible to drive the cannibalistic behavior of the independent art scene to its extreme. We have reached a point where people encounter one another primarily at court". After years during which "resistance was the art of the hour", supporters of a sterile, de-politicized notion of art finally won the upper hand. Following 18 months during which a reduced amount of educational work was carried out and international projects in Serbia and India were completed, the final cut of all subsidies on the part of the City meant forced Netbase to cancel its entire event and project schedule. Only the Institute for New Culture Technologies, Netbase's carrier organization, remained.

In a declaration of support for Public Netbase, Nobel Prize winner Elfriede Jelinek had commented: "So-called de-politization is nothing harmless, even if it sounds harmless". De-politization and a doubtful understanding of the internet secure the harmonious state of the Austrian "culture nations". "New information and communication technologies offer culture nations a vast range of possibilities of preserving, archiving and presenting their holdings."² However, in order to be able to realize and share the social and economic potentials of the new technologies that mark our world, what is needed is more net culture. In order to reach this goal, Public Netbase shied away from no local or national conflict during its twelve years of existence, even when it was already internationally successful. However, with its mobilization against Netbase and its members, the makers of cultural policies in Austria have succeeded in closing a major access point to this world of new culture technologies. Welcome to the nest!

NOTES

1. Federal Press Service: "Informationsgesellschaft in Österreich", Vienna 2005
<http://www.bka.gv.at/2004/11/26/infogesellschaft.pdf>

2. Federal Press Service: "Informationsgesellschaft in Österreich", Vienna 2005
<http://www.bka.gv.at/2004/11/26/infogesellschaft.pdf>

Katharina Ludwig
OPPOSING NEST CULTURE

Intermission at the Combat Zone

A Review of Public Netbase's Urban and Symbolic Lines of Conflict

Clemens Apprich

<http://www.netbase.org/t0/intro/06>

When the Institute for New Culture Technologies/t0, launched in 1994 by Konrad Becker and Francisco de Sousa Webber, went online with its server at the Vienna General Hospital, internet access was still in its infancy. The discovery of this medium, today inextricably linked to everyday experience, marked a moment in cultural history when artists and cultural producers began to explore new forms of engagement with information and communication technologies – and found them at the Institute for New Culture Technologies/t0. Initially, then, it was mainly the mediation work at the interface between art and technology that led to a new understanding of cultural practice, allowing the establishment of an internationally networked media platform. Before long, the platform set up its dedicated culture server at the Vienna Messepalast (later to become Museumsquartier), where the committed cultural project t0 was institutionalized as Public Netbase. Apart from Internet service providing, Public Netbase offered a varied program of workshops and conferences on the promises and risks of a rapidly growing information society. In his inaugural speech on 17 March, 1995, philosopher and essayist Peter Lamborn addressed the challenges emerging in an increasingly media-driven world, in which information becomes the raw material of modern society. Under his pseudonym Hakim Bey, Wilson became known mainly for his notion of "Temporary Autonomous Zones" (Bey 1990), referring to a situation in which the existing order is suspended within temporal and local limitations. A far cry from immaterial cyber utopias, Bey's theory insists on connecting the TAZ to real space, as this is the only way of providing it with (social) meaning.

From the very beginning, Public Netbase clearly distanced itself from any virtualized notions of the new media, focusing instead on an urban articulation of the cultural practices arising from the use of information and communication. The modern city represents a hybrid intersection of physical and digital space, whose architecture covered with layers of data flows. Apart from mobile communication technologies such as phones and laptop computers, this data sphere also contains rapidly expanding surveillance systems and increasingly invasive advertising media. Given this rapid progression of new technologies into all realms of social life, the cultural use of electronic media increases in significance. Urban space provides a field of artistic action on which new publics are created by means of confrontation, agitation and intervention, with the aim of countering practices of enclosure by government and business. Public Netbase is among the first in Europe and in Austria to exploit digital space for critical media practice. Its efforts were focused on political awareness building vis-à-vis an increasingly networked society in which virtual and real space progressively converged. Theories of symbolic rule provided a conceptual backbone for experimental forms of artistic and cultural practice beyond any consumer-oriented use patterns. The conflicts resulting from this had to be taken up and translated into negotiable positions in public debates – "particularly since contemporary art itself has now been normed, organized, channeled into the safe-havens of museums. The debate must be created, extended, deepened and resolved in public, where the issues themselves exist" (Holmes).

MUSEUMSQUARTIER: A ZONE OF COMBAT

A first step towards securing an autonomous position within the cultural environment of Vienna was taken by promoting public access, providing low-cost internet access to approximately one thousand art and culture projects within a very short period. Acting as an interface of technology, science, and art, Public Netbase began to build digital networks of cooperation at an early stage, which made it possible to bring leading theoreticians and artists of the new cyber culture to Vienna. The diversity of Public Netbase's program and the intense demand from local and international communities soon made it possible to relocate to larger facilities. The opening of the Media~Space event space in early 1997 made the significance of electronic media in the cultural debates on creativity current artistic practice the centerpiece of a varied event program, underlining Public Netbase's potential as a fertilizer of innovative cultural policies at the outset of the 21st century.

Before long, though, Public Netbase's understanding of an adequate space for action and production – a space that would reflect the latest artistic forms of expression and offer appropriate exhibition and performance facilities – began to fall out of step with that of the management of the Vienna Museumsquartier, which at that time was initiating a large-scale reconstruction scheme. It is surely not surprising that a project of this order of magnitude – a surface of 60,000 square meters right in the center of Vienna – would give rise to opposing views, turning the project into one of the fiercest cultural combat zones in Austria.

A total of 300 years separate the building complex from its origins as imperial mews, its later use as a trade fair center, and the official inauguration of the Museumsquartier in June 2001.

Clemens Apprich

INTERMISSION
AT THE COMBAT ZONE

The development of the Museumsquartier itself, a project sponsored by the Austrian and Viennese Governments, stretched over a period of 20 years. In 1977, when the buildings were first considered as a possible extension for the Austrian Federal Museums, the debate around the specific design of such a new museums quarter took off. Ten years later an invitation for tenders was published, resulting in a unanimous jury verdict in favor of architects Laurid and Manfred Ortner in April 1980. The project, at that time still referred to as "21st century house" by Minister of Culture Erhard Busek, involved a newly built museum of modern art, an additional art and event hall, and, most strikingly, a media tower (often referred to as reading tower) designed to overtop the baroque front section the quarter by 67 meters. This symbolic transgression of the former imperial mews became a point of conflict in the debates on Austria's cultural heritage. A citizen's group was launched to spearhead a cultural crusade against the "museums monster". Supported by Austria's popular press and the Freedom Party (FPÖ), it demanded a public enquiry and the intervention of the Federal Agency for the Protection of Historical Monuments. When in 1992 the Vienna People's Party (ÖVP) yielded to the pressure, dishonoring its previous agreement with the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), the idea of a media tower acting as an archive, a forum for reflection, a research center, and as a location for the democratization of the media, disappeared for good.

This cultural tug of war, which resulted in the conversion of a center for contemporary art into a mere additional asset in Vienna's bid as business location, reflected a line of conflict in Austria's cultural landscape that "reduces art to its decorative exhibition value instead of understanding it as a mode of thinking" (Rollig 1995). However, any art mediation targeted primarily at event marketing and consumption disregards the larger aesthetic developments at the turn of the 21st century. This is a time when art can break its hermetic closure and open itself to new social realms. The interface of culture, technology, art and society had been Public Netbase's most central field of activity, so that its efforts to gain an autonomous creative space now found themselves in direct opposition with restorative cultural policies. While in 1998 Public Netbase had had to resort to court in order to stop a populist, FPÖ-initiated slander campaign occasioned by the feminist lecture series "sex.net", the authoritarian turn in Austrian politics represented by the new governmental coalition between People's Party and Freedom Party now lead to an alarming intensification of hostile maneuvers. Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel suspected that a supposed "internet generation" was the mastermind of the public protests against his right-wing extremist government. Since most of the projects critical of the government were hosted by t0, suspicions intensified and lead to a repressive policy in governmental art funding, before finally resulting in a massive cut in basic subsidies.

On 5 April 2000, Public Netbase was dismissed from its facilities at the Museumsquartier under the pretext of imminent building works at the Fischer-von-Erlach section, the section housing its offices. The date set was 30 April 2001, and no replacement facilities or prospective date of re-entry were indicated. In spite of the "readiness for dialogue" recurrently claimed by Wolfgang Waldner, General Manager of the Museumsquartier's carrier company, there was an overwhelming impression that Public Netbase, by then a successful cultural institution, was supposed to be

stripped off its vital assets. As an early indication, the planned enlargement of the Media-Space at the Museumsquartier's Ovalhalle H was overridden by a different plan in 1999.

All of a sudden, the assurances given by Waldner's predecessor, according to which Public Netbase would not only remain a crucial and integral part of the new museums quarter, but that its presence would even be strengthened, no longer seemed to count. Following the fall of the media tower, one of the most successful cultural institutions in the field of new media was also facing its end. The structural plan for the future Quartier 21, produced by Markus Weiland and Vitus Weh, neither considered the space requirements of Public Netbase, nor reflected the standard phrase of "cultural diversity". Instead of a non-hierarchical platform of different cultural groups that would develop their programs at the greatest degree of autonomy, Quartier 21 turned out to be a centralized organization allowing Waldner, whose original role resembled that of a caretaker, to directly intervene into content development.

After the governmental subsidy was first cut for political motives and then eliminated altogether, Public Netbase now had to fear for its location at the Museumsquartier. Since Waldner delayed the conclusion of an adequate rental agreement and instead made every effort to force all the institutions concerned into the rigid Quartier 21 scheme, the affected tenants (which included, apart from Public Netbase, Basis Wien, Depot, and springerin) informed Waldner on 11 June that they considered the dismissals as null and void.

In a further development, Waldner cancelled Public Netbase's participation in the inauguration festivities scheduled for late June 2001, whose motto "Baroque meets Cyberspace" seemed an appropriate headline for the existing conflict. The Museumsquartier management was intent to impress the invited celebrities from politics, culture, and the media with a concerted performance. Public Netbase's idea to involve the anonymous masses in the celebrations by "urban screening", projecting spontaneous text messages, graphics and animations onto the front of the historical Museumsquartier buildings aroused fears of an art practice that could not be calculated. However, since obviously censorship cannot censor itself, the ban provided the occasion for an art action pointing at the heart of the matter: An army tent circled by sand bags, tank traps and barbed wire was set up in one of the Museumsquartier's courts with the idea of highlighting the political maneuvering of "curator" Waldner, and reminding decision makers that "art and culture are in no way comfortable, let alone pleasing".

The statements screened by "remote viewing" were intended to underline the continuing need, contrary to public declarations, to struggle for and defend cultural diversity. How serious Public Netbase was about this became manifest when in the night from 26 to 27 September, 2002, a tent installation surprisingly appeared at a central spot of the Museumsquartier. Under its title "Remote Jam", this Base Camp acted as a literally "shining" example of participatory media culture by featuring a novel internet application that allowed a world-wide audience to participate in a real-time musical composition – a loud and clear signal in favor of Public Netbase's re-entry. An agreement proposed by Vienna's government seemed to facilitate a compromise solution,

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but failed as a consequence of Waldner's rigid position, leading to the final eviction of this troublesome cultural institution in early 2002.

COMBAT ZONE KARLSPLATZ

Following its eviction, the base camp was moved to a location just outside the Museumsquartier, where the interactive SMS radio project "text-fm" was launched in cooperation with British media artists Graham Harwood and Matthew Fuller. A special software converting incoming messages into computer-generated voice responses, provided an interface between private and public space, once again underlining the need for critical art practice. In the end, the Government of Vienna agreed to recognize Public Netbase's cultural significance. While the City Council had already expressed itself in favor of Public Netbase's continuance at the Museumsquartier, it now gave assurances of stronger financial support. As a consequence, Public Netbase's survival was secured at least temporarily, allowing the group to continue its work at a temporary quarter (at Burggasse, later Neustiftgasse). Given the precariousness of its lease arrangements, Netbase focused on re-appropriation strategies in urban space, a location of media spectacles reflecting the symbolic order of existing rule. The specific occasion was provided by a debate that had been going on for years, and that concerned the rebuilding of the Karlsplatz square – an area to which Otto Wagner had already referred to as "wasteland". In the public mind, this centrally located square is a busy, traffic-ridden nightmare whose underground stations provide shelter to Vienna's drug addicts. Following decades of enlargements and reconstruction, Karlsplatz was now supposed to be converted into an "art space" that would generate more attention for the adjacent cultural institutions (Secession, Technical Museum, Musikverein, Künstlerhaus, Historical Museum, Kunsthalle). This manner of instrumentalizing art and culture indicated a political will to clear up this urban wilderness with its marginalized social groups.

"Upgrading the Karlsplatz art space" was one of the main objectives of Vienna's Councilor of Culture, Mailath-Pokorny, who had exchanged his previous post as Federal Art Secretary for this position in the Vienna City Government. The reconstruction of the Vienna Underground did, in fact, provide an opportunity to transform the traffic hub Karlsplatz into an attractive urban environment, and to turn its sub-surface space into a thriving cultural location. In order not to leave the debate in the hands of Austria's most notorious tabloid "Kronen-Zeitung" and its readership, Public Netbase launched a citizen's group in early 2003 that demanded a dynamic experimental space for the 21st century. Its motto was "Open up Karlsplatz! Make way for open cultures!". The fake statements published by the group, often purposefully expressed in clumsy wording, pointed at the shortcomings of cultural policies concerning the Museumsquartier, both in an aesthetic and argumentative manner. By contrast, the "Karlsplatz art space" had the potential of becoming a focus of critical art and media discourse, and an abode of non-compliant art debates that would literally stand out into the world. When the City of Vienna suggested that the visionary Karlsplatz plan was going to be yet another attempt of a mere embellishment, Public Netbase embarked on another political intervention: In order to reappraise the question of public space in the public debates, Netbase organized the two-day "Open Cultures" conference in the early summer of 2003.

