

IMMATERIAL

LABOUR

UNION

IMMERSIVE  
ADS

#7

## Editors' Note

*Lidia Pereira and Δεριζαματζορ Προμπλεμ ιναυστραλια*

Welcome to the 7th issue of the Immaterial Labour Union zine, this time inspired by the trend of 'Immersive Advertisement'. In an attempt to cope with the ever-engulfing sensorial pool of data which floods as we drown in it, we looked for contributions that could act as an appeal to reason against our 'smart' environment. The concept of immersion immediately evokes that of boundaries. Immersive advertisement, they say, lulls us into product gazing through creative storytelling, but might not one consider just as immersive all these companies inhabiting our digital interactions on corporate social media, thus creating a false sense of intimacy? Lee Nutbean invites us all to participate in his collaborative online persona and, in doing so, hopes this social performance of the self will 'contaminate' the well oiled machine of personal data economy.

**Δεριζαματζορ Προμπλεμ ιναυστραλια** remixes an article presenting the new Facebook Canvas, the mobile platform for immersive advertisement, only to make the already-there disturbing qualities glaringly obvious.

Back in May, Roel Roscam Abbing, Femke Snelting and Peggy Pierrot organized a workshop out of which a comment on the proposal to add new emoji modifiers was produced, which we now share and which concerns itself with the "danger of augmenting racist and sexist undertones". Dmytri Kleiner underlines the insufficiency of going back to early Internet structures of decentralized servers, as cybernetic capital was designed to defeat precisely such attempts. Alternatives must thus be conceived with that in mind.

On her presentation of "Emergenc(i)es: Control and Calculation : Inheriting Liberation : Improvised Publics"<sup>1</sup>, an exhibition which took place in June, D-M Withers, the event curator, speculates about the power of 'resilience' and improvisation within a growingly scripted society.

Nick Briz shares with us an instruction guide on how to leave Facebook without deleting your account, as doing so is not always the most feasible option for a lot of its users. So how to reach a compromise?

### **Contributions by:**

D-M Withers, Dmytri Kleiner, Femke Snelting, Lee Nutbean, Lídia

Pereira, Mathijs van Oosterhoudt, Nick Briz, Peggy Pierrot, Roel Roscam Abbing, Simone Cassiani, Δεριζαματζορ Προμπλεμ  
**ιναυστραλια**

All contributions to the zine, unless otherwise specified, are licensed under the GNU Free Documentation License 1.3<sup>2</sup>.

---

1: <https://emergencies-bristol.tumblr.com/>

2: <https://www.gnu.org/licenses/fdl-1.3.en.html>

# Valuable Friendships

Lidia Pereira and Mathijs van Oosterhoudt



# Click Me

*Simone Cassiani*

It's both man and machine  
Machine to emulate man, man who emulates machine,  
Two parts, infrastructural promiscuity.  
Click me, said Alice to the button,  
Or was it the contrary? Anyway, it feels  
these news from everywhere cramp up my abilities.  
Machinic freedom, we crave it to be and yet  
From every crevice we sweat commodities.  
You're making it harder for me to escape:  
The borders of your control control the borders of me.  
I exist for your interventions, dimensions  
Of user freedom to express efficiency.

# Faux Pas

*Lee Nutbean*

<http://leenutbean.uk/faux.html>

## **Abstract**

Over recent years, mobile communication technologies have enabled capitalist networking algorithms to quietly penetrate our daily lives, becoming an integral component in the shaping of our identity. We no longer have sole agency over the presentation of self, as our everyday cycles of impression are laminated together to form a synchronized sphere of monetized data. Where total public transparency has become the default setting, and privacy glass is an alternative 'tickable' option.

Faux pas is an always-on intervention to contaminate the oil of the personal information economy with a foreign body of de-monetized labour. The live performance openly submits my personal sphere of 'life - my quantification, my autobiography and my social media persona - to be publicly curated, socially edited and playfully embodied by others to collectively transmit a faux performance of self.



