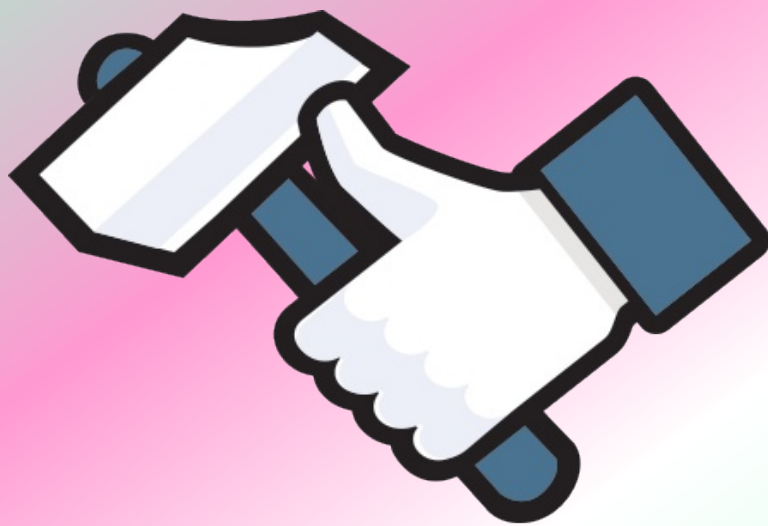


SPECIAL ISSUE



PERVASIVE

LABOUR

UNION

URGENT
PUBLISHING
DEBRIS
#15

You can also read the
Pervasive Labour Union
zine online @ ilu.servus.at

Editors' Note

Kimmy Spreeuwenberg Lída Pereira Miriam Rasch

Welcome to the fourth special issue of the Pervasive Labour Union zine, Urgent Publishing Debris. In May 2019, the Making Public: Urgent Publishing Conference took place. Among others, it asked the following questions:

- -"How to realize sustainable, high-quality alternatives within this domain of post-digital publishing?"
- -"How can designers, developers, artists, writers and publishers intervene in the public debate and counter misinformation in a meaningful and relevant way?"
- -"What are new publishing strategies for our current media landscape?"
- -"How to design for urgency without succumbing to an accelerated hype cycle?"

The presentations, debates and conversations all have been officially documented in blogposts on the Institute of Network Cultures website, videos and pictures. But what about the notes, the pictures, the recordings and the tweets of the conference's visitors? What do they have to tell us of how each person experienced the conference? This special issue aims to provide new readings of the event by creating remixes of the official archival sources with the 'unofficial' debris circulating around it.

In order to facilitate the navigation between articles, making connections visible where they might have only been implicit, the editors have decided to define eleven overarching topics (Social/Community, Activism, Post-truth, New forms, Authorship/Makers, Speed, Positioning, Locality, Relationality, Authoritarianism, Parasite). Each of the topics was attributed a colour and the source material is highlighted accordingly.

Furthermore, each remix has a dispersed editors' note, wherein each editor reflects in more detail on the program, how it connects to the conference's topic and how it might answer any of the aforementioned questions.

The Making Public project was supported by Regieorgaan SIA (Taskforce for Applied Research), which is part of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).

We would also like to thank everyone who made this issue possible with their contributions.

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Post-Truth Publishing

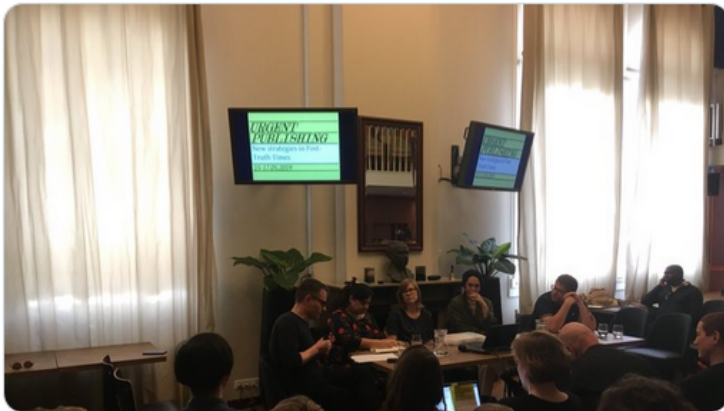
Presentations and discussions with Clara Balaguer, Padmini Ray Murray, Morten Paul, and Nikola Richter, moderated by Florian Cramer

Remix of a blogpost by Inte Gloerich and a debris of notes and tweets, complemented with a dispersed editors' note.

Inventing new ways of publishing between fast populism and slow academia. How to counter misinformation and stimulate open public discussions through a speedy publishing process, high quality content and spot-on positioning?



Institute of Network Cultures @INCAmst... · May 15, 2019 ▾
#urgentpublishing The conference has started! Florian Cramer opens 3 days of talks, discussions and workshops on urgent publishing strategies in post-truth times.



Tweet by Institute of Network Cultures.

This panel served as an excellent kick-off to the conference: excited participants, urgent discussions, and a good overview of the topics to come. Moderator Florian Cramer framed the debate with a few opening words about what this 'post-truth' moment is that we find ourselves in.

Florian

debates on truth

↳ not just about authorship, but also methods of publishing & the means/media we use.

- the more thorough the slower it is.

popular strategies can be successful if they shortcut this. → Peterson uses his academic background on ~~platform~~^{Jordan} in combination with fast publishing.

→ need to rethink the publishing strategies that can respond to this in a timely matter.

↳ concerns practice of authors, designers etc.

If traditional media are to be believed, social media are to blame for the current state of public debate. The refrain goes: people continue to drive circles in their own algorithmic filter bubbles, only seeing material that confirms their pre-existing worldview and subsequently polarization occurs. It seems to be a problem of information, truth, and authorship, an editorial problem, but in reality just as important are what we publish, how we publish, and which technologies we use.

Generally speaking, the more thorough a publication is, the more slow it is. This is something that populists take advantage of readily by short-circuiting social media speediness and academic slowness: while Jordan Peterson is trending on Twitter, surely the countering academic articles are in the making, but these refutations of Peterson's take on Foucault or Derrida simply come too slowly to have any useful effect.

Spectrum of speed: social media

}
academic publ.

Short circuiting the spectrum =
success (eg Jordan Peterson)
Reputations two years in the making
= too late.

Even while its completely misinformed
(like JP on Derrida, racism etc)

In this session we hear from practitioners that go beyond disciplinary boundaries to have a quick but thorough input for current debates.

Morten Paul

Morten Paul (DE) is editor at the humanities publishing house August Verlag Berlin. Studied German Studies, Philosophy and Cultural Studies at the University of Konstanz and Goldsmiths College, London.

Morten Paul is editor at the humanities publishing house August Verlag Berlin. He starts his talk with the statement that the notion of 'post-truth' is wrong to begin with. There is in fact a proliferation of truths, there are too many truths! While post-structuralism killed the truth, the right-wing has been allowed to flourish because of it. The problem with alternative facts is not so much the alternative, but the positivist understanding of 'facts'. This is too reminiscent of conspiracy theories: facts are truths that are out, but covered up. Alternative facts have been around for as long as we can remember.

Morten: Post-truth? Rather too much truth
a proliferation of truths
Post-structuralist re-regards who
abandon their own past
'Alternative facts' → problem is
not alternative, but notion of fact.
And the shock-factor: where did
this come from? → look at past.
- It always existed (since 1945)
- Look at environment, media-ecology

By historicizing these phenomena, Morten tries to go beyond the shock the left seems to be in right now. Having researched the history of far right magazines in Germany, he is able to discern that the strategies we see around us now have in fact always existed. Far right activism and the rise of right wing political parties historically go hand in hand, and are supported by a certain ideological cohesion on the right that the left lacks.

Historization instead of being shocked of where this
(all)right publishing comes from ^{existence}
↳ was always there & feeded by far right party

Nikola Richter

Nikola Richter (DE) is a writer, journalist, and publisher who combines comprehensive knowledge of the cultural and literary sector with an interest in online media and a broader perspective on political and social issues. In 2013 she founded the publisher mikrotext.



mikrotext @mkrtxt · May 15, 2019

I will coin our short digital titles "digital chapbooks" tonight at **#urgentpublishing** Trying to link the fast and available ebook to the tradition of the chapbook. [irishtimes.com/culture/books/...](https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/) More digital chapbooks via [@Sukultur](#) [@EELECTICebooks](#) [@achjeverlag](#) [@FrauFrohmann](#) Who else?



Word for Word: Chapbooks – small and covet...

Wouldn't it be great if each bookshop we visited had one space dedicated to bespoke, ...
[🔗 irishtimes.com](https://www.irishtimes.com)



2



2



6



Tweet by mikrotext.

Nikola Richter is a writer, journalist, and publisher. She also draws historical parallels in her talk, although of a different nature. While we are talking about the speed of publishing in relation to social media virality, she says that the history of publishing was always also about speed. Think back to the 16th-18th century chapbooks: street literature that was cheaply produced and meant to spread popular cultures widely.

Nikola Richter - mikrotext

*• chapbooks 17th century small pamphlets - inexpensive booklets
Digital publishers is everywhere, but what has changed as a
publisher is that she is engaged with the writers through
social media. linking/commenting.*

Today, a publisher's role is expanding. No longer is it just about selecting, editing and presenting texts coherently, but a publisher now also needs to be a reader, a commentator, needs to engage on social media.

vgl. Mikrotext. No prioritization
in published works; texts are
freed from their genre. (alles doch
ethisch)
Rde of publisher changes
engaged, L as editor, as reader
ethical publisher Infiltrate the
discussion via
Marie Perle

A publisher is not an outside entity acting upon public discourse, but actively located within it. An ethical publisher says "nichts tun ist keine lösung", and publishes for others, does it while thinking of others.

Publishers need to exploit their media to infiltrate discussions. Can the epub be a mobile chapbook? It can be read on any device, and one copy can instantly turn into endless copies.

ethics of publishing → publishes by thinking of others...?
↳ infiltration as strategy. Through other topics
being in other discussions

Clara Balaguer

Clara Balaguer (PH) is a cultural worker. Currently, she coordinates the Social Practices course at Willem de Kooning Academy and teaches Experimental Publishing at Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam.

Clara

- exile of academia

Musquito Press - freedom press during dictatorships

↳ full of Buzz; not about truth; just annoying

- Hardworking / Goodlooking publishing house.

Deep listeners vs Trolling

Clara Balaguer explains her situation as being "in exile by academia". Originally from the Philippines, she decided to leave when the situation became untenable for her critical activities. She works by immersing herself in communities, on the ground in the Philippines, but similarly online as a troll (which you can read more about in the Memes as Means report).