At the Kunsthalle's "Project Space", international speakers demanded free access to information and education, backing up the request for an institutionalized structure for independent art and media producers.

Leaving behind emotionalized tags such as "drug square" and "traffic nightmare", Karlsplatz was supposed to become a "productive urban jungle", rather than being trimmed and dressed by bourgeois security paranoia. A "Free Media Camp" set up by Public Netbase, Radio Orange 94.0, and PUBLIC VOICE Lap on 27 June, 2003 in cooperation with MALMOE magazine and cultural lobbying group IG Kultur Wien, left no doubt that there was no lack of concrete initiatives towards a cultural renovation of Karlsplatz. The Media Camp, whose presence at Karlsplatz throughout the summer carried a strong symbolic value, offered more than one hundred events dealing with the precarious survival of free media in Austrian cultural and media policies, and demanded strong foundations for a participatory public in a future network democracy. The latter is jeopardized not only by governments, but increasingly by private business interests, as a further step in the Karlsplatz campaign was going to show: together with the international artists group 0100101110101101.ORG, Public Netbase staged a fake re-naming of Karlsplatz to "Nikeplatz", with the idea of highlighting the disappropriation of public space occurring at many places. However, the "hardly believable Nikeplatz trick" was not directed against Nike per se; it was meant to illustrate the symbolic dominance of global business in public space. In recent years, the boundaries between the public and private realms have been experiencing a shift, transforming open urban space into semi-public areas. This process of privatization, manifest at railway stations, city squares, and shopping centers, leads to the exclusion of large segments of the public, in particular of groups already at the margins.

The fact that Nike, a sporting goods producer known for its underground marketing strategies, would threaten to litigate for 78,000 Euros of damages, only strengthened the artists' determination to make the functioning of public space the object of their work.

The world-wide interest generated by this action, then, can be accounted for by the important function of contemporary artistic practice interested in the real means of production in a society increasingly determined by media and technology. The artistic reflection of symbols of everyday culture provides an example of a new form of intervention in public space: "We see it as our task to initiate a debate on the conflict between public interests and the commercialization of all realms of life, and to expand the scope of action by directly intervening in urban and media space" (Becker 2003). The action was meant to spark off new ideas for a future "Karlsplatz art space" by showing how a combination of net art, politics, and theory delivers alternatives to a culture of representation. However, the Vice Mayor of Vienna, Grete Laska, finally appeared to be overcharged by such a radical construction of a critical public. As a response to the Media Camp, she cancelled Public Netbase's budget at the end of March 2004. As a result, ongoing efforts to obtain space at the Karlsplatz, as had become necessary following the eviction from the Museumsquartier, ended up in nothing. Instead of an "art space" providing a solid base for critical culture and media discourse, Vienna witnessed the

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establishment of Austria's first "protection zone" symbolizing police order and zero tolerance vis-à-vis drug addicts.

Security policy was at the center of yet another Public Netbase action at Karlsplatz: together with Slovene artist Marko Peljhan, and heralding the slogan "Eyes in the skies, democracy in the streets", the fictitious civil counter renaissance system "S-77CCR" was presented to the Viennese public from 13 to 27 May, 2004. At a time when street protests against the right-wing government still took place every Thursday, a counter renaissance system operating with unmanned aerial vehicles was supposed to provide civil society with the required information advantage vis-à-vis the police, the military, and the secret services. The idea of a civil society counter renaissance did generate a certain amount of nervousness – as the response from the Interior Ministry indicated: The Ministry made it clear that the expansion of surveillance systems as promoted by the Government did not represent a "charter for so-called counter-surveillance". Sure enough, the stealthy privatization of public space is itself a result of the outsourcing of public security to private contractors. "Lawful" surveillance by third parties undercuts the distinction, crucial to every democracy, between the public and the private realms, and fosters the acceptance of control technologies in all areas of life. The progressive disappropriation of public space, and the consequent weakening of civic rights, requires concrete strategies of re-appropriation. In the "Free Bitflows" event – a package of conferences, exhibitions and workshops on new forms of accessing and distributing knowledge – Public Netbase showed that such strategies also concern digital space. Together with Vienna's largest political sound project "Free RePublic", in the summer of 2004 presented for the fourth time by the Austrian National Union of Students and various youth organizations, Free Bitflows was one of the last signals demanding an "underground" media tower at the "Karlsplatz art space". "Such an inverted tower is not a metaphor, but rather the creation of something invisible, of discourse and dissent, of a conflictual public" (Raunig 2003). Precisely because in early 2006 Public Netbase had to pay for its unbending position with its own existence, it continues to be an example for the possible inversion of cultural concepts, for digging pits of one's own in the cultural landscape. For sure, the intermission at the combat zone won't last long.

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Open Letter to the Austrian Public

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

Right-wing Government Targets Public Netbase

September 2000

<http://free.netbase.org>

TACTICAL MEDIA

The individuals, initiatives, and organizations listed below hereby demand that Public Netbase, the Viennese Center for New Media, should neither be forcibly closed, nor should it be moved from its current location in the Museumsquartier. We urge the Austrian government to acknowledge Public Netbase as a pioneer in the field of new media arts and culture by enabling the organization to continue its work in the Museumsquartier.

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Since its opening in 1994, Public Netbase has played an instrumental role in shaping the rapidly changing landscape of electronic culture. Under the dedicated guidance of Konrad Becker and Marie Ringler, Public Netbase has contributed both to local media culture in Vienna and to new media culture in larger European and global contexts. In addition, Public Netbase offers a unique mix of community services, including technical training, public internet access, and a sophisticated artistic program; It also produces exhibitions, organizes conferences, provides essential resources to several communities, and helps advance the culture of new media technologies by significantly contributing to the development of theoretical and practical models. Continuing to integrate these initiatives into the cultural context of the Museumsquartier would contribute tremendously to the type of cultural context and competence that will allow Austria to proceed through this new century in a manner in keeping with its rich cultural heritage.

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Unfortunately, since the change in government, Public Netbase has become the target of unreasonable accusations, hidden machinations, and unwarranted attacks. The withdrawal of all federal funding, the government's effort to stop support on the regional level, and the unsuccessful but extensive investigation into alleged financial misappropriations, are clearly being enacted as a means of silencing critical voices in Austrian civil society. We find this situation to be not only shocking but also deeply distressing, considering the contributions Public Netbase has made to the local community and to the field of new media arts.

We insist that the Austrian government reconsider and clarify its cultural policy regarding Public Netbase and acknowledge its achievements. Public Netbase should be supported for the unique cultural environment it creates, and for its history of support for experimental and emerging artistic practices. Not only should Public Netbase be given consistent support, but so should those individuals and organizations participating in the impressive variety of other Austrian independent and experimental media projects that have come into being over the last decade. These projects have demonstrated that media art and network practices have a distinguished history and that they attempt to reflect the creative diversity and a broad range of critical discourse of crucial importance to the emergence of global culture. Too often, electronic time-based media has been inappropriately described as marginal, fragmented, or outside the cultural debates about creativity in the current art scene. Nothing could be further from the truth, and this is why an organization like Public Netbase has been a staunch promoter of this rich new media culture. As such, it is the responsibility and duty of the Austrian government, as the custodians of public culture, to reinstate funding for Public Netbase and facilitate their continued presence in the Museumsquartier. Anything less would be a disservice to the public and to the cultural legacy of Europe.

Alex Adriansen, Director V2, Rotterdam/Netherlands

Eric Alliez, Professeur titulaire de la Chaire d'Esthétique à l'Académie des Arts plastiques, Vienne/Austria

Eddie Berg, FACT, UK

Kristin Bergaust, Artist and Director of Media-Lab Atelier Nord, Norway

Andreas Broeckmann, Artistic Director transmediale, Berlin/Germany

Antonella Corsani, enseignant-chercheur Université de Paris/France

Critical Art Ensemble, Artist Group, USA

Amanda Crowley, Adelaide Festival of Arts, Australia

Erik Davis, Author and Contributing Editor, Wired Magazine, San Francisco/USA

Manuel DeLanda, Fellow at Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey/USA

Mark Dery, Author, Editor of Artbyte, New York/USA

Sara Diamond, The Banff Center, Canada

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Julian Dibbell, Author, Contributing Editor at FEED Magazine, South Bend/US

Sher Doruff, Society for Old and New Media, Amsterdam/Netherlands

Timothy Duckrey, Author and Lecturer, USA

Silvia Eiblmayr, Galerie im Taxis Palais Innsbruck/Austria

Adele Eisenstein, C3 Center for Culture & Communication, Budapest/Hungary

Andrea Ellmeier, Kulturdokumentation, Vienna/Austria

Valie Export, Artist, Vienna/Austria and Academy of Media Arts Köln/Germany

Bronac Ferran, Arts Council, UK

Jim Fleming, Editor & Publisher, Autonomedia, New York/USA

Vera Frenkel, Ontario/Canada

Tomas Friedmann, Literaturhaus Salzburg, Austria

Martin Fritz, Curator EXPO 2000 (In Between), Hannover/Germany

Matthew Fuller, Lecturer in Media, Communications and Culture at Middlesex University, working with the artists' collective Mongrel, UK

Alex Galloway, rhizome.org, New York/USA

Gabriele Gerbasits, IG Kultur Österreich, Vienna/Austria

Lizbeth Goodman, Director of The Institute for New Media, Performance Research School of Performing Arts - University of Surrey/UK

Franz Graf, Professor Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna/Austria

Reinhold Grether, Dr, Netscientist University Konstanz/Germany

Henning Gruner, Kunsthaus Tacheles/Berlin

Cees J. Hamelink, Professor of International Communication, University of Amsterdam/Netherlands

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Michael Haneke, Regisseur, Austria

Honor Harger, Tate Modern, London/UK

Lisa Haskel, Media Art Projects, UK

Perry Hoberman, Artist, teaches at the School of Visual Arts, New York/USA

Danny Holman, No D Media Lab, Prague/Czech Republic

John Hopkins, Media Lab - University of Art and Design, Helsinki/Finland

Erkki Huhtamo, Professor UCLA, Dept. of Design, Finland

Elfriede Jelinek, Schriftstellerin, Wien/Austria

Michael Joyce, Writer and Professor of Electronic Literature, New York/USA

Eric Kluitenberg, Media Theorist and Curator New Media, de Balie - Center for Culture and Politics, Amsterdam/Netherlands

Knowbotic Research, Artist Group, Germany

Piotr Krajewska, WRO Center for Media Art, Wroclaw/Poland

Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, Editors CTHEORY, Boston, Massachusetts/USA

Spela Kucan, Ljudmila - Ljubljana Digital Media Lab, Slovenia

Violetta Kutlubasis-Krajewska, WRO Center for Media Art, Wroclaw/Poland

Herbert Lachmayer, Leiter der Meisterklasse für Experimentelle Visuelle Gestaltung, Universität für künstlerische und industrielle Gestaltung, Linz/Austria

Jacques Le Rider, Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes, Section des sciences historiques et philologiques, Sorbonne, Paris/France

Geert Lovink, Media Theorist, Canberra/Australia

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Art and Technology Foundation, Madrid/Spain

Tapio Makela, M-cult, Finland

Gerald Matt, Kunsthalle Wien, Austria

Armin Medosch, Telepolis, London/UK

Wolfgang Modera, Ars Electronica Center, Linz/Austria

Sally Jane Norman, Directrice Générale de l'Ecole supérieure de l'image, Angoulême Poitiers/France

Robert Palmer, Director Brussels2000, Belgium

Sylvie Parent, Curator, Centre international d'art contemporain, Montréal/Canada

Ana Parga, Art and Technology Foundation, Madrid/Spain

Marko Peljhan, Project Atol, Ljubljana/Slovenia

Constance Penley, Professor and Chair Department of Film Studies
University of California, USA

Miklos Peternak, Director C3 Center for Culture & Communication, Budapest/Hungary

Otto Pfersmann, Professor for Philosophy, Sorbonne/Paris

Sadie Plant, Writer, Birmingham/UK

Doron Rabinovici, Writer, Austria

Susie Ramsay, Art and Technology Foundation, Madrid/Spain

Veronika Ratzenböck, Director Kulturdokumentation, Vienna/Austria

Christian Reder, Professor University for Applied Arts, Vienna/Austria

Martin Reiter, Kunsthaus Tacheles/Berlin

RTMark, Artist Group, USA

Gerhard Ruiss, IG Autorinnen Autoren, Austria

Giaco Schiesser, Head Department New Media, University of Art and Design
Zurich/Switzerland

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Annette Schindler, Director Plug In, Basel/Switzerland

Burghart Schmidt, Professor for Aesthetics, University Offenbach, Germany

Christine Schöpf, Ars Electronica Center, Linz/Austria

Dieter Schrage, Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna/Austria

Yukiko Shikata, Curator, Japan

Rasa Smite, E-LAB Electronic Arts and Media Center, Riga/Latvia

Raitis Smits, RIXC The Center for New Media Culture, Riga/Latvia

Stahl Stenslie, Artist and Curator, Oslo/Norway

Marleen Stikker, Society for Old and New Media, Amsterdam/Netherlands

Gerfried Stocker, Ars Electronica Center, Linz/Austria

Martin Sturm, O.K Centrum für Gegenwartskunst, Linz/Austria

Janos Sugar, Media Research Foundation, Budapest/Hungary

Daniela Swarowsky, Manager of DEAF_2000 Festival / V2_Organisation
Rotterdam/Netherlands

Peter Tomaz, President Association for Culture and Education, Multimedia Center
KiberSRCeLab - KIBLA, Maribor/Slovenia

Toshiya Ueno, Associate Professor, Sociologist, Tokyo/Japan

Markus Wailand, Artist and Curator, Vienna/Austria

Ulrich Wegenast, Wand 5/Stuttgarter Filmwinter, Germany

Dirk de Wit, Brussels2000, Belgium

Siegfried Zielinski, Establishment Rector Academy of Media Arts, Köln/Germany

Heimo Zobernig, Artist, Vienna/Austria

Open Letter
to the Austrian Public

Notice Served to Public Netbase in the Museumsquartier

Press release, April 11, 2000

<http://free.netbase.org>

Public Netbase has been notified that the lease for its premises in the Museumsquartier will be terminated. This action threatens to bring an end to the internationally successful achievements of one of Europe's most respected media-culture institutions.