## **Nudging Transparency**

We are sleep walking into a transparent society of authenticated self-monitoring. Where the concept of self-tracking is pushed to be taken up voluntarily as a response to external encouragement, rather than as a wholly self-generated and private initiative. Self-tracking rationales and sites are proliferating as part of a 'function creep' of the technology and ethos of reflexive self-monitoring. The personal informatics derived from life logging are used by actors, agencies and organizations and go beyond the personal and privatized realm<sup>1</sup>.

Self-tracking fosters a decontextualized blurring of common privacy boundaries by collapsing social contexts. This causes personal information that was formerly confined to and aimed at a particular social context or relationship to transgress its usual borders<sup>2</sup>. In some contexts people are encouraged, 'nudged', obliged or coerced into using digital devices to produce personal data to be used by others. Nudging influences agents' processes of preference (and, hence, identity) formation by the partial outsourcing of self-government.

Under the allure of 'excessive convenience' we are systematically discouraged from shaping our will and agency over active choice. This prevents us from engaging in the existential (if effortful) task of self-constitution that is at the heart of the very process of identity formation<sup>3</sup>.

## **Faux pas-formance**

Faux pas breaks the dichotomy of transmitter-receiver and performer-audience by the dissolution of pre-defined dualities. My primary online identity is suppressed and possessed by an infinite array dissociated personalities, who dynamically re-define their roles to achieve a live state of my cohabitants. The faux performance of distinct personalities collectively adheres to current trends of identity authentication, and embrace the nudges of encouragement from external devices by providing a real-time feed of de-monetized labour.

---

1: Deborah Lupton, Self-tracking modes: Reflexive self-monitoring and data practices. (2014), 7. Available at SSRN:<http://ssrn.com/abstract=2483549>. Accessed 14 February 2016.

2: Helen Nissenbaum, Privacy in context: Technology, policy, and the integrity of social life. (Stanford Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2010), 40.

3: Christian Schubert, On the Ethics of Public Nudging: Autonomy and Agency (2015), 22. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2672970>. Accessed 2 March 2016.



# Facebook Canvas Remix

*Δεριζαματζορ Προμπλεμ ιναυστραλια*

Mobile ads can be a painful experience. They can stop you dead in your tracks for all the wrong reasons. Take a moment to think through what that means. Agency designers found Facebook too creatively restrictive. Mobile ads can be painful. But they don't have to be. Those two things aren't mutually exclusive. I'm excited about what we've built. I know I'm not alone. We wanted to build a natural and familiar experience: fast, fun, and rewarding. This hinted a way forward for the creation tool: modularity. We affectionately started calling it the other space. The other space crystalized when we found the sweet spot of these two goals: a flexible tool where we were able to control the variables. We make sure that ads feel at home, without delivering anything valuable to you. We drew inspiration from all sorts of places. That became Canvas. But flat navigation also keeps things easier to create—it's much easier to conceptualize something linear than more complex multi-page hierarchies. The value of a good story is too often overlooked. An advertiser has the creative flexibility to construct a narrative with the blocks that best meet their goals. Last April, we started the process of finding partners to begin public alpha tests. We led brainstorm and white-boarding sessions with agencies and brands that were unconstrained by the limits of our existing patterns. Think of Volkswagen's Think Small, Apple's Mac vs. PC, Dos Equis' Most Interesting Man in the World. They connect on a personal level, hitting on some universal truth. Today, Facebook announced that Canvas is available to our advertisers worldwide. But we're not finished. Take a moment to think through what that means.

# Issues with modifier mechanism, UTS #52

*Various*



Feedback submitted on Monday 2 May 2016, 09:00 CET to <http://www.unicode.org/review/pri321/>

We are submitting these comments to the Proposed Draft UTS #52, Unicode Emoji Mechanisms because we think there are serious issues with the general implications of the modifier mechanism that was already introduced in Unicode 8 with Skin Tone Modifiers. We believe UTS #52 possibly contravenes both the mission and bylaws of the Unicode Consortium. We wish to identify issues that we hope will have an impact on decisions and future policies. We suggest a reconsideration of the underlying logic of the modifier mechanism as applied to emoji.