Feeding the trolls

↳ who are these trolls

↳ not feeding it doesn't work. It keeps happening

↳ it seems to be more of a male beast they

↳ more political also females!

The troll as a role model for publishers

Class/ Low first issue, → art book fair →

look at what people want → going to

where the books move

It's about who you're meeting

Getting your book curated.

Being invited to speak at a conference with the word 'urgent' in the title seems odd: since arriving in the Netherlands, Clara in fact has been feeling a general lack of urgency. Everything is

neatly organized and orderly. In this privilege there is no real urgency like she knows it is experienced in the Philippines.

Clara Community based projects.

Here: a lack of urgency (esp. compared to Manila)

Mosquito Press - underground presses that were buzzing.

Not publishing 'canned' content, but producing the content as well.

Making the books that are missing.

You have to be present to meet the work of the academics. (censorship)

Publication made in 5 days.

'How many copies do you need to get your publ. in the right hands?'

Not feeding the trolls is not an option

Clara co-founded Hardworking Goodlooking, an underground publisher, that wears the badge 'mosquito press' as a badge of honour. To be full of buzz and annoying under dictatorship, never able to be exterminated, is something to be applauded. Hardworking Goodlooking uses pirating strategies to distribute inaccessible academic work within the Philippines. This is not about big numbers: getting 25 copies into the right hands is in this case enough to have the right impact.

Padmini Ray Murray

Padmini Ray Murray (IN) is a researcher and creator currently based in Bengaluru where she has founded a not-for-profit organization called Design Beku. She is visiting faculty at the Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology, where she launched India's first-degree program in the digital humanities.

Padmini Ray Murray is a researcher and creator who is passionate about transforming ways in which we make and share knowledge. In her talk, she zooms in on the interrelation between power and knowledge, and relates this to the caste system in India and its influence on knowledge production.

Padmini: Straight from analogue to ^{vernacular} mobile.
Effect on caste, feminism. ^{What from below}
Knowledge prod. + academi.: always the
Now where this is broken open ^{same case}
Older explicitly strategies are now
explicitated, brought outside
But also mind. delegitimized

Vandalism
as a sort
of strategy
(Shiva Akhola)

The idea of the university campus as hotbeds for rape culture is not just an American phenomenon. The case of #LoSHA (List of Sexual Harassers in Academia) is an example of a kind of graffiti-inspired strategy of publishing that has a longer history in feminism. By publishing the list of harassers on Facebook, Raya Sarkar effectively created a graffiti wall consisting of names of the accused that was open for anyone to add to. It played a significant role in the start of the MeToo movement in India.

Facebook legitimized to use as promotion for events
↳ when used for complains it is demised
↳ form of vandalism/political activism
↳ there is power in what is published through Facebook etc.
Vernacular knowledge is

When "RAPE HAPPENS HERE" was projected onto the building of Columbia University during an open day in 2015, or when students at Brown University wrote the names of their harassers on toilet doors in the 90s, activists similarly inscribed a public place with their accusations, for all to see, for the public to deal with.

A ready critique of this type of 'calling-out' on social media, or finger-tip activism is that there is no due process. At the same time, social media activism is very ephemeral. Everything that is posted is at there at the mercy of the platforms and can be taken away easily.

Following Sara Ahmed, academics have to acknowledge their complicity in these power struggles. Academia never was the place of freedom. Cambridge University Press has always profited from colonial knowledge production in India. We now have to take social media practices as counteracts to those institutions and histories as well.

Anxiety on the side of liberal left.
But we have to make things, get hands dirty.
Hack the system, also by understanding
what is going on.
Acknowledge that academia was never
space of freedom. + Not only academia /
thought would change the world.

Dispersed editors' note: Publishing doesn't exist in a political void. It is, therefore, always an act of positioning. The examples brought by the speakers of the session speak to this: Clara Balaguer's 'mosquito press', Nikola Richter's chapbooks, Morten Paul's research into the history of the far right magazines, etc. As such, for what Nikola Richter calls "an ethical publisher", the question of speed is crucial, especially in politically unstable times where misinformation circulates faster and wider. What new responsibilities do publishers have in 'post-truth' times?

In the West, it is easy to be critical of the medium itself, forgetting about situations in other parts of the world where the benefits of connecting outweigh the downsides of the business. To deal with the post-truth, the answer should always be 'more discussion', never more authority.

liberal left - or what we have done → need to get hands dirty
• publishing as practice
Post-structuralism → need to re-organise how knowledge is spread
but this never happened

Not everyone can do what Sara Ahmed did and leave the institution.
Learning from Fred Moten and Stefano Harney we have to find the
undercommons and make subversive use of the institution, and
perhaps similarly the platform?

become more nimble? (parker)
↳ publish small bits & pieces during time of research
(research takes time!) & through instagram & then
collect everything into one anthology.

Truth vs Legitimacy

↳ publishing + academia
skill has this. How to deal
Can we also use this for ourselves? } Still needed, to have
reach etc to have a book.

↳ Can digital publ. reach this?
The utopia of the epub.

Social media as longform publishing avenue

Also Instagram

→ Compendium, anthology at the end

Mollen Academic publ. is a political space
Needs't be thrown away.

G. del Agnassie: univ. as place of censorship

Tactics: what? but not necessarily a bad thing
to the ^{air} ^{not copy} ^{that dist.} ^{tactics have} ^{air.} (Use populist/right wing)

Tactics of publishing. Beyond the monograph

- writing in public as an academic.

↳ as feminist act, vulnerable.

- podcast as PhD, comic book.

- Palgrave Pivot: 20-30,000 words But then

- Attention to the process

want: human
rhetoric
of network
25th pin

- Cyberspace + meatspace.

the
legitimacy
problem

- Literary activism

Question of
aesthetics

The archive of the feed

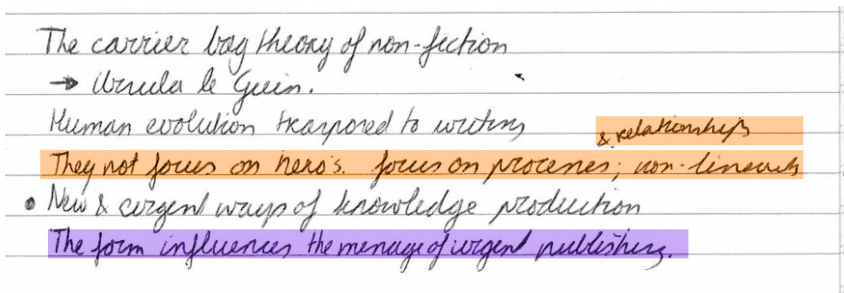
Also as the protection from trolls

The Carrier Bag Theory of Non-Fiction

Remix of a blogpost by Maisa Imamović and debris of notes, pictures and audio, complemented with a dispersed editors' note.

What promises does modular, non-linear publishing hold for writing and reading, research and collaboration? What potentialities of collectivity, collaboration, and commons can hybrid publishing processes set free? How would that challenge existing roles and practices? Modularity in form and process, after proving itself in software development, has conquered the world at large. It fits the dynamics of the market and allows us to communicate in bits and pieces, fierce, hyped-up, and snappy. Efficient medium, efficient messages.

But modularity and non-linearity also contain a notion of critique. They can challenge myths of origin and originality, authoritarian authorship, single-voiced narratives, hero perspectives, and definitive truths. They can inspire a Carrier Bag Theory of Non-Fiction: publications holding grains of knowledge and experience of various kinds and species, which can be laid out in different ways and directions. How would these forge meaningful connections and complex relations between contents, people, places, and futures?



The Carrier Bag Theory of Non-Fiction

Janneke Adema is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Postdigital Cultures at Coventry University. In her research, she explores the future of scholarly communications and experimental forms of knowledge production, where her work incorporates processual and

performative publishing, radical open access, scholarly poethics, media studies, book history, cultural studies, and critical theory. Gary Hall is Professor of Media in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities at Coventry University, UK, where he directs the Centre for Postdigital Cultures and its research studio The Post Office, which brings together media theorists, practitioners, activists, and artists.

• Publishing of practice instead of something that reports on the practice

How to respect fluidity & the processual within modularity; is that even possible.



Photo collage screenshot by Miriam Rasch.

Janneke Adema and Gary Hall investigate modular publishing from a post-humanities perspective. They criticize what publishing does rather than what it is. According to them, culture which is remixed and made modular in digital environments creates new forms of communication.

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Manovich's understanding of modularity.

critique on modular publishes which emphasises
the object/the book → Lev Manovich

Alternative → relates it to the object not being bound. Culture is 'made' modular. Remixing becomes possible. Standardization for possibilities of sharing & moving around content of cultural objects
"helping cultural bits move around more easily"

Tara McPherson → aligns to capitalism defining it as bound, finished compartments.
→ emphasizes stability still
⇒ does not see cultural objects as themselves being fluid^{or complex} but as something becoming modular through new media

need to question standalone → capitalism/commodity look as marketable object.
⇒ how we do scholarly work

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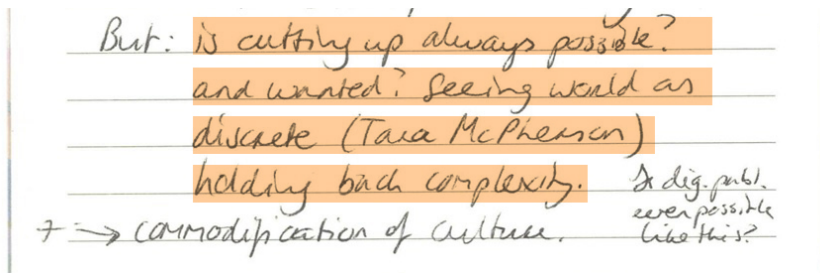
Tara McPherson's critique on modular thinking.

What's important to remember is that not all analogue objects can be translated to digital forms. Doing so mirrors lack of appreciation for books, for example. It's like putting trees, minerals, and shops in one-and that's all. It's a commodity.

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A lack of appreciation of fluidity.

They argue that in order to re-invent performing a book, one needs to embrace everything what is given with the book, and focus on these questions. Where should we cut them? Who is making decisions? Who moderates the decisions? What's kept/ what's preserved in the process?



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What boundaries do we take responsibility for?

