The Real and the Virtual

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The Cyber Hub
"Cybercultures"
The Real and the Virtual:
Critical Issues in Cybercultures

Edited by

Daniel Riha And Anna Maj

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Introduction

Daniel Riha & Anna Maj

The papers in this volume reflect the debates that progressed during the 4th Global conference on *Cybercultures: Exploring Critical Issues*, held as a part of Cyber Hub activity in Salzburg, Austria in March 2009. The edited draft papers make up a snapshot for the actual publishing.

This multi-disciplinary conference project is a successful reborn of the 2003-2005 conferences held previously in Prague in the frames of the ID.net *Critical Issues* research project.

Being a contemporary dominating cultural paradigm, cyberculture is an important subject for a wide range of researchers representing various disciplines. Thus, the idea of interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge through presenting results of diversified research projects seems to be crucial for their further development at both local and global levels. The research problems connected with cyberculture (or rather cybercultures) nowadays are those arising in the field of philosophy, psychology, sociology, culture, media and game studies, IT studies, engineering, design and law.

One of the fundamental topics raised during the conference was the issue of access analysed at various levels, especially users' access to information and technology with regard to the notion of diversified competencies, knowledge and disabilities but also accessibility of the content and interface. The discussions also concerned the question of user’s involvement in the process of development of technologies and devices, client’s incorporation into the creative process and the idea of user-friendly interfaces as well as their implementation. The issues were elaborated on with reference to the problematics of control gaining, maintaining and lack of control as associated with privacy and its loss. This subject implies ideas of control over the dispersed and decentralised system of the Net itself but also of the content distribution in the context of Web 2.0 architecture and cultural trend of sharing. Moreover, these areas provoked questions on changes in education and the increasing need to provide cyber-education for various groups of society in view of their specified profiles. The necessity to broaden the abilities of an average user and the demand to constantly increase teachers' competencies are the challenges for educational systems. These problems were analysed with reference to interesting local examples of different forms of implementation of new ideas and methods of creative teaching of media and through media, i.e. with the use of 3D environments, games, machinima and social networking websites.

The relation between the real and the virtual was the second important issue raised during the conference. Crucial terms analysed in various contexts became ‘interaction’ and ‘interactivity’. This problematics
concerns virtual environments, game design and human-computer interaction, user-generated content connected with the ideas of openness, folksonomies and wikinomics. Both the constantly emerging and growing virtual communities and the convergence of new media create new possibilities of communication. The current situation enables media users to develop, often subconsciously, their skills and various types of communication behaviour, which results in new models of perception and thinking—thus, new patterns of culture and new forms of society. However, cyberculture, being shaped by the global market and by information marketing provided by major teleinformation companies, still largely depends on the Web users’ will and their access to the global information product. Web 2.0 can be without any hesitation regarded as such a product—moreover, a successful one. But the label ‘2.0’ quickly changes into ‘3.0’, as the novelty is one of the priorities of marketing. What does it mean for the users and for future communication? The authors specializing in various disciplines try to find answers to these and other important questions of our contemporariness and future.

This book consists from 19 chapters and has been organized into eight parts:

- **Part I:** Theories and Concepts of Cyberspace and Cybertulture;
- **Part II:** Online Communities, Web 2.0 and Emerging Practices in Social Networking;
- **Part III:** Cybersubcultures;
- **Part IV:** The Future of Interactive Entertainment;
- **Part V:** Social Presence in Virtual Worlds;
- **Part VI:** The Cultures of Online Learning and Educational Use of Videogames;
- **Part VII:** Digital Art and Interactive Storytelling;
- **Part VIII:** Cyber-Policy and Cyber-Democracy and their Impact on National and Global Politics;

The first part comprises from 2 chapters on loosely corresponding topics:

*Umut Burcu Tasa* and *Ali Yurtsever* in their opening essay (“Redefining the Body in Cyberculture: Art's Contribution to a New Understanding of Embodiment”) concentrate on the issue of the body in cyberspace and the question of its redefinition by digital environment, especially by new media art. Digital culture is seen here as a continuation of the Cartesian dream of disembodiment of humanity by freeing the mind from the materiality of reality. The authors compare this Western idea with Sufi mysticism where reality is regarded as the illusion produced by the mind and senses. The essay investigates the possibilities of a double perspective of
looking at the problem of the body in the context of technology-in the Western order the body is disconnected from the external world, while in the Eastern it is deeply connected with it, moreover-the body and the external world depend on one another.

Ayşe Şat (“Human Bodies in Cyberspace”) analyses selected pornographic website to deconstruct the way our bodies are subject to the Ideological State Apparatus. The outputs from her analysis indicate that body image serves as a controlling mechanism for the global capitalist system enabling the power groups to control people and social order.