These comments were formulated by an international, multilingual group of researchers working in the field of software and media. We investigate and produce a wide-range of projects around the role of standards and the politics embedded in infrastructures of communication, and are using emoji intensively in our communication. We are thus deeply concerned about the directions that emoji related standards have taken so far, and are being proposed to take in the future.

The introduction of emojis into the Unicode standard shows a contradiction at the heart of the Unicode project, specifically if we consider the ways in which the precedent of Skin Tone Modifiers advance the reduction of types and attributes in the name of increased particularity. This lapse in logic exposes the inherent biases and considerable problematics that underwrites such a proposal and move. We want to emphasize that emojis are functioning in the realm of semantics rather than syntax. As a result they bring up radically other issues than those related to the domain of written characters.

We question the fundamental assumptions that diversity should be expressed through a "modifier" at all:

1. By positing a "normal" baseline against which difference is to be measured, the mechanism sets up problematic relations between the categories that act as modifiers and the pictographs that they modify. If we, for example, imagine what the consequences would be of adding "disability" as a modifier to future Unicode specifications, it is easy to understand this tension. Disability should never be conceived of as a condition of modification to a base-line standard. In practice however, it would have to be implemented exactly in this way, not unlike the way the Skin Tone Modifiers are now implemented and more importantly perceived as a "blackface" modifier to a "white" base.<sup>1</sup>
2. To express diversity as a "variant" is a reductive response to the complexity of identities and their representational needs. If we consider the implementation of gender variants (male, female, neutral) for example, we can foresee issues with expressing more complex gendered formations such as transgender or transsexuality. This issue would not be solved by augmenting the resolution of the variants, as the mechanism of varying between binary opposites itself is fundamentally flawed.<sup>2</sup>
3. The consortium should take into account how, once implemented, the modifiers will function in today's media environment. Should Unicode-compliant search engines differentiate results according to modifier categories? There is a documented case of Instagram searches that return different results depending on emoji with the Skin Tone Modifier applied.<sup>3</sup> We think that the responsibility for instituting such potential for segregation lies not (only) with the one who implements, but rather with the one who proposes and defines a standard. Unicode can not neglect to consider such consequences. Aside from impacting the equal access to information, the mechanism can be expected to be used in reverse, as a method to identify authors of content on the basis of their supposed race, gender etc.

4. The proposed modifiers for skin tone and haircolor are both based upon questionable external standards. In the case of the Skin Tone Modifiers, the Consortium has chosen to use the Fitzpatrick scale in an attempt to find a "neutral" gauge for skin tone. The argument was made that it 'has the advantage of being recognized as an external standard without negative associations'.<sup>4</sup> In doing so, the Consortium has conflated and misunderstood a medical standard for the way human skin responds to UV exposure, with a scale that represents skin color.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the Fitzpatrick scale has a lineage to colonialism via the Von Luschan's chromatic scale. To ignore this lineage is emblematic of implementing a standard without careful examination of its scientific, political, cultural and social context of production. In TR52, when discussing the options for haircolor, the consortium insists on a limited palette by referring to the "cartoon style" nature of emoji.<sup>6</sup> At the same time the proposal refers to the US Online Passport application form as the "standard" to follow when choosing this limited palette. The way the U.S. State Department chooses to view and categorize people is a particular expression of how the border control agency sees a person, it should not have to make its way into daily communications. Rather than suggesting a less "loaded" standard to follow, we argue that this is yet another example of the unavoidable and unsolvable problems that the Unicode consortium runs into with the logic of the modifier mechanism.

The origins of emojis demonstrate a certain inventiveness on the part of users, but now 'novelty' has been subsumed into a template of standardised add-ons or modifiers circumscribing, in effect, the creative capacities of users. Language is a realm of invention and play in which the inherent ambiguity of meaning allows for the richness of human expression. The arbitrary relations between signifier and signified is something that simply cannot be standardised without severely limiting creative possibilities for communication and expression across social and technical systems. We find that the difficulties originate in the fact that the semantic layer that the emojis belong to, needs to go beyond syntax which means it is not as directly computable. Semantics cannot simply be reduced to standardised implementations or

understandings without being an ideological project at the same time.

