Critical Issues
Imaginative Research in a Changing World

New Media and the Politics of Online Communities

Edited by

Aris Mousoutzanis & Daniel Riha

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Online Communities

Critical Issues

A *Critical Issues* research and publications project.
http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/critical-issues/

The Cyber Hub
'Cybercultures'

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Online Communities

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Inter-Disciplinary Press

Oxford, United Kingdom

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Introduction

Aris Mousoutzanis

The papers in this volume reflect the debates that progressed during the 5th Global conference on *Cybercultures, with Digital Memories: Exploring Critical Issues*, held as a part of Cyber Hub activity in Salzburg, Austria in March 2010. The edited draft papers make up a snapshot for the actual publishing.

Whereas the papers presented in the event were extremely diverse in subject matter, theoretical orientation, and methodological approach, a number of key common themes and issues were raised and discussed by different speakers and members of the audience. This year, perhaps the most important topic to be discussed was the question of identity and its interaction with digital technologies, online platforms and, primarily, the new media. A large amount of cultural criticism has already been written on contemporary theoretical understandings of identity as a multi-faceted cultural construct constantly in a state of fluidity and change, subject to its interaction with 'other' individuals, communities, discourses and the wider 'culture' - which, in theoretical disciplines like those relied upon in this collaborative work, is often understood variously as 'technoculture,' 'media culture,' 'cyberculture.' Many of the papers included in this collection follow this approach as they examine the effects of these cultures upon different aspects, constructions and representations of identity.

The so-called 'new media,' on the other hand, are the main focus of several papers included in this collection and, in certain cases, their main subject of inquiry, which often concentrates on the alleged 'newness' of the new media. Contributors such as Jernej Prodnik follow previous theoretical approaches that have questioned the extent to which the remediation of previous technologies into new media offers as radically a break with earlier media forms as it is often suggested. Others, like Theodoros Thomas and Marina Vihou, explore the extent to which the new possibilities for online representations of identity provided by digital technologies - such as machinima platforms in their case - are productively exploited by users; it is found that individuals use the 'new' media in 'old' ways and that new media will not necessarily guarantee the construction of new identities.

Discussions like these are only an indication of the wider interest demonstrated in this collection in the interaction between new media and identity, in fact in most of its categories often addressed in cultural criticism - gender and sexuality, ethnicity, and national identity, which naturally was the one most often brought up in a collection of papers from a global conference. The very concept of a national identity has been increasingly questioned, challenged or even reaffirmed in a world that becomes increasingly

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globalised, networked and interconnected. And whereas there has been a lot of theoretical debate over the arguable 'death of the nation-state' at the rise of a new global order of things, recent historical conflicts and political realities have at least underscored the persistence of this particular political formation in individual and collective consciousness. Papers included in this collection, such as the ones by Harris Breslow, Ilhem Allaghui, and Herman Coutinho, reflect this dialectic whereby the new media and the Internet on the one hand destabilise national boundaries and create novel networks of online communities whereas, on the other, they may also serve as sites for the reaffirmation and reinforcement of national identity, as in the case of discussion forums, chat rooms and websites dedicated to members of a particular nationality.

A second issue often raised in the collection, relevant to the first, is the question of the relation between new media and cybercultures to experiences of migration, diaspora and the postcolonial condition. Since their emergence around the turn of the twentieth century, even earlier forms of media, such as the cinema or wireless telegraphy, were implicated in the perpetuation of imperial hegemony and the reproduction of imperialist ideologies. These early connections between media and imperialism became more prominent later on, during the 1970s, that witnessed the increasing use of terms such as 'media imperialism,' to highlight the extent to which the media themselves, in their increasing power and influence, were beginning to take the place previously occupied by traditional formations of political power such as classical models of imperial control or modern nation states. By the end of the twentieth century, 'cyberspace' had begun to be seen as 'the final frontier' even as there was increasing recognition of the large part played by the media to the emergence and experience of globalisation, multiculturalism and the postcolonial. Some of the articles chosen for this collection, such as those by Renata Eid, Federica de Cordova, Eleonora Riva and Nicletta Vittadini, engage precisely with these relations, as they seek to address the function of the new media for the formation and preservation of online diasporic identities and communities, the preservation of links with the 'home' and the 'world,' and the negotiation of hybrid identities among younger generations of migrants who find themselves divided by the cultures of the host country and the homeland.

A work often discussed or at least cited in this collection, which is relevant to discussions of both national and diasporic identity, is Benedict Anderson's seminal discussion of national identity as an 'imagined community,' not the least because it has lent itself to theoretical appropriations and translations in order to be applied to other types of communities such as online groups, discussion forums and online fan communities. Some of the papers in this collection engage with questions of online fan identities and communities dedicated either to mainstream popular

culture icons, such as Steven Gately in the case of Helen Barber and Jane Callaghan's discussion, or marginalised forms of cultural expression, such as dark slash fiction in Brita Hansen's research, in order to investigate traditional and more recent theorisations on fandom and its relation to new media and online platforms. Earlier theorisations of fandom have been mostly made in negative, pathologised terms, often relying on the language of obsession and addiction, whereby the fan is a passive dupe compulsively consuming texts and commodities related to their favourite fan text. More recent research in the area, however, has concentrated on a view of fandom as a more positive, dynamic, active - even subversive - form of consumption, whereby fans engage in a more productive relation to texts and commodities, which they are appropriating and 'rewriting' them in order to fulfil their own needs and desires.

Many of the papers here adopt the latter approach, whether discussing fans in particular, or media audiences and users in particular, a general orientation that highlights another major preoccupation that run across different papers of the conference. This is the relations between identity, media, and power, the extent to which individuals, in their engagement with new media technologies, are in control of the construction of their identity rather than simply being made into passively consuming and uncritically adopting images, meanings and identities to which they are constantly exposed by the media. This issue, however, was not limited to questions of identity construction only but was also discussed in relation to the very nature of 'cyberculture' itself: do discussion forums, chat rooms, blogs, the Internet in general, constitute examples of an online public sphere whose members can freely express themselves, engage in productive debates and possibly contribute to change? Or are these online platforms simply giving the illusion of freedom and authenticity for the purpose of further manipulation and control by media institutions, political authorities and the culture industries? This is a question to which several discussions in this collection return to, albeit in different ways and with different media forms and theoretical issues in mind.

The more political orientation that these questions were following was accompanied by even more overtly politicised discussions on the role of cyberspace for the assertion of or resistance to political power and/or domination. Papers included in this volume, such as the ones by Sabine Baumann and Fidele Vlavo, explore the ways in which the Internet has been used either by politicians in order to promote their political campaigns or by activists who seek to stage their strategies of resistance on or through cyberspace. Questions of political power and hegemony, resistance and authenticity are inevitably brought to the foreground when considering these themes.

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Other issues that were discussed, again relevant somehow to the issue of identity construction, was the impact of the new media on education and creativity. Contributors such as Paolo Lattanzio and Raffaelle Macella, Hana Marešová and Jaroslav Sláma are among those who present the results of their own research in educational institutions on the potential new opportunities and advantages that new media and online platforms may provide to the educational process. The interactivity, openness, reciprocity and user-friendliness of the new media are seen as features that challenge traditional roles of teacher and student, allow a more active engagement with the learning experience by the student, or even collaboration among students for the learning experience. Papers such as those by Daniel Riha, Fredrik Gundelsweiler, Christian Filk and Bruno Studer, on the other hand, explore the potential of new media forms to encourage creativity and even art, either in terms of their own structures and functions or of their role in the dissemination and consumption of media texts across the globe.

The decision to combine the Cybercultures event with the pathway on Digital Memories inevitably led to a significant critical attention to the question of memory and its relation to individual identity and collective history. The ability of recent media technologies to store unlimited amounts of data that can be easily retrieved has generated a growing tendency to constantly archive and accumulate information rather than process, edit, and delete, thus raising questions regarding the status of externalising, archiving, and processing personal information and historical facts. Papers included in this collection, such as those by Heiko Zimmerman, Katrina Sluis, and Martin Pogačar, participate in wider current debates, often taking place within the area of memory studies, on the ways in which online media may serve as sites of memory and remembrance. At the same time, the increasing reliance on computer memory for the accumulation and retrieval of information has also generated discussions regarding the nature of human memory, and the ways in which it has been conceptualised as 'information.' Contributors such as Raffaelle Mascella and Paolo Lattanzio suggest that a new model of memory is emerging out of the interaction of the human subject with new media and online platforms, which is interactive, open, 'writerly,' and fluid.

The book consists of 26 chapters and has been organised into 10 parts

        Part I   : Concepts of Cyberspace and Cyberculture
        Part II   : Cyberculture, National Identity and Diaspora
        Part III : Fan Cultures Online
        Part IV : Cultures of Online Learning
        Part V   : Changing Identities in Cyberspace
        Part VI : The Future Platforms

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The first part includes two papers on 'Concepts of Cyberspace and Cyberculture.' In 'Electronic Kairos,' *Gary Thompson* discusses the ways in which the act of rhetoric has been affected by the new media from a perspective that combines classical theoretical concepts, such as that of *kairos* ('the right time' or 'moment'), with more recent theories such as Richard Dawkins's memetics. Classical rhetoric practices, Thompson demonstrates, were relying on the concept of *kairos* in order to identify the right moment to engage the audience's attention and persuade them. Our current cultural moment, however, has witnessed the multiplication and dissemination of electronic texts online that has brought about a shift, whereby the control over the text has moved from the rhetor to the audience.

Leighton Evans, on the other hand, in 'Authenticity Online,' discusses the concept of authenticity with regard to the experience of belonging to online communities by following a phenomenological approach largely relying on concepts from the work of Martin Heidegger, such as 'angst' and 'resoluteness.' From this perspective, the experience of being online leads to either an intensification of Heideggerian enframing (*gestell*), of inauthentic modes of being, or to different types of alterity. The novelty of Evans's approach lies in his choice to support his claims with results gained from his own online ethnography ('webnography'), thus adding a quasi-empirical element to a topic traditionally theoretical.

The second part, 'Cyberculture, National Identity, and Diaspora', includes three papers that deal with the effects on and transformations of conventional conceptions of national identity and experiences of migration and diaspora by the proliferation of new media and particularly the increasing use of the Internet.

Drawing on results from their work with the Emirates Internet Project (EIP), *Harris Breslow* and *Ilhem Allagui* investigate the impact of the Internet on the articulation of social and national communities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In 'Stresses Upon An Emergent Imagined Community', they follow Anderson's seminar work on national identity as they explore the implications of the Internet for the formation of 'imagined communities' for a relatively young nation such as the UAE. Their discussion focuses on aspects of national identity highlighted by Anderson, such as a shared language, social structures like family, the tribe or the clan, and national polity. Their research reveals a significant impact of the Internet on the first two, whereby individuals are placed at the interstices between

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national language (Arab) and online lingua franca (English), on the one hand, and between private space and online community, on the other. Even more challenging, however, is their suggestion, with regard to national polity, that the Internet leads to a formation of a 'post-national culture,' whereby the sense of a single national community has given way to a series of socio-political national circuits online, in which national dialogue has been replaced by private conversation.

Renata Seredynska-Abou Eid, on the other hand, discusses the impact of online environments, such as social networking sites or forums, for the formation of migrant communities by focusing specifically on communities of Polish immigrants in the UK. These online environments, Eid demonstrates, serve as a diasporic public sphere whose members exchange both practical information and advice for the host country as well as their feelings and emotions on the migrant experience. By analysing websites dedicated exclusively to the Polish diaspora, Eid explores the ways in which online communities affect conceptions of identity, 'home,' and belonging for the Polish immigrant.

Finally, *Federica de Cordova, Eleonora Riva,* and *Nicoletta Vittadini* present the results of their research on peer-to-peer communication among foreign adolescents in Italy, from the perspective of theories of 'flow' and 'acculturation.' Through their results collected by digital ethnography, they highlight differences in the use of new media by native Italian adolescents, on the one hand, and those of a migrant background, on the other. Their discussion reveals the ways in which the use of digital media by the latter is often a tool for them to establish connections with their parents' homeland and to negotiate their hybrid identity as both Italian and migrant.

The third part of this collection, 'Fan Cultures Online', follows the focus of the previous section on online identities and communities, but the papers included in this part discuss online subcultures and fan communities instead.

In 'The Darker Side of Slash Fanfiction on the Internet', *Brita Hansen* examines the ways in which the Internet has provided a space for the increasing publication and popularity of so-called 'slash fan fiction' - a form of fan fiction written by heterosexual women that appropriates male characters from popular culture and presents them engaging in homosexual relationships. Hansen challenges existing theoretical approaches to slash that see it mostly as an alternative to the traditional romance novel by directing attention to the dark side of slash, the 'darkfic slash,' a branch of slash fiction which includes stories dealing with dominant/submissive, often sadomasochistic relationships, often sexually explicit and violent. Darkfic slash, a large body of writing on slash fiction and both writers and readers are aware of and familiar with it, cannot be approached theoretically from the dominant theoretical perspectives on slash and Hansen urges for different

ways to approach slash fiction that would extend beyond the 'alternative-to-romance' approach.

In 'Virtual Friends' *Helen Barber and Jane Callaghan* challenge dominant representations, perceptions and theorisations of fandom that primary construct the fan in negative, caricatured, and pathologised terms, whereby the experience of being a fan is seen as a 'problem' and theorised with the language of addiction, particularly when discussing online fandom. By contrast, Barber and Callaghan subject the results of their online research to interpretive phenomenological analysis in order to reveal the experience of using the Internet and being a fan as a social activity that brings people together and creates friendships and communities. Online fandom, their discussion suggests, is not necessarily an asocial, isolating experience but, on the contrary, may contribute to the establishment of stronger bonds and relations among individuals and groups.

Beatrice Jetto's discussion of music blogging, on the other hand, focuses more on questions of power as she analyses blogs by relying on theoretical concepts from subcultural studies, such as 'scene,' 'subcultural capital,' and the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Jetto's approach to music blogging seeks to reveal the extent to which the Internet contributes to the development of music scenes. Instead of an idealised view of blogs as an 'authentic' alternative to the mainstream music industries, Jetto examines the ways in which blog practices reproduce social hierarchies among fans and music blogging is seen as a step to gain status in the music industry and become a professional. Blogging emerges as a practice located between the circulation of subcultural capital and the reproduction of dominant capitalist structures perpetuated by the music industries.

The next part, 'Cultures of Online Learning', engages with questions and issues relating to the use of new media technologies in the classroom for educational purposes. In 'E-learning 2.0 as Reciprocal Learning', *Paolo Lattanzio* and *Rafaelle Mascella* are investigating the ways in which web 2.0. affects the function and experience of computer-based learning (CBL) that leads towards a new experience of online learning that is reciprocal and affects both students' and teachers' fixed roles. Unlike what they call 'e-learning 1.0', which had fixed boundaries and was based on traditional platforms, e-learning 2.0 is characterised by an openness, personal learning environments (PLE) and informal, whereby students create their own learning space

Like Lattanzio and Mascella, *Hana Marešová* and *Jaroslav Sláma* also discuss the impact of new media in education, and particularly on the use of ICT skills in first-language education. Drawing from the results of their research and teaching at Palarcky University, they focus on aspects of media literacy such as the use of ICTs in the classroom by teachers, the use of computer hardware and software in Czech language education.

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The next part of this collection focuses even more directly on the question of identity and the way in which it changes in online environments. In 'Cloakroom Communities', *Jernej Prodnik* questions dominant theoretical approaches to online communities that see them as isolating, asocial and inauthentic, an approach that he considers to rely too much on theories of technological determinism. Prodnik is particularly sceptical of theoretical concepts such as James Beniger's 'pseudo-community,' as they idealise face-to-face communication and denigrate online interactions, even as they are outdated in days of interactive online media. Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities,' on the other hand, seems more apt to approach the formation of communities on the basis of communication and language – what Prodnik refers to as 'communification.' He therefore follows a social constructionist approach that will pay attention to the influence of shifts in modes of production and consumption under contemporary capitalism. Relying on Zygmunt Bauman's idea of a 'liquid modernity,' where revolution is not a deviation but an integral part, Prodnik asks if the allegedly new 'cloakroom communities' indeed mark a radical change in themselves or are just a symptom of wider changes under post-Fordist capitalism.

Theodoros Thomas and *Marina Vihou* discuss the representation of identity in machinima videos created by undergraduate students at the Department of French of the University of Athens, from the theoretical perspective of narrative identity, as informed by the work of Anthony Giddens and Paul Ricoer. The results of their research reveal that new media technologies will not guarantee novel modes of representing identity, as the majority of the videos constructed stereotypical images of gender. As such, they conclude that whereas new digital technologies may offer opportunities for creativity and self-reflection, the humanistic tradition is still persistent in the subjects' perception and understanding of narrative identity.

In the last article of this part, *Bello Benischauer* and *Elisabeth m Eitelberger* investigate the ways in which globalisation, the new media and the Internet have affected the production, dissemination and consumption of art as well as the establishments of networks among artists worldwide. Through a presentation of their own work, they discuss the status of art in the era of what Nicholas Bourriaund has termed 'altermodern' to refer to the significance of global flows and exchanges for either the creation of online art or the promotion of offline projects.

The next part deals with 'Future Online Platforms'. *Daniel Riha* discusses the impact of recent developments of machinima user-generated content for creativity, by relying on semiotic terms and concepts such as that of the syntagm and the paradigm, in order to explore the ways in which digital creativity now arises from the combination of existing elements and allow the user/artist to be part of what Henry Jenkins has called the participatory culture of audience studies.

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In 'Media Convergence and the Future of Online Platforms', *Fredrik Gundelsweiler, Christian Filk* and *Bruno Studer* discuss the implications of digitalisation and media convergence for the production, dissemination and consumption of media content in online platforms. 'Cross-media' provide new opportunities for the production and distribution of content and the writers urge for further training on those, as there seems to them to be a need for people trained in the new media by media institutions that seem to be still focused on old media structures, functions and practices.

Gaspar Pujol Nicolau's paper is on Augmented Reality (AR), which differs from Virtual Reality in that it doesn't substitute reality but overprints digital data and virtual objects over the real world, and as such bridges the gap between virtual reality and the real world, leading to a 'mixed reality'. In his paper, Nicolau discusses the implications of AR for conventional understandings of reality and embodiment and focuses on the ways in which AR may effect gaming, new media such as iphones, and its potential in a wider market and practices such as shopping, working and information processing.

The papers of the last part of the collection deal with 'Controversial Issues in Cyberlife.' In 'Election 2.0', *Sabine Baumann* discusses the 2008 US presidential election, in order to illustrate the ways in which democratic election processes have been transformed by the use of cyber platforms and social networks for the sharing and exchange of information, in an attempt to explore the ways in which the use of virtual environments may shape ideas and influence opinion-building. By discussing the use of the Internet to spread information, build voter networks and attract sponsors, Bauman demonstrates how Obama's campaign of 'change' included a change in the ways in which citizens themselves could contribute to the election campaign and become part of virtual political networks.

In 'Click here to Protest', *Fidele Vlavo* questions the utopian streak that often accompanies discussions and practices of electronic civil disobedience (ECD) that view cyberspace as a rhizomatic borderless space exceeding national boundaries that may serve as the site of a transnational activist sphere. Vlavo's discussion, instead, illustrates the ways in which these practices and discourses of resistance are in fact reproducing notions of discrimination, ideological domination, and control. Her discussion of concepts of legality and legitimacy in globalised digital resistance reveals cyberspace to be a highly territorialised and controlled environment.

Finally, in 'Cybertrauma and Technocultural Shock in Contemporary Media Culture,' Aris Mousoutzanis discusses the increasing preoccupation with the concept of psychological trauma in the Humanities and the emergence of the discipline of 'trauma studies' within the context of media technologies. Trauma, for Mousoutzanis, emerges as a concept to best represent the experience of postmodern technoculture, not only because some

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of the defining characteristics of the psychopathology are representative of aspects of contemporary media culture – the disruption of time and space, the overwhelming nature of the 'information overload' associated with postmodernity, and so on – but also because the media now serve as the main site to represent, witness, or even actually produce trauma at a global scale.

This part is then followed by a section including papers from the Digital Memories strand of the Cyber-Hug. The first section consists of papers investigating the 'Externalisation and Mediation of Memories' by digital technologies and new media.

In 'Integration of Digital Memories Within Hand-Made Objects', *Cerys Alonso* and *Elisabeth Edwards* begin their discussion by focusing on the extent to which traditional craft objects, such as jewellery, can store or retrieve memories as 'data' to humans and serve as vessels for human memories. They then extend their discussion to digital media in an attempt to explore how technologies mediate our relationship to memory. Their paper examines how memories are captured and accessed both by the originator of the memory and subsequent others through both digital means and tacit knowledge. The proliferation of objects that sense and gather data, they argue, raises issues about the potentially changing nature of the objects themselves and the way they mediate experience.

Patrick McEntaggart, on the other hand, in 'Once Upon a Paradigm Shift', explores the ways in which the new media affect the production and reception of narrative. The new media are seen as exemplifying theoretical glimpses on the nature of narrative by modernist figures such as T.S. Eliot and Marcel Proust, in their construction of non-linear narrative. In this respect, the new media have brought about a paradigm shift; in their open, interactive format, narratives produced by the new media are Barthean 'writerly texts,' in which the user is also producer of meaning. The relationship between narrative and new media forms is reciprocal, whereby stories benefit from change in perspective, while the medium becomes more meaningful and relevant for the production of new types of narrative.

The second part of the Digital Memories pathway is concerned with the ways in which the new media affect representations of history and the past.

Martin Pogačar discusses music blogging but, unlike Jetto, he is mostly interested in the ways in which 'mu-bloging' may preserve and archive historical material and popular culture from the past, by discussing specifically on the case of former Yugoslavian popular culture. Pogačar approaches online blogs within the context of discussions on 'media convergence' and 'remediation' in order to see the practice of mu-blogging in relation to the re-narrativisation of Yugoslav past through the remediation of Yugoslav popular music. His discussion focuses just as much on the potential of the Internet as a popular archive as well as on the ability of popular music

to preserve the historical past and reveals the ways in which history may be represented and re-narrated on sites like YouTube, online museums, or comments on discussion forums.

Harris Breslow and *Herman Coutinho*, on the other hand, investigate the extent to which the new media, and particularly interactive multimedia academic databases and archives, contribute to the production of historical knowledge and the preservation of national identity and memory. The work of Anderson again proves to be crucial in this discussion and particularly his emphasis on the significance of citizenship, shared language and common religion for the formation of an 'imagined community.' The paper argues that roundabout art plays a complex role in the reproduction of local and national Emirati culture, and that the most effective way to discuss, describe and display the complex conjunctural functions of roundabout art is through the use of a new medium, such as the Digital Emirates Project

The last section on Digital Memories engages with 'Theories and Concepts in Digitising Individual and Community Memory.' *Heiko Zimmermann* discusses the ways in which online media may serve as sites of remembrance and memory. Drawing on theoretical distinctions between individual/subjective memory and collective/public memory from the area of memory studies, he investigates the function of the new media as sites of memory and remembrance and discusses the differences between web 1.0 and 2.0 for the storing and retrieval of information, by focusing on social networking websites such as Facebook and Gayromeo.

In 'Algorithmic Memory', *Katrina Sluis* explores the ways in which memory is constituted in digital culture by challenging dominant approaches that discuss digitalisation in terms of dematerialisation. By relying on software studies, she follows a materialist approach in order to explore the ways in which digital memory is constructed within new material structures that allow someone to 'cache' their life at a cultural moment when Derrida's archive fever has replaced by a database fever and the photo album is being replaced by the database, a time where human memory is increasingly subjected to information processing and knowledge management.

In 'Fluid Memory on the Web 2.0', *Raffaele Mascella & Paolo Lattanzio* discuss the ways in which human memory is affected by the new media by focusing on the ways in which the human mind interacts with new media platforms in order to externalise and extend memories. Recent advances in media technologies, and particularly the advent of Web 2.0, have enhanced the externalisation and dissemination of memory and, as such, they affect the ways in which the human mind processes information and memories.

PART I

Concepts of Cyberspace and Cyberculture

Electronic Kairos

Gary Thompson

Abstract

Electronic discourse has vastly multiplied the number of texts competing for attention. Traditional rhetoric accounts for success in persuasion through *kairos*, or the right time or measure. However, because electronic texts are distributed and asynchronous, control over texts has shifted away from rhetor to audience. *Kairos* in electronic discourse may be better accounted for by memetics: memes circulate because of reproducibility, simplicity, ideological relevance, and verbal and conceptual pleasure. *Kairos* also can refer to a time of transcendence, which relates to Benjamin's aura; however, the postmodern nature of electronic discourse disperses such a quasi-religious experience.

Key Words*: Kairos*, aura, meme, electronic discourse, rhetoric, multitasking, drinking the Kool-Aid.

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1.   Introduction

Getting at an issue important for understanding electronic discourse while we are immersed in it is difficult but necessary work. Marshall McLuhan is widely quoted as saying, 'We don't know who discovered water, but we know it wasn't the fish.' The issue is this: out of all the millions of concepts, phrases, and images perpetually in circulation on the internet, why do some catch our attention, while others languish in electronic obscurity? Why do some last, while others fade quickly? Why is there sometimes a delay before attaining salience? We may attempt an explanation by appropriating a term from classical rhetoric, *kairos*, and relating that to two other concepts: the modernist concept of aura from Benjamin, and Richard Dawkins' notion of memes.

Electronic here refers to any text - verbal, visual, interactive, or whatever - accessed or substantially created by computers or chips. *Kairos* equates to time in one specific sense: In English we use the word 'time' to refer either to duration or to the moment. We speak of time as in time marches on, or of time as in 'this time,' 'the next time,' etc. There are two different words in classical Greek for the one English word: *chronos* and *kairos.*

Ask a rhetorician and the term *kairos* will usually be defined as *the right time or right measure*. We are to speak, to children or students or the general public or specialists or authorities, in terms and at the length appropriate to each. For the Greeks, *Kairos* was even a minor deity, the spirit

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of opportunity. But if you ask a theologian about *kairos* you are likely to find the term given a New Testament context, as the time when God intervenes, as on the day of Pentecost in Acts of the Apostles, or as in the incarnation, or in the mass when the bread becomes flesh, or in judgment day. Appropriately, *kairos* (which I understand in modern Greek also means weather) is a protean term, itself adapted to new contexts. I propose to insert it into yet another context, that of electronic discourse.

A skilled rhetor can read the audience and judge how slow or how fast to go, judging the proper moment to bring the argument home. But what if the audience is not present, but distant in space and even in time, responding to texts removed from any carefully prepared context, texts which are a miniscule part of the textual avalanche now available? What causes some concepts to take hold long term, and others to flash briefly and then disappear? As a test case, consider the following phrase, which can serve as illustration.

2.   Drinking the Kool-Aid

November 18, 1978: More than 900 people died in a massive murder-suicide at the People's Temple, Jonestown, Guyana, a religious cult under the domination of Jim Jones. Congressman Leo Ryan, who was investigating the group, was shot and killed at the airport; subsequently, almost all the community was invited or forced to drink a cyanide-laced grape drink (probably not Kool-Aid but a knockoff).

Over time, tragedy becomes metaphor or dark humor. It took not quite ten years before the phrase *drinking the Kool-Aid* was used in a 1987 *Washington Post* article, about the mayor, Marion Barry. The frequency of references increased considerably early in the Bush administration - that is, primarily distributed through electronic media. The *New York Times*' first use was in 1989 about a lawyer suffering penalties for supporting striking air traffic controllers - the sense here is strictly about drinking poison, not about being part of a cult. However, when Arianna Huffington used the term in 2002 about economic planners meeting with George W. Bush in Waco, Texas - 'Pass the Kool-Aid, pardner' - the term had passed to its present dominant meaning, as a common off-hand reference for falling under the baleful influence of a person or organization or ideology. The phrase has since been applied not only to Bushies, but to many others outside the political context.

But why the timing? Why wasn't the phrase adopted immediately, why did it find its way into use in the last decade, and why has it attained the status of rhetorical shorthand or near-cliché now?

We can consider the phrase *drinking the Kool-Aid* as what Dawkins has called a meme. Memes are bits of cultural knowledge - a word, a phrase, a musical bit, an image, a gesture, or a pattern of any sort capable of imitation

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- passed around from person to person, by analogy with genetic transmission. When something is circulated as a meme, that indicates something like *kairos* - the textual bit catches the attention sufficiently to make us pass it on to others. Electronic media accelerate the process, of course, but they also tend to remove the context, so that most users of *drinking the Kool-Aid* do not think about the grisly aspects of the phrase's origin. However, its initial use drew on the Jonestown incident for shock value, gaining it wider circulation.

Memes such as *drinking the Kool-Aid* are transmitted on the basis of timeliness and cultural needs. In other words, wide distribution and currency are indications of *kairos*. With respect to this particular phrase, the culture apparently needs a way to describe others who appear to be brainwashed to the point of self-destruction. Assigning this brainwashing to a trivial consumer product, Kool-Aid, calls attention to others' stupidity in falling victim to propaganda.

3.   *Kairos* and Aura

There are of course many thousands of such verbal memes in circulation, of greater or lesser intensity than this one. *Kairos* in the sense of opportunity can account for the prominence and persistence of *drinking the Kool-Aid*; we should examine another sense of *kairos*, found in New Testament usage, that of God's time: 'Behold, now is the accepted time [*kairos euprosdektos*]; behold, now is the time of salvation'.[1] *Kairos* in this passage points to an opportunity which may not come again, an opportunity (so the story goes) for transcendence, for being in GOD's presence.

I want to trace an association between this sense of *kairos* as transcendence and a key term from 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.' The 1930s of course offered no hint of the present rapid conversion to digital representation; however, I would argue that Benjamin's mechanical reproduction has reached its apotheosis in the digital environment.

Benjamin argues that artistic texts possess an aura which is bound up with the work's unique existence in a place and time, its presence. The aura is precisely *that which cannot be reproduced* - in this way of thinking about art, it is not possible to separate the image from its material form. Being in the work's presence creates an ineffable experience; this quasi-religious aura, for Benjamin, is weakened by the work's reproduction as kitsch and in parodic versions, to the point that modern audiences experience the art work only in diminished form.

When I've presented an abbreviated version of Benjamin's argument to US students, most of whom have not had the experience of seeing art works *in situ,* they don't buy it. Aura for them is bound up with the notion of celebrity: *Why wouldn't aura be increased by multiple copies?* Celebrity, created in part by repetition across media, points to the postmodern

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detachment of the artistic image from its material incarnation. Digital copies are the way that contemporary masses experience art, so that simulacra have now successfully redefined aura as the opposite of its meaning for Benjamin.

In Benjamin's terms, aura would be something like the theological notion of *kairos*, to be experienced - if you are lucky - when standing in the actual presence of the art work, comparable to divine inspiration. But the art work's presence is now distributed, as contemporary audiences see the image, but not the material work, across computer screens, perhaps with even greater fidelity than conditions of modern museums would afford. In the case of artistic events rather than graphic texts, not only the presence but the time of the event is distributed and recontextualized to suit the audience's convenience. The implication of this is that *kairos* is now distributed and more open to audience control, or rather, insertion into multiple contexts and the vagaries of audience experience.

4.   Distributed *Kairos*

Discussing reception is always tricky, but we may be confident that audiences are far more likely to be multitasking now than before the electronic age. *Attention is distributed*: It's not so much short attention span as attention paid on several planes in alternation. And if attention is distributed, necessarily *kairos* must be as well.

Multitasking is however only one factor in the shifting nature of *kairos*. Classically the rhetor's art depended considerably on the ability to invent and organize and polish stylistically the speech, and during the actual delivery, to read the audience so as to sense the right measure and the right moment to move them to action. Context was stable and relatively controlled. Online audiences, however, are not in the same place, usually not accessing discourse at the same time, and not subject to the rhetor's always partial control. As with other aspects of present-day communication, the multiplication of texts has meant the audience does more to manage what Baron calls 'volume control,' giving different media and texts within those media higher or lower priority.

Digital media, which are capable of endlessly reproducing identical copies, seem to be the ultimate form of Benjamin's mechanical reproduction. But there's more to it than that: the essential form of digital texts is code which must be read mechanically - code which we represent as zeroes and ones. The analog color spectrum blends smoothly, while digital spectra proceed by very small quantum jumps. A digitized image is therefore an approximation to the analog image. It might not have, say, the precise reds and oranges of a Cézanne painting, but they are so close that only a color savant could see any distinction. What happens to the aura when you

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approach it as a limit? When you perform calculus upon the aura and approach divinity?

Classically, art is available only to the elite, privileged to be in the performer's presence. The aura available in live performance is based at least in part on the fact that everyone who is not there cannot share in the experience. But if we can have rough approximations to Fine Art easily and in quantity, then we care less about the transcendent aura of the Real Thing. In a postmodern context, aura is no longer dependent upon the image's physical embodiment in, say, oil paint on canvas, but is instead freed from its material rendering and made available in approximated form. Audiences are now accustomed to such transferrals, and value them to a greater or lesser extent depending on context. It may be argued that, as with celebrity, these reproductions in fact multiply the effect of the work by building its reputation and popularity.

Perhaps Benjamin unnecessarily romanticizes art. While one must be present before the art work to experience its aura, simply being there might not lead to a transcendent experience. Art is not so much what is on the canvas, but an event - what happens in dialogue between the work and the audience. And in digital transmission, that dialogue occurs across a wide expanse of times as well as locations, in a wide range of contexts. It's live for each audience when they see it. This formulation leads to a statistical version of *kairos*, bringing a sort of graph of right moments, like a wave which builds and then crashes into random movement. This dispersion - electronic liminality - may be seen as a repurposing of Derrida's famous observation that *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*.

5.   Conclusion

So to return to our original questions: how can something like *kairos* exist in the postmodern digital context?

Our discourse has changed due to the cultural penetration of electronic media, in a distributed, decentered, postmodern manner. Electronic texts are recontextualized in ways controlled by neither the author nor audiences, but rather subject to a combination of factors (hardware, operating system, browser software, as well as our own environments). This way of describing *kairos* as affected by the democratization of electronic discourse tends to remove human agency and economics from the picture, collapsing the aesthetic and commercial.

Circulation of memes and therefore *kairos* depends on ease of reproduction. Memes must possess some quality of memorability, which may be helped by concision, sonority, assonance / alliteration, and other verbal qualities. Second, a successful meme needs a balance between novelty and repetition: the meme needs to strike its audience as a new insight or reformulation, capable of being appropriated for repeating and developing

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concepts; and it needs to be repeated enough to capture general notice. Perhaps most important is the quality of ideological suitability. The Jonestown tragedy takes on particular resonance as a meme given Americans' commitment to individualism: ideologically each citizen is supposed to decide on his / her best interests, while in practice herd behavior is easily demonstrated. *Drinking the Kool-Aid* is an affront to the official pieties of individualism. Most current uses take the phrase as useful for describing others who seem to have been brainwashed into (rhetorically) self-destructive behavior. But those new to the phrase see its origins as shocking, while more habitual readers of political discourse are already objecting to the phrase as a cliché. The meme exists in multiple states at once, illustrating the concept of distributed *kairos,* changeable as the weather. Finally, electronic distribution may have finished once and for all the notion of *kairos* as transcendent experience.

Notes

[1] 2 Corinthians 6:2, [Sipiora 123].

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Authenticity Online: Using Webnography to Address Phenomenological Concerns

Leighton Evans

Abstract
In this paper, I will aim to describe a webnography-based approach to exploring issues of the authenticity of being in online spaces. Early studies held the prevailing view that online communities were exotic places and fundamentally different to the norms of everyday communication, but the issue of authenticity still demands enquiry, and using Heidegger's categories of angst and resoluteness as moods of authentic existence, it will be argued that the extent of authenticity in being online can be assessed using ethnography. In asking about the nature of anxiety in online communications important insights about the possibilities of authentic response can be established.

Key Words: Webnography, Heidegger, methods, authenticity, enframing.

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1.   What is Virtual Ethnography?

Virtual ethnography is the process of conducting and constructing an ethnography using the virtual, online environment as the site of the research. While an anthropological ethnography that occurs 'in real life' is conducted to detail the experiences of people in specific cultural milieu, a virtual ethnography will look to do the same job, but in an environment that lends itself to different means of collection of data. Traditionally, in ethnography a researcher will immerse themselves in the community that they wish to study, and become familiar with the people in that community, and the practices that they undertake in everyday life. The interview and survey that is so important to the ethnographer can be supplanted by the collection of pre-existing information that is abundant in online environments such as social networking sites and Internet forums. Information can be located and archived from the Internet without it having to be recorded and transcribed as the traditional ethnographer would need to ensure. This can be done without sacrificing the need for the ethnographer to participate within the environment and reflect upon the experiential insights of being immersed in the community.

The virtual ethnography can utilise a number of computer-based methods of data collection in order to collect the data that can be used in the construction of the ethnographic profile of a community. According to Miller and Slater the immersion in a particular case, the reference to a specific

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locality and participant observation (e.g. in chat rooms) are still the cornerstones of ethnographic research, even when using the Internet as the research environment.[1] However, the notion of the field itself is radically altered; since the field is now text on a screen and the group of people involved in the community can be scattered worldwide in physical geography - however, sharing the same space as one another thanks to the use of the technology. Morton states that there are possibly two ways of conducting ethnography on the Internet - distanced or involved.[2] Schwara extends the term involved to mean 'discursive and communicative.'[3] Distanced research might be constituted by the evaluation of sources such as texts, images, or emoticons and the observation of (but not participation in) social interactions in online spaces. Discursive or communicative research, the active involvement of the researcher in the environment being researched, can lead to the subjectivity of the actors being revealed[4] - enabling the researcher to have theoretically a better understanding of the identity performance of the user, and the significance of the interactions taking place, in comparison to a distant piece of research.[5]

Hine has produced arguably the most complete methodological framework for the construction of virtual ethnographic Internet research.[6] Hine's own research involved an ethnographic investigation of web sites and newsgroups that were concerned with the case of British nanny Louise Woodward, who was accused and eventually acquitted of the murder of the child she was hired to look after. Following this research, Hine developed ten principles of virtual ethnography, which Hine paraphrases as:

1. We can use ethnography to investigate the ways in which the use of the Internet becomes socially meaningful.
2. Interactive media such as the Internet can be understood as both culture and cultural artefact.
3. The ethnography of mediated interaction often asks researchers to be mobile both virtually and physically.
4. Instead of going to particular field sites, virtual ethnography follows field connections.
5. Boundaries, especially between the 'virtual' and the 'real,' are not to be taken-for-granted.
6. Virtual ethnography is a process of intermittent engagement, rather than long-term immersion.
7. Virtual ethnography is necessarily partial. Our accounts can be based on strategic relevance to particular research questions rather than faithful representations of objective realities.
8. Intensive engagement with mediated interaction adds an important reflexive dimension to ethnography.

9.   This is ethnography *of, in* and *through* the virtual - we learn about the Internet by immersing ourselves in it and conducting our ethnography using it, as well as talking with people about it, watching them use it and seeing it manifest in other social settings.

10.   Virtual ethnography is, ultimately, an adaptive ethnography which sets out to suit itself to the conditions in which it finds itself.

2.   Why is a Virtual Ethnography Being Used in my Research?

The ethnographic approach is being used in my project to collect information of sufficient length and depth necessary to infer the phenomenological aspects of belonging to an online community, and how being in an online community affects people in their average everydayness. For a phenomenological investigation, it could be suggested that a phenomenological research method would be the most appropriate form of study; but I do not concur with this. A phenomenological account, be it an introspective account of experience or a series of subjective accounts from participants, is necessarily narrow and limited in the scope that such an investigation can have when charting experience.

The virtual ethnography being undertaken in my research will take the form of a comparison between users of epistemic communities and social networks, and will look for three main phenomenological features of everyday being: does being online lead to an intensification of Enframing or *gestell*; does being online lead to an intensification of inauthentic modes of being as exemplified through fear as opposed to resoluteness; and does being online lead to a different type of alterity when considering other users.