The second part of this book presents three articles focused on the emerging practices in social networking:

Donata Marletta in her essay (“Hybrid Communities to Digital Arts Festivals: From Online Discussions to Offline Gatherings”) shows the possibilities for anthropology of cyberculture or ethnography of media, science and design. The author examines new forms of connectivity and modes of community forming, especially those connected with the Internet communication and a wide spectrum of new media festivals, digital art competitions and conferences on ICT and its social impact. The research perspective presented here sheds new light on parallel online and offline existences of digital communities. The essay indicates important factors of the evolution of the meaning of virtual communities and cyberspace itself.

Nils Gustafsson explores the borders of social tendencies and viral politics in his essay (“This Time It's Personal: Social Networks, Viral Politics and Identity Management”). Social media are analysed here from the point of view of identity design and management, whereas social networks are regarded as a form of collective gatekeeping of information and post-institutional way of civic self-organisation. The author proposes a new model of political viral campaign using social media and operational terms as ‘viral politics’ and ‘temporal elites’, which are fundamental for the understanding of this communication process.

Kristi N. Scott in the essay (“The Second Self through Second Life: Mask or Mirror?”) analyses the psychological aspect of avatars’ creation in the Second Life environment. The author suggests that it is possible to find patterns of behaviour which are used by introverts and the patterns that are articulated and performed by extraverts. Second Life is seen here as a virtual environment answering to various psychological needs of different users-helping in many ways to experience the pleasure of interaction, enable self-presentation and self-redefinition. The author examines similarities and differences between the psychological paradigms performed in real life and those realised in virtual second life, especially in Second Life.

The book’s third part considers selected issues on the operational models of the cybersubcultures:
Vikki Fraser’s paper (“Sex, Sexuality and Cyberspace: Intersecting Queer Spaces on and Offline”) focuses on the discourses analysis of the websites that are designed for and used by queer youth. She is interested in the intersection of both the online and offline social queer worlds. Based on the outputs from the qualitative research carried out in Australia this paper focuses on the way discourses of sex operate on websites commonly used by queer youth. Gaydar (www.gaydar.com) and Gaydar Girls (www.gaydargirls.com) serve as a base for her research.

Natalia Waechter, Kaveri Subrahmanyam, Stephanie M. Reich and Guadalupe Espinoza in their essay (“The Use of Social Networking Sites and Their Relation to Users’ Offline Networks”) present results of empirical research on social networking of American teenage users and the modes of their activity. Teenagers are eager to use social networking websites as well as other communication tools which expand their offline social networks but also let them create online social networks. The researchers study behaviour, attitudes and needs of young Internet users in order to understand the dependencies between their online activity and psycho-sociological development of emerging adults.

Bittiandra Chand Somaiah (“Cybergrace among Eating Disorder Survivors in Singapore”) considers the implications for ethical storytelling. Illness has been understood as learning to cope with lost control. Cyberspace then to the author might serve as a medium for semblance of lost control. The potential impact of online eating disorder support groups and blogs for shaping individual and collective identities has been examined.

The fourth part of this book presents papers concerned with videogames as an art and human-computer interaction design issues in the context of the visually impaired:

Jef Folkerts concentrates on the issues of perception, interaction and semiosis in the essay (“Playing Games as an Art Experience: How Videogames Produce Meaning through Narrative and Play”). Game design and playing are regarded here as an important semiotic activity where meaning is constructed by designers and constantly reconstructed by players. The issue of imagination produced by games is the core problem analysed by the author in the context of other kinds of cultural mass production. Games are regarded here as the following step of evolution of artificial environments used for creation and recreation of social and personal imagination.

Anna Maj and Michal Derda-Nowakowski in their essay (“Anthropology of Accessibility: The Perceptual Problems of Human-Computer Interactions”) show the context of accessible design, especially for people with visual impairments but also for other groups of users that can be marginalised by the process of acceleration of the development of technology. The authors indicate the fact that nowadays competencies to operate technologies have become fundamental cultural competencies.
Problems connected with the ‘proper’ design—which means openness, standardisation, usability and accessibility—are analysed here with the background of some influential technological solutions and inventions, and is regarded as an anthropological problem of communication process and information flow.

The part five examines the selected design issues of multiplayer online games from the sociological point of view and the second paper included analyses the user generated contents in the web 2.0 era:

Gökmar Bostanci Ege and Nicholas Koullapis (“Social Nature of Time and Space in Online Games: Designing Fantastic Social Worlds”) are concerned with the issues of time and space in the multi-user online games in relation to the World of Warcraft. They examine the user/designer perception of the interface and compare the time and space of the WoW with other games of the same genre and analyse social aspects of these game worlds.