To us, the Unicode project is important as a worthy attempt to develop universal standards that are cross-compatible technically and inclusive of cultural difference: 'to enable people around the world to use computers in any language, by providing freely-available specifications and data to form the foundation for software internationalization...'.<sup>7</sup> We support this basic premise, yet we are deeply troubled by the tendency towards ideological presumptions that have been the subject of fierce debates in civil society, as for instance in the case of the civil rights movement in the US. Implementation of universal standards on this basis carries a danger of augmenting racist and sexist undertones.

We hope to have demonstrated sufficiently the problems that have arisen (and will further arise) when dealing with the issue of diversity through the modifier mechanism. We understand for reasons of backwards compatibility it is not desirable to revert the decisions made for Unicode 8.0. To prevent further irreversible contraventions to the mission and bylaws of the Unicode Consortium, we strongly suggest to refrain from implementing any further modification mechanisms for emoji.

Geoff Cox (Associate Professor, Aarhus University, Denmark)  
Linda Hilfling Ritasdatter (PhD candidate, Malmö University)  
David Gauthier (PhD candidate, University of Amsterdam)  
Geraldine Juárez (MFA candidate, Valand Academy, University of Gothenburg, Sweden)  
Marie Louise Juul Søndergaard (PhD candidate, Aarhus University, Denmark)  
Helen Pritchard (Research Fellow, Goldsmiths, University of London)  
Peggy Pierrot (Independent researcher, Brussels)  
Roel Roscam Abbing (Independent researcher, Rotterdam)  
Susan Schuppli (Senior Lecturer, Goldsmiths University of London)  
Molly Schwartz (PhD candidate, Malmö University)  
Femke Snelting (Constant, association for art and media, Brussels)  
Eric Snodgrass (PhD candidate, Malmö University)  
Winnie Soon (PhD candidate, Aarhus University Denmark)  
Magdalena Tyzlik-Carver (Research Fellow, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK)

---

- 1: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/04/10/how-apples-new-multicultural-emojis-are-more-racist-than-before/>
- 2: [http://www.slate.com/blogs/future\\_tense/2014/02/13/facebook custom gender options here are all 56 custom options.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/future_tense/2014/02/13/facebook_custom_gender_options_here_are_all_56_custom_options.html)
- 3: <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2015/dec/08/uif618-your-ascii-goodbye/>
- 4: <http://www.unicode.org/L2/L2014/14213-skin-tone-mod.pdf>
- 5: <http://www.beauty-review.nl/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/The-validity-and-practicality-of-sun-reactive-skin-types-I-through-VI.pdf>
- 6: <http://www.unicode.org/reports/tr52/tr52-1.html#Introduction>
- 7: <http://unicode.org/>

# Mr. Peel Goes to Cyberspace

*Dmytri Kleiner*

## **Unhappy Mr. Peel**

In Chapter 33 of *Capital*, Marx introduces us to the character of Mr. Peel, recounted from E. G. Wakefield's book *England and America*.<sup>1</sup> While Mr. Peel's story is one of early 19th-century colonialism, it helps us understand what has become of the Internet and the so-called sharing economy.

Mr. Peel went to Swan River in Australia to seek his fortune. He brought everything an aspiring capitalist might need to start accumulating surplus value and become a great capitalist: 300 people, including men, women, and children to provide labor and its reproduction, along with £50,000, presumably a large sum at the time. However, things didn't work out for Mr. Peel, as Marx concludes: "Unhappy Mr. Peel who provided for everything except the export of English modes of production to Swan River!"

Once in Swan River, the 300 people simply went off and settled on the vast amounts of free land available, and "Mr. Peel was left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water from the river."

He discovered that capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons, established by the instrumentality of things.

As Marx explains further, "Property in money, means of subsistence, machines, and other means of production, does not as yet stamp a man as a capitalist if there be wanting the correlative – the wage-worker, the other man who is compelled to sell himself of his own free will...The means of production and subsistence, while they remain the property of the immediate producer, are not capital. They become capital only under circumstances in which they serve at the same time as means of exploitation and subjection of the labourer."