Dispersed editors' note: "It is a strange realism, but it is a strange reality." This is a quote from "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction", by science fiction author Ursula Le Guin. Her concept refers back to something called the carrier bag theory of human evolution. Human evolution, according to this theory, has much more to thank to the carrier bag - the container in which you can put apples, berries, pretty little stones (in Le Guin's words: "A leaf a gourd a shell a net a bag a sling a sack a bottle a pot a box a container. A holder. A recipient") and to the people gathering and carrying all these things, than to mammoth-slayers and their spears, who've always gotten all the attention. Transposed to writing, this focus on the gatherers rather than the hunters calls for different kinds of story and storytelling. Carrier bag works do not focus on the hero and on time unfolding in a linear and progressive fashion, ending in a grande finale,

whether it's triumph or apocalypse. Rather, they focus on multiple relationships and voices, on process. How could such carrier bags look like beyond the science fiction genre, e.g. in research publishing? That calls for experimentations, tools, concepts, and collaborations. New imaginations of publications, incorporating different voices and delivering different reading experiences. An urgency in publishing will need to address the form and make-up of the contents as well, and start up discussions on the post-digital, on post-humanities, and on the undercommons as new modes of knowledge sharing.

Pervasive Labour Union zine

◦ pervasiveness of the format of the zine.

Lídia Pereira presents Pervasive Labour Union Zine which brings together personal rants, academic texts, poetry, photo montages, collages, drawings, etc. addressing topics such as Terms of Service, Advertisement or Pervasiveness. Each issue attempts to establish an interconnecting discourse around these topics.

Lídia Pereira's graduation project, touching upon the topic of labour on social platforms which later becomes a product designed by social experiences, questions why we are not organizing. According to her, it's because we don't consider it work. Her project is an attempt to create a medium where there is discourse, instead of a definite conclusion(s). Perhaps even a platform for changing minds? That's how she came up with a zine, as a research medium for her research to continue growing.

◦ who is involved in producing. It takes more people to publish. → multi-voiced: is this reflected in the arguments?

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Arriving at conclusions, or maybe not.

During the discussion the following questions were raised: Why do old formats persist? Who has the privilege to own the new platforms? What is the future of archive?

Why are traditional formats so pervasive?

↳ How does this relate to the experimental formats?

• the privilege to leave the platforms

↳ to explore other ways of publishing

recurrent types of experiments through history

= we are faced with similar problems so makes sense to go back to earlier responses

= a lot of problems in academia have already been addressed in arch - pull inspiration from there

↳ a merit regime with peer 2 peer.

= not about reinventing new forms, but thinking

through why you publish, what is it for & from

there think of the most relevant form.

Post-digital Publishing and the Return of Locality

Axel Andersson investigates the role of locality for contemporary Publishing.



How can we find meaningful and critical ways of re-territorializing digital publishing practices? Axel Andersson at #urgentpublishing



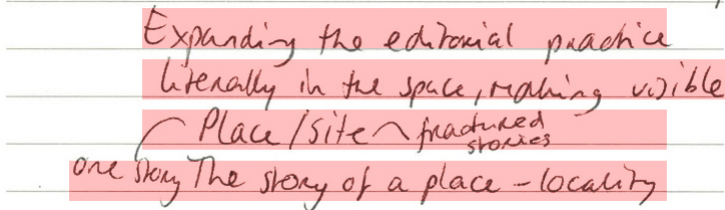
11:04 AM · May 16, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

Then Axel, oh Axel Andersson, who was asked not to give an academic ted talk, did not mind sharing a B&W image of him, in which he is thinking about Smithson; a fact which opened up his presentation of thoughts on topics of locality and post-digital publishing. As his position of being a critic was challenged by extinction, he was faced with having to experiment his way forward and think what might be wrong with media that critique doesn't work?

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The dead end of critiques?

A funded experiment, an online book fair where online users get to publish, amateurization of critique, and the last mass mail at the Supermarket art fair (2018) where a critical journal written by the visitors is printed on spot, are projects that call for further thinking about how to be in the context?



Expanding the editorial practice
literally in the space, making visible
Place/site ~ fractured stories
one story The story of a place - locality

The context in this case, can be further defined as not a place, but physicality which has locality...In other words: How to expand public/private spheres?

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What does it mean to be of a place?

Memes as Means

Remix of a blog by Sepp Eckenhausen and debris of tweets, notes, and audio, complemented with a dispersed editors' note.

However trivial and frivolous the meme might seem, its function as a cultural and communicative object deserves investigation. The meme can bear witness to shifts in language and cultural norms. Memes can function as political agent: spread like a virus and change sentiment, become a talking point, or set an agenda. Are memes the ammunition of online culture wars? Have they contributed to the normalization of the alt-right? How to study these symbols and tropes, and how to create our own?

Using memes as a starting point, we look at online visual culture and how different popular communication styles have been incorporated into strategies of far-right movements. What are innovative ways to counter these movements on a transnational level? And how does the passing of Article 13 in the European Parliament affect our ability to freely express ourselves online? What does the meme have to say about positioning topical publications or research output?



Clusterduck
@realclusterfuck



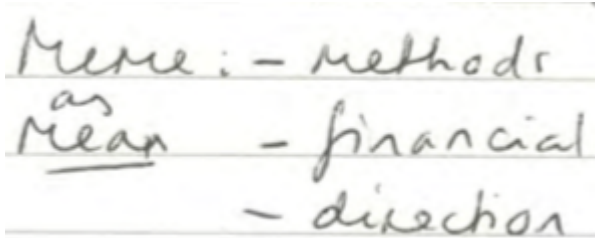
The ways of the meme are inscrutable. If you don't believe it, ask our special ducklings [@hawaidolphino](#) and [@NoelNicolaus](#). Or even better: go see them at [#UrgentPublishing](#) in Arnhem (NL), where they will be speaking at the panel "[#Memes as Means](#)" ⚡
[networkcultures.org/makingpublic/c...](#)

9:10 PM · May 15, 2019 · [Twitter Web App](#)

Tweet by Clusterduck.

Meme culture can be situated and investigated within a history of online visual culture and the senses of community in it: selfie

culture - video culture - meme culture. The notion of 'means' moreover addresses memes as having financial capacities, and as 'means to an end'. What kind of activist strategies can memes as means inform today? Should we use them in every way we can, because ends justify means, or can we employ memes with laser point precision?



Meme: - method
as
Mean - financial
- direction

There are also questions of authorship and ownership. Crediting meme-makers becomes more widespread on the left flank of the political spectrum. What will be the relation between more severe copyrights and the anonymous army? Is there a chance of meme revenue models, of being paid for previously unpaid work? Is it time to unionize meme-work? Is meming a matter of being professional or of fighting a trench war?

The World Wide Web of Gatekeepers

Evelyn Austin (NL) works for Bits of Freedom, a leading European digital rights organization based in Amsterdam. She is also the co-founder of The Hmm, a network of contemporary visual culture enthusiasts.

Evelyn Austin, who works at Bits of Freedom and co-founded *The Hmm*, considers digital human rights such as freedom of publishing and distributing in the context of Article 13. The internet has always carried the promise to empower the powerless, and indeed it does empower. But as it usually goes, the internet also empowers the already powerful.



Institute of Network Cultures
@INCAmsterdam



What are the current challenges to our freedom of expression, how is the open internet under threat, and why should you care? Evelyn Austin talks us through the world wide web of gatekeepers.

[#urgentpublishing](#)



1:19 PM · May 16, 2019 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

Tweet by Institute of Network Cultures.

Many examples show the hampering of communication: Facebook took down pictures of Femen in Yemen on basis of nudity regulations; Dutch pro-choice organization WomenOnWaves were blocked in Ireland four times in the run-up of abortion referendum; YouTube videos with the word 'trans' in their titles are systematically categorized as 'adult'.

This shows that there is a need for different modes of publishing and for alternative platforms, but also for new strategies of communication and distribution. We need good, strong, and wide networks of digital rights organizations and journalists. What we got is Article 13. The article (which in the end turned into Article 17) makes platforms and other 'hosts' accountable for what users are saying on their site. An individual's speech on a company's website is automatically the company's speech. This is of course threatening to companies. There are two solutions:

1. Licensing agreements with rights' holders (however, it would be nearly impossible to come to sufficient agreements in all cases).
2. Upload filters (but this means that all of our content will be monitored and filtered, and that governments are allowing companies to discipline citizens in a way that they're not allowed to do themselves).

Thus, we find ourselves in a complicated situation. Realistically, we're stuck with the big platforms for now. This means there will be loads of frustration about filters of 'possible' terrorism, child abuse, nudity, etc. We have to remain critical and we do have the means to change things, as for example #gamergate has shown.

Aphorisms by Citizen Troll

Clara Balaguer (PH) is a cultural worker. Currently, she coordinates the Social Practices course at Willem de Kooning Academy and teaches Experimental Publishing at Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam.

*As a troll, you must be cunning
+ obsessive*

Cultural worker and avid troll Clara Balaguer has been occupied with online troll wars against the rise of authoritarianism in the Philippines for years. Two years ago, it became untenable to do critical cultural programming in the Philippines for under-served communities and Clara decided to come to the Netherlands. In the inevitable comparison of these two countries, it is clear that the levels of 'urgency' generally felt in the Netherlands are much lower than those in the Philippines. Reflecting her experiences as troll, Clara shared five aphorisms:

1. *Nobody gives a shit about your kerning, but graphic design is important.* A lot of activists are hold-overs from the 70s (baby boomers trying to understand what's happening online). But memes should not look like professionally designed (and paid-for) posters, because that makes them less trustworthy. Making 'nice' stuff does not work anymore. Professional designers: demodernize and decolonize!



Geert Lovink @glovink · May 16

"Graphic designers need to unlearn if they want to make memes." Clara Balaguer [#urgentpublishing](#)



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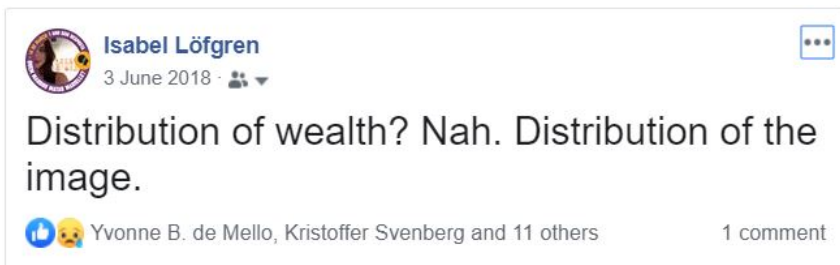
Tweet by Geert Lovink.

