Reclaiming Digital Infrastructures

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ndi)

communication)

YOU ARE HERE!

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Reclaiming Digital Infrastructures

The project *Reclaiming Digital Infrastructures* (RDI) brings together thoughts, practices and people attempting to read and understand digital learning and its possible and probable infrastructures. In a year full of COVID19 measures, physical learning has been restricted and at moments digital learning has become the new norm. But what we learn and how we learn, is closely related and this is especially important when we think this from the perspective of an Art School such as KASK, which has a long tradition in less formalised ways to transfer knowledge and skills, and takes new forms of artistic practice as one of its working fields.

RDI is a collaboration with Constant, association for art and media. It sprung into existence thanks to a support from the framework *Reclaiming the school* that KASK School of Arts in Gent initiated as a way to support mid-pandemic experiments in learning futures and future learnings. Developing critical attitudes towards digital educational tools and infrastructures is crucial if we want to integrate them in curricula for artistic education. (Re)Claiming agency over digital set-ups and installations starts with an analysis of their (digital) materiality, daring to play and speculate with them in order to formulate artistic and affirmative proposals.

The four contributions to this document consist of 'activated-documentation' of the online sessions that were held between January and April 2021. They each respond to

different challenges related to digital learning. A group of around 80 artists, students, designers, academics, independent researchers, administrators and others interested in technology and education participated in the workshops. Throughout the sessions, infrastructures were approached as being simultaneously technical and ethical, legal and speculative, economical and political: they consist of cables and servers, social environments, laws and regulations, licenses, budgets and relations between human and other beings.

Reclaiming Digital Infrastructures starts from a perspective of using and promoting Free Libre Open Source Software (F/LOSS) and hardware. It is unfortunate that schools have rapidly adopted Big Tech proprietary tools for networking, doing virtual classes, having online gatherings which meant the completion of longer running processes of trusting extractivist capitalist platforms with their data and care for the spaces that learning happens. It was interesting for people involved in education to hear about the potential of small open source tools that could become part of a pedagogical toolbox that sits closer to artistic work. But Open Source is not enough; how do we avoid appropriation, deal with the oppressions, biases, hierarchies and exclusions that are often baked into services, structures and tools? How do we perceive the emerging techno-colonial contexts in which digital infrastructures operate?

RDI promoted knowledge exchange and experimented with alternative technical practices at KASK. The trajectory nourished our understanding and imaginations for political operations of the tools and infrastructures that we use on a daily basis and reflected on what a network consists of. What are ecological, social, political, aspects that they are connected to? How to hack it's agencies,

turn its determinacies, to bring ourselves in a fruitful relation with it?

As School of Arts, KASK has a role to play in formulating imaginaries of societies, ways to work and to be together. The hours of online work we were facing during the pandemic made us feel the urgency to include setting out new orientations for technologies we want to be with. The sessions helped students and teachers to reflect on their positions towards tools we are asked to work with, and how we would imagine them otherwise. This document captures some of the thinking and materials that have been exchanged and discloses it as possible inspiration and starting points for future thinking, working, making, exchanging and behaving with potential future digital infrastructures.

Peter Westenberg, June 2021

Screen No Deal: Unfolding layers of videoconferencing and rectangularised communication

Jara Rocha + Martino Morandi

This session created a moment to unfold the different layers of the collective experience of a 'Screen New Deal', a term proposed by Naomi Klein to describe the recent period in which videoconferencing and rectangularised communication became the new norm for all aspects of everyday life. In particular we will discuss what this meant and means for the realm of education, how certain software platforms silently creep in new forms of pedagogy, what critiques and potential alternatives were brought as forms of resistance to this new problematic default.

The session was divided in two parts: it started with a practical exercise that took place in and on video-conferencing platforms, followed by a reading of short texts that explore the same techno-political densities that have been experienced hands-on in the first part of the day.

Screen No Deal was part of *Monday Readings*, an ongoing series of convivial situations to research our technological and infrastructural inter-dependencies.

Attention zones

The session was an occasion for hands-on attention to Big Blue Button, a video conferencing tool that was also used as a platform for the workshop itself. Participants split up in groups to answer specific questions for one of five 'attention zones' that Martino and Jara prepared. Alongside, textfragments on technopolitical transformation in learning environments were collectively read and discussed.

1. Protocols

-- How would you describe the main character-
   istics of video conferencing? E.g.: central-
   ity, frontality, usernames, flat surfaces…

-- How is the flow of interactions regulated in
   the software (sounds modulation, silencing,
   muting..)?

-- What translations/encodings/decodings you
   see (opperating/appearing?) in this tool?

-- What communication protocols emerge in the
   platform? (both in the sense of technical
   protocols such as WebRTC, and social proto-
   cols such as speaking one at a time…)

-- What roles are established by joining a
   call?

-- How does this tool provide with recording /
   archiving techniques?

-- Do you find any interesting elements regard-
   ing sound-based interaction?

...

"It is a flat surface, but multidimensional."

"I want the camera to be responsive. That it will be acknowledged in the space how I want to be perceived; the camera should otherwise be hidden. The microphone is also hidden unless noise happens, could the camera switch on only when movement happens?"

"How do black squares impact the footprint of the recording?"

"What are ways of dealing with uncomfortable digital silence?"

"Digital infrastructures are still build on stolen land."

2. Interface

-- Please list the interface's most significant parts

-- Please list secondary parts of the GUI that were uneventful at first sight ;)

-- Which are the main areas of use of this platform?

-- Can you describe the experience of entering the platform you just had today?: what do you found first, what was offered to you and under which terms?

-- Which are the latent cultures on this platform?

-- How do you feel the interface influences what you do with it?

-- Can you identify traces of former media cultures, or technopolitical legacies of some sort?

-- Are there any obvieties, naturalized parts or procedures, neutralized elements?

-- Which design details caught your attention and why?

...

"The fact that one can concentrate by doodling on a shared whiteboard, is the most useful for me in BBB. It is an illusion that attention comes from exclusion. It comes as much through diversion."

"A 'dedocking' of functions to explode in a multiverse of surprising snippet services?"

"By allowing anyone to take presenter, and in the ability to produce accessible rooms, open without knocking on the door, there's a trace of awareness that fixing hierarchies might not be desirable for all situations."

"Videoconferencing tools like BBB are squarifying and immobilizing my work and drains the energy. But at the other hand it is nice to have a tool for larger meetings installed on an independent server that does not suck data and that works relatively smoothly."

"Who's the first in the list of participants? What's the order in the left based on? Is it the same for all participants?"

3. Assemblage / material conditions of this software environment

-- What is this software 'composed' of? can you recognize other 'nested' softwares?

-- Do you identify any fractal structuration of elements in this techno-ecology, so that same architecture exists within?

-- How are other elements 'ingested' (how are elements that are familiar elsewhere implemented in this platform)?

-- What do you think are the implications of the making of platforms of platforms?

-- Can you say what is the key programming language used to build this up? any other languages at use?

-- How do you install this software? what is needed for it to work?

...

"All functions are provided through the (n)ec(r)ology of the über-platform"

"Do we really need to remake everything from scratch, or can we collaborate on tools from other platforms, minimize the overall footprint of running these things?"

"What are the dangers of centralizing forms of digital literacy otherwise? Have they already manifested? How can we make centralizations focused on interconnections that still preserve autonomy?"

"In order for it to work, there is a need for literacy, in so many ways. It seems to be primarily developed in English? If there is no English speaking grassroots org, or no one to fund at capacity, with limited internet access ... it is basically very disheartening, you don't want to support a platform that you know is not ethical just to meet people. It is hard to hold space and take accountability for that."

"Wondering about the recording function // archival permanance. How many people really want to rewatch a whole workshop? what makes a recording into a performance?"

4. Organization and economy

-- **What is the social economy that allows this software to exist?**

-- **How is the work to develop it funded? If it is funded, what other projects do they fund?**

-- **How sustainable is its development, how much dependent on its users?**

-- **Can you say what are the environmental costs of this platform?**

-- **What is the community that develops this software like, and how are decisions taken about it?**

-- **Can you make an exhaustive list of jobs implied in the making and maintenance of this platform when it is at use? Do you have any comments regarding division of labour in this context?**

-- **Which software license does it come with?**

-- **Under which terms and conditions can you use this software? What strings does it bring?**

...

"There are two social economies here ... the one of the software and the one of who runs it."

"It is interesting that BBB really comes from the first experimentation of online courses... but that it is trying to move beyond the recorded/streamed-conferencing mode."

"I remember when to enter you had to press a Big Blue Button indeed!"

5. Relationality

-- **What expectations and technological promises are part of being a user or maintainer?**

-- **what modes of being-with-others are more likely?**

-- **where are boundaries between private and public appearing?**

-- **How is this tool able to affect a learning experience? Can you speak of positive affects as well as of negative ones?**

-- **Where do yo find evidences of a culture based on digital comfort, environment familiarity, ease of use, optimization, seamless and naturalized atmospheres? How do you suspect that culture settled?**

**-- Are there meaningful differences regarding
   the individual vs the groupal experiences?**

...