That is because, in Austria, the clock ticks with a different beat. In Europe, development and expertise in the field of new media receives a broad base of support. But here in Austria, Public Netbase – a successful model of expertise, skill and mediation – is nearly at its end after years of successful work and achievement; after serving as a provider in 1,200 important art and cultural projects.

The step taken by the Museumsquartier Errichtungs- und Betriebsges.m.b.H threatens any further development of an important, innovative cultural center in Vienna. Moreover, it confirms all of the fears and criticism that have been expressed about the Museumsquartier since its own beginning.

Austrian cultural policy and administration obviously has no interest in creating or securing conditions for free and active cultural activities and development. Despite – or perhaps even because of? – the indisputable international, and even national, recognition of Public Netbase, the existence of all organisations like ours is under serious threat.

FACTS REGARDING THE NOTIFICATION OF TERMINATION OF THE PUBLIC NETBASE LEASE

Service-Discourse-Mediation in the Museumsquartier

Since 1994, Public Netbase in the Museumsquartier has developed from a small, active cultural project into one of Europe's most respected media-culture institutions.

Embedded in a tight Austrian and European network, Public Netbase focuses on work that lies on the cutting edge of technology and art. This is shown through our successful activities, projects and events in the Museumsquartier as well as throughout Europe – such as the New Media Projects of the cultural capital Brussels 2000.

HISTORY

Through several years of discussions with the Museumsquartier Errichtungs- und Betriebsgesm. b.H., Public Netbase was planned as an essential and integral part of the new Museumsquartier. After extensive negotiations, not only was the presence of Public Netbase secured, but so was the substantial expansion and development of new media.

In the summer of 1999, we had to accept with great regret that even though it already had been financed, our Media-Space in the Museumquartier's Oval Hall H would be replaced by the presentation of a model of the Museumsquartier. Our efforts to find a new solution were not successful – and have so far resulted in material damages totalling 6 million Austrian schillings.

Despite substantial proposals made by Public Netbase to the Museumsquartier – based on the skill and expertise of Public Netbase – no productive solution could be reached.

ENDANGERING THE FUTURE

On April 5, 2000, the existence of Public Netbase in the Museumsquartier was thrown into chaos with the serving of the lease termination notice. We learned from the notice that the Prekarium (lease) would be cancelled as of April 2001. In addition to this, renovations inside the Museumsquartier would begin in the summer of 2000 – meaning that Public Netbase work would be severely disrupted long before our lease ended.

Because the notice of termination does not propose any substitute premissis for Public Netbase, nor a date for returning to the original one, we must believe that through the pretext of "necessary renovations", one of the most successful and valued cultural institutions will lose the base of its existence.

Notice Served
to Public Netbase

Public Netbase t0 Moves Into Position

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June 27, 2001

<http://free.netbase.org>

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At the official opening of the Museumsquartier, the net culture institution draws attention to its insecure future and denial of lease.

Although the official opening of the Vienna Museumsquartier, from 28 to 30 June, will take place with the participation of Public Netbase t0, the institution's future on the Museumsquartier premises remains uncertain.

PUBLIC NETBASE

In spite of several announcements to the contrary made by the Museumsquartier management, Public Netbase t0 remains without a contract that would secure its re-entry following reconstruction works in 2002. This creates a situation of legal insecurity that further exacerbates the problems Public Netbase has faced following a politically motivated cut in public subsidies by 60 % in 2000 and 2001, and a complete withdrawal of project-based public funding.

For this reason Public Netbase and three other independent Museumsquartier occupants, Basis Wien, Depot and springerin, wrote a letter to the Museumsquartier management as early as 11 June, 2001, stating that the dissolution of the current lease contracts would have to be considered null and void for as long as the management drags its feet regarding a legally binding contract for the future.

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In order to draw attention to these developments within the programmes surrounding the opening ceremony, Public Netbase t0's contribution to the opening has been given an external appearance that emphasises the fact that, in spite of repeated assurances, the fight for a "rich diversity" of the Museumsquartiers offerings still resembles a fierce battle. While the planned lunch packages and cultural picnics will seduce visitors into an atmosphere of cosiness and tranquillity, Public Netbase t0's has set up a military defence installation reminding the audience that art and culture are anything but neat and cosy.

In the media installation "Remote Viewing" artists and artistic initiatives will feed texts and visuals into an interactive billboard set up in one of the Museumsquartiers courts, the Staatsratshof. The installation can also be viewed online at <http://remote.t0.or.at>. Participants include Tanya Bednar, Sabine Bitter/Helmut Weber, Christian Hesse, Martin Krenn/Oliver Ressler, Maschek, Bady Minck, monochrom, Max Moswitzer, Georg Udovicic, Eva Wohlgemuth and WR. In addition, local visitors will be able to enter Remote Viewing via a WWW interface.

Following the three days of opening ceremonies, the Museumsquartier will officially commence its routine functioning. However, whether initiatives such as Public Netbase t0 will see their year-long commitment honoured by a contract securing its future remains uncertain.

Open letter to Michael Häupl, Mayor of Vienna, and the Vienna City Government

Wide Support for Public Netbase

Vienna, May 6, 2004

<http://www.netbase.org/t0/about/press/20040506/?preflang=en>

The importance of Public Netbase as participative platform in the digital age and as interface between art, culture and the information society is beyond dispute. Over the past years, the broad range of new media projects and events produced by Public Netbase have provided an important contribution to Vienna's cultural trajectory.

More than other institutions, Public Netbase has been severely affected by the political changes of recent years. Today as in 2000, the existence of Public Netbase is under permanent threat. It was its unequivocal position on cultural policies, and its critical art and culture work, that lead to Public Netbase's eviction from the Museumsquartier. Ever since then, Public Netbase has been struggling with locational problems.

The signatories of this letter wish to express their grave concern about the fact that Public Netbase's international importance and standing is still not being met by a corresponding provision of secure basic conditions.

We request the Vienna City Government to secure the basic conditions for successful work in art, culture and new media, as stipulated by the municipal council's resolutions of 2000 and 2001.

Anton Pelinka (Universität Innsbruck)
 asylkoordination österreich
 Cornelia Kogoj (Initiative Minderheiten)
 Christian Reder (Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien)
 Dachverband der Filmschaffenden
 Dietmar Steiner (Architekturzentrum Wien)
 Doron Rabinovici (Schriftsteller)
 F.E. Rakuschan (Medientheoretiker)
 Gerald Matt (Kunsthalle Wien)
 Georg Schöllhammer (springerin)
 Gerald Raunig (Europ. Inst. f. Progressive Kulturpolitiken)
 Gewerkschaft - Kunst, Medien, Sport, Freie Berufe
 Hans Hurch (Viennale)
 IG Autorinnen Autoren
 IG Bildende Kunst
 IG Freie Theaterarbeit
 IG Kultur Österreich
 Katharina Gsöllpointner (Kulturwissenschaftlerin)
 Julia Perschon (ÖH Uni Wien)
 Kurt Einzinger (Internet-Experte)
 Lioba Reddeker (basis wien)
 Marlene Streeruwitz (Schriftstellerin, Regisseurin)
 Martin Hagn (ARGE Österreichischer Jugendzentren)
 Monika Mokre (Kulturwissenschaftlerin)
 Musiker-Komponisten-AutorenGilde
 ÖH Bundesvertretung
 Österreichischer Musikat
 Peter Rantasa (mica)
 Peter Zawrel (Wiener Filmfonds)
 Sabine Breitwieser (Generali Foundation)
 Secession
 Siegfried Mattl (Universität Wien)
 Sigrid Gareis (Tanzquartier Wien)
 Tasos Zembylas (Inst. f. Kulturmanagement und Kulturwissenschaft)
 Stella Rollig (Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz)
 Übersetzungsgemeinschaft; Verband Freier Radios Österreich
 Verein Black*Box*Systems
 Veronika Ratzenböck (Kulturdokumentation)
 VOICE - Verband der Sprecher und Darsteller
 Wolfgang Zingg (Depot)

Open letter to
 Michael Haupt

On Public Funding and Critique

Branka Ćurčić

DISCOURSE

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Contemporary art and media practices suffer a significant pressure of instrumentalization, commercialisation and deregulation. Under the umbrella of neoliberal creative industries, governmental regulations are employed to induce omnipresence of creativity as the ultimate imperative of cultural production together with embracement of draconian regimes of intellectual property protection. In this landscape, contemporary art and media production becomes a commodified object or a tool for creating intellectualized entertainment. Effective critical practices could be perceived as a danger to such an apparatus and they could be easily marginalized and dismissed.

In the global wave of privatization, the public sphere has become fragmented, non-unitary and particularized. Today, we are rather talking about public spheres that are conflictual and contradictory and that could erect a new space for differences and oppositions to meet. Contemporary art and media practices are not autonomous and they are heavily regulated by policies and economies. Public funding of art and cultural institutions appears to be an extended hand of regulations implied in the concept of parliamentary democracy, which quite often translates conflictual communication into rational consensus.

It seems that with the expansion of communication technologies, networks and global culture, art and culture ceased to be the main vehicle of constructing national identity of a welfare state, usually identified through the institutions of the national theater, opera and museum. The move towards internationalisation, support for contemporary art and media production took place, but with full respect to economic achievements, technological innovation at any rate and negation of political relevance of art. The example of the Museums Quartier in Vienna brings all those issues together: Government cultural policies, high-art institutions and raising creative entrepreneurship.

This strategy does not leave any space or support for non-profit independent organizations. But, it leaves a lot of space for thoughtful critique of this overwhelming neoliberal constellation. With its years-long practice in contemporary media culture, Public Netbase t0 has structured its critical potential around the heart of the very problem. Public Netbase has affirmed the significance of self-organized critical discourses in (re)claiming the necessity of public discussion within this context, in a persistant attempt to revitalize the political potential of art itself.

World-Information.Org was set up as a trans-national cultural intelligence provider, a collaborative effort of artists, scientists and technicians. It is a practical example for a technical and contextual environment for cultural production and an independent platform of critical media intelligence. Launched under the patronage of the UNESCO at European cultural capital Brussels 2000, World-Information.Org was set up by the Institute for New Culture Technologies Vienna to meet the needs and expectations of citizens for high quality and accessible services of cultural information. With its mission statement "knowledge of future culture" World-Information.Org explored new technologies and future communication environments along with their implications.

World-Information.Org monitors and maps the infosphere, the world's invisible nerve system of information networks, as well as the global information economy. Through artistic and scientific exploration of information and communication technologies World-Information.Org disseminates an understanding of their cultural, societal and political implications, and fosters future cultural practice. An agent of digital democratization and the pursuit of digital human rights, enlightening the opportunities, challenges and risks of information and communication technology, World-Information.Org provides information necessary for a democratic development of society, culture and politics.

World-Information.Org addresses the rise of electronic information- and communication technology in which our society is subject to deep structural changes and transformations that affect all aspects of social life.

World-Information.Org recognizes that ICT is not Science Fiction; it is now that we experience a steady increase in the importance of intelligently processed information and communications and this demands new ideas at the interface of culture and techno-politics.

World-Information.Org declares that not only the influence of communication and information technologies on culture and arts, needs to be examined but the artistic and cultural practice with and within digital networks and the resulting changes in society, politics and the artistic practice itself.

World-Information.Org demonstrates artistic practice in an increasingly immaterialized world, in which reference-information on situations are more relevant than the situation itself, and the use of digital networks for symbol-manipulation becomes more and more important.

World-Information.Org shows that the "digital revolution", the expected changes both within the sector of work and everyday life through the increasing use of ICT in analogy to the profound changes in our society through the "Industrial Revolution" or so-called "Gutenberg Revolution" is very much related to what is happening in the field of biotechnology, biometrics and the fusion of "flesh and machine".

World-Information.Org

World-InfoCon Brussels (2000): An Annotated Report

Steve Kurtz

August 08, 2000

<http://world-information.org>

In a series of cogent lectures by a roster of distinguished speakers including Phillipe Quèau, Saskia Sassen, Philip Hammond, Duncan Campbell, Steve Wright, Shahidul Alam, Simon Davies, Cees Hamelink, and a variety of other contributors, many significant themes emerged-in fact, too many to be reported in this brief document. However, in the interest of promoting further discussion among a wider audience interested in imagining alternatives to global capital and developing forms of tactical resistance, World-Information.Org offers the following abbreviated list of threads.