1. *Trolling is a ladylike pursuit.* The idea many people hold of the troll is a neck-beard guy in his mom's basement. But when ideology comes into play (political trolling), the alternatively gendered and women become more active. Pro-Duterte trolling in the Philippines is dominated by female and non-conforming voices.
2. *Outside of the echo chamber, check yourself (you are not immune to neurolinguistics programming).* Never assume that you're above the narcotic effects of being outside of your echo chamber. Still, also from a position of privilege, we

Mindmap shared by Isabel Löfgren.

Isabel Löfgren, a Swedish-Brazilian artist and educator currently based in Stockholm, took up the theme of memefascism vs. autonomous zones of resistance in Brazil. The fact that memes are a serious means is very clear by the fact that Jair Bolsonaro has been elected president thanks mostly to 'bolsominions': an army of trolls campaigning for Bolsonaro through WhatsApp. Jair Bolsonaro has even claimed to be, next to president, the official controller of memes.

This situation also shows us something about the so-called post-truth condition. Studies show that half of the troll messages during the election campaign came from WhatsApp family groups. This signals that, first, it's not about truth but about trust, and, second, that the crisis of authority in relation to truth effectively splits families and social structures as we know them. In the presidential palace, there is even an official social media farm. The most successful bloggers and vloggers from the campaign are hired to work for Bolsonaro's official PR bureau. Together, they effectively create a bombardment of disinformation.



Facebook post by Isabel Löfgren.

However, Bolsonaro's disinformation and repression of minority voices is not unbreakable. When, during carnival, black, poor, and gay voices let themselves be heard on the streets, Bolsonaro started tweeting about golden showers, subsequently asking: What is a golden shower? He was met with cunning and humor, when Twitter and Facebook accounts named Golden Shower started asking: What is Jair Bolsonaro?



Meme from Golden Shower Facebook account.

In fact, this type of humorous grass-roots mobilization is a consistent trend in Brazil. Already during the election campaign, women, black people, and other minorities repressed by Bolsonaro came together in the Not Him-campaign (#elenão), which was huge and powerful.

It is clear that the far-right kidnaps forms and thereby subverts democracy, but that counter-meming can be a powerful means of the Left, too. The questions that rise include: How to level out this battlefield of meme-wars? What is the role of poetic justice in memes? How can art collapse meaning and contribute to meming?

Dispersed editors' note: The gap between traditional research publishing and meme culture appears unbridgeable. Not only because

the first may take years to produce a single publication, while the latter spawns offspring seemingly effortlessly, or because both relate in opposite ways to notions such as referencing, originality, and authorship. Memes thrive in a polarized environment that rewards the in-your-face punchline. Researchers value nuance and seriousness more than anything. This begs the question whether memes actually have potential outside of digital culture, even if they have shown to be an inherently political instrument over the past years. Moreover, don't memes serve the (radical) right of the political spectrum best, tailoring to its desire for just such polarization? It surely isn't a coincidence that right-wing presidents such as Bolsonaro or Trump associate themselves with meme-ification? This style of politics, as Isabel Löfgren says, loves binary oppositions. Aren't memes inherently binary themselves? And what then, could 'serious' publishing learn from that? Some answers are given here: their humor of course, their use of language (so not only their visuality), the way they tell a story, the way they build trust and organise communities around them, and their commonality.

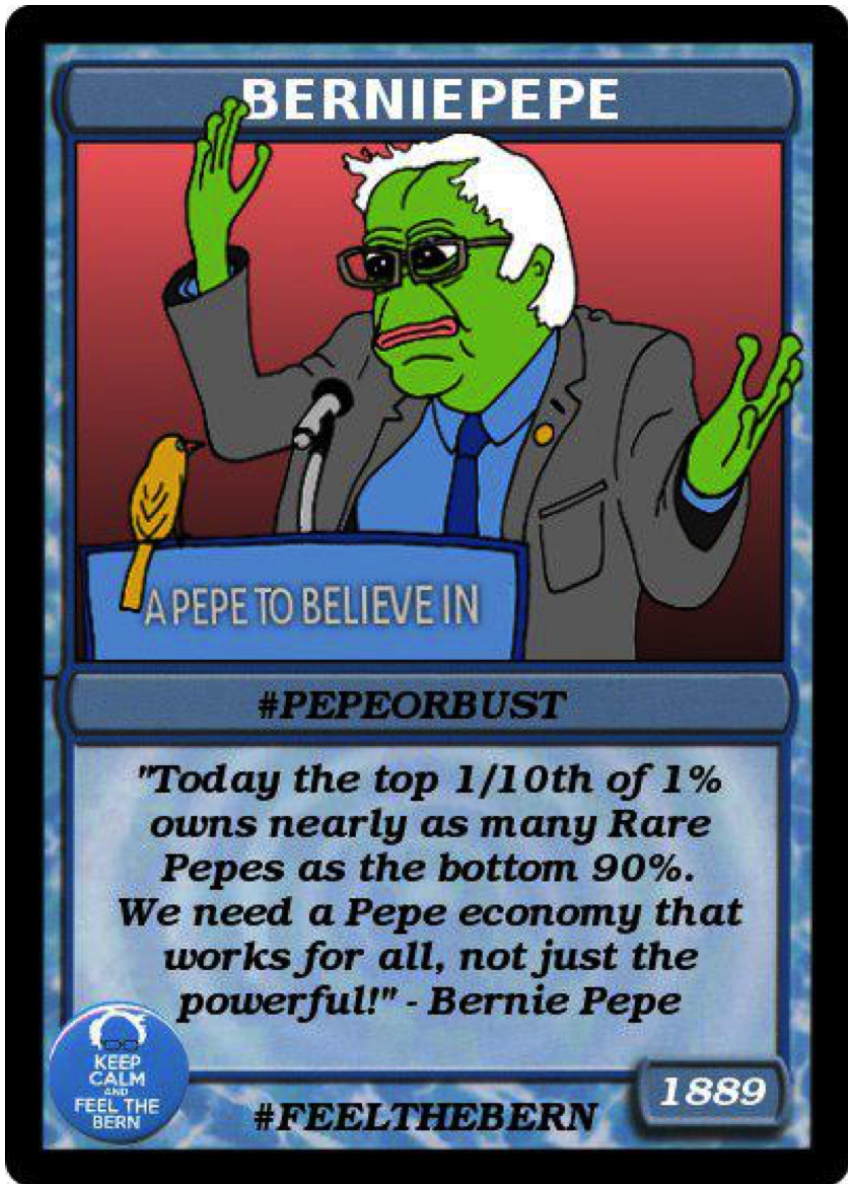
Are memes inherently binary?

MEMEPROPAGANDA

Noel David Nicolaus (DE) is an independent scholar and editor living and working in Berlin. He is currently working as an editor and is part of the Digital Art Collective Clusterduck, an interdisciplinary group working at the crossroads of research, design, and filmmaking.

*Silvia dal Dosso (IT) is a creative in the digital field and researcher of internet trends and subcultures. She wrote and directed *The 1 Up Fever* (2013). With Clusterduck she created #MEMEPROPAGANDA, an interactive exhibition built to create active engagement and awareness about the process of memetic propaganda.*

A last contribution to the panel was made by Silvia dal Dosso and Noel David Nicolaus, as representatives of Clusterduck, a hypergeeky online environment for the study, production, and exploration of memes.



Berniepepe meme.

Memes cannot be consistently explained, as mainstream media often try to do. For example, the narrative of the American election running from alt-right sentiments living on social media, to Trump

endorsing these memes, to Hillary falling into the troll trap, to Russian bots intervening in the campaign is as linear as it is inaccurate. Have we forgotten that there were also Berniepepes? To really understand memes, we have to go deeper into the actual images and see how they're currently used as means.

The history of memes is a history of exodus, in which meme communities migrate from one medium to another. The most recent major example would be memelords changing to Instagram after Tumblr changed its terms of use.



Doodling.

Even though there seems to be some agency in this mobility of communities, it is a complicated issue. There is an on-going effort to make a memers' union, to start protecting the authorial rights of meme-makers. The initiative went viral and was picked up on by the media. However, the union itself has not been very successful in terms of members.

Isabel Löfgren on how to organize and the role of communication.

How to co-opt meme activism? Noel David Nicolaus on the stories that we tell.

The discussion around memes as means comes down to one lesson, which is as powerful as it is simple: democracy is not a given. Fascism is a reality, which has to be faced. It is time for the Left to stop being disdainful to the means of memes, to co-opting, and to organization, because this why the Right is winning right now. The Right organizes, has money (which comes with being in power), doesn't claim a moral high-ground, and is willing to accept pluralism. We should not give in to the instantism we're being pushed into by dominant modes of knowledge-producers, but start taking back initiative, and: start to troll.

The Afterlife of Publications

Presentations and discussion with Marc van Elburg, Krista Jantowski, and Padmini Ray Murray, moderated by Geert Lovink

Remix of a blogpost by Minke Vos and a debris of notes and tweets, complemented with a dispersed editors' note.

What remains of a publication after it has been published? How does its status change in the post-production phase? Does it survive and thrive or will it suffer a slow, unnoticed death? Some works keep circulating, others do not. Fragments live on in search engines, on platforms, or in physical space, aggregated, fragmented, or re-contextualized. How does the materiality, positioning, and design of the work influence this afterlife? How to design for sustainability of the publication? The constellation of readers, publishers, designers, and editors is under consideration. Why do we even publish and for whom? What does it mean to actually read nowadays? Why are aspects of time and space important in the positioning of a publication? When we shake off the idea of the book as a static object, we can start to look at other - social, emotional, material, and spiritual - aspects of publishing. The echoes of the afterlife will reverberate through new publishing strategies.

As publishing professionals, we are always looking for new ways to 'keep a publication alive' post-production, as well as new ways to design for the sustainability of a publication. What can we do to prevent books from collecting dust on bookshelves? During the Urgent Publishing conference presentation *The Afterlife of Publications* Marc van Elburg, Krista Jantowski, Cristina Garriga and Karolien Buurman each show how they strive to keep their publications sustainable.

Readers & publishers

Cristina Garriga presents Readers & Publishers, an online directory of independent publishers. (<http://readersandpublishers.org>)

Cristina Garriga explains that there is a need among artists and writers to know how publishers work and how to reach each other. Readers and publishers, an online directory for independent publishers tries to close this gap by giving a potential author a clear and concise idea of what the publisher stands for, what kind of books they publish and what their submission policies are. Connecting the right authors and audience to the right publisher can ensure the sustainability of the publication.