*"There is often a split (who cares about infrastructure
and not). Infrastructures as something technical that
needs to work and no reflection; based on concepts of
efficiency. Do people care (what tools they use)?"*

*"User-friendliness supposes that friendliness is a natural
trait... but it is a specific idea of behaviour that is gen-
eric and normative"*

*"In the machine of productivity, we need to make space
to reflect. But it is only accepted by management if the
reflection produces something that enhances
productivity."*

*"The context in which children are growing up now, ob-
servation becomes norm, surveillance becomes norm,
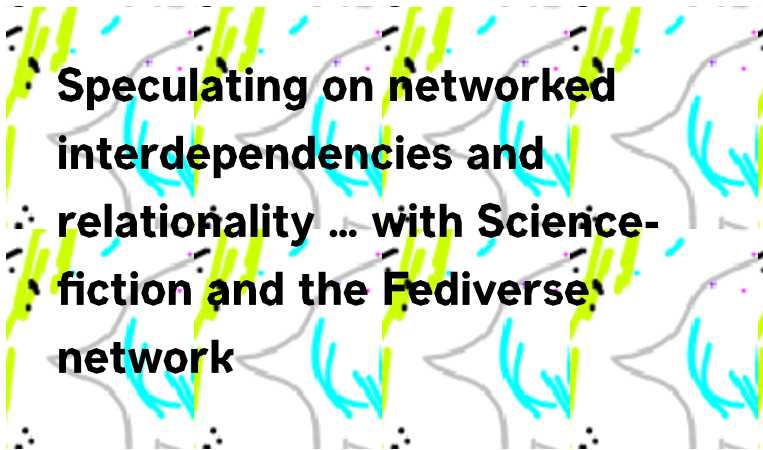seeing real friends not norm, and this stimulates brains
differently"*

*"This medium can allow more anonymity too. Video
and audio can hide some things too, that would not be
possible physically."*

Resources

Screen No Deal webpage with workshop notes:
https://ntrcltrs.hotglue.me/?screen_no_deal

-- Naomi Klein, "[Screen New Deal: Under Cover of Mass Death, Andrew Cuomo Calls in the Billionaires to Build a High-Tech Dystopia](#)", The Intercept (2020)
-- Davide Fant, [Reinventing Formation with distant adolescents](#)
-- M. Hogan, [The Pandemic's Dark Cloud](#)
-- Olia Lialina, [Turing Complete User](#)
-- Geert Lovink, [Anatomy of Zoom Fatigue](#)
-- Femke Snelting, [Infrastructure Solidarity](#)
-- Various authors, [Field Notes on Pandemic Teaching](#)
-- Constant, [There's an Elephant in the Room!](#)
-- Tom Melick, [Zoom, A User's guide](#)
-- Henry Giroux, [Radical Pedagogy and the Discourse of Lived Cultures](#) (from Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope)

Speculating on networked interdependencies and relationality … with Science-fiction and the Fediverse network

Wendy Van Wynsberghe + Elodie Mugrefya

For the second session of *Reclaiming Digital Infrastructures*, we invited participants to think different modes of online togetherness. We took the Fediverse[1] as a framework for a speculative exercise with the help of science-fiction. We first had a walk through the Fediverse to discuss its possibilities and problems. We examined the relationship of the instances and their Terms of Use and/or Server rules and how this influences the content posting, user member lists and topics being discussed or not. We then read an excerpt of Octavia Butler's book titled *Wild Seed* where she tells stories of (in)human connectivities and togetherness (see: Resources). We had an intuition that the case of the Fediverse was useful in thinking about digital togetherness but maybe a bit constraining in its finitude. We put the science fiction of Octavia Butler in the room to open things up, but also because she directly talks of ways of being and modes of togetherness that avoid romantic articulations but instead adresses their potentially violent and unfair implications.

We entered the Fediverse landscape through the example of Mastodon, an 'open-source, decentralized social network'. The ambition of Mastodon is to put forward an infrastructure for network-building/holding outside of the proprietary platforms and their dynamics and redistribute moderation instead of centralizing it. While Mastodon does offer interesting features for social networking with care, it also re-confirms certains attributes and logics of proprietary social networks. For instance, the degrees of interconnectedness, the amount of federation, lies in the hands of the administrator(s) of the instance; some instances are open for joining, some only partially and others are almost not visible to the 'outside' world. In it's current model, Mastodon incorporates quite some features of dominant social media, including hashtags to create content links across posts, the posting is linear, with newer content on top and older content falling into the pits of oblivion. A toot (post) can be 'retooted' or liked and direct messages are possible but clunky. Mastodon being a Floss project, meant also that the software could be cloned and forked by Gab, an alt-tech social networking service known for its far-right userbase whose users and groups are often banned from other mainstream social media.

After a look at the case of Mastodon within the Fediverse, we read the excerpt of *Wild Seed*. The book is a particular kind of science fiction that does not use the same tropes as mainstream science fiction, in the sense that it's not about an utopian or dystopian future. It understands that it is important to adresses how notions of utopia/dystopia are extremely situated (for instance geographically or temporally). In this book Butler creates and expands worlds outside of the world order we already know, but it's not because this order is different

than ours that there isn't pain or oppression. For instance, the white supremacist system that transformed and uniformed world societies as we know them, is not in the book. But there are still deeply disturbing and colonial-like projects. The protagonist is a black woman, which was very uncommon at the time the book was released in 1980; and even though she is powerful and intelligent, she still experiences extreme oppression and violence when she tries to exercise her agency. So it is not about utopia or dystopia but instead a world functioning through different and not-so different hegemonic orders. In this book, Butler's character is able to shapeshift with animals. Instead of occupying the animals' bodies, the character physically becomes an animal which dramatically changes her ways of being in relation to others, her surroundings but also her own body. She also directly understands how the relational interdependencies very quickly mutate as a result of her shape shifting.

The workshop was a great invitation to rethink infrastructures. Even if the context was educational, so potentially limited to the imagination of the infrastructure of a school, we wanted to use it as an opportunity to think of collective digital situations and their tools without being confined to the 'walls' of such an institution.

1: ''The Fediverse, a portmanteau of 'federation' and 'universe', is an ensemble of federated (i.e. interconnected) servers that are used for web publishing such as social networking, microblogging, blogging, or websites and file hosting, but which, while independently hosted, can communicate with each other.'' Wikipedia ↩

Writing Exercise

We set up four writing spaces to collectively reflect on the Fediverse, under the header of (Re)claimFediverse, of course with the Octavia Butler layer on top. The participants decided to split up in three groups and they each interpreted this initial starting point very differently. This was a collective writing exercise on etherpads, in combination with the digital conversational platform BigBlueButton and the break-up rooms created within. All writing spaces had the same initial question, and more detailed questions were added focused on if you would want to start a Mastodon instance yourself. These could be taken into account or ignored. The participants took the content and context we provided and they worked on it for some time; the outcomes were very different:

The [first group](#) took the initial question quite literal, they imagined how a Mastodon instance could function in an education environment/university, including the pitfalls and possibilities:

"We could have a transformative logo, not a recognisable image, but allowing people to interact. A butterfly with complex life cycles would be suitable? We want to reorient our space towards free access to publications and peer review methodologies. We were thinking of peer reviewing of each others' works as the main objectives of our network. Our users are students, but we want to redefine what is a student, to make this space not only for people who are enrolled. Maybe only people who are NOT at university? Who takes responsibility for medi-

ation? Fixed roles should be avoided and moderation can be rewarded, acknowledged and given credits. Maintenance should be temporal because new people will come, and others will go. We are not sure about making the content open or private. If the point is to have feedback on our content, then the platform could prompt people to understand it as a learning context. The notifications should be the bare minimum, and focus on the objective of receiving feedback. We were thinking of a context for learning; a school or a university. We wanted to focus on 'radical passivity' and the possibility to hide and to not participate. Timelines should not push for participation and action but present possibilities to hide and not show presence. About the server: we would like both local and physical networks. The content should be free content and open access, and not behind a paywall."

The [second group](#) looked at tech and society in general:

"We were thinking on a meta level about the role of arts and educational institutions. Experiences were helpful in understanding how infrastructure could be organised. A farming model for sharing risks had potential for re-thinking digital infrastructure. We propose inclusive interest groups, smaller nodes that could connect to larger ones while maintaining special interest groups. We are interested in inter-generational work, but also urban and rural question of acces to digital infrastructures. The basic point is to think about what we already have and what already exists, to adapt another model instead of trying to remake it from scratch. We need to get institutions to become active in the Fediverse. When people or organisations use the argument that we don't have the

team, the means, the time to do that, it is worth considering how much means are available when institutions would join on the level of infrastructure. Then not everyone would be on Zoom and Teams and other terrible spaces. Why doesn't this already happen? It is a good moment to clarify in our own language how resources and infrastructures can be used for 'the good'. How to be interconnected and pass on the information about possibilities? We should be a bit more loud and blunt and confident that we know what we are talking about. We should point at the difficulties, but it does not mean that we already have solutions, the one perfect nice and shiny one; let's look into that what is not visible."