METHODOLOGY

Many of the topics presented and discussed during the conference were extracted from very fuzzy to dark areas in the socio-political landscape. By way of example, Duncan Campbell presented information on Echelon (a highly classified world-wide surveillance network primarily initiated by the US and the UK), and Philip Hammond presented material on NATO's propaganda campaign during the war in Kosovo. As to be expected, these topics are fraught with danger when approached from the standpoint of intellectual rigour. This is not to say that these analyses were not carefully constructed, it is only to say that when examining topics like Black-Ops (military and/or security operations of which there is no public record) or misinformation campaigns that the data is incomplete, unreliable, and often requires speculative conjectures to fill in the information gaps (speakers were all very forthcoming about when they were in speculation mode). All the same, this type of analysis conjured many questions about what constitutes plausible evidence, and reliable witnesses. Further, this discussion raised issues on how scholars and investigators can protect themselves from charges of being cranks, conspiracy fanatics, or other such labels used to delegitimize explorations into fuzzy regimes, and reduce the production of multiple perspectives and ideological diversity.

In addition, when considering such fractured information there was a good deal of debate over what type of information has greater validity. For example, in Philip Hammond's analysis of NATO's construction of the war in Kosovo, a schism emerged that proceeded along the lines of those who thought that direct experience had greater validity than research grounded in secondary documentation and those who thought the reverse. Those in the former camp stated that when using secondary data one cannot separate corrupted documents from useful ones while the latter argued that individual experience is too idiosyncratic and often nonrepresentative of a general situation. This area was of profound concern when considering that most activism is virtual. Campaigns and movements develop support from individuals who have no experience of localized problems (such as the war in Kosovo), and who have no choice but to follow and react to the course of events through mediated resources.

Terms and classifications were also dramatically problematized. Terms such as public/public access/private/privatised were subject to considerable drift from context to context, and there was tremendous diversity concerning the way such concepts should be modelled. Of considerable difficulty were even vaguer concepts such as the "the common good". In this case, the fear was that the future hopes and visions of participants were so vague that only an anachronistic political term could be used as a descriptive device. Other common terms that needed more definition were "digital", "citizen", "privacy", "Internet" and "democracy".

INSTITUTIONAL INTERVENTION USING STATE MECHANISMS AND GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION DIRECT ACTION

While participants expressed preferences and tendencies for one model of resistance or the other, on a practical level, most expressed sympathy for hybrid models. On the one hand, it was

Steve Kurtz

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suggested that it is preferable to launch cellular and small group units, which could in turn form the foundation for temporary single issue coalitions geared for both street and electronic actions. Others insisted that alliance building in conjunction with legal initiatives had to be used regardless of the danger of the potential of forming future bureaucracies or other types of long-term authority structures. The need for legal action at both national and international levels was really driven home by Saskia Sassen with her point that the deregulation of mobile capital was a major contributor to the collapse of the financial infrastructure in South Korea, as well as Simon Davies' point that Regulation of Investigatory Powers bill (a bill launched by the British government to link all electronic communications to MI5 total access to all electronic communications without the need of a warrant) was stopped only by an alliance of academics, trade unions, and human rights organizations that intervened in parliamentary process. The use of anti-trust laws were also cited as the only successful means used thus far to break up monopolies. Both Sassen and Quéau noted that such techniques were at times necessary to avert catastrophe.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

A healthy portion of time was given to the subject of the Digital Divide (the massive gap between developed and developing nations regarding technological infrastructure). After giving a brief introduction to fundamental principles of postcolonial theory, Shahidul Alam argued that the grand majority of people in developing nations had been intentionally denied access to information and communications technology (ICT), and that this majority had been all but removed from policy making process regarding ICT (even in their own countries). Alam continued by stating that technological progress dependent on unilateral donor-driven initiatives can only be viewed as a continuation of colonial domination configured to maintain the "global" information political economy. This description was echoed by Cees Hamelink after which he further explained how this divide could be narrowed, if not eliminated, with rather minimal investment (the equivalent of the money spent on pet food annually) by developed nations, thus concluding that the divide is purely a political one.

Linked to this subject, was the theme of expanding the definition of low intensity warfare. Certainly withholding ICT in order to maintain western capital's hegemony is an example. As is Sasken's point of view that national invasions by mobile capital and the dismantling of the welfare state (in the US and UK) constitute a form of violence so savage that it can only be considered warfare.

PRIVACY AND SURVEILLANCE

After the presentations of Davies, Wright, and Campbell, one could not help but believe that the technology necessary for total surveillance in cyberspace and pervasive real space surveillance is not only possible, but is regularly employed in the US and the UK, and is rapidly expanding in other western nations. This tendency was presented as being out of control, and can only be slowed

rather than reversed. The question soon became what should the reaction to this situation be? While the speakers all agreed that cryptography was the best means for an individual to resist electronic surveillance, some audience participants argued for a policy of total transparency at all levels in order to stop the proliferation of intranets and the division of the Internet into a series of fortifications all resisting infiltration from the other. While this option of complete transparency appears to be impractical at the moment, it may become more prominent as infoculture continues to change.

It was also noted that a paradigm shift is underway in the apparatus of repression due to new vision technologies. The older strategies of temporal immediacy and presence are giving way to temporal delay and absence. Any one who has received a traffic ticket through the mail is familiar with this shift. The police field of perception is being extended with vision technology so that entire landscapes of "criminal" data can be recorded and thereby witnessed in a manner that flesh police never could in real time. Although delays in arrest are a weakness with this model (a gap that is getting increasingly smaller), it makes up for this shortcoming by functioning as an excellent means for intelligence gathering for future, often pre-emptive, police strikes. It also functions well in mass actions considered a danger to social order (from traffic infractions to riots) in that police are able to eventually identify and arrest every participant. Cameras have the additional feature of acting as a material, environmental reminder that self-discipline must be maintained at all times. The surveillance system used in London's "iron circle" (a surveillance network that can identify and track any vehicle entering the district) was presented as the state of the art for this particular paradigm of repression.

CRIMINALITY

Criminality was a theme that continually entered presentations at the conference—not so much in its material sense, but in the meanings it generates as a semiotic network inscribed on groups and individuals with resistant tendencies or other minoritarian (in the Deleuzian sense of the term) activities and behaviours. The western cultural landscape has been falsely constructed as seething with terrorists, drug dealers, and paedophiles from whom the public must be protected. Those who challenge the capitalist order tend to be publicly labelled as criminals generally falling into the terrorist category. For example, in spite of the tendency that most activists using models of electronic resistance are applying neither sabotage nor terrorism (data and networks cannot be terrorized), they are still represented as perpetrating high crimes against public safety. Recent laws passed in the UK linking hacking to terrorism are an indication that this labelling trend will increasingly manifest as law. As Simon Davies demonstrated, crime itself has fallen in the UK and US, and yet there are still regular calls and attempts to increase the surveillance capabilities of security agencies through legitimate channels by use of the rhetoric of criminality.

At the material level the culture of control is best indicated by the dramatic expansion of the repression industry (security agencies, prisons, courts, social workers, and hardware/software).

This development was further illustrated by Steve Wright who presented a catalogue of recent developments in near or less-than-lethal weaponry. This included weapons like water canons, foam guns, car taser security systems, and stun batons that ranged in deployment contexts from home use, to prison use, to general crowd control. These weapons (of which there are a far greater variety than which is listed here) are designed to debilitate, disable, disorient, disperse, and/or detain those who are on the wrong end of them.

COMMERCIALISATION

Cees Hamelink, in a manner reminiscent of the Situationists, began his lecture by expressing his concern that the cultural landscape was transforming itself into a big billboard. No person, or place could escape being a medium of spectacle. Sassen was also thinking along these lines in regard to electronic space in particular. Using software development and sales as key indicators, she argued that the topography of electronic space will be increasingly configured as a space of commerce. The internet (a term she found suspect) as a pure research space or as a liberated zone is rapidly moving into obscurity as commerce overwhelms the space. The only big research that will soon be on the internet will be that of corporate surveillance to gather data useful for identifying consumer groups, tracking consumer behaviour, and constructing pinpoint consumer profiles.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Although this topic was at the margins of conversation, it was noted that biotechnology would play a role parallel to ICT in various pancapitalist initiatives. Flesh informatics are but another form of digital modelling which rests on the cosmological principle of information society in general – that order comes from order (which stands in contrast to the analogic model that order arises from chaos). Whether we are speaking of digital TV or a clone, capital's obsession with these technologies is with the fidelity of replication. The usefulness of biotechnology to support capitalist hegemonies is undeniable. Already we are seeing colonial expansion by way of raiding third world cultures' biological resources by eco-pirates and bio-privateers; Eugenic consciousness is being reconfigured for a consumer market eager for the totalisation of reproductive process via extreme medical intervention; And the development of surveillance techniques designed to invade biological privacy at a molecular level.

FINAL NOTE

While this conference had a deeply pessimistic aura surrounding it in regard to subject matter and critical analysis, there was still a general feeling that effective action could be taken, and that apocalypse was not a predetermined outcome. Autonomous zones still exist in a variety of forms. These can be maintained and potentially expanded even in the most repressive of situations. The strength of the society of speed is also its weakness. No amount of management can eliminate all the fuzzy, confused, and dark areas that accompany high velocity reconfigurations

and emergent complexities. Even totalising institutions like jails have under-economies, illicit activities, secret organizations, and conspiracies. While the intensity of control may fluctuate, it will never reach perfection.

World-Information Forum Vienna (2000): Conference Report World-Information.Org

<http://world-information.org>

The World Information Forum, held in connection with the World Information Exhibition at Vienna's Technical Museum, brought together a number of distinguished speakers who all addressed, each from a different perspective, the political and artistic dilemmas as well as the opportunities contained in the transition to a digital world. Reflecting the many of the topics and concerns around which the work of World-Information.Org revolves, the speakers and panellists discussed issues of democratisation, surveillance, digital grassroots activism, as well as artistic practice in digital networks, with Pauline van Mourik Broekman from Mute Magazine, London as chairperson.

Ben Bagdikian, Professor Emeritus of Communication, was regrettably prevented from attending the conference in by a last-minute medical emergency. However, he made the extended version of his talk available to the conference. Following a welcome message by Konrad Becker, the paper served as the basis for a brief introduction to WIO's work by Wolfgang Suetzl. In fact, Bagdikian's paper on "Democratisation and the Digital World" in many ways addressed key concerns of World-Information.Org. Unless the political nature of modern information and communication technologies is recognised, Bagdikian states, there is a danger that the democratic achievements are eroded. Freedom and unrestricted availability of information is fundamental to every democratic system of government, but can hardly be spoken of when the global information channels are in the hands of a few powerful corporations inspired not by democratic ideals, but by a desire to generate profit. Another factor undermining democratic norms is the erosion of privacy, a problem whose urgency is still not fully understood but becomes drastically apparent when the development and increasing acceptance of interception and data capturing techniques in the digital realm is considered. Against this background, retaining and expanding democracy in the face of informatisation requires a concerted effort of governmental and non-governmental democratic forces across the globe, and the creation of international forums capable of designing internationally valid norms against the abuse of democratic rights in the digital world.

The uneven distribution of information resources across the globe was then addressed by Kunda Dixit from Nepal. Dixit criticised the hype that surrounds information and communication technologies and that makes it appear as a remedy against all ills in the eyes of development agencies, third world elites and western corporations alike. Where everything else has failed, so the argument runs, information and communication technologies will finally bring about the desired effect: elimination of poverty, and educational and health standards matching the "developed" nations of the west. Yet large scale infusions of new technologies in the ailing economies and societies of the third world are bound to fail when basic technical infrastructure is not in place. Building schools

and providing clean drinking water may be a less profitable business, but unlike the ICT phantasies of development experts and managers they respond to urgent needs. On the other hand, simple communication technologies such as short-wave radio, frowned upon by the priests of technical progress, are vastly under-utilised. In the final analysis, however, no technology can solve problems that are political in their nature, and that need therefore need to be addressed politically.

The presentation of Steven Wright, director of the OMEGA foundation, and author of the report on technologies of political control for the European Parliament, took up a particularly alarming aspect of informatisation: the rise of the surveillance state and the sneaking elimination of privacy. In a presentation backed up by a wealth of visuals and graphics, Wright told the story of the spread of surveillance technology, and of surveillance becoming a standard tool of political repression even in the midst of democratic states. Advances in communication technologies tend to immediately be integrated in technological systems of political control, projecting the power of policing into new areas of society and culture, and rapidly blurring the line between law enforcement and open repression, and between the military and the police. How far the undermining of the right to privacy has already progressed and is being further promoted become apparent with disturbing urgency in the presentation, which ended by portraying anti-surveillance initiatives both on governmental and non-governmental level.