Barak Dogu and Zehra Ziraman (“Web Based Authorship in the Context of User Generated Content: An Analysis of a Turkish Website: Eksi Sozluk”) analyse the online collaborative activities on the popular Turkish website Eksi Sozluk. This site has emerged as a database but is exploited as a blog diary and a web forum at once. The focus is on the attributes of authors contributing to this web community by reproducing texts.

Two papers in the sixth part consider the role of the new media technologies in the frames of education:

Daniel Riha (“The 3-D Virtual Library Concept Re-Visited”) discusses the functionalities the Library 2.0 shall deliver with the focus on 3-D library service and analyses the assumptions for the establishing of the long term user community from the wider historical perspective. The concept of the 3-D Virtual Library, realized in 2004 for the University of Constance Library is compared against the actual 3-D library concepts.

Theodoros Thomas in his essay (“Cyberculture: Learning New Literacies through Machinima”) concentrates on cyberculture teaching, a new context of education process and alternative, participatory forms of knowledge distribution. Basing on realisation of an educational project concerning cyberculture and digital literacy, the author analyses problems and challenges of teaching new media skills. The knowledge of cyberspace, virtual communities and environment, basics of image, video and sound processing and digital storytelling skills which was acquired during the academic course, were later applied by students to prepare their own machinima projects.

The part seven continues with two chapters devoted to media convergence and digital art:

Tatiani G. Rapatzikou analyses an example of the influence of electronic texts on the print novel in the essay (“Print Novels and the Mark of the Digital’: Mark Z. Danielewski’s Only Revolutions and Media
Danielewski’s book, being an experiment in the field of writing, editing and typesetting, becomes a signal of mutability regarded here as a trait of digital culture and interactive media development. The narration gains new dimensions due to the form of the book, traditionally printed yet ‘digital’ in navigational design and demanding an interactive reading process.

Tyng Shiuh Yap (“Intermedial Performance: Digital Connectivity”) focuses on some of the conceptual as well as practical issues surrounding the incorporation of intermediality in live performance proven on the case studies of the practitioners presently based in Australia. Representation or remediation through transcoding involves a reductive process. This materialist idea of translating qualitative values and relations from one medium to another transposes our conventional idea of meaning creation. Intermedial performance presents an expansion of how we construct and think about meaning and performance through the process of mediation and remediation.

The eight part presents papers that argue about the cyber-policies: Melissa DeZwart and David Lindsay in the essay (“Governance and the Global Metaverse”) analyse an issue of increasing importance-multidimensional coexistence of juridic systems and digital culture. The authors examine various problems, such as ideas and methods of governance, legitimacy and power distribution in the context of 3D virtual worlds, games and social networking websites, raising questions on the conditions and implications of the ways in which cyberlaw functions in different digital environments and also in offline reality of state law. These issues are crucial for global culture and cybersociety as they concern questions of the code being the law itself, freedom of users (or its lack) and the power of service providers.

Christina Neumayer, Celina Raffl and Robert M. Bichler in their essay (“Politics and Social Software: Recommendations for Inclusive ICTs”) reflect on social media potential to strengthen citizen movements through disseminating patterns of collaborative creation. The authors suggest that social networking can be more effectively used as a powerful tool for political and ideological purposes and for struggling with the digital divide or other forms of social marginalisation. The authors focus on the inclusive use of new media increasing social power due to various tools such as social software which may have impact on political activism enabling a participatory attitude to social issues.

Rasha El-Ibiary (“Mediatisation of Terror in Cyberspace: Scrutinizing Al-Qaeda’s Media Strategy”) analyses Al-Qaeda’s media strategy, as central to its military strategy in its fight against the West. The author is assessing the ways it communicates its strategic deeds and proposes that this media strategy carries the seeds for its failure due to the inherent
contradictions in its propaganda messages, the absence of legitimate goals, and the inability of its virtual activity to substitute for the real world.
PART I

Theories and Concepts of Cyberspace and Cyberculture
Redefining the Body in Cyberculture:
Art's Contribution to a New Understanding of Embodiment

Âli Yurtsever and Umut Burcu Tasa

Abstract
The advance of digital technologies and evolution of cyberculture have reju-venated Modernity’s Cartesian dream of the pure mind achieving an uncondi-tional freedom by leaving the body behind. The body, now more than ever, is perceived as another object in the external materiality where, as the lineage of Western thought so obstinately insists, the Truth is to be found. Eastern traditions like Sufi mysticism, on the other hand, offer a stark alternative; the physical reality is dismissed as illusion, the search for the Truth is essentially internal, and the self is not a segregated and detached entity but is an ever-interconnected part of the whole. We argue that leveraging both on the an-cient wisdom of the East and the immense success of science and technology of the West, cyberculture can foster a new human condition of re-embodiment, interconnectivity, and re-unity. We maintain that contemporary arts, particularly in performative and collaborative forms, have much to con-trIBUTE to this endeavor, and emerging technologies like biomechatronics and neuroprosthetics, which are acclaimed by some for their assumed contribu-tion to the ideal of disembodiment, might be exploited by artists to promote a new understanding of embodiment and humanity’s interconnectedness with the rest of the existence.