Mr. Peel's capitalist class was not satisfied with their inability to expand their mode of production into the colonies, and found a solution in enclosure, described by Wakefield as "Systematic Colonization." Land was seized by law as public property and

privatized, leaving no free land available. Only those with wealth could be owners, and thus everybody else needed to sell their labor (or what Marx calls "labor power") to capitalists.

The early Internet was like Swan River. How can Mr. Peel make money operating Internet platforms, if anybody can do so? If all the software and the networks are open and widely available, then nobody could really make significant profit. If the means of production are available to all, then there can be no capital. Like the colonies, the Internet needed to be systematically colonized in order to create the conditions needed by capital. This was also accomplished by enclosure. The original infrastructure – which was developed with public funds – was taken over and brought under capital control, and decentralized systems were displaced with centralized systems.

"Social media" and "sharing" platforms are two forms this centralization takes, two business models for platform capitalism.

### **Surplus Value vs. Surplus Profit**

It's tempting to look at sites such as Facebook and YouTube and conclude that they they earn profit by exploiting their own users, who generate all the content that makes the sites popular. However, this is not the case because the media is not sold, and therefore makes no profit and captures no value.

What is sold is advertisement. Thus the paying customers are the advertisers, and what is being sold are the users themselves, not their content. This means that the source of value that becomes Facebook's profits is the work done by the workers in the global fields and factories, who are producing the commodities being advertised to Facebook's audience.

The profits of the media monopolies are formed after surplus value has already been extracted. Their users are not exploited, but subjected, captured as an audience, and instrumentalized to extract surplus profits from other sectors of the ownership class.

Sharing economy companies such as Uber and Airbnb, which own no vehicles or real estate, capture profits from from the operators of the cars and apartments in the marketplace they control. Neither of these business models is new. Media businesses selling audiences as a commodity are at least as old as commercial radio. Marketplace landlords, capturing rents from market vendors, have



been with us for centuries. Rather than subvert capitalism, "sharing" platforms are an extension of it.

### **Consent-Oriented Architecture**

Capitalist platforms based on the sale of the audience as a commodity and capturing marketplace rents demand a sacrifice of privacy and autonomy.

Audiences, like all commodities, are sold by measure and grade. Eggs are sold in dozens as grade A, for example. An advertiser might buy a thousand clicks from middle-aged white men who own a car and have a good credit rating.

Audiences are graded by " demographics." Platforms with business models that sell audiences require surveillance. Likewise, platforms that capture marketplace rents collect extensive data on their users and providers in order to maximize profitability.

A mandatory sacrifice of consent is required to use the platforms. When users share information on a platform, they may consent to sharing that information with certain intended people, but they don't necessarily consent to that information being available to the platform's staff, to advertisers, or to business partners and state intelligence agencies. Yet, as there are no practical alternatives for most users, they must sacrifice such consent in order to use the platform.

Corporations built to maximize profits are unable to build consensual platforms. Their business model depends fundamentally on surveillance and behavioral control. To build consensual platforms require that privacy, security, and anonymity be built into the platforms as core features. The most effective way to secure consent is to ensure that all user data and control of all user interaction resides with the software running on the user's own computer, not on any intermediary servers.

### **Counter-anti-disintermediation**

On her blog, Wendy M. Grossman writes: "Disintermediation" was one of the buzzwords of the early 1990s. The Net was going to eliminate middlemen by allowing us all to deal with each other directly... Today, the landscape is dominated by many fewer, much larger ISPs whose fixed connections are far more trackable and controllable. We thought a lot about encryption as a protector of privacy and, I now think, not enough about the unprecedented

potential for endemic wiretapping that would be enabled by an increasingly centralized Internet.<sup>2</sup>

The idea of disintermediation was central to the emancipatory visions of the Internet, yet the landscape today is more mediated than ever before. If we are to understand the consequences of an increasingly centralized Internet, we need to start by addressing the root cause of this concentration. Centralization is required to capture profit. Disintermediating platforms were ultimately reintermediated by way of capitalist investors dictating that communications systems be designed to capture profit.