Christina Readers & Publishers
Odi: art book-fair.

Kardien NXS World

Other ways of publishing
Publishing as a part of a nexus
of activities

Making a Public

The chain of pieces

↳ reaction on initial pieces

Creating rather than editing

Publication also as starting point

of (chain of) events/conversation

Keep an subversive method

upl
SG
telling-
reache

NXS

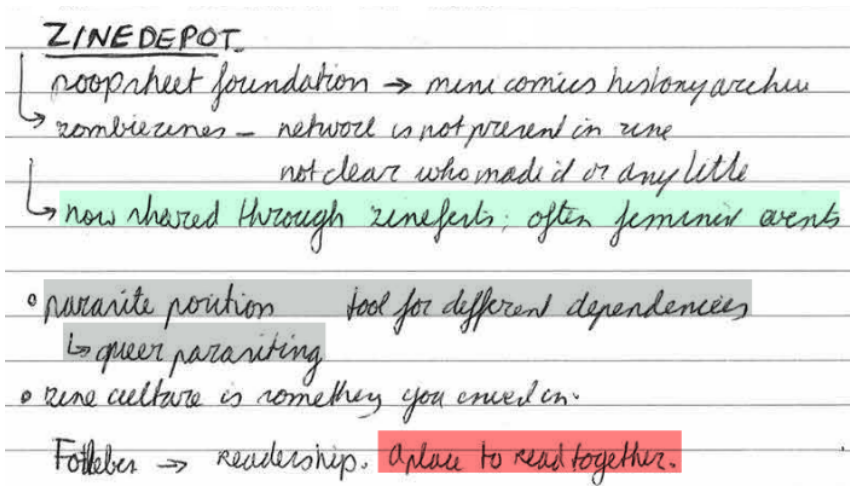
NXS is an Amsterdam based research collective that explores 'the self' in the age of digital technology through publications, exhibitions, art works, public events, and a working lab. <http://nxs.world/>

For Karolien Buurman, the answer lies in collaborating and creating a community. She works for NXS, a collaborative research

project that explores "the self" in the age of digital technology. NXS publishes twice a year. Each contributor responds and reflects on the work of another contributor. In addition to the publications, NXS hosts lectures, performances and exhibitions around the theme of the publication. In this way, they create a community that is much broader than their readership.

Parasiting Zine Culture by Marc van Elburg

Marc van Elburg (NL) is an artist and zinester. He was the founder of experimental DIY noise theatre and zine library de Hondenkoekjesfabriek, and a curator for Planetart. Currently he is looking after the Zinedepo zinelibrary in Motel Spatie in Presikhaaf.



Mark van Elburg talked about the Zinedepo zinelibrary in Motel Spatie in Arnhem. He explained that the zine culture, particularly that of the 1990s, acted outside commercial consumerism culture, and therefore outside of convention. The zine culture was a close-knit community. One zinester might have included the names of several other zines on the same topic, and where to get them. Van Elburg referred to this as DIY culture.



INTRO // statement (illustrate with zinecult)
 (with new materialism:) subcultures - under the radar
 (in context: copyright, censor)

ZINE - network included: cut & paste
 * My: inbetweenness
 * website: upload links to web
 * Archive: upload culture to web
 consumerist media

ZOMBIE ZINES - zero info
 + threshold in tact

ZINEFEST - new generation offline
 tactile personal
 INVERSION: old: network inside contact distance
 new: network at a distance contact u edge

RIOT Grrrl! - negotiate social norms
 + trolling
 Post-truth - absence of world view
 to personal info leads to machismo
 cultivated stupidity
 social norms

PARASITE - spatie - inshhite
 • parasite frame - non-binary
 • brings to front dependence
 * looks at old & new zine culture (minor)
 (users also producers)

LIBRARY - bringing self education to zine
 and zineculture to dead papers.
 zine as parasite

Notes by Marc van Elburg.

INTRO

(MIND FULL OF Brain parasites & memes)

Yesterday @ URGENTDISHNS I realized AGAIN THAT:

Probably

THE STRONGEST ARGUMENT FOR
A PARASITIC WORLDVIEW

IS THAT IT CHALLENGES THESE IDEALS OF

FREEDOM - SELF-DETERMINATION - AUTONOMY
INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY

THAT THESE NEW POPULIST LEADERS USE TO
BUILD THEIR WALLS AND FENCES

BECAUSE FROM A PARASITE PERSPECTIVE

WE ARE NOT FREE - NEVER WERE FREE
AND NEVER WILL BE FREE

BECAUSE IF WE WERE WE WOULD DIE

WE ARE ALWAYS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF
PARASITES

BE IT BIOLOGICAL LIKE INTESTINAL WORMS SHAPING
OUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

OR BRAIN PARASITES MEMES SHAPE THE WAY
WE THINK

OR SOCIAL PARASITES SHAPE THE WAY WE
ORGANISE

AND WE ARE SO ENTWINED WITH THESE PARASITES
THAT THEY ARE PART OF US AND WE PART OF THEM
SO THAT IF WE WOULD EXTERMINATE THEM
OUR ECOSYSTEM DIES AND OUR BODY DIES AND OUR
CULTURE DIES.

IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT ALL PARASITES ARE GOOD
IT JUST MEANS WE NEED TO PARASITE THE PARASITES WITH
THE RIGHT TOOL STRATEGY TO TURN THE BAD INTO THE GOOD

AND FOR THIS WE NEED TO MAKE EXPLICIT
OUR DEPENDENCIES AND STRATEGIES AND I
HOPE TONIGHT I WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THIS

Marc van Elburg

Zine as new materialization of online network cultures. Coming out of older (offline) underground network-

Zine as result of networks & zines in ^{their own right} cultures

Zines operate outside ~~existing~~ ^{existing} categories
(The zine as way of entering the network.
Open structure

Inbetweenness

The older zine networks were uploaded to the Internet. + Zine fairs/fests

What is left? Zombie zines - no title

So: anonymity is new ^{no name}
^{on paper rather} ^{no list}
^{than online}

→ Parasite Publishing - Michel Serres

↳ non-binary, not necessarily

queering good or bad

Different dependencies

A Much Needed Location for a Community of Readers by Krista Jantowski

Krista Jantowski (NL) is co-owner of WALTER; a (for lack of a better word) bookshop in Arnhem (NL). Her academic background is in film studies, her work back-ground in organizing and curating, her interest lies with reading as a social practice.

Krista Jantowski of Walter Books in Arnhem explained the importance of the bookshop not just as a place of commerce or a temporary storage room for books, but as the starting point of the circulation of knowledge. Bookstores are places where communities can come together and share knowledge and opinions.

Krista Jantowski - Walter Benjamin
Translation - Afterlife
Überleben /
Vorleben
des afterlife
in vorleben
nicht überleben
↳ Buffy & the library
A physical place to meet
The reader as a not-separate
domain

Padmini Ray Murray

Instead of the planned talk by Alice Twemlow, Padmini Ray Murray stepped in and gave a presentation.

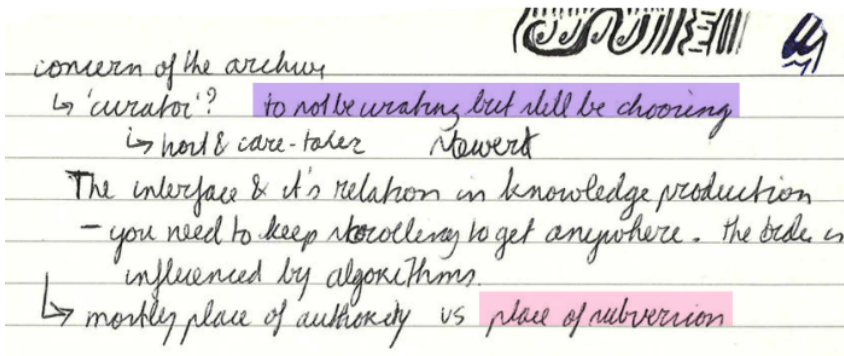


Institute of Network Cultures @INCAmsterdam · May 16, 2019

Online representation of feminism in India is highly classist, only certain castes are shown - Padmini Ray Murray talks at #urgentpublishing



Tweet by Institute of Network Cultures.



Dispersed editors' note: Considering the archive is a fundamental aspect of publishing. An important facet of this afterlife was brought forth by Padmini Ray Murray. Understanding the archive as activism, Padmini Ray Murray's called for decentralized servers hosting DIY archives as a way of providing a counterpoint to massive archiving projects by the likes of, for example, Google. Giving the example of Google Arts & Culture's project "Women in India: Unheard Stories", Ray Murray stressed that all the material Google has received from many Indian cultural institution merely

serves as a corpus to train their machines. One way to tell this is through its interface, which is cryptic at best. According to Ray Murray, the relationship between interface and knowledge production is a very important one: the ones in charge of the archive determine how the subject is represented. Ray Murray is therefore critical of the ability of profit-led corporations to truly forward the interests of the represented subjects. Such an archive must be challenged. The taxonomies and categories of the Internet, as a consequence of the Enlightenment project, must be exploded: "As scholars, as thinkers, as makers it is also on us, I think, to jam the archive, and to make the ways that the digital archive thinks about how the world is represented, how history will be read, or how history will be understood."

Your browser does not support the audio element

Padmini's question.

Your browser does not support the audio element

Padmini's answer.

Padmini response
Creating is a dirty word now
Custodianship: amplifying who cannot speak
Stewardship.



mikrotext @mkrtxt · May 16, 2019

Very important appeal by Padmini Ray Murray to question the unquestioned archive work of Google and to know and work on alternative archives. Archive Activism! [#urgentpublishing](#)



Tweet by mikrotext.

archives of holding

care, stewardship, custodianship

→ weaponised, archive things as future weapons

Conclusion

Each in their own way, the speakers highlighted that it is important for publishers to actively work towards bridging the gap between authors, readers and themselves, to build communities, to bring people together, and to collaborate within and outside of your own network. It is high time to stop looking at the book simply as a product. The speakers of *The Afterlife of Publications* have shown that the book, or any other publication, can serve as a catalyst for connection in the 'post-truth' era.

How can the archive move forward?

Archive - not just search engine results

DIY - archiving

The question of categorisation

- What do we want to make available?
- We keep things to be able to use them
(as future weapons)

Workshop: Say It Ain't So

A simple Speech-To-Text experiment with serious implications

Remix of a report by Barbara Dubbeldam and debris of photos and audio, complemented with a dispersed editors' note.