Key Words: Art, Body, Cyberculture, Disembodiment, Embodiment, Eastern Mysticism, Sufism

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1. Introduction
Throughout history, human body has played a crucial role in all searches of humanity to attain a comprehensive meaning for its existence. It has also occupied the agendas of cultural, literary, feminist, and cyber theo ries of the last four decades. Postmodern discourses of cultural studies and critical theory all seem to be deeply obsessed with it.

Body is a baffling concept, which gets more elusive as its technologically re-produced versions come around. Embodied experiences in and with digital technologies transform both the body and consciousness, and this transformation engenders a whole new series of attributes associated with the body. We talk about telematically-transmitted bodies, bodies that are immersed, extended, composed, substituted, etc.
As digitalization becomes an indispensable part of our everyday lives, some of those technologies become like extensions of our bodies, and our bodies develop extensions and synthetic senses through them. While eyeglasses and walking sticks are low-tech examples of bodily extensions, cell phones and robotic arms, can be considered as high-tech ones.

This discussion is not unique to the academia; daily news media also abounds with articles on the subject. A very current news article in New York Times, for example, was on the transformative effect of map and location aware applications in mobile phones on our way of thinking, and how this could reduce the growth of cells in the hippocampus, which is a part of the brain.

So, it is already a well-established fact that digital technologies transform both our bodies and our consciousness. What is now in question is how to design and utilize these technologies, and how to place our bodies within? The answers to these questions will have an immediate impact on our future.

The technologies, both their development, and their comprehension, and the way our bodies’ interact with them, have been shaped by western lineage of thinking. So in order to understand the roots of how we comprehend our bodies today, and our existence within cyber technologies, we would like to present a brief historical overview of body in western tradition.

2. Body in West

The performance artist Caroleen Schenemann proposed that the body is where all the splits in Western Culture occur. The origins of the split between the soul and the body go back to Ancient Greece. Then it continues in Christianity, Enlightenment and Modernity, in one form or another. In the Classical era, the body was subordinated to the soul, which was a rational soul then. The body was a tomb for the soul according to Plato, and according to Socrates, pure knowledge could only be achieved by freeing oneself from the body. Since then, the body has been conceived as something we have, rather than something we are. Early Christianity also adopted the Ancient Greek notion of the body-soul dualism with a little twist that the body was now sinful.

In 1637, René Descartes, arguably the most predominant forerunner of the Enlightenment, separated the body from the mind once and for all, and subjugated the body to the power of reason, to the power of mind. In due course, the body-soul dichotomy of Antiquity and Medieval Christianity would be converted into the “body-mind duality” or the “Cartesian Split” as it has come to be known. Dichotomy between the “rational soul” and “vessel body”, which culminates in the Cartesian body-mind duality of the Enlightenment, forms the basis of the ever-persistent idea of Modernity that the self resides in the mind not the body. The body is, therefore, externalized and
objectified, and subjugated to the mind only to be perceived as another object in the external materiality where, as the lineage of Western thought so obstinately insists, the Truth is to be found.

The body, either sinful or weak, is a temporal, an “external thing” to control, shape up, and fix. It is viewed as a mechanism, and the bodily functions are perceived as algorithm-based procedures that can be imitated by some proper mechanical apparatus.

The vision of Enlightenment that the rational mind reigns over the body, and therefore shall not be bound and limited by it, has been revived with the introduction of digital technologies and the consequent evolution of Cybertecture. Out in the vastness of cyberspace, it initially seemed that the mind/body segregation of the West has just found the right “media” to reach its ultimate goal: the utopian dream of the pure mind achieving an unconditional freedom through disembodiment.

Beginning from the 1980s, the “myth of disembodiment” was the new evangelic way to “escape from our embodied world” to an alternative cyber-reality, fostered in the dreams of AI specialists as well as non-technical virtual communities. Within a decade, Barlow would declare the cyberspace as a “new civilization of Mind”, a civilization of identities who left their bodies behind.  

In those days, while Virtual Reality (VR), networking technologies, and cyberspace were re-enforcing the dream of a pure disembodiment, robotics and cybernetics were generating the idea of the cyborg. And both of these represented the pure domination of mind over body, and its right to transform and replace it.