3.   Progress so Far...

Here are some of the findings of interviews using Facebook private messaging so far - this first response concerns why this respondent (participant 4 in my anonymity coding) uses Facebook. Asking direct questions about Heideggerian concepts is not something that I would advise to anyone when dealing with 'real people,' and so the purpose of this question was to assess why someone would choose this world - given Heidegger's concept of world from *Being and Time*, that is a place filled with things that are present-to-hand or ready-to-hand, and with which we form meaningful relationships as we strive to understand the world as *Dasein*.[7]

> It is all to do with self interest. Facebook is there so that you can tell everyone about yourself. What you are doing at a specific moment of time etc. I mean if I write a particularly sad status I am guaranteed to get people asking

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me what is wrong etc. If I write something interesting
people will comment on it too. I love it. I shouldn't, but I
do. Even the people writing on my status updates or
commenting on my every mood only want me to do it in
return to them. They want me to show an interest into their
lives. The majority for example, live the same as each
other. We all go to school and then we all have our own
families and for the most part we all do the similar 9-5 job
after education. It is only the little bits that they do in their
lives that they see as cool or different that they try to force
down everyone's throats

But it isn't just us trying to make us look more interesting
to everyone else. It is a sad strange little culture which I
hate to be a part of because there is no room for secrets. We
whore out our entire lives to people who we haven't seen in
years, people we barely speak to, our family, and people
who already know too much about us. Facebook is
addictive because it is all about selling ourselves. That is
what 'Social Networking' is. We sell ourselves and we
LOVE it. Actually love it. Everyone loves reading about
themselves whether it is good or bad, and everyone loves
interacting with others over the Internet because it is easier
than doing it on a one to one basis, where heaven forbid
you might have to look at the person you are speaking to,
or be in close range. Why do that when it is so much easier
to talk to them from the comfort of your own room or
home?

4's response points to a revealing of a world that is in necessity
superficial, and has the essence of unabashed self-disclosure (Mark
Zuckerberg's recent comments that privacy is not a feature of modern
sociality are interesting given this).[8] This world is characterised by a radical
presence-at-hand, with no further interaction that would allow understanding
of any entity (even other people) at the level of ready-to-hand, and therefore
the extent to which meaning and significance can be derived from the
environment is compromised. The world 4 describes is one of being-with
rather than Dasein-with - entities existing with one another but in a radically
atomised manner, without significant interaction or understanding.

In response to a question of how, if at all, Facebook has changed
your life, and from the Heideggerian perspective therefore changes the world
in which *Dasein* resides factically, 4 responded:

Yes of course it has! If I don't know someone well now then the first thing I am going to do is bring up Facebook, because likely hood of things is that we are Facebook friends. But being Facebook friends with them doesn't mean that we hang around together or even socialise. Some person added me before they got to uni and has never talked to me face to face until last week. We have been Facebook friends for well over a year, and we wouldn't have even talked if I hadn't taken the initiative and wished him a happy birthday when it was just the two of us outside. Facebook has changed the world for me I think. I consider it not to be normal anymore if someone doesn't have it. For me, a daily user, it is like an extension of myself and if I don't have it then I do go slightly mental and I feel terribly cut off from everything. There is something inside me that loves to know everything about everyone, so I love the Newsfeed because it tells me about people. I love people's pictures because it does the same thing. It is weird because if Facebook didn't exist then that would be the equivalent of me going through someone's room and their diary and looking through every album they had. It is stalking! Sort of. I think..

I think Facebook has changed how I exist in the world because it is like an extension of myself on the Internet. The only way I can describe it is to imagine I had surgery on my brain and instead of anything being taken away something is added to one side of my brain. The added part is social networking and it is like a metallic brain part. It goes over the side I would normally use for socially interacting with people and attaches itself to it. I am now an extension of Facebook with practically everyone I know at my fingertips. It is a bizarre thing. I can't even manage to go a day without Facebook anymore because it feels weird.

In this account 4 identifies the possibility of Enframing (in that a day without Facebook is weird), and 4 also makes many references to how Facebook has altered existence in average everydayness - searching for people is everyday, social awkwardness derived from the status of friendship online, and the notion of isolation which could be discussed in reference to angst and authenticity in Heidegger. The answer also touches upon the McLuhanist notion of extension through media, and this could be interpreted as a radical Enframing from the Heideggerian perspective.

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In contrast, and with one analytic eye on Heidegger's notion of Enframing from *The Question Concerning Technology*,[9] this response from participant 7 offers another perspective on the view of the world that Facebook offers:

> I don't think Facebook has changed the way I see people or relate to them. It can sometimes give an insight into other people's thoughts, feelings, actions but that's about it. I think Facebook is very…um…kind of superficial (I think that's the word) kind of where you only see the surface of people, it's not that deep, but I suppose that's all it's for.

This response illustrates a freer relationship with the technology, and is more representative of the majority of responses. Note, however, a questioning of the nature of relationships online and the idea of being-with online is again drawn into question in this response.

This is a very short account of one potential method of webnography and how the method can be employed to investigate in a quasi-empirical manner a topic that has traditionally leant itself to purely theoretical investigation. While some will question the use of method in the investigation of Heideggerian philosophy a priori, this research will hopefully add contours to the research that would be sadly absent in a purely theoretical investigation.

Notes

[1] D Miller & D Slater, *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach*, Berg, Paris, 2001, pp. 21-22.

[2] H Morton, 'Computer-Mediated Communication in Australian Anthropology and Sociology', *Social Analysis Journal of Cultural and Social Practices*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2001, pp. 3-11.

[3] S Schwara, 'Ethnologie im Zeichen von Globalisierung und Cyberspace', *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien (MAGW)*, vol. 129, 1999, pp. 259-273.

[4] ibid., p. 271.

[5] L Kendall, *Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for Examining the Net*, Sage, London, 1999, p. 71.

[6] CM Hine, *Virtual Ethnography*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2000, pp. 61-71.

[7] M Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J Maquarrie & E Robinson, Blackwell: London, 1963.

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PART II

Cyberculture, National Identity and Diaspora

Stresses upon an Emergent Imagined Community: Results and Insights from the Emirates Internet Project

Harris Breslow & Ilhem Allagui

Abstract

This paper uses the results from the first annual Emirates Internet Project survey to address the effect of the Internet upon the articulation of social and national communities in the UAE. This paper argues that the UAE is still in the process of defining its 'imagined community' and that the Internet is problematically affecting the articulation of this community in the following ways. 1:Pressure upon the national lingua franca: Although Arabic is clearly the UAE's national language, web use in the UAE amongst young Emiratis in particular and in-country Arabs in general overwhelmingly occurs in English. We argue that this has long term implications for Arabic as the national language. 2:Pressure upon heretofore-traditional patterns of social networks: Arab societies and their resultant social networks are organized within layers of private space, oriented around the family, and primarily articulated within the home. We argue that increasing use of the Internet is playing a role in rearticulating the nature, location, and membership of social networks. 3:The role of the Internet in the articulation of a post-national culture: The articulation of an Emirati nation is always already problematic because of two factors: the fragmenting role played by historical tribal identities in Emirati commerce and politics, and the fact that four in five residents of the UAE do not have citizenship. We argue that Internet use in the UAE intensifies these factors by enabling the propagation of social networks that exceed or circumvent national identity and space.

Key Words: Internet use, UAE, survey, national community, social networks, national policy.

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## 1.	Introduction

The Emirates Internet Project (EIP) is a longitudinal survey research project of patterns of Internet usage amongst residents of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The EIP is a participating partner in the World Internet Project (WIP), a consortium of institutions researching Internet usage in 22 countries. Partners survey a basket of common questions used for comparative analysis, and local survey questions to gain additional insight of local Internet usage.

One important set of results concerns the role of the Internet in the articulation of stress to Emirati culture and polity. The UAE, like any nation

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state, signifies the articulation of a sense of community fashioned from disjunctive components of political institutions, language, and culture, enabling the articulation of common traditions and common identity.[1]

We examine three of these - language, social networks, and a sense of national polity - as they articulate to one another in the UAE, and the pressure that they face from Internet usage.

2.   Stresses to the National Language

A fundamental structure of any national community is its shared language.[2] In the UAE this language is Arabic. Arabic occupies a central role in the cultural history of the region, and is the historical language through which Emiratis gain their respective identities.

And yet, English is the language most commonly spoken by residents of the UAE. We note the somewhat unique political economies of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, where expatriates hold both high value occupations and low paying positions. The majority of these - 70% of the total population - do not speak Arabic. Typically, migrant labourers and high value employees both view English as a requisite skill for oversees work,[3] and English has become the national lingua franca, used by residents of the UAE as 'a contact language used among people who do not share a first language.'[4]

Skutnabb-Kangas points to the fact that native languages often decline in the adoption of formal education systems.[5] In the UAE private education stresses the teaching and use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), as a 'world language.'[6] Online communication reinforces this phenomenon; English has become the language of Internet use in general, and the web in particular.

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Table 1. **Language of Websites Most Often Visited by Nationality and Age**
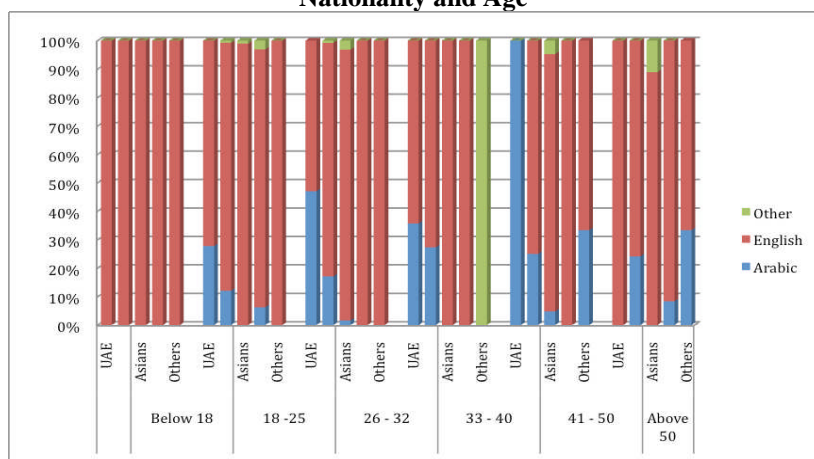
Clearly, the younger one is, the more likely one is to report most frequently visiting English language websites. A majority of Emirati respondents under the age of 41, large majorities of Emirati respondents aged 18-25, and *every* Emirati respondent under 18, report that they most often visit English language websites.[7]

This assertion is made more compelling by the figure, below.

Table 2. **Frequency of Navigation between English and Arabic Websites**
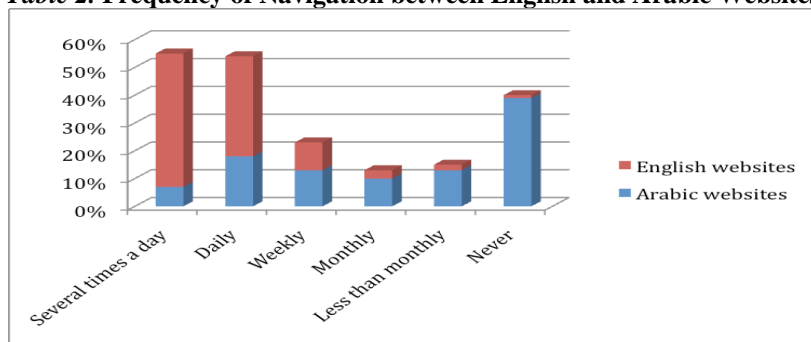
Here we see that a respondent navigates to an English website, and then remains within the English web universe. The opposite, where one navigates

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to an Arabic website and remains within the Arabic web universe, occurs so rarely - less than three percent of respondents do so - that it may be said to not be occurring at all.[8]

The use of English while online functions as an ELF bridge builder, placing non-native speakers of English in a loop that propagates and reinforces western cultural values among online users of ELF. If 'we assume… it 'brings forth a world,' and that the social organization of this world is rooted in the worlds which gave rise to it… [then] the Internet embodies the values of its creators.'[9]

3.   Pressure Upon Traditional Patterns of Social Networks.

The social construction of families on the Arabian Peninsula is based on clan and tribe. Families are central to one's social relationships, and are consulted for both major and minor issues. The Arab Thought, a research project produced by the Zogby Institute, surveyed 3800 Arab adults in eight Arab countries (Egypt, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, UAE and KSA) and found that personal concerns related to family, job security and religion are most important in Arabs' lives.[10] The same research showed that Arab values are centered on the family first, before the self.

The development of the media in the Arab Middle East has strengthened these relationships. The usage patterns of both radio and television embraced the place of the family. Radio was listened to in family circles of and amongst neighbors. Television was a family activity whether for *musalsalat* (Egyptian drama series), or football matches. 'Traditional' media were not only a good fit for the pre-existing structure of social networks and community, they also strongly articulated to, and reinforced this structure.

The development of new media, however, tends to articulate itself to an individuated usage pattern, causing a shift from physical community to virtual community and potentially reconfiguring Arab space. Van Dijk argues that

> The history of the 20th century reveals a disintegration of traditional communities… into associations which… are declining in size (caused by privatization and individualization) and… are extending as they become more diffused and spread over greater distances. In the eyes of many social scientists, planners and citizens, we are dealing with a 'lost' community.[11]

The Internet engenders a new set of relationships, displacing the family for the 'equilibrium' of individuals (specifically in Arabic societies).

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Web surfers have discovered a new kind of relationship where they keep in touch with others, virtually and regularly, and thus belong to a new structure of family and social networks, 'the virtual community.'

Rheingold argues that virtual communities replace whatever is lost with the decline of traditional communities. Opposed to this determinist position, are sociologists who attenuate the effects of technology upon society.[12] Jankowski highlights the difference between early sociology and that after the Internet as a 'redirection of emphasis from geographic place to a feeling or sense of collectivity.'[13] This sense of collectivity occurs outside the family, but to what extent does this occur in the UAE?

The EIP found a moderate impact from the adoption of the Internet upon UAE society.

Table 3. **Impact of the Internet Upon Social Relationships**
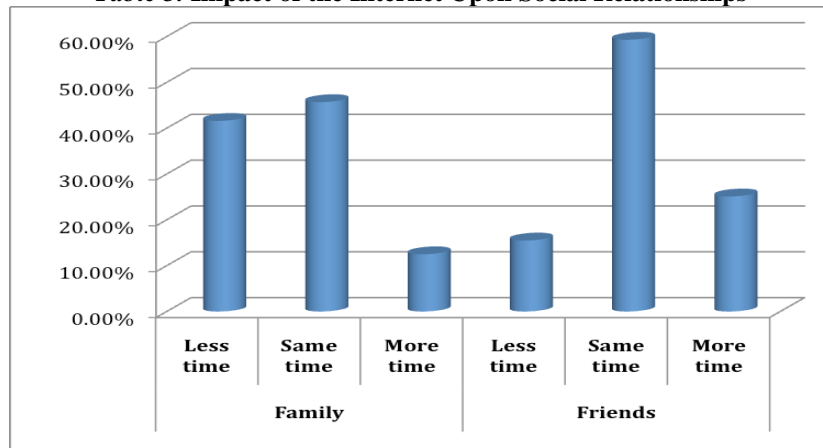
More than half the Internet users in UAE spend the same time with their friends since adopting the Internet, and about 40% spend the same time with their families. One should also note that about 40% say they spend *less* time with the family since their adoption of the Internet, an initial indication of a shift from time spent with families to time spent with friends, and thus a shift in the construction of these networks. This is most noticeable among Emirati youth below age of 18, 66.7% of who declared that they spend less time with their families since the adoption of the Internet.

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Table 4. **Impact of the Internet on Time Spent with Friends**
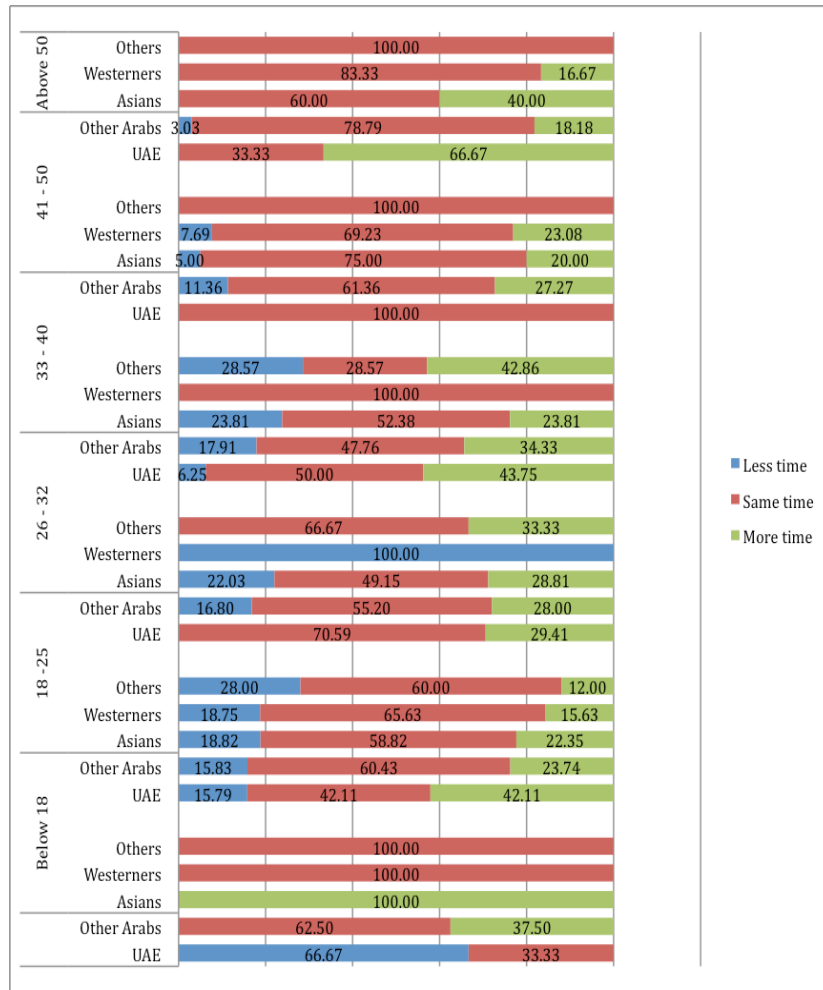
Respondents report the Internet's positive impact on their relationship with their families. For instance 66% of respondents report that the quality of their relationship with their family has either somewhat or greatly increased. This is explained by the fact that most of the UAE's residents are expatriates who use the Internet as a channel to communicate with their families while saving the telecommunication fees.

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4.   Heading Towards a Post National Culture?
        Typically, when one thinks of a national polity one thinks of the several components that we discussed at the start of this chapter. One can also add to this list a set of common media channels/outlets that provide the community qua polity with information regarding affairs of national concern.[14]

        We begin by noting that, in the UAE, non-national residents' visas are, in effect, *temporary* residence visas. This has a profound effect on the results of our survey: People without the ability to politically participate will generally display a distinct lack of affect regarding local political affairs.

Table 5. **Impact of the Internet Upon Politics**

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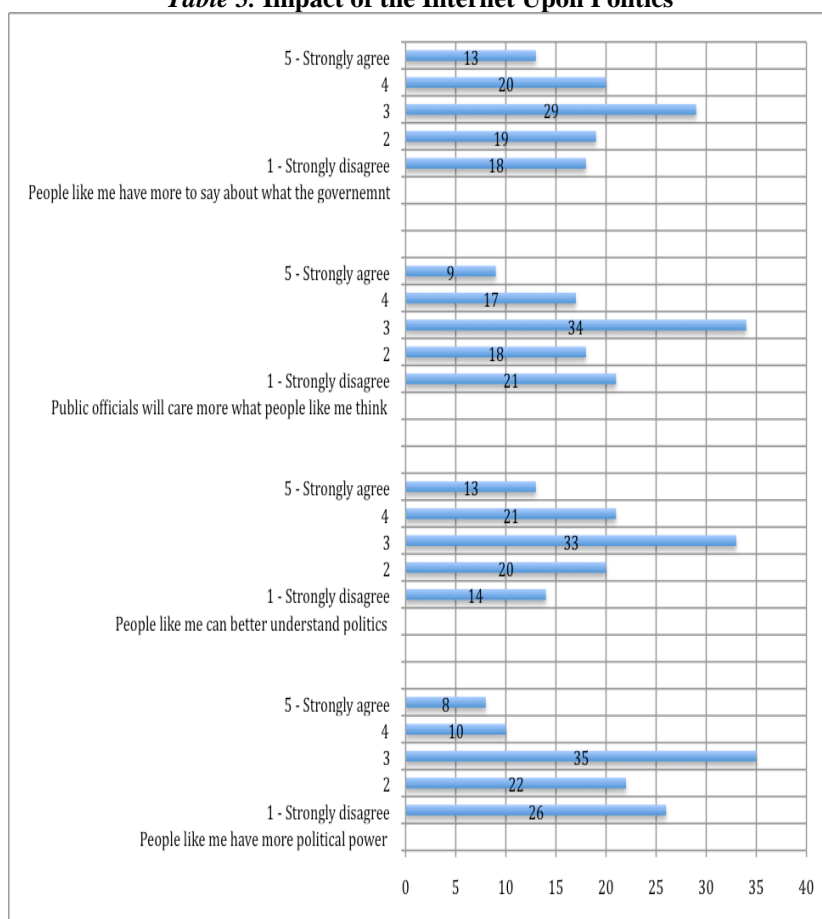
This last point is, predictably, what we find in one set of results from our survey.

 Amongst the aggregate responses the mean varies between 2.5 and 3 (where 2 means disagree and 3 means Neutral) for each of the following statements; 'people like me have more political power,' 'people like me can better understand politics,' 'public officials will care more about what people like me think,' and 'people like me have more say about what the government does.'[15]

This does not, however, mean that people are entirely apolitical. It means that their political concerns may be directed elsewhere. The figure, below, is of great interest.

Table 6. **Importance of Media as Source of Information**
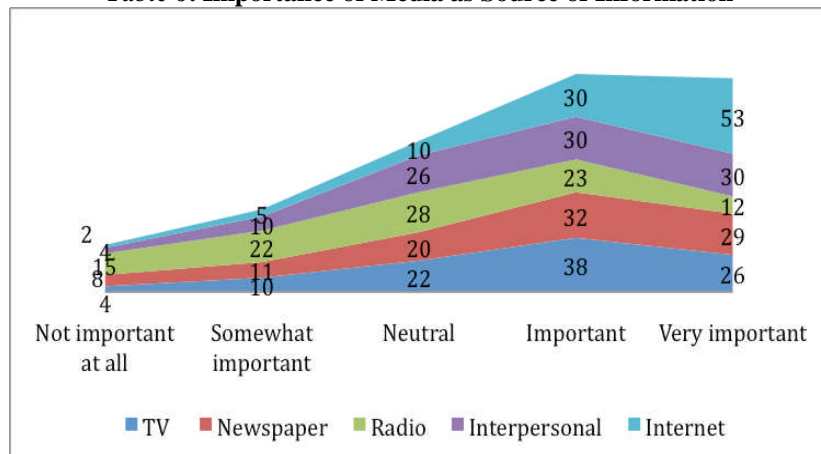
Our results indicate that the Internet has clearly supplanted all other mass media as the most important source of information in the UAE. More than four in five respondents (83%) state that the Internet is either an important or very important source of information.[16]

We postulate several causes to these results. Amongst them are the predominance of expatriate residents in the UAE; a lack of local media sources in expatriates' native languages, regardless of the use of ELF; and the dearth of investigative print and/or electronic media in the UAE, which

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will drive expatriates and citizens alike to seek other sources of information, online.

We can also, however, point to the idea of a post national culture in the UAE. It is our belief that, in the UAE, one does not find a single national community, articulating itself as a polity. Rather one finds a series of sociopolitical national circuits within which residents of the UAE 'travel.' At times and places these circuits come into contact - such as at the mosque, or the mall. In terms of politics, however, these circuits almost never come into contact. Rather, for the majority of residents in the UAE there is a turning away from the concept of unified polity in favour of a series of parallel circuits found online.

ELF use bridges the above-mentioned circuits, but it does not function to integrate the UAE's residents into a common community or polity. ELF functions to disaggregate the various resident national groups found in the UAE. In so doing non-national residents do not occupy a single national space, but rather move through social circuits that are akin to mobius strips; two-dimensional spaces enabled by ELF, articulated across the Internet, but without social efficacy or permanency within the UAE.

Notes

[1] B Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1991, Chpts. 2 and 3; E Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', *The Invention of Tradition*, E Hobsbawm & T Ranger (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 1-14; T Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory and Politics*, Routledge, London, 1995, Chpt. 4.

[2] Anderson, op. cit., Chpts. 4 and 5.

[3] A Pennycook, 'Beyond Hegemony and Heterogeny: English as a Global and Worldly Language', *The Politics of English as a World Language: New Horizons in Postcolonial Cultural Studies*, C Mair (ed), Editions Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2005, pp. 6-7.

[4] J Jenkins, *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, p. 8.

[5] T Skutnabb-Kangas, 'Linguistic Diversity and Biodiversity: The Threat From Killer Languages', *The Politics of English as a World Language: New Horizons in Postcolonial Cultural Studies,* C Mair (ed), Amsterdam, Editions Rodopi 2005, pp. 40-42.

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[6] R Zaltsman, 'The Challenge of Intercultural Electronic Learning: English as Lingua Franca', *Cyber Culture and New Media*, F Ricardo, (ed), Amsterdam, Editions Rodopi, 2009, p. 99.

[7] I Allagui & H Breslow, *The Internet and the Evolving UAE: Year One of the Emirates Internet Project*, Under Review, n.d., p. 40.

[8] ibid., p. 39.

[9] M Chase, L Macfayden, K Reeder & J Roche, 'Intercultural Challenges in Networked Learning: Hard Technologies Meet Soft Skills,' *First Monday,* vols. 7 and 8, 2002, viewed 1 February, 2010, http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/975/896, p. 9.

[10] J Zogby, *What Arabs Think: Their Values, Beliefs and Concerns.* Zogby International Graphics, Utica, New York, 2002, p. 7.

[11] J Van Dijk, *The Network Society*, Sage, London, 2006, p. 165.

[12] N Jankowski, 'Creating Community with Media: History, Theories and Scientific Investigations', *Handbook of New Media*, Lievrouw &Livingstone (eds), Sage, London, 2006, p. 60.

[13] ibid., p. 60.

[14] See J Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Burger. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1984.

[15] I Allagui & H Breslow, op. cit., p. 68.

[16] ibid., p. 42.

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The Role of Online Communities in Social Networking among Polish Migrants in the United Kingdom

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Abstract
Migration is a global phenomenon; however, in the European Union (EU) moving across the borders seems to easier due to legislation and continuous uniting processes that take place in all member countries. In 2004, after the enlargement, the EU experienced a mass movement of Eastern European citizens to the west in search for better paid jobs and so called 'better life.' The latest Polish immigration to the United Kingdom (UK) has outnumbered any other migration wave to Britain. The volume of Polish immigration has surpassed any political expectations and any realistic calculations in the United Kingdom. Social networking creates a 'home away from the homeland' for many immigrants while cyberspace provides numerous opportunities for members of the immigrant community to share thoughts, exchange ideas, and seek advice about any issue. Polish identity emerges from a relatively monolithic socio-cultural structure; therefore, keeping expatriate ethnic identity might be of high importance to some migrants in the multicultural host country. In the Internet era, computer-mediated public spheres seem to develop rapidly and widely. Online forums, blogs, newsrooms, chat rooms, photo galleries, and personal websites offer endless opportunities to share information of any kind. This paper, focusing on contemporary Polish immigration to the UK, explores the role of computer-mediated communication in establishing migrant communities in the target country. The function of a national space created in the virtual world while staying away from home is examined in terms of validity, usefulness, and importance for establishing relations with compatriots. Although the analysis focuses only on one national group of immigrants, the issue of cyber-communication is complex and fluid; therefore, the impact of the online environment on migrant communities is multi-layered and not entirely predictable.

Key Words: Adaptation, community, online communities, identity, belonging, home, migration.

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1. Introduction

From the cultural point of view, migration is a complex process. Apart from a physical change of place, it involves understanding and adapting to a new culture, day-to-day functioning in a new environment and,

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ideally, the possession of a certain level of language competence to communicate in the host culture. Polish communities have been present in the United Kingdom (UK) since mid-1940s. In today's world, the technology offers nearly endless opportunities to form ties with other online communities and to enable social networking among people. The issues of identity, home, and belonging appear to be crucial in determining migrant communities. This paper will focus on the current state, value, and usefulness of some of Polish online communities in the UK.

Since there is a wide range of portals, the focus will be placed on websites that provide some guidance, offer a forum, and create an online community for migrants across the country rather than locally. For that purpose, the following portals have been chosen: Moja Wyspa www.mojawyspa.co.uk – transl. My Island, Moja Brytania www.mojabrytania.pl – transl. My Britain, G. Britain www.gbritain.net, Polacy www.polacy.co.uk – transl. Poles, Wielka Brytania www.wielkabrytania.org – transl. Great Britain. Large portals like Facebook, MySpace, or Yahoo have not been taken into account, as they do not entirely reflect the theme of a migrant community or a diasporic spirit. Also, the Polish Cultural Centre (POSK) or other cultural websites are not mentioned as they only utilize the Internet to promote their cultural activities. Detailed statistical analysis is beyond the scope of this paper too.

2.   Identity, Home and Belonging

Migrating to another place is inevitably connected with changing one's environment. In the long term, the fact of changing places raises the issues of identity and belonging and affects the perception of 'home.' In today's world, technology and communication opportunities play an important role in reducing the distance between migrants' actual place of residence and their home country.

'Identity,' in the simplest terms, signifies who one is. That will further depend on the context of culture, language, politics, nationality, religion, ideology, beliefs, etc. Castells defines 'identity' as 'the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning.'[1] 'Identity' is perceived as 'people's source of meaning and experience;' however, there may be multiple identities within one individual or a group.

In diasporic terms, 'identity' often refers to cultural, ethnic, social, or national background. Yet, it is usually an identity of a group while the meaning of the term applies to its collective aspects rather than individual ones. Hall marks two types of cultural identity: one - associated with race and ethnicity and understood as a shared history of individuals and the other - changeable, full of contradictions and affiliated with similarities and differences.[2] Moreover, identity formation is a process that is enabled by the

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recognition of differences. Only then diasporic consciousness may emerge to confront the notion of the nation - 'the idea[l] of a cultural norm that is ascribed to or prescribed by those occupying the boundaries of the nation-state.'[3]

Meyer claims that identity of an individual includes such affiliations as nationality, language, era, religion, family and background, and cultural heritage.[4] When crossing borders, ethnic identity becomes important for both the migrant and the host community. Erikson and Sørheim quoted in Durovic defined ethnic identity as 'a sense of belonging and loyalty to one or several ethnic groups, defined by citizenship, religion, race, language or another ethnic marker.'[5] Nonetheless, ethnic and cultural identities seem to be intertwined; therefore, ethnic communities are associated with certain cultural elements or practices.

'Home' is another aspect that is crucial for identifying and understanding a migrating individual. The term 'home' has multiple meanings; though, it is always symbolic, emotional, and connected with personal experience. Burrell states that these are 'domestic rituals' and objects that make 'home' particularly important for national identity.[6] Rybczynski states that '[d]omestic dwelling is a fundamental human need that is deeply rooted in us, and that must be satisfied.'[7] It seems, therefore, that the feeling of place-rootedness and stability may play a major role in migrants' emotional and physical well-being regardless of the fact whether 'home' is a physical space or an abstract concept.

3.   Social Networking

Although the idea of migrants being able to find ways in which to 'return to their roots' within the context of the host culture may seem to only have a sentimental value, it can be a motivating factor in the building of new networks of friends who are of similar backgrounds and can be trusted in a foreign context.

Kuo and Tsai explain that in a destination country a distant relative or an unrelated person, who comes from the same country or region, can become a reliable companion.[8] Often migrants refer to compatriots rather than the host society to gain necessary knowledge or information. The reason for this could be that a person of the same origins, someone who speaks the same language and has understanding of migrants' home culture, is perceived as a trustworthy source of support in the new environment.

Upon arrival in a new society, 'acculturation' takes place, a 'dual process of cultural and psychological change that happens as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members.'[9] Social acceptance, migrants' adaptability, and language are some of the most important factors that contribute to a higher level of acculturation and migrants' more rapid adaptation in the target culture. At the same time,

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mental and physical well-being is crucial for migrants to be able to survive in a different environment. Therefore, networking (i.e. establishing social bonds) is vital for the reduction of stresses and individuals' insecurity connected with entering a new society.

Kuo and Tsai indicate that communities serve as a social support system, which has a soothing effect on migrants' psychological health providing the system is available and suitable.[10] Although it is important for migrants to feel supported and secure by creating social networks only amongst those who speak the same language and share the same culture, in fact, it can be counter-productive since it can reduce social mobility.

4.   Online Communities

'People generate and cultivate networks, trust and norms of mutuality […] to meet human needs for companionship and individual as well as collective aid.'[11] Computer-assisted networks can strengthen already existing groups or can contribute to the establishment of new communities. The latter seems to be more common among young people for whom online contacts are adventurous. Kavanaugh believes that social networks help to build two kinds of trust among members: thin trust – less personal, based on indirect social relations, and thick trust – triggered by intensive contacts among members. Also when trust is extended on distant and less known people, it may become a more abstract concept.[12]

Virtual relations and abstract trust alter social contacts in ways which have not yet been fully measured. Currently societies experience a rapid growth of online communities due to technological development and increasing Internet accessibility. Online communities can be measured in terms of size and volume, the number of members or visitors in particular. The largest of the analysed portals, Moja Wyspa, has 58,424 registered members (as for 23rd January 2010). The second largest one, Moja Brytania, has 12,559 registered members (as for 23rd January 2010). G. Britain, established as early as in October 2004 (just five months after Poland's accession to the EU), does not provide any statistics as for the number of members; however, in January 2010 the website was visited by over 81,000 viewers. Detailed and precise statistics is not really available due to the fact that the virtual world is rather fluid and may change very quickly. Also, migrants might have restricted access to the Internet due to either lack of equipment (many migrants tend to have limited possessions when living abroad) or poorer economic situation (unemployment or certain financial commitments), which may affect their online status.

The five main portals offer their members a discussion forum, various types of advertisements, useful links, information about Polish shops, churches, clubs, etc. The language, Polish, seems to be a distinguished feature of the portals. Since four out of five websites are exclusively in

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Polish, the target audience is restricted to the speakers of the language, thus to the people of Polish origins as not many foreigners speak the language. The fact that there is not any other language option implies the intention of restricting the audience. It is worth mentioning here that members of those communities seem to be 1st generation migrants.

In addition, certain links and useful addresses are aimed at Polish migrants only, e.g. Polish shops, Polish churches, or Polish discos; therefore, Polish is the main language. The first example refers to food and cuisine, which is always culturally unique. Certain products might not be available as there is no such tradition in the host culture, e.g. pickled cucumbers, sauer kraut, pretzels; therefore, migrants will search for specific products in order to satisfy their tastes. Even if equivalents can be found, very often the value of the products is diminished due to a difference in the place of origins. Often an individual will say 'It's not as tasty as ours,' or 'Ours is better.'

Another form of social support can be noticed in a broad range of advertisements. These are classified ads on a variety of topics; however, the most common ones concern accommodation (flat/house rent or share), stuff for sale (including air or bus tickets to Poland), services (money transfer, parcels to Poland, translation, or advice about documents – WRS, NINo, social benefits), and dating. Moja Brytania offers even a 'shared journey' service, i.e. members can advertise a car journey and the number of free spaces. A potential partner will share the costs of the journey, which undoubtedly will be lower than any air or bus fare.

Apart from advertisements and more formal types of advice, members of a forum can start threads on any topic. The most common subjects of discussion refer to everyday matters, local culture issues, work and money, health care, car and driving licence. Also, the exchange of information about work places, accommodation, or places to visit is relatively frequent. It is worth noticing that one of the portals, Polacy, reinforces the notion of social support through advertising itself as 'Poles.co.uk – you are not alone.'

Forum members are also interested in sharing general experience, impressions of Britain. Threads like 'What do we really like here in England' (in colloquial Polish, like in many other languages, the UK is commonly referred to as England) or 'What do you really miss here' generate quite a large response. Migrants seem to be happy to share their opinions and impressions, especially that it is much easier for them to write in their own language and replies come from individuals they trust. As it has already been mentioned, in a new environment compatriots are trusted more than the local community.

It is interesting to notice that most of the websites do not offer blogging opportunities. Their members seem to prefer to write short posts on the forum rather than write blogs. The reasons might vary; however, the issue

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of time may play a role here. Most migrants work long hours and prefer to spend their free time with friends, listening to music or reading. Therefore, short forum posts appear to be a better solution to the issue of expressing one's opinion without being involved in more extensive writing.

5.   Conclusion

The role of online communities is complementary to social networks created among migrants in that respect they provide individuals with required information from more than one source. Also, social networks exist locally while online communities can virtually connect people who live in distant parts of the country. Information provided by compatriots seems to be more trusted than advice given by members of the host culture. In addition, online communities offer an opportunity of gaining all information in the native language, which is important for those migrants whose level of English is rather low. At the same time, the fact that many portals are exclusively in Polish restricts access to the website to the Polish community only. The Internet offers almost endless opportunities of searching for information while national space in the virtual world serves the community well. The fact that new members join forums every day shows how important a tool online communication is for migrants. Further investigation in that field is required to establish all possible variables of social virtual networking.

Notes

[1] S Castles, *The Power of Identity*, 2nd ed., Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, p. 6.

[2] S Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, J A Braziel &A Mannur (eds), Blackwell, Oxford, 2003, p. 234.

[3] VS Kalra, R Kaur & J Hutnyk, *Diaspora and Hybridity*, Sage, London, 2005, p. 30.

[4] U Meyer, 'In the Name of Identity: Teaching Cultural Awareness in the Intercultural Classroom.' *Information Sciences (Informacijos Mokslai)*, vol. 45, 2008, pp. 48-50.

[5] J Durovic, 'Intercultural Communication and Ethnic Identity', *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, vol. 16, 2008.

[6] K Burrell *Moving Lives: Narratives of Nation and Migration among Europeans in Post-War Britain*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2006, p. 72.

[7] W Rybczynski, *Home: A Short History of an Idea*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1987, p. 217.

[8] WH Kuo & Y M Tsai, 'Social Networking, Hardiness and Immigrant's Health.' *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, vol. 27, 1986, pp. 133-149.

[9] JW Berry, 'Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures.' *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, vol. 29, p. 698.

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[10] WH Kuo & Y M Tsai, op. cit., pp. 133-149.
[11] A Kavanaugh, 'Community Networks and Civic Engagement: A Social Network Approach', *The Good Society*, vol. 11.3, 2002, p. 17.
[12] ibid, pp. 17-24.

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Emerging Communication Practices and Immigrant Adolescents in their Developmental Process

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Abstract

This article analyses peer to peer digitally mediated communication among adolescents of foreign origins in Milan. Aims of the research was to highlight the role of new communication practices in shaping cultural integration/differentiation processes. The sample, collected in two high schools in Milan (Italy), consists of 20 subjects, male and female, aged between 15 and 19. All of them attended Italian school from the first year of secondary school at least. Data was gathered through individual interview, focus groups and virtual shadowing. Results are presented and discussed from the point of view of flow theory and acculturation processes. Results outline specific communication behaviours in which socialisation processes can bring about change in the traditional categorisation Italian/foreigner. The consequence is a new symbolic space for self-representation and construction of identity.

Key Words: New media, second generation, acculturation, flow theory.

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1.   Introduction

This article presents the results of a research on communication practices mediated by digital technologies among adolescents belonging to the second generation of migrants in Italy.

Migrant's access to digital technologies is increasing and 'digital divide' is progressively reducing under the pressure of socio-cultural changes and of young generations. The reasons of this increasing digital literacy are: the need to nourish ties with the homeland; the wish to increase interethnic relationships; the research of news about the homeland and the need of bureaucratic information; the effort to learn the language of the new country and the diffusion of gaming offline and online.

Adolescents belonging to second generation of migrants are characterized by the increase of the complexity of the individual system (personality and psychic world) and the relevance of the social system (groups and communities) joined by multicultural dynamics. School and media, for those adolescents, are very important to orient their choices toward integration or conflict.

The research focused on the analysis of technology mediated communication practices among college students belonging to families of

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migrants. The sample, 20 people aged 17 or 18, has been picked out in two technical colleges in Milan both multicultural (30% of students belonging to migrants families). The colleges were different for the presence or absence of curricular activities on digital technologies. The interviewees had: a mobile phone (with Bluetooth) and a pc at home both used daily. All interviewees, realized photos and videos with their mobile phones; were frequent users of messenger (3/4 days per week) and had a personal profile on a social network.

The methodology integrated different tools aimed at: gain descriptions of digital media use (20 in deep interviews with students); follow daily practices through digital ethnography (20 daily monitoring through messenger); observe the processes of collective elaboration of meanings and values of digital practices among the students (2 focus groups one per each school).