The second half of the conference was dedicated to questions of artistic practice and social activism in digital networks. A panel consisting of publicist and filmmaker Hito Steyerl (G), Alice Dvorska (CZ, INPEG), Marion Hamm (UK, IndyMedia), and Honor Harger (UK/AUS, Tate Modern London, *radio q u a l i a*) discussed their experience in promoting digital art and using the digital media in campaigns. Anti-globalisation campaigner Dvorska spoke about INPEG's (Initiative Against Economic Globalisation) experience in using the New Media as communication tools in rallying against the IMF Summit in Prague in 2000. Although Internet Access in the Czech Republic is not as widespread as in many western European nations, the net proved to be quite effective in bringing together resistant groups and individuals. Hamm also referred to the empowerment potential of the new media, emphasising the importance of a combination of activities in virtual and real space, and pointing out the dilemmas arising out of this double-track approach, such as the tension between providing a completely free access to a website and the need for editorial work. Harger's contribution concerned the relationship between the internet and the broadcast media. *radio q u a l i a* is an experimental new media broadcasting platform that explores new forms of broadcasting as well as providing performative space combining web streamings with traditional media. Steyerl provided an illuminating insights into her work on the hierarchy of surveillance, where docusoaps such as Big Brother, CCTV surveillance of public places merge within the imperatives of the global information economy.

At the end of the days session there was a clear feeling that in spite of the potential authoritarianism exercised in digital networks, it is within complexities of these networks themselves that openings appear from which resistant and autonomous practices can be launched, provided that democratic values and creativity can be asserted both in the real and the virtual worlds. The networks can then also serve as a mobilising agent for broader public criticism and help to empower individuals and cultural groups.

The Vienna Document

Transnational Net Culture and "The Need to Know" of Information Societies

Open Cultures Working Group

Vienna Draft Document by the Open Cultures Working Group hosted by "Towards a Culture of Open Networks" – a collaborative program developed by Sarai CSDS (Delhi), Waag Society (Amsterdam) and World-Information.Org (Vienna).

<http://world-information.org>

Information technologies are setting the global stage for economic and cultural change. More than ever, involvement in shaping the future calls for a wide understanding and reflection on the ecology and politics of information cultures. So called globalization not only signifies a worldwide network of exchange but new forms of hierarchies and fragmentation, producing deep transformations in both physical spaces and immaterial information domains. While global information cities increasingly resemble neo-medieval city states, market concentrations establish a dominion over knowledge. On the way to information feudalism, diversity seems to loose out. Nevertheless global communication technologies still hold a significant potential for empowerment, cultural expression and transnational collaboration. To fully realize the potential of life in global information societies we need to acknowledge the plurality of agents in the information landscape and the heterogeneity of collaborative cultural practice. The exploration of alternative futures is linked to a living cultural commons and social practice based on networks of open exchange and communication.

We an open group of artists, researchers and cultural activists recognize common ground for transnational exchange and collaboration towards a culture of open networks. Cultural practices surveying information grids of global cities paint landscapes of global transformations and provide depth to an outlook towards a future that has already begun. Cultural investigations into the urban grids of communicative practices are at the base of mapping options and negotiating conditions of socio-cultural reality. Cultural collaboration, providing a wealth of perspectives and ideas in communication practices, is in itself a transformative process, an agency of change. We need to value the diversity of emerging recombinant interactions and networks of imagination that provide a rich resource for our future cultural heritage.

We applaud all initiatives that reclaim the benefits of new communication technologies for the common public.

We know that the future is too precious to leave it to experts; Digital human rights in everyday life are everyone's concern.

We trust nodes open of information cultures to explore the diversity of choices in the shaping of information societies based on semiotic democracy.

We recognize that street level open intelligence is of high public value and a cultural process that is highly dependent on information climate and environment conditions.

We do not accept a world where popular culture and human heritage is fenced in and IP restriction management separates us from our own thoughts.

We appreciate the fact that boundaries between users and producers become permeable in new communication environments and new practices dissolve traditional notions of authorship.

We are committed to critically observing the mindsets of possession and the creation of scarcity as processes implementing control in the information economy.

We refuse to live in an information society where nothing belongs to all of us, but everything is owned by cartels, locking human knowledge into the vaults of private interests.

We acknowledge that knowledge is for those who do, not for those who don't, because cultural progress implies that ideas emerge from exchanges, from communication, from interaction.

We do not want a world where you need a license to whistle a song or access your own memories.

We value information as a human resource of cultural expression rather than a commodity to be sold to consumers.

DISCOURSE

We anticipate a silent spring in Information Society's landscapes when even a bird's song becomes subject of copyright control.

We realize that intangible information resources raise the issue of a digital ecology, the need to understand ecosystems constituted by information flows through various media.

NEW ART PRACTICES

We urge to ask who benefits from technology that is never neutral, empowerment and participation or domination and containment.

We reaffirm that security concerns are not an excuse for pervasive surveillance and control environments linking personal profiles and producing social sorting and segregation.

TACTICAL MEDIA

This text is a document that emerged from a work meeting in Vienna June 2005. This draft of the Vienna Document is written by Konrad Becker and Felix Stalder based on the inputs and contributions made by the members of the working group.

DIGITAL MEDIACULTURE, NETWORKING AND PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC NETBASE

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NOTES

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The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of Waag Society and its Partners (Sarai and Public Netbase) and of the people who contributed to the discussions of the working group, and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.

World-InfoCon 2002, Amsterdam

Eric Kluitenberg

A public conference in the frame of World-Information.Org 2002, Amsterdam

<http://world-information.org>

The World-InfoCon 2002 conference "The Network Society of Control" was a two-day interdisciplinary meeting and conference held at De Balie, Centre for Culture and Politics in Amsterdam, one of the Amsterdam partner organisations for World-Information.Org, Amsterdam 2002.

The idea of the conference was to investigate two key areas of infopolitics: Surveillance and security in the digital domain, and public relation management as two sides of information control, and secondly the intensifying debate about intellectual property rights and alternative models for the current highly restrictive legal frameworks for intellectual property rights management. The choice for these themes was guided by a growing awareness that information control is a vital meeting point of economic, political and cultural interests. The conference was intended to look at this issue not only from a political/economic point of view, but also to take the cultural dimension of these processes very seriously. Culture relies on the availability of information and the exchange of ideas and opinions. The space of free exchange of information, ideas and other immaterial goods is increasingly reduced, after the early start of the internet and net.culture seemed to promise an exponential growth in the availability of information and the possibilities for information exchange. Cultural development and innovation is stifled by all too tight restrictions on information exchange. This point is also recognised in the world of information law, and initiatives such as the Creative Commons a new legal project and licensing system put forward by some of the brightest minds in US information law who attempt to address this issue in a constructive manner. We briefly describe here the background of our discussion and some of the main outcomes.

In advance of the conference a reader was compiled with materials mainly distributed via the internet, which documents the context of the conference in greater detail, contains interviews with relevant thinkers and activists, and concludes with a section on the World-Information.Org project itself and the projects produced by artists in the frame of the 2002 Amsterdam edition of World-Information.Org.

BACKGROUND

In 2000 De Balie organised a conference of similar scale and format devoted to a critique of the new economy called Tulipomania DotCom. At that time, June 2000, the new economy and dotcom craze were at their height in Europe and The Netherlands, but had already crashed in

the US. What we witnessed in the two years that followed was the complete and total demise of the new economy and large parts of the new media industry. The benefits of the dotcom hype went to the financial speculators who left the digital pyramid game at the right moment, whilst their willing accomplices were left with a severe dotcom hang-over. The idea of a bristling internet- and new media economy, let alone the premise of a "new" economic logic has been dissolved. New media as a business sector has become the object of disdain and pessimism. No longer is the ICT sector seen as the motor of innovation and economic renewal.

Meanwhile, despite the pervasive dotcom nihilism, the internet has been a huge success as a social and cultural phenomenon. Well above 500 million people use this new communications medium on a daily basis, and especially e-mail has transformed the economics of international communication, fostering countless transnational connections between a multitude of private, personal, social and public initiatives. But despite the fact that the economic take-over seems to have failed in the on-line world, whilst the social and cultural sphere are thriving, is no reason for celebration of the latter: First of all the social and cultural actors were relegated to the side-lines when the commercial violence unleashed itself on the networks. Later on they were equally absent in the demise of the commercial players on-line. At best they were helpless spectators, at worst they were part of the vast army of willing accomplice.

More worrying, however, is the fact that after the demise of the new economy darker forces have taken control of the dominant net.agenda: Security and control have become the buzz words of the main-stream discourse about the internet. At first it focused on the concept of "unwarranted content". Post 9/11 it turned into an at times hysterical debate on security demands vis-à-vis the perceived threat of international terrorism. In the drive for total information control that followed from this security anxiety even more vital issues than the balance between security and privacy are in danger of dropping out of sight: Silently the old economy, and in this case in particular the media and information giants have absorbed what was left of the "new" economy. New integrated constellations of media production and distribution have emerged, of which the AOL/TimeWarner case has only been the most visible. They generate dubious information monopolies that appear in stark contrast with the widely celebrated open ended and exchange based character of the internet.

New legislation for intellectual products in the digital domain all push for the protection of vested interests. The interests of public accessibility of information products, one of the main strong points of digital networking technology, are severely harmed by the narrow interpretation of Intellectual Property according to various representatives of public institutions such as libraries and public information centres, and more predictably by the advocates of copyleft and open content. These critics stress the necessity of an open information and knowledge space as a catalyst for development and as a means of bridging the digital divides that grow within and between our societies. Interestingly similar initiatives have been launched from the side of information law stating that free use of information materials, within certain limits is a prerequisite for innovation.

In a number of converging debates the figure of the commons has emerged as a central thread; The Creative Commons, the information commons and the overarching idea of a digital commons. Taking the analogy of common land for the poor to cultivate, the discussion asserts an open and participatory knowledge and information space in which knowledge becomes a resource for the public domain, rather than a proprietary asset. There are complicated questions here about the viability and the economics of a digital commons. Some of the contradictory questions are explored in the texts gathered in this reader and during the conference for which it is produced. Can we dispense with the model of commodification at all to produce the knowledge that needs to enter the public domain? Can the digital commons help to bridge the digital divide? Is the idea of open networks about to be dissolved in the face of the current narratives of the war on terror? Can the digital commons ever become sustainable? Is there any political will to turn it into a reality? Is institutional politics needed at all, can it contribute? For us as organisers the main question put forward was how to build the digital commons?

SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

The conference produced a high level of analytic debate from a variety of disciplinary viewpoints. From the start the conference was conceived as small-scale, but high-level international working conference. The conference should first of all be regarded as an endeavour to map the new terrain of information politics in a period following the demise of utopian claims of cyberculture in the nineties and the ideology of the new economy that was built on many of these claims at the turn of the millennium, and more importantly in the middle of a period of widespread cynicism about information and network technology and its significance for social, economic and cultural processes in society.

Especially the first day of the conference was an exercise in mapping new domains of power by tracking recent trends in networked surveillance and technologically enhanced social control systems, leading from the more technologically determined forms of information control to the refinement of p.r. technologies and public opinion management strategies. Cultural critic and writer Brian Holmes most literally illustrated the practice of mapping new control systems by discussing a series of projects he has been involved with together with the French art group Bureau d'Etudes, who are involved in an extensive project series producing maps of European control and policing systems executed as large scale newspapers, on-line maps and installations and wall-paintings, all of which are distributed via cultural festivals, magazines, and internet projects.

In the afternoon session of the first day, Sheldon Rampton and Eveline Lubbers made a critical analysis of the communication strategies of large companies and government agencies aimed at positioning a very specific image of their actions and policies not always in balance with their actual policies. They showed how civic-interest groups, concerned about possible effects of these policies held outside of public scrutiny with sophisticated communication strategies, can work around the p.r. front to make companies and government agencies accountable to the wider public. Eveline Lubbers revealed how the p.r.-related spendings of mayor industrial companies on communicating these companies' efforts on sustainable production methods, in 2001 exceeded the actual spending on the creation of

more sustainable production methods, thus indicating the scope of the these problem civic interest groups are facing.

The second day was first of all a critical examination of the strategies of the open source/open content movement that advocates alternatives for the mentioned restrictive regulation on intellectual property rights, especially as they have been developed for the digital domain. Darius Cuplinkas from the Open Society Institute in Budapest showed a very successful alternative publication system of scientific and academic papers that made these findings publicly accessible and created a viable network for academic exchange, independent of mayor academic publishers. The reasoning here is that this knowledge is created with public means (academic funding) and thus should be available in the public domain and not closed of as a commercially exploited information asset.

Steve Cisler contributed insights from the world of public libraries in the US, while Thorsten Schilling of the Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung showed a series of projects of his organisation, emphasising that there is still a very strong public domain, at least in Europe, which should be mobilised more decidedly for the digital domain. Felix Stalder discussed examples of initiatives that have been created outside of formal institutional frameworks, such as the Open Flows organisation (Open publishing systems) or the mailing list nettime on net-criticism and internet-culture.

This second day was in short devoted to a comparison of models of how a digital public domain, or a digital commons, could be built. We missed the presence of a representative of the Creative Commons project a new set of licensing systems developed by information law specialists in the US headed by professor Lawrence Lessig, intended to offer more flexible arrangements to manage intellectual property rights. Their case is to go back to the original purpose of copyright law to safeguard intellectual production by offering authors some mechanisms of protecting their work, while ensuring sufficient possibilities for the exchange and re-use and modification of existing ideas, so as not to stifle innovation.

Most speakers concluded that the restrictive frameworks for intellectual property rights implemented recently by the US (DMCA) and in a new DG XIII directive by the EU, will not be able to withstand the pressures for a more free exchange of intellectual products exerted by the convergence of technological development (deployment of broadband internet most notably) and wide-spread consumer demands. The right to protection of intellectual products is also not understood as self-evident in many non western cultures, and so Arun Mehta concluded that only an act of civil disobedience, mimicked by millions around the net would be able to enforce a change in these policies, and was in fact an inevitability.