We argue that, this approach to the body, and in turn to humanity, and in turn designing today’s technologies accordingly, is problematic and an alternative perspective is necessary. And we argue that, Eastern thinking can maintain a different point of view, which is summarized very briefly.

3. Body in East

Mystical teachings like Taoism, Zen, and Buddhism of the ancient East, and Sufism of Islam, all elaborate body-mind duality in one form or the other. Yet the dualities of the East are fundamentally different from those of the West: opposite principles of a dichotomy do not exclude each other; even at the very extreme, each polarity is still reminiscent of its opposite twin. The dualities of the East are, therefore, mutually inclusive; the opposites are interdependent on and intertwined with each other, and it is not simply possible to conceive any one of them in solitary existence. So contrary to the Western thought, it is not possible to let go of the body, according to the East.

At this point, an objection may arise. In many forms of religious mysticism, particular teachings and rituals can be read as asserting that the destruction of the body is a way to return to this universal unity. However,
that would be a rather simplistic interpretation. In any of these traditions, the actual target of destruction, if there is any, is not the body, but the ego, or the individual self, which thrives within the territorial demarcations, set by the body. In any of these texts, there is no hatred for the body itself. The aim is to let go of the self, the individuation, the weaknesses of the ego, which is the reason of separation from unity.

According to Taoism, having a body is a good thing, because it is the means of one’s existence; but it also subjects one to “evils and misfortunes.” The reason why the body subjects one to evils is not because the body itself is evil, but because, the body sets the boundaries of the selfhood, separates us from the whole. The evil is the separation; the self; so it is what should be let go.

Both in Buddhist practices of meditation, and in Sufi rituals, the experiences are basically body-centric and somatic, and require full body awareness. Without the body, the practices, the rituals could not be fulfilled. Besides, Sufism, the mystical tradition of Islam, sees the human body as the manifestation of God’s names and attributes.

To conclude, the underlying theme of the Eastern mystical thought, is the concept of unity in the universe. Every physical and spiritual being are interconnected parts of this Oneness.

4. Embodied Technology

On this plane we live in our bodies. The body embodies consciousness, and it is our primary means of interaction with the rest of existence around us. We believe that, a new approach to technology, leveraging both on the ancient wisdom of the East and the immense success of science and technology of the West can foster a new human condition: A condition of re-embodiment, interconnectivity, and re-unity.

Contrary to the popularity of disembodiment dreams, we see that scholars and scientists from various disciplines have generated an enormous literature on embodiment. Especially during the past two decades. The concept embodiment emphasizes that the materiality of the body does not necessarily make it an object among other objects. VR technologies, for instance, have been utilized for embodied simulation systems in education and entertainment, and in psychological treatment.

The embodied approach is particularly inevitable in the field of interaction design, and Human-Computer Interaction (HCI). Because when we assume the role of a user in our relationship with technology, the body of the user becomes the first constraint that a designer must take into account.

Another remarkable example comes from textile engineering. By the application of nanotechnology, there is now an extreme sport called wing suit flying, which is the art of flying without using anything but one’s own body dressed in a special suit called the “bird-man suit”. This special suit reduces
the falling velocity of a skydiver to eliminate the need for a parachute, and makes a significant amount of horizontal flight possible.\textsuperscript{15} As the technology develops, further decreases in fall velocity and increases in horizontal flight are expected, which may then prompt even the possibility of a safe landing without a parachute, and actualize the human beings’ eternal dream of flying like a bird.

Besides the existing embodied experiments in technology, in order to integrate the Eastern approach into the development of technology and our daily lives, we argue that, art has quite the potential to offer a strategy and reveal alternative ways to further embodied designs of new technologies.

5. **Art and Re-Embodiment**

Art as an experimental research method is relatively superior to other disciplines in the sense that, it can utilize unconventional systems of knowledge that are unacceptable by other fields.\textsuperscript{16} That is basically the reason why it can remarkably suggest alternative, innovative and humanistic scenarios for the development of technology.

Simultaneously with the spread of digital technologies, contemporary art has witnessed countless number of works that are inspired by ancient Eastern teachings, and by the interconnected, collaborative and rhizomatic nature of Cyberspace. And in turn they produced visionary theories and alternative practices on how digital technologies could shape human body and consciousness. And they had their share in the “Body in the Cyberspace” debate.