2.   Adolescents or Migrants? Digital Communication Practices

Adolescents using digital communication tools can be defined as managers of a differentiated set of digital devices[2] that they activate according on daily organization of time and the kind of social network they are communicating with.

A quantitative research carried on by Nielsen in September 2009 depicts the 'young technoday'. In the morning they usually control the sms and have a first glance at Facebook to 'monitor' friends and organize the day. During the travel time to school they relax with music and build spaces of intimacy with girl/boyfriends through sms. The school time is colonized by mobile phone (videos or sms) to contrast the boredom of the daily duty. The evening time, at home, is committed to organization (Facebook or messenger); intimacy (sms or phone call); diversion and fun in the bedroom (social networks, music and videos).

Migrant adolescents adopt the routines of the hosting country, nevertheless, second generations of migrants use digital technologies in different ways.

For Italian adolescents, parents and relatives are almost excluded by the digital networks, except for mobile phone and sms. Migrants adolescents use the same technologies to stay in touch with both peers and relatives, mixing friends and families in their virtual communication activities. For Italian adolescents mobile phone is the more intimate tool used to communicate with parents or girl/boyfriend. For migrant adolescents, the more intimate tool is Internet (Skype, webcam etc.). Migrant adolescents define two different intimate spheres: one characterized by mobility and proximity of the device (mobile phone); the other characterized by visuality of communication (web cam).

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The awareness of migrants adolescents of different social and life conditions, as the ones of the homeland of their families, bring them underline that young people can live also without using technologies, and recognize the pervasivity of digital communication as a cultural trait.

Finally, they express two peculiar needs. The need to express themselves, to acquire a voice in cyberspace according to the self-perception as people under-represented in the public sphere. And the need to be informed people (e.g. reading online newspaper) according to the familiar habit to look for information about the homeland.

Research results highlight also the significant role of the educational institutions in respect of the proper socialization to digital technologies. The two groups of interviewees, in fact, have different attitudes towards technologies; value them in a different way and act differently.

Students of the college with fewer laboratories on digital technologies learned how to use and how to think about communication devices from friends, media, siblings and only occasionally parents acquiring an unmediated technical and communicative knowledge. Then, their attitude towards these tools is both enthusiastic and naïve. They perceive digital tools as something that cannot be renounced. Moreover, they are more trustful in the opportunities offered by communication technologies; interested in widening constantly their friends networks including friends of friends and new people.

Students of the technical college with more laboratories on digital technologies learned how to use and how to think about communication devices from teachers acquiring a competence they can spend at home or with friends; a mediated and more conscious technical and communicative knowledge. They perceive communicative technologies as less 'natural' then their coetaneous. They are more expert in managing their privacy, for example in social networks and they are less enthusiastic and define those technologies as 'useful' if used sagely, if they don't compete with sociality in real life. These adolescents show a more rational attitude. Starting from the research results, then, we can affirm that adolescents belonging to second generations of migrants while adopting style of use and habits of their coetaneous in the new country act differently according to their double belonging identity. First of all using technologies in order to respond to different needs (expression; information) and to build and nurture different kinds of social networks (different kinds of intimate spheres for example). Second looking at technologies in a more conscious way (for example recognizing some cultural traits).

Educational institutions still have a great responsibility in building conscious attitudes towards digital technologies among adolescents, and especially among young people who's often responsible of the literacy process of migrant's parents.

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3.   Use of Digital Communication and Subjective Experience

According to the Theory of Optimal Experience[3][4] any individual can experience a situation of psychological well-being, called *Flow of Consciousness*, which requires the involvement in a specific and temporary defined situation or activity. This condition is characterized by: intrinsic motivation, self-determination and balance between skill and ability as perceived from the subject. Recent researches[5][6][7] demonstrated that new media's use, because of their characteristics of interactivity, may promote Flow situations. We hypothesize that a more widespread and various use of mediated technology and communication would enhance and reinforce subjective Optimal Experience.

Most of the interviewees described several situations of Flow while using new media. In particular, some participants identified Flow situations in relational activities, while others found it in individual tasks requiring personal involvement, creativity and the improvement of knowledge/competences, [8][9]such as school researches or informatics artifacts creation.[10][11]

Flow experience in new technologies' use is not evoked simply by the mediated activity per se, but is elicited by specific activities that adolescents can achieve thorough new media use. Optimal Experience in new media use appears to be strictly linked to creative experiences, considered as described in Gardner's Theory.[12] In fact, both in individual and relational activities, participants have felt to be actively involved in the construction of something new, significant and socially recognized, such as for example the acquisition of particular technological competence which allows the subject to overcome peers' abilities; or the construction or re-construction of relational nets, both new ones which let emerge their multicultural, Italian, peer-to-peer social participation, and transnational and transgenerational ones, that can reinforce affective and cultural ties to their or their parents' original countries.

This direct link among new media activities, Optimal Experience and creative artifact construction promote adolescents' mental integration and their development and reinforcement of a more complex personal, social and cultural Self.[13][14][15][16] This specific identity construction process support them in overwhelming the social pressure that force them in choosing a cultural adaptation model between either the one ethnocentrically proposed by the Italian society or the other one embodying their parents' country of origins. The experience participants have in new media everyday use, causing Optimal Experience and creative results, is better interiorized and more easily re-evoked in the daily process of Self Construction and re-construction.[17] In this way they are able both to recover their own and their family cultural memory, to understand and deepen unknown aspect of their original culture,

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and contemporary to interact and cooperate in the construction of a transcultural and mediated peer social network and culture.

4.   Digital Mediated Communication and Acculturation Process

Studies in cross-cultural psychology widely embrace Berry's bi-dimensional acculturation model in which a four-category classification is proposed: 'assimilation', 'integration', 'separation' and 'marginalization'.[18] The optimal outcome would be integration: both the original culture is preserved and the individual is actively involved in local culture.

Acculturation process is conceptualised as a linear process towards adaptation. Within this frame culture seems a defined *topos* making belonging a matter either/or.

Adolescents participating in the research offer a different overview. Grounded on a 'crossing' land where refound social fields reconfiguring what seems in our eyes 'here and there'. Belongings are based on information fluxes and values within diasporic communities.[19] Acculturation process is then an individual, multidimensional and contradictory experience.[20]

The issue 'contact between cultural groups' crossed with 'maintenance of identity and culture' is therefore a slippery concept. Socialisation is no longer an activity occurring within a physical place. Contemporary forms of communication occur within a compressed time/space-dimension[21], creating a new connotation of 'place' where social ties are maintained. Cell phones and computers work as key-artefacts enabling adolescents to mediate among different symbolic orders. The core of belonging is built on aleatory aspects such as personal interests, values, life-style, while structural elements seem to weaken, requiring a continuous reorganisation among differences and specificity.

A developmental step in this phase of life consists in placing respect on one's own belonging group. We have highlighted some themes showing the role of technological device in mediating such a process:

a)   *Discover roots*. Most of the subjects claim that surfing the web has been the occasion to broaden a family narrative. Both if they visit the original country or they have never been there nearly all of them searched the web to obtain information to make up their own mind and visualise places, environments. Sometimes they get information previously unknown even for their parents.

b)   *Shaping ties connecting multiple cultures*. New media and social networks are different ways to keep alive social ties, making more familiar a world geographically far away and reaffirming a shared intimacy and routine, in order to

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domesticate the 'exotism' of the 'other part' of self. In reply to the question 'what do you talk about?' common answers were 'nothing': it's not the content that is important, but consolidating a shared social environment.

c)   *Discover identification models*. Adolescents talk about their contradictory feelings about being Italian. Second generation youth seem to meet in this phase a critical point of their life, discovering themselves as 'different' from Italians. New technologies provide a relevant arena apt to develop innovative parts of self in order to bring about identitarian changes and manage their cultural specificity. In particular, there they can identify models enabling them to connect in a whole shape parts of them mirrored in the Italian context as alternative.

Finally, we can say that second generation adolescents seem to express various forms of cultural hybridation through the use of technological devices, sometimes in order to express creativity and cultural originality, others to a more repairing way. The central point of the matter does not seem to be how strongly they keep ties with far away places, but to which extent they can take advantage of these communicative forms in order to act coherently with intra-psychic processes. In these terms a virtual community and relationship can support destructuration of culture supposed as an identity marker to become a catalyst of original configuration of meaning within a new symbolic space.

Notes

[1] Federica de Cordova is the author of paragraph 4. Eleonora Riva is the author of paragraph 3. Nicoletta Vittadini is the author of paragraph 1 and 2.
[2] L Haddon, 'Research Question for the Evolving Communications Landscape. *Mobile Communications: Re-negotiation of the Social Sphere*, Springer, London, 2003.
[3] M Csikzentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Harper-Collins, New York, 1990.
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[5] H Chen, 'Flow on the Net–detecting Web Users positive Affects and their Flow States', *Computers in Human Behaviour,* 22, 2006, pp. 221-233.
[6] TP Novak & DL Hoffman, 'Measuring the Flow Experience among Web Users', *Paper Presented at Interval Research Corporation*, July 31, 1997.

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[8] H Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*, Basic Books, New York, 1993.

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PART III

Fan Cultures Online

The Darker Side of Slash Fanfiction on the Internet

Brita Hansen

Abstract

In the 1960s slash introduced a major new premise to fan fiction (fanfic) - slash eroticised the homo-social undercurrents between the male protagonists from popular culture. Slash is: Erotic fanfic written by heterosexual women for heterosexual women, using appropriated characters from popular culture. The sexual pairing, indicated as character/character, is always two men. The actors portraying these characters must be thought to be sexually available to the women i.e. heterosexual, and at least one of them is sexually attractive to the writer/reader. Slash has never been published in mainstream media despite widespread publication of similar male-oriented erotica. The Internet has provided the means for widespread self-published, uncensored circulation, allowing women to realise a shared, common sexual fantasy. They no longer need to feel isolated and ashamed, believing their sexual fantasy to be unusual. Researchers suggest that slash, while written with very explicit homosexual sex, is not about homosexuality; it is a female idealisation of relationships acted out on male bodies. The writer can ascribe emotions and behaviour she desires from the men in her relationships. Research to date argues for slash as a reworking of the traditional romance novel formula; inherently between unequal partners, portraying a model of male authority. Slash is suggested as a means of substituting a situation in which a loving relationship between equals is possible, allowing the writer/reader to identify with the hero's partner, a social equal, a friend, and a desirable person. While this appears to be a realistic interpretation of some slash stories, I argue that this is not the case for a large proportion of slash - the darkfic slash. These stories are more complex, based on unequal, complicated relationship showing evident dominant/submissive roles, often sadomasochistic, sexually explicit and/or violent. On entering most of the large, dedicated slash Web sites, one is directed to search for stories containing specific themes, many of these themes come under the classification 'darkfic': bondage, erotic asphyxiation, horror, kink, mutilation, non-con, torture etc. It is clear that within the slash writer/reader community there is an awareness of this darker aspect of the literature, an aspect that has barely been acknowledged by academic researchers to date. This darker side of the slash genre is the area that I am exploring in my research.

Key Words: Darkfic slash, fanfiction, Internet erotica.

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1.   Introduction

The dark side of slash - why has academic research failed to address this phenomenon, arguing instead that slash is an alternative to the readily available female erotica - the romance novel? My research shows that the slash communities themselves, as indicated by the search engine options that the webmistresses nominate, are well aware of, and interested in, the dark side of slash.

So what is slash? The original definition of slash, and the one I use for my research, is: erotic fan fiction (fanfic) written by heterosexual women for heterosexual women, using appropriated characters from popular culture.[1] The sexual pairing, indicated as character/character, is always two men. The actors portraying these characters must be thought to be sexually available to the women i.e. heterosexual, and at least one of them is sexually attractive to the writer/reader. Slash erotises the homo-social subtext within popular culture media such as television, movies and books; slash is a genre which Henry Jenkins, who produced the first major work, and still writes on slash, suggests 'does…constitute a significant genre within fan publishing and may be fandom's most original contribution to the field of popular literature.'[2] The term slash has grown to encompass a plethora of closely related erotic sub-genres, such as fem slash (female/female) and RLP (real live people).

The popularity of slash can be directly attributed to the Internet; prior to the advent of the Internet, slash remained a relatively obscure, underground genre, available only to those 'in the know' via private mailing groups or short-run fan club magazines (fanzines).[3] However, today, if you Google just one slashed television series, *Stargate SG-1*, over 550,000 hits are produced.[4] Indeed, the Google search engine suggestion of *Stargate SG-1 slash fanfiction* produces the greatest number of results of any of their suggested search options, once you type in *Stargate SG-1* fan.[5] One of the largest *Stargate SG-1* slash archives, *Area 52*, has over 11,000 stories archived, and is growing at the rate of 15 new stories per week,[6] despite the show being cancelled in 2007.[7]

2.   Slash as the Alternative to the Romance Novel

Academia first began to notice slash in the mid 1980s when slash was only available in fanzines or as privately circulated stories. One of the first academics to write about slash was Joanna Russ. In her 1985 book, *Magic Mammas*, Russ suggested that women wrote slash because they wanted 'a sexual relationship that does not require their abandoning freedom, adventure, and first class humanity,'[8] and that this was something they could not find in conventional women's erotica. In 1986, Lamb and Veith saw slash as a reworking of traditional romance onto male bodies: 'Theirs is a union of strengths, a partnership rarely possible between men and women today.'[9] Camille Bacon-Smith, in her 1992 book on the women in the *Star Trek*

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fandom, wrote of slash: 'With some surprise, I discovered that the traditional romance formula missing in the fiction about women in relationships with men and each other shows up here, in the fiction about men in love with men.'[10] However, Bacon-Smith was made aware that the slash writers were not comfortable with public exposure of their erotic preferences, quoting one of her study group: 'Because of the moral climate in this country lately, people, people who have been unafraid to attach their names to things, are now not going to publish without pseudonyms.'[11] The risk was real: 'Employers of another woman who works in publishing threatened her job if she participated in the community. She takes the risk, but under a pseudonym, as do a number of established commercial writers.'[12] She concluded: 'The visual media, still overwhelmingly controlled by men, send out a clear message to women: female heroes don't have satisfying sexual relationships unless they learn to take second place in their own adventures.'[13] Bacon-Smith argues that slashers write homoerotic romances when using appropriated media culture protagonists because there are no suitable female heroes for them to identify with. Arguably one of the most influential early books mentioning slash was Henry Jenkins' 1992 book, *Textual Poachers*. In this book, Jenkins, describing slash, suggested: ' stories centre on the relationships between male program characters, the obstacles they must overcome to achieve intimacy, the rewards they find in each other's arms.'[14] This formula echoes that which Radway cited for romance novels.[15] Jenkins also mentions the resistance to slash by many: 'some cons still refusing to allow the public distribution of homoerotic publications.'[16]

The flaw with this argument is that the scenario does not reflect the relationships written into a large proportion of slash - the darkfic slash, where relationships are often far more complex, based on unequal, complicated relationships showing evident dominant/submissive roles, often sadomasochistic, sexually explicit and/or violent. That the 'slash as an alternative to romance' theory fails to acknowledge the dark side can be shown by investigating just one of the popular slashed television series, *Stargate SG-1*.

While there are many websites that contain *Stargate SG-1* fanfic, one of the largest is *Area 52*, a dedicated slash fanfic site. Approximately 94% of the stories archived were rated, using the Motion Pictures of America (MPAA)[17] system: G (general), PG (Parental Guidance), PG13 (Parental Guidance over 13), R (Restricted), NC-17 (Adult only). Of the rated stories, 5% were rated G, and 61% were rated R or NC-17. The MPAA system of rating used by the Area 52 site shows a preference for R and NC-17 rated stories. When compared to the 81% gen versus 19% adult archived in Area 52's 'sister' fanfic sites *Heliopolis* (a general fiction (gen) heterosexual or Male/Female romantic pairing (het)) fanfic site and *Heliopolis2*, (an adult het site) it was evident that the slash writer/reader preferred the dark fic.

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However, does this reflect an interest in the darker side of sexual fantasy, or merely an interest in more sexually explicit material?

A look at the site's search-engine options (Table 1) for the selection of story types proves that the interest is in the dark side. I suggest that these figures, coupled with the search engine themes, clearly indicate a preference for the darkfic stories by slashers, rather than the romantic stories researchers have concentrated on to date.

Table 1.1 Area 52,[18] *a dedicated* Stargate SG-1 *slash fiction site, showing the list of themes on their search engine*

Addiction	Disturbing Images	Het	Mutilation
Adult	Domestic Abuse	Homicide	Non-con
Themes	Domination/submission	Homophobia	Partner
BDSM	Drug Use	Horror	Betrayal
Bestiality	Enema	Incest	Sad
Bondage	Erotic Asphyxiation	Intense	Slavery
Character	Fantasy Play	Situations	Spanking
Death	Fisting	Kidnapping	Suicide
Child	Gen	Kink	Torture
Abuse	Ghosts	Language	Underage
Dark		Multiple	Vampires
Discipline		Partners	Violence

Just as Radway wanted to ask what sorts of histories prepared romance readers to understand and take pleasure in those stories,[19] so one might want to ask what psychological histories and experiences prepare some women, the slash writer/reader, to recognise homoerotic cues in commercial media as relevant to their experience, as a potential route not only to pleasure in slash, but in particular to pleasure in darkfic slash?

By investigating the Cyber Communities that have emerged around slash, it is apparent that the slash community is well aware of their interest in the dark side of erotica, and that the advent of the Internet has allowed women to explore and express this interest, perhaps for the first time, through the Internet's capacity to allow, anonymous self-published, uncensored publication of darkfic slash, and that they do so by the interaction with groups of like-minded people.

3.   Looking for the Dark Side

Fan fiction appears to have started in the 1920s, firstly around science fiction clubs, and then in movie magazines in the 1930s. Presently,

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the first known slash story appeared in fan-produced magazines (fanzines) created by fans of the cult television series *Star Trek* in the 1970s,[20] although there is growing anecdotal evidence to suggest privately circulated slash stories were written not only by *Star Trek* fans, but also by other fan groups from as early as the mid 1960s. The early *Star Trek* fan club was unlike most other science fiction-based clubs where the majority of members were male, and were writing technology-based fanfic based on the series. From the beginning there were a large number of women members who, within a very short time, started writing romantic, character-driven stories, and quickly became the majority of the fanfic writers in the *Star Trek* fan club.[21] Within a few years, fanzines appeared publishing very explicit erotica, and then slash fanfic.[22] However, that the slash fantasy was shared by a large number of women remained almost unknown, even among devotees, until the advent of the Internet.[23]

4.   Conclusion

Erotica and pornography are traditionally seen as a male's domain. The mainstream erotica available to women, mainly in the form of romance novels, did not permit the expression of slash fantasies, and therefore appears to have not met the needs of a large proportion of women. The ability to communicate with others via Cyber communities allowed many slash devotees to understand that they were not alone in having what at first glance appears to be an unusual sexual fantasy. Indeed, in many fanfic sites, slash far outnumbers fanfic written using traditional opposite-sex pairings (het (for heterosexual) fanfic).[24] The communities that formed around fanfic sites allowed many women the opportunity to really explore aspects of their sexuality for the first time, and they have found that sexual fantasies are not only far more complex, but also darker, than many believed.

The search engine categories found in most slash websites indicate that the majority of the theme areas to search stories for are not the romantic categories one would expect if, as posited by academic researchers to date, slash represents a reworking of traditional romance stories onto male bodies. Rather, the categories indicate that most readers are interested in explicit, violent and dark themes.

The Cyberculture and communities that have evolved around darkfic slash has allowed women, for the first time, to self-publish their erotic fantasies without the constraints of a male-dominated print media. Slash Internet websites are therefore of particular interest when researching the desires and fantasies that generate that genre. The fact that these sites contain only user-generated work, and the guides indicate the cultural practices that are seen to be essential within the community, identifies useful indicators for research.

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Notes

[1] For my study I use the original definition of slash. The term 'slash' has evolved to encompass a wider range of sexual pairings, for example femslash, pairing two women or RLP, Real Live People..

[2] H Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*, Routledge, New York and London, 1992, p.188.

[3] R Bury, *Cyberspaces of their Own: Female Fandoms Online*, Peter Lang, New York, 2005. pp. 73-74.

[4] Results 1 - 10 of about 555,000 for *Stargate SG-1* slash fanfiction. (0.32 seconds) accessed 15/12/2009.

[5] http://www.google.com.au/ 11/1/2010. 1,190,000 results vs 345,000 for the next most numerous results.

[6] http://www.area52hkh.net/news.php. accessed 15/12/2009.

[7] Movies based on the series have been released since 2008.

[8] J Russ, *Magic Mommas, Trembling Sisters, Puritans, and Perverts*, The Crossing Press, New York, 1985.

[9] PF Lamb & DL Veith, 'Romantic Myth, Transcendence and Star Trek Zines', *Erotic Universe: Sexuality and Fantastic Literature*, D Palumbo (ed), Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn., 1986.

[10] C Bacon-Smith, *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

[11] ibid., p. 241.

[12] ibid., p. 206.

[13] ibid., p. 208.

[14] Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 188-189.

[15] JA Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*, The University of North Carolina Press, London, 1991, p 38.

[16] Jenkins, op. cit., p. 188.

[17] Motion Picture Association of America http://www.mpaa.org/FlmRat Ratings.asp. viewed 25/2/08 MPAA has sent Cease and Desist notices to many slash sites to limit the use of this classification system.

[18] http://www.area52hkh.net/search.php. viewed 14th July 2009.

[19] Radway, op. cit., p. 10.

[20] JM Verba, *Boldly Writing: A Trekker Fan & Zine History, 1967-1987*, FTL Publications. 2003. p. 18.

[21] ibid p. 55.

[22] ibid p. 66.

[23] ibid p. 38.

[24] For example, in *StarGate SG-1* sister sites, slash outnumbers it by nearly two to one.

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Virtual Friends: Experiences of an Online Fan Community

Helen Barber & Jane Callaghan

Abstract
Within modern culture 'celebrities' and 'their fans' are familiar phenomena. However, the construct of 'fan' is one that is both deeply pathologised and caricatured in both academic and media representations. This jars with the experiential register of those who report 'fandom' as a positive and enjoyable social activity. Those fans who use the Internet face a second level of pathologisation, since web usage too is often constituted in academic representations as a 'problem.' The language of 'addiction' is the dominant frame of reference in psychological theorisation of the use of Internet technology. To explore the experience of those who identify as online fans, nine participants were recruited from Stephen Gately's official message board. Interviews about being a fan were conducted using instant messaging and then subjected to an interpretative phenomenological analysis. Several interconnected themes emerged. Far from being isolating as the media presents, the practice of both being a fan and of using the internet appeared to bring people together and increase their social involvement. In an increasingly Internet and celebrity driven world this research raises important questions about our conception of 'real' life, friendship formation and the Internet.

Key Words: Fans, celebrity, online communities, virtual community, internet forum.

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1.   Introduction

Modern media and academic culture represents the familiar phenomenon of 'celebrities' and 'their fans' in caricaturing and pathologising ways.[1] Most research is quantitative, and focuses on fans' predisposing personality traits - the assumption being that there is something intrinsically wrong with anyone who wants to be a fan. There is minimal consideration of benefits to fans' lives, their reasons for being a fan, instead presenting 'fandom' as thurst upon them by their lack of the necessary skills to keep a grip on reality.[2] This jars with the fans' reported enjoyment of 'fandom' as a positive social activity. The experience and personal meaning of fandom is unarticulated in these pathologising academic and media accounts, and the diversity of fan communities is unacknowledged.

Fans who use the Internet as a means to share their interest in a celebrity face a second level of pathologisation, since web usage too is often constituted in academia as a 'problem':[3] psychological research focuses on

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apparent poor social skills, loneliness, and 'Internet addiction.'[4]. Minimal research explores the potential positive role of the Internet in terms of building a sense of a fan community, sharing information about their favourite celebrity and enabling social networking.

2.   Method
        Nine participants (aged 19-72) from Stephen Gately's official message board were interviewed about their experience of being online fans. Online semi structured interviews were conducted via instant messaging. This online modality reproduced a familiar Internet mediated environment, and enabled global sampling. In these interviews, participants produced rich qualitative data, and the capacity to edit messages enabled a more reflexive response to interview questions.[5]

3.   Analysis & Discussion
        Interviews were analysed using Smith's approach to Interpretive Phenomenolagial Analysis.[6] Interviews were coded individually for their content, from which we built interpretive themes emerging across accounts.
        Overwhelmingly, participants reported that being a fan was a positive and life-enhancing experience. In contrast to current pathologising theory and research[7], participants describe how being a fan offers positive escape from the stresses of life, improves their mood and provides friendship.

        I've had a complete blast over the past few years and made
        so many new friends. Being a fan has also helped me
        personally in many ways too (Leonie, 52-54)

        The emphasis participants place on the role their fandom plays in their lives is clear, and the dramatic language used suggests they are determined to defend this position. The enhancement to life that being a fan provides has generally been ignored by the media and academics. It has been observed in sports fans,[8] but this has only been transferred to music fan research where it is seen as the exception rather than the norm.[9] Duffett argues this is due to the white middle-class biases of academic researchers, who seek to normalise non-fans.[10] There is limited support for our findings - Grossberg explains fans as not being unhealthy and unrealistic extremists, but as consumers who are able to use popular culture to fulfill their desires and needs.[11] Carlin goes much further to suggest that people who keep up to date on celebrity gossip are popular, with strong social networks, a healthy drive for independence and high emotional autonomy - all attributes that Western society values.[12]
        Contrary to the literature the participants appear to lead 'normal,' healthy lives and are able to describe the realities of being a fan without appearing to be deluded. The participants do not describe every aspect of

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their experience as positive, but that the overall lifelong experience is.

> Helen: Do you like being a Stephen fan?
> Louisa: sometimes I hate it! But 99% of the days I like it
> Helen: lol, ok, so for the 1% you don't, why is that? what's the negative side?
> Louisa: travelling (I'm scared of flying)….it always pays off so
> that's ok (Louisa, 154-164)

The beneficial experience of being a fan is heightened by both the friends made, and the use of the Internet to enhance both the feelings of community and the closeness they feel to Stephen.

Participants all describe how important the friends and they have made through their fandom are. For most, they began on the Internet.

> I've found wonderful friends through my fan following.
> People around the world and many who have become close
> friends (Eleanor, 236-237)

Social support is clearly of benefit. Indeed it is hypothesised that social networks are a biological imperative,[13] particularly with similar others, who might validate our identities[14]. Sports fan research supports this - the group affiliation motive is important.[15] Jenkins has argued the positive benefits of friendships made should be emphasized.[16] O'Guinn found that fan clubs acted like surrogate families and often the relationships that developed from within them became the most important and enduring in fans' lives.[17] Participants believe that knowing they have something in common initially makes it easier to make friends.

> Helen: What is the most important thing to you about being a fan?
> Eleanor: The community I've found in the process. It wasn't something I was looking for, but because of a shared love for BZ, I've met some wonderful people who have become very close friends over the years (Eleanor, 771)

Given the pathologised real world representations of fandom, it is not surprising that fans seek out friends and form strong online bonds:

> I'm comfortable with it now but I used to be a little
> ashamed to talk to 'normal' people about it years back. I
> guess it was because people told me liking a boyband was

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> silly and I believed them. now I just tell them to f*** off
> (Louisa, 360-370)

> I have his pic pinned up on my workstation wall as my
> hubby wouldn't have allowed me to put it up at home. I feel
> very happy when someone comes up to me and say 'hey!
> who's that guy on your wall? cos I get to talk briefly about
> Stephen and how I got his pics (Jessica, 58-62)

Fiske's social marginality hypothesis of fandom predicts that fans' marginalised status encourages people to seek out similar others, an idea that our data appears to support.[18] Positive validation of fan identities in online communities might actually function to increase self-acceptance.

Fans clearly value friendships made online. Leonie explains how she speaks to people online more often than offline.

> Helen: Do you consider the people you chat with online
> friends?
> Leonie: yes
> Helen: do you think about them the same way as your
> offline friends?
> Leonie: Some of them I do. Some I have been lucky enough
> to meet many times in real life and have become quite close
> to them so they do mean as much to me as my offline
> friends. Also, as I'm online every day, I sometimes chat to
> my online friends more often than I do my offline friends
> (Leonie, 145-152)

Leonie's statement also raises the issue of differences between online and offline friends. Despite valuing the friendships they have made, some of the fans are a little more reluctant than others in considering people they have met online as 'proper friends.' Louisa, however, suggests this issue is not limited to online friendships.

> I am very careful calling anyone a real friend (online and
> offline) but there are definitely one or two friends I have
> never met… I'd like to have the whole message board
> living in my street, I think that would be fun (Louisa, 284-
> 301)

In the literature, there is a debate as to whether online relationships can be anything other than shallow and superficial,[19] but increasing evidence supports the view that genuine relationships and communities can be

created.[20] The 'Uncertainty Reduction Theory' suggests that as uncertainty decreases the development of relationships increases.[21] Thus, the message board provides a location where initial risk is low and people are more predictable, which will encourage the formation of initial relationships. In order to progress to deeper level relationships, uncertainty must be reduced, and this may be harder to achieve online.[22] There is evidence that relationships online can become more personal and intimate over time.[23] Participants' experiences seem to follow this pattern, with many stating that people they have met online are friends, but that it took longer and often meetings in person to make the friendships deeper.

> Anna: yes there are people who i consider my friends, that ive met online
> Helen: and you have met them offline too?
> Anna: yes
> Helen: but online came first?
> Anna: yes
> Helen: and you considered them friends before you met them offline?
> Anna: Probably more acquaintances. only a handful of all the people ive met that i would want to be friends with
> Helen: right. do you think its possible for people to really know someone enough online to be able to consider them a friend?
> Anna: Not for me. yes they all seemed ok online but we only talked about one thing with most of them… offline you get a better feel for the person and whether you have other things in common (Anna, 911-952)

Existing theories of friendship have generally ignored computer-mediated communication, yet clearly personal relationships in online settings are commonplace and pervasive to life.[24] All participants describe the big impact the Internet has had on their life as a fan, and how it has made being a fan easier. It has facilitated the formation of a Stephen fan community and aided the creation of relationships within it. The interviewed fans ascribe significance to the friendships they have made online and believe them to be deep and real. Whilst I have already considered the normally accepted (pathologised) view of both being a fan and Internet use, Grohol provides a voice of reason.[25] He suggests that people who spend time online are simply engaging in normal, healthy, social relationships, which can be of even higher quality or value than offline relationships would be.

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4.   Conclusion

          This study highlights the problem of the pathologisation of both fans
and Internet users and considers fans' experiences as useful data. Being an
online fan was viewed as a positive experience, with participants focusing on
the use of the Internet to develop a fan community and the ongoing
friendships that developed. Far from being isolating as the media presents, the
practice of both being a fan and of using the Internet appeared to bring people
together and increase their social involvement. In contrast to the popular view
of fans, perpetrated by the media and academics, the fans interviewed in this
study, are seemingly healthy, happy members of society who make a
conscious choice to exhibit fan behaviours to the extent they do because it
brings enjoyment to their lives. All of these topics will provide important
areas of further study. In an increasingly Internet and celebrity driven world
this research raises important questions about our conception of 'real' life,
friendship formation and the Internet. This particular research may lead to
interesting further research following Stephen Gately's recent death.

Notes

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Music Blogs, Music Scenes, Sub-Cultural Capital: Emerging Practices in Music Blogs

Beatrice Jetto

Abstract
Drawing upon theories largely used in popular music studies I propose a new approach for the analysis of music blogs using concepts such as music scene, sub-cultural capital and authenticity. I first consider music blogs as an emerging form of commercially independent fan production, a more recent digital reincarnation of fanzines, creating and circulating sub-cultural capital within indie music scenes at a local as well as at a virtual level. I describe how music blogs filter information in different but often overlapping contexts. Using Bourdieu's *Field of Cultural Production* as the main theoretical framework, I argue that contrasting dynamics of hierarchisation and commercialisation might influence how music blogs filter information. Although music blogs have been considered as operating independently from the music industry, I raise some issues in regards to their authenticity and cultural autonomy from pressure of power within indie scenes. I argue that music blogs' cultural production is often shaped by personal motives as well as more commercial motives such as popularity and professional status. The considerations presented in this paper are based on primary ethnography data on the Australian indie scene and in-depth interviews with Australian music bloggers.

Key Words: Music blogs, music scenes, sub-cultural capital, authenticity, field of cultural production, cultural gatekeepers, music industry.

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1.   Introduction

Music blogs first emerged as a manifestation of fandom that soon replaced more traditional forms of independent media, such as fanzines, because of social and cultural shifts in music scenes caused by technological developments such as the Internet, in the first place, and web 2.0 after.[1] Over the past decade, several studies have illustrated the capacity of the Internet to contribute to the development or the reinforcement of music scenes.[2] I argue that the emergence of music blogs is consistent with such trends.

Music blogs are primarily dedicated to independent non-mainstream niche music and the recent increase of music availability have made music blogs a prominent source of information, especially for special interest groups. Several authors have already emphasised the importance of blogs as

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intermediaries between fans communities and the music industry, becoming particularly influential especially across indie music scenes.[3]

2.   Music Blogs as a Field of Cultural Production

In order to examine how the external environment shapes music blogs cultural production, it is important to contextualise music blogs at the crossover of three different types of indie scene: the local, the trans-local, and the virtual.[4] Music blogs can be seen to stand at the crossover of these three different types of scenes. For example, some music blogs, by creating awareness of what is happening in the local scene, provide a major portion of the infrastructure that support the local scene.[5] As an online medium, music blogs are also capable of networking with other fans with the same interests as well as reaching a global audience. In doing so they participate in the trans-local indie scene.[6] Finally, blogs are also part of the music blogosphere. Creating links and networking with other related music blogs is a common practice that music blogs perform in order to integrate into the desired online music scene.[7] In each context blogs will generally filter content based on individual personal taste, some focusing more on the local scene, others on the trans-local by featuring international artists. However, they all share the same principle of independence from the mainstream.

An important aspect to be considered in relation to indie scenes is that, despite an appearance of egalitarianism among members, in fact they reproduce social hierarchies based on status. Members, not only share the same interests, but also compete over cultural knowledge.[8] A useful theoretical model to explain how these hierarchies work and how they frame music blogs practices, at a local as well at a virtual level, is Pierre Bourdieu's theory of *Field of Cultural Production*.[9] Following Bourdieu's theory, indie scenes are artistic fields where power dynamics and hierarchies exist.[10] Bourdieu defines two logics of hierarchisation, often contrasting with each other within the same field. The first logic shapes how art is created following the principle of *art for art's sake* that rejects the pursuit of profits and condemns the power of cultural institution.[11] In opposition to this, is the creation of art according to what audiences expect and that to which critics and institutions give legitimacy. The latter is derived from the logic of the market and economic power, where success depends on commercial sales and honour from established authorities. Bourdieu recognises a divide between those who dominate the field economically, and those who see themselves as independent from economic power. This dichotomy is responsible for constant hierarchical struggle. On one side there are hierarchies based on economic and commercial forces and, on the other side, there are hierarchies based on authentic free artistic expression. Members of the scene can therefore gain status following one of the two types of logics.

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Considering the local indie scene as the artistic field, it can be shown how these two contrasting logics might impact on music blogs practices. Within indie scenes, the logic of art for art's sake creates hierarchies and confers status based on levels of authenticity, one of the core principles of indie ideology, and autonomy from the commercial music industry. In the indie community *authentic* means something personal, perceived as real, and created because of artistic expression instead of commercial motives.[12] In music blogs authenticity is expressed by operating against the traditional mainstream and promoting music on the basis of their aesthetic values only, showing a distinctive personal taste.[13]

Authenticity is often tied with the notion of sub-cultural capital as it has been adopted in music scenes to build social hierarchies.[14] Thornton introduces the notion of sub-cultural capital in her study of club cultures.[15] She explains how sub-cultural capital is expressed through taste in music and it gives status to those who are considered to have it, such as DJs and music journalists.[16] In the same way, I argue that music blogs express their sub-cultural capital through the music they feature.[17] Through their unique taste and music knowledge, they can influence other fans as well as create a sort of hype around particular artists.

The second type of logic operating within indie scenes is based more on commercial interests than on aesthetic values and involves the relationship between the scene and the corporate music industry. Fonarow argues that professionals are considered to have high status within the scene because of a series of advantages they can benefit, such as guest lists and exclusives. These privileges distinguish them from the ordinary fans. However, professionals are not the only scene members showing status within the indie scene. There are also specialised groups of fans whose desire of gaining contacts with bands pushes them to liaise with professionals. These relationships can often turn into career opportunities.[18]

I argue that music blogs practices fit into this discourse. Despite the desire of music bloggers to be perceived as authentic through the music they feature, some music bloggers consider their music blogs as a step to gain status in the music industry and to possibly become professionals. There are several examples where Australian music blogs, having started as personal outlets, ultimately became involved in the music business.

Therefore, although the motives of music blogs should be only about the quality of music and about promoting artists who are not famous or successful, the reality is that some bloggers often see their work as an avenue to increase their popularity in the local scene and gain validation in the music industry. A way for music blogs to gain status within the local scene is to collaborate with record labels and PR agencies for the promotion of artists. Because of the increasing influence of music blogs, the music industry, as

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they have done in the past with other forms of independent media, is trying to incorporate them into the system through a co-option process.[19]

The co-optation of music blogs is generally structured around the offer of free tickets to events, free CDs, invitations to parties, exclusives etc. These are all things of appeal to music bloggers since they might increase their status as professionals in the local scene.

Those members of the community that value authenticity criticize this sort of deviation from indie values. In a recent Music Bloggers Roundtable several bloggers expressed their disappointment:

> Some blogs have become nothing more than press outposts for major labels and the handful of indie artists with strong enough publicity beyond them.
>
> I though that music blogs would be a real and intellectual critical movement. It seems to have settled into hipsters copy-and-pasting press releases.[20]

The question then is to what extent music blogs can maintain a level of cultural autonomy by distancing themselves from pressure of commercial power within the indie scene and, hence, being considered as authentic. Stuart, from the blog New Weird Australia, clearly elucidates the struggle that often music blogs experience:

> It is very difficult for a music blog to be authentic. They will always be compromised because they are holding to very different agendas: their own personal curatorial agenda and the other agenda, which is to get products, be part of the scene. When I was writing Fat Planet I did feel caught in that sense. There were labels that I wanted to favour because I wanted to continue to get releases from them. I felt quite compromised for a little while. Eventually, when I brought myself back to what was the purpose of doing this then I was fine but I understand that the temptation is there and you can be drown to it[21]

At a virtual level, if we consider the music blogosphere as the artistic field of production, it can be seen how dynamics of power operate in a similar fashion. Music blogs, which follow commercial motives, generally aim to be popular in the blogosphere by having high levels of readership. An easy way for music blogs to gain fast readership is by blogging what's popular in the music blogosphere, which generally translates into what is hyped by music blogs aggregators.[22] By putting different posts into the same

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context, aggregators create a sense of hype around artists that most bloggers post about. Blogging about hyped artists is becoming quite common, especially among new bloggers who, instead of showing a personal taste, believe that featuring what is popular in the music blogosphere is a way of remaining relevant and gaining readership.

On the other side, blogs that value the art-for-art's-sake principle often express a sort of criticism toward blogs that subsume their personality by merely reproducing label press releases or posting music that is going to attract the most possible traffic. Stuart further articulates on the notion of authenticity:

> I think authenticity is consistency and that's not necessarily consistency in terms of regularity but consistency in terms of the music that is being pushed through. I have a slightly different take on it because I am still on a lot of mailing list of record labels so I see the sort of stuff that is sent to blogs and I post pretty much none of it or less than 1% of it. Generally blogs that are avoiding that and seeking an alternative pulling from other places are the only ones able to show a unique taste, dissimilar to other blogs that are out there[23]

This quote shows how authenticity is normally questioned among bloggers or very knowledgeable fans only. The majority of music fans consider music blogs as a trusted independent source, where they can acquire music knowledge, as well as free MP3s. Wodtke suggests how ultimately the only way to define the authenticity of music blogs is by other bloggers' reaction toward them and how they, as social group, define themselves.[24]

3. Conclusions

This paper has argued that music blogs are a form of independent media forming the infrastructure that support the development and continuation of local and trans-local scenes. Through the creation, and circulation of sub-cultural capital, music blogs have become extremely influential across indie scenes. The way in which they construct and circulate sub-cultural capital is deeply affected by often contrasting hierarchies of power and autonomy from the commercial industry. Many music blogs often express a tension between the desire of being valued as authentic by few loyal fans and the desire of being popular in the music blogosphere and gaining status in the local scene. Music blogs that follow the art-for-art's-sake logic are those that demonstrate a consistent and discerning taste, independent from the hype generated by the music blogosphere at a virtual level and independent from pressures of the music industry at a local level.