"Say It Ain't So", a workshop organised by artist Amy Pickles and designer and researcher Cristina Cochior. The topic is speech to text processing, including technical aspects of speech recognition software such as the open source engine PocketSphinx, and issues of visibility and invisibility.



Photo taken by Institute of Network Cultures.

The workshop is in response to an urgent need to raise awareness to digital discrimination arising from voice technology developments. This is illustrated in a [speech_recognition_interview](#) between Amy and, as it turns out, all

of us, collectively reading out lines from a script. It doesn't go well for Amy; she is rejected due to data drawn from not just what she said, but also how she said it. Her fate is sealed by low percentages of the things that matter, such as confident delivery and use of predetermined key words.

In contrast with the perception that discrete parts of language are mostly stable, speech recordings contain more dynamic, complex elements than we imagine. Speech to text uses a 'bag of words' model; utterances are sliced into basic units of language and indexed by frequency. More frequent combinations are matched with corresponding equivalents from sourced dictionaries; speech to text and vice-versa. This is illustrated in a quick demonstration of PocketSphinx transcription with mixed results; either rendering (relatively) faithfully or producing comical phrases that barely resemble natural language, especially when confronted with accents.

Dispersed editors' note: The question who gets to speak and who will be heard is given immediate and literal relevance in this workshop based on audio, speech recognition, and recording. As with so many potential surveillance technologies, speech recognition software poses the issue of not wanting to be discriminated by it, e.g. on basis of accent, but also wanting to steer clear of easy targeting. How can such technology be appropriated? What strategies of obfuscation do our voices offer? The multitude of different voices together form a strong tapestry - or perhaps a carrier bag - that escapes the automated categorisation of the software.

Writer Ursula K. Le Guin's "carrier bag theory of fiction" suggests that the first tool was a bag (rather than a weapon), with contents that allowed us to form narratives through powerful relational qualities. In this workshop, spread out on a carpet, are a collection of plastic bags filled with printed texts. We are invited to record ourselves reading from them in groups, either obscuring or emphasizing elements. Most adopt tactics of sabotage and subterfuge, such as broken syllables, speaking continuously, using languages other than English, etcetera. Some aim for clarity; text to speech, exploiting acoustics or carefully pronouncing certain words.

The workshop wraps up with listening to recordings from the morning, and reading printed transcriptions. Each transcription contains a list of phonemes next to eerily accurate but

semantically unrelated matches. We record parts of the transcriptions and assign them as phone ringtones to play during the plenary session, with comedic effect.

Your browser does not support the audio element

Recording of group reading.

It's easy to laugh at the mess made of what comes so naturally to us; language. But there are more serious implications, as we see in a screening of a video of academic Halcyon Lawrence, who maintains that homophony is engrained, and confronting accent bias is a crucial part of ensuring access to technology. The hallmark of algorithmic natural language applications is invisibility, relying on a participant's lack of awareness of the process. However, invisibility is also a result of these applications, in their ability to discriminate between the contents of the bags of words they employ, and so hide differences; discarding what is considered to be indistinct.

Workshop: All Sources Are Broken by Labor Neunzehn

a Post-Digital Reading Group

Remix of a blogpost by Silvio Lorusso and debris of photos, complemented with a dispersed editors' note.

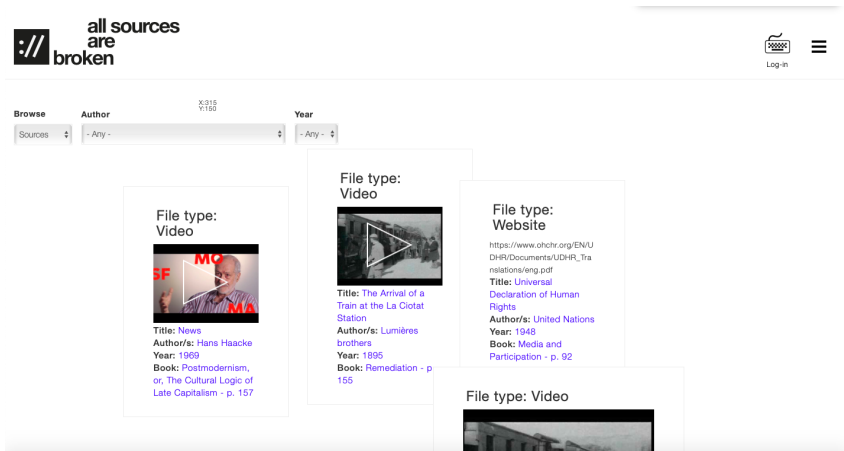
Labor Neunzehn is run by Valentina Besegher and Alessandro Massobrio. It is an artist-run space located in Berlin and multi-disciplinarily engaged in expanded cinema, modern music, publishing, and the critical reflection in media art.

During the workshop participants dive into ASAB, a web-based application and an artist experiment about books, hyperlinks obsolescence, and reading strategies developed by Labor Neunzehn. The project considers how hypertext and print already coexist (as opposed to one superseding the other), through a navigable archive of collected reference material that visitors can both navigate and shape themselves.



Participants during workshop All Sources are Broken.

Alessandro and Valentina introduced the workshop by highlighting the relationship between post-structuralism and post-digital. All Sources Are Broken is the name of the platform developed by Labor Neunzehn. ASAB allows users to create cross-references between so-called old and new media. Users are asked to select short passages of a book mentioning media items such as movies, documents, websites and pictures, but also public figures and places. In this way the original book is 'exploded'. The tool fosters the exploration of new strategies of learning and reading. ASAB is not meant to be understood as a full-fledged 'product' or 'service', but more as an experimental instrument to rethink publishing. This is why the tool doesn't incorporate automatized shortcuts such as looking for the excerpt in a database or giving a list of preselected choices: ASAB encourages slow reading.



Screenshot from interface of ASAB.

To introduce ASAB, Alessandro and Valentina showed us Starfire, a 1993 commercial from Sun Microsystems. The futuristic commercial is particularly relevant because is mentioned in Remediation, a book by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, one of the books we were asked to work with. The other two were Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism by Frederic Jameson and Media and Participation by Nico Carpentier. These books were chosen to demonstrate that hypertextuality precedes the advent of the internet and can be found in print as well. ASAB tries to go

beyond the dichotomy between paper and pixel and reminds us that reading is itself an act of writing. The tool comes from the realization that it is common to include hyperlinks in printed books but these hyperlinks are often broken. ASAB comes in help by connecting pieces of text in the book to media item online, which are defined OMS (online media sources).

Dispersed editors' note: While urgency may seem to call for a fast publishing process up front, after the publication is issued starts the trajectory of the afterlife, which preferably stretches out over a long time. Keeping a publication urgent over the course of weeks, months, years, or even decades (as in the examples that were used in the workshop) asks for dedication and thus: a slowing down. Slow reading, continuous remediation, following inter- and hypertextual tracks throughout literary history, offering up a book to participatory investigation: they all partake in the afterlife of the publication - its urgency as it spreads out over time.

Alessandro and Valentina are currently developing a new functionality for ASAB consisting in turning the surface of the website into a canvas. The user will be able to organize resources to create narratives and print a pdf out of it.

The project can be seen as a form of re-archiving that relates to techniques of preservation such as DOI (Digital Object identifier) or crawlers. ASAB is participatory: multiple users can contribute to enrich the archive. Its interface tries to go against the general 'shopping mall' feel of the contemporary web. After the participants tested ASAB, there was a discussion on new functionalities to implement and on the possible direction the project might take. While some of them enjoyed the experimental approach of the tool, some saw the potential of turning it into a service or into a software that can be locally installed.

Surgencies – A Personal Protest Statement

Workshop by NXS

Remix of the intro text and a debris of tweets, photos, and a poem, complemented with a dispersed editors' note.

How do we consume? How do we get influenced? How do we protest?

NXS – standing for nexus (a connection or bond) – is an Amsterdam based research collective that explores 'the self' in the age of digital technology. At its core is a biannual publication that extends to exhibitions, art works, public events, and a working lab. NXS searches for personal viewpoints, experiences, and stories.

1. Social media produces the social, experienced as isolation and loneliness.
2. Let's not go back to pain and work ourselves through the real existing numbness.
3. 21st century will be about the shortcircuiting of today's slavery. Make servitude visible.

Notes from Geert Lovink.

The Surgencies workshop by NXS was aimed at creating a collective lexicon of personal viewpoints on ubiquitous technology, by drawing attention to the implementations that are so vowed into our daily lives that they normally go unnoticed. The intangibility

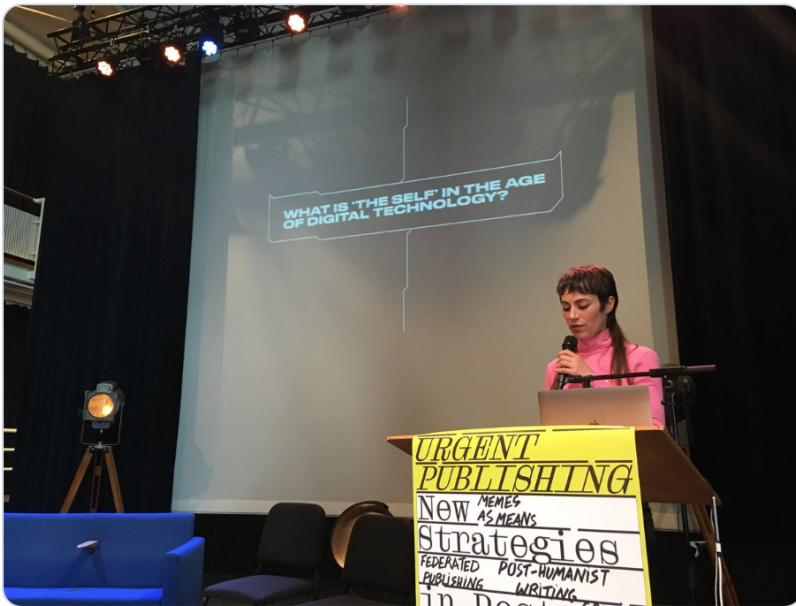
and unclarity of where and how exactly digital technology works and affects us, evokes the uncanny feeling of a loss of control, a sense of frustration and anxiety. By investigating and collectively mapping emotional responses to technology and their behavioral implications participants extract inspiration for a personal protest statement that was published in the direct surroundings.



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Karolien Buurman from NXS World talks about using irrationality and emotion as the starting point for publishing [#urgentpublishing](#)



4:16 PM · May 16, 2019 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

Tweet by the Institute of Network Cultures.