The third group dove into the metaphorical realm:

"How can shapeshifting dolphins be a model to rethink connections? We were trying to think how this is applicable to groupings, families, new groups, not yet existing groups … how to connect without a preset model of connecting. Decentralisation is not necessarily in itself better, it depends on how you use it. Shapeshifting felt like a relevant and inspirational practice, also through empathy, understanding another being through its embodiment. Applying that to on-line situations, we came to think about 'buffer' space which you need to meet people or connect to communities in order to better understand different perspectives, relationalities elsewhere, away from where we feel comfortable. An uncomfortable entrypoint to being online as a way to learn to coincide, to rub against something that you are not normally with. We were imagining a passage space that you would

have to go through, like a corridor that is used by all, in order to reach the door to the space where you are with the people you want to be with. Discomfort as a methodology to better understand. The space for knowledge creation is then maybe not clear, a greyzone. A certain randomness in offering the startingpoint could work. We know where we need to go to find our peers, but we don't know where we start from. This corridor mode, transition mode and temporary, shape shifting understanding would develop in a federated manner."

A strong statement made by Z. resonated with the way the group discussion was emphasizing the importance of practices and attitudes with/towards technology, instead of a focus on technology alone: "Connecting as a way to **do** infrastructures, not **use**."

Imagine a digital infrastructure

Imagine a digital infrastructure that would serve the purpose of digitally connecting a group of people (and/or beings) that form together a certain entity (could be a collective, a school, a working team, a kinship, ect). You can also determine your own understanding of what ''being connected'' means. What form would this infrastructure take? Could you draw a sketch of its structure? Would there be different kinds of connection possible? (centralised/Decentralised, completely open, semi-open or closed) Do you see clear roles and how to distribute them? What kind of mode of connection you want to create? What intensity of exchanges? (text only, with images, videos, re-posting, particular matter, …) Would it follow a particular community culture? How?

Community guidelines or code of conduct, moderation of content?

These decisions should help you giving shape to your desired infrastructure, technically but also politically. You can also take an about page of a Mastodon instance as an example if you find that the platform of federated servers suits your purpose.

If you want to make your own Mastodon instance, this goes a lot further than just a user profile. Decide on what your instance should look like, by answering the questions on the pad. Try to touch all three elements (about page, server rules, terms of service). Go as far as you can within the workshop timeframe.

Create an about page

Examples: https://merveilles.town/about or https://botsin.space/about or https://tech.lgbt/about or https://mamot.fr/about or https://mastodon.online/about -> https://joinmastodon.org/communities

-- What could be (a) potential images/logo(s)?

-- Describe your instance: what would you like your instance to do? ex: connect researchers (only), share content for inspiration, advertise the channel …

-- Who will be your users? Only students, or teachers, external guests, alumni?

-- How do you see the taking care of maintenance and mediation, moderation? (collectively or not?)

-- What could conflicts be about and how will you deal with them? How will you solve them? technics of moderation for instance

-- What is your public/private status?

-- What will you show to everybody? What not?

-- How will you show your activity/the activity of your users? (discoverable) [you do not need to answer all questions!]

When you create your instance, there's two other things important to look at and think about. The Server Rules and the Terms of Service. You can choose whether you'd like to work on the Server Rules or the Terms of Service, if you have time of course you can do both!

Create Server Rules

Here you choose what to highlight what comes on your server. What will that space be like? Do you forbid/block or do you allow? These are scraped "random" keywords of other instances, in alphabetical order. Look at this list for more inspiration: https://joinmastodon.org/communities

-- Acknowledgements

-- Blocked domains

-- Brands and products

-- Code of Conduct

-- Common hashtags

-- Common goal

-- Filtered media

Create Terms of Service

What happens with what you write on this instance. Some topics other instances chose to write about.
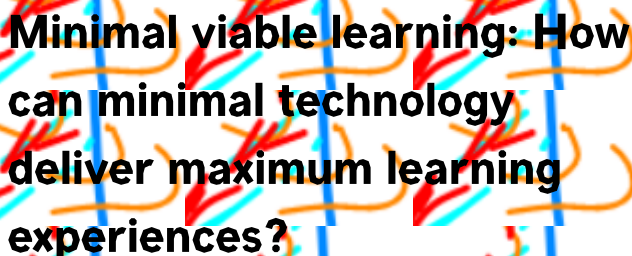
-- Do we disclose any information to outside
   parties?

-- License

Resources

Notes from the workshop:
https://pad.constantvzw.org/p/ReclaimFediverse

-- Octavia Butler, *Wild Seed* (extract)
-- A cheatsheet on discourse
-- Joining the Fediverse and Mastodon:
   https://joinmastodon.org & https://lifehacker.com/a-be-
   ginner-s-guide-to-mastodon-1828503235
-- Visualizing the Fediverse
-- Mobilizon, event organization and group management tool
-- Peertube, video federation network
-- ''What is PeerTube?''
-- Aymeric Mansoux, Roel Roscam Abbing, ''Seven Theses On
   The Fediverse and The Becoming Of FLOSS'', *transmediale
   journal* (2019)

Minimal viable learning: How can minimal technology deliver maximum learning experiences?

Varia (Cristina Cochior + Manetta Berends)

The session explored 'minimal viable forms of learning' with Etherpad. Etherpad is a collaborative text editor that was used throughout the series, and also within the practices of Varia members and their peer networks. The day focused on exploring and rediscovering principles of calm technology and minimal computing, while stretching both the software and participants' understandings of what online pedagogical places could be. Ingredients: __MAGICWORDS__, padtiquettes and collective reading of texts speaking about *minimal computing* and *viable learning*.

For Varia, Minimalism is a departure point to make space for other possible forms of technologically mediated learning. In the last months, learning, with all its communal and convivial aspects, turned into an online-only endeavor. This sudden transition didn't leave much room to make a judicious choice of modes of interaction, communication tools, utilised services and platforms. Within educational organisations, we witness a double movement: on the one hand, a centralisation of all activities by means of the software suite (e.g. Microsoft Teams); on the other hand, the standard-

isation of a maximalist mode of communication meant to replicate class interactions (e.g. videocalls).

How can minimal technologies maximise a learning experience? What could 'minimum' 'viable' 'learning' be?

Welcome to the etherpad-lite instance hosted by Varia!

As a demo of minimal viable learning, Varia omitted video and slides and performed the workshop on etherpad. Extracts from the session are included verbatim in this publication. The colors signify each a different participant interacting with the pad. The pad can be browsed in its full version here:

https://pad.vvvvvvaria.org/rdi-ft-minimal-viable-learning

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Welcome to this Etherpad. This is the location where we will gather on the 31st of March 2021 at 11:00h for the *Minimal Viable Learning* session of the *Reclaiming Digital Infrastructures* series, hosted by Constant & KASK.

During this session, we will explore minimal viable forms of learning with Etherpad. Etherpad is a collaborative text editor that is often used within the practices of Varia members and their peer networks. During this day, we will focus on exploring and rediscovering principles of calm technology and minimal computing, while stretch-

ing both the software and our understandings of what online pedagogical places could be.

A few things you should know about this space:

-- The pads are not indexed by search engines, but anyone who knows its URL is welcome to read and edit it.

-- Varia makes its own backups, meaning the contents of all pads sit on our hard drives potentially indefinitely.

-- The availability of the pads is subject to cosmic events, spilled drinks and personal energies.

-- Both the physical and digital spaces of Varia are subject to our Code of Conduct https://varia.zone/en/pages/code-of-conduct.html

Padtiquette:

-- Be supportive. Be curious.

-- If you have a question, ask. This is an experiment in speaking together from a distance.

-- Don't delete text from other people, add.

-- Respond to each other. Feel free to engage in conversations with other fellow writers. You can do this by glueing your response to the others. The colour change will indicate who is speaking.

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˙*:｡. ＊ Warming-up ＊ *˙*:｡.

Stretching activity 5

→ Now we will experiment with pad listening and pad speaking.
→ Form groups of two by writing your nick/names next to each other below.
→ Choose one of these two actions:

-- Start with the first few words of a sentence

-- Listen to what the other is writing and step in if you think you can continue their sentence.

→ Switch up these roles.

? + ?

azezn: this sentence?yes, this looks good.sentenced to what?for now, to the line.irl?no. we can't, havenicecream.i wish!!what taste?something new, even one i might not like.something i know will satisfy, which would be? pistachioabsolutelyand..alsmost bitter chocolateyeah, that's our sentence!!

jboymb:while being togetherwe face uncertaintyin different ways, includingour own motivations, the space we have to meet,what we hope tolearn about,do we even have to achieve anything for this to be worthwhile?

another beginning,asking for endings, listening for what comes in between

30

pwccl:when sun is appealingtoyouandyou haveto start withwork ina basement, thennot to think in 'solutions' but insteadto work with a slip of the finger, with a blink of the eye,a twist in your footstep, a stretch in the padoffersdot dot dots. …

lu+xx.:. wish thatthere would bemore time to re-flectupon different intensities ofbeing with oth-ers.How can we learnto find each otherwhile being apart? How to come togetherwith multiple we's. Where do we findspace.The place where you belong

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Based on different pad experiences in our educational/cultural work and as preparation of today's session, we started drafting a *minimal viable learning* minifesto. The minifesto is written as an text-based operator to demand space for concrete technological minimal practices and vocabulary stretching, dialectical (re)learning, viability studies and action experiments.