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This type of blogs embraces more an amateur philosophy by favouring personal motives instead of professional motives and popularity. Other blogs might sacrifice their indie ideals of authenticity in favour of their professional status. Ultimately the logic that will prevail will depend on the subjective value that the blogger gives to each context. Therefore, I argue that although the general belief that music blogs could operate democratically and authentically, in fact, they might act in ways that allow the music industry to influence their sites. Ultimately, this very first attempt of questioning about the cultural logic behind music blogs should account for recognising that concepts such as status, authenticity, sub-cultural capital, all are seminal to speculate how the phenomenon of music blogs might evolve in the future.

Notes

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[10] ibid., p. 238.

[11] ibid., p. 40.

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PART IV

Cultures of Online Learning

E-Learning 2.0 as Reciprocal Learning

Paolo Lattanzio & Raffaele Mascella

Abstract
E-learning 2.0 uses knowledge in an accessible and dynamic way. It provides the elimination of the platform's ties for an open web-based participation. Analogue important changes also appear in learning communities, that are moving towards a digital nomadism. From a 'one to many' communication, typical of traditional e-learning, there emerges a new form of e-learning, based on a 'many to many' communication. It indicates a kind of 'reciprocal learning' and the learning paradigm evolves from 'push' to 'pull' strategies.

Key Words: e-learning, web 2.0, learning community, knowledge, World Wide Web, knowledge management, innovation.

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1.   Introduction

Today we witness many changes in every aspect of human life directly connected to the Information Society. In particular, the World Wide Web evolution and the more and more technological possibilities are changing the way users learn and teach to others.

Every task is changing, evolving in new forms and new dynamics. Also in the field of computer based learning (CBL) there are important innovations about contents and learning strategies.

In fact there are emerging innovative and participatory forms of e-learning based on the social and communicative revolution of web 2.0. They enable essentially a form of 'reciprocal learning.' We define it 'reciprocal' because it is a kind of learning that creates a communication between users (students and teachers) without fixed roles, in a wide space characterised by a continuous creation of contents.

2.   E-learning 1.0

Without undermining traditional e-learning, it is important to underline the difference with the new kind of web learning. To distinguish the new e-learning marked by the diffusion of web 2.0 from past form of distance learning, we call the latter 'e-learning 1.0.'

It is a form of 'distance learning' through the Internet that disseminates pedagogical contents on a technological platform. The learning platform is a digital environment where students, teachers and tutors meet each other and play their different roles.

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Here the learning content consist of every kind of digital content produced by teacher, and the training process is managed through teaching process starting with contents delivery and ending with evaluation.

Now traditional e-learning appears to be a kind of traditional teaching based on a top-down process with the transfer of knowledge in a unidirectional way. In fact when we look at traditional e-learning we can observe a static organisation based on courses, modules, tests and a low degree of interaction. This type of e-learning does not take real advantage of the new technologies in the creation and transmission of updated knowledge. Traditional e-learning systems that we define as 'e-learning 1.0' show a reluctance for interactivity, collaborative activities and learning personalisation both in using and creating educational material. Furthermore e-learning 1.0 is based on a reserved closed platform that creates a kind of knowledge not longer exploitable because it is usable only inside the platform boundaries.

Thus what is gained by students seems to have a limited portability, and totally different from the emerging use and participation in contemporary Web, that involves contents creation by users. The traditional e-learning is then platform-centered.

3.   E-learning 2.0

Our proposal is to consider new form of e-learning based on the new participatory dimension of Web 2.0, because it creates a new shape of e-learning featured by reciprocal learning, recombinant communities and user-generated contents without access restriction.

The tools that characterise the social web can be used for pedagogical and training work. It is due to the success in participation to the so-called read/write web. This way of learning is considered useful for these principal reasons: on one hand, for exploiting at the best the power of web, on the other hand for ensuring a continuous and updated knowledge.

In e-learning 2.0 there are new features that give different form at the same content by using different languages, so now it is usable in different contexts. This novelty linked to the possibility to use a lot of user generated contents and start drawing the new form of learning supported by the Web. But there are still two important features that differentiate e-learning 1.0 from web learning.

On one hand, in traditional e-learning the authorial role that allows creating educational contents is really similar to the traditional teacher. With a paradox, the risk is to use an advanced technological platform for a traditional type of teaching. On the other hand, in e-learning 1.0 when the teachers create educational contents, they put in Learning Objectives in specific repositories. In this way we observe a clipping of a limited and unnatural space, as an enclosure, as if we create a narrow cage to trap the sea.

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Closed repositories don't allow a global fruition of the contents, they do not allow peer review, rating, and evaluation. Really, new kind of e-learning is similar to www.merlot.org a website for sharing educational contents: here you have an open publishing platform, a kind of user rating, the peer review and so on.

One of more important features for this type of collaborative learning is the possibility for everyone to give his own contribution for building social knowledge. It means that you can learn from many different knowledge sources and with different styles of teaching.

Often this set of innovations is called reciprocal teaching, with the focus only on the role alternation that new technologies enable. We believe that is very important also for the phase of learning. For this reason, we speak about reciprocal learning, that is a kind of learning based on the enjoyment of digital educational contents produced by other users or members of the 'virtual' classroom. When students or the web become a source of information, the kind of learning changes: for example, there are simplified explanation strategy and contents organisation, continuous updating of contents, direct link with everyday extra-school lifetime and so on.

For this reason we focus on reciprocal learning. In our university we have a direct example of this new kind of reciprocal learning. For the course of 'Science Communication' we create a blog, www.leparoledellascienza.org where every student for the exam must record and share an audio file about a scientific problem. So the student can study in deep the selected one, find an expert on it, create and share the final content. The so created contents are not only exam material, but they become pedagogical content available for other students. This is a kind of reciprocal learning because a student becomes teacher for other students in a continuous updating. This way of building knowledge is based on social interaction.

Thus, participative web is now a tool as a pen, a whiteboard and the books. Its global diffusion reinforces new abilities such as writing and at the same time creates new ones such as creating multimedia and hyper-media. The contents produced and shared are not all equal, because there is a kind of control over them. The value of the contents is ensured through the peers' evaluation. So we have a virtual path: only better contents become relevant, thanks to the evaluation and the rating of users. Learning is evolving from closed virtual spaces to new characterised by openness. In other words we have personal learning environments (PLE) in a lifelong learning perspective characterized by informality. It is possible because every student creates their own learning space selecting and using different contents from many sources, and arranging these in an educational way. In E-learning 2.0 the web is a shared operative system and archive, a place with a computation power greater than in single desktop computer, both for available contents and tools.

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4.   New Trends

This new kind of web is important both in creative and in sharing side: in fact, the web 2.0 allows students to generate educational contents exploiting the web, so as to arrange these contents in folksonomies that enable new kind of representing the knowledge.

Web 2.0 used for educational aims allows the use of technologies and communicative abilities that people just know, especially for young people that are digital natives. Adopting this point of view it is possible to promote a modern and personalized learning, featured by flexibility and modularity, but also by bidirectional interactivity or intercreativity. So we have a new self-directed, just in time, decentralized personal learning environments.

The contents generated by everyone in new open learning environments are reusable and remixable according to the individual and group needs. So pedagogical strategy is going from a push strategy in which teachers and platform administrators pushed contents to the students, towards a new pull strategy. This one is typical of web 2.0 and is based on active pulling whereby the learners aggregate the educational contents according their needs in personal and creative way, as for example using a feed reader.

New perspectives triggered by the web 2.0 have allowed the birth and growth of a download generation: members of this generation are used to look for information in the whole web, accepting many kinds of contents created in different languages that must be immediately downloadable.

Digital natives go from content to another, scanning found results in looking for useful ones. When they find something that may be useful for their educational path, they insert them inside own personal learning environment.

Digital native learners developed a habit for the real time communication and for immediate feedback, so it needs a kind of educational contents that guarantee active interaction.

Learning now appears being a social and situated process, and this is the real innovation of e-learning 2.0. The kinds of informal learning we observe have any outcomes also on the shape of learning communities: these become occasional, open and fluid until to disappear to regroup on new issues.

We have communities about a specific theme and the participants are active about it, without a fixed connection in time. When they end the task, they abandon the community and go in another one, taking knowledge from everyone they enjoy.

It stops to have a strong meaning the traditional idea of classroom, which in e-learning 2.0 seems to be in process of overcoming because of the openness, bidirectional and collaborative dynamic. Reciprocal learning

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encourages autonomous thinking and deep understanding rather than just reading and memorisation.

The important possibility for everyone to draw his own learning path shows the transformation from a culture based on receiving, transmitting and transferring to a new culture based on social making meanings, building and sharing knowledge. Reciprocal learning is a communication from many to many. As web 2.0 creates read-write web different from old unidirectional web, so e-learning 2.0 creates read-write learning.

These illustrated changes show as we are going toward personalisation of learning based on contents produced collaboratively and shared by users. In open community that work with e-learning 2.0 reciprocal learning is based on peer collaboration which permits a quickly and networking information flow in bidirectional ways. Thus learning communities are cooperative rather then competitive. In these extended learning environments, which are typical 'virtual' web space, the knowledge emerges from the conversation, so that we have a myriad of different learning environments enriched by digital nomads.

These new kind of modern nomads of Information Age satisfy a nomadic attitude which leads them in search of better resources available. Nomadic computation moves from desktop to mobile paradigm. It is possible because computation and information are disseminated in everyday objects that people manage. So every device connected to the Web will access the digital educational contents. E-learning in this way can disengage from boundaries so it is becoming a training experience usable everywhere and in every time.

In fact web learning is influenced by these recent innovations that just schedule next step: the mobile learning, based on nomadic computation and chip miniaturization. Having learning experiences on mobile device allows using educational contents in new ways, with different communicative languages for every need or ability.

5.   Different Epistemological Models

Finally, we compare reciprocal learning with traditional e-learning using a comparison due to Eric Raymond between two different models: the bazaar and the cathedral.[1] Raymond uses the differences in software compilation in order to compare commercial products made by few programmers (without code sharing) with the process of collaborative writing of Linux kernel code, created by a community. The cathedral is built by a small number of experts, who compile the software code in rigid and compartmentalized hierarchies, with the aim of making a stable and commercial software release. Instead, in the Bazaar model the software source code is freely available, so that users can interact with the developers and edit the code. In education field, there is a really similar situation: e-

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learning 1.0, where teachers create their own courses within a restricted access platform, provide to authorised users educational contents for a limited time, and don't allow them to edit contents.

In this sense, Web learning (or 2.0) is opposed to E-learning 1.0. It is made with many pieces, or micro-contents, generated by many users: all these contents are used, reused and shared by the fluid communities.

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[1] E Raymond, *The Cathedral & the Bazaar: Musings on Linux and Open Source by an Accidental Revolutionary*, O'Reilly Media, USA, Sebastopol, 1999.

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New Media Literacies of Future Mother Tongue Teachers

Hana Marešová & Jaroslav Sláma

Abstract
Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become a very important part of our everyday lives and have become an essential need for everyone who wants to benefit from innovations of the modern world. That is why ICTs play an important role especially in education. To help our students develop ICT skills, a seminar focused on the use of ICT in mother tongue education was prepared and has been realised since 2003 at the Faculty of Education, Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic. To help our students improve knowledge about cyberspace and topics focused on e-literature, the subject New Media and Cyberculture has been realised since 2003 at the Faculty of Education and Philosophical Faculty. The seminars help our future teachers to work with ICT in educational process and use the new media in the three parts of mother tongue education (grammar, literature and stylistic education and communication training). The article describes our experiences from the seminars and examples of education in cyberspace are analyzed.

Key Words: New media literacy, mother tongue education, information and communication technology, teacher's skills, cyberculture.

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1. Introduction

> When it comes to helping them learn how to be citizens in a democracy, media literacy education is central to 21st century civic education.[1]

Nowadays we live in an increasingly digitalized culture - it has also an influence on many areas of everyday activities. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have recently become also a very important part of how people interact with one another. Thus ICT skills have become an essential need for everyone who wants to benefit from innovation of the modern world. In case of students, one of the most commonly cited reasons for using ICTs in the classroom is the need to prepare them better for their future occupation.

On the face of it, we can say that ICTs play an important role especially in education. When using technology tools for learning (teaching), students (teachers) develop their ICT skills and competencies, which is a

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strong foundation for skills being used in their next careers. Teachers already understand that integration of ICTs within the educational process is necessary but for many of them ICTs are still a new addition to their teaching practice because they are in the early stages of using ICTs in classrooms and for many of them ICTs are still something new and strange.

ICTs can also help to transform the learning environment. According to researchers, when used appropriately, ICT enable new ways of teaching and learning, it helps to constitute a shift from a teacher-centred pedagogy to a student's active learning.[2] However, according to Thijs at al., ICTs have changed many more aspects of traditional pedagogy (for example changing of work in classrooms from individual homogenous groups to working in teams or an reproductive learning to the problem solving).[3]

2.   ICT and Mother Tongue Education

Media literacy is generally defined as an 'ability to access the media, to understand and to critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents and to create communications in a variety of contexts.'[4] In the case of the new media, it means work with a different type of text and multimedia tools, therefore the main role in education of students should play the teachers of mother tongue because this is the subject focused on the communication competences development. So what are the ICTs in the life of mother tongue teachers all about? Firstly - as for the other teachers - it is the essential need of ICT skills and competences to be able to work with ICTs in the classroom. It means they should be able to use ICTs as a *tool* for education but apart from the teachers of other subjects there is one special aspect arising from the existence of digital media. There are many new implications coming with the use of ICTs; new stylistic and communication forms have been created as e-mail, hypertext novels, chat, electronic conferences, electronic forms for structured curriculum vitae, newspapers and so on. Therefore, ICTs became for the mother tongue teachers also an *object of description* - they have to teach students how the texts on the Internet are made, how hypertext technology works, what kind of literature we can find in the Internet, and so on. Thus, we have to say that especially the mother tongue teachers should be able to know both of the above-mentioned parts of the new media issue if they really want to prepare their students for real life.

A. ICTs as a Tool for Teaching

Here are some examples of skills based on our experiences with teaching ICTs in courses for mother tongue teachers and also our undergraduate students which (as we suppose) are necessary for the effective use of ICTs in the mother tongue education: it is an ability to work with presentation hardware (notebook and data projector, interactive whiteboard), presentation software (MS PowerPoint, SmartNotebook), text editors -

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including the use of templates (MS Word - school newspaper, curriculum vitae), educational software, graphic editors, web pages editors (WYSIWYG HTML editors, PHP basics), multimedia (on-line TV, video, on-line radio - podcasting), Learning Management System (LMS) and Web 2.0 tools (blogs, YouTube, wiki tools). Finally it is also the ability to know how to work with the Internet and multimedia sources for mother tongue.

To help our students develop these ICT skills, the subject focused on the use of ICT in the Czech Language education was prepared and has been realized since 2003 at the Department of Czech Language and Literature, Faculty of Education, Palacky University in Olomouc. Since 2006 a similar course is realised for Czech Language teachers as a part of the continuing education of teachers. The course Internet and Multimedia in the Czech Language Education (IMC) is focused on the development of the basic ICT skills of our students and can help them to use ICT within the three parts of the Czech Language education - grammar, literature and stylistic education and communication training and can be used also in media education.[5]

The course content:

1.   Introduction - basic terms (information and communication technology, Internet, multimedia).
2.   Internet - networking, TCP/IP protocols. WWW, browsers. Hypertext, hypermedia.
3.   Searching - advanced search in Internet network, search engines, full text.
4.   Internet resources for Czech Language and Literature (CL).
5.   E-books. E-paper.
6.   MS Word - use in classroom. School newspaper - principles of creating a classroom newspaper by MS Word template.
7.   Graphics, graphic editors - use in the study materials for CL.
8.   Presentation hardware and software - interactive whiteboard SmartBoard, data projector, principles of presentation.
9.   MS PowerPoint - principles of creating study materials for CL.
10.   Creating a web page I. - principles of creating a web page with WYSIWYG editor MS FrontPage.
11.   Creating a web page II. - basics of HTML, PHP, FLASH editors.
12.   Electronic communication - e-mail, ICQ, NetMeeting, chat. Electronic conferences.

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13.   Multimedia for CL - off-line digital media for CL. Use of music media in CL education.
14.   Educational software - tutorials, learning software, games for CL.
15.   On-line education. E-learning. LMS Unifor, Moodle - use in the classroom.

B. ICTs as an Object of Description

ICTs have given birth to the whole field of digital texts which are not bound to the book as a medium. It means that besides new composition and stylistic forms it comes a new field of literary expression - today the majority of literature is written in digital format, including the 'matrix' for printed books - it is possible to read them from the computer screen or many kinds of digital reading devices - e-books. Digital literature brings also a new text structure - hypertext and new ways of working with texts - hypertext links and fulltext searching. Moreover, new media bring an absolutely new dimension of media expression - it is no more an isolated text on one hand and media forms (TV, video, art, photography etc.) on other hand. All the above-mentioned aspects of the 'new literacy' bring some new topics which should be included in the mother tongue education. In the language part it is a new terminology (chatroom, e-mail, wiki, blogger), study of new text structures (hypertext, full-text searching), use of new discussion techniques (chat, electronic conferences). In the literature part it is a new way of reading (e-books, hypertext novels, RSS - Rich Site Summary), new literary trends (netart, cyberpunk) or new forms of literary expression (blogs, collaborative works, multimedia novels). Finally, in the composition part it is the rise of new text forms (e-mail, blogs, hypertexts) and in media education the ability to understand new media (critical thinking, evaluation of Internet sources, ethical use of information). To help our students to include these new aspects of digital culture into the education of the mother tongue, an optional subject focused on cyberculture was prepared and has been realised since 2005 at our department. The seminar New Media and Cyberculture (NMC) can help our students to increase their media literacy as the process of access, analysing, critical evaluating and also creating messages in a wide variety of forms. Students can learn about the literary production on the Internet and will be able to evaluate the sources from the Internet and analyse the texts in new media.

The course content:

1.   What are new media? Electronic and digital media.   M. McLuhan. Paul Levinson etc.

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2. Internet as medium. Dynamic content of media. Semantic web.
3. Interactivity and multimediality.
4. Virtual reality - definition, classification, history, cyberspace.
5. Cyberculture and netart.
6. Artists in new media: M. Amerika, S. Mouhltrop, A. Shulgin, M. Baňková.
7. Intersubject relations - art in Internet network (music, galleries etc.)
8. History of hypertext (V. Bush, D. Engelbart, T. Nelson, T. Berners-Lee). The influence on human cognitive function.
9. Digital literature: hypertext literature, multimedia literature, hypermedia. E-books.
10. Experimental literature - hypertext, experiments in digital typography (PDF art, 3D text etc.)
11. Collaborative literature, weblog, wiki, e-mail.
12. Computational linguistics, artificial intelligence: chatbots (Elisa, Jabberwacky etc.), natural language generation, semantic networks.
13. Language of new media. Remediation of traditional media. Aesthetic aspects of new media products.
14. Critical thinking as a part of media literacy.
15. Presentation of student's works.

During the courses, each student can work with their own computer and share their work with other students by oral presentation. The students can finish their study by a final project - the classroom presentation of a multimedia project including all the earlier works. It helps them to develop public speaking skills as well. According to the evaluation questionnaire, all students find these courses highly interesting and informative for their future career.

C. Experiences from Seminars

On the basis of our experiences from the seminars (since 2003), we can say that the majority of future mother tongue teachers usually come with the basic ICT skills (which means the work with MS Office software (MS Word, MS PowerPoint) and use the Internet (mail, chat, internet sources searching) or work with education software). They are less skilled in the area of work with interactive whiteboard or using Web 2.0 tools (mostly it is a passive work with 'wiki' tools or multimedia storages as YouTube etc.). The majority of students are not able to work with ICTs in a creative way which

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means that they have created their first online blog or the first published webpage in our seminars.

Therefore we find it beneficial to teach our students how to work with ICTs actively and to be able to use the virtual environment in their own communication with their pupils (by creating online education objects or online school magazine etc.). The creation of web pages and work with computer graphics was the most popular part of IMC seminar - it means that students have a relation to these creative activities but they were not enough skilled for it so far. The most discussed part of NMC seminar was the work of netart artists (typographical experiments or multimedia novels such as *The City* of Markéta Baňková).[6] - some students were very excited to read it and work with it but some of them refused it as literary unvalued. Students were also included into communication in the multiuser virtual environment (MUVE) - Second Life - in which they were supposed to cooperate together on given tasks. The possibility of virtual communication by individually created avatars and the movement in the virtual 3D environment has given them a new experience of connecting with other people and new possible ways of learning strategies.[7]

3.   Conclusion

ICTs have been currently an important part of the educational process which is why today's teachers need to be acquainted with at least basic ICT competencies to work effectively with their students. We hope that these courses will help our students to use ICT as a profitable utility in their teaching practice.

Notes

[1] H Rheingold, 'New Media Literacy in Education: Learning Media Use While Developing Critical Thinking Skills', *Master New Media*, 21 October 2007.

[2] op. cit.

[3] A Thijs, R Almekinders, P Blijleven, WJ Pelgrum & J Voogt, Learning Through the Web: A Literature Study on the Potential Uses of the Web for Student Learning, 2001, http://www.decidenet.nl/Publications/Web_ Based Learning.pdf. p. 4.

[4] Commission of the European Communities, 'A European Approach to Media Literacy in the Digital Environment', in *i2010 - A European Information Society for Growth and Employment*, October 2009. http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/literacy/docs/com/en.pdf. p. 2.

[5] Media education is one of the cross curriculum theme of the Czech educational system according to the Framework Education Programme of

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Basic Education. The main part of this topic is realised in the mother tongue subject.

[6] The novel is available online at http://www.city.je/.

[7] The positive experiences with *Second Life* at our university have also teachers and students at the Department of Applied Economics which use it as one of the newest methods of virtual teams building by team gaming of specially designed games (as described in the text of Kubátová, J., 'Rozvoj virtuální spolupráce ve virtuálním světě', in *Ekonomika a management*, 2007).

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PART V

Changing Identities in Cyberspace

Cloakroom Communities and Cyberspace:
Towards a Concept of 'Pseudo-Environmental' Niche

Jernej Prodnik

Abstract
Debates about the so-called 'virtual' communities most of the time revolve around questions of disintegration, spread of cynicism, in-authenticity, and the likes. Authors that base their theories primarily on the new technologies often tend to point at the social isolation of the individual (brought by technology) which presumably leads towards increase in individualisation and has long-term devastating influences on what is traditionally thought of as *community*. Such outlooks are overlooking other aspects of social life and should be subject to serious criticism about technological determinism. One of the main purposes of this paper is to present a wider outlook on the new technologies through changes in production and contemporary capitalism. It is urgent to ask ourselves whether the individualised instrumental networking, which mostly forms fragile communities and offers several optional and changeable identities, is perhaps a symptom of other vast social changes in post-Fordist capitalism. Can this be seen only as a radicalization in the development of these processes? In the second part a concept of pseudo-environmental niche is proposed, which could be useful for understanding contemporary changes and reactionary communitarian responses that are proposing a return to 'genuine' communities. This is done through theorisation of 'worldliness' as lately conceived by Paolo Virno. This is followed by deconstruction of mythological aspects of community life and a proposition to revise our understanding of community. The question of community is, in the author's view, an eminent question of politics.

Key Words: Cloakroom communities, identity, Zygmunt Bauman, Paolo Virno, pseudo-environment, worldliness, post-Fordism, capitalism.

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1.　　　Introduction

When talking about new technologies and the Internet, one can see a standard pattern known from before. The Internet is regarded either as a possible saviour or as something that will make things worse. This paper rejects both these views as inadequate, but does acknowledge them as important indicators of where society stands and what could be seen as the main social antagonisms in it. In my view, they can be tackled only by political means in the broadest and most democratic sense of these words. When approaching them from other perspectives, there is a big danger of

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somehow mythologizing them and providing inappropriate, even reactive solutions.

Conceptualising 'community' has always been a slippery terrain, which is why I am not offering any 'proper' definitions; I however oppose communitarian understanding that at least implicitly regards community as some kind of homogeneous amalgam. As it will become clear, I contend that this is a regressive response to the dangers of the 'world.' Utopian conceptualisations of the 'virtual' community on the other hand presume they are somehow separated from the 'real,' creating another world. As this can in fact never be realised, this view at the end of the line also avoids tackling the same problems.

2.   From Pseudo towards Imagined Communities

Beniger's concept of 'pseudo-community' is often reckoned as a pessimistic outlook on the consequences of technology for traditional communities. His concept is in essence questioning impersonal communication and idealising face-to-face relationships, while technological development supposedly started to erode intimate relationships, sincerity and closeness, distinctive of *Gemeinschaft*. These vast transformations lead towards a hybrid of two extremes that we can call *pseudo-community*.[1] Besides being outdated because of interactivity in digital communication, Beniger's theory should also be put under a high degree of scrutiny because of its technological determinism.

Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities' are well known amongst authors writing about virtual communities, as they pave the way to look at them as a construct which has its origins in communication.[2] According to Anderson 'the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities.'[3] A useful term for describing this is 'communification' as people without direct interpersonal relations imagine themselves as members of community through communication of symbols and cultural artefacts of a particular kind, which can arouse strong attachments. For Anderson all communities are imagined, so they should be distinguished by the style in which they are imagined, not by their genuineness or falsity.[4]

Anderson's approach could be regarded as social constructionist, similar to Anthony Cohen's. According to Graham Day, 'the social constructionist spotlight is turned more on the ways in which communities are brought into being through the interpretive activities of their members, and registered among the concepts which they use in everyday interaction.'[5] This is important as subjective dimensions are pushed to the fore.

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3.   There is no 'Virtual' Community

This *everydayness* is of considerable importance when we approach the problems concerning cyberspace, as we find a lot of similarities between them and the conceptualisation of community. Mark Nunes is trying to re-approach the modern dichotomies by showing that space is not a thing, but a social process. Consequently, cyberspace is not where we go with technology, but something that we live.[6]

According to him there is a relational connection and mutual influence between material form, conceptual structure (e.g. communication, semiotic structure) and lived practice (e.g. everyday life, language context) which for example enables our own understanding of space as a social construct. Much of the same could be claimed of 'community.' There cannot be a community which on the one hand has no chance of seriously changing our everyday lives, and on the other does not reproduce itself through it; which at least potentially has no effect on material conditions of our common being; and that can exist without communication. Community, like (cyber)space, is a result of these inseparable relations.

I contend it is even highly disputable to debate about 'virtual' communities as such. The word alone carries with itself an obvious connotation of something that is fictional. There either is a community or there is not, because they are all imagined. In fact, we could say these are just upgraded 'apparatuses' enabling the unconscious imagination process. Artificial contrast is fundamentally mistaken as communities are always dependent through physical structures, socio-economic and socio-cultural processes, everyday life etc. Virtual is merely another part of our everyday.[7] But there is another, at least as important reason: no person is a part of a 'virtual,' but of a certain, very specific kind of community.

Many boundaries of different communities according to Cohen exist only in the eyes of their members, as they share the same symbols through certain cultures, but give them particular meanings which may not be seen to everyone. These symbols can be of special importance to members and, consequently, help maintain the existence of a particular community. Boundaries, which are constituted through symbols and concepts, form what we could call 'special' communities; this makes every particular community distinctive for their members. Communities are largely based on subjective experiences of their members, on communication of symbols which keeps communities alive.[8]

But we should not forget about wider structural frameworks in society that are either aiding the existence of solid, 'inbred' natural communities, or latently working against them.

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4.   Cloakroom Communities in the Time of Liquid Modernity

To expose the structural outline which is typical of contemporary society, I am using Zygmunt Bauman's sociology. He first adopted the concept of post-modernity, but later acknowledged that modernity lives on in the *permanent revolution of liquid modernity*. He carried on with his research adopting the metaphor of 'liquidity,' still stressing much of the same urgency for individual freedom and social plurality as before. He acknowledges that revolutionising is not a break with routines like before, but has become a normal practice of society. It is indicated by flexibility, uncertainty, and precariousness. Stable orientation points and reliable reference frames have become almost non-existent.

It is therefore much easier to change form than to keep the planned life-patterns in linear paths towards a certain goal. These transformations leave visible marks on communities and identities, Bauman insists. We could say that identities are connected to, and surrogates of, 'cloakroom communities,' which need a spectacle to temporarily hold together. Their temporality and brevity means they add little new quality to life as they last as long as the excitement of a certain performance.[9]

But this should not be seen as overtly pessimistic prospect. As a robust critic of modernity, Bauman defies oppressiveness of traditional communities. Homogeneity and sameness cannot be found in his repertoire; on the contrary, this is by no means the type of ideal we should be searching for. It should consist of reflection, criticism and experimentation; no agreement should ever be 'natural.'[10]

> Community of common understanding, even if reached, will stay fragile and vulnerable [...] People who dream of community in the hope of finding a long-term security which they miss so painfully in their daily pursuits, and of liberating themselves from the irksome burden of ever new and always risky choices, will be sorely disappointed.[11]

5.   Human Nature between the 'Environment' and the 'World'

This more and more 'liquid' state of social conditions recurrently throws people in the 'world,' where they indeed belong by nature of their bioantrophological constant. The human being is separated from other animals by its openness to the 'world,' Paolo Virno maintains; by high degree of undefined potentiality which originates in the unspecialized character of Homo sapiens. Human animal, which is in its foundation a *linguistic* animal, can in essence be seen as an undetermined being with no predefined instincts. While environments are closed and stable, worldliness is a state of potentiality, 'a vital context that always remains partially undetermined and unpredictable.'[12]

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Because human beings by their nature lack fixed environment, they can at the utmost build themselves pseudo-environments of automatism. This risky instability of disoriented animal when without stable reference frames can bring to the fore both: dangers, as well as freedom and creativity. Moreover, contemporary changes in capitalism and other wider social transformations have brought these virtues to the fore.[13]

There is a vast change from the times of Fordist capitalism, which was full of pseudo-environments, as people are becoming continuously exposed to all the risks of the 'world' because of the incredible mutability of forms of life. This is perfectly exposed by Richard Sennett, for whom the main motto of the New capitalism has become 'No long term.' Uncertainty and instability have become woven into capitalism, which produces not only weak social bonds, but also corrodes trust, loyalty and commitment.

It should come as no surprise that it has become increasingly difficult to talk about solid communities; they once offered important reference points where people could find shelter and a hiding place. Social imbalance is inherent to capitalism, but more-so in the conditions of post-Fordism with extremely temporary pseudo-environmental niches. People are constantly oscillating between them and the 'world,' which is best illustrated by ever-present possibility of the state of exception.

Robert Putnam, one of the leading best-sellers of community restoration in America, could hardly be more wrong, when he states that we cannot search for answers in capitalism (and then blames most of the problems on TV); 'a constant can't explain a variable,' he claims, when describing faltering American communities.[14] Have there been no major changes in capitalism in the past decades?!

6.   The End of Community (…Myth)?

We collide with several profound problems here. Closed and limited communities that are proposed by communitarian authors can be seen as a reactionary response, seeking some never achieved life of a once-upon-a-time dream. Such vision of community is repressive towards differences and fails to grasp where the antagonisms actually stem from. As Wellman has put it, 'for those who seek solidarity in tidy, simple hierarchical group structure, there may now be a lost sense of community.'[15] Several authors point at the contradiction to search for freedom in a unitary community; nevertheless, it is still continuously seen as some kind of saviour for all: liberation, safety, and salvation for declining democratic life.

We could easily reject these propositions, but we would neglect some important messages. 'To understand a myth involves more than proving it to be false. It means figuring out why the myth exists, why it is so important to people,' Vincent Mosco claims.[16] Myths are more than 'fabrications of truth;' they help people deal with contradictions in life. The

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recipe prescribed by the communitarian authors is a response against the dangers of the 'world.'

An alternative conception, virtual-utopianism can also provide some sort of solution, but again mystifies the actual problem. Talking about on-line relationships, Howard Rheingold, one of the prophets of the wonders of the net, proposes to curb enthusiasm, but points out that the Internet can indeed be helpful for the people living 'in a scary part of town, where they don't want to leave their apartment at night.'[17] This is a banal example, but because separateness never actually happens, these authors propose to turn a blind eye on certain aspects of the social life (in our case lying outside of the virtual). What connects both of these proposals, at least in its fundamentals, is their attempt to resolve eminently political questions without politics.

7.   Concluding Remarks: Pseudo-environmental Niches

It is necessary to acknowledge that community in its traditional sense is not the right answer for the burdens of today's society. And neither can *hiding* from social circumstances through the virtual spaces resolve these contradictions.

Today's pseudo-environmental niches are in their fundamentals deferring democratic political means. But when talking about myths, we should note they are not only post-political, but also pre-political, sometimes pointing to the right directions of where the problems lie. They cannot however offer the correct answers for their solution.

Why has the 'world' *become* so problematic, while an author like Hannah Arendt put it at the fore of her 'political programme'? We can find only one answer: there are basically no 'commons' in the 'world,' even though Arendt was always writing about the *common world*; this must be regarded as a prerequisite for political activity and the public sphere. In this case, the question of community in its essence becomes political question of creating *friendships without familiarity*, as Virno would put it, of primarily creating commons, not comm*unity*.

Notes

[1] JR Beniger, 'Personalisation of Mass Media and the Growth of Pseudo-Community', *Communication Research*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1987.
[2] B Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, 1991.
[3] ibid., p. 133.
[4] ibid., p. 6.
[5] G Day, *Community and Everyday Life*, Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 156.
[6] M Nunes, *Cyberspaces of Everyday Life*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota- London, 2006.

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[7] J Malpas, 'On the Non-Autonomy of the Virtual', *Convergence*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 135-139. See also Nunes, op.cit.

[8] AP Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Routledge, New York, 1985.

[9] Z Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 199-201.

[10] Z Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001.

[11] Ibid., p. 14.

[12] P Virno, *Multitude: Between Innovation and Negotiation*, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles, 2008, p. 17.

[13] Ibid. & P Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, Semiotext(e), LA&NY, 2004.

[14] RD Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon&Schuster, 2000, p.282.

[15] B Wellman, 'The Community Question', *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 84, No. 5, 1979, p. 1227.

[16] V Mosco, *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace*, The MIT Press, Cambridge and London, 2005, p. 29.

[17] H Rheingold (interviewee), 'Howard Rheingold Interview'. Link: http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/digitalrevolution/2009/10/title.shtml.

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Identity Representations through Machinima Creation

Theodoros Thomas & Marina Vihou

Abstract
This paper investigates identity representations through a narrative perspective. It examines the reproduction of social stereotypes through the creation of machinima films created by the students of the Department of French language at the University of Athens. According to Giddens´s project of social and self identity and Ricoeur's interpretation theories, the machinima films will be considered as an eloquent reflection of their creators' representations. They claim that narrative is the dialectical process, between me and the other, through which the person is constantly led to a conscious identity adjustment. Based on this assumption, we investigate the mediating role of machinima, animated filmmaking within a real-time virtual 3-D environment, in the identity awareness of the subject. We study the representations produced by a group of students through the evaluation of the signifying practice of the creation of machinima films they have created during a Cyberculture course.

Key Words: Cyberculture, machinima, narrative identity.

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## 1.	Introduction

In this paper we explore the stereotypic representations found in the machinima videos created by students following a Cyberculture course, in the Department of French Language and Literature (University of Athens). We investigate these cultural representations in the video's subjects and the scenarios. We tried to figure out how their narrative identity was formed inside an academic environment and what kind of attitudes students formed towards this identity.

## 2.	Background

Culture, according to Clifford Geertz is 'a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.'[1] We analyse culture in order to clarify meanings and values, implicit and explicit, in a particular way of life. We search for reflections of social and economic conditions but we also investigate how culture itself produces socio-economic relations. We look for meanings, the way they are produced, circulated or contested. Scholars nowadays tend to emphasise signification as a tool for understanding culture since all social practices,

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organized through meanings, are considered as signifying practices and should be studied in their cultural dimension.[2]

These signifying practices affect the processes through which members of a group consider themselves and the other, are interrelated and mark the emotional and symbolic belonging to a particular national, cultural or other group. Although postmodern theory has claimed that identity is disjointed and destabilized, identity keeps on returning on everyday debates of western (and not only) societies: national identity debate in France and in Greece, identity cards debate in the UK, race issues raised by the election of Obama in U.S.A., the constant question of 'who am I?' or as Sherry Turkle asks, 'Who am we?' is always there.[3] We try to give insights to this question by applying the theory of narrative identity as expressed by Giddens and Ricœur.

Giddens stresses that self-identity is formed through our ability to create narratives about ourselves. These stories try to answer focal questions such as 'What to do? How to act? Who to be?'[4] 'Self-identity is what an individual believes it is: 'A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor - important though this is - in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going.*'[5]

Identity is not a stable and immutable collection of characteristics. This image of ourselves which changes through time and space according to situations is a creation, a reflexive project. Time connects narrative to the identity since it is the first that assures continuity.

Ricoeur similarly claims that since human life is entangled in time, it is a constant quest for narrative. Narrative becomes 'a privileged means by which we reconfigure our confused, unformed and mute temporal existence.'[6] The relation between narration and life is so close for him that he connects it to the Socratic maxim 'the unexamined life is not worth living.'

His approach is to develop what he calls the hermeneutics of the self. According to Ricoeur's conceptual framework, an individual person's (or sometimes even a historical community's) identity is twofold. He sees identity as sameness (Latin: idem; English: same) and as selfhood (Latin: ipse; English: self). Sameness (idemité) is conceived as uniqueness, a timeless and permanent substance. Selfhood (ipseité), on the other hand, is characterised by a person's ability to reflect upon itself. These two components of identity are connected through narrative identity, 'the kind of identity that human beings acquire through the mediation of the narrative function.'[7] Narrative follows lived experience and it influences practical action through a circular procedure that has three steps: prefiguration, configuration and refiguration. Narrative structures articulate symbolically and temporally lived experience of an actor (prefiguration). Events are then shaped to an emplotted story (configuration) and then story meets again the actor by influencing his choices on how to act in the world (refiguration). Or

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as Maria Duffy puts it 'the storied self turns out to be a figured self - which imagines itself in that or that way.'[8]

Since narrative identity is the personal identity, someone can understand himself/herself/themselves in the same way we make sense of identity of characters in stories. This understanding is produced only in and through his/her/their involvement with others. In these interactions with others, he/she/they do not simply enact a role or function that has been ascribed to him/her/them. He/she/they can transform him/her/themself(-ves) through his/her/their actions and can reasonably involve others to a more or less radical change.

3.   Research Questions

Inspired by the theory of narrative identity, we formulated the hypothesis that the machinima videos created by a group of undergraduate students, as a narrative creation reflect their identity representations. The video's genre, aesthetic, plot and characters' relations are conscious or not conscious choices of the video creators and, therefore, they are considered as 'images' of their internalised culture.

We consequently tried to figure out how students revealed, defended or accepted their identity, how they represented difference stereotypically, how their creativity was influenced by the use of cybermedia and finally how they assimilate the aesthetics of television and cinematic narration.

Our claim is that the use of a technology, in this case machinima, in spite of its affordances, does not guarantee deterministically the rise of creativity, the creation of highly novel products or the liberation of the person. In each case, however, it may lead to the conscious manipulation of a controversial system of values.

4.   Methodology

The course of cyberculture lasted for one semester, from February to June 2009. The audience consisted of 33 students (31 females and 2 males) aged from 19 to 30. All of them were Greek originated. Students were self organised in 13 small groups of 2 to 5 members that produced equal amount of machinima videos in French that they published online. The platform they used was mostly Lionhead's *The Movies* (except one video that was created with *The Sims 2*). They also documented their effort on a wiki: they posted the plot, characters' description and the scenario of their movie. First they did a discourse analysis of the scenarios trying to discover any common patterns. Six months after the completion of the course, we invited students to answer an anonymous on-line questionnaire consisting of 18 closed and open-ended questions. Twenty-five of them responded.

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5.   Critical Analysis of Scenarios

The gender of the videos of our corpus is definitely feminine, since all of them have been made mainly by women (except the participation of two male students). Furthermore in only one video there are no female characters (*Une Histoire Incroyable*, a typical western confrontation). As a consequence, the representations of feminine identity are omnipresent.