A forerunner example is Char Davies’ immersive Virtual Reality piece *Osmose* (1994). In this piece, the participant wears a stereoscopic head-mounted display (HMD) and a motion-capture vest equipped with breath and balance sensors. Using breath and body balance, the participator undertakes an immersive and fully embodying virtual journey through the HMD. The responses of the participator were recorded similar to the “reactions generated during traditionally induced altered states of consciousness.”\textsuperscript{17} The piece also evokes the state of mindfulness in Buddhism, since it attempts to stop the mind from being on an autopilot.\textsuperscript{18}

This and similar works’ capability to provoke altered states of consciousness tell us that, we might hope to utilize technology for creating shamanic consciousness states, in some way.

Camille Baker is another media artist and a researcher we would like to mention. For embodiment via technology, she has explored biosensors and wearable computing technologies in media art. She developed a device called *The Pod* (2004), which utilizes biofeedback technology, meditation, yoga and multimedia. Similar to *Osmose*, *The Pod* also creates a virtual experience of re-embodiment and altered states of consciousness in participants. Baker
makes experiments of alternative communication systems like telepathy using *The Pod*, and gets promising results. 19

Wearable computing and mobile communications, movement detection, gesture recognition and sensor technologies have been quite popular in interactive art installations, thanks to the opportunities they offer for audience participation and embodiment.

The final artist to mention is the performance artist Suzan Kozel. She also explores how future generations of digital devices, as they become our extensions, may expand new physical and conscious awareness states. 20 She also gets use of wearables, mobile technology, networking, and biofeedback.

6. **Conclusion**

Paraphrasing Alan Watts, technology should be designed and utilized not to alienate us from our bodies and from the nature of our existence, but to raise our awareness to a new state, a state where we can grasp that we are the one and the same process as the universe.

Contemporary arts, particularly in performative and collaborative forms that embrace all key attributes of the cyberspace like connectivity, immersion, interaction, transformation and emergence, have much to contribute to this endeavor. 21 And emerging technologies like biomechatronics, neuroprosthetics and alike, which are acclaimed by various cyber-subcultures for their assumed contribution to the ideal of disembodiment, might be exploited by artists to promote a new understanding of embodiment and humanity’s interconnectedness with the rest of the existence.

**Notes**

6 Youde op. cit.
14 Bolter & Gromala, op. cit., p. 129.
18 L McRobert, *Char Davies’ Immersive Virtual Art and the Essence of Spatiality*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2007, p. 89
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Human Bodies in Cyberspace

Ayşe Şat

Abstract
The author William Gibson defined cyberspace in his sci-fi novel Neuromancer as ‘Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data.’ It is the global network, which connects millions of computers and people to exchange the data, news and opinions and for this they are using their bodies and minds together. In this virtual world, human bodies and gender differences have a significant place, because our body images are always an important issue which is subject to cultural, social, economic and political struggles of definitions.

Cyberspace is a private place for individuals to play with their own body images, create their own fantasies or imaginative world according to their desires or ideas. By using cyberspace, and the human bodies, the global capitalism finds a way to spread its power over the world: ‘With the transition from industrial capitalism to a globalised network based capitalism, the paradigm of gender has changed, our gender differences are intermingled/blurred with each other.’ Thus, this conference paper will analyse some pornographic pages to show how our bodies are subject to the Ideological State Apparatus. Consequently, the initial findings of the analysis will indicate that body images are a kind of tool for the global capitalist system or power groups to control people and social order.

Key Words: Human Bodies, Cyberspace, Internet, Capitalism, Politics, Porn Sites, Gender Differences, Slave/Master, Binary Opposition

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1. Introduction: Cyberspace, Body, Biopolitics/Biopower
Internet, which is the one of the significant developments of the 20th century, is created by people for people. The author William Gibson defined cyberspace in his sci-fi novel Neuromancer as ‘Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding.’ It is the global network, which connects millions of computers and many countries. People are linked into this virtual world to exchange the data, news and opinions and for this they are using their bodies and minds together.

It can be said that, Internet is a kind of social or cultural system and our body images are always an important issue which is subject to cultural, social, economic and political struggles of definitions, because body is one of the medium between Internet and physical reality as Merleau-Ponty states ‘I am conscious of the world through the medium of my body.’ It means that is
possible to accept the body as vehicle, because my body is an object used to communicate with others and perceive things, which are outside of us. ‘The body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be involved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be continually committed to them.’

Merleau-Ponty continues and relates body with the mirror ‘every object is the mirror of all others’ and on the Internet body as a vehicle is like a mirror or it is a mirror, which reflects our own world and our own bodies. If we accept the body as an object it means that, it reflects of our and other bodies together. So, our bodies are the mirror of the other bodies, rules and ideas.

In the (late) twentieth century, I believe it will in the future be said, philosophy began to discover that its categories of reason and knowledge are marked by sexual difference. Feminists have argued that these concepts of reason and knowledge, as well as those of man, history and power, are reflections of gendered practices passing as universal ones.