The collective 'research through making' approach mixes speed and visual and textual assignments with performative elements that require quick responses. They do not allow over-rationalization or

over-explanation of implicit constructs but promote the production of associative and subconscious ideas. By exposing the seemingly trivial daily urgencies in life, we can stop asking questions and make strong and profound statements to counter them.



mikrotex @mkrtxt · May 16

Cuteness in Arnhem. [#streetpublishing](#) [#urgentpublishing](#)



Tweet by mikrotex.

Lovesick Poem to a Chat Bot That Has Fallen Silent

Go and rot.
You have disappeared.
But I have not.

Nikola Richter

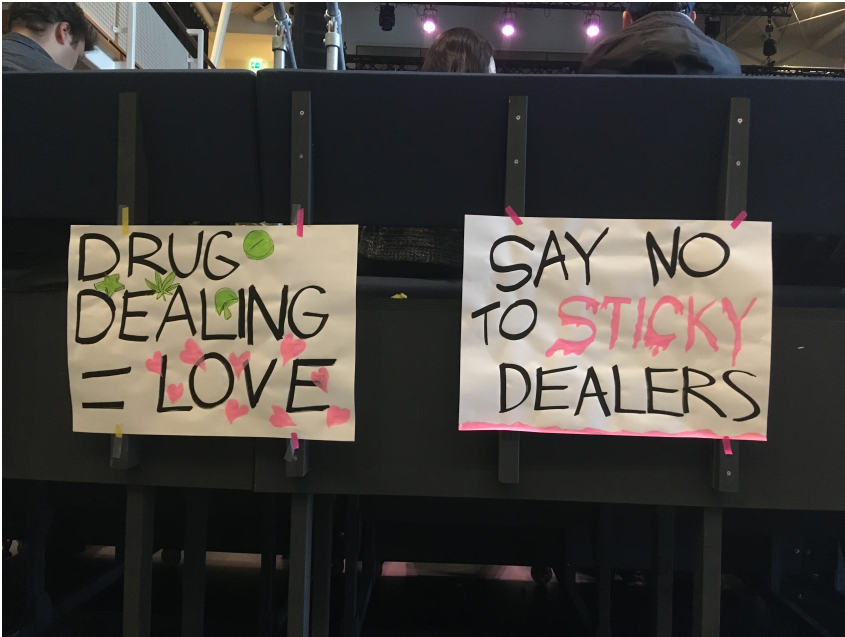


Photo by Inte Gloerich.

Dispersed editors' note: Speedy publishing has a bad ring to it: it leaves no time for line-editing, fact-checking, or conspicuous design. What happens if you lay aside these formal objections and ask what speed may have to tell us? This doesn't mean we have to blurt out everything as it comes to our minds, adding to the pile of braindumps that is too gigantic already and polluting the info-sphere even further. This workshop poses the question what happens when you take another inroad into what you might want to express. Not the rational but rather the emotional one. Not aiming for the unidirectional argument but for a multi-path walk in the woods. While the associations we might have with 'personal', 'protest', and 'statement' in an era of post-truth politics are probably not the best, they can also propose an open and involved manner of thinking, writing, and publishing.

Federated Publishing

Roel Roscam Abbing in conversation with Florian Cramer



Remix of a blogpost by Silvio Lorusso and a debris of tweets, complemented with a dispersed editors' note and a post scriptum.

Florian Cramer and Roel Roscam Abbing talk about federated social networks, how they work, what they do, and what chances and pitfalls they present for the publishing domain.

A public conversation on federated publishing took place during the lunch break of the final day of the Urgent Publishing conference. Florian Cramer, reader in 21st Century Visual Culture/ Autonomous Practices at Willem de Kooning Academy, asked Roel Roscam Abbing a few questions on federated networks, their origin, and their techno-social implementation.



Clusterduck @realclusterfuck · May 17, 2019

#UrgentPublishing, day3: learning about federated, **#distributedNetworks**, mastodon, diaspora, peertube & co  



Tweet by Clusterduck.

Roel Roscam Abbing is a researcher and artist who works on networks, infrastructures and the politics that inform them. He's

a founding member of varia, a space for developing collective approaches to everyday technology located in Charlois (Rotterdam). Varia hosts and employs a series of federated networks, such as one based on XMPP, an open standard for messaging.

Cramer and Roscam Abbing started by explaining what is a federated network and why it matters nowadays. Federation allows diverse entities to preserve some internal rules while still being able to communicate with each other. In this way they are able to maintain a certain degree of autonomy. Roscam Abbing pointed out that federation is not new, email and the web being old examples of it which are still in use. However, in a landscape characterized by an increasingly vicious centralization and by users' growing awareness of their needs and the limitations of generalist platforms, federation acquires new meaning and relevance.

The subject of the conversation then became Mastodon, a Twitter-like federated social medium. Unlike Twitter, Mastodon is comprised of multiple community-owned "instances", that can define their own rules, modify user interface, etc. Mastodon itself is part of a bigger network called the Fediverse, which includes different applications (such as the older GNU Social or the recent PeerTube) that are able to communicate with each other thanks to underlying federation protocols such as ActivityPub or OStatus.



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Examples of platforms within the fediverse are PeerTube, Diaspora, Mastodon. [#urgentpublishing](#)

12:45 PM · May 17, 2019 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

View Tweet activity

2 Retweets 2 Likes



Institute of Network Cultures @INCAmsterdam · May 17



Replying to [@INCAmsterdam](#)

Mastodon was founded in 2016 within the contexts of Trump's election and GamerGate. Communities at risk took an interest in federated platforms [#urgentpublishing](#)

1



2



Institute of Network Cultures @INCAmsterdam · May 17



Federated networks could offer the technical infrastructure for online safe spaces.

1

1

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Institute of Network Cultures @INCAmsterdam · May 17



However, federated publishing has been critiqued for not having an ethical code of conduct in itself. Roel: "There is a commitment by Mastodon to only list servers with sound community guidelines"



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Tweet by Institute of Network Cultures.

Roscam Abbing is one of the admins of a Mastodon instance called post.lurk.org and dedicated to media, free software and the politics of technology. Post.lurk.org currently hosts 129 users and is invite-only (you can get in touch with the admins on <https://talk.lurk.org/>). Roscam Abbing explained Mastodon stands in a too long tradition of projects that reimplement the features of proprietary applications but in free and open source software.

Mastodon initially emerged as a fork of GNU Social and was driven by a dissatisfaction towards social media like Twitter. Particularly in the wake of silencing techniques and the harassment campaigns that went through the hashtag #gamergate and the election of Trump. The urgency was that of modifying the software stack and to build organizational techniques to create safe spaces for targeted communities.

In order to join Mastodon, a user needs to pick up an instance, which might be confusing at first given the sheer diversity among the existing ones. Picking one instances doesn't mean you can't communicate with other ones, however. They do however form their own distinct communities with rules and guidelines. Roscam Abbing highlighted the presence of code of conducts on many of these instances as well as shared customs, such as stating one's pronouns in their bio. These codes of conducts are meant to communicate to potential visitors on what that community considers (un)acceptable behaviour.

In this respect, Cramer remarked that safe space doesn't necessarily mean progressive or left-leaning, but it can also be a zone that purposefully breeds far-right sentiments and ideas. From this point of view, Mastodon can be seen as "the perfect technology for distributing a troll farm". In fact federated social media share a common ground with the interests of a subset of 4chan users, in particularly the board /g/ where free software and alternatives to commercial media are often discussed and promoted. Similarly interest in these networks can also be linked to cyberlibertarianism.

There are several ways to preserve a sense of safety within an instance. For example, other servers can be silenced (users will still be able to get their content in their personal timeline) or fully blocked, in a process called 'defederating'. Roscam Abbing pointed out that defederating caused quite a stir among inhabitants of the fediverse, as it goes against the principle of openness and unlimited interconnection that are the hallmark of web and free software ideology. One way to motivate the implementation of silencing and blocking at the instance level can be summarized as "we don't have to read your bullshit".

"If silencing and blocking is possible, isn't there the risk of creating the equivalent of an organic supermarket, of elitism, of leaving the territory unguarded?", asked Florian Cramer,

suggesting that it is important to "stay with the trouble". Roel's response was that federated networks and proprietary platforms are not mutually exclusive. However, the safe spaces provided by a specific instance allow to strategize and to produce a different techno-social imagination.

The issue of privacy was also raised by Cramer, who spoke of synchronization while being reminded of bbs. Roscam Abbing clarified that privacy on Mastodon shouldn't be understood in the classical sense of a private communication channel as it doesn't implement any end-to-end encryption. This is because Mastodon has been conceptualized as a publishing platform where most messages are publicly readable. This makes Cambridge Analytica-style mining still possible. It also means that direct messages can be potentially read by admins, just like on the major commercial platforms.

Cramer and Abbing discussed the "composition" of the people involved in a project like Mastodon: not necessarily male engineers rooted in computer science but often designers and media people with a particular attention to user interface (Mastodon looks much better than the average free software project) as well as communities typically underrepresented in free software development such as people of color, queer, etc.

Dispersed editors' note: Commercial micropublishing platforms such as Twitter and other corporate social networking platforms may offer the speed required by the notion of urgent publishing. However, they are rife with misinformation, troll attacks, cyberbullying, etc. As highlighted by Roscam Abbing, the development of Mastodon was driven by the dissatisfaction of historically marginalized communities, often the target of such attacks, with these (and other) aspects of commercial platforms. The federated social web tries to experiment with radically different ways of conceiving digital sociality, supported by a decentralized technical infrastructure. The focus on communities, codes of conduct and moderation present in many of the instances and projects of the Fediverse attests to this. In this sense, besides speaking to the notions of 'speed' and 'post-truth', federated publishing connects with other overarching themes of the conference, namely 'community' and 'locality'. However, as Florian Cramer pointed out, the federated social web is not an inherently emancipatory project, as the existence of alt-right Mastodon instance Gab proves. Nonetheless, for all the reasons listed

above, federated publishing deserves to be developed further as a possible answer to the challenges of publishing in post-truth times.