As far as genre is concerned, the students' videos superficially appear to belong to several forms (comedies, mystery or action films, etc.) and that is how they have been characterised by their creators in the questionnaires but because of the emotional involvement of the characters, all of them turn out to be romances. The themes of love (*αγάπη*), desire (*έρωτας*), infidelity and generally emotional relationships between the two genders seem to occupy an important position in the narrative experience of the students, either as spectators, or as narrators.

Male and female characters in the majority of the films are based on a stereotypical perception of the two genders. For example, female characters are in the centre of action having an active attitude towards situations but at the same time the solution they provide is based on conservative moral values. Some indicative cases are:

In the video 'Le voyage fatal' cruelty and infidelity derive from the female character while the male character is projected as sentimental and vulnerable. In the end, nemesis falls upon the infidel woman who is murdered by a stranger.

The main character of the video 'Amour de sang' finds the love of her life, on the face of a vampire. Happy ending will come after the unsuspecting friend of the protagonist is sacrificed and the vampire renounces his supernatural identity. The sacrifice of the innocent girl implies the danger that lurks in difference. The decisive role of the protagonist in the transformation of the vampire to a mortal, stresses the role of the woman in the maintenance of a conservative and conventional way of living. That is to say, woman and her love are in this video the guarantee that everything will return to normality and that dangerous difference will be eradicated.

From the above examples we can deduce that students-creators have assimilated the wide and often contrasting range of television and filmic stereotypes for the female gender. This gender oscillates between two poles: the traditional role of a woman and the dynamic/active role. On the contrary the traditional male role seems to fade away and this procedure is presented with comical elements. It could also reflect the reproduction of a television stereotype about the weakening masculinity compared to women's empowerment. To sum up we could say that the attitude of these students towards the two genders shows their inability to propose a personal position. This situation leads them to a without guilt reproduction of television stereotypes and to their adoption as their outlook on life.

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6.   Critical Analysis of Scenarios
        The student's representations as they are recorded through their comments on their movies offer us an insight on the degree of self-awareness of their choices. We see that the ipse part of them remains nebulous.
        To the question whether the subject of their story is original more than two thirds (72%) seem to apprehend that it is not (they used the terms: based on, a classic story, inspired by, similar…) although half of them later claim to a next question that their objective was to create an original video. One creator states that the subject of his/her movie is 'robberies that make us feel insecure.' This is an apparent connection of the real and the narrative identity. One other states that the video is 'influenced by action movies but it has its own identity.' The creator accentuates his/her dynamic interference to the remix of a known film.
        It is interesting to notice that the majority of the creators claim that their videos are influenced by films and not by TV (a 64.29% to a10%). This fact can be interpreted as an attempt to demote their identity as TV viewers and on the contrary to promote their identity as film viewers. This proves indirectly that their representations of TV and generally pop culture are negative, compared to a positive view of high culture of cinema. They are more willing though to recognise the influence of TV on the creation of dialogues (17%) and the plot (67%) than the influence of their literary studies (only one answered so).
        The recorded responses reveal an intense need to be creative and to expand their identity by adopting a new role, this of the director/creator. (I want to bring up human relationships, to create a plot, to experiment with the creation of our movie, with our additions, to feel a little bit like directors…).
        It is interesting to see that the machinima creators think that their videos belong to various genres. They all fail to realise that the theme of their movie is redirected towards romance no matter what their original intention is.
        As far as the presence of stereotypes in the videos is concerned students seem divided. Almost one out of two (46%) admits that there are stereotypes in his/her movie while 20% think that there may exist some. What is remarkable is that one third believes that there are no stereotypes in their videos. This fact may indicate the lack of awareness of stereotypical representations in their real life. It is probable that they adopt stereotypes without guilt as it happened in their videos. It is also probable that they have an unclear image of stereotypes intermingled with their reality to distinguish them.
        Finally, despite their introversion that can be explained as a defensive stance, students considered as possible viewers of their creation all possible users of youtube.com (37%), besides their teacher (16%), the other members of their team (22%) and their friends (22%). This claim shows their

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need to open up towards the world, to become social actors and members of a broader community.

7.   Deductions

The creation of these videos covered but also revealed the great students' need for creation. Students want to invest their experiences in creative activities during their studies that promote their personality and their identity.

In several occasions students identify their videos with their personality and their attitude towards life. That is why they defend fervently their creations by stressing out that they are original, without stereotypes. Moreover they assert to be influenced only by Cinema and not by television. Even if they were invited to answer the questionnaires a long time after the completion of their movies, they did not develop a critical stance towards their videos, possibly because they felt very creative while producing them.

Their personal investment in the procedure of creation of machinima videos retains them from expressing eventual weaknesses due to the tool they use, the aesthetic baggage they carry or their dominance of the French language.

Nowhere are recorded any influences coming from the fields of their studies: literature, poetry, theatre, psychology. Of course, the presence of the academic environment may not be present in the selection of themes or characters but it is present as a restraining environment that somehow streams creation. The videos were created as part of a course, so they are influenced by this environment and its stereotypical / conventional form.

8.   Conclusion

The introduction of digital technologies in the classroom does not inherently entail the renewal of the teaching practices, the stimulation of creativity or the encouragement of the self-reflexive processes. In order to take advantage of the affordances offered by machinima in the narrative creation, we need to delve into humanistic tradition. We have to help students discover their narrative identity because it is narrative 'that carries us beyond the oppressive order of our existence to a more liberating and refined one' and not machinima as a technology per se.[9]

We must likewise deploy an instructional design that will help to develop the set of cultural competences and social skills that people need in the new media landscape. Only then the individual will be elevated from a simple user to a reflexive actor.

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Notes

[1] G Geertz, *The Interpretation Of Cultures,* Basic Books, New York, 1973.

[2] P du Gay et al (eds), *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony. Walkman*, Sage, London,1997.

[3] S., Turkle, 'Who am We?', *Wired*, vol. 4, no. 01, January 1996, viewed on 14 March 2010, http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/4.01/turkle.html?topic=&topic_set=.

[4] A Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991.

[5] ibid.

[6] P Ricoeur, *Temps et récit. Tome I: L'intrigue et le récit historique,* Le Seuil, Paris, 1983.

[7] P Ricoeur, 'Narrative Identity' *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*, D Wood (ed), Routledge, London, 1992.

[8] M Duffy, *Paul Ricoeur's Pedagogy of Pardon: A Narrative Theory of Memory and Forgetting,* Continuum, London, 2009.

[9] P Ricoeur, 'The Creativity of Language' *On Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva*, Kearney (ed), Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004.

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Artistic Identity within Cyberspace: Issues go Global, Interdisciplinary Projects do Evolve – A Personal View

Bello Benischauer & Elisabeth M. Eitelberger

Abstract
This paper involves a case study about ART IN PROCESS (Austria/ Australia), a partnership based in Fremantle, Australia. Our work is a critical engagement with a number of issues specific to Western consumer culture and behaviour. We work together across installation, video, new media, performance and live art. In this paper we will address the growing inter-human and artistic communication through cyberspace. How can artistic networks be built through the Internet? How do they influence the artistic practice itself in their aim to reach the public on various levels? Another objective of the paper is how social media as well as cyberspace itself can increase the transportation of artistic message and lead to transformed, extended and even enhanced work-conglomerations between artists and a wide international audience. This opens up for completely new forms of expression, extended varieties of working on participatory projects, linking artists from around the world. Virtual residencies exist already. Calls can be made over platforms, only a mouse-click away from reaching the World Wide Web and its users. Our intent is to instigate a change of thinking, a shifting of accommodated world conception within the viewer/participant, in continuously looking for an open dialogue with the public. We do this through art-interventions, performances in public and private spaces and partly online-exhibitions with video and sound and mixed media installations and through platforms in cyberspace in the use of social media. Over the years we have started to grow cyber-work relations with individual artists and institutions around the world. The paper focuses on a presentation of running projects by ART IN PROCESS as well as a compilation of past work based on discussing, how online presence and virtual communities led to the creation of new work and could enhance our artistic profile in reaching out for another and wider audience.

Key Words: Art, social media, collaborations, internet, networking, video art, installation, media art, performance art, online-screening.

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1.   An Introduction: Globalisation and Cyberspace - Perceptions and Worlds of the Altermodern

Globalisation has opened up enormous possibilities of linkages; it ideally means dissemination, diversity and insight into foreign worlds. But other than leading to a broad perspective or enthusiasm about the various aspects of this world per se and its cultures, we must admit that - critically observed - globalisation really often concludes in generalisation and uniformity.

For artists globalisation and the Internet have created new ways of engaging and gathering together to produce work that sets a counterpoint to the various and absurd forms of mass consumption.

Such an example is a video we developed together with RAM Productions in 2009/10, a collaborative effort of an artist interview that has partly been produced in our studio in Fremantle, Australia and in a studio in Philadelphia, USA.[1]

Artists employ the web as a communication platform and new technologies to make their work available to a greater audience these days, even if they still use traditional media in the making. Others have chosen the World Wide Web as the main media of creation, a field of experimentation under the umbrella of new media and cyber arts.

In this paper we are giving some concrete examples of how we personally use the Internet in particular and how aspects of globalisation are presented in this work. It translates our own perceptions into works of art; it transmits our thoughts and feelings/emotions into an interpretive and *aesthetic object* (a wall-object, a video and sound installation, a social sculpture) that becomes an artistic statement. It engages with people - not just through the *white cube*/exhibition space, but through the work process itself; questions are asked, discussion takes place and work is being produced. The context's origin is socio-political, in which we explore relationships between humanity, technology and the natural environment. The outcome: new media art projects, mostly leading into installations (video and sound).

In our independent research regarding our work-context we are especially interested in terms used and created by Nicolas Bourriaud, describing how use over meaning in Art has developed in recent years and how the Internet leads into a new direction of artistic expression.

Under the term of Altermodernism (after Postmodernism) he addresses the global movement of engaging with the Internet as the main tool of expression; expanding the artist's possibilities to interact with the world instead of reflecting only on own cultural heritage. Postmodernism - in his opinion - was still occupied by Western culture, whereas Altermodernism involves now streams around the globe (including African, South American, Asian Art and more). Bourriaud refers to this global culture as the playground

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for artists to experiment and to start building new forms of expression - influenced by and associated with the World Wide Web.

He sees the human frame of mind, characterised by a global culture, today dominated by exchange. Artists use and create out of different streams of knowledge that are presented within this global culture. *Altermodern* in his opinion intends to define the actual modernity according to the specific context we live in: globalisation, and its economic, political and cultural conditions. In an interview he states: 'The core of this new modernity is, according to me, the experience of wandering - in time, space and mediums.'[2]

Some of our past projects like *Digital Trilogy* (2003), *manipulated* (2005) or *Identical City* (2006) tried to capture the evolving characteristics of the phenomenon of globalisation that derives among others from mass information and mass media. The three installations are currently presented in the solo-exhibition called IMPACT & FUSION that questions the social impact of human beings on nature through mass consumption and globally increasing population, touring in Australia from 2008-2011 (WA, NSW, QLD).[3]

2.   Cyberspace: New Forms of Expression

Our projects do not originate from particular theories - but of course, *are* influenced by our immediate surroundings, by the contacts we make to others, by the media, by education (to an individual and certain degree) and by a long history of our own underlying culture, we grew up with.

In becoming an extremely globalised world the western image of art and the exhibition space per se have died. Art lives now in cyberspace, it happens within the social space; it spreads out into our daily surroundings. Artists/people are suddenly able to participate in the creation of a new artistic era that connects them with different places and different cultures, away from exclusion and one-sidedness.[4]

In 2009 we developed an international project series called *INTERVENTION* that initially derived from cyber-relations that developed over time.[5]

E-communication made it possible to connect with institutions worldwide. Social media like Facebook, vimeo, flickr and others introduce new forms of presentation, away from the physical exhibition space and away from censorship and elitism.

> History is filled with examples of new technology that enabled new art forms to develop while vastly widening the audience. Printing created the best seller… eventually the novel. Lithography, an inexpensive printing process that also permitted wide distribution, brought art out of palaces and galleries and into ordinary homes.[6]

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Digital Art is again the media that breaks the aesthetic boundaries of traditional art perception and extends into daily life. It serves as a database, a digital archive for many artists, including us. Of course, considering the fact that there is a multitude of people with no access to technology, the Internet is still a Western commodity/toy.

And what do we do with art that derives from and spreads through the Internet - if we take technology away?

Digital media art is a contemporary art form that is ephemeral, is process orientated; this temporality is the art form's main character. We can present it in many places at the same time. It can be consumed in a different way than art has been consumed before. But it also has to defend itself as art, even more than in the real space, where the *white cube* can provide some sort of a protection shield.

3.   Personal Use and Global Culture's Platform

Cyberspace has clearly opened up new ways of art-production and presentation; it created and made space for the various and quite diverse means of new media art.

How does this affect our work in particular?

The Internet serves us to collect, process and develop material into an artwork that again grows into something else - the process is the outcome, its fragile nature a side effect that has to be considered carefully.

We created some of the videos particularly for online-presentations: i.e. *The Curio Kiosks Project* (2009, The Kumasi Symposium, Ghana), *Infertile Future* (2008, ISEA Singapore) or *Seafactory* & *White Net* (2007, Techart, Brisbane).[7]

The website *Art in Process* (www.artinprocess.com) has become our personal database, our archive, serves us as the documentation room/station/space; where people can find all updates on our work.

Our projects can be viewed on DVD and Blu-ray discs; eventually books are printed as an artistic documentation of a project but most of our video and sound installations can be viewed online, even if the overall work is not solely created for the Cyberspace.

4.   Disconnected we Search for New Connections: Inter-Human Communication in the World Wide Web and Face-To-Face Projects

Claire Bishop writes about virtual relationships and globalisation that they would have prompted a desire for more physical and face-to-face interaction between people - which inspired artists to respond with real-time projects.[8]

Wherever we go, the Internet is the common meeting place and the basic tool for communication, but still travel and the face-to-face balance is needed to succeed in our projects.

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A lot of our e-connections result later in personal connections through travel and onsite projects. To name a few examples:

Sonance - artistic network Vienna[9]

ARTECH: International Conference on Digital Arts, held in Porto/Portugal, discussing conception, production and dissemination of Digital and Electronic Art [10]

ISEA: the International Symposium on Electronic Art initiated in 1988, the world's premier media arts event for the critical discussion and showcase of creative productions applying new technologies in interactive and digital media; held biannually in various cities throughout the world [11]

CAM: Contemporary Arts Media is one of the leading consultants and suppliers of films and books for Arts Education worldwide [12]

Ram Productions: a video production, post-production company, Philadelphia/USA[13]

POOL Project: collaborative space where audiences become 'co-creators'. Pool brings together ABC professionals and audiences in an open-ended process of participation, co-creation and collaboration.[14]

Virtual Residency Project: a European Capital of Culture 2007 project - international media art project.[15]

Dance in Portugal: platform for dancers, performers, video art [16]

MONA: Museum of Modern Art Detroit [17]

ACCEA: The Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art is an alternative center for avant-garde and modern art in Yerevan, Armenia[18]

Subnet: platform for experimental media art and technology, Austria[19]

AMODA: Austin Museum of Digital Art[20]

5.   Emotional Seasons - International Project Series in 2010: Experimentation between Performance and New Media Art

Internet Culture has awoken again the interest in an interdisciplinary and within the arts the hybrid process of crossing media. This is nothing new, just appears as a new form of an old system, praising plurality over singularity. Contemporary art's perception has reached a different level. A shifting takes place: the process itself has become the object of contemplation.

Today's artists navigate and engage in activities, where the process becomes the central part, the end product a kind of post-productive documentation. Bourriaud calls this kind of artist *semionaut*. He imagines links and is able to picture relations that can derive from those linkages.

The semionaut illuminates what is going on in the sphere of visual communication - art, advertising, film and graphic design.[21]

Our 2010 project series, a cross-cultural and interdisciplinary art project, questions borderlines in society, in real- and cyberspace. *Emotional*

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Seasons fosters cultural & art networking and promotes the idea of 'art as collaborative work' as one of the highlights of contemporary art production.[22]

6.   Artistic Engagement

The artist traveller (in real and in cyber space) explores global culture(s). He translates his visions into a work of art. Today we look beyond our daily environment. Contemporary artists are about to invent (a) new form(s) of art. Globalisation, new technologies and particularly the Internet lead to an expansion of our worldview. Extensive developments on various levels urge us to reorganise, reshape and rename certain aspects of human existence. A constant questioning of our immediate surroundings can help us to build new solid structures, may enable us to find a new orientation within this explosively growing world, in which we have to redefine identity and belonging.

In our artistic projects we will continue to ask questions about the connection points between real- and cyberspace, asking how people's perception, how global culture per se influences our way of thinking and how this can be translated into artistic expression.

7.   Post-Production and Documentation Material

Released DVDs, Blu-ray discs and books in limited editions are distributed by CAM Contemporary Arts Media Inc. (Films and Books for Arts Education worldwide).[23] Further readings and screenings of our projects on the ART IN PROCESS website *www.artinprocess.com*.

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PART VI

The Future Platforms

Machinimation Tools and their Impact on Creativity

Daniel Riha

Abstract

Machinima as user-created content has gained increasing amounts of attention from videogame developers over the past few years. Many videogames include machinimation modules or some form of support for amateur machinima productions. This paper explores three selected tools for machinima authoring in the context of creativity. Building on Bardzell's methodology for the semiotic analysis of multimedia authoring platforms and identified principles of digital creativity, this paper analyses how the features of the following machinima platforms influence creativity and user community building. The focus here is on a machinima tool based on the videogame platform *Half Life 2*, its modification *Garry's Mod* (2004), and two dedicated machinima production applications: *Moviestorm* (2008) and *Antics3D* (2008).

Key Words: Machinima, creativity, semiotics, multimedia, Garry´s Mod, Moviestorm, Antics3D, reconfiguration of videogames.

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1.   Introduction

According to Lowood, we can think of machinima as 'a found technology.' He applies Duchamp's concept of the found object from the visual arts. Such an object, the readymade, is an everyday object that is put in a different context as a form of artistic expression. Lowood emphasizes that this sort of artefact has neither been designed for or by the artist nor for the intent of show or artistic statement. Common objects are assigned a new context. Artist-player designs are the visual products that emerge from their 'recontextualisations.' Lowood characterises machinima as a found technology, accenting some of its characteristics as the 'player-created use of computer games, such as the availability of game technology as 'readymade' for a purpose other than making movies.'[1] In machinima, such a recontextualisation is accomplished not by re-designing the game engine, but rather by switching 'found technology' into an animation engine, while exploiting various techniques already learned from the other multimedia applications. Lowood notes that this medium, based on videogames, encourages a sense of 'co-ownership', not in legal terms, but in the sense of the freedom to 'replay, reinvent, and redeploy.' Specially, the performative use of machinima leads to 'high performance play' where the artist-player utilises new applications of multimedia for cultural production.

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Mitchell and Clarke propose to categorize videogame art under the following categories:

Remixing - the use of videogame iconography in other media.

Reference - the creation of original games that make known reference to previous games.

Reworking - the modification of existing games, often to create new interactive environments or 'machinima'.

Reaction - performance (often disruptive or ritualistic) within a multiplayer game.[2]

The reworking category positively corresponds with the above-mentioned machinima characteristics of recontextualisation.

Machinima production as a type of game modding activity might also be understood as an element of 'participatory culture', the concept introduced by Jenkins. Jenkins has differentiated participatory activities into four categories: affiliations (online communities); expressions (production of artefacts); collaborative problem-solving; and circulations, (dissemination in media).[3]

Successful machinima production requires, in the same measure, different levels of artist-player knowledge on various multimedia platforms and membership in the proper machinimistic online communities.

2.   Creativity in Amateur Art Productions

Bardzell attempts to deconstruct the implementation of creativity in multimedia authoring software. He compares human computer interaction (HCI) and cultural studies discourses and identifies some common characteristics that cultural studies, HCI, and semiotics share. All theorize on creativity in the context of professional knowledge production. These disciplines understand creativity as situated within 'systems-networks of software-supported experts, discursive sign systems, and frameworks of production'.[4]

His deconstruction is based on the introductory assumption that each software application differs in the way that it promotes authoring. Industry-level image- and video-editing software offers editorial advantages to users who prefer to work with layers when compared to hobbyist software. This, to Bardzell, makes certain content is more easily rendered by professional software.

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While researching creativity projected by authoring software, he lays out a common descriptive language to analyse the different platforms while applying the concept from semiotics: paradigms and syntagms, developed by Barthes, and previously used in new media theory already by Manovich.

This semiotic concept tries to recognise that elements of sign systems are combined together to create meaning beyond the aggregated meaning of the single components.

A syntagm is a 'grammatical' sequence of signs and a paradigm is a class of unit within a syntagm. To study the use of multimedia authoring interfaces, he applied these concepts to explore 'the legal sequences of actions designers could follow, and to explore the paradigmatic classes of options within those sequences.'[5] Bardzell revealed that in all variant genres and data-types, the similarities among these software applications were remarkable.

This paper presents a comparative analysis of selected machinima platforms, based on Bardzell's sample syntagmatic analysis of multimedia authoring software. Such a system recognizes the syntagms common to the most multimedia authoring platforms. In his terms, a syntagm has to be 'a more or less stable sequence of actions required to accomplish a particular design task.'[6] This common syntagm is the creation of an art element. In multimedia applications, this syntagm comprises the following sequence:

1.   Identify a location in space and time in which to work;
2.   Create the element;
3.   Specify the element's relationship to the remainder of the composition.[7]

A paradigm is then a 'set of possible actions that constitute one step in that task.'[8] Bardzell recognized three different paradigmatic options of the syntagm for designing a simple art element: set up of the element-from scratch, from primitives, and from components.

One of the significant methods in terms of machinima production is computer automation when creating art. With this method, the artist-player designs art from primitives/components. Most software applications can import various data-types to be used as primitives/components.

The syntagm composition includes usage of timelines, canvases, virtual cameras or viewpoints. These are, in Bardzell's terms, 'nearly universal interfaces for handling this step. Object nesting (building complex objects out of grouped simple objects) is another way of specifying relations.'[9]

The paradigmatic options call for different interfaces and user behaviours that 'shape the nature of the art created, and hence its

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meanings.'[10] The implementation of primitives often offers customization tools and art design elements with components supported by various wizards and palettes.

When comparing interface and artistic outputs of select software applications, Bardzell notes that each paradigm requires different art production skills on the user side:

> Individual amateur Flash works tend to privilege one art creation paradigm option over others, not because users rationally match their paradigmatic choices to the materiality of their art and their message, but rather because users choose the tools with which they are the most competent.[11]

He defines the primary syntagms of multimedia authoring, by identifying some of the common paradigms that might be traced in many of multimedia applications (Figure 1).[12]
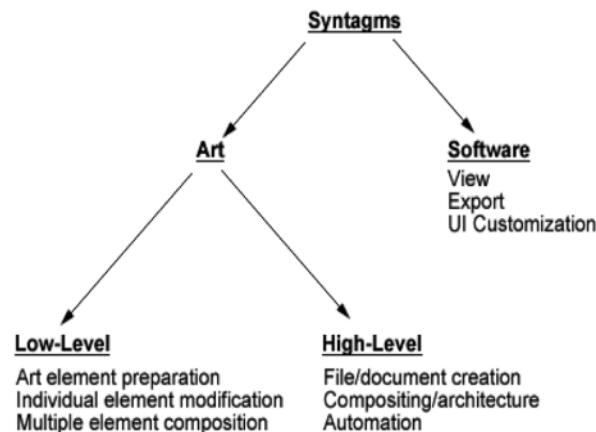
Figure 3. A sketch of syntagms common to most multimedia authoring platforms.

Figure 1

He proved that these applications have 'a similar language of creative expression and correspondingly project a similar notion of creativity.'[13]

From the point of view of usability research in the context of amateur multimedia, Bardzell proposes that 'the easier or more visible a feature or tool is in the interface, the more likely it is to be used.'[14]

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We may trace the convergence of methods of art production in multimedia art, which unites the elements of text, photo, video, music, and others into a single product. Bardzell recognizes as well the function of transformed media to contribute 'to the elaboration of new aesthetics in the parent medium.'[15]

A natural candidate in such a case is machinima, seen by Bardzell as the conflict between cinematic and videogame logic. Similarly, we may identify two production branches of machinima: cinematic and ludic machinima:

> *Cinematic machinima* features narratives shot in the world of a particular video game. Many of these films continue with the aesthetic of the game. […] Many cinematic machinima films use the logic of cinema to expose and parody the absurdity of games.

> *Ludic machinima* feature the logic of video games, which includes game rules, physics, and, above all, play (Aarseth, 2004). In this type of film, the found art is the physics engine of the video game, is used in ludic machinima to create commentary through its juxtaposition with other media.[16]

To conclude the review of methodologies for analysing creativity implementation in amateur multimedia, we might agree with Bardzell that the smallest meaningful unit is the art element in the form of primitive or video shot in software applications. Digital creativity then arises from 'the composition of such elements in a process in which these elements are created discretely separate from one another but more importantly, remain discretely separated, no matter how organic the final composition appears.'[17]

Finally, Bardzell considers amateur multimedia to be seen as creative only if it has a discourse, here proposed as 'innovation in the rebalancing of production quality and expense on the one hand and meaning-making on the other.'[18] While applying the creative principle of remixing, even very amateur or dated graphical quality digital art production might create culturally valid statements.

3. Impact of Garry´s Mod, Moviestorm and Antics3D Software Applications on Creativity

Garry´s Mod[19] represents the ludic machinima, the type of machinima that, in short movies, features various experiments with game engine physics. Moviestorm and Antics3D bring cinematic machinima types of applications that focus on the development of traditional film storytelling.

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While the cyber-community of machinima producers around videogames recruits mostly from the active players engaged in historical culture of gameplay and modification of the selected videogame title, the dedicated machinima production platform is often more popular among amateur animation film enthusiasts.

In ludic machinima, movie production is realized often as a form of 'acting' in 3-D space rendered and saved in real time, so this production activity is freed from some of the traditional video-editing chores. But when the artist-player wants to customize the available 3-D content in full, then the production line in ludic machinima requires more advanced game editing or modding skills. The adaptation of models, characters and animation does not usually allow for rapid prototyping.

This is the case in the example of machinima production in the Half-Life 2 videogame modification Garry´s Mod (GMod). GMod is a physics sandbox extended with scripted behaviours developed by numerous fan-user communities. Therefore, even in scripting, an unskilled user might play with advanced effects included in building blocks not available in the cinematic machinima platforms. The production of machinima in GMod is mostly based on live action puppeteering combined with recording in external frame-recorder like Fraps or GameCam. The low-level syntagms of art manipulation present in GMod include individual element modification in position, scale, textures, lightning, and sound. The higher-level syntagms present include imported 3-D game elements and design blocks of assets. Syntagms related to GMod as an authoring platform are then built-in game functions and game view interface. Syntagm (the sequence of steps in creation of basic art element in the case of machinima) is here the creation of a single movie shot. GMod offers two of the three paradigmatic options available for designing a machinima scene- primitives and components. In GMod, unskilled artist-players have an extensive set of game assets available to them, but with the significant limitation in genre: only sci-fi, detective and World War II themes are included. The tradition of machinima production in GMod includes equally narrative movies and physics scripting experiments. The character modification and animation is a time-consuming and skill-demanding process and finalization of machinima requires knowledge of external video-editing software. This platform might be recommended for game-expert users instead of machinima novices. In the context of my annual machinima production course, this platform was selected more often by students skilled in advanced ICT operation.

Antics3D[20] is a pre-visualization tool popular among cinematic machinimists. This platform offers a simple interface with drag and drop functionality in importing assets. It offers an advantageous import prop feature directly from Google Warehouse. Recording is based on character staging and allocation of animation sequences such as pathfinding and

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interaction with props from assets. The built-in video-recorder allows for direct output from this application.

The low-level syntagms of art manipulation present in Antics3D include individual element modification in position, scale, texture, lightning, and sound. The higher-level syntagms present compositing from imported 3-D game elements in .3ds and Google SketchUp formats, built-in animated characters from assets, the ability to design a scene/room from primitives, and easy import of standard animation files in .bvh format. Syntagms related to Antics3D as an authoring platform relate to the semi-interactive 3-D view interface. Antics3D therefore illustrates two of the three paradigmatic options of the syntagm for designing a machinima scene: primitives and components. The path-finding system works with a limited number of asset-animated characters. External video-editing software is needed for the finalization of machinima.

Moviestorm[21] features the first attempt to deliver an all-in-one solution for the cinematic machinima production pipeline, from importing assets, built-in interactive recording, video-editing, and exporting in various video formats functionalities.

The low-level syntagms of art manipulation present in Moviestorm include individual element modification in position, scale, texture, lightning and sound. The higher-level syntagms present include imported 3-D game elements and design blocks of assets. Syntagms related to Moviestorm as an authoring platform are the fully interactive 3-D view interface combined with simplified built-in video-editing software. Moviestorm has, therefore, two of three paradigmatic options of the syntagm for designing a machinima scene: primitives and components. Its main disadvantages are: a complicated asset import model, and almost impossible ability to adapt a designer's own characters, and a standard animation format import into the environment. Similar to Second Life, Moviestorm offers dedicated Moviestorm users a marketplace for the exchange and sale of the Moviestorm Workshop (Plug-In Object Editor) signed objects.

The simplistic interface makes Moviestorm the ideal choice for machinima novices, which is confirmed by the statistics of software preference in my machinima production course.

Although Antics3D development was discontinued in 2009, this platform still has some advantages over Moviestorm, with easier and extended import of props (.3ds format) and import of user-preferred animations in .bvh.

Since August 2008, I have witnessed Moviestorm's rapid development, so I am optimistic about its role in becoming the primary tool for cinematic machinima production in the near future.

The results of this comparative analysis of machinima platform and their impact on creativity reveal that interface features significantly influence

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the user-type involved with a particular platform, which is in line with Bardzell's conclusions.

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Media Convergence and the Future of Online Platforms

Fredrik Gundelsweiler, Christian Filk & Bruno Studer

Abstract
In this publication we present our theory about media convergence. We explain the new evolving requirements and design possibilities for novel online platforms. The key ideas on how to design and realise a multimedia online platform of the future are discussed. Therefore we explain some theoretical assumptions and found them on our practical experiences. We present our findings which we got during the requirements analysis and show how we came to our theory and conclusion by evaluating and interpreting the results. In the outlook we present current research trends of media convergence and human-computer interaction.

Key Words: Media convergence, crossmedia, multimedia, Web 2.0, online community, interaction, multimedia production.

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1. Introduction

We are building up a new course of studies called Multimedia Production (MMP) which educates students in producing and publishing new media content for crossmedia online platforms. Media agencies, news and multimedia companies are in need of people with these skills because they have to respond to the changes in the traditional media landscape caused by the new media. Although the trends show that organisations which use content management systems are increasing, most of them neglect the use of novel web principles and techniques. These web platforms are far from up-to-date trends like web 2.0 and novel possibilities of interacting with and searching for information. Most of them use primitive search functions and result visualisations which are outdated and static. This concerns the interface design of search, interaction and navigation for interactive web applications. An additional issue is how to manage the diversity of content in different print, audio and video formats.

2. Transformation Processes and Converging Media

In the last two decades the quaternary economic sector and the media industry are characterised by fundamental transformations. Especially the digitalisation and convergence processes trigger enormous consequences for media products, services, business models and the respective media based user roles and transactions. When we take a look at the traditional media of public mass communication like newspapers, radio and television we

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recognise that they are faced with a hard challenge created by new standards. These standards are set by the fast technology growth, information and communication technology (e.g. mobile communication) and the Web 2.0 principles and practices like user generated content, network effect and remixability. All these new standards under development show the enormous structural changes of the media and the society.

Above all, the concepts of cross-media and media convergence are of great importance in the current theoretical and practical discussion. Especially for media companies both terms describe variants of media economical added-value. 'Value-added step' is meant in the sense of product differentiation: 1. produce content (first value-added step), 2. combine content (second value-added step) and 3. distribute content (third value-added step).

The usage of media-convergent concepts and strategies in the communications industry can address media users according to the target group starting with streaming media, branded entertainment, viral marketing through scientific visualization, micro-blogging and YouTube to Google News, Ricardo and Facebook.[1] New web services are raising fast like Twitter, Google Wave and Google Buzz.

The term 'media convergence' first referred primarily to the technical convergence of print media to electronic media and telecommunications. In this context established communication, journalism, and content-recovery processes in the media business dissolved.[2] The prevailing specialisation in traditional production, distribution and reception contexts got obsolete because of digitalisation and convergence of (mass) media.[3] As a result it was necessary to create, bundle and distribute new content. This brings about consequences in the relevant converging media and communication markets in conjunction with technological, political, economic, legal and sociocultural aspects.[4] With this market transformation was a significant potential growth especially of the content distribution, the third value-added step of media economy.[5]

3.   Media Convergence and Society

In interdisciplinary research on media convergence a system of business and revenue forms was designed that can be adapted modularly.[6] The value chain concept with recourse to Porter turns to be particularly advantageous since it opens up various options for connections with parts of economic concepts which have been unrelated until now.[7]

At this point new cross-media and media convergent products, services and their models establish. The Internet as a global network becomes the promoter for telecommunications by the successive integration of more and more networks, services and applications.[8]

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In contrast to neoclassical microeconomics the markets of the Internet economy can be understood as process dynamics.[9] Because of the direct and indirect network effects of online media we have to adjust traditional functions and attributions of economic theories: negative feedbacks change in the Internet economy to positive feedbacks. Mass displaces scarcity as a source of value.[10] The Web 2.0 is a 'participative economy.'[11] Sustainable Web 2.0 technologies and related applications (social media, knowledge management, microblogging etc.) support businesses in the development of their products by getting feedback on products and making business decisions through customer involvement.[12]

Converging media environments and cross-media usage models provide many opportunities to produce, combine and distribute content. The adaptation of media convergent conceptualisations and strategies in the context of media, economics, society and culture requires that the society has established a predominant communication pragmatism based on visual, participatory and self-organised forms of media.[13] Cross media formations constitute a participative, convergent network culture only due to a strong understanding of the importance of visualisation, participation and networks in the society.[14]

4.   Requirements of New Media Systems

From the perspective of human-computer interaction, users must be involved early in the development process for interactive applications.[15] In our case, there is the problem that users must have understood the concept of media convergence and its far-reaching consequences. This would enable them to give meaningful input in the process of requirements analysis and design. The problem here is that the understanding of this complex subject is not given. A test for whether this knowledge is available fails because the transformation process of media in society is not yet complete.

Following our assumptions media convergence takes place in three areas in this transformation process. The first area is the technique that is used for the consumption of media content. It includes devices such as smart phones, notebooks, personal computers and televisions. Here we see a general trend towards the mobile sector, however fixed TVs are preferred at home by consumers because of better quality and large screens. The second dimension is time. It plays an important role when the consumer accesses the content. Generalising, one could establish the following proposition. In the morning the users are listening to the radio. While on the way to work, they use their mobile devices to receive media content. At lunch they use their personal computers to consume media content. In the evening they are using mainly both mobile devices and devices with large screens for the playback of content such as movies. The two previous dimensions affect the nature of processing of media content. Properties of media such as formats, resolution,

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quality, length, video, audio, text, and many more have to be identified and matched to the particular situation of the consumers. Depending on the situation in which the consumer is and the available device, the media content has to be tailored to the user.

5.   Multimedia Platforms of the Future

Our research objectives are subject to different platforms. We want to adjust these in terms of media convergence and integrate them into one viable multimedia platform of the future. There already exist several projects that were implemented by us or our commercial partners. A platform for transmitting movies is graubuendentv.com which currently distributes video and audio content via different channels (own streaming, Youtube, etc.) from Switzerland, Graubünden to the consumers. The next step will be the integration and transmission of such content via IPTV.

The future multimedia platform must be able to tailor the format to the situation and the type of user-desired consumption. Within this concept, however, the generation of content by many users is a basic principle which follows the Web 2.0 principle of 'user-generated content.' Consumers who are on site where the events happen are becoming journalists or editors and start reporting live on site. This is the way news are created by consumers for consumers. In the future the fact is that beginners will be journalists and this will affect the quality of reporting and thus the quality of the news. In addition a steering board defines which content is distributed to the different channels.

6.   Conclusion and Outlook

We argued that the media world is in a transition stage where the convergence of the media develops in the areas of technique, content and social aspects. Many companies are missing this transformation process. In order to be better accepted by humans as social beings the socialisation of multimedia systems in the future will be a unique selling point. With this publication, we want to bring up an interesting discussion about the future world of multimedia systems in relation to new technologies and the Internet.

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Gaming Potential of Augmented Reality

Gaspar Pujol Nicolau

Abstract
Augmented reality (AR) consists in a series of interconnected devices capable of adding virtual information over physical. It distinguishes from virtual reality because it does not substitute reality but overprints digital data over the real world. Actual applications of AR are multiple, from social networking through info overlaying, to gaming. The appearance of more and more powerful portable devices is introducing AR applications and games into our daily lives. Therefore, in our saturated game industry, augmented reality seems to be one of the more interesting gaming innovations available. We discuss *proof of concept* demos, gaming prototypes and actual commercial games based on AR in several platforms. This will let us start to understand which the true possibilities of AR are in gaming terms, and which could be the next step for AR games. Finally, we will briefly delve into the actual problems and possible improvements of AR.

Key Words: Augmented reality, videogames, magic lens, magic mirror, HCI, future platforms, mobile phones, wearable computers.

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1.   Origins of AR

Initially, augmented reality (AR) comes from the need to process huge amounts of data associated with real-world objects (and subjects). The basic idea is that the most intuitive way of showing this data is to place it directly over the real world. As human beings we are used to interpret and process the world around us with astounding speed, faster and better than any computer. By using this natural ability and combining it with some kind of intermediary device, we can 'enrich' our environment with the data we need. In this way the architect could actually see the building as he designs it, the physician could see medical data over the patient's body and the pilot could see the speed, altitude and bearing of every plane in his field of view.

AR provides the means for intuitive information presentation which enhances our perception of the real world, placing virtual objects and graphical/written information over them. At the same time it exploits the natural understanding and familiarity with our 'real' environment as means of improving human-computer interaction (HCI). We could define it as a series of interconnected devices capable of adding virtual information over physical objects or places. It distinguishes from virtual reality because it does not substitute reality but overprints digital data over the real world. Actual

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applications of AR are multiple, from social networking, through info overlaying to (lately) gaming.

Table 1. Continuum from reality to virtuality, as presented by Paul Milgram

In fact, we could say that AR bridges the gap between virtual reality and the real world. Following the ideas of Paul Milgram we can think about a continuum going from reality to virtuality. The space in between reality and the virtual world covers what they called 'mixed reality,' where virtual and real elements coexist and interact. AR is only part of this continuum, being nearer to the 'real' side of the spectrum than to the virtual one. Since the appearance of the virtual world, the barriers between what's virtual and real have been thinning.

At a first glance, we can see that the implications of such a technology can greatly affect our daily lives. But the fact is that, even though this technology has been there for more than 18 years now, its true potential is only being exploited superficially.

Therefore, the use of AR in forms of leisure and gaming seems the next logical step. In our saturated game industry, AR seems to be one of the more interesting gaming innovations available. As AR capable hardware such as powerful mobile devices is introducing AR applications and games into our daily lives, developers are using this technology to experiment in gaming design. At the same time, good gaming ideas seem to mobilise hardware industry into new (and risky) interfacing methods.

Actual gaming platforms are dealing with AR in several ways, but all of them can be summarised in two main tendencies. The first one relies on a fixed real environment near to a camera and a display, where the mixed AR images appear. The second one relies on a device that captures reality behind it and adds the mixed reality elements behind it presenting them to the viewer.

2.   Magic Mirror

The metaphor of the 'magic mirror' suits perfectly to the first technology we want to discuss about. A mirror is static, and reflects what is in front of it in an inverted fashion (if you move your right arm, the 'left' arm of your reflection moves). The Magic Mirror AR consists of a video capture

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device (webcam or similar) situated parallel, diagonal or perpendicular to the play surface. It is supposed to remain static and never change its focus. To see the mixed reality elements, the player has to look towards the display where the real and virtual worlds are mixed. However, the reduced field of view of the camera deeply hampers this procedure, limiting the play area to that of the static scene being recorded. The physical limitations of this technology make it suitable for limited spaces and static environments (desks, walls, tables, living rooms…).