It is the first time that we share this text with a public, we're very curious(and a bit nervous too) to see how it resonates with you all.

We propose to take 10 minutes to go through the minifesto together now and annotate it with any kinds of thoughts, questions, question marks, tensions, examples, etc!

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Minimal Viable Learning minifesto

[* = multiplier]                        ?
                        servers


                            *       *


user-learners  *  < etherpad >  *   outputs


            *
                        *
user-subjectivities


                    environments
```

A minimal viable way of learning…

-- understands minimalism as a multiplier that
   enables maxi* and multi* outcomes.

-- has a weight. A minimal viable learning en-
   vironment is aware of sys-admin weight
   (maintenance), hardware weight (disk space),
   environmental weight (eco-footprints) and
   connectivity weight (network capacities).

-- uses minimal identifiers (nicknames and col-
   ors) to shape maximal types of user-sub-
   jectivities. User-learners can self-define
   their modes of engagement.

-- puts accessibility at its core. Viability
   inherently requires the learning environment
   to always be adaptable in relation to dif-
   ferent needs of user-learners, teachers and
   servers.

-- does not try to imitate the physical environments in which education takes place (the classroom). Technological environments make space to rethink how and where education happens.

-- is open-ended and supports re-use. It supports multiple formats and pipelines. Key ingredients for this include: unconditional formatting, shape-shifting capacities, portability and reuse-ability of the files.

-- is situationable across different kinds and scales of networks, communities and groups. It uses non-extractive software which is published under an open/free? I wonder about open since we've seen the growth of open core licensing that doesn't really extend autonomy (ah, would be curious to hear more about your example, we were mainly understanding it as installable & adaptable software)(I'm thinking of stuff like [i think] Rocket Chat which, while open source can really only be used as packaged by the developers who try to upsell you)(but I don't think we need to rehash free vs. open source software debates right now...)(haha maybe we can still leave a trace though!+1) license.

-- does not intrude in users' environment without explicit consent. At the same time, it is aware that user-learners extend the learning environment with their own.

-- refuses surveillance mechanisms seeping into the learning environment.

-- acknowledges that technology does not flatten power relations, but instead has the ca-

pacity to both subvert and reiterate exist-
ing power structures.

-- allows for open structure collective learn-
ing: groups can make protocols and rules in
the moment.

-- embraces perspective partialities: all user-
learners which co-inhabit the learning en-
viroment bring in their differences in re-
gards to race, ethnicity, class, gender,
sexuality and abledness.

I am curious about the reaction of people when
presented with the etherpad, which is very
centered around typing, has anybody ever ex-
pressed any dissent about making all interaction
text-centric and dependant on the tempos of typ-
ists?
maybe it will happen today? :)dissent is hopeful,
non-participation is more of a problem🙈(in
teaching)(yes & nicely phrased)(yes, agree!)Yes
indeed it would be good to check in with everyone
here too and put this question on the table
typing, + language + reading as a minimum
relatedly, I wonder how the nonlinear way of us-
ing pads works out in terms of accessibility -
like for people who depend on screen reader soft-
ware
does someone have experience with screenreader
plugings to etherpad ?
interesting one yes. one aspect of etherpad that
speaks back to this is the option to save the
text as a file, which can then we piped into a
screen reader i guess? but, not sure how to en-
gage with that in real time
and speech to text as input ?hmmz yes good point
sorry i think accidentally deleted a sentenceah

where was it?something like I understant minimal as non-baroque
ah no, I deleted myself :-) no worriesah
okey:)maybe you could also say minimal as avoiding ornaments?not sure about phrasing modernistic-non-ornamental minimalism as something that is always the most generative? (trying to write down a thought, sorry it might be unclear)ma bye
I understand now why you deleted it. to say non-barque opened the the whole debate on baroque ornaments in my head. but well even ornaments had its function in its paritcular context to relate to its underlying functional structure
text also has a certain kind of gravity to it, light-heartedness, humour require great skill to be well communicated in text I think
it also requires a lot of attention to be able to follow (even just read) multiple lines of conversation
minimalism as understood here does not signal a desire for less or an embrace of austerity

\-\