The absence of a representative of the Creative Commons (because of problems with the date and the official launch in the US of their new licensing systems) precluded a direct comparison of the various alternative models proposed with the licensing systems introduced by the Creative Commons group. As the Creative Commons licensing system is currently the most promising alternative to DMCA-like regulation, this could only be dealt with in a cursory manner, and remains a topic for a next debate.

World-Information.Org

Mission in Serbia

Dejan Sretenović

World-Information.Org mission in Serbia is quite specific regarding its historical experience of control and conflict in the sphere of information and communication, poor technical infrastructure, as well as insufficient interest of the public for use of ICT potentials in actual processes of social transformations and cultural shifts. Exhibition World-Information.Org is a pioneering enterprise in Serbia, representing for the first time, in a comprehensive, interdisciplinary, educative and critical manner, the ICT paradigm and its ideological, political, cultural, economical, social, military and technological implications.

World-Information.Org is being presented in Serbia at the time of growing dissatisfaction with the dynamics of change in the sphere of public information, undefined development policy in IC sector and lack of political will for just regulation of the digital public domain. For this reason, World-Information.Org is a major contribution to elevation of the level of knowledge, establishment of a platform for critical thought and setting in motion public actions aiming at development of strategies of collaborative action leading to a re-evaluation of the role of ICT in institutional policies in Serbia as well as in the apprehension of its citizens.

Also, World-Information.Org aims at demystification of the relationship between media and public opinion in a contemporary society by shifting the accent from media policy to the information policy. In this way World-Information.Org mission in Serbia pays heed to the message which Croat philosopher Boris Buden has sent to all those prone to fetishization of the role of free information flow in former autocratic regimes in Croatia and Serbia: Only a politically aware subject can use a neutral information to create the truth of necessary political change.

World-Information.Org is emphasizing the necessity of stimulation of creative use of digital technology in arts and culture, transformation of the system of art education and provision of necessary conditions for the artists to have direct access to technology. Artistic projects presented at World-Information.Org exhibition demonstrate a turn from representation to information which, through digital artistic practices, becomes a raw material for creative interventions of unimagined potentials. The slogan "digital art of today is cultural heritage of the future" is not just an appealing marketeering phrase, but a historical necessity.

In spite of the objective fact that some of the issues raised by World-Information.Org seem to be thousands of miles away from the actual reality of Serbian society, we must not forget what William Gibson once said about development of the new media and technology: "The future is already here, but it is not evenly distributed yet". Entering the global infosphere is not just an issue of technical equipment and economic capacity, but also a matter of ICT development policy and cultural participation.

Realization of World-Information.Org project in Serbia is a result of a collaborative effort of governmental and non-governmental organizations from Belgrade and Novi Sad, supported by numerous participants, contributors, institutions, companies, media, sponsors and donors who in this project recognized the dynamics of cultural change. Finally, the organizers express their gratitude to Konrad Becker and Public Netbase team whose enthusiasm, friendship, support and understanding made possible this adventure called World-Information.Org.

When State of Emergency Becomes a Constant

Branka Ćurčić

During the very preparation of the exhibition World-Information.Org in Novi Sad, Serbia, on the March 12th, 2003, 10 days before the opening, Zoran Đinđić, Prime Minister of Serbia was assassinated. The same day, state of emergency was declared in the country, with the aim to investigate his assassination and to arrest the perpetrators, followed by greater authority of the police to act, in a period of over one month. It was the event that deeply shook up Serbia, which, in many different ways, pushed all other events taking place at that time to the background, including the exhibition itself. From the present perspective, it could be said that this event in a certain sense accentuated exactly those elements of the exhibition dealing with certain aspects of laws which constrain people's lives, by introducing contemporary control mechanisms aiming towards the primacy of the private over the public and of collective responsibilities over individual freedom.

According to some opinions, the power to declare the state of emergency defines a country's sovereignty. But political theorists such as Giorgio Agamben have criticized this idea, arguing that the mechanism of the state of emergency deprives certain people of their civil rights, producing what he terms *homo sacer* ("the sacred man"). Agamben investigates how the proliferation of laws within a state of emergency or crisis can become a prolonged state of being, operating to rob individuals of their citizenship. In Serbia, the state of emergency was declared, the state took power to act beyond law, but instead of revealing the political background of this assassination and acting on it, it prolonged this continuous state of being. Different laws and legislations were introduced and implemented, such as the law on piracy, which directly pointed to one of the side-effects of such a condition, which is to endanger peoples' civil liberties.

The whole state of emergency and the long trial of Đinđić's assassins, which is still ongoing today, are marked by both engagement of the police, secret services and the government, but also by their genuine inability and unwillingness to cast light on the political motivation for such a violent act. The assassins were sentenced in 2007, but the complex net of accomplices and certain political figures in the background of the assassination remain unrevealed.

At the opening of the World-Information.Org Exhibition in Novi Sad, director of the Public Netbase t0, Konrad Becker, stated that it seems that the whole world is in a state of emergency and that in Serbia people seem to be aware of it – partly the people of Serbia and partly the Serbian government. Agamben claims that the difference between oppressive regimes and democracy is indeed thin. Concentration camps, Guantanamo Bay, and the inhumane treatment of asylum seekers are created as entire zones of exception, and the state of exception becomes a status under which certain categories of people live, whose lives are captured by law. In Serbia, the state of emergency failed to permanently capture those responsible for the assassination of the Prime Minister, while "softly" keeping all its other citizens in captivity, not by implementation of specific behavioural acts, but through making it generally impossible for people to comprehend the political stances of this criminal act. There is a tendency in today's society to extend such processes to all citizens, treating the entire population as a suspect – except those who actually represent the criminal body.

DISCOURSE

NEW ART PRACTICES

TACTICAL MEDIA

DIGITAL
MEDIACULTURE
NETWORKING AND
PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC NETBASE

Cultural Intelligence

Cultural Intelligence and the Urban Multitudes

World-Information.Org

December 11, 2006

"World-Information City" and the Culture of Open Networks, by World-Information.Org

<http://world-information.org>

"World-Information City" was a one-week program of events and a publication addressing global issues of intellectual property and technology in conjunction with changing urban landscapes. The activities that took place in Bangalore in November, 2005 presented a rich spectrum of public relations including conference and workshops, outreach programs and public art, interventions and exhibits, screenings, performances and guided tours. "World-Information City" focusing

WORLD-
INFORMATION.ORG

on cultures of open networks in technology driven urban information societies, was the result of an extended process of global collaboration and rooted in the diversity of Bangalore's Information Society projects. Held during the UN's World Summit of the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis at India's IT metropolis "World-Information City" constituted part of a larger project in the framework of the EU-India Cross Cultural Programme together with the, Waag Society, Sarai CSDS and the Institute for New Culture Technologies/t0 working together "Towards a Culture of Open Networks". The primary objective of the overall project was to build bridges of culture and communication in Europe and India, focusing on issues relating to the emergence of "Information Society"; A web of social, cultural, economic and political relationships giving primacy to the technologies of information. This collaboration emerged from a previous history of the three partners working together in an extensive dialogue on these very same areas of discourse and practice. Over some years and in the course of the project this developed into an extensive network of cooperation including the Alternative Law Forum (ALF) in Bangalore itself.

World-Information.Org, a model for a trans-national cultural intelligence agency staged its extensive exhibition and conference program in Vienna, Amsterdam, Belgrade, and Novi Sad and spawned activities in various European cities like London, Berlin, Geneva or Helsinki. "Towards a Culture of Open Networks" presented a unique chance to realize World-Information.Org operations beyond the geographic borders of Europe. "World-Information City" became a challenge to adapt concepts of cultural intelligence to a South-Asian practice and perspective and to map its processes into the context of Bangalore, the icon of IT outsourcing. However, the sharing and transmission of public knowledge is a prerequisite for a thriving, participatory society based on equality while valuing diversity all over the world. Similarly, and in addition to their ability to pool know-how to spearhead ICT research, cultural organizations and networked media arts offer models of alternative practice, and a unique contribution to ongoing debate about intellectual property rights and the knowledge commons on a global scale.

In introductory conferences like "Networks of Imagination" (June 2005, Vienna) researchers, practitioners and institutions from Asia and Europe working in the field of culture and knowledge economies, looked into the practice, strategies and interventions of agents in the information landscape and debated assessments regarding change and everyday life in information societies beyond Europe. Surveying emerging maps of social and cultural interaction, tracking the mindsets of property, the creation of scarcity in the information economy, and the processes of control materializing in global cities and converting information into intelligence. The "Vienna Document – 'The Need to Know' of Information Societies" a digital cultural policy manifesto was formulated by the Open Cultures Working Group and again asserted that exploring alternative futures is linked to a living cultural and social practice based on networks of open exchange and dissemination. Nodes of semiotic democracy based on clusters of free information cultures provide trajectories for discovering different options in the shaping of information societies. Independent investigations into the

urban grids of power that shape the social reorganization of cultures enrich the imagination towards a multiplication of choices in negotiating conditions of socio-cultural reality. Smart modes of networking are a prerequisite of being able to challenge the overwhelming noise of vested interests in order to get these voices heard. Ventures like World-Information.Org need to develop a broad spectrum of communication strategies designed to engage the imagination of potential target audiences. The existing resources need to be carefully adapted to realize an optimized approach to influence results appropriate to specific time based contexts and conditions. The identification and assessment of target groups and their accessibility provides the base for a multilevel operation plan with different communication layers.

The World-Information City Newspapers objective was to alert the general public, decision makers in politics and business, and multipliers in media and educational institutions about the dangers emanating from restrictive information regimes, about global intellectual property (IP) as well as the cultural and societal potentials of alternative information management regimes under the heading of an "information commons" or "knowledge commons". With a view to the World-Information.Org program, and its focus on the interrelationship between information regimes and urban environments, a majority of the contributions focused on urban issues. Inviting a group of outstanding authors to contribute non-specialist and to-the-point articles, care was taken to reflect key concerns with regard to IP/Commons and urban development as well as to ensure a balanced geographical perspective. In order to gain in-depth reach within each of the audience groups and geographical areas the publication was aimed at, the paper has been produced in three different editions: An international edition; A Bangalore edition, with additional specific contents and a German language version. With the principal target areas being the World-Information City events at Bangalore, the World Summit of the Information Society in Tunis and European and international readers a global dissemination strategy of 30,000 copies of the publication could be realized. As the main printed publication the paper played a key role in the World-Information City program as well as in the general activities of the Institute for New Culture Technologies and has served as a point of reference in the debates around the commons and IP also as an online resource.

From an early point in the World-Information City project artists and communication designers have been invited in open calls to join the process of developing key iconography for urban media interventions regarding IP and the city. World-Information City aimed to raise awareness on issues of the information society in the public sphere and to introduce these themes into the streets and urban environment of the city. A multitude of ideas and imagery emerged and have been displayed in various contexts while some works have been specifically realized for the streets of Bangalore, highly diverse media interventions located in different parts of the city. Along with billboards, posters, stickers and traditional Indian media forms like cut-outs, street-banners and wall paintings, branded rickshaws and mobile displays presented key messages in the city's streets, repeatedly prompting the local media and newspapers to pick up on this imagery and use it for their illustrations. The World-Information City campaign caught

passers-by by surprise through its infiltration of the city's ad-dominated visual infosphere with billboards, posters and even flower arrangements, questioning the politics of IP in places usually dominated by unquestioned commercial imperatives.

The locations of the artists work and installations, stretched between three main points in the city, from some of the oldest quarters of town to some of the new upscale areas of the city. The dispersed show across different sites was designed to facilitate site-specific works, but also to allow for interaction with different publics. The experience, sights, sounds and smells along the way being part of the show, and simultaneously being informed and broadened by the media and art projects. A multitude of artistic practice represented a wide range of approaches to a technological communication culture and provided many layers of investigation into the infosphere. The diversity of artworks that contributed to World-Information City addressed conflicts surrounding the rise of the information economy, be it in the form of installations, objects, performances, or films accessible to the public at different points of bustling Bangalore. The many interventions which reappeared in the city in various formats, like Sebastian Lütgert's brightly colored "Good Questions" series of simple but clever inquiries, Ulrike Brückner's "Delinquents" billboard featuring a theme of the criminalization of sharing, Vasu Dixit's "Copycat" mural at the bus terminal, or Ashok Sukumaran "Electricity as Network" street installation at the oldest cinema of Bangalore, to name just a few, were entering into an imaginary dialog in public space.

Broadcasting in the electronic communication spectrum Shaina Anand's "WIC TV", after engineering the support of a commercial cable operator, went into operation in one of the city's neighborhoods and managed to get a hold of a prime slot on a local TV channel. Produced together with a highly spirited team it was receiving great interest from local audiences and quickly acquired a dedicated fan audience. In different locations art works like Christoph Schäfer's ironic reflections on global mediated culture were complemented by Ayisha Abraham's media archaeology and the screening of the international "Thought Thieves" video award for WSIS. Rajivan Ayyappan's radio soundscape installation "Air Around" meeting with Marko Peljhan's concepts of alternative communication technologies and alongside 0100101110101101.ORG's over-affirmative rendering of a fictional European Union movie campaign are examples of the breadth in artistic production. With the conference location in a public park next to a spacious bamboo groove, visitors could wander off of into a World-Infostructure show of a large number of graphic displays based on research by World-Information.Org. Numerous visualizations illustrate issues associated with the development of digital media and sophisticated technical instruments like the increasing use of biometric devices, themes linked to various aspects of information societies as well as topics relating to Bangalore.