This technology is the first step into AR, because it actually puts you into the processed world that the TV or computer display. It is not actually 'taking out' objects from the virtual to the real world but 'putting in' real objects (you and your living room) into a processed scene where virtual objects appear. The most evident advantages are that this fixed AR is easier to manipulate and programme, and that the whole technology works with very common hardware (cameras/webcams and monitors/TV sets).

Nowadays we have few commercial games using this technology in a successful way. Two of the best examples using the magic mirror technology belong to Sony's PS3. Both *The Eye of Judgment* and *Eye Pet* use the peripheral called PlayStation Eye to capture the immediate environment around the TV screen and to place there the animated characters. Of course, both lack the possibility of moving the point of view of the camera.

Another completely different tendency is what Nintendo Wii and Microsoft's Xbox360 Project Natal are trying for their machines. Even though marginally AR, it is an interesting way to use this technology. We could speak here of *embodied gaming experience*, where your real life movements become the interface to play the game. In both systems, a fixed device captures the movements of the player (or at least the controller) and composes them into the virtual world. Experimental prototypes, such as *Kickass Kungfu*, try to exploit the movements of the player's full body, thus requiring a lot more space.

The last analysed possibility is to use real objects augmented with virtual images as ways of interfacing with the computer. The prototype by Dassault systémes for a Nestlé *Arthur & Minimoys* promo campaign uses a normal cereal box with a fiduciary marker to transform it into a gaming console. The position of the box is used to affect the physics of the game. In the same way, project *Levelhead*, by Julian Oliver, presents three cubes as a spatial 3D memory puzzle game. In tilting the cubes, the character in the games moves accordingly to the steepness. It is also able to pass from one cube to the other in order to solve the puzzle.

3.   Magic Lens

The 'magic lens' technology is the next step towards AR. It is developed as a portable, or at least, more mobile version of the magic mirror

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technology. In order to be able to show AR elements to the user it needs of some kind of portable device where to project and mix real and virtual worlds. The metaphor applied here is that of a 'magic lens' you can carry and move all around you, through which you perceive the 'magic' AR world.

Of course, this technology is completely related to that of wearable computers. Nowadays two tendencies emerge, semi-transparent displays and video-composites. The first is a see-through glass, where layers of virtual elements can be superimposed. This gives a perfect fidelity of the real world but also a lot of problems to make AR elements 'believable' within the users field of view.

The second is a video display fed by a camera, where real and virtual objects are mixed and then presented to the user. With this technology it is easier to mix real and virtual elements, but also provokes a general loss of fidelity. Some years ago, it required specific hardware as virtual glasses or head mounted displays. Now it is the easiest way to program AR applications, as new media (iPhone, NDSi, PSP with the camera module or Multimedia mobile phones) are appearing.

It is interesting to note that old portable consoles and mobile telephones did not have a camera. However, all the new generations of portable devices are created with the idea of multimedia applications in mind. The incorporation of cameras into these devices makes them a perfect target for first-generation AR applications. Cameras are not only designed to capture images but to transform the device into a 'magic lens.'

With the appearance of new portable multimedia platforms, the use of this technology is spreading quite fast. Games like *Ghost Wire* (NDSi), or *System Flaw* (NDSi) use the positioning of flat sprites over real background images. The movement of the camera allows rotating the world accordingly. Fiduciary markers are used in *Invizimals* (PSP) to fake the AR characters walk over surfaces, and be affected by shadows and hand movement. On the prototype side, we have project *ARhrrrr!* by Georgia Tech and SCAD Atlanta for the Nvidia Tegra. The physical map, acting as a fiduciary marker generates a whole 3D AR environment over it, where enemies appear. The player has to shoot the enemies, adjusting his position in real space accordingly. Occlusion and distance are part of the gameplay.

4.   Gaming Potential

So, as we have seen, using the real environment as support for games has an almost unlimited potential. Our movements can be captured and entered into the game to move our character. Layers of reality and virtuality can coexist in the same physical space to make things appear or disappear. In fact, reality can be altered and ultimately masked to become another world.

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With the simultaneous use of positioning technology such as GPS, the world can be transformed in a huge playground. Physical mobility becomes an alternative way of playing, allowing dynamic activities capable of involving thousands of players. Maybe the best example of this is the Hewlett Packard tech demo called *Roku's Reward*, where we can see to a great extent the potential of this technology. An alternative world is superimposed over the real one, posing new challenges and rewards to achieve.

Moreover, AR can be combined with existing technologies, hobbies and tendencies. We could think of AR puzzles, AR graffiti, AR radio controlled cars or planes, AR toys, AR board games,etc. To see a few selected examples among the current technologies we would mention Parrot's *ARdrone*, and *PIT strategy* AR board game from Augmented Reality Games. The first combines a real radio-controlled helicopter attached to a camera with AR generated enemies and obstacles. The second one is a racing board game with superimposed AR images, played in real time with fiduciary markers in the form of cards. What players put over the board affects the speed and behaviour of the virtual cars.

5.   What is Missing?

Even though the possibilities seem endless, AR technology must be improved before it finally reaches the masses. One of the first problems we encounter is that most of these tech demos are never fully developed into full-fledged technologies, because of lack of economical support. This means that nowadays, only few commercial games can be made economically viable and therefore, profitable. AR technology is neither cheap nor reliable enough.

There are many hardware problems concerning latency, occlusion, fidelity, and lack of processing power and resolution that must be solved before a proper portable AR-capable device can be made. Apart from that, one of the biggest issues is the lack of two-way interaction. Nowadays, we are only simple spectators of the AR world. One of the challenges for the future is affecting and receiving input from the AR world, in real time, and to share this experience with other people.

Another issue to be solved is to develop more comfortable AR capable hardware. Most of all, we have to improve usability. Now you have to hold your mobile device, arms stretched, and look through a tiny screen. This is bulky, ugly and uncomfortable, apart from being hardly usable. Possibly the future is a contact lens or glasses-like device, probably connected through Bluetooth to a mobile phone or similar device, in the tracks of what project *Sixthsense* by P. Mistry is presenting. We have to have in mind that this hardware has to be polyvalent: not only for gaming but also for shopping, working and dealing with information. This would be the only way to introduce it to the mass market.

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Of course, apart from the technical problems mentioned above, there are several human and public health questions that must be put into the light before making this technology available to the masses. Masking reality can be dangerous if we end down a manhole or run over by a car we thought didn't exist. AR spam and advertising can also be an interesting topic to think about in the near future. What is sure is that Augmented Reality is going to affect our future lives in a way or another.

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PART VII

Controversial Issues in Cyberlife

Election 2.0: How to Use Cyber Platforms to Win the US Presidential Elections - An Investigation into the Changing Communication Strategies of Election Candidates

Sabine Baumann

Abstract

From a political communication perspective presidential elections have significant characteristics. There is a large, global audience looking for information. The information material is highly suitable for interactive exchange (latest events, voter opinions; candidates' positions on election issues; updates; personalisation). Not surprisingly, this potential for interactivity has unleashed the use of cyber platforms to share information not just via the customary media channels but virtually from citizen to citizen. Candidates or parties not familiar with the potential of communicating via interactive cyber platforms no longer stand a chance to win the election. Democratic election processes have completely been transformed with regards to how to communicate with the electorate.

The major candidates in the 2008 US presidential elections, Barack Obama and John McCain, have used all communication channels, including those in virtual environments, on an unprecedented scale. This included sharing information via social networks, communicating on electoral topics, and Obama's extensive grassroots campaign. Obama, in particular, mobilised followers to become information brokers by creating and sharing their own content, reporting on the latest events of the campaign trail, organising local and national events as well as collecting donations to support their candidate.

The paper explores how cyber platforms fulfil a variety of functions within democratic election processes: spreading information, creating commonly accepted topics, building voter networks, and attracting sponsors. The communication strategies of the US presidential candidates are used as examples to study the application of virtual environments to shape ideas across societal groups and hence, the influence on opinion building. The paper demonstrates how ordinary citizens can be motivated to become part of virtual political networks on a global scale. Immediate interpersonal communication through cyber platforms provides the new extended foundation to gather votes and funding within the democratic election process.

Key Words: Political communication, presidential campaign, web 2.0, user generated content.

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1.   Introduction

Barack Obama is the first Afro-American president of the United States. Before the election process started, he was only known to a small fraction of the US population let alone to a global audience. For many, the Illinois senator seemed to have come out of nowhere. However, his appearance on the scene and his eventual success were based on a well-devised communication strategy which not only took into account how to reach potential voters and drive topics, but mobilised followers on a nationwide scale. This essay explains the components of Obama's strategy and compares it to McCain's approach.

2.   Challenges of the Election Process

The election road to the White House is a long and exhausting one. It needs contestants with charisma, a great deal of stamina, and abounding financial resources. While in 1976 the candidates would have spent less than 70 million USD in total for all their campaigns this figure had risen to 1.3 billion USD in the last election.[1] In the primaries the candidates have to succeed against other candidates from their own political party before finally confronting the contenders of the other parties. Within his own party, the Democrats, Obama initially was not regarded as an aspirant who could seriously challenge favourites like Hillary Clinton. But it was well before the primaries that he started the campaign that would finally take him into the White House.

On Friday, February 9, 2007, the day before making his announcement that he would run for president, Obama explained the central ideas behind his campaign in a preview announcement. He invited followers to join him on his journey to make change happen and to fundamentally change the nature of politics in the US. According to his statements this change could happen if individuals got involved, each contributing their share, even if but a small one. What he meant was that followers should use his new website to „organise your friends, your neighbours and your networks'[2]. Equally important was that followers should take fundraising into their hands by raising small donations, thus making the campaign independent of large contributions.[3] Looking at the donor contribution statistics (see exhibit 1) this strategy proved successful. Compared to John McCain with only 34%, 54% of Obama's contributions came from donors giving less than 200 USD each. Overall, Obama raised about 750 million USD while McCain only managed to attract donations of about 270 million USD.[4]

Candidate	No. of $200+ Contributors	% from Donors of $200 or less	No. of $2,300+ Contributors	% from Donors of $2,300 or less	No. of $4,600+ Contributors	% from Donors of $4,600 or less
Obama, Barack	362,952	54%	66,034	32%	13,120	9%
McCain, John	145,299	34%	34,461	49%	6,654	16%

Exhibit 1: Donor Demographics – Contributions from all Donors/
Individuals: Contribution Size[5]

On the spending side McCain spent a total of 119 million USD on media, of which 4.6 million USD were dedicated to Internet media. Opposed to that, 24.2 million USD of Obama's 312 million USD media budget were directed to Internet media.[6] Both, internet and mobile media were more central components of Obama's campaign than in that of McCain who had underestimated their considerable power and attraction, and, in particular, their information and mobilising potential. Almost half of all voters actually used the internet during the campaign for various purposes: obtain news and information on campaigns via news sites, watch online videos, consult Wikipedia for background information or view original documents (e.g. finance reports and data published by the Federal Election Commission). Beyond that, supporters met in social networks to exchange information and opinions with other voters, to share their stories and experiences, to organise events or - and that was new - to collect donations for their preferred candidate.

3.   Comparison of McCain's and Obama's Communication Strategies
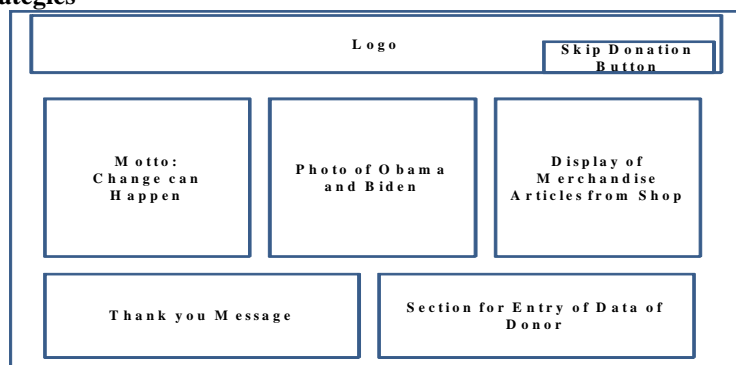
Exhibit 2: General Layout of Entry Screen Obama-Biden Website

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        A detailed analysis of the Obama-Biden website reveals how its
layout supported the desired objectives. When accessing the Obama-Biden
website a pop-up immediately appeared asking for donations (see exhibit 2
for the general layout of the entry screen).[7] Users then either entered their
data into the appropriate section in the bottom right hand corner or clicked on
Skip Donation to go to the main website. However, there were more
fundraising functions installed on the website by offering various interesting
products in the store (some featured items already displayed on the entry
page). Besides the usual merchandise such as t-shirts, mugs, caps, etc. two
product ranges attracted a lot of attention and their products were soon sold-
out: *Runway to Change* propounding clothes designed by fashion designers
supporting Obama, and *Artists of Obama* offering specifically designed
works of art. The latter seem to have established a trend regarding art works
relating to the president.[8]

        Unsurprisingly, the Obama-Biden website provided users with
extensive information on the biographies of the candidates, their spouses,
dates and activities of the campaign trail, positions the candidates take on
certain issues such as civil rights, defence, the economy, education health
care, etc. Users could also access the latest media coverage through articles
and videos. They were informed by email on upcoming events if they left
their contact information. Regarding these anticipated features the McCain-
Palin website offered similar functionalities.

        However, the Obama-Biden website went well beyond the
established approach by introducing numerous ways for users to
communicate with the candidates and with each other. In this communication
tactic lies the strength of their site. For example, followers, who had joined
Obama Mobile by leaving their mobile phone numbers, were the first to be
informed by SMS about Obama's running mate - even before he made the
announcement to the press.

        Obama was also present on the most important social networks (see
exhibit 3),[9] this component of his strategy being adequately named *Obama
Everywhere*. Evidently, the platforms were used to thank the voters
immediately after the election.

Facebook	BlackPlanet
MySpace	Faithbase
YouTube	Eons
Flickr	Glee
Digg	MiGente
Twitter	MyBatanga
Eventful	AsianAve
LinkedIn	DNC Partybuilder

Exhibit 3: Platforms used by Obama Everywhere

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The heart of Obama's internet campaign is *MyBo*[10], a powerful tool to accomplish what Obama requested in his preview announcement, namely join the network, share stories and experiences, contact undecided voters and collect donations. The tool has a variety of features which are very effortless to use and give immediate benefit to the user once he/she has registered and created an account.

The first step for people new to MyBo is to create a profile to help others to get to know them better and let them know why they had joined the Obama movement. The information, where someone lives, provides instant information on other supporters in the area and on upcoming events. More than 20,000 groups were active on the site, which were organized by location, profession, shared topics or interests. An activity meter shows how active a particular group is, assisting newcomers to select the one most suitable to them. Once they have registered for one or several groups, they automatically receive emails about events or information how to participate in group activities.

Contacting undecided voters is supported by another tool within MyBo. All a volunteer needs to do is enter his/her address and the tool will automatically supply information on one or both of two campaign types: call-in or walk-in. In the first case the tool provides a list of potential voters and their phone numbers. For the walk-in campaign the tool not just produces the list of voters to talk to, but also a map with the shortest route to visit them as well as a script to guide the conversation. Flyers are available for print to take on the walk-in campaign. Through a report-back function supporters give an account of how successful they were talking to assigned voters and what problems they incurred.

Volunteers can also create their own fundraising page in MyBo, where they can define a goal and track their progress with a kind of thermometer which shows their current amount of collected donations. The tool helps users to easily contact potential donors among their friends and family by providing an interface through which email addresses can be imported from other programmes. Friends and family can then be invited to donate by sending them a personal message why they should contribute.

Blogs are another feature of MyBo through which followers can share their thoughts and experiences along the campaign trail. Again, these are straightforward to create and personalise.

4.   Communication after the Election

After the election Obama's communication campaign did not finish. Immediately, a new site was launched: www.change.gov (see exhibit 4). This site consisted of the conventional features explained above to communicate the agenda but also provided a place for citizens to impart their *American Moments* or propose issues where the country could still improve. After

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inauguration the site was closed. „The transition has ended and the new administration has begun. Please join President Barack Obama at whitehouse.gov'.[11]

Exhibit 4: Change.gov[12]

       The White House site incorporated the social network familiar from the Obama-Bide site in order to allow voters to stay connected. It also continues the *Open Government Initiative* (see exhibit 5) for citizens to share comments and ideas with the government. The Obama-Biden site has been renamed as *Organizing for America*, now supporting the Democratic Party. MyBo is still available through that site.

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Exhibit 5: Excerpt White House Website[13]

5.   Campaign Results

From the start of his election campaign Obama had devised a concept to mobilize voters to help him spread information, organise events on a nationwide scale and collect funds. His overwhelming success is based on three pillars: money, communication and voter mobilization. Obama managed to collect more than one million addresses and mobile phone numbers which marketing experts would value at about 200 million USD.[14] More than 75,000 events were organised via MyBo. He collected twice the amount of money than his opponent McCain. The 26 words he used in his SMS to announce the name of his running mate, Joe Biden, to his supporters were named 'the greatest mobile marketing action in history'[15] by Nielsen analysts. They estimated, it had eventually reached 2.9 million people.[16]

In terms of campaign funding Obama succeeded in making a surprising number of private citizens donate money - often very small sums – to his campaign. The availability of funds is one of - if not the - decisive factor in US election campaigns. During the primaries candidates have no access to public funding and must finance their campaign through personal resources or donations. Obama managed to build a strong base of supporters

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right from the start. Although they donated only small sums they did this on a fairly regular basis. He could rely on them once more after his nomination by the Democratic Party. For the first time in history the Democratic Party became a *Party of Money*, more precisely big money in small sums.

Obama's communication advisors recognised exceptionally early the potential in using electronic media. The MyBo platform is *high tech with high touch*. It proved an excellent means to direct campaign assistants and supporting volunteers at the touch of a button. During the decisive phases of the campaign the helpers received emails almost at an hourly rate asking them to ring friends, to attract more followers for the common purpose, to talk to undecided voters in the neighbourhood or to attend a campaign activity to cheer for their preferred contestant. Thus, Obama's communication approach combined the concept of multi-level-marketing successfully introduced by companies such as Tupperware™ with modern means of communication: every volunteer acts as an independent representative who in turn recruits and takes care of new volunteers. Over time this builds a communication pyramid in which each additional level increases the communication spread both in absolute numbers of communicators as well as location coverage. All representatives remain in their own neighbourhood pursuing the topics they are most interested in but the general agenda is still propagated on a nationwide or even global scale. The very personal relationship of the participants ensures a mutual trust and hence cohesiveness of the system, while electronic communication can multiply information at an unprecedented speed.

Notes

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Open Secrets, *John McCain (R)*, 2008, retrieved 16 December 2009, http://www.opensecrets.org/pres08/summary.php?cycle=2008&cid=N00006424.

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org/pres08/expend.php?id=N00009638&cycle2=2008&goButt2.x=4&goButt2.y=2.

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Click Here to Protest: Electronic Civil Disobedience and the Future of Social Mobilisation

Fidele Vlavo

Abstract
This paper considers the concept of electronic civil disobedience as a contemporary redefinition of socio-political activism. The aim is to examine a new form of protest which positions cyberspace as the unique site for social mobilisation. The discussion starts with a reassessment of Henri Thoreau's original formulation of civil disobedience. In particular, the notions of legality and legitimacy are re-addressed in the context of globalised digital resistance. I also explore the theory of electronic civil disobedience as a partial product of the 'Internet *Imaginaire*,' a concept derived from psychoanalytic theory that, according to Patrice Flichy, articulates our fundamental belief in the redemptive role of digital technology. Finally, the paper outlines the main challenges paused by the praxis of electronic civil disobedience. Raising questions related to the social and geopolitical mappings of the Internet, I suggest how this initially appealing proposition of radical virtual protest discursively reinforces ideological domination and inequality in its attempt to assert cyberspace as the exclusive space for socio-political activism.

Key Words: Critical Art Ensemble, electronic civil disobedience, Internet *Imaginaire*, computer hacking, socio-political activism.

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1.   Virtual Activism

The presumed formation of independent spheres of communication promotes the Internet as an open environment. Cyberspace, the 'new' virtual world, is perceived as a borderless and unified space that supersedes nation states and geographical frontiers.[1] In this context, idealistic visions of global democracy and citizenship encourage the emergence of a so-called transnational activist sphere, whereby cyber-citizens assemble in virtual spaces and exercise their right to protest. In 1994, the American group of media theorists and artists, Critical Art Ensemble provides the first theoretical text on virtual activism entitled: *Electronic Civil Disobedience*.[2] Arguing that past models of opposition no longer succeed in the 'physical' world, the Critical Art Ensemble proposes the development of a virtual resistance based on computer hacking. The group suggests the re-staging of the civil disobedience protests performed during the American civil rights and anti-

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war movements in cyberspace to disrupt governing bodies in their alleged virtual locations:

> (Un)common sense tells us that we can follow the money to find power; however, since money has no point of origin but is part of a circular of spiralling flow, the best we can expect to find is the flow itself. Capital rarely takes a hard form; like power, it exists as an abstraction. An abstract form will probably be found in an abstract place or to be more specific, in cyberspace.[3]

At first, the idea of a new form of protest produces great optimism for the reconsideration of social and political inequality. Yet, the Critical Art Ensemble's simplistic explanation illustrates the problematic theoretical framing of electronic civil disobedience. A closer examination underlines how the principles and arguments for digital resistance are themselves reproducing notions of discrimination and social control. The discussion in this paper argues that far from offering a radical form of protest, the praxis of electronic civil disobedience relies on a problematic conception of digital technologies that replicates dominant patterns of prejudice and socio-political inequality.

2.   The Legacy of Civil Disobedience

The critical examination of the relationship between electronic civil disobedience (ECD) and civil disobedience (CD) is a process that is too often neglected; yet it is central to the discussion of online activism. According to most civil disobedience specialists, the term 'civil disobedience' first appeared in an essay written in 1849 by Henry David Thoreau.[4] Thoreau was an American writer who proclaimed his opposition to the Mexican war and the slave trade by refusing to pay his poll tax. During that time, he wrote the text now commonly known as *Civil Disobedience*.[5] The relation that Critical Art Ensemble constructs with an electronic civil disobedience is not accidental. The group explicitly relates the new electronic protest to the tradition of civil disobedience: 'blocking information conduits is analogous to blocking physical locations; ... ECD is CD reinvigorated. What CD once was, ECD is now.'[6] Electronic civil disobedience therefore aims to replicate blockades and sit-ins in cyberspace. Yet, in the conceptualisation of electronic civil disobedience, Critical Art Ensemble fails to address questions of law obedience and the acceptance of penal retribution that are central to the theoretical framework of civil disobedience.

Civil disobedience theorists, such as Rawls, have argued that CD requires the existence of a formal legal structure.[7] Hence, the act of civil disobedience consists in the infringement of a law found to be unfair or

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immoral, but it implies obedience to the overall legal system and its representatives. This is what differentiates civil disobedience from anarchism but also separates disobedient citizens from revolutionaries or criminals. In addition, by making public statements of civil disobedience, protesters confirm their decisions and demonstrate full awareness of the laws and the consequences of breaching them.[8]

Inevitably, these questions resurface in the conceptualisation of electronic civil disobedience. The act of law violation is particularly relevant in the context of cyberspace. Considering Critical Art Ensemble's narrative, it is not clear which legal system ECD actions would infringe. Since the notion of a legal system, or cyber law, on the Internet is a recurrent and contentious topic, the decisions and procedures that could criminalise these activities are still pending.[9] The praxis of electronic civil disobedience thus raises concerns about the legality and legitimacy of online activism which simply cannot be resolved with a basic transposition of past activist practices. Yet, far from taking into consideration the philosophical and practical heritage of civil disobedience, and their implications on the Internet, cyber-utopians, including Critical Art Ensemble, cyberculture theorists and political activists, persist in promoting cyberspace as the most suitable environment for social mobilisation. [10]

3.   The *Imaginaire* of Cyber-Resistance

The role given to cyberspace in the production of new forms of social protest corresponds to a persisting pattern of over-idealistic representations of the virtual world. This trend can be related to a phenomenon described as the 'Internet *imaginaire*'.[11] In his research on cyber-*imaginaires,* Flichy has studied the process of social imaginary projections, whereby individuals collectively produce and share visions. Building on a concept derived from psychoanalytic theory, Flichy explains that in the context of digital technologies, most developments tend to be interpreted as positive evolutions that reverse the failures and deficiencies of contemporary society. As such, representations of cyberspace are rooted in a technological *imaginaire* working towards a digital miracle: when the sole aim of digital technology becomes the continuous improvement of the human condition.

The prophecies formed around the potential of computer technologies have developed to produce new collective and utopian visions on the functions and usage of digital technology. One of the versions that conceive cyberspace as a free and democratic space is illustrated by John Perry Barlow's *Declaration of the Independence of the Cyberspace*; a text which has become a seminal argument for the separation of cyberspace and governmental authority.[12] Barlow's narrative signifies and reinforces a discursive representation that assumes cyberspace to be free, autonomous and

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self-governable. It also explicitly encourages the protection of the virtual world through radical dissidence.

The persisting visualisation of the Internet as an open structure is further supported by the theoretical re-appropriation of notions of rhizome and nomadicity. Whilst they are not always directly mentioned, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concepts are often conveniently redeployed to participate in the construction of cyberspace as an immaterial and deterritorialised environment. In one of the last chapters of *A Thousand Plateaus*, 'Treatise on nomadology', Deleuze and Guattari refer to the primary condition of early nomadic tribes which escape state control and domination by constantly changing their physical location.[13] Critical Art Ensemble uses a similar framework to produce the concept of 'nomadic power' and justify the relocation of political protest online: 'Nomadic power must be resisted in cyberspace rather than physical space.'[14] The group completes the formulation of electronic civil disobedience with the proposition to create anonymous and discreet guerrilla cells of coordinated computer hackers that perform online disturbances. However, this conception of electronic civil disobedience does not confront the problematic perceptions of a free and deterritorialised virtual space. Nor does it critically consider the ethical and legal implications of disobedience and political activism. Instead, it pervasively reproduces the dominant pattern of technological hegemony and determinism which excludes local agency and recreate discriminatory chains of commands in social and political mobilisation. In spite of these contradictions, Critical Art Ensemble's writings have still convinced political activists to engage with the apparently radical form of virtual protest.

4.   The Practice of Electronic Civil Disobedience

In 1998, the first practical manifestation of electronic civil disobedience was organised. Artists and activists from the Electronic Disturbance Theater arranged a virtual protest against Ernesto Zedillo's website, the then Mexican president, the Frankfurt Stock Exchange and the US Department of Defense.[15] This virtual protest was coordinated in support of The Zapatista movement which rose up against the Mexican authorities during the early 1990s. For the project, known as SWARM, Electronic Disturbance Theater created FloodNet, a computer application designed to temporary block access to specific websites. Conceived on the DOS (Denial of Service) principle, the programme required that participants simultaneously connect to the Internet and reload the pages of target websites every three seconds for the duration of the event. This was set up so that the hosting servers would slow down or eventually crash under the excess of requests.

Whilst it was reported that the Mexican government website experienced a reduction of its activity during the attack, there was no

evidence that the servers were at risk of shutting down at any point. Similarly, the Frankfurt Stock Exchange site was set up to cope with large amounts of online page requests and did not experience any dysfunction. As for the virtual sit-in of the US Pentagon website, the Department of Defense retaliated with a counter application. *Hostile* was produced to counterattack FloodNet and responded with empty browser windows which temporarily disabled the protesters' computers. Members of Electronic Disturbance Theater acknowledged the Department of Defense's response as 'the first offensive use of information war by a government against a civilian server.'[16] Although little information regarding participation is available, the organisers of the SWARM project claimed that thousands of protesters took part.[17] Whilst, the attacks did not produce noticeable technical damage, the project is nevertheless recognised as the first instance of a virtual globalised activism. As such, it also exposes some of the challenges and conflicts rooted in the praxis of electronic civil disobedience.

To begin with, the questions of access and participation emerge as dominant issues. Certainly, the well-rehearsed discourses of digital divides are useful in drawing attention to the limitation of an exclusive form of activism. However, the point is not just that expert knowledge is necessary for the organisation of an event such as SWARM (and clearly, with ECD only those with digital access will have a voice), but more importantly, in the context of global power, control and resistance, it raises the subject of legitimacy: *who* can and does protest, for *what* causes and on behalf of *whom*. Human right activists have voiced their concerns and considered electronic civil disobedience as an illegal and non-justifiable practice.[18] They have questioned the consequences of virtual attacks and the response of the Mexican authorities, not against so-called cyber-protesters but toward the dissent local populations. Ironically, electronic civil disobedience seems to offer a new form of resistance, whereby participants, from the comfort of their home, select from a range of available resistance movements online and 'click here' to protest, unaware and unaffected by the possible effects of the virtual activism. The ambiguous concepts of transnational solidarity and global mobilisation seem to deny, or minimise, the importance of local struggles creating a new type of distant and disengaged mobilisation.

The other concern is directly linked to the discursive construction of cyberspace as an open and deterritorialised space. During the SWARM event, the virtual sit-in targeting the US pentagon website caused the Department of Defense to retaliate by deploying a counter Java applet. Clearly, the department regarded the activist performance as an online terrorist act. In the global context of technological fear, governments, private corporations and the mass media are readily associating electronic civil disobedience practices with cyber-terrorism. As an example, it is difficult to ignore the impacts of online activism on the recent political events in Burma. Following the

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uprising of the Buddhist monks in August 2007, it was reported that the Burmese military regime shut down the Internet claiming that the country's unique network had been damaged.[19] In fact, the authorities had detected that Burmese citizens were using the web to alert international communities of the violent repression, in the same way that the Zapatista revolutionaries had succeeded in ten years earlier. However this time, recognising the potential threats, the military state reacted by disconnecting the entire public communication network. This illustrates an increasing awareness of the potential use of cyberspace for virtual mobilisation but it equally demonstrates governments' unrestricted control and authority to switch off the Internet.

5.   Conclusion

The first practical applications of electronic civil disobedience illustrate that far from being free and borderless, cyberspace is, in fact, a highly territorialised and controlled environment. By retracing some of the conceptual theories and visions forming the basis of contemporary online activism, this paper has drawn attention to the problematic ignorance of the legal, social and political implications of virtual resistance. The main conclusion is that no meaningful political protest can or should exclusively rely on digital technology. As it is formulated, the concept of electronic civil disobedience corresponds to a utopian and distorted visualisation of cyberspace. This representation will need to be addressed and renegotiated, if indeed, cyberspace is to play a predominant role in the future of global socio-political mobilisation.

Notes

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[4] For discussions of civil disobedience see the writings of Rawls, Bedau, and Murphy.
[5] HD Thoreau, *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, Houghton, Mifflin Co., Boston & New York, 1893.
[6] Critical Art Ensemble, *Electronic Civil Disobedience,* Autonomedia, New York, 1996, p18.
[7] J Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1972.
[8] A Bedau, *Civil Disobedience in Focus*, Routledge, London, 1991.
[9] For an overview of law in cyberspace see J Goldsmith and T Wu.

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[10] See for example the writings of Stefan Wray, Critical Art Ensemble and Electronic Disturbance Theater.

[11] P Flichy, *The Internet Imaginaire*, MIT Press, London, 2007.

[12] JP Barlow, *A Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace,* MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2001, p 27.

[13] G Deleuze & F Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1987, p.380.

[14] Critical Art Ensemble, *The Electronic Disturbance,* Autonomedia, New York, 1994, p.25.

[15] See Electronic Disturbance Theater, *Advance News Release*, Thing.net, 25 Aug 1998, retrieved 22 Mar 2010,   http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ecd/September9.html.

[16] M Bond & R Frank, 'Ricardo Dominguez, Artist and Electronic Civil Disobedience Pioneer', The gothamist.com, 29 November 2004, retrieved 22 Mar 2010, http://gothamist.com/2004/11/29/ricardo_dominguez_artist_and_electronic_civil_disobedience_pioneer.php.

[17] ibid.

[18] See MG Ramirez, 'A Dirty War in Internet (analysis)', Thing.net, 27 Apr 1998, retrieved 22 Mar 2010 http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ecd/amelapaz.html.

[19] J Booth, 'Internet Access 'Cut off' in Attempt to Silence Burma', *Time Online*, 28 Sept 2007, retrieved 22 Mar 2010, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article2549404.ece.

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Cybertrauma and Technocultural Shock in Contemporary Media Culture

Aris Mousoutzanis

Abstract
This paper investigates the relations between contemporary media culture and the 'culture of trauma' that has been emerging during the last few decades by focusing on three arguments. First, it approaches the prevalence of trauma in popular culture and academic debate in terms of the ability of the concept to epitomise the experience of postmodern technoculture. As a concept primarily defined by its overwhelming nature, trauma may be seen as representative of the period of postmodernity which has been theorised in terms of an 'information overload.' Second, the prevalence of trauma is interpreted due to the fact that the very nature and function of the new media reproduce the experience of trauma, in that they produce new ways of experiencing time and space that resemble the structure of trauma. And third, contemporary media technologies serve as the major site wherein contemporary trauma is not just witnessed but actually produced and registered as traumatic in the first place. 'Cybertrauma' thus stands as a term registering a feedback loop between the discourses of cyberculture and traumaculture. As 'trauma' has often been theorised in relation to the concept of 'shock,' 'cybertrauma' is seen as a response to the 'technocultural shock' of the Information Revolution at the turn of the early twenty-first century.

Key Words: Cyberculture, media culture, trauma, memory, Freud, Lacan, Kittler, media events.

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This paper investigates the relations between contemporary media culture and the 'culture of trauma' that has been emerging during the last three decades. During this period, the concept of psychological trauma became a focus of attention across diverse areas of scientific study, academic discussion, political debate, and popular culture to the extent that some critics have argued for the emergence of a 'trauma paradigm' or a 'trauma culture.'[1] This emergence was a result of a convergence of diverse discourses: those of the feminists in the late 60s, who were fighting to expose secrets of patriarchy like abuse and rape; Vietnam veterans who were demonstrating for political recognition and social justice; members of psychiatric communities engaged in theoretical debates on the nature of traumatic memories; and fictional writers and scholars who were preoccupied with the question of representation of atrocious historical events such as the Holocaust, a

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preoccupation that led to the emergence of 'trauma theory.' The aspect of trauma culture that I'm interested in is its relation to contemporary technological forms and discourses, or, more specifically, in a set of relations between trauma culture and cyberculture, which may be summarised in three arguments. First, trauma may be seen not just as a clinical pathology but as a metaphor to encapsulate the experience of postmodern technoculture. Second, there is a sense in which the very nature and function of the new media reproduce the experience of trauma. And third, contemporary media technologies serve as the major means through which trauma is not just witnessed but actually produced and registered as traumatic in the first place.

1.   Memory Wars and Cybertrauma

          The 1990s witnessed the outbreak of the so-called 'Memory Wars,' a series of theoretical debates between the proponents of the Recovered Memory Therapy (RMT) technique and those of the False Memory Syndrome movement. RMT was a popular therapeutic technique in the 1980s that was based on the assumption that repressed memories of past trauma could be retrieved through hypnosis. The technique was largely discredited by advocates of the False Memory Syndrome movement, who believed that recovered memories were fabricated by suggestion through hypnosis. One striking aspect of these debates was the extent to which they were referring to contemporary technologies in order to debate on the nature of human memory. According to RMT practitioners, for instance, repressed memories were 'lost files' that were 'recorded and stored in the filing system in [the] brain' and could be retrieved by 'accessing' the memory bank.[2] Followers of FMS, on the other hand, would suggest that the 'lost files' were corrupted by the 'virus' of RMT and its 'data manipulation.' In discussions on the function of regressive hypnosis, for instance, the psychiatrist Mikkel Boch-Jacobsen argued that

> it is difficult to avoid comparison with modern technology…patients are 'switched' like the television channels; elements of trauma are decomposed and recomposed as easily as 'processing' words on a computer; and the patient's past is brought back as easily as 'rewinding' a video cassette (in fact, certain therapists speak of 'rewinding the patient').[3]

          These debates were taking place at the same time with a wider interest in memorials, commemorations, archives and anniversaries during what Andreas Huyssen has described as the 'memory boom' of the 1990s, which he was diagnosing precisely as a response to advent of the Information Revolution. 'Memory', for Hyssen, represents

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the attempt to slow down information processing, to resist
the dissolution of time in the synchronicity of the archive,
to recover a mode of contemplation outside the universe of
simulation and fast-speed information and cable networks,
to claim some anchoring space in a world of puzzling and
often threatening heterogeneity, non-synchronicity, and
information overload.[4]

The preoccupation with memory then, human or electronic, served
as a site that witnessed the entanglement of discourses of cyberculture and
traumaculture into what I describe as 'cybertrauma.' However, one should
avoid identifying a radically new technologically-conditioned conception of
human subjectivity within an information-ridden postmodernity. The
technological subtext of these theorisations is more in a continuum with the
earliest theorisations on traumatic memory, such as those by Sigmund Freud
himself. Thomas Elsaesser has been focusing on the abundance of
technological terms in Freud's work, such as 'resistance,' 'excitation,'
'discharge,' and 'induction' in order to describe Freud as a 'media theorist'
who 'thought of the body/mind as a storage and recording medium as well as
an input/output device.'[5] Freud formulated his theory of memory within his
dual model of the psyche, which consisted of the mutually exclusive levels of
consciousness/perception and unconscious/memory. Consciousness, for
Freud, was, in Elsaesser's words, 'a feedback system' which 'must not retain
any data, otherwise it could not respond to the environment and be self-
regulating.'[6] This 'structural asymmetry' between 'the quantity of data
capture and the relatively restricted repertoire of data processing' points,
according to Elsaesser, towards a view of Freud's theories of memory as 'a
problem of data management.'[7] Freud was writing during the period of the
Second Industrial Revolution (1870-1914), that witnessed the invention of
the first 'proto-media' of the film, the typewriter, the gramophone, wireless
telegraphy, and so on. Accordingly, his work, according to Friedrich Kittler,
'reasoned only as far as the information machines of his era - no more, no
less.'[8] Kittler has paid attention to Freud's choice to describe the human
psyche not as 'soul' but as a 'psychic apparatus,' suggesting a model of the
human psyche as a machine that, in Kittler's words, 'implemented all
available transmission and storage media, in other words, an apparatus just
short of the technical medium of universal-calculation, or the computer.'[9]
From Freud's days to the Memory Wars, memory and trauma were concepts
whose theorisation was affected by contemporary technocultural discourses.

2.   Freud, Trauma and Technological Modernity
One must focus further on Freud's work to understand the ability of
the concept to represent the experience of postmodern technoculture. The

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most defining feature of trauma is its overwhelming nature. Freud defined trauma as 'an increase of stimulus too powerful to be dealt with or worked off in the normal way.'[10] Freud thus saw trauma as a form of sensory overload, an experience that for intellectuals like Walter Benjamin epitomised modernity itself, as witnessed in the modern metropolis:

> Moving through this traffic involves the individual in a series of shocks and collisions. At dangerous intersections, nervous impulses flow through him in rapid succession, like the energy from a battery….technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training.[11]

Benjamin's references to technology pave the way towards a view of the overwhelming aspect of trauma as representative of the experience of postmodern technoculture in particular, at least in the way it has been theorised by Jean Baudrillard who described postmodernity in terms of information overload, a proliferation of mediated images, signs, codes and information in Western industrialised societies, that the human subject cannot assimilate. Theories of trauma often focus on a dialectic between an external 'shock' assaulting the subject and a consequent internal 'trauma'. With the above discussion in mind, I think we can recontextualise this dialectic and see cybertrauma as a result of the technocultural shock of the late-twentieth century, the eruption of information and communication technologies in almost every aspect of contemporary Western culture.