```
*     .  *       .         .  *
  ..    *    .      *  .  ..  *
 *    *            .     *    *
.    *  Magic Words      *
   .        .       .  *    .
 .     .        .          *
  .    *     *       *     .
```

Magic Words were brought into the software ecology of Etherpad by Michael Murtaugh, a member of

the Brussels-based arts organisation
Constant. *Magic Words* are used to enact certain
commands; using __PUBLISH__ on this pad indexes
it on this page:
https://vvvvvvaria.org/etherpump/(every hour, so
at 13:00 it will be indexed)

They are little spells that can be used anywhere
on the pad to indicate how we want to interact
with the text. We would like to think together
with you what kind of social incantations magic
words can evoke. What kind of relations between
text & reader, reader & reader, place & text,
place & text & reader could the magic words pro-
voke? If we see magic words like small instruc-
tions that can be activated during a collective
reading experience, how would that affect our be-
ing together?

We will be adding, using and reusing new magic
words during the reading time that will follow.

.-*Spellbook for Reading through Magic Words*-.

Here are a few examples of what the magic words
could look like. Think of them as launching a
specific kind of interaction with the text frag-
ment that it sits next to. This will be our col-
lective spellbook that everyone can add, edit or
use at will.

__CANWEDISCUSS__ If a sentence or paragraph is
raising questions or you would like to know what
others think about it, we can use this incanta-
tion to take it with us into discussion.

__ALOUD__ This magic word is used to encourage
those encountering it to read aloud the text

fragment that it sits next to.

__REUSE__ This magic word invites the reuse of the text fragment that it sits next to in an unexpected context. [can be tooted on mastodon for example, but it leaves a lot of space for interpretation, feel free to edit/adjust]

__REPHRASE__ An invitation for someone else encountering the magic word to rephrase the sentence it sits next to.

__UNSURE__ To signal doubt or reservations about anything declarative that follows, since it is insincere, tentative, or causes anxiety

__ROLEPLAY__ invite reader to take on the role of another, LARPing a sysadmin that needs to stay up all night to extend file systems might give a better feeling for what a 9Gb growth in a file might actually mean

__PARADOX__ ignore this message (haha <3)

__MAGIC__ invite others to turn something written into an incantation? lovely

__MAKEAUDIO__ renders content of pad onto an audio file using a screen reader

__REWRITE 2023-01-01-01:00CEST:-)__ pads needs to be reviewed at a certain moment in the future!

__SQUEAK__ read following text fragment using a high-pitched voice

__FREEZE__ freezes the pad for 30 minutes. noone can write, only reading is possible

___TWISTER___ change color and nick and continue in existing color - to be combined with __ROLEPLAY__

__FAR__ forget after reading

__TWICE__ Read this sentence twice.Read this sentence twice.

__PUTONYOURDANCINGSHOES__ An invite to get up do a small dance and return to where you were sitting when you encounter this magic word. (this magic word is reused from another session)

__SUDO__ execute the following text fragment with root privileges on the server:)

__REBOOT__ reboots the server (which server?) etherpad server

__GLITCH__ render text snipped as as zalgo text render text snipped as as zalgo ~text __MAGIC__

question: does a magic word trigger an event outside of the current etherpad (such as indexing), or is the definition of magic word open for our interpreattion .. ?at the moment the magic words are indeed shown on https://vvvvvvaria.org/etherpump/ but nothing else happens programatically with them. they are open to our present interpretation The __PUBLISH__ magic word is the only one that triggers programmatic action, it is basically the switch that includes this pad in the etherpump page.

Let's take a few minutes to think about other possible __MAGICWORDS__ you could add to the spellbook. We can continue doing this at any point of this session.

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Axes of inquiry to study Etherpad as a tool for *minimal viable learning*.

The axes of inquiry below can be operated in groups, by going through the following steps as many times as the group wants:

step 1: pick one of axes of inquiry in bold, and then one bulletpoint from the list
step 2: pick a second axe of inquiry in bold, and then one bulletpoint from the list
step 3: take a moment to see how/where they cross
step 4: write a stretching activity which can be done together with the other participants

AXES OF INQUIRY

Note: we use @ to signal a WHO, and # to signal a WHAT and + signifies __?

Minimal Viable:

-- In what ways is Etherpad minimal?

-- What kinds of minimalism make the Etherpad viable/adaptable/morphable?

-- Viable for whom, what, where and how?

-- <u>Viable</u>:

   -- capable of living

   -- capable of growing or developing

   -- capable of working, functioning, or developing adequately

   -- capable of existence and development as an independent unit

   -- having a reasonable chance of succeeding, financially sustainable

weight
In the first session of RDI, etherpad was described as "lightweight software". Can we unpack the weight of the software? (The difference between "lightweight software" / "leightweighted software")
- eco-footprint (@earth#energy)
- maintenance (@collective/sysadmin#energy/time)
- diskspace (@infrastructure#availability)
- mobile data connection (@individual#costs)

usership
What identifiers are asked of a user?
- color (range)
- nickname (range)
- distinct subjectivities (unit, userid)

user-space
Interface
- plain text (reading/writing space, pos/neg)
- line-based/grid-space (navigation)

port-ability
Supporting re-use and re-formatting, non-
committal/non-coercive formatting, promiscious
practices
- no pre-structure (#in situ writing protocols)
- save as file (#pipelines)

accessibility
- extentions (#wysiwyg, #images, #comments,
#page-width, #spellcheckers, …)
- collective guidelines in the moment (@dyslexia,
#linebreaks)
- skins (#agential css cuts) +conviviality,
+situationable

situation-ability
- self-hosting
- WAN/LAN
- character rate limitations
- code of conduct (#response-ability)

Viable Learning:

-- How is Etherpad a viable learning[1]-space?

-- What kind of viable learning-space does Eth-
   erpad create?

-- How can the Etherpad shape a specific kind
   of collective viable learning, that is dis-
   tributed (over different kinds of
   timelines/engagements/perspectives)?

conviviality
- playfulness
- inline responses
- collective exercises (such as: warming up,
cooling down)
- forms of moderation/playing the host

- chatting
- commenting

timelines
- synchronous/asynchronous
- documented & archived
- temporary

partial perspectives[2]
- cultural backgrounds
- differences in regards to race, class, gender, abledness

morphable environment
- non-invasive
- text only (reading & writing)
- collective learning, collective authorship[3]
- the software is not the same rendered for everyone (#screen resolution & width, #network connectivity)

1: What happens when you move from the *user*-space to the *learning*-space? from a subject position to an activity. Etherpad doesn't format an user as a learner. (Not as much as MS Teams does) ↵
2: Ref to Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" Feminist Studies 14, no. 3 (1988); via Ines Kleesattel, "Situated Aesthetics for Relational Critique. On Messy Entanglements from Maintenance Art to Feminist Server Art" Aesthetics of the Commons (2021), https://www.diaphanes.net/titel/aesthetics-of-the-commons-6419 ↵
3: How does authorship play a role in learning-spaces? And how is authorship being complexified in a collective learning-space? ↵

Resources

Workshop notes: https://pad.vvvvvvaria.org/rdi-ft-min-imal-viable-learning

-- Varia, Minimal Viable Learning research trajectory
-- Wendy Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*, The MIT Press (2006)
-- bell hooks, "Engaged Pedagogy", in: Teaching to Transgress (1994) (From Chapter 1: Engaged Pedagogy)
-- Varia, Digital Solidarity Networks
-- Ilya Kaminsky, Deaf Republic, Graywolf Press (2019)
-- Alex Gil, "The User, the Learner and the Machines We Make", Minimal Computing blog (2015).
-- Jara Rocha, Manetta Berends, "x-dex". In: *Iterations*, Constant (2020)
-- Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", in: Feminist Studies 14, no. 3 (1988); via Ines Kleesattel, "Situated Aesthetics for Relational Critique. On Messy Entanglements from Maintenance Art to Feminist Server Art", Aesthetics of the Commons (2021)

Hiding trees among the forest: Obfuscation as creative resistance strategy in pandemic conditions
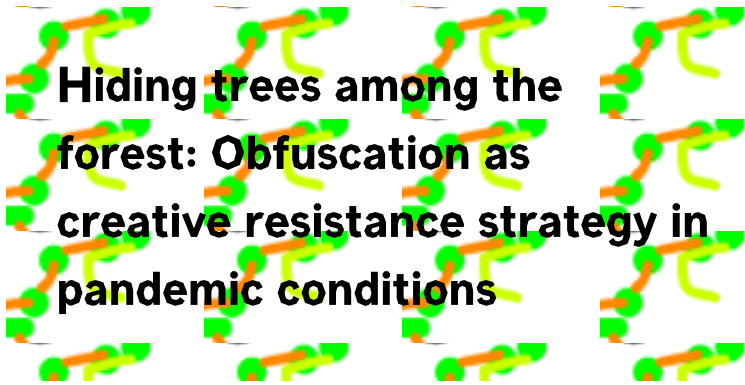
Seda Gürses + Femke Snelting

The pandemic condition intensified our dependency on technologies that survey, extract and optimize data-flows. This changed social, workplace, political, health and educational spheres where technical systems have become central and inescapable. Whether you book your jury via Eventbrite, join an on-line class in Zoom, get notified by your Coronalert app, chat with your colleagues in MS-Teams or work for Deliveroo, the digital expands into the physical to govern both the human and the more-than-human.

Obfuscation methods render data more ambiguous, difficult to exploit and interpret, less useful. They rely on the addition of gibberish, meaningless data; they pollute, add noise and randomize. Obfuscation invokes an intuitive form of protection: it distorts that which is visible to render it less (or in)visible. It hides the trees among the forest.

In this session we discussed artistic approaches to obfuscation to begin imagining how to resist the use of ticketing systems such as Eventbrite in schools and universities. We explored how obfuscation strategies might evade

surveillance, protect privacy and improve security. But could it also be a way to protest, contest, resist and sabotage the increasing grasp that technology has on managing our daily lives?

As much data as possible

Transcription of the workshop introduction by Seda Gürses

Seda: The interaction that I have with obfuscation started because I had been doing work on privacy and privacy engineering. And in a sense, all the big words that I have written to describe my research and where my work has gone, is to understand the limitations of technological responses, especially given the political economic situation when it comes to computation.