Duncan adds simply, that ‘reason is male’. Our world is constructed by this binary opposition or dominant traditional rules. It seems that man has mind and woman has body and this opposition is related with the mind and body dualism. ‘The major factor in this masculinist formulation of reason has been mind-body dualism.’

Still some academicians suggest that males and females have differences in that men are more powerful than women because they are close to culture and knowledge and in contrast women are close to nature. In other words, women are more sensitive than men. Yet, the current academic world continues to be dominated by the ideology of gender differences or the superiority of men. In this technological age human bodies are a kind of bridge between the outside and the inside of computers and two social systems. In this virtual world we have different power relations, which are controlled by the micro power groups.

In the modern era, the system/power that we are talking about is defined as ‘Biopolitics’ by Foucault:

Foucault needs a new political theory and a new ontology to describe the new power relations expressed in the political economy of forces. In effect, biopolitics are ‘grafted’ and ‘anchored’ upon a multiplicity of disciplinary [...] relations between forces, those which power ‘coordinates, institutionalizes, stratifies and targets,’ but that are not purely and simply projected upon individuals. [...] The
relations between man and woman, master and student, doctor and patient, employer and worker that Foucault uses to illustrate the dynamics of the social body are relations between forces that always involve a power relation.¹⁰

In this global age politics or biopolitics give people opportunities to feel they free the creator of their own lives. Also, it tries to work on the groups, who are working together or affect each other. For example, on the Internet people who are from the different countries can find and meet each other. We can show porn sites as an example for the ‘multitude forces’, because in these pages we use our bodies to have sexual relations with others. Therefore, as Michel Maurizio Lazzarato states Foucault’s ideas in his web article ‘life’ and ‘life being’ is the most important aspects of the politics:

Foucault, through the concept of biopolitics, was already pointing out in the seventies what, nowadays, is well on its way to being obvious: ‘life’ and “living being” [le vivant] are at the heart of new political battles and new economic strategies. […] In effect, from the 18th Century onwards the dispositifs of power and knowledge begin to take into account the ‘processes of life’ and the possibility of controlling and modifying them.¹¹

Technology is related with both power and knowledge because cyberspace is a social network where people share information with each other and economic strategies play a good game by using human bodies in this virtual space. With the technological developments one can see some changes in power strategies and human bodies.

In addition, Michel Maurizio Lazzarato concludes his article by constructing a relationship between biopolitics and biopower:

Biopolitics is the strategic coordination of these power relations in order to extract a surplus of power from living beings. […] According to Foucault the biopolitical functions of ‘coordination and determination’ concede that biopower, from the moment it begins to operate in this particular manner, is not the true source of power. Biopower coordinates and targets a power that does not properly belong to it, that comes from the ‘outside.’ Biopower is always born of something other than itself.¹²

By using Foucault’s ideas, Lazzarato wants to articulate that in general politics use life or body images to gain power over them and develop its
economic strategies. It seems that this virtual space gives us freedom to play with our bodies and ideologies, which are gender differences and freedom. The discourse stressed in this article, which is binary opposition, starts to change its meaning. It seems that in cyberspace binary opposition is intermingled with each other.

2. Binary Opposition: Under the Name of Liberation

This section will consist of the analysis of Binary Opposition and how the ideology tries to take a different shape in this technological age. In the book of Homo Sacer, Agamben talks about political ideology and binary opposition by using political parties. He suggests that binary opposition loses its clarity.

In both cases, these transformations were produced in a context in which for quite some time politics had already turned into biopolitics, and in which the only real question to be decided was which form of organization would be best suited to the task of assuring the care, control, and use of bare life. Once their fundamental referent becomes bare life, traditional political distinctions (such as those between Right and Left, liberalism and totalitarianism, private ad public) lose their clarity and intelligibility and enter into a zone of indistinction.13

In this technological age, binary opposition takes a different shape because cyberspace is a private place for individuals to play with their own body images, create their own fantasies or an imaginative world according to their own desires or ideas.

Moreover, because of the political strategies, binary opposition has began to be intermingled or fused with each other. In this virtual mirror we can see the physical reality and our own realities, which are created by us. During the process of the creation we start to add new things or change the order by using our bodies and we can say that ‘Social values are embedded in bodies,’14 therefore ‘bodies move and recreate themselves’, on the Internet, which are used by the small powerful groups/companies, biopowers or individuals and in this way ‘power constructs bodies.’15 Therefore, cyberspace has many different power structures or social control groups. Some of them are based on people (individuals) some of them are based on public groups but still we have power. In other words, in this virtual space we create our own power structure and we play with it and we think that we can control our own bodies and wishes and become the master of our own creations.
3. Slave and Master, and Gender Differences

It seems that binary opposition is demolished and we are free. For Foucault, freedom is related the irony of liberation as he mentions in the first volume of his ‘History of Sexuality’.