Furthermore, there is a more general sense that contemporary media reproduce the structure and effects of trauma, in that they disrupt conventional perceptions of time and space. Another important characteristic of trauma is its peculiar temporality: trauma victims appear originally unaffected for a period of 'latency,' after which they start developing post-traumatic symptoms such as amnesia or hypermnesia, anxiety or dissociation, nightmares, and so on. Traumatic temporality is therefore non-linear, disjunctive, and fragmented, similar to the temporality of contemporary media which, according to Vivien Sobchack, 'both constitute and symbolise the radical alteration of our culture's temporal and spatial consciousness.'[12] The most obvious example here would be the Internet, whose ability to disrupt established conceptions of time and space has been repeatedly underlined by cultural critics but Sobchack, writing in the early 90s, was specifically discussing the ways in which the medium of television challenges conventional temporality, whose 'non-chronological Moebius strip…allows us to see and re-cognise the complexity and thickness of temporal experience': television is 'immediately mediating our spatial and temporal experience of the world, and then analysing, replaying, dramatising, rerunning, and exhausting it in insatiable acts of consumption.'[13]

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Significantly, it is specifically the temporality of television that Mary Anne Doane has focused on in her discussion on the relations between television and catastrophe. For Doane, the major category of television is time, its emphasis on the 'now,' what she calls 'an insistent presentness' and a 'celebration of the instantaneous.'[14] Television, for Doane, 'deals not with the weight of the dead past but with the potential trauma and explosiveness of the present.'[15] Doane has underlined the paradox whereby, on the one hand, catastrophic events are subversive and disruptive in that they interrupt the regular flow of television broadcasting but, on the other, they may also be seen as exemplary of the function of television in that television itself is often theorised as a medium of discontinuity, heterogeneity and rupture. Television 'is a kind of catastrophe machine, continually corroborating its own signifying problematic - a problematic of discontinuity and indeterminacy.'[16]

3.   Media Events and Trauma

Doane's discussion anticipated more recent theoretical discussions in Media Studies that have underlined a shift of focus in the genre of 'media events.' Whereas in 1992 Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz were classifying media events in terms of ceremonies, contests, and conquests, by 2007 Katz and Tamar Liebes were suggesting that the focus of media events has now shifted to disaster, terror and war.[17] This shift has taken place not necessarily because there has been an increase in the occurrence of these events, but precisely because of the emergence and proliferation of global media technologies which make these events more visible at a global scale and produce a global experience of catastrophe. The new media stage these events by employing any resource available; media events, in this sense, are very self-conscious genres that test the limits of the media - a recent example would be Michael Jackson's death, the news item that managed to crash Twitter for the first time. Contemporary catastrophes are therefore unique because of a 'revolution in representational practices…and the technologies of representation made possible by the electronic revolution.'[18] 'Modern electronic media', according to Hayden White, ''explode' events before the eyes of viewers.'[19] There is a sense therefore that contemporary ICTs do not just represent trauma but actually produce it, that they are, as Anne Kaplan and Ban Wang have put it, 'the breeding ground of trauma' and 'a cultural institution in which the traumatic experience of modernity can be recognised, negotiated, and reconfigured.'[20]

The most obvious example would be 9/11, an event that might not have been perceived as such a major trauma if it was not broadcast live at a global scale. It is also an example that may hint towards further directions for this discussion, especially when bearing in mind Slavoj Žižek's analysis of the event. The incessant, repetitive transmission of the images of the attacks has been seen by Žižek as a prefect example of the traumatic compulsion to

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repeat but, most importantly, Žižek diagnosed the event as that historical moment when Americans were thrown out of the 'virtual reality' of Hollywood disaster movies to the traumatic Real.[21] Virtual reality, cyberspace and the Internet have also been technological sites to negotiate the experience of trauma, both in fictional narratives such as William Gibson's cyberpunk novels, where often his characters resort to cyberspace as a source of comfort from trauma, or in real life itself, which sees the increasing proliferation of confessional blogs and online support groups. These aspects need further discussion if we need to explore further the extent to which contemporary technologies provide a discursive framework within which people experience, understand, and theorise trauma within a technologically saturated cultural landscape.

Notes

[1] See K Farrell, *Post-Traumatic Culture: Injury and Interpretation in the Nineties*, John Hopkins University Press, London, 1998. EA Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, Rutgers University Press, London, 2005. R Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, Routledge, London, 2008.

[2] R Fredrickson, *Repressed Memories: A Journey to Recovery from Sexual Abuse,* Fireside, New York, 1992, p. 88.

[3] M Borch-Jacobsen, 'Who's Who? Introducing Multiple Personality', *Supposing the Subject*, J. Copjec (ed), Verso, New York, 1994, p. 52.

[4] A Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, Routledge, London, 1995, p. 7.

[5] T Elsaesser, 'Freud as Media Theorist: Mystic Writing-Pads and the Matter of Memory', *Screen*, vol. 50, no. 1, p. 102.

[6] ibid., p. 114.

[7] ibid., p. 104.

[8] F Kittler, 'The World of the Symbolic – A World of the Machine', in *Literature, Media, Information Systems*, trans. S Harris, J Johnston (ed), Overseas Publishers Association, Amsterdam, p. 134.

[9] ibid.

[10] S Freud, 'Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis,' *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XVI, J Starchey (ed), The Hogarth Press, London, 1963, p. 274.

[11] W Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', *Illuminations*, trans. H Zohn, HarperCollins, London, 1973, p. 171.

[12] V Sobchack, *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film*, 2nd. ed., Ungar, New York, p. 223.

[13] ibid., pp. 235-6.

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[14] MA Doane, 'Information, Crisis, Catastrophe', *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, P Mellencamp (ed), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, p. 222.

[15] ibid.

[16] ibid., p. 234.

[17] D Dayan & E Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1992; E Katz & T Liebes, ''No More Peace!': How Disaster, Terror and War Have Upstaged Media Events'. *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 1, pp. 157-166.

[18] H White, 'The Modernist Event', *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event*, V Sobchack (ed), Routledge, New York, 1996, pp. 22-23.

[19] ibid., p. 23.

[20] A Kaplan & B Wang, *Trauma Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations,* Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2009, p. 17.

[21] S Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real,* Verso, London, 2002.

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PART VIII

Externalisation and Mediation of Memories

Integration of Digital Memories within Hand-Made Objects

Cerys Alonso & Elizabeth Edwards

Abstract

In the age of 'everywhere,' any object can become a site that senses and processes information (Greenfield). Every object can have a memory store that, shadow-like remains with the object through life. There is the potential for objects to gather data in an arbitrary, structured or reactive way as shown through the development of Microsoft's SenseCam. In this way objects can hold an accumulation of data, which could be classed as the object's memories. While these can establish a memory of a place or the relationship of an object to an environment they can also act as a memory trigger for people. Digital stores can also hold imposed memories, dictated by an external source. Some objects, particularly jewellery and handcrafted artefacts are predisposed to be vessels for memories, in part because of their relationship to significant life events and because of what they represent in people's lives and relationships but also due to the very nature of being hand made. Over time, as heirlooms, these objects often become repositories for family memories. When digital memory storage is applied to objects that have not traditionally had this potential the intrinsic nature of the object or may change. This paper aims to discuss the relationship of memory to traditional craft objects and those possessing a digital dimension. This discussion will encompass the nature of stored memories and their permanence or transience in relation to Paul Virilio's notions of chronoscopic time and the mediation of memory with respect to data retrieval, particularly in response to Weiser's assertion that 'the most profound technologies are those that disappear.' Issues of ownership and the nature of memories, notably the creation and imposition of memories will also form part of the discussion.

Key Words: Digital, memory, hand-made, object, narrative, RFID, jewellery.

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Every new technology mediates our relationship to memories as each technology, from the spoken word to the drawn mark, has freed us from the need to hold onto memories in our minds.

This paper examines how memories are captured and accessed both by the originator of the memory and subsequent others through both digital means and through tacit knowledge gained from hand-crafted objects, with particular reference to the narrative innate within jewellery. When digital

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memories are incorporated within traditional, handmade objects, multiple translations of experience are transmitted; the tangible, tactile nature of the physical contrasting with the untouchable, insubstantial character of digital aura. The juxtaposition of media translating experience differently could produce incongruence.

This paper questions whether adding the knowledge of the artist digitally to an object, thereby allowing subsequent viewers to share the experience of manufacture or design, enhances the item, or whether the static nature of digital capture distracts from the natural layers and multiple interpretations imbued by future viewers.

Development of the digital field has expanded rapidly, moving into new and unexplored territories. Digital technologies are moving away from the screen, and we are entering the age of ubiquitous computing and the 'internet of things.' This brings with it new possibilities for engagement. Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6) has enabled massive growth in the number of potential IP addresses, meaning that it is now possible to extend networks beyond the bounds of a traditional computer. Physical objects that were not previously networked may take on a new digital aspect. RFID, sensors and augmented reality are amongst the technologies that may extend the digital realm to the traditionally non-digital sphere.

Adam Greenfield examined the potential for objects to be reconsidered as sites for the sensing and processing of information. The proliferation of objects that sense and gather data raises issues about the potentially changing nature of the objects themselves and the way they mediate experience. 'All media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience in new forms.'[1]

As mediators, technologies interrupt direct experience and this both extends and amputates sensory engagement. Each new technology brings different extensions and amputations, for example extending the role of vision, whilst diminishing the influence of aural input. In this current period of transition, digital technologies are not seamlessly embedded into everyday life, although they are becoming more instinctive. The interfaces mediating our digital experiences are still overt and the experience of use can be strained and uncomfortable. This can be exacerbated by the juxtaposition of hand-crafted objects imbued with digital memories.

Over time the conspicuousness of technologies changes, culminating in invisibility for those that become familiar and commonplace. As they merge into the background they become part of the 'fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it.'[2] This is evident through technologies including books, packaging and signage, which now form an unconscious backdrop to our lives.

Omnipresent computing will change our physical and emotional relationship to the digital medium. As devices become smaller and are

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embedded within the environment there will be fewer artefacts to obstruct direct experience, and instead of dominating space, computing will melt into the background of our consciousness. Consequently users of digitally enhanced everyday objects may experience a greater degree of fluidity and compatibility.

As a result, people will become fluent with this form of media 'translation' and will be able to extend senses and emotions accordingly. The blurring of technological boundaries will cause objects to be perceived as increasingly responsive and subjective, though it should be noted that hand made items are rarely neutral and objective. This is due almost entirely to the very nature of 'hand made.' The artist or crafts person has a level of personal investment in each piece they make. It is this 'human touch' with all its possible imperfections, which makes the item unique and desirable. The object has a memory or history before it leaves the hand of the maker.

The word memory can be understood in several ways and, although the differences in definition may be subtle, they present different facets that have implications in the discussion of digital memories. Memory refers to both a period of time over which memories extend and individual recollections within that time. Although it is the technical term for data store held on a computer it is also defined in relation to things held in the mind. It is the active 'act of remembering' but may also be the passive repository for stored memories.

The ambiguity over what memory means prompts consideration of how it might be applied in the digital realm, for example the difference between memory and information or data. Memories are a type of data but memories may hold a significance and emotional dimension that distinguish them from other data. The act of attaching significance changes our relationship to the data. This can be conscious or unconscious and can occur at any time, even long after the data was gathered.

Our relationship to pieces of information is not static, but ebbs and flows through life. Memories change. Gaps form and are filled in. Emphasis and meaning change, and perception alters with context. While such capriciousness may be a failing of the mind it is also cherished. It enables memory to live and breath and the scrutiny and interaction sustain it.
Data stored digitally is sometimes fixed, sometimes editable, but there has been a conscious decision to alter, edit, add to or otherwise manipulate the store. Consequently the shifting, inconstant, (and sometimes inaccurate) aspects of human memory may be absent.

There is now the potential for objects to gather data in an arbitrary, structured or reactive way. In this way objects can hold an accumulation of data, which could be classed as the object's memories. In some circumstances they act as a proxy memory for a user. At other times they work independently of human intervention, after initial programming,

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generating a well of information relating to any number of variables, for example location, proximity to other objects, temperature and use. Some definitions characterise these recordings as memories and although machines do not think in order to attach significance, programmed conditions, when met, might identify 'significant' events.

However, at present the fluidity, flexibility and fragmentary nature of human memory contrasts with static, solid, less flexible digital memory. An example of how we attach significance to memories can be seen in our desire to make them tangible; we give our memories physical form in order to capture them and enable the possibility of sharing them with others. There is an inherent message or story in handmade objects defined by its human interaction. Its narrative is due in part to the physical and emotional relationship of the maker, the degree of imperfection from the human touch and the significance placed on the object by the owner. This layering of story or memory carries on through out the life of the item. Human touch stores memories: dents, chips and scratches caused by repetition of use leaves memories of events as well as people and places attached to them. This can be evidenced particularly through jewellery. 'adornment has been found in every human society ever encountered and everywhere this ornament has meaning –it is never simply something which 'looks nice'.'[3]

In the same way that architecture defines our environment and affects how we interact with one another, jewellery defines who we are as individuals, marking us out as part of a 'tribe,' signalling to others. It can trigger memories, based on both collective knowledge and individual experience. It is this layering of symbolism and personal interpretation, which gives jewellery, its unique ability to explore and present issues of value, communication, personal and collective histories. Mah Rana in her research project 'Attachments and Meanings' examines this key element stating that:

> When we inherit jewellery we accept someone else's taste,
> aspirations and memories, the selection of a piece based on
> its design is a process that is removed, already attributed to
> another.[4]

However whilst there is a narrative already embedded in the piece of jewellery there is also a constant flow of other stories and memories attributed to it by the viewer or owner.[5] The question as to whether this continual layering of 'memories' and the open interpretation that the viewer can place on the object would be hampered by the capturing of these stories in a tangible form, digital or otherwise is a difficult one to answer.

Historically, jewellery, in particular lockets, have been the traditional way of keeping 'memories' with you, from Victorian mourning

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jewellery to a photograph carried in a gold pendant. They are perceived as being a constant connection to a loved one.

> Lockets are symbols of sentimental value…Whether a locket is full or empty, the perception of preciousness is in the concept of the locket itself: believing that it should contain something of value.[6]

Lockets are amongst the most personally significant items of jewellery due both to their symbolisms but also the way they are worn. This proximity to the body, within one's personal space, protects against any unwanted examination of the object, which could be interpreted as violation.

There are issues around the security of digital data stored within an object. There is the possibility that data that forms part of a ubiquitous computing network could leak into the environment. This could change the memories that people are willing to leave. Jewellery and other handmade objects often use codes, which are almost communal, including form, colour, material and the position in which it is worn. However more discrete codes such as engraved initials are also used, and these can be 'read' and understood by the intended but are otherwise private. It would also be possible to store this kind of coded data digitally but the fears of insecurity could deter storage of such personal content.

How the memories might be accessed, as well as how the potential user might be made aware of the hidden layers that are attached, need to be addressed. While development of a visual language of symbols to identify pools of electronic information, as explored by Timo Arnall, may be appropriate in certain settings, it could be impractical in some contexts. The need for handmade objects to transport memories has been, in part, superseded by technology. Functional objects such as iPods and mobile phones allow the owner to capture, store and transport 'memories' in a way that was previously impossible. As these devices become a container of memory and an extension of self, the perception of these objects is changing. This is illustrated by the desire to engrave iPods with personal messages, in a way that was formerly reserved for precious objects such as watches and wedding rings. Once viewed as relatively disposable, digital devices are being imbued with emotional importance. Disparate values are beginning to merge.

Digital stores can also hold imposed memories dictated by an external source. This raises questions of ownership and co-ownership. The end of 20th century has been characterised as one of time-space compression brought on by the acceleration in the pace of life.[7] The digital medium has played a part in condensing time thereby creating a speed-space, conceptualised as dromology by Virilio.[8] Instantaneous transfer of

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information, effectively reduces physical distance but can also bring the past into the present, sometimes with violent speed. Although people are used to a stimulus triggering memories that flood into awareness, these memories are often partial and fragmentary, frayed and distorted. Stored digital memories accessed by an RFID trigger are solid, unchanged from the day they were deposited. The character of memories accessed in this way differs from those generated subconsciously.

RFID-triggered memories may offer a new perspective allowing a different kind of connection to artefacts in our lives. It offers the opportunity to share different kinds of stories in keeping with our modern networks. Digital memories interwoven within an object allow us to connect to the maker through the creation of the piece. We can incorporate our own narrative, and collective memories can be added digitally to develop an ongoing interactive story. The production is much more apparent than in a non-digital setting, but the truths, lies and mediation can be just the same. We absorb memories through various sensory receptors. Digital memories can be shared using different channels, for example auditory and visual forms, and this may offer a more authentic or animating recollection. Digital memories reveal some of the multiple layers, which already exist but are hidden. Although this can tarnish some of the magic of the remembrance it may also make stories more tangible and can therefore preserve the memory.

The diversification of digital technologies may be viewed as an encroachment onto the traditional language of memory that is layered onto hand made objects. However, the evolution of technologies is so readily absorbed into culture that the juxtaposition will soften and boundaries will merge.

> Physiologically, man in normal use of technology (or his variously extended body) is perpetually modified by it and in turn finds ever new ways of modifying this technology.[9]

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Once upon a Paradigm Shift: Interactive Storytelling in a New Media Context

Patrick McEntaggart

Abstract

A story gives the gift of human attention, connecting us and touching our hearts to make us feel alive.[1] The human brain looks for patterns in sound such as speech and music, in images it finds colours and shapes, recognising these patterns gives meaning. Just as we look for these patterns, it can be said that we also look for them in our lives and experiences and it is these wider patterns that we call stories. Stories are a large part of our lives, helping us to understand who we are and where we have come from, by creating, telling and re-telling them we can discern meaning and understand from our changing world. The technological change in recent years has been immense, affecting all aspects of communication. This research will consider why stories are an important part of communication, how they have developed and explore storytelling within the context of our digital future.

Key Words: Storytelling, narrative, new media.

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1. Stories as Communication

Storytelling is one of, if not the most powerful form of human communication and a fundamental way by which we make sense of our lives and the world around us.[2] If we understand the world around us in terms of stories, this would suggest that they are an inherent part of our thought processing and a tool which can help us to structure our impressions of the world and ourselves. It has been argued that the structures in stories are limited to a relatively small number of repeating patterns; after a study of classical Greek and contemporary French writing it was argued that there are exactly 36 dramatic situations that can occur in a story.[3] In his book, *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*, Christopher Booker argues that archetypal patterns underlying storytelling have emerged through evolution, as a way for human beings to pass on information that will help shape us into mature adults with the necessary understanding of the world and ourselves to function.[4] It would seem that we tell stories because it is a fundamental part of being human, and the archetypal patterns that have developed shape our thinking since they are embedded so deeply within us.

If storytelling is something that makes us human, then it must form an inherent part of our culture. Speaking at the 2005 international conference on Storytelling in a museum context Dr. Viv Golding argued that storytelling

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is the process of progressing knowledge and driving our understanding and culture forward, she also sees it as something universally human and common to us all.[5] Whilst storytelling is part of our common humanity, the diverse forms stories take are influenced by cultural trends and technological evolution. T.S. Eliot said of Joyce's *Ulysses* 'I hold this book to be the most important expression which the present age has found,'[6] he clearly regarded it as an important work which moved books and indeed storytelling forward. 'It was not until Cecil B. DeMille and Sergi Eisenstien that a true language of film developed, one that exploited the particular qualities of the medium.'[7] Innovative techniques and theories can offer a new way to engage the listener, viewer or user by creating a different way of seeing or experiencing material. Not only can the author explore the way the medium is used, they can challenge how the story is conceived for that medium. With each new manifestation of a story the user is able to expand their perception of storytelling, becoming more able and willing to receive new techniques and experimental forms of narrative. Janet H. Murray argues that a wide variety of multiform stories in print and film are pushing past linear formats in an effort to give expression to the characteristically twentieth century perception of life as composed of parallel possibilities.[8] If one were to imagine a twenty-first century perception of life and indeed how to express it, one might need to consider the influence new technology has brought to our lives and the perception we have of ourselves within the world.

2. Modern Storytelling and the Use of New Media

The new media give us a new perspective, but they have not just sprung into existence, they exist because of what has come before and has a relationship with the old. Sometimes this relationship feeds the newness, as the new allows the old to be experienced in a way that was not possible before. Although they can be thought of as new because of the latest technology in use, this is not the only aspect that gives them newness, the 'new' can also refer to the new media in an ideological sense as being a place for 'the cutting edge' or 'avant-garde,' a place for forward thinking, derived from modernist beliefs in social progress as delivered by technology.[9] In practical terms the fact that the new media are new allows the freedom to explore formats and break some of the conventions of the old, precisely because people are coming to them with different expectations.

Marcel Proust once said 'The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.'[10] Indeed it could be argued that a transformation of vision gives new media their newness and in turn allows us to see from a different perspective, experiencing or understanding that which was invisible before.[11] As discussed previously, a story has patterns that are recognisable to people, but changing how we receive and experience that story with new media can bring a different

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perspective to its telling. In a recent article for *The Guardian*, new media author and journalist James Harkin examines the idea that people are becoming more accepting of different forms of narrative, as a direct consequence of using new media on a daily basis, in the form of email, internet and social networking. He groups these new narrative formats into a category called 'cyber-realism.'[12] These are stories that contain at least one of four different elements: the puzzle (narrative is broken up into disparate pieces, becoming clear only when all of the pieces are revealed), the loop (a narrative that comes full circle rather than moving forward), multiplicity (disparate strands of narrative that run concurrently) and the tie (unlikely connection that brings all of the strands of a narrative together). If stories are the landscape in which we can find our ourselves and our past, the paradigm shift in the form of the new media gives us fresh eyes with which to explore this landscape.[13] The relationship between stories and the new media is reciprocal; whilst stories can benefit from the change in perspective, new technology is given relevance and meaning by its facilitation of this change on something as fundamentally human as storytelling.

3.   Changes in Positioning and Perspective

One could say the 'death of the author,' in the traditional sense, is the birth of the user, and the user as opposed to the viewer or reader, is positioned as interactive. The new media are never complete without the user, they are in a sense co-authors of the work, they bring their experiences and participation to the work and become a part of it, thus completing its meaning and reflecting Roland Barthes' concept of the 'writerly' text.[14] Through interactivity the new media can position users as active participants in a completely different way from traditional media – they allow interaction that could have the potential to facilitate the user becoming involved in an emotional level and create more engaging content. If the agency of interaction can reveal content that evokes emotion, then it would be logical to assume that the combination of interaction and emotion will facilitate a more engaging experience for the user since emotions are what power us.[15] The context needs to be considered, a narrative environment is a suitable framework for interaction and emotion, as stories are very much a part of being human and emotions are a crucial part of how we think. It is also important to consider how the new media can affect our relationship with a story as it changes our positioning by bringing us closer to the material.

Our real life experiences shape who we are and how we view the world,[16] and our online experience is equally important since the virtual world plays a big role in our lives. This familiarity with the virtual allows users to be more accepting of non-linear structures that represent the world. Just as 'cyber-realist' narratives in film and TV have become mainstream through greater exposure to new media, users should also be more open to a

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change in positioning and emotional involvement in interactive content since they experience a closer relationship with the real and virtual as part of daily routine, often being present in both simultaneously. As people have become more accepting of new ways to represent the world, it could be argued that the new media give us a new freedom and opportunity to feel represented. Stories told through new media can be continually made present by user activity, their telling is 'produced by' rather than 'consumed by' the user.[17] The user actively shares in creating the experience and thus writing their own version of the story. This is digital storytelling; its power lies in the ability to offer a sense of closer involvement (interactivity) and personalised experience of a story, giving users an opportunity to create more engaging stories and thus communication. However, what will be the enduring legacy of new media? It may be that we require new forms of storytelling to put the endless artefacts the new media have allowed us to create with such ease into a structure that makes sense and can be experienced in a meaningful way.

4.   Stories of the Future

When users approach the new media their expectation is to interact and consume content with a degree of control over the order and pace of the unfolding information. Interactivity allows us to harness the power of discovery within storytelling, by intensifying the process of uncovering the elements that make up the story and shifting more control from the author to the user. With this in mind it should be possible to break a story down into packets of information that can be understood as single entities and as parts of the whole. A packet is a defined item, but not necessarily rigid in structure. It can be made up of ingredients for example text, image, video and sound. Packets that make up the fabric of a story can be defined in two ways, one where they are used to convey story-materials such as characters, environments, events and atmosphere. Alternatively they can be broken into pieces of story-time and used to convey a flow of events in small digestible packets of time. One or both techniques could be employed in the same story.

The packets can be created and enhanced by using the different forms of ingredient, for example a character might be expressed using many packets; some that are video, some that are text and/or audio and some that are a combination of all ingredients, On the other hand, the character can be made up of packets that are pieces of the story-time expressed in the various media forms available. Interactivity employed to connect or reveal packets of information can enhance the meaning. Through the ingredients, content and the methods of interaction with the packet(s) we understand aspects of the story and piece them together to form an overall impression, thus we engage with and have greater control over of the story exploration. It is important to note however that engagement can be enhanced or decreased by the diversity of form within packets or ingredients. If the variety is vast then the

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connections and tone of voice must be strong in order to maintain the essence of the story. If the variety is low then the essence of the story is easier to maintain, however engagement can decrease if interaction is not appropriately considered.

Storytelling is, and always has been, about discovery. As we follow the narrative from the first page, frame or line, this process of discovery has the power to involve us as we learn more. Interactivity facilitates curiosity and allows the user to have a closer relationship with the packets of a story as they build the meaning. It is this process that can enhance engagement with stories beyond that which was possible before, and gives storytellers a new form of expression within a digital future.

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PART IX

New Media and Representations of the Past

Mu-Blogging: Yugoslav Pop-Musical Archives

Martin Pogačar

Abstract
In the newly established post-socialist states, which largely experienced an annihilation or revision of their socialist pasts, renarrativisations of the past in the era of ubiquitous media feature prominently. One of the many means available to re-appropriate the past (in the case of the former Yugoslavia) is the emergent medium of photo/video/audio blogging, i.e., blogs that employ video-image-text-audio to renarrate and preserve the disappearing facets of Yugoslav popular culture. This paper interrogates the potential of mu-blogging for preserving/archiving the remnants of popular culture and everyday life.

Key Words: Music blogs, digital heritage, SFR Yugoslavia, history, popular culture.

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1. Introduction

A wide array of various online representations of the past, from complex and comprehensive websites (online museums) to a-v (historical) statements (as found for instance on YouTube), and posts and comments on forums and blogs, apply and utilise numerous sets of practices and strategies to represent and re/narrate the past. These practices are clearly not all entirely new, or exclusively related to the digital realm, but significantly draw upon offline media and to 'old' practices and strategies of narrativisation and communication. As it is communication that is at stake in these inter-personal interactions, in many respects online representations of the past are examples of digital storytelling.[1] Blogging, one of the popular practices for online communication, generally features as a very straightforward example of *media convergence*,[2] in both form and content.

This paper discusses mu-blogging in relation to the *renarrativisation* of Yugoslav past through the remediation[3] of Yugoslav popular music. More precisely, the role of mu-blogging is discussed in the scope of van Dijck's concept of *mediated memories*,[4] in relation to preservation of Yugoslav musical heritage online, and with that the preservation of an important portion of Yugoslav history.[5]

First I look into the issue of the internet as a popular archive, a ubiquitous and widely used tool/medium/technology for preserving data; and secondly into the issue of music as a vehicle for preserving and transmitting the past. The second part discusses the questions of music in cyberspace and

more specifically mu-blogging as a practice to preserve the past. Finally, the discussion is rounded up with a short discussion of two mu-blogs.

2.   The Internet: A Popular Archive

Preservation of the past is an intrinsic characteristic of human existence and a crucial social activity that enables/facilitates preservation of a collectivity over time and space. Records of the past can be found in monuments, paintings, literature, official documents, music, cinema, literature etc. It was not, however, until the age of modernity that (occidental) societies started to go at sometimes ridiculous lengths to preserve their presents for their possible futures. The modern period pedestalled the importance of the archive and took archiving to a new level and significantly contributed to the nation-building processes in the 19th century. It is reflected in romantic quest for folk origins, which extensively led to transcribing and documenting ordinary practices in order to establish a link to the ancient past and tradition of a newly imagined nation. Nevertheless, not only due to the technologically insufficient recording equipment and problems of storage, but also because of political, economic and mythistorical circumstances and aspirations, the ideological selection/censorship held sway upon what was to be preserved, how and where (and what was to be left to oblivion).[6]

Unlike the classical archive with its limits of access, retrieval and submission of data, the internet offers relatively easy access, upload and retrieval of data. This data, however, 'suffers' from issues with authenticity and the status of interpretive authority (which is often taken for granted in official, national archives) and is often considered untrustworthy and unreliable, not to mention it is often difficult to keep track of. The content is not necessarily (although it often is) published with an archival agenda. In many respects the internet *is* an archive that keeps record of user/visitor activity online, through IP addresses, posts and comments, images, video, sounds. Moreover, in many respects this archive could be seen as an infrastructure of a collective intelligence, which according to Jill Walker Rettberg 'doesn't lie in the individual videos on YouTube, or in each separate blog post we write, it's in the patterns we trace as we move through these media: the order in which we listen to songs, the books we buy after viewing a particular site, the links we make or the links we choose to follow.'[7]

3.   Mu-Blogging as a Past Preserving Practice

Many blogs that host/gather links to compressed music files at remote storage sites are very similar. Although focusing on different music genres, periods etc, the technology they use is the same and often is the structure (emanating from the options given by the technology). A mu-blog is usually introduced by a heading explaining what the blog is about, or declares a 'blog policy,' after which posts are ordered chronologically, with newest on

top of the page. Usually, posts contain a short description of the record, a track list, tags and comment function. Apart from that a mu-blog usually gives option to visitors to 'follow' it, and a selection of links to other mu-blogs.

Another aspect of mu-blogging is the origin of the records. From what can be told from visiting these sites it is clear that, in the case of former Yugoslavia music in particular, that the music at stake is relatively old, vinyl music/records which can no longer be bought in a shop nor have they been released on a CD. In many cases the music in question is music practically lost. If it were not for these mu-bloggers who go to second-hand record shops, flea markets, browse old collections of records in the attics etc. in search for rarities and oddities of a musical past. Furthermore, the records are digitised, classified the folders compressed and uploaded to one of the numerous file hosting sites (Megaupload, drop.io, Rapidshare...). On the blog the link is posted to the remote storage site.

This is a time and money consuming pastime: you need time to find all these records, money to buy them, time to digitise them, and money again to spend so much time doing this for free and still make a living. Yet this is an activity that clearly thrives. This is interesting in view of the fact that this music would otherwise be completely unavailable. In the case of Yugoslav music thus preserved it is all the more important from the perspective of preservation of the past. The country that disintegrated in 1991 plunged into wars out of which several new states emerged (very roughly speaking), in the process of nationalisation/independentalisation of the former republics suffered a considerable memory loss. The newly forming countries tried to eradicate the once common past, supplant it with newly established national(ist) narratives which in essence meant also breaking any links to the former shared popular culture. Popular pasts tend to find ways into the pop cultural presents, but in this respect this was actively discouraged. It is probably also because of this that the mu-blogs find sufficient audience. They attract an audience from across the former Yugoslavia, but judging the visitor counter the majority of visitors are coming from other parts of Europe and North America, with some form South America and Australia. Thus, the music and portions of Yugoslav past are preserved and distributed globally and the Yugoslav past, i.e. the music becomes a mediator of memories.

4.   The Cases of jugozvuk.blogspot.com and nevaljale.blogspot.com

The owner of the Jugozvuk, Aktivista, delimits the scope and aim of his endeavours and through this also makes an identity statement, positioning himself as a dedicated preserver of Yugoslav musical heritage. Through referring (nostalgically) to his personal experience he passionately addresses the visitor trying to mobilise enthusiastic response. Inviting visitors to get in

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touch and participate at the creation of the blog, Aktivista implicitly attempts to make it into an interactive platform.

Aktivista does not devote much time to editing the textual posts, the primary goal is to find the music offline, digitise it and make it available online. Apart from buying records at flea markets, the owner gratefully lists the so-called donators, who help him by providing links to remote sharing sites to the material uploaded by them. Apart from that, he admits to sometimes taking music from the 'stealing sites,' i.e. from bloggers who 'steal' the music from blogs and invest no time into obtaining the records offline. This is established through inspecting the quality of the files (bit rate, artwork scan) and comparing them against their own work. Mu-bloggers also seem to devote much time into digitising their 'artefacts' in high quality. Apart from that there seem to be issues of honesty and dignity involved in creating and maintaining such blogs, where genuine effort is rewarded and doing it the easy way is condemned.

Jugozvuk links to several other mu-blogs and I am now just briefly going to refer to a blog 'ova ploca nista ne valja, ima rupu u sredini' at http://nevaljaleploce.blogspot.com/. Cross-commenting between the two blogs (and some others) suggests some sort of community emerging between the mu-bloggers. However, as compared to Aktivista, Gramofonije took a different approach and makes his blog much more personal by blogging also about his private life, travelling and his band. At the beginning he states: 'If anyone is upset about anything, whether the content or copyright breach/whatever please get in touch. I recommend everyone and anyone and their families go out and buy these records, if available.'[8]

Blogging less extensively than Aktivista, Gramofonije often provides more detailed information about the music. His blog is much more manageable and transparent, also offering access to posts in chronological ordering, which makes it easier to navigate and follow. In this respect the storytelling on this blog is much more straightforward, with textual narrative supported by music records that clearly are important for the author (not only trashy music is posted), who overtly declares himself to be a fan of certain groups, and in that way establishes a much stronger, more personal relation to the music he posts. Thus, for instance he provides a longer description of Yugoslav punk-rock bands such,[9] which significantly influenced the last decade of the (cultural, social and political) life in Yugoslavia.

5.   Conclusion
Now this last statement may be a bit exaggerated as it quickly becomes obvious there are problems with archiving these sometimes rather large collections of music (Aktivista claims to have posted 1,500 items). If this music is to be available globally and permanently the archives need to be maintained. The problem with archiving is that these endeavours are solely

individual and intimately motivated, and are also funded by these enthusiasts (apart from some compensation they might get from hosting ads). Consequently they are forced to use more or less free and more or less expirable file hosting web providers. Apart from the fact that mu-blogging is a sort of semi-legal activity, the sad reality is that many files are only available for a relatively short period of time and may in 5 years become extinct. Thus for instance, some of the oldest posts on the both discussed blogs are no longer available, and Aktivista noted in a comment that as of January 2010 he will no longer be re-upping the files as his archive has become too difficult to navigate. Re-upping is the usual procedure in cases when the links have expired either to time-out or because of no-visit expiration, and it is mostly done upon request. This means that large collections of music no longer available in shops will be lost. On the other hand, much of pre-digital audio sources, which has not (yet) been digitised, are still unavailable to the public, researchers, as the 'major impediment remain[s] the fact that most of our audiovisual memory is in one analogue format or another.'[10] And the question is whether it would make sense to make such activities part of larger institutional frameworks for preservation of audio heritage.

Another question is the role of blogs as digital storytelling media. In most cases, and in the two discussed as well, the attempt to create a narrative, albeit not in classical terms, is clearly discernible, particularly if we see blogging as a descendant of writing a diary. The blogger's ambition to present his/her life, parts of it, or music, to perform and manage identity further supports understanding mu-blogs as digital storytelling. Apart from that mu-blogging at least to some extent contributes to community building, through merely passive browsing and downloading to more active commenting and reciprocal linking among blogs. On another level the interlinked (former Yugoslav popular music) blogs also via the various 'visit counters' offers an 'ordinary' visitor an impression of a wide network/community of people who are interested/impressed by these collections of music.

Finally, what does such utilisation of a medium mean for understanding, representing, re-presenting of the Yugoslav past? First of all, it enables/facilitates recovering, disinterring and representing and re/narrating the past, or rather aspects of the past that usually escape the grip of historiography. Outside digital media these aspects of the past would thus face a twofold extinction – from historiography and media ecology – which would even further exacerbate the consequences of the collapse of the state and the ensuing emigration for the preservation of Yugoslav history.

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[1] Digital storytelling is here understood in a broader sense than that proposed by Joe Lambert's Center for Digital Storytelling http://www.storycenter.org. and includes any online activity that aims to (re)narrate personal, collective, present or historical experience.

[2] H Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York University Press, New York, 2006.

[3] J D Bolter and D Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge, London, 2001.

[4] J van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2006.

[5] The term "Yugoslavia" refers here to the former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) which disintegrated in 1991.

[6] See P Connerton, *How Societies remember*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989.

[7] J W Rettberg, *Blogging*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2009.

[8] See Gramofonije Pločanović, ova ploca nista ne valja ima rupu u sredini, , date of viewing 08/02/10, http://nevaljaleploce.blogspot.com/.

[9] See ibid.

[10] D Teruggi, Ariadne, 'Can we save our Audio-Visual Heritage?', date of viewing 09/02/10 http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue39/teruggi/.

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New Media Use in the Production of National Identity and the Preservation of National History: The Digital Emirates Project

Harris Breslow & Herman Coutinho

Abstract

This paper addresses the use of new media in the production of historical knowledge and the preservation of national identity and memory within the framework of an interactive multimedia academic research database and archive. One method for the preservation of national historical knowledge and identity is the integration of multiple sources and forms of information within an interactive multimedia archive; the more sources and media within the archive, the more complex the overall informational effect, and thus the more deeply and complex the experience of national identity and memory. We will demonstrate this in the following ways. 1: A demonstration and discussion of a prototype of the Digital Emirates Project, an interactive multimedia database and archive based on an historical timeline, and allowing for the real time interaction of maps, still photography, video, research archives and academic and popular databases. 2: The delivery, through the database, of a project concerning the uses and depiction of roadway roundabout art as historical markers, communal symbols, and cultural icons. This paper argues that roundabout art plays a complex role in the reproduction of local and national Emirati culture, and that the most effective way to discuss, describe and display the complex conjunctural functions of roundabout art is through the use of a new medium, such as the Digital Emirates Project. 3: In order to demonstrate the potential of the software as a repository for multiple sources/types of information we will also demonstrate the delivery of a second academic project, 'The Changing Space of the Arab City.' The project's thesis is that changes to the nature of urban space have fundamental effects upon the national cultural formation within which the changes occur. This project uses Dubai as a case study and will be discussed within the framework of the Digital Emirates Project.

Key Words: UAE, database, imagined community, history, scholarship, cloud computing.

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Founded in 1971, The United Arab Emirates (UAE) faces the typical challenges that may be said to befall any young nation-state during the process of its creation, among them the production of a series of referents to

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which its imagined community[1] is articulated: There is a mythic origin point, a national language, a national press, a national market place, and a cultural infrastructure.[2] There is also scholarship within, and concerning, the country: This functions to establish and further reinforce commonly accepted 'facts' concerning the nation as well as establishing a sense of legitimacy.

Now in prototype form, the Digital Emirates Project (DEP) will be a cloud-based database of academic research both conducted in, and concerning, the UAE. Users access the database via an interactive GUI linking research to spatiotemporal coordinates. This is accomplished through a multi-paned screen in which each of the search elements are linked and are presented to the researcher, one element to a pane.

This work is also tied to aiding the preservation of historical modes of Emirati culture that face an inevitable decline in the face of an international mass media apparatus which tends 'to destabilize local customs, to extend awareness of other ways of life, and to add complexity to the process of socialization.'[3] Moreover, it does so by presenting this complexity according to priorities and logics that are appropriate for market profits rather than cultural stability. Local content is buried under an avalanche of international and regional content that has already recouped its costs and is cheap to purchase.[4]

Our work resembles the Aluka Project, which archives the history of the anti-apartheid struggle in Southern Africa.[5] Following Aluka, local scholars will shape and direct the contributions to DEP; ensuring that the DEP does not become a repository of ephemera and trivia, while being sensitive to the politics surrounding any selection criteria.[6] Another similarity is in our concern to ensure that we do not replicate the commercial mass media, thereby reproducing structures that turn cultural histories into mere commodities to be bought and sold.[7]

We are keenly aware of the potential for the DEP to inadvertently reproduce existing dominant institutional classificatory schemes that both homogenize content while reproducing structures of unequal access.[8] It is our intention to make the DEP as open to content as conceivably possible, while maintaining a level of integrity to the entire body of content. We are also aware of the fact that schemes of classification will have a direct impact upon the nature of cultural memory and heritage.[9]

Dalbello describes two existing models for digital archiving and materials classification. There is the model of the distributed library, which integrates disparate and discontiguous content. In this paradigm 'collaborative efforts could become standard practice in developing digital collections around a subject or a regional focus.'[10] There is also the model of the living library, where the archive taps into content supplied by members of the surrounding community, bridging the asymmetries discussed, above.[11] The DEP will bridge both models; it will be a collaborative effort amongst

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scholars and members of the community, while aiding in the production and dissemination of new knowledge.

Archival collections are productive of narratives of cultural memory. All narratives typically require a system of fixed relations amongst their exegetic elements that enables the production of the narrative, and hence the production of memory.[12]

We have two objections to this assertion. Our first relates to the politics of this fixity: Who is responsible for determining the order and classificatory schema of a new culture's archive? Is it not accurate to say that importing an existing scheme causes the reproduction of one culture's institutional priorities over those of another?[13] The highly interactive structure of DEP's GUI responds to this concern. In the DEP there is a minimal *a priori* classificatory scheme that, when combined with the high degree of search and information interactivity, enables users to construct their own narratives directly from the archive.[14] The DEP will enable the articulation in the UAE of 'accelerated populism,' the acceleration of the process of issue group formation and action within a specific polity,[15] and the enunciation of new narratives and the preservation of cultural memories.