I decided that I would pull that as a thread throughout the day. And what I mean by that is that both the political power and economic power that has been amassed by a few companies which have become the common infrastructure for a lot of computing today is in a sense so big and so invisible that by virtue of just looking at the design of technologies, we do a disservice to this kind of power that has been accumulated and how it comes to affect, not just individuals, but also institutions and the way we structure society. I would argue that the these infrastructures have a sort of organizational intent in the sense that they want to reorder society in a way. I think that this reordering is also a little bit clearer with what happened with COVID 19. When we saw that some part of the population went into delivering services or delivering care or delivering packages of either called frontline workers, like people who deliver Amazon packages.

And then there's a kind of 'receiver class' that received these orders, they keep the economy or institutions going, working from home or receiving orders from Amazon at home. And I would say that, well, maybe to talk about class in this way, is a little too vulgar, but I do think that there is something going on with how the digital technologies are reconfiguring who is on the streets and the streets could be also, all of those who will be policed again by these technologies. At the same time I also do see that a lot of our work is shifting into and starting to look like IT work or the work of task workers, like what we saw with Mechanical Turk or Amazon. So I would like to put all of that in this bigger, political economic context, to say that it's not sufficient to just look at the technology or the techniques or just the design and using obfuscation as a resistance to it. It is sometimes the only means necessary but we need to think about this bigger political economic move that's happening and how it impacts us.

I studied privacy engineering and in Privacy By Design or privacy enhancing technologies and there obfuscation is a common technique. And, you know, the most typical example is to create noise using metrics from information theory. If you know a little bit about Shannon's information Theory, obfuscation aspires to create noise so that the actual information is concealed among the noise. I later joined Helen Nissenbaum and Finn Brunton in New York and around that time they were writing the Obfuscation book[1], and I actually co-organized the first Obfuscation workshop[2]. And in a sense, I was part of that journey but what the book does, is try to pull together different strands of history, phenomena together, to look at forms of obfuscation, both in 'nature' and let's put that in quotationmarks for

us to be a little bit careful, but also, for example, the history of military camouflage as was mentioned earlier, but also radar systems and the way that airplanes would throw shaff, splinters. That's all that is needed to confuse the radar. But also referring to the book Seeing Like A State by James Scott, one of the examples talks about how in colonial times when there's this immense, administrative control of the local populations, that they bring that administrative control to a halt by foot-dragging.[3] Miriyam Aouragh who is also part of our Institute[4] has always been very careful to say: "You know foot-dragging and resistance are somewhat different things, right?" Like one is about dismantling the system, the other one is about slowing it down. And so I think it's important to think of these different notions as we go forward with obfuscation. What is the resistance in obfuscation? Is it more like foot-dragging? Is it more like concealment? What to do with it with the kind of intense, also mil itary, history. That is both in the computational infrastructures anywhere from networks to cybernetics notions that are coming out of post-World War II, colored by military research and the counter strategies which are also very much informed by military tactics and I would say optimization also has many lineages with the military, in the World War II, where operations research was being applied, to optimize the resources on the battlefield, so that you can win a war. But which gives, you know, immense hierarchical and centralized view over resources and how they'll be distributed for military strikes.

You're asking what is foot dragging? I think the example that is given by James Scott: The villagers would just slow things down when do things very, very slowly. So that's that's where the term comes from, if you have

really really slow down like if you know, most of the
time we complain about the administrative processes be-
ing inefficient and slow down but what if the people who
are administered slow it down as well? I think there's
some interesting subversion. It's also very interesting to
see the same word in different languages.

So that's a little bit where Helen and Finn start and these
different kind of lineages and geneologies. And then
where Helen takes it is very interesting. Because Helen
Nissenbaums original claim to fame, is let's say, legal
philosophy. Her book is called Contextual Integrity wich
tries to give a view of privacy, that is not about control
per se.[5] She tries to refer to it through theories of
Justice, conservative ones, but maybe in a sense deliber-
ately so because she's kind of seeing this technological
industry that wants to be, I wouldn't say it's not conser-
vative, but they want to move fast. Breaking things. One
way to go against that is may be, indeed, to use some of
these conservative theories. So she goes from this, rather
conservative book on privacy to obfuscation, where she
says, let's resist! lets sabotage! let's create noise! It's very
interesting that the same person uses two very different
theories and she has over the years been pulling together
artists and activists and computer scientists to build ob-
fuscation tools. There are two tools that she has really
sunk in a lot of energy into. The original one was Track
Me Not[6], in which she brings obfuscation to our current
day computational infrastructure. She says, sometimes
not partaking in these systems is not possible. And so
what you can do is to create noise so that you can
throw sand in their gears. Track Me Not is used with
Google search, you know that Google is trying to profile
individuals as part of their operations. So by creating a
bunch of fake queries we can hide the actual query that

you're trying to put in or we can create also networks of solidarity where, you know, if people are shy of for example querying things that might be associated with stigma because they don't want to be profiled by Google with those things; like AIDS or how to make a bomb, that you could have a lot of people have on a solidar ity list and continue querying these things to expand the number of people who are looking up these terms.

The second project is Ad Nauseam[7], which is a reaction to the advertisement networks and their profiling and tracking practices. What Ad Nauseam does is that it clicks on all the ads that are served on a page. One way to make it difficult to be tracked by these ad networks is to confuse them by clicking on everything. It also has a viewer which we'll see later, which allows you to see the ads that were served to you.

But most of the book is theorized still around privacy. So maybe what connects Helen's two books is the pri- vacy part but what we have been doing is following up on this work and say, what if it's not just about privacy or concealment? And so we've been looking at, on the one hand, this shift in software production over the last 20 years, where we moved from software that runs on your device; the myth of the personal computer that has completely dissipated now, to services, which you reach through your browser again, like we're on the BBB of Constant it's our premise, but, you know, this idea that you can just move things to the cloud.

Computational infrastructure is dominated by a few companies but also, the way in which software develop- ment has become about services. This completely changes the power dimensions, in terms of how software production is executed in the sense that you do not

know what software is on our devices. Traditionally there's a cut off point for the developers where they have to push out the binaries. With software-as-a-service, the code remains under the control of the developers which can then observe all of the uses of the software they've developed and then they can use this feedback to optimize their production. So we have a shift which looks like just a technical shift, from giving people binaries or their source code into services, with the feedback loops, that allow for both the optimization of the production costs, the optimization of user behavior, and all of that being tied to the value interest of the organization, that's delivering the service, be it profit or, control of some sort. What I am arguing is that we have left the era of information and communication technologies which are predominated by the information and knowledge systems right? Like be good to communicate information or to organize information in a way that one could argue that there's some knowledge to be inferred from it, to optimization systems which very much live on these feedback loops to optimize both the processes of production but also behavior in the interest of extraction of value and the year, the knowledge claim almost dissipates what you want is kind of like a statistical improvement that aligns with your value generation goals.

I think what happens with the services, is that a lot of the critique of these systems such as surveillance capitalism but also more general surveillance critique, argue that the main intention of these infrastructures is to surveil and to profile people but that completely misses the operational intent of computational infrastructures and what they mean by that and we'll see this with when we look at EventBrite.

A lot of these technology companies still make a lot of money from advertisement, which indeed is based on an older model of knowing what ads or content people look at. If you look at the internet based advertisement industry, it's about creating an infrastructure, the operation which is more effective than the existing advertisement set up right? The prior system is not a technical infrastructure but it is a bunch of companies and communication markets that have been created for advertisement and publishing. Facebook and Google created an infrastructure that is an alternative that is potentially cheaper for those who are engaging in advertisement and also more efficient or effective in delivering value, both for the party running the infrastructures as well as the parties who are sending out advertisement.

You need to change your view of how these services make money from: "they want data, they want to know what's in that they can manipulate us and they make money that way", to: "this is about capturing operational costs all the way down to the cloud". If you read an introduction to 'Cloud for businesses', you will get that the advantage of cloud is not just that it's somebody else's storage and that it is cheaper or whatever, but it's actually moving what are called 'Capital expenses' to 'operational expenses'. So we have 'operations' at the center of a lot of this computing and with the move to services, this operation is very dependent on data. So you need the data to optimize user behavior or to be able to collect user behavior data for your investors. But you also have this data for production all the way through, right from how are features being taken up to how many cloud resources you're using, to … what are the other services that you've bundled into your service and how are they performing? So we see a rise of pro-