Parallel to the World Summit in Tunis, the World-Information City conference with satellite events in Paris and Vienna brought together renowned European and South-Asian researchers on issues of information economies and Intellectual Property Regimes related to the social dynamic of emerging global information cities. Like all WiO conferences the event was open to

non-specialist audiences and accessible to a larger audience via internet streaming. The two day conference, addressed social and political questions related to neo-medievalism and information feudalism, as well as semiotic democracy and the psychological and structural qualities of urban development reflected in urban zoning and the rise of city states. Emerging intellectual property regimes make knowledge and freely shared resources into private possessions of a few large corporations. This virtual land grab has new feudal figures dominating knowledge economies, reducing the promise of a new public domain and the digital commons to a faint possibility.

The talks looked into the question of how the city is affected by Information and Communication Technologies and the rise of electronic surveillance and control. Mapping interrelations of global information landscapes and urban transformations, of immaterial regimes and social realities, it highlighted conflicts over the dominion on knowledge, the implications of new information regimes on knowledge and culture production and the zoning of the information city. Questioning the obsession over intellectual property rights and the new limitations imposed on digital information exchange, it explored arguments for the "Information Commons", a democratically regulated information space with public accountability. This requires a vibrant culture of "Open Source", based on a plurality of agents in the information landscape and the heterogeneity of collaborative cultural practices.

Beyond long term collaborators like Felix Stalder, co-editor of the WIC newspaper, or Eric Kluitenberg from WIO Amsterdam, or project partners like Lawrence Liang from ALF or the Sarai group itself, a range of stimulating speakers engaged in the dialog. "The globalized IT industry in India is an international island of privilege in a sea of local despair", said Indian writer and critic Arundathi Roy at the World-Information City conference concluding session. Speaking a short distance away from Bangalore's IT corridors, Roy stressed the parallels between the technologies of the colonial period, roads and railways, and the contemporary expansion of IT into the rural areas. Surveillance expert David Lyon views Bangalore call centers as the sites of "social sorting", the automatized hierarchization of social strata according to criteria of profit generation, as in database marketing. Clouded by rhetoric of service and privacy, political accountability is being eroded by invisible streams of data. However, as Bangalore-based feminist and historian Lata Mani pointed out, "The logic of capitalist globalization is not the only logic at play, a statement that finds an empirical grounding in Solly Benjamin's work on urban land conflicts, also presented at the conference. His accompanying guided tours "Cities within Cities" did give an intriguing inside view into urban and zoning and the transformation of cities. Even more layers of inquiry into the theory and practice of emancipatory knowledge work was provided by a range of accompanying workshops on the organization and economy of the commons, open source tools and programming as well as a range of media skills.

With this mix of locations, media and technologies, World-Information City was able to catch the attention of a vast audience even outside of the closed spaces of the conference, the various exhibition spaces, workshops and performances and to set a model for cross cultural intelligence cooperation and artistic interventions in the global infosphere.

Bangalore and Back

Reflections on World-Information City, Bangalore

Felix Stalder

<http://world-information.org>

Bangalore is a mythical city. Once a quiet "garden city" it is turned upside down by local, regional, national and international forces at break-neck speed. But what is it turning into? In the absence of any way to fully grasp of the city's emerging shape as it continues change, myths are growing. They are taming contradictory and complex stories into easy, instructive narratives that can bolster a wide range of already existing views. If the mirror is broken, there are many images to see.

In the Western press, Bangalore stands for both a promise and a threat. It's the promise of globalization gone right, of a world where the hierarchies between the "first" and "third" world have collapsed. It is a symbol of the new world which is flat, an even playing field rewarding the hard-working wherever they might be. Rising middle classes are becoming the new political actors of democratization. Stepped up international competition is ushering Western governments down the beneficial path of streamlining their bureaucracies and upgrading their own economies.

In this new world, neo-liberal booster and NYT foreign policy columnist Thomas Friedman puts it, "you have to run faster to stay in place".¹ Here, the promise seems to morph into a threat. After many manufacturing jobs have move eastwards, jobs higher up the value chain are coming under pressure from out-sourcing. After all, there are millions qualified programmers in India ready to do coding for a pittance and thanks to the internet, geographic distance no longer matters. Like all myths, this is a powerful story, with a kernel of truth, yet more educative than descriptive.

"World-Information City" – a series of events and an international conference held in Bangalore in November 2005 – set out to examine this mythical place through interventions by artists and activists, and through analysis by a wide range of scholars from Europe and India, working in fields such as history, surveillance studies, cultural and media studies, urbanism, and political theory.

For me, an avid reader of the Western press and well attuned to their myth making and coming to Bangalore for the first time, the most important realization came early: Being in Bangalore would not get me much closer to the facts behind the many myths of this city than reading the European press. Rather, the artists and scholars were multiplying the myths. Or, to be more precise, it turned out that much of the material they worked with, were locally produced myths about Bangalore itself. In other words, Bangalore is no less mythical to locals than it is to foreigners, though the myths are different. There is the myth of American suburb, narrated in countless soap operas flashed around the world on satellite TV and ingrained in the cultural make-up of Indians returning from the US to work in the expanding software industries. These myths provide the blueprint for Bangalore's own newly constructed suburbs. In his installation "Melrose place" Christoph Schäfer investigated an actually existing suburban development, modeled closely after the American TV series of the same name. Here, in self-contained islands, gated and guarded, people live out their dreams and fantasies about what it means to lead a good life in a globalized society, yet still claiming to have rightful place as the future elite of India (rather than being immigrants in the US). The surveillance mechanisms securing such upscale islands were examined by Taha Mehmood. On the other end of the social scale, there are the myths about the gray markets, the vast sections of the economy which seem to function largely outside the regulatory framework. They are refusing to accept the mythical and counter-intuitive notions intellectual property and dispense with the legal system for enforcing contracts, in favor of more robust and hands-on notions of physical property and kinship relations, as Lawrence Liang and Shuddhabrata Sengupta analyzed. These gray markets serve the vast sections of the city that are not included official fantasies of the middle classes, yet are still living in a fully mediated, translocal networks. Shaina Anand explored the semi-legal network of neighborhood cable-TV operators by producing her own programming for them. Then there is the myth of physical space, of development, where land speculation on gigantic scales (the area set aside for development around the international airport is the size of Paris, the French capital) displaces entire villages and communities, as the urbanist Solomon Benjamin explained. Yet, even to him, probably the most astute observer of Bangalore's urban transformation, it remains entirely unclear whether anything will be ever built there. Auto suggestive processes that we know from the financial markets are playing themselves out on the ground, in the ground. They are powerfully

fusing the myth of "emerging countries", an investment category, with shady, and highly corrupt, private-public partnerships. Then there is the myth of the local identity, where Bangalore joins other Indian cities reinventing itself by dropping the English name and taking the more authentic local name, Bengaluru. Globalized as it may be, it is positioning itself not just against colonial history, but also against the tradition of the fairly liberal nationalism of the federal government in favor of more xenophobic, local identity politics, as Arundhati Roy critically remarked. This is fueled, at least in part, by another myth, that of terrorism, lurking underneath a seemingly calm surface, ready to be mobilized by whomever agenda it serves, maybe even terrorists, as Konrad Becker explained through an exploration of the psycho-geographies of the contemporary security landscape.

Perhaps, this is what can be learned from the exploration of artists, activists and scholars, all highly trained to work at the intersection of the empirical and the imaginary. Our cities are becoming complex beyond even the specialists understanding, and are fracturing under contradictory pressures into physical and informational spaces representing extremely different cultural, economic and political trajectories. The city becomes a series of special zones. I suggested as much in my editorial (co-authored with Konrad Becker) to the World-Information City newspaper, of which 40,000 copies were printed and distributed in Bangalore and at the World Summit of the Information Society (WSIS) which took place in Tunis at the same time. In such a situation, and this was one of the things emerging from our investigations on the ground, myths are one way of making sense. They enable us to tell stories – combining some of the empirical fragments swirling around us into educative tales – in which we can appear as actors. Viewed like this, Bangalore is not catching up with the Western cities, but is representing their future. Yet it can only be another myth, one that the city boosters are embracing with a vengeance.

NOTES

1. Friedman, Thomas (2005). *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Public Netbase 1994 - 2006

List of Events 2003 - 2006

2003

Power Lines, Opposing Gazes

in cooperation with Bureau d'études (FR)
Brian Holmes, Marko Peljhan (SI), Konrad Becker (AT)
Vienna 17.01.03

New World (B)Order

in cooperation with Tanzquartier Wien (AT)
Dezentrale Medien (AT), Ricardo Dominguez (US), FO/Golab (AT),
Coco Fusco (US), Fran Illich (MX)
Vienna 18.-19.01.03

WORLD-INFORMATION Exhibition in Serbia

0100101110101101.ORG (IT/ES), Apsolutno (YU), Big Brother Awards, Konrad Becker (AT), Mathias Broeckers (DE), Bureau d'études (FR), Ewen Chardronnet (FR), Critical Art Ensemble (US), Eastwood (YU), Darko Fritz (CR), GLOW (AT), Ingo Günther (DE/US), Derek Holzer (NL), Margarete Jahrmann (AT), Vladan Joler (YU), Zina Kaye (AU), Eric Kluitenberg (NL), kuda.org (YU), Petar Milat (CR), Max Moswitzer (AT), Sjoera Nas (NL), Gordan Paunović (YU), Marko Peljhan (SI), Mr. Snow (AU), Raitis Smits (LV), Goran Strugar (YU), Martin Ratniks (LV), Rasa Smite (LV), Dejan Sretenović (YU), Surveillance Camera Players (US), Tomasz Sustar (SI), Zoran Todorović (YU), Anita Witek (AT/UK)
Serbia: Novi Sad 22.03.-05.04.03, Belgrade 19.03.-15.05.03
(see pictures at page 342 & 343)

0100101110101101.ORG presentation

0100101110101101.ORG (IT/ES), Neon Squid Autopsy (AT)
Vienna, 25.04.03

Campaign against the violation of data protection

International Campaign against the violation of data protection
laws in cooperation with European Digital Rights - edri.org (NL),
Vienna, 20.05.03

Open Cultures

Free Flows of Information and the Politics of Commons
Ted Byfield (US), Shu Lea Chang (TW/US), Darius Cuplinskis (HU), Adam Hyde (NZ), Sascha Kösch (DE), Christoph Kummerer (AT), Armin Medosch (DE/UK), Erik Möller (DE), Julian Priest (US), Bruce Sterling (US), Shu Lea Chang (TW/US), Peter Eckersley (AU), James Love (US), Eben Moglen (US), Andy Müller-Maguhn (DE), Siddhabrata Sengupta (IN), Alan Toner (IR/US), Franz Xaver (AT)
Vienna, 05.-06.03, (see pictures at page 343)

Free Media Camp

in cooperation with Malmö, IG Kultur Wien, Radio Orange 94.0 and Public Voice Lab
contributors: 4YourEye, Alien Miss Mos, Alf Altendorf, Bernhard Amann, amp, Dolf Andel, anime.ps2.notebook.noise, AnyFlag, ATTAC Austria, audio.entertainment.unit, Austrian Zope User Group, Ivan Averintsev, Charlie Bader, Tarafa Baghajati, ballesterer, Thomas Bailhausen, Bilderwerfer, Katharina Blaas, August Black, Anja Buechele, Bureau für Philosophie, burn_those_idle_cycles, cafe temelin, ccp.at, C:0hr, Contrast, community media cluster vienna, CPT Jogin, Markus Decker, decoy, Dezentrale Medien,

dieb13, dissecting squids, Domu aka Sonar Circle, Ricardo Dominguez, Djing, Nieszka Dzierzbicka, Electronic Zapatista, Elis, esel.at, eroticunion, Europäisches Institut für Progressive Kulturpolitik, European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, Fatal Kiss, Sigi Feldbacher, fiber, werkstoff fuer feminismus und popkultur, Andreas Leo Findeisen, firstfloor.org, FOKUS, Peter Fleissner, Robert Foltin, Günther Friesinger, Wolfgang Fuchs, Marius Gabriel, Gesellschaft für politische Aufklärung, thomas grusch, Gerhard Gutschli, boris hauf, Fritz Hausjell, Franz Hautzinger, Herbert Hrachovec, Rupert Huber, Michaela Hurdes-Galli, Matthew Hylandd, IG Kultur Österreich, Initiative muslimischer ÖsterreicherInnen, izz, Jezabel, kanonmedia.com, Therese Kaufmann, keks, Wolfgang Kindermann, klingt.org, Helga Köcher, Patricia Köstring, Krach, Hubsi Kramar, Elke Krasny, Christoph Kummerer, Wolfgang Lammer, Stadträtin für Medien Grete Laska, Grace Marta Latigo, Ralph Leonhard, Karin Liebhart, Lobosolar, Herby Loitsch, Lost in Bass, Michael Luger, maniac riot, Gertrude Moser-Wagner, Oliver Marchart, Manoa Free University, mattin, Elisabeth Mayerhofer, Andrea Mayr, MediaBar, Medienwerkstatt Wien, med-user.net, Mela Mikes, Bady Minck, Monochrom, Monika Mokre, Martin Moped, NASKIG, netbridge, Alexander Nikolic, NOISECAMP, Doris Nußbaumer, ÖH Bundesvertretung, Operator Spice, Österreichische Gesellschaft für Politikwissenschaft, Permanent Breakfast, Amir P. Peyman, Phish, pilot.fm, Play Tekno is not a crime!, Harald Posch, Thomas Prlc, privatkopie.net, Projektheaus, pura vida, pure date, Gernot Pürer, Radio Widerhall, Radio Augustin, Manfred Rakovsky, Urban Regensburger, Alexandra Reill, Sebastian Reinfeldt, manuela reizl, billy roisz, Gerhard Ruiss, Günther Sandner, Birgit Sauer, Ralph Schallmeiner, Schakmann, Dieter Schrage, Gregor Seberg, Mimi Secue, Lorenz Seidler, shortwave lab, sinn-haft, E.T. Spira, Felix Stalder, Paul Stepan, Oliver Stotz, Team Teichenberg, Theaterkombinat, Rohan Thomas, tribbeldam, Johannes Ullmaier, Petra Unger, United Aliens, Roberto Valliengua, Vina Yun, VFRÖ - Verband Freier Radios in Österreich, volXtheater, Barbara Waschmann, wahlkabine.at, Christine Werner, WochenKlausur, X-Box Liberation, Julia Zdarsky, Wolfgang Zingg
Vienna Karlsplatz, June - October 2003
(see pictures at page 343 & 344)

wahlkabine.at

regional elections of parliament in Tyrol and Upper Austria
in cooperation with iff - Fakultät für interdisziplinäre Forschung und Fortbildung, Abteilung politische Bildung (AT), Gesellschaft für politische Aufklärung (AT), ÖGPW - Österreichische Gesellschaft für politische Bildung (AT)
August - September 2003

nikeground - rethinking space

in cooperation with 0100101110101101.ORG
Vienna Karlsplatz, October 2003, (see pictures at page 344)