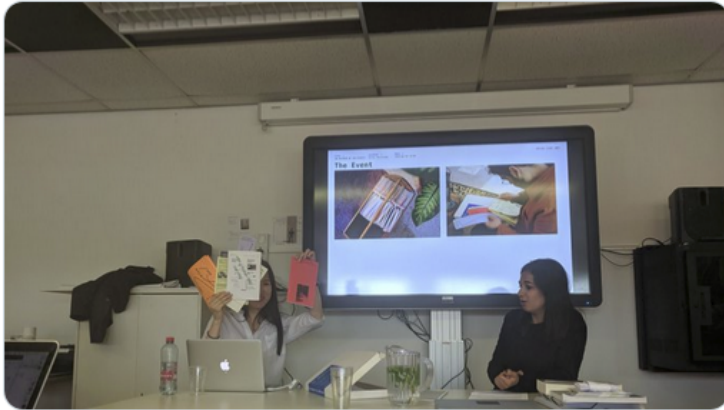
The questions from the audience revolved around the notion of governance. Roscam Abbing responded that the development of the project is currently based on the "benevolent dictator" model, as the creator of Mastodon has the power to take final decisions (in fact there have been Mastodon fork-tryouts, where the main focus has been a different form of governance). Furthermore, not all labour that goes in the project is acknowledged: work that is not code is often rendered invisible. This has led to disenfranchisement from queer and POC communities that in the early stages contributed a lot to the platform. One of the most interesting spaces to understand where Mastodon is going is the issue tracker: this is where plenty of users, not necessarily developers, request, discuss, and criticize features.

P.S.: After Roel Roscam Abbing and Florian Cramer's presentation, students from the Experimental Publishing Masters @ Piet Zwart Institute (Rotterdam) presented their publication *The Networks We de(Served)*. The publication features the students' personal accounts on setting up their own homebrewed network: "While self-hosting together we questioned our understandings of networks, autonomy, online publishing and social infrastructures, where each of us departed from a different question."



INCamsterdam @INCAmsterdam · May 17, 2019

Paloma Garcia explains how they launched the publication and hosted the event. Visitors had to collect printed zines into their wrapper
[#UrgentPublishing](#)



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#synchronicityofparasites

@Zinedepo/Motel Spatie

Remix of a blog by Florian Cramer and debris of tweets and photos, complemented with a dispersed editors' note.

The evening #synchronicityofparasites is organized by Marc van Elburg of the Zinedepo in Motel Spatie, Arnhem. Working with theories on the parasite as a metaphor for media culture, Marc found himself in a hotel in Ljubljana one day right next to an art space called P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. which he did not previously know of. This coincidence can be explained by the inherent synchronicity of parasites, which is probably also why we planned our publishing conference on the exact same day as Marc's event.

Motel Spatie is a DIY space founded in 2010 on the principles and with the attitude of squatter culture. Housed in Motel Spatie is the Zinedepo, a collection and public library of more than 1,200 international zines (i.e. small-edition, inexpensive DIY periodicals), founded and maintained by Marc van Elburg.



Photo by Clusterduck.

Van Elburg has been a zine maker and zine collector since the early 1990s. He is also an experimenter with generative/rule-based zine making, and a zine theoretician. His Zinedepo manifesto of radical zine culture clarifies Zinedepo's overall understanding of zine culture in between (a) 1980s/1990s zinemaking as anti-mainstream, countercultural publishing and (b) today's zinemaking renaissance where zine culture positions itself as an alternative to the internet (particularly, to blogging and social media), often emphasizing the handmade, visual, and material qualities of its medium. Here, the Zinedepo manifesto sees the danger of fetishizing and over-designing:

The radical zine format is basic; several pages, black & white, folded and stapled together. Zines = zineculture Zineculture = proto social network. The radical zine format is not about printing and printing techniques (but its content can be). The radical zine format is not about bookmaking (but its content can be). Zines are about social networking (global and local). Most zines have an 'open structure', (this way

they are also a network of meaning). The radical zine is primarily about personal interest (from the individual to the general). Radical zine ideology is 'do it yourself' ideology. Radical zine culture is not technophobic; a robot may produce and promote a zine completely automatically as long as it is a product of its personal expression.

In researching radical zine culture, Van Elburg became interested in the notion of the parasite and parasitic publishing. In his book *The Parasite* (originally published in 1980), philosopher Michel Serres suggests rethinking the relations between humans and parasites: "We parasite each other and live amidst parasites. Which is more or less a way of saying that they constitute our environment."

For Van Elburg, the concept of the parasite is thus opposed to the ideology of autonomy and freedom as it is nowadays promoted by right-wing populists, because from a parasitic perspective, we are never free but live in complex systemic dependencies. The interrelation between parasite and body is so deep that separation would be deadly. The negative connotation of the 'parasite' thus needs to be turned around and 'parasites' need to be thought of as positive forces.

In this spirit, the Urgent Publishing symposium parasitically dwelt on Motel Spatie's and Zinedepo's symposium, the Synchronicity of Parasites. Coincidentally, this event was planned to take place at the same time as Urgent Publishing, and the two joined forces.

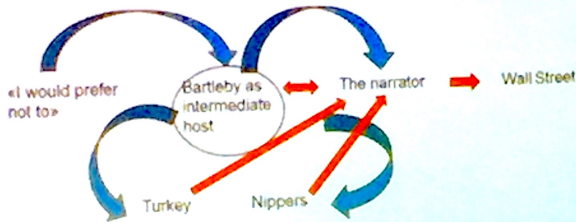
Dispersed editor's note: The notion of parasitic publishing has taken hold in many ways, both conceptually and concretely. Conceptually, the stress on the interdependencies of host and parasite can be transferred to a renewed relationship between publisher and reader, moreover: between publisher, writer, editor, reader, and book, bookshop, platform, etc. Another lesson learned deals with the accepting the evolution of publication into new forms, allowing them to flourish beyond your control. Parasitic publications need each other to come into being and can start to thrive on one another when allowed the space to do so. The afterlife might just become a new start.

On the Emergence of Humanist Parasite Studies

Anders M. Gullestad is associate professor at the Department of Linguistic, Literary, and Aesthetic Studies at University of Bergen, Norway.

Gullestad introduces parasite studies as something that became his own endeavor and academic specialization through his PhD thesis. There are a number of negative, often political attributions of 'parasite'. For example, both capitalists and socialists have been called parasites by their respective enemies. The literal meaning of the word, however, is someone who sits at a dinner table next to the regular guests and eats the food. Gullestad focused on Herman Melville's *Bartleby* and his "I would prefer not to", and its adoption as a political slogan for Occupy Wall Street in 2011. *Bartleby* has been interpreted as a corpse or ghost, as a slacker, schizophrenic, the narrator's double, a symbol of artists under marketplace conditions, as the patron saint of writers who stopped writing, as an exploited proletarian or even as a revolutionary. And as a parasite.

The formula as parasitic meme



Slide from Anders Gullestad's presentation.

While there are several scholarly readings of Bartleby as a parasite, he actually does not feed on anyone or anything. So maybe the narrator himself is the parasite, feeding on Bartleby, and resulting in a symbiosis of parasite and host? Alternatively, the formula "I would prefer not to" could be seen as a parasitic meme, spread via Bartleby, with what Gullestad calls the 'Bartleby [interpretation] industry' being its performative proof.

The scholarship on the subject of parasites exploded after 2000. Gullestad therefore imagines Humanist Parasite Studies as a new field of research spanning literary studies, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, film studies, media studies, cultural

studies, art history, linguistics, theology, classics, and more. However, this comes with a number of issues and challenges:

- The question of metaphoricity: when are we literally or metaphorically referring to parasites? - To give an example: calling plants and animals parasites is a historically much newer phenomenon than calling people parasites, and therefore more metaphorical.
- The question of ethics: how can one revise the stigmatization of parasites without falling into the opposite extreme of glorifying them? How can parasites be made productive and not simply remain in a pejorative realm? An example of this are colonial languages that are, in the most literal sense, parasitic languages.

Since parasites are always with us and cannot be avoided, they are not a matter of good or bad. They disturb and upset control and therefore disturb hierarchies.

The Synchronicity of Feminist Parasites

Anna Poletti is associate professor of English Language and Culture at Universiteit Utrecht.

Poletti introduced herself as a literary scholar who does not study what is canonically recognized as literature, but marginal publications such as zines. Poletti relocated to the Netherlands from Australia where she had been involved with one of the world's longest-running and (within international zine communities) most famous zine spaces, Sticky Institute, which is located in a pedestrian underpass in Melbourne's city center. Prior to her talk at Motel Spatie, she had published her manuscript as a zine and distributed it among the visitors who were invited to read along her lecture.

THE
SYNCHRONICITY
OF
FEMINIST
PARASITES

The lecture focused on three now-canonical woman writers: Virginia Woolf, Audre Lorde and Chris Kraus. Riffing on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's question "Can the subaltern speak?", Poletti asks: "Can the parasite write?" She suggests to look at "femininity as a parasitic position that must be thought in relation to its host."

Poletti's lecture sparks a lively debate with the audience. One question concerns the ethics of Kraus' novel (which contains intimate details published without consent). Another question concerns the master's tool as being central to almost any countercultural and critical publishing strategy: The Xerox machine with which most zines are produced happens to be a master's tool, the internet is a master's tool as well. Lorde did not literally speak of tools, but of practices and patriarchy, calling upon a new way of scholarly thinking, instead of continuing old modes of discourse.

Parasite Game

Wilfried Hou Je Bek is zine maker, writer, squatter and psychogeographic computationalist, and game developer.

Wilfried Hou Je Bek gives an introduction into systems, organization and the theory of the 'invisible hand' of Adam Smith. He proposes to look at the parasitic through the lens of game theory. Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' was a rather obscure concept within his work until it became singled out and highlighted by the 20th century neoliberal 'Austrian economists' who advocated an uninterrupted free market without outside (i.e. state) interference.



Marc van Elburg and Wilfried Hou Je Bek.

The equilibrium theory of the invisible hand seems to leave no room for parasitic actors. This also includes the game theory of the Nobel Prize-winning economist John Forbes Nash Jr. Margaret Thatcher's famous quote that 'there's no such thing as society' is derived from it: there is no society, only egoistic actors. This theory solves the free-rider problem through making everyone a parasite.

To put these observations into practice, Hou Je Bek programmed a small multiplayer browser game called Parasite Game. In this economic simulation, players can choose to be either contributors or parasites. Parasites will always win more money than contributors, but the game ends when everyone acts as a parasite. Wins accumulate so that in the end, wealth will be unevenly distributed. There are two ways of being parasitic: out of strength or out of hopelessness. If everyone contributes, the game ends after 40 rounds; with a certain but limited number of parasites, the game will last longer. This is an empirical proof of the parasite being beneficial to the system as a whole.



Miriam Rasch @mirias · May 17

#nocontext #urgentpublishing #motelspatie



Tweet by Miriam Rasch.