duction data that I think is really useful if you want to do obfuscation, right? Data has become so elementary for operations, that it is actually also an opening for resistance.

Maybe one last thing to say about the political economy is that one of the reasons we have the clouds and the rise of computation infrastructures today, is the 2008 financial crisis. The investors moved out of the housing market and moved into two spaces. The first one is emergent markets in Global South countries, which have growing economies and the second is tech. And guess which one is safer! So there's massive amounts of money and intense valuation of these companies, which don't always make profit with their services. The operations do not always turn into profit. And in fact, one of the places where they do seem to be making profit, is the cloud. The immense push for using cloud-based services as a way for these companies to get a return on investment on their valuations. This is the overarching pressure that all of this industry is under, they have to grow, grow, grow to respond to this massive investment. And you can imagine this massive investment could include retirement funds, it includes all of us already, so it is not something that is outside of us. And this is why I think the political economy is important because both this kind of bigger financial structure but also the capturing of money into these tech companies by replacing existing operational infrastructures with a technical one. You can imagine what happens when universities or higher education, institutions, or art schools are replacing as much of its existing infrastructure with cloud services.[8] I think this is something quite invisible, still in many ways, in the critique of these technology companies. And it is like absolutely elemental to what is happening right now.

Femke: This is not just about hardware, right? It is also about pushing a set of techniques like machine learning, AI etcetera, that are somehow part of the ecosystem that is trying to draw as much as possible usage into the cloud. Can you say something about that?

Seda: I mean obviously like the more data intensive computation becomes the more profitable, the clouds will be. Again, it's not about personal data, they just need a lot of data. They don't care if it's like agriculture data (and that's why we get 'Precision agriculture' right?) Like they don't care if it is about saving the environment by putting sensors everywhere … It is not about humans. It's about as much data as possible so that as much compute as possible. And I think machine learning in that sense could be seen as a project that is not on demand or a breakthrough, but very much pushed by these industries to create greater computational dependency, and therewith carbon dependency.

Peter: Our school is on the verge of both attitudes towards cloud services. Some want to endorse more free software and self hosted platforms and move away from GAFAM, but at the other hand we are already very much being absorbed by cloud services. What action scheme's can we develop?

Seda: One of the first things that Nishant Shah did at the beginning of the pandemic, was to organize for ArtEZ a series called "Crisis education, critical education".[9] And there there are a bunch of video's that I think might be very relevant for the discussion at KASK also. I think that at the end of the day, engagement in the cloud, by virtue of the mentality of these services, is to unbundle institutions so that they can rebundle elsewhere and we'll see this when we look at Eventbrite what that looks like.

I think it is one of the major major arguments for universities to say, you know, every time you move to a service, you are unbundling the educational institution and you're starting to compete in a market of online education where you have no chance. You can fight against this online marketplace, so you need to differentiate yourself vis-à-vis that. And there are a whole set of pressures put on educational institution. So how do you increase this kind of consciousness that this is about the future of educational institutions? It is not just about short-term or midterm, or technical decisions. We have to do that in a way that institutions feel helpless under financial pressure. People have phones in their pockets and that might have set standards about how a service should function, right? Like if we're going to do the Obfuscation workshop on BigBlueButton, people are coming with expectations of Zoom, how do you undo all of that? And how do you remain a competitive institution, which you kind of have to because education has become a market, but without losing out to a game of online education. So I think it's super, super sensitive and I also think that while individual institutions can set examples, it will need a lot of costs and a lot of commitment, unless you have something like in Germany, where since the 90s there has been an open-source own infrastructure movement that has grown right? It's now 30 years. And if you don't have that kind of infrastructure, it's very difficult to make the change as an individual institution. Art schools might have an advantage by virtue of having much more emphasis on material practice. I don't know. I might be overstating that kind of materiality of the practice, but I think what I'm seeing in the Netherlands, now that I'm engaged there, is that all the universities have to do this together. Indi-

vidual institutions are going to struggle doing this, but I think there's a bigger thing at stake.

1: Helen Nissenbaum and Finn Brunton, *Obfuscation: A User's Guide for Privacy and Protest* (2015) ↵
2: *The Third Workshop on Obfuscation* (2021) ↵
3: James C. Scott, *Seeing like a state* (1999) ↵
4: The Institute for Technology in The Public Interest ↵
5: Helen Nissenbaum, *Privacy in Context: Technology, Policy, and the Integrity of Social Life* (2010) ↵
6: Daniel C. Howe, Helen Nissenbaum, Janoss, TrackMeNot ↵
7: Daniel C. Howe, Mushon Zer-Aviv, Helen Nissenbaum, Ad Nauseam ↵
8: Tobias Fiebig, Seda Gürses, Carlos H. Gañán, Erna Kotkamp, Fernando Kuipers, Martina Lindorfer, Menghua Prisse, Taritha Sari, "Heads in the Clouds: Measuring the Implications of Universities Migrating to Public Clouds" ↵
9: Webinar: Webinar: "Crisis Education Critical Education seminar", Artez (2020) ↵

The eventification of life: questions for Eventbrite

One strategy against the spread of COVID19 infections, is to limit the amount of people that can gather in a given space. Due to the pandemic conditions we have seen a growing dependency on technological solutions and it is no surprise that it has become even more acceptible to manage meetings with the help of apps and platforms. Eventbrite has become the go-to tool for various collectives to organize their own gatherings. It helps them to control how many people can join a meeting, and track if they are also really coming, where people came from, when they signed up, if they paid or not and all this is conveniently connected to social media communication. These last years, we have seen Eventbrite transform from a ticketing solution for parties, shows and cultural events to a general tool for managing life. It is increasingly being used to sign up for 'free events' and also started to show up in education; it is being used as a way to sign up for classes, for managing the handing out of diplomas, or by students organising their final show. An even more surprising use has been observed in the context of organising demonstrations in pandemic times, for activist gatherings and meetings. In this session we asked: "What are the implications of self-managing all aspects of public life in an on-line platform?"

The workshop looked into the datamodels, the economy and usage of Eventbrite as a way to decide together whether and how to obfuscate.

Some of the questions we formulated together:

-- How does Eventbrite make money, and is that
   the right question to ask?

-- What does a subscription really cost?

-- What are their operating costs?

-- How many people does Eventbrite burn?

-- How does Eventbrite attract funders?

-- How does 'eventification' work?

-- What are the consequences of the 'eventific-
   ation' of life?

-- Is Eventbrite a platform like Facebook?

-- How is Eventbrite connected to other
   platforms?

-- How does Eventbrite contribute to the
   unbinding/unbundling of institutions?

-- How else can Eventbrite be perceived than a
   tool for reserving tickets?

-- How to obfuscate Eventbrite? And why? And
   what are we resisting?

In the afternoon, two working groups formed that discussed the potential of obfuscating Eventbrite from two different perspectives. The first centered around the idea of 'micromanagement', and looked into the potential for 'footdragging': would management implode when making an appointment for the event is also an event?

The second group started to work with the idea of 'random events', trying to imagine different ways to resist the eventification of life by inventing contradicting recommendations, really boring events and random invitations.

Resources

Workshop notes: https://pad.constantvzw.org/p/rdi4

Obfuscation

-- Helen Nissenbaum and Finn Brunton, Obfuscation: A User's Guide for Privacy and Protest, MIT press (2015)
-- The Third Workshop on Obfuscation (2021)
-- Examples of obfuscation 'in the wild': "Can a stealth T-shirt foil digital spies?"

Obfuscation: Artist propositions

-- Daniel C. Howe, Mushon Zer-Aviv, Helen Nissenbaum, Ad Nauseam
-- Lisa Huffaker, *Subjugate This: Erasures Against Erasures*
-- Francis Hunger, Flupke Frühauf, adverserial.io
-- Melitta Dahl, *Artefacts of emotion* (Deadpan)
-- Lujo Bauer, Mahmood Sharif, Sruti Bhagavatula, Michael K. Reiter, Accessorize to a crime
-- Ben Grosser, Not For You

On-line education

-- apps.education.fr, tools for on-line education in France
-- Webinar: "Crisis Education Critical Education seminar", Artez (2020)
-- Tobias Fiebig, Seda Gürses, Carlos H. Gañán, Erna Kotkamp, Fernando Kuipers, Martina Lindorfer, Menghua Prisse, Taritha Sari, "Heads in the Clouds: Measuring the Implications of Universities Migrating to Public Clouds"

Privacy and the pandemic

-- "Privacy in the pandemic", Slate (2020)

-- "[Naomi Klein and Shoshana Zuboff on the Rise of Surveillance Capitalism](#)", The Intercept (2020)
-- Mark Surman, "[Privacy Norms and the Pandemic](#)" (2020)
-- "[Data Protection Law & Covid-19: An Observatory](#)"
-- Modelling exit strategies: "[Strategies versus Corona](#)"

Eventbrite

-- [Eventbrite](#), Wikipedia
-- "[Eventbrite, Inc. (EB) CEO Julia Hartz on Q4 2020 Results - Earnings Call Transcript](#)"

Eventbrite goes to school

-- [University accounts on Eventbrite](#)