The flaw was, to some degree, a result of the architecture of the early Internet. The systems that people used in the early Internet were mainly cooperative and decentralized, but they were not End-to-End services. Users of e-mail and Usenet, the two most common platforms, did not generally operate their own servers on their own local computers, but were dependent on servers run by others. But servers require upkeep. Operators need to finance hosting and administration. As the Internet grew beyond its relatively small early base, Internet service came to be provided by capitalist corporations, rather than public institutions, small businesses, or universities. Open, decentralized services came to be replaced by private, centralized platforms. The profit interests of the platform financiers drove anti-disintermediation.

Just as Systematic Colonization was developed to establish the capitalist mode of production in the colonies, anti-disintermediation was developed to colonize cyberspace. The basic strategy of anti-disintermediation was formulated by economists like Carl Shapiro and Hal R. Varian. Their influential book *Information Rules* encourages platform owners to pursue "lock-in."<sup>3</sup> As Varian explains, "Since information technology products work in systems, switching any single product can cost users dearly. The lock-in that results from such switching costs confers a huge competitive advantage to firms that manage their installed base of customers effectively."<sup>4</sup>

Their advice was well received. Varian is currently the chief economist of Google, while Shapiro is the Transamerica Professor of Business Strategy at the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley, and was a Deputy Assistant

Attorney General for Economics of the Antitrust division in the U.S. Department of Justice.

Going back to an early Internet architecture of cooperative, decentralized servers, as projects such as Diaspora, GNU Social, and others are attempting to do, will not work.<sup>5</sup> This is precisely the sort of architecture that anti-disintermediation was designed to defeat. Decentralized systems need to be designed to be counter-anti-disintermediationist.

Central to the counter-anti-disintermediationist design is the End-to-End principle: platforms must not depend on servers and admins, even when cooperatively run, but must, to the greatest degree possible, run on the computers of the platform's users. The computational capacity and network access of the users' own computers must collectively make up the resources of the platform, such that, on average, each new user adds net resources to the platform. By keeping the computational capacity in the hands of the users, we prevent the communication platform from becoming capital, and we prevent the users from being instrumentalized as an audience commodity.

Thus, we leave Mr. Peel just as unhappy in cyberspace as he was in Swan River – and resist the colonization of our communication platforms by Venture Capital and pave the way for Venture Communism.

---

1: Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *England and America: A Comparison of the Social and Political State of Both Nations* (New York: Harper, 1834).

2: Wendy M. Grossman, "Take Back the Net," July 13, 2013. Available online at: [http://www.pelicancrossing.net/netwars/2013/07/take\\_back\\_the\\_net.html](http://www.pelicancrossing.net/netwars/2013/07/take_back_the_net.html)

3: Carl Shapiro and Hal R. Varian, *Information Rules: A Strategic Guide to the Network Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 1998).

4: Statement of Hal R. Varian before the Subcommittee on Basic Research of the Committee on Science, United States House of Representatives, March 16, 1999. Available online at: <http://people.ischool.berkeley.edu/~hal/Papers/congress.html>.

5: <https://diasporafoundation.org> and <https://gnu.io/social/>.

# Presentation of "Emergenc(i)es" (Excerpt)

*D-M Withers*

'Resilience', I discovered when writing the application for this project, is one of those austerity/scarcity buzzwords used by policy makers to help shape visions for the future. The idea is that cities, communities and individuals must learn resilience so they can absorb the 'shocks' of a malfunctioning economic system and, increasingly, the results of climate change. If we can become resilient, the logic follows, catastrophes can be subsumed by the resilient social-economical body and business as usual can keep on rolling.