Accelerated populism also addresses our second objection to Dalbello's assertions. This objection is concerned with the nature of the memories that are generated through online experience and online archival searches. Memory plays a generative role in, and is articulated to, narrative formation, and subjectivity. One aspect of memory is what Crapanzano refers to as the referential third; the always already presupposed and idealized interlocutive referent assumed in acts of communication.[16] This referential third, argues Crapanzano, not only enables relatively unproblematic dialogue, it is also a key element in the construction of social membership, and the production of narratives and memories. Internet usage is often a cross-cultural phenomenon, and thus lacks in the clear articulation of a referential third,[17] thereby preventing the formation of narratives and memories.

Other aspects of digital media compound this. Digital games, in particular MMORPGs and those played through the online gaming services, do not make use of a consistent external spatial referent that grounds the game within a permanent narrative space. Rather, they function by generating elements, settings and environments that are momentarily called into being in order to 'evolve, manifest, and 'disappear' its parts… as a function of action itself.'[18]

Researchers have begun to examine an aspect of the phenomenology of digital archival and database searches and research that tends to be occlusive of memory. There are two models of archive and database retrieval. There is the typical library research/search database function. We search such a database using search term combinations organized according to logical operators, and which are related to categories such as keyword, author, title

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and subject. This produces a form of 'flatness' to the fields of knowledge that we are searching.[19] The complexity of the archive as a lived experience is replaced by a set of limited search results, reducing a complex system of knowledge to a manageable volume of data, while reducing complexity to instantaneous results. There are also commercial search engines, such as Google. Typically, the results of a search using a commercial search engine are undifferentiated, lack categorization, and are absent of both relevance measures and temporal organization.

Johnson-Eilola describes the amount and structure of information on the Internet as a 'datacloud,' a constantly shifting structure of information that is based on the ongoing and overwhelming amount of information generated by the traces of our existence.[20]

> [W]hen we [search] we're attempting to take some meaning out of our own idiosyncratic and specific experiences and transfer that meaning to someone else's idiosyncratic and specific experiences.[21]

When we do so we must take the idiosyncrasies of our lives, and the lives of others whose data traces we retrieve, entirely out of context. We flatten context, again reducing the complexities of experience to a definable search.

> [What] Google excels at is this flattening of information space, the decontextualizing of information in order to make it more fluid. Although there's always the option to view search results 'in context'… that context is illusory and must be understood as always contingent.'[22]

Regardless of whether we search deeply or superficially, we are always flattening experience, and thus flattening the narratives that we construct from this experience and the memories that these narratives enable us to produce. 'Database (the paradigm) is given material existence, while narrative (the syntagm) is de-materialized. Paradigm is privileged, syntagm is downplayed. Paradigm is real, syntagm is virtual.'[23] The DEP will aid in the reconstruction of syntagmatic experience through the use of complex layers of existence - time, space, text, multimedia - rather than their flattening through simple text searches. The answer to the social and ontological problems of new media technologies is neither more nor less of these, but rather their careful application in new and thoughtful ways.

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Notes

[1] E Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', in *The Invention of Tradition*, E Hobsbawm & T Ranger (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 9-13; B Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition, Verso, London, 1991, Chpts. 2, 5 & 6.

[2] T Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory and Politics*, Routledge, London, 1995, pp. 33-48.

[3] M Poster, 'Everyday (Virtual) Life', *New Literary History*, Vol. 33, No. 4, 2002, p. 751.

[4] See P Golding, 'Global Village or Cultural Pillage?', in *Capitalism in the Information Age: The Political Economy of the Global Communication Revolution*, R McChesney, E Wood, and J Foster (eds), Monthly Review Press, New York, 1998; R McChesney, 'The Political Economy of International Communications', in *Who Owns the Media: Global Trends and Local Resistances*, P Thomas and Z Nain (eds), Zed Books, New York, 2004.

[5] A Issacman, P Lalu and T Nygren, 'Digitization, History, and the Making of a Postcolonial Archive of Southern African Liberation Struggles: The Aluka Project', *Africa Today*, Vol. 52, No. 2, 2005, pp. 55-77.

[6] M Dalbello, 'Institutional Shaping of Cultural Memory: Digital Library as Environment For Textual Transmission', *The Library Quarterly*, Vol. 74, No. 3, 2004, p. 291; A Issacman, P Lalu and T Nygren, p. 59 & p. 66.

[7] A Issacman, P Lalu and T Nygren, p. 59.

[8] M Dalbello, pp. 266-267, 275.

[9] ibid., p. 267.

[10] ibid., p. 274.

[11] ibid., pp. 274-275.

[12] ibid., pp. 277.

[13] ibid., p. 275.

[14] J Billington, 'Culture, Memory and Technology', *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 109, No. 2, 2001, pp. 220-222.

[15] B Bimber, 'The Internet and Political Transformation: Populism, Community and Accelerated Populism', *Polity*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 1998, p. 136.

[16] V Crapanzano, 'The Postmodern Crisis: Discourse, Parody, Memory', *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1991, pp. 434.

[17] ibid., p. 438.

[18] J Oliver, 'Buffering Bergson: Matter and Memory in 3D Games', in *Small Tech: The Culture of Digital Tools*, B Hawk, D Rieder, and O Oviedo (eds), The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2008, p. 127.

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[19] G Crane, 'History, Memory, Place and Technology: Plato's *Phaedrus* Online', in *Structures of Participation in Digital Culture*, J Karaganis (ed), Social Science Research Council, New York, 2007, p. 44.

[20] G Bowker and C Geoffrey 'The Past and the Internet', in *Structures of Participation in Digital Culture*, J Karaganis (ed), Social Science Research Council New York, 2007, p. 26.

[21] J Johnson-Eilola, 'Communication Breakdown: The Postmodern Space of Google', in *Small Tech: The Culture of Digital Tools*, B Hawk, D Rieder, and O Oviedo (eds), The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, pp. 112-113.

[22] ibid., p. 115.

[23] L Manovich, 'Database as Symbolic Form', *Millennium Film Journal*, No. 34, 1999, p. 34.

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PART X

Theories and Concepts in Digitising Individual and Community Memory

Diverging Strategies of Remembrance in Traditional and Web 2.0 Online Projects

Heiko Zimmermann

Abstract

This paper focuses on the conditions for using on-line media as means of remembrance, memory and achieving. Starting from a diverse theoretical basis that does not only include theorists like Halbwachs and Assmann but also older metaphorical literary descriptions of processes of remembrance, the paper will compare projects like *Facebook* and *GayRomeo* with less interactive Web 1.0 projects in terms of their aptitude for described processes. As a result, it will have to be questioned whether tradition on-line media can serve to (re-)construct memory at all or how they will have to be adapted to obtain this ability. For Web 2.0 projects, there are other implications that are related to the level of subjectivity vs. collectivity and public vs. private memory.

Key Words: Social network sites, memory, collective memory, communicative memory, eemembrance, Web 2.0, Web 1.0, Facebook, GayRomeo, Find a Grave.

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1.   Typology of Memories

Memory is always collective. Taking the example of a tourist's walk trough London, the French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs has shown very clearly that 'In reality, we are never alone.'[1] The tourist is not alone as they have heard about London from others, as they might have a map, created by others, or just because they are putting themselves into the point of view of the land surveyor who had designed the layout of the city.[2] How far can one talk then about individual or subjective memory at all? Halbwachs explains, 'remembrances are organized in two ways, either grouped about a definite individual who considers them from his own viewpoint or distributes within a group for which each is a partial image.'[3] The individual, thus, participates in two types of memory:

> [H]e places his own remembrances within the framework of his personality, his own personal life; he considers those of his own that he holds in common with other people only in the aspect that interests him by virtue of distinguishing him from others.[4]

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Therefore, individual memory is a vital part of personal identity construction that goes hand in hand with the knowledge of the differences to others. It is a form of othering. Collective memory is constructed in the interaction of people as members of a group. It comprehends the individual memories of the group members while remaining distinct from them.[5] If one were to describe the relation in terms of set theory, one could understand collective memory to be a superset of the involved individual memories. These notions of individual - augmented by subjective evaluations of mere events and, thus, called subjective memory - and collective memory shall be used in the following analysis.

2.   A Metaphorical Literary Description

The idea of an active construction of memory by remembrance is not new. In the second book of his epic *The Fairie Queene*, written in 1596, Edmund Spenser describes a library as the metaphor for processes of remembrance and the memory.[6] This metaphor distinguishes an active and a passive principle. This difference is the difference of memory and remembrance. Memory (Eumenestes) becomes an archive from which remembrance (Anamnestes) selects, updates and takes material.

Why should one take a closer look at Spenser's conception of *memoria*? By depicting memory not merely as a storeroom of the mind but rather connecting it with current events and history, of which Eumenestes is the chronicler; by depicting it as a library to which even visitors have access; by depicting it through a metaphor within a metaphor - the library/memory in the chamber in the mind/in the castle tower/in the body of Alma/in the soul - the boundaries between collective and individual possession are blurred. This blurring also takes place on SNSs on the Web 2.0.

3.   Shortcomings of the Web 1.0

In his recent monograph *You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto*, the internet pioneer Jaron Lanier comments on the interpretation of the idea of informational freedom which underlines that information should be free: 'I say that information doesn't deserve to be free'.[7] He states:

> Information is alienated experience.
> You can think of culturally decodable information as a
> *potential form* of experience, very much as you can think of
> a brick resting on a ledge as storing potential energy. When
> the brick is prodded to fall, the energy is revealed. That is
> only possible because it was lifted into place at some point
> in the past.
> In the same way, stored information might cause experience
> to be revealed if it is prodded in the right way.[8]

This potential experience is graspable in Web 1.0 projects. Although, information is stored in them, the triggering of experience happens mostly outside the medium - in the head of the otherwise passive user - and is not reflected therein. Thus, the information stored remains static. People with the ability to programme for the Internet, to change and easily mash-up information without the typical Web 2.0 tools would probably disagree here. The father of the world wide web, Tim Berners-Lee, stated in an interview, that the Web 2.0 did not exist at all. The Web was conceptualized as a medium in which everybody was able to publish.[9] Thus, there is *a priori* an interaction, an activation of information and a modification of it. However, the vast majority of users do not have the ability to edit websites on the mark-up/source code level.

An example of the heaving of information to potential experience is 'Leipziger Erzählen,' a part of an educational project for elderly people - *Aktives Alter* - that asks them to tell personal stories. There are accounts, for instance, by people like Heinz Lohse, born in 1928, or Inge Mothes, born in 1926, who succeed in presenting the very subjective point of view of young people during the first years of the Second World War.

However much potential information on 'Leipziger Erzählen' might be stored, it will surely fail to be a medium for remembrance as it does not invite readers to comment on, link, quote or syndicate the stories. There might be people of the same age who share very similar or diverging experiences that could be added or confronted with the stories on the website in order to keep alive the memory or to revise it. There might be historians who could connect the information to other original sources or factual texts. However, all this is not intended. The information rests on the website like the stone on the window sill: There is potential experience. Alas! It is never going to be released.

4.   Memory on the Web 2.0

Facebook is well known and does, therefore, not need to be introduced here. *GayRomeo* is foremostly a dating website for men, inter- and transsexuals looking for other men. In Germany and some other parts of the world, the use of the network is almost natural for homosexual men: The frequency of use in the target group is probably comparable to the use of *Facebook* amongst American university students.[10] *Find a Grave*, in contrast, is an international database of graves of famous as well as publicly mostly unknown people. The records can be searched for names, dates of birth and death as well as for a given cemetery.

As described in the theoretical writings mentioned above, remembrance works via interaction of people. This is precisely the strength of SNSs. Halbwachs writes:

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> Very often […] images imposed on us by our milieu change
> the impression that we have kept of some distant fact, or of
> some person known long ago. […T]hese images blend into
> our remembrances and seemingly lend them their own
> substance […]. Just as we must introduce a small particle
> into a saturated medium to get crystallization, so must we
> introduce a 'seed' of memory into that body of testimony
> external to us in order for it to turn into a solid mass of
> remembrances.[11]

Images posted by others on *Facebook* or *GayRomeo* might become a seed of
memory, especially if the one was involved in the event whose document the
picture is. The same is true for *Find a Grave* if one has been to a respective
cemetery. An advantage of the SNS is that they allow immediate feedback.
'No memory can preserve the past. […It] works by reconstructing, that is, it
always relates its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation.'[12] This
adaptation is possible by a continuous discussion about the items that
represent memory. Parts of this discussion are comments as text or as the
infamous 'Like' and 'Poke' on *Facebook* or the footprints on *GayRomeo*,
allowing a minimum feedback without too much interaction, giving just the
necessary confirmation that a piece of information is correct, that the opinion
on things is shared by others.

    Garde-Hansen sees a problem in the influence of the archive as
agent in the process. She argues, supported by Derrida, that the technical
structure of the *archiving* archive determines the structure of the *achievable*
content.[13] She writes,

> SNS users do not simply attend a party, gig or meeting
> offline and then post their photos or thoughts as memorable
> record online. They actively engage with the archiving
> archive of the SNS […]. How a user remembers and
> archives a rock concert in Facebook would be very different
> from how that same user remembers and archives it in
> Myspace.[14]

    How can subjective evaluations of memory be retained within
SNSs? One strategy is surely the disconnection from most other 'friends'.
What Joanne Garde-Hansen describes as a communication problem is
actually one stronghold of personal-only memory: the individually specific
interwovenness of the users in various groups of friends, groups of people
who share common interests or participated in a given event.[15] The
disconnection from other people's lives may allow single users to retain a
very personal view, a very subjective evaluation of memory.

GayRomeo is an excellent example of the different layers of public and private memories, or - if you want - the disconnection from other people's lives that is represented in the inherent structure of the system.[16] Users are able to save other users as contacts. They can decide whether a saved contact is able to see that he has been saved or not. Moreover, this contact can, if he allows it, be shown publicly as a link. If a user is saved as a contact, the saving user can add comments, that only he is able to see, to the profile of the other. By doing so, the public profile is augmented by a private narrative - usually consisting of notes - mnemonics - about real-life encounters, additional information that was collected during chats or even more private details.

5.   Conclusions and Recommendations

While subjective memory is retained on SNSs, collective memory is an active process that has to be guided.[17] The mechanisms of the SNSs could be an option. Better would be an awareness of the users, that the system influences their way of archiving and, resulting from this, more subversive usage that at times breaches of the rules and the underlying functional principles of these systems in order to steer the system in the desired direction. This can also be achieved by active participation in the services offered by the system (having own groups, deciding on the visibility of information, creating own applications).[18]

The Web 1.0 services do not suffer from somebody taking control of the way they archive information but rather from no-body taking control over the archived information to discuss and update it. The only way to keep these sites as possible memory is to open them, if not for direct comments and additions on the websites themselves then for comments and additions off-site using services like *digg*, tagging information to make it more easily accessible for search engines, or to offer ways of using the information in other context - e.g. by providing a feed that can be aggregated somewhere else.

An example for this could be the 'blog' of Felix von Leitner, which is one of the most read German blogs. It does not allow leaving comments. However, there is a feed that readers can subscribe to. Content syndication and aggregation is possible. The discussion takes place somewhere else. The rating website *deutscheblogcharts.de* lists von Leitner's website as number five of the most referred-to German blogs.

Joanne Garde-Hansen closes her analysis with the statement that SNSs 'are a symptom of a need: for identity, for memory, for stories and for connectedness. We are suffering from archive fever […] and are in need of archives.'[19] However, if there is such an archive fever, why do websites like *Aktives Alter*, websites that are an insufficient medium for (re-)constructions of memory exist at all? How safe are *our* memories on SNSs, and are there

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other ways of creating and maintaining archives on-line? There are many questions that remain unanswered.

Notes

[1] M Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, Harper & Row, New York, 1980, p. 23.

[2] ibid., pp. 23-24.

[3] ibid., p. 50.

[4] ibid.

[5] ibid., p. 51.

[6] For a detailed description cf. H Zimmermann, 'Erinnerung im Web 2.0: Das Internet als (persönliches) Gedächtnis', in *Vorträge aus dem Studium Universale 2004-2007*, E Schenkel & N Kroker (eds.), Leipziger Universitätsreden, vol. 106, 2009, pp. 131-149; pp. 140-142.

[7] J Lanier, *You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2010, p. 28.

[8] Ibid., pp. 28-29, italics by me.

[9] Cf. T Berners-Lee, Interview, in *developerWorks Interviews*, 25 Aug. 2006, 26 Jan. 2007, http://www-128.ibm.com/developerworks/_podcast/dwi/cmint 082206.txt.

[10] For more details on the impact of *GayRomeo* cf. Zimmermann, op. cit., p. 136.

[11] Halbwachs, op. cit., p. 25.

[12] J Assmann, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique*, vol. 65, 1995, pp 130.

[13] Cf. J Garde-Hansen, 'MyMemories?: Personal Digital Archive Fever and Facebook', in *Save As...: Digital* Memories, J Garde-Hansen, A Hoskins & A Reading (eds.), Palgrave, London, p. 137.

[14] ibid., p. 137.

[15] ibid., p. 143.

[16] Very much in contrast to *Find a Grave*, where the subjective part blends entirely into the publicly accessible files.

[17] Cf. A Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, Beck, Munich, 2003, p. 15.

[18] The recently introduced *Facebook Site Governance* is a piece of evidence of the influence users have on the corporate system.

[19] Garde-Hansen, op. cit, p. 148. Cf. also J Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz, U of Chicago P, Chicago, 1996.

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Algorithmic Memory? Machinic Vision and Database Culture

Katrina Sluis

Abstract
This paper examines the material structures which support the sorting, searching and filtering of digital memories. Whilst accessible tools and cheap storage provide new opportunities to 'cache' one's life, practices of editing and annotation are largely being replaced by passive accumulation. The problem of managing a snapshot collection which might number in the thousands has spawned the development of software interfaces in which the paradigm of the album has been reinvented as a database with a search field. Technologies such as automated image annotation and image retrieval promise to outsource the process of tagging, naming and organising memories to the computer, using complex algorithms to approximate a kind of 'machinic vision'. This paper argues that far from representing the dematerialisation of the object, digitisation represents a significant shift in the way in which memory is constituted. Drawing on the field of software studies, the relationship of materiality to memory is problematised through an analysis of software and algorithm in the construction of digital memories.

Key Words: Archive, database, algorithm, memory, software, new media, digital culture, server farm.

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1. Introduction

Digitisation, as commonly argued, has liberated our documents from the limitations of physical media, producing a 'storage mania' in which it is easier to accumulate rather than delete data. However, it would be a mistake to equate the current expansion of networked storage, as simply a shift from 'material archive-systems' to 'immaterial information-banks', as argued by Brouwer and Mulder.[1] As Derrida's *archive fever* is supplanted by *database fever*, technologies of memory are increasingly linked to the industrial processing of information and the performativity of software. Part of the problem facing scholars of memory is the way in which software is both ubiquitous and invisible forming what Thrift describes as the 'technological unconscious.'[2] The friendly face of social media largely obscures an ecology of software in which algorithms and databases are actors which mediate our encounter with digital memory. In their work on archives, Brown and Davis-Brown state that activities such as acquisition, classification and preservation are 'technical' activities associated with the archive that may become

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explicitly 'political' as they determine visibility and access.[3] This paper argues that far from representing the dematerialisation of the object and the liberation from the archival gaze, digitisation presents us with new material structures through which memory is constructed.

Framing these shifts has been an ongoing consideration of how the archive might be understood in the context of ubiquitous networked media. The rhetoric of Web 2.0 celebrates the possibility of shared media which is both mobile and instant, hosted on storage which is limitless and 'free,' requiring little technical mastery to publish and share. With the ability to organise content through user-generated tagging systems such as folksonomies, the democratic promise of social media appears to extend the web's potential to overcome hierarchies of knowledge. At the same time, platforms such as YouTube and Flickr do not exist as 'guardians' of digital preservation, but seem to offer opportunities to archive oneself in real time. In light of these changes, I would like to suggest that when we think about an archive today, we should not think about an 'immaterial' or 'virtual' cyberspace, but rather the server farm [fig. 1] or database schema.

2.   Database Fever

The relational database was first proposed by E.F. Codd in 1970. They have since become a central, yet largely invisible technology of memory, a container for the blobs of data we persist in calling videos, documents and snapshots.[4] Databases have colonised the back-end of the web: they are the skeletons of search engines; they lie behind social platforms like Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and Wordpress.

To most users, however, it may not be immediately obvious that the pages that make up the web are increasingly being generated automatically from an underlying database. In the 1990s, establishing a web presence required an FTP program, a few HTML tags and a folder on a web server to store your 'home.html.' In a Web 2.0 environment, authoring is reconfigured as a process of adding items to the [Flickr/YouTube/Wordpress] database. The rhetoric of Web 2.0 frames this as a 'liberatory shift' in thinking about the web not so much as a set of hyperlinked documents but as a rich interactive platform in which 'SQL is the new HTML.'[5] Observing this 'database turn' in relation to YouTube, Lovink observes: 'We don't watch TV any more, we watch databases.'[6]

Whilst database driven websites are certainly not new, they have emerged as a critical component of the financial success of Web 2.0 companies. In his article outlining the Web 2.0 paradigm, O'Reilly observes that 'control over the database has led to market control and outsized financial returns.'[7] As the database structure becomes increasingly profitable, it is important to recognise the way in which the web becomes increasingly dominated by centralised collections of media. Inside these 'walled gardens,'

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one's mnemonic labour is threatened by the future obsolescence of the website and one's access is subject to the continuing approval of the company. In light of these dangers, Pemberton calls for a return to the notion of the personal website where control over one's data and its semantic meaning might be possible.[8]

Highly efficient computing platforms have also evolved to support the expansion of the networked database. The enterprise data centre or 'server farm' has emerged as the contemporary *arkheion* of Derrida's *Mal d'Archive*: a facility for housing tens of thousands of concatenated servers. With each site the size of a football pitch and costing anywhere up to US $2 Billion, these vast air-conditioned bunkers are strategically located near cheap, abundant electricity; their location is often shrouded with secrecy and access is highly restricted.[9] As part of the emerging paradigm of 'cloud computing'' these server farms are in the process of being re-branded as data 'clouds.' The accompanying rhetoric proposes a future in which consumers can easily outsource their hard disks to the server farms of companies such as Google and Apple. In this environment the consumer PC is repositioned as a terminal for accessing remote archives of data.[10]

When the collection and distribution of *media* becomes the collection and distribution of *data*, our digital memories become subject to the economics of information production and knowledge management. The database and its attendant technologies (e.g. SQL/XML) are in part a product of what Liu describes as 'the new discourse paradigm' which values 'the ability to say anything to anyone quickly.'[11] Liu's work is significant in identifying the ways in which the development of such standards are informed by the need to make communication as post industrially efficient as possible in order to allow knowledge to move seamlessly from print, to web or mobile devices. He observes that the demand that discourse becomes transformable, autonomous and mobile is necessary, so that

> a proliferating population of machinic servers, databases, and client programs can participate as cyborgian agents and concatenated Web servers facilitating the processing and reprocessing of knowledge.[12]

This separation of data from its presentation, promoted by standards such as XML, contributes to the modularity, speed and automation of contemporary memory. Increasingly, digital memories can be processed and circulated without human intervention; images and texts can be rapidly decontextualised and recontextualised onto different interfaces. In the not-too-distant future, the GPS in your camera will encode each snapshot with the place of capture, your calendar will sync up and confirm the context of your

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location, a face recognition algorithm will identify and tag the people in the frame before uploading it to Flickr. From there, it could be instantly syndicated into the sidebars of blogs or broadcast via RSS to the wireless photo frame sitting on your mother's mantelpiece on the other side of the planet.

3.   The Algorithm and Machinic Vision
           As the archive expands beyond the limits of human attention, the way in which we annotate and share these digital memories is recognised as a significant problem. Algorithms are being employed for tasks as varied as facial recognition in photo collections, aesthetic evaluation of snapshots, automated photo enhancement and the automated creation of digital family albums. Despite their goal to build intelligent machines for the management of images, the field of informatics has not yet developed an accurate algorithmic means for approximating human vision. The development of machinic vision is currently mitigated by a 'semantic gap' caused by the lack of similarity in the way in which humans and machines interpret these binary blobs of data. As a result, popular search engines mainly rely on the ability of their software spiders to harvest *contextual text* (metadata) rather than *content* to index images and videos, in a return to an archival classification paradigm.
           Whilst user generated folksonomies promise to bring some human order to material online, they cannot keep up with the expansion of the archive. The navigational paradigm of 'browsing' or 'surfing' a series of hyperlinks is challenged by the search engine's growing status as the primary interface to the web. Faith in the search algorithm persists as a means through which knowledge can be 'PageRanked', democratised and shared.[13] In her work on mediated memories, van Dijck suggests that 'the networked computer is a performative agent in the act of remembering' in which the navigation of personal memory 'not only highlights the processes of remembering but also allows the user to make connections that would never have been discovered without the computer.'[14] As the album is reconfigured as a database with a search field, it is important to consider the way in which the algorithm mediates these connections.

4.   The Archive as Commodity
           The database has immense value in the attention economy. O'Reilly emphasises this in his following advice to Web 2.0 programmers:

> It's no longer enough to know how to build a database-backed web site. If you want to succeed, you need to know how to mine the data that users are adding, both explicitly and as a side-effect of their activity on your site.[15]

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By evaluating the comments, clickthroughs, tags, and other content in their databases, companies such as Yahoo, Facebook and Google are able to develop the intelligence of their algorithms and generate wealth from highly targeted advertising. Participation in the archive generates another kind of unintentional memory, a 'data shadow' which is collected in exchange for free access to these platforms. The data mining of our digital selves not only contributes to the commodification of digital memory, but forms part of an economy of association in which transversing the database is mediated by recommender systems which point us towards certain content above others.

In this environment, the ontologies which inform the algorithm are withdrawn from discursive access. In 2007 Yahoo filed a patent for 'interestingness,' an algorithm which Flickr uses to evaluate the quality of photographs in order to draw attention towards exceptional images from its database. Here commenting, favouriting and tagging along with some 'secret sauce' contribute to the weighting of each image.[16] Like Google's PageRank algorithm, its exact nature is kept secret to prevent users from 'gaming' the system in order to rank higher in search results, whilst ensuring the protection of the corporation's intellectual property.

5.   Concluding Remarks

In the process of outsourcing the function of 'seeing' and 'recalling' to machines, there emerges a desire for memory which is both automated and passive. The modularity and flexibility of media creates the possibility of an *algorithmic memory*: an increasingly intelligent self-organising extensible memory which can circulate independently of human intervention. The reliance on algorithms to process images and retrieve texts also presents a shift in focus from *storage* to *retrieval* in mnemonic labour.

Bowker suggests we live in an 'epoch of potential memory' in which 'narrative remembering is typically a post hoc reconstruction from an ordered, classified set of facts which have been scattered over multiple physical data collections.'[17] As narrative remembering becomes constituted through the performance of software it becomes linked to the discourse of informatics and knowledge management. The relational database has become a convenient site from which information can be stored, analysed and transmitted, feeding off the data it accumulates in order to develop new categories, relationships and knowledge. As the archive is re-invented as the 'cloud,' it is important to imagine digital memories as not just vaporous, immaterial, streams of data - but as data which is embedded in the material structures of hardware and software.

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Figure 1: Sig Telehousing datacentre, Groningen
Kite Aerial Photograph © 2009 Eric Kieboom, All Rights Reserved

Notes

[1] J Brouwer & A Mulder, 'Information is Alive', *Information is Alive: Art and Theory on Archiving and Retrieving Data*, V2/NAi Publishers, Rotterdam, 2003, p. 4.

[2] N Thrift, 'Remembering the Technological Unconscious by Foregrounding Knowledges of Position', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol 22, no. 1, 2004, pp. 175-90.

[3] RH Brown & B Davis-Brown, 'The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness', *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 11, no. 4, 1998, p. 18.

[4] EF Codd, 'A Relational Model of Data for Large Shared Data Banks', *Communications of the ACM*, vol. 13, no. 6, 1970, pp. 377-387.

[5] SQL, or Structured Query Language is a language used to create, maintain and query relational databases. T O'Reilly, 'What is Web 2.0? Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software', *O'Reilly Network*, 30 Sept 2005, retrieved 2 Mar 2010, p. 3. <http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/whatisweb-20.html>.

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[6] G Lovink, 'The Art of Watching Databases: Introduction to the Video Vortex Reader', G Lovink and S Niederer (eds), *Video Vortex Reader: Responses to YouTube*, Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam, 2008, p. 9.
[7] ibid., p. 3.
[8] S Pemberton, 'Why You Should Have a Website: It's the Law!', *Steven Pemberton at Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica*, n.d., retrieved 3 Mar 2010. http://homepages.cwi.nl/~steven/vandf/2008.03-website.html.
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[10] For an overview of cloud computing see N Carr, 'The Big Switch: Rewiring the World, from Edison to Google', W W Norton & Company, New York, 2009.
[11] XML is a set of rules for encoding documents electronically and provides a standard through which disparate data sources (especially from databases) can be structured and read. A Liu, *Local Transcendence: Essays on Postmodern Historicism and the Database*, University Of Chicago Press, 2008, p. 211.
[12] ibid., p. 216.
[13] See, for example the 'Memories for Life' project, a Grand Challenge of Computing.: http://www.memoriesforlife.org/.
[14] J van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*, Stanford University, California, 2007, pp.166-167.
[15] T O'Reilly, 'Programming Collective Intelligence', *O'Reilly Radar Blog*, 15 Aug 2007, retrieved 10 Feb 2010, http://radar.oreilly.com/2007/08/programming-collective-intelli.html.
[16] see S Butterfield, 'The New New Things', Flickr Blog, 1 August 2005, retrieved 2 December 2009, http://blog.flickr.net/en/2005/08/01/the-new-new-things/. and Yahoo Patent Application for 'interestingness ranking of media objects': http://appft1.uspto.gov/netacgi/nph-Parser?Sect1=PTO1&Sect2=ITOFF&d=PG01&p=1&u=%2Fnetahtml%2FPTO%2Fsrchnum.html&r=1&f=G&l=50&s1=%2220060242139%22.PGNR.&OS=DN/20060242139&RS=DN/20060242139.
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This paper is a compressed version of a longer, fully referenced paper which the author is happy to provide upon request.

Fluid Memory on the Web 2.0

Raffaele Mascella & Paolo Lattanzio

Abstract
Digital memory is an artificial type of memory that contains data and instructions. In the era of web 2.0, we are facing an evolution of such memory that involves a great dynamicity. In fact the well-known process of usability, sharing contents and creating categories affect continuously the web users' memory. We suggest that this new kind of digital memory can be regarded as 'fluid memory.' As we know, the web 2.0 enhances the process of memory externalisation and dissemination. Users are not involved in univocal using of those objects because they realise content's re-semantisation. It enables a diversified memory based on the form of hypertext. Web 2.0 leads to the birth of folksonomies, ways of managing information based on tagging that every user makes, different from taxonomy. Web 2.0 is directed towards the creation of hybrid systems where human specific skills have benefit and enhancement thanks to the close interaction with the computational abilities of the computer. So the creation of memory in the cybercultural age is a human activity realised in interaction with digital machines inside an epistemological context that gives a new shape to the representation of knowledge.

Key Words: Memory, epistemology, web, cognitive abilities, cyberculture, knowledge, folksonomies, intelligence.

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1.   Digital Memory

The goal of this paper is to analyse the arrangement between human memory and digital web-based technologies to explain how it creates a kind of new artificial memory. This new memory appears to be based on the externalisation in a coupled system composed by mind and web. We decided to study how the human mind uses external technological platforms to extend its own memory and how memory changes.

In the Digital Age human memory interacts with digital technologies. This interaction is not a modern prerogative because man has always interacted with the environment using external media and artefacts: we can think of the primitive man that engraves cave walls, the ancient Egyptians that use papyrus to record commercial transactions, the engraved stones of hunters, and so on. In these ways they displace information outside the mind so that it is available in other times or places. Leroi-Gourhan recently observed that the cultural evolution of human beings is based

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primarily on a kind of social memory built with external media. Leroi-Gourhan says that only external memory allows to socially increase knowledge, allowing a flexible and rapid adaptation.

When information is externalised it comes from unintentional, as when we observe a natural phenomenon in the world, to intentional as when people create a text composed by signs about something, as Charles Peirce defines a text. The externalisation extends the mind's possibilities and communicates with other people. In the past there were only technologies difficult to use and manipulate for dimension, non-codified language or difficulties in transportation, while today modern societies have global and digital technologies to communicate and interact in real time. The telephone, the Internet, television and the mobile phone are only some examples. New technologies are not only tools to access information or to connect with friends, but they often affect cognitive abilities as memory.

Among all available technologies, the World Wide Web plays an important role in enhancing and altering human memory because on the one hand it has inside a huge amount of shared knowledge, and on the other hand because it enables users to have many new mediated experiences. For example people have information about undemocratic countries thanks to the web, so that now many of this information are part of Western knowledge representation. Users who are interested in using this information must be prudent, because many times on the web there is not the editor who warrants the truth of information, so everyone must evaluate the contents.

The web appears to be composed of three different spaces: physical or hardware; digital or software; cognitive or representational. Here the interesting one is the cognitive, because of the representation of knowledge it enables. When the World Wide Web interacts with people they appear a coupled system composed by user and the web with the aim to solve problems and to reach complex goals.

The current innovations that the Web is enjoying make it an intercreative platform on which people can create and share own knowledge, so the Web becomes a base to enhance, diversify and modify memory. In fact our memories are recreated each time we access them, so we have the fluid memory that is not fixed in time and space, but changes with new facts, discoveries and technologies. This process is more relevant with new technologies characterised by users' participation, contents reusability and free access to publication, as it occurs with web 2.0.

Digital memory is a kind of artificial memory that includes data and instructions, which are contents and algorithms for process input and giving output. It is evident on the web where people enjoy huge amount of knowledge that allows creation of personalised memory creating an extended mind composed by human mind and cyberspace. Accessing the web we have a big semantic archive, so that we use this information as part of our

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knowledge. New technologies, called psychotechnologies, create new spaces for acquiring and managing information. Technologies with which the mind interacts are cognitive artifacts. They are properly called 'cognitive' because they extend human cognition in thinking, planning, solving, measuring, knowing, categorizing and remembering. For example the computer is a special kind of cognitive artefact capable of extending a broad range of human cognitive abilities in finding, calculating and so on. Donald Norman studies artificial devices designed to maintain, display or operate upon information in order to serve a representational function. Fluid memory is possible due to a new link between internal mind and external technologies or artifacts. So it's possible to create a memory formed by previous acquired knowledge with new knowledge mediated by the mass media and technologies. This expansion is directly linked to the deep nature of the web as semantic archive and to the mind's tendency to work in synergy with surrounding environment.

We must stress that we do not propose a structural analogy between technological artefacts and human memory because the deep origin of understanding is within the biological structure of brain, even if it can't be reduced to it. We rather seek to propose a synthesis that considers technologies as tools for human memory, which remains the real computational centre. Digital memory is an artificial system based on the dissemination and externalisation on the Web of some objects outside of the human mind. Using the web as platform, the human mind has an additional support for working. Contents transferred online have a deep impact on individual and collective culture.

The externalised data remain very important because they can be again analysed through the human senses that enable different kind of understanding and an important kind of meta-reasoning. We establish that material supports that contribute to the cognitive performances, are places where mental realisations happen. Thus the subjective mind is spread into the world. The usual distinctions between internal and external lose any consistency. The human being must be considered as an extended system, a coupling of biological organism and external resources. The conditions that ensure a reliable continuity of mind with external device are three: 1) the support must be ever available and must be often used; 2) the knowledge embodied in the device must be easily accessible; 3) the knowledge embodied in the device must be automatically been considered efficient. If the external device satisfies these conditions, it may be considered a component of extended mind.

Web 2.0 enables for the users the possibility to remix the contents inserting them in new context to re-semantisation. All these features just frame the web as a new mnemonic platform fluid and dynamic. So digital memory seems a phenomenon with two sides: one is collective and creative

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and concerns the upload of contents and their storage, the other is personal and pragmatic and concerns the choice of contents and the updating of personal path. The first one is potential because there are the contents but they are not organised so that they cannot be used for creating individual path, while second one is realised because every one chooses the contents in a broad range of contents produced by users. This abundance of contents is a feature of fluid memory.

Every web user can give new semantic meaning to the contents generated by other users, putting these in the personal context for creating own memory. We have an individual use of contents generated by the community, so that memory will become fluid and personal because it may change according to the user's needs and choice. In fact the user can find on the web different cultures and knowledge from diversified sources that can be remixable.

2.   Fluid Memory and Expanded Intelligence

The internal individual memory meets on the web the collective externalised memory. Now the web user develops a kind of multifaceted relationship to communities that allows develop a cognitive identity that is fluid thanks to a diversified participation in different groups. This shift enables new dimension of self-participating in many communities in Pierre Levy called collective intelligence.

Everyone can connect and disconnect to this shared intelligence creating a fluid memory in permanent development in two senses: for the great amount of online knowledge available and for the updating of acquired knowledge. The constant interaction between internal and external allows for hybrid systems. The Web user inside a dynamic of coupled system does not simply uses what is just created, but contextualises the contents, enriches and categorises the information in a creative and active process about knowledge and memory.

So we observe a development of individual intelligence, toward a connective intelligence that uses physical and telematic network to enrich and diversify the links between individual ones, increasing the performances. The outcome is the mind extension.

3.   Folksonomies

The new type of individual memory created by the interaction between human mind and web is hyper-textual and it appears as a molecular aggregation of atomic parts. While in the past the information has been categorised using taxonomies, designed as collection of controlled vocabulary organised in a hierarchical structure, now with fluid memory it is not more adequate. Taxonomies had a kind of centralised organization that was static, so that it is difficult to access and participate in their building.

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On the contrary, the web makes available for individuals not only cultural products but also the possibility to be involved in categorising digital contents with folksonomies. Folksonomy describes a way of categorising made by a user through tagging that is an attribute of one or more key-word to the contents in a free way. While traditional taxonomies are hierarchical and with a central restraint, tagging is a social task acted by all users. The opposition between folksonomies and taxonomies is an attack against a top-down categorisation. Folksonomy is a particular kind of taxonomy in a peer creating way, and starting from the personal attribution of tags to digital contents, it generates aggregate outcomes available for the community. Folksonomy creators are users that are the same people who use folksonomies, so that on one hand there is not a central control and on the other hand the categories created in social way reflect in an accurate and updatable way the information, in respect of user's knowledge representations.

So, folksonomies are a dynamic way to organise and storage the information characterised by fluidity in two different means: users can select freely tags that they will use; any content may be inserted in several categories developing a plurality of relationships. Fluidity generated by folksonomies concerns both knowledge and memory. So we have participative organisation of knowledge and the retrieval of information with new searching methods that are closer than traditional search engines to user needs.

Folksonomies are also able to organise specialised knowledge because they aggregate better competences in a global perspective. Folksonomies organise and rationalise the management of knowledge, ordering chaotic stuff. So memory can be personalised and constantly updated: in fact each user can take some parts or contents from the whole web, creating their own memory. The pieces taken on the web are not usable in only one memory's creation, but they can get in several and potential unlimited kinds of memory.

4.   Conclusion - Hybrid Systems

Fluid artificial memory gives rise to a new system of linked objects. This one is created combining human memory and the web. This relationship creates immediately a link with millions of other intelligences and memories and it sets up a coupled system, which is a hybrid system that combines natural and artificial components. This new kind of memory creates benefits for people because it put in relationship specific abilities of human mind with computational power of global web.

Mind-web coupled system generates innovative shapes of knowledge representation. Human beings are now able to change the management of their surrounding world thanks to cognitive abilities,

augmented by the use of new technologies, in learning, storing and finding information.

The human mind and the World Wide Web together are a kind of extended mind that is a coupled hybrid system based on bidirectional interaction that includes informative inputs and epistemic action on these. Coupled systems create a dynamic interaction with cognitive artefacts that represent a crucial feature in the Information Society. These systems, although with troubles and problems, offer to the human mind new perspective for the management of information in cyberspace and set the new borders for individual and collective memories and knowledge representation.

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