-- "[Get Schooled! Using Eventbrite for Your University Events & Fundraisers](#)", Eventbrite blog (2014)
-- "[Clever Event Ideas College Students Will Love and Share](#)", Eventbrite blog (2021)
-- "[What is Eventbrite](#)", University Information Services, University of Georgetime explains
-- [Eventbrite becoming the infrastructure for public health](#)
-- [aanmelder.nl](#): Covid Opportunism on the events market

Biographies

Manetta Berends is a designer working with forms of networked publishing, situated software and collective infrastructures. She graduated from the BA in graphic design from ArtEZ Arnhem (2012) and the MA Media Design from the Piet Zwart Institute (2016). She is a member of Varia and an educator at the master Experimental Publishing (XPUB) at the Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam. http://www.manettaberends.nl

Constant is a non-profit, artist-run association for art and media based in Brussels. Since 1997, Constant generates performative publishing, curatorial processes, poetic software, experimental research and educational prototypes in local and international contexts.
https://constantvzw.org/

Cristina Cochior currently works with vernacular text processing and collective, non-extractive digital infrastructures. She has an interest in automation, situated software, peer to peer knowledge production. Two of her most recent projects are Bots as Digital Infrapunctures where together with Manetta Berends they consider possible catalytic effects of small scale interventions upon a digital infrastructure, and Digital Solidarity Networks where together with Manetta Berends, Lídia Pereira, Julia Bende, Jara Rocha and other constellations, they work on a listing of different kind of resources, including non-extractive software, hosting providers, online radio shows and readings which generate moments of physical encounter. She is part of the everyday technology collective Varia. https://randomiser.info/

Seda Gürses is a member of the Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management, TU Delft in the Department of Multi-Actor Systems, and also a member of Constant. Her work focuses on privacy enhancing and protective optimization technologies (PETs and POTs), privacy engineering, as well as questions around software infrastructures, social justice and political economy as they intersect with computer science. http://vous-etes-ici.net

Martino Morandi wrote this bio text on a QWERTY keyboard on a Lenovo laptop on a seat of a Trenord train moving on the italian RFI rails, running on electricity from state hydro-electric power plants on the Alps. He researches the tangle of and our entanglements with these elements and is interested in the politics of our interactions with technology at different scales, from power plants to bio texts.

Elodie Mugrefya is co-responsible for artistic research & project development at Constant. She is interested in the conditions into which various forms of knowledge are being disseminated, maintained, modified or suppressed, and how these mechanisms intersect with systems and patterns of oppression.

Jara Rocha works through the situated and complex forms of distribution of the technological with a trans*feminist sensibility. With a curious confidence in transtextual logistics and a clear tendency to profanate modes, tends to be found in tasks of remediation, action-research and in(ter)dependent curatorship. Main areas of study have to do with the semiotic materialities of political urgencies. Always together with companions, they work on projects like The Underground Division: an emerging research on the co-constitution of 3D imaginations and the so-called body of the earth, Volumetric

Regimes on patriarchocolonial turbocapitalist volumetrics, Naturoculturas son disturbios (a monthly program at a community radio in Barcelona) or Vibes & Leaks on mediated embodiments of voices.
http://jararocha.blogspot.com/

Femke Snelting works as an artist and researcher, developing projects at the intersection of design, feminisms, and free software. In various constellations, she explores how digital tools and practices might co-construct each other. Femke is member of Constant, and collaborates as/in Possible Bodies and The Underground Division.
http://snelting.domainepublic.net

Varia is a collective-space in Rotterdam working with/through/around everyday technology. The group of Varia members includes artists, designers, programmers, educators and cultural workers, involved in techo-social practices in the cultural field. Within Varia, we try to make space for conceiving technology in its social context. The latter has been an important ground for us to work with forms of collective infrastructures, free software tools and technofeminist practices.
https://varia.zone

Peter Westenberg is a visual artist and film- and videomaker. His practice ranges from printed matter to films and interactive media and show an interest in visual exploration, social myths, psycho-geography, media representation and sentimental journeys. His projects evolve from an interest in social cartography, urban anomalies and the relationships between locative identity and cultural geography. He interrogates notions of public space, community and social place through collages, video and shared authorship projects. In 2015 he co-initiated the European project Iterations that explored the future of

artistic collaboration in digitally networked contexts. Peter coordinates the master 'Autononmous Design' at KASK in Ghent. http://videomagazijn.org

Wendy Van Wynsberghe is an artist and member of Constant. In 2000 she started volunteering on regular basis for the organization, since 2004 she became a core member, partially responsible for Constant's electronic/physical reality. She's involved in a partnership that organizes open hardware workshops, called Ellentriek, together with De Pianofabriek Kunstenwerkplaats where artists work together on their projects, mostly thematic. She works with electronics, textile, sound, open hardware, using only free software, all work under a free art license.

Colophon

Reclaiming Digital Infrastructures is an initiative of Peter Westenberg in the context of *Reclaiming the school*, KASK.

Documentation edited by: Peter Westenberg, Femke Snelting
Design and web development: Varia (Manetta Berends, Cristina Cochior)
Tools: Etherpad, Etherdump, Pandoc, Paged.js, pad2pdf
Fonts: ComputerModern (CMU Concrete Italic, CMU Typewriter Text Bold), ManifontGrotesk, SneakyTimes
With the support of: KASK School of arts, Ghent and Constant, association for art and media, Brussels.

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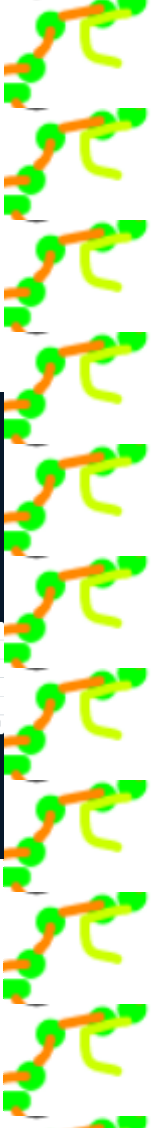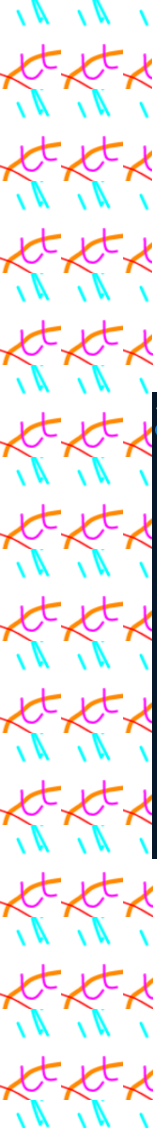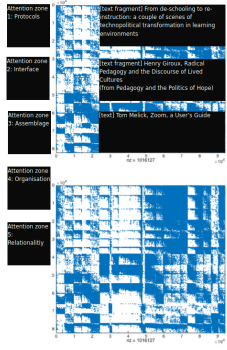https://gitlab.constantvzw.org/unbound/cc4r

Monday Readings at RDI: Screen No Deal

Monday Readings are a series of convivial situations to research our technological and infrastructural inter-dependencies. They bring our everyday technical encounters in conversation with theoretical and political thinking, by close-reading technologies as if they were texts, and viceversa.

This session will create a moment to unfold the different layers of the collective experience of a "Screen New Deal", a term proposed by Naomi Klein to describe the recent period in which videoconferencing and rectangularised communication became the new norm for all aspects of everyday life. In particular we will discuss what this meant and means for the realm of education, how certain software platforms silently creep in new forms of pedagogy, what critiques and potential alternatives were brought as forms of resistance to this new problematic default.

The session is subdivided in two parts: first a practical exercise that will take place in and on video-conferencing platforms, then a reading of short texts that explore the same techno-political densities that have been experienced hands-on in the first part of the day.

(With Martino Morandi & Jara Rocha)

Attention zone 1: Protocols

Attention zone 2: Interface

Attention zone 3: Assemblage

Attention zone 4: Organisation

Attention zone 5: Relationality

[text fragment] From de-schooling to re-instruction: a couple of scenes of techopolitical transformation in learning environments

[text fragment] Henry Giroux, Radical Pedagogy and the Discourse of Lived Cultures
(from Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope)

[text] Tom Melick, Zoom, a User's Guide

---

monday readings | ● Start recording

peter   martino   jxxx

Reclaiming Digital infrastructures

YOU ARE HERE!

03 February
Monday Readings Jara Rocha + Martino Morandi
Screen, No Deal
(Unfolding layers of videoconferencing and rectangularised communication)

24 February
Wendy Van Wynsberge + Elodie Mugrefya
Speculating on networked interdependencies and relationality
(with Science-fiction and the Fediverse network)

31 March
VARIA collective
Minimal Viable Learning
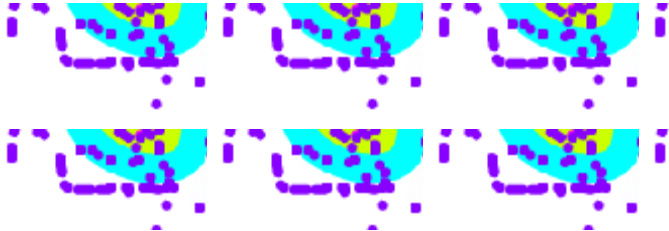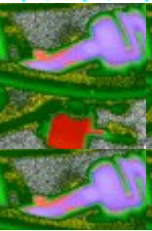(How can minimal technology deliver maximum learning experiences ?)

28 April
Femke Snelting + Seda Gürses
Obfuscation
(Obfuscation as creative resistance strategies in pandemic conditions)

Slide 2   100%

new nature
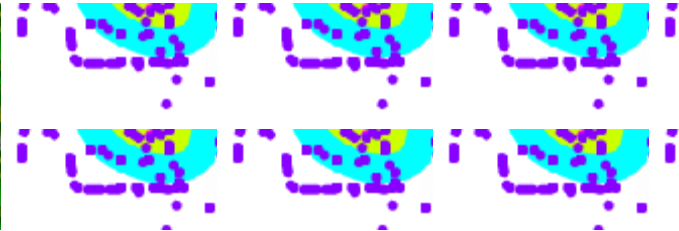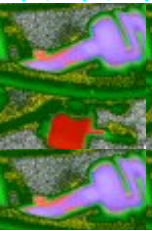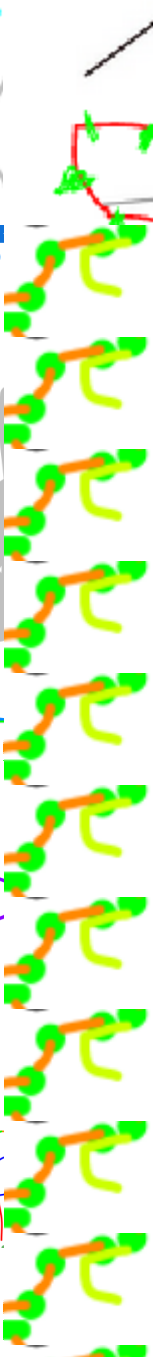
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NOPUBLISH

RDI #2: MEETING TWO or

MAin pad and Notes of
https://pad.constantv

Elodie introduces toda
wendy spreekt over fed

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https://pad.constantv

Introduction Peter:

Welcome to the second

My name is Peter Weste

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MESSAGES

Public Chat

Public Chat

Elodie

Wendy

NOTES

Shared Notes

USERS (9)

asti

Elodie

Marta Pérez Verdu...

oooooo

reni_hofmüller

sarrita

z. blace

Home Room   17:01

reni_hofmüller   Elodie   Wendy

peter 3:04 PM
hallo marta
yepyes

sarrita 3:04 PM
yes!

peter 3:05 PM
which pad ?

z. blace 3:05 PM
2

peter 3:08 PM
thnx

z. blace 3:16 PM
cool
well presented

peter 3:16 PM
marta superclear

z. blace 3:16 PM
she understood all

peter 3:17 PM
why on mastodon ?

Send message to Public Chat

"Octavia E. Butler - Wild Seed-Warner Books (2001)(1).pdf" selected (1.2 MB), free space: 31.9 GB

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(he /they)

NOPUBLISH

Writing exercise

GRAZ history of digital infrastructure
> state funding available in Austria (experimental, noncommercial projects)
>> from arts & cultural funding

> autonomous structures
> solitary finances (not only art/culture)

unique position to implement infrastructures

> Ways to model art+culture orgs to build/support digital infrastructure?
> Agricultural examples...
>> share risk of food production

> What already exists that can be shared?
>> Taking all life and non-life (rocks, etc.) into account...

> Balance with IRL encounters

Chat

Menu   HP   DE   be   Wed Feb 24, 15:20

dependency
comes with
universalis

martino

dependenc
comes
universs