I worry about using resilience to think about the activities explored in "Emergenc(i)es"<sup>1</sup>, especially in terms of the social practice of improvisation. This is partly because in practice I believe improvisation can help communities become more resilient - in the non-capitalist sense. One of the ways it can do this is by strengthening social bonds through the invention of novel forms of communication. Noise, gesture, gibberish and the relational/vibrational qualities of sound can become especially meaningful in improvised encounters. Conflict may be transmuted in a flurry of rhythms that combine, separate and co-exist; energy can be generated and dispensed - those who make the sounds share in the creative, communicative encounter. Of course such outcomes are not guaranteed, and perhaps need to be lovingly facilitated; someone must signal that it is safe and possible to communicate or even 'to be' this way, to depart from the 'normal way' we communicate. Those who enter into such improvisational acts are, I believe, bound together; they exit altered, yet integrated.

What if such a resource, which does 'work', is used to help people become resilient in the way disaster capitalism requires? A key skill improvisers can acquire is to be comfortable 'in the moment': the ability to respond to a sound, gesture or rhythm change immediately. Such responsive qualities are undoubtedly important for surviving in any neoliberal workplace and environment. How often do you read on job applications the questions: how well can you quickly and effectively adapt to change? The social practice of improvisation is, however, not solely about learning how to be responsive; it is also about

listening and responding with another, and to whatever emerges through the encounter. The practice is the end in itself; it has no input/output logic. It arrives, circulates and disappears. It leaves a memory and creates a structure of relational feeling. That structure is often weird and indeterminate, sometimes beautiful but often ugly. The improvised activity appeals to the memory of freedom, understood here as the capacity to aimlessly wander, interact and exit where one chooses, or feels compelled to.

Is this social conception of freedom disappearing in the networked control of the digital world? Perhaps it only existed for a privileged few anyway, or never really existed for anyone. Maybe freedom is just imaginary, something that can only appear as an accidental fissure piercing the monolithic march of history, which always seems wedded to the victory of the powerful. Even if freedom doesn't exist, or only exists as a memory, hope or suggestion, it does not mean we should not fight to protect it. And the freedom that can be glimpsed through improvised practice - a freedom that always emerges with others - is unquantifiable, in any unitary sense.

Within this historical context, which is characterised by the deep infiltration of digital technologies in our everyday lives that meticulously control, track and anticipate individual and collective behaviour, there is a real need to preserve alternative social mechanisms that can nurture the accidental and emergent within our relationships. The social practice of improvisation creates one such unprogrammable context where 'all the threatened and delicious things [can practice] joining one other (without conjoining it, that is, without merging) in the expanse of Relation'<sup>2</sup>.

*Author's website:* <http://deborahwithers.net/>

---

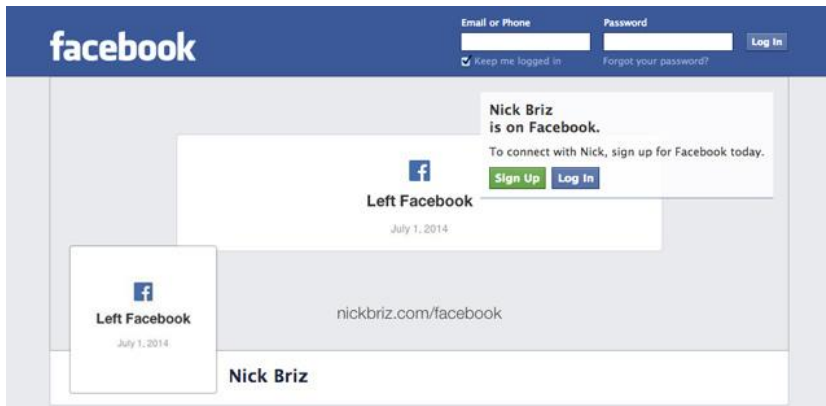
1: <https://emergencies-bristol.tumblr.com/>

2: Édouard Glissant, 2005, Poetics of Relation, trans. Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 62.

# How To / Why Leave Facebook (on my own terms, without "deleting" my account)

Nick Briz

<http://nickbriz.com/facebook/>



Nick Briz [backed up photos](#) he was tagged in.

Nick Briz [backed up his wall posts](#).

Nick Briz [untagged himself](#) from all photos.

Nick Briz [deleted all his photos](#).

Nick Briz [left all his groups](#).

Nick Briz [deleted all his activity](#).

Nick Briz [unfriended](#) all his friends.