Panel discussion nikeground - rethinking space

Konrad Becker (AT), Friedrich von Borries (DE), Sigrid Gareis (AT), Thomas Rottenberg (AT), Georg Schöllhammer (AT), Veronika Weidinger (AT)
Vienna, 26.11.03

Democracy and the Public in the Information Society

in cooperation with the Open Society Institute Budapest (HU), Bernhard Drumel (AT), Andrea Ellmeier (AT), Herbert Langthaler

(AT), Christian Mock (AT), Heinz Patzelt (AT), Alan Toner (UK), Barbara Waschmann (AT)
Vienna, 10.-19.12.03

2004

wahlkabine.at

regional elections of parliament in Carinthia and Salzburg in cooperation with iff - Fakultät für interdisziplinäre Forschung und Fortbildung, Abteilung politische Bildung (AT), Gesellschaft für politische Aufklärung (AT), ÖGPW - Österreichische Gesellschaft für politische Bildung (AT)
February - March 2004

S-77CCR System-77 Civil Counter-Reconnaissance

Eyes in the Skies / Democracy in the Streets
S-77CCR Consortium, Projekt Atol/Pact Systems (SI/US), Delray (SI), MX (SI), Nullo (SI), IVOL (SI), Weber (SI), Jadviga (SI), Octex (SI)
Vienna, 13.05. - 31.05.04, (see pictures at page 345)

Free Bitflows

cultures of access and politics of dissemination
Saul Albert (UK), Michael Aschauer (AT), Beat Brogle (CH), James Brown (UK), Ewen Chardonnet (FR), Ian Clarke (IE/US), Marco Deseriis (IT), Petko Dourmana (BG), Eastwood (CS), Volker Grassmuck (DE), Thomas Grill (AT), Menno Grootveld (NL), Maia Gusberti (AT/CH), Bjoern Hartmann (DE/FR), Reni Hofmueller (AT), Brewster Kahle (US), Karsten Kinast (AT), Stoyan Kostadinov (BG)/Slavo Krekovic (SK), Georg Lauteren (AT) Paula Le Dieu (UK), Sebastian Luetgert (DE), Max Moswitzer (AT), Martin Pichlmair (AT)/Sjoera Nas (NL), Istvan Rev (HU), Janko Roettgers (DE), Thorsten Schilling (DE), Pit Schultz (DE), Wendy Selzer (US), Kristin Thomson (US), Michael Weinkove (UK)
Vienna, 02.06. - 18.06.04, (see picture at page 345)

Art and Bioterrorism

Brian Holmes (US/FR), Claire Pentecost (US)
Vienna, 15.09.04

2005

Austria 2005: A protection kit against a year of homeland celebrations

A range of political and cultural events, organized against the engines of jubilation, facilitated debates on the various jubilee topics from different emancipatory perspectives
oesterreich-2005.at

Patriotismus oder Vaterlandsverrat

Patriotism or treason - Where do you stand in Austria? Answer 22 questions in Austria-Quiz and find out which of eight types you are most likely.
quiz.oesterreich-2005.at

Voll geil oder voll daneben?

A discussion on the relationship between youth and politics in an age of new media
Gertraud Diendorfer (Managing Director Democracy Centre Vienna), Karin Liebhart (political scientist), Laura Rudas (SP-Gemeinderätin), Moderator: Linda Kreuzer (OH progress)
Vienna, 17.3.05

ZKW kf45 2005

Virtual Drama in four Acts: A critical interpretation of historical representation in the Austrian "jubilee year" 2005
May 2005, (see picture at page 345)

Networks of Imagination

Global Information Landscapes and Urban Transformations in Asia; Sunil Abraham (Mahiti, Bangalore), Konrad Becker (Netbase, Vienna),

Solomon Benjamin (Urbanist, Bangalore), Paul Keller (Waag Society, Amsterdam), Lawrence Liang (Alternative Law Forum, Bangalore), Namita Malhotra (Alternative Law Forum, Bangalore), Taha Mehmood (Sarai CSDS, Delhi), Stefan Nowotny (eicp.vienna), Christoph Schäfer (Park Fiction, Hamburg), Shuddhabaratha Sengupta (Sarai CSDS, Delhi)
Vienna, 20. - 22.06.05

Netbase Opening

With Christian Möller (OSZE), Cornelia Kogoj (Initiative Minderheiten), Armin Medosch (Ravensbourne College, London) Live-Act: Ravissa and Dunja
Vienna, 23.09.05

doorbitch

Advertisements in sight! An audiovisual evening with doorbitch
Vienna, 24.09.05

NotTheSameColor

a live video-sound-duo by dieb13 and billy roisz
Vienna, 29.09.05

reservoir_bots v.3

an audio-visual interactive feedback circuit. GameMod: Syl.Eckermann, 4Kanal Soundsystem: Szely
Vienna, 30.09.05

Datenzwangsverhaltung

A pseudomedical lecture by Erich Moechel
Vienna, 03.10.05

club.ware

infrasemantic extravaganza by electronic media artists Christina Goestl and Boris Kopeinig
Vienna, 07.10.05

eicp: faculty opening party

Launch of the Faculty of Transnational Radical Aesthetics
Vienna, 09.10.05

BODYSCAN: e=emotion 2

Presentation/Installation Eva Wohlgemuth featuring sound by/in memoriam Nicole Oppolzer
Vienna, 13.10.05

Ludic Society Club Abend

hosted by Margarete Jahrmann & Max Moswitzer special guests: ludic society honorary member F.E.Rakuschan ludic socialite Fleshgordo a.k.a. Super Mario live
Vienna, 14.10.05

XDV.org

"kymatest .1 - sound moving matter"
Vienna, 15.10.05

World-Information City

Presentation of the competition entries "Billboards Bangalore 2005" and the magazine of the project "World Information City" in Bangalore (India), followed by a discussion
Vienna, 17.10.05

Netbase: Upload Future Culture!

An info-evening on program and organization of media culture institution Netbase
Vienna, 20.10.05

VSSTV Gebhard Sengmueller

Very Slow Scan Television (VSSTV) is a new television format that we have developed building upon Slow Scan Television (SSTV)
Vienna, 21.10.05

SPAN: Holes, Cuts and Bones!

Matias del Campo und Sandra Manninger - architectural language of computer architecture
Vienna, 28.10.05

Fakes

Dr. Klaus Schönberger, Forschungskolleg Kulturwissenschaftliche Technikforschung, Institut für Volkskunde der Universität Hamburg
Vienna, 29.10.05

PURITY

an evening with Pure - live from Berlin. featuring b.b.
Vienna, 05.11.05

World-Information City

a joint effort of European and South Asian civil society, a global cooperation rooted in the diversity of Bangalore's Information Society projects, Conference, Exhibitions, City Campaigns,
Bangalore (India), 14.11. - 20.11. 2005, (see pictures at page 346)

WSIS-WIC

Day of Action on the occasion of the "World Summit on the Information Society" of the UN and the parallel event held "World Information City" in Bangalore, India.
Vienna, 18.11.05

que[e]r mobil

Ladyfest Wien goes que[e]r. Video, photographic documentation and discussion.
Vienna, 23.11.05

que[e]r mobil

Café Temelin: DVD-Präsentation 25 (twentyfive) Hüsle Tour 2005
Vienna, 14.12.05

Netlabels und die Krise der Musikindustrie

Teil 1: Projekte der Wiener Szene. Präsentation und Diskussion, in cooperation with mica (Music Information Center Austria)
Vienna, 15.12.05

Murmel Comics

Murmel Agenda 2006. Calendar presentation and celebration
Vienna, 22.12.05

2006

que[e]r mobil

"Wahrheit macht frei!", The "revisionist" Amoklauf against the memory
Vienna, 11.01.06

Autonomous sailing boat - Microtransat Robot Competition

A theme evening of the "Austrian Society for Innovative Computer Science"
Vienna, 12.01.2006

Im mythischen Lala-Land der Creative Industries

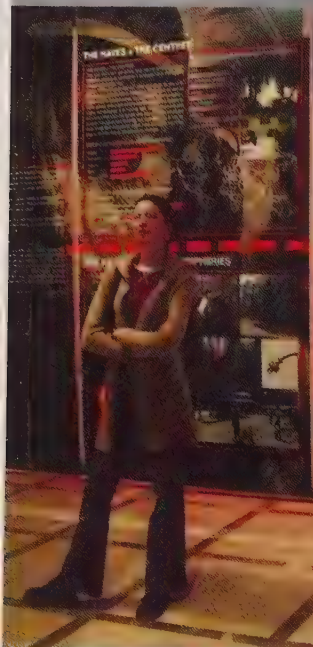
Discussion about current issue of the journal Kulturrisse followed by relaunch party.
Vienna, 30.01.06

Netlabels und die Krise der Musikindustrie

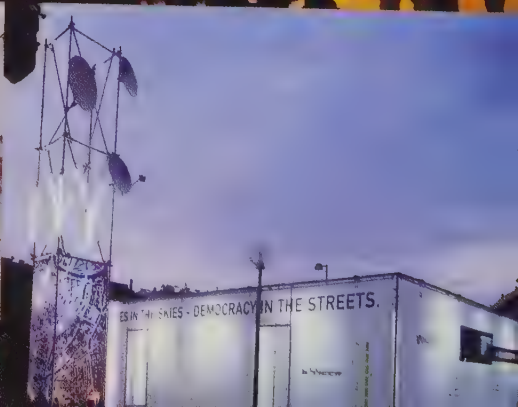
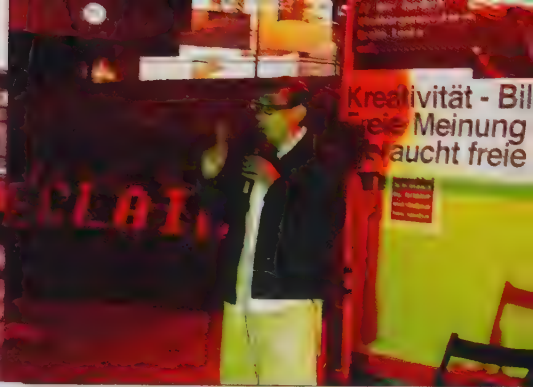
Part 2: Between marketing-interests and open files sharing networks, in cooperation with mica (Music Information Center Austria)
Vienna, 31.01.06

wahlkabine.at

Federal elections
in cooperation with Donau Universität Krems (AT)
August - October 2006









WORLD- INFORMATION CITY

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A

THE
RIGHT
COPY?

B

C

UNITED WE STAND
SURVIVE WAR & MISSION

ವಿಶ್ವ ಮಾಹಿತಿ ನಗರ

" WEAR SEAT BELTS
WHILE DRIVING "

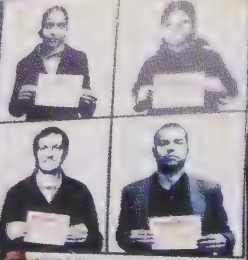
WHO OWNS YOUR KNOWLEDGE?

WORLD- INFORMATION CITY

avoid
For L

SAVE THE FUTURE
SAVE THE DIGITAL

WORLD- INFORMATION CITY
ವಿಶ್ವ ಮಾಹಿತಿ ನಗರ



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Work Group on "Cultures of Electronic Networks"

Cultural Competence, International Conference, Linz, Austria

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<http://s-77ccr.org>
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- **Open Letter to the Austrian Public**
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- **Notice Served to Public Netbase in the Museumsquartier**
<http://free.netbase.org>

- **Public Netbase t0 Moves Into Position**
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- **Bangalore and Back, Reflections on World-Information City, Bangalore**, Felix Stalder
<http://world-information.org>

Parallely with publishing of the book and its distribution, new web platform will be established - <http://nunstop-future.org> - which will contain all texts published within this book, joined with reach photo and video documentation.