Moreover, we need to consider the possibility that one day, perhaps, in a different economy of bodies and pleasures, people will no longer quite understand how the ruses of sexuality, and the power that sustains its organization, were able to subject us to that austere monarchy of sex, so that we became dedicated to the endless task of forcing its secret, of exacting the truest of confessions from a shadow. The irony of this deployment is in having us believe that our ‘liberation’ is in the balance.16

In this part Foucault talks about the future and the capitalist system, and how the system plays a game with us like a toy? He argues that we are free, in fact not. We just think that we are master and we can talk about liberation but in reality, we are a slave of the system. We are just living in a dreamland, which is Cyberspace.

On the one hand, those web pages let us to think of the virtual space as a coin. It is one but it has two sides, because, we are free and a slave at the same time. One side of it shows us that we are free we can control our own bodies, for example we can create different bodies, but at the same time we are not free because we need other bodies. At the end, when we shut down your computer, you are the same person within the same body. It means that politics makes us a slave and a master at the same time. You think that you are master of your body, because you can play with it as a toy and you have many bodies when you open different web pages, and you can even create different bodies. But you are not free because at the end when you turn off your computer you use the same body. You create different bodies by using the same body.

It is this possible through the Cyberspace to have a chance to chat with and meet different people, with different identities and bodies. You can even learn new fantasies, stories and satisfy your sexual desires. Most of the pornographic web pages can be shown are prime examples. Here, it is possible to feel the torture, bondage and submission, and sexual relations. The following are typical examples:17

1. realitykings.com  2. brazzers.com  3. wannawatch.com
4. bangbros1.com   5. literotica.com  6. eskimotube.com
7. naughtybank.com  8. herfirstbigcock.com
This short article will analyze the first two porn sites listed above, to show that the body which belongs to the human beings is controlled by the power structure. These web pages are the most popular porn sites. Both sites start with a statement such as ‘Sexual Content Warning.’ After that you can see the body images of men and women. Both sites have the same format, because most of the body images belong to women with the male sexual organ. It is possible to see different races form the different ethnic groups. One can see some visual body/sexual scenes or trailers, but if you want to see the full video you have to pay. They ask for membership type or payment type and other kinds of personal information such as First / Last Name, Zip / Postal Code, Country, Email, Membership Type (3 Day Trial - $4.95, and 1 Month - $24.95, Payment Type (Credit Card, Check).

This suggests not only that the habits of looking at Internet pornography are as constitutive of the viewing experience as the images themselves but, likewise, that these habits of looking insistently participate in inscribing power relations and social relations directly on to the body of the subject through gesture and repetition.18

In short we are living in a dreamland and we think that we are free to make our decisions and satisfy our own sexual desires. However, as it is clearly seen from these pornographic sites, we are being controlled by the porn industry as Zabet points out in his article Going On-line: Consuming Pornography in the Digital Era.

A subset of the cyberporn industry is devoted to the categorization and classification of these images and Web sites; these sites present categories of images, laid out in tables or allowing so-called key term searches. The ‘click here if you’re gay!’ button, like the ‘s/m’ button, indicates a technology of desire both productive and regulatory.19

Moreover, those web pages clarify that Internet gives us chance to play with our money and our bodies under the name of freedom and these technological changes effect the political body and some of our discourses.

4. Conclusion: We are playing the Game of the Global Capitalist System

When we look at the statistical information, people most often like to surf on the Pornographic web pages, because as Foucault points out ‘Broadly speaking, at the juncture of the ‘body’ and the ‘population’, sex
became a crucial target of a power organized around the management of life rather than the menace of death." Hence, ‘the mechanisms of power were in fact used more to arouse and ‘excite’ sexuality than to repress it.’ Internet gives us a chance to feel ourselves free, because we can recreate our own bodies and identities according to our wishes. Instead of repressing our sexual desires and our wishes, we start to create our own realities, and experience new fantasies.

It can be argued that by using cyberspace, and the human bodies, the global capitalism finds a way to spread its power over the world as one of the Feminist Dialogues Form states in their web page ‘With the transition from industrial capitalism to a globalised network based capitalism, the paradigm of gender has changed.’ For example, when we look at web pages we can say that our body images (male and female) and our gender differences are intermingled/blurred with each other. That is related to capitalism as Foucault states in his book ‘This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism: the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes.’

It means that in this century we talk about the free flow of information, human bodies and money, as some people write on in their blogs:

Loren - February 5th, 2009 at 10:47 am PST: really the 12% was very true in 2006 and the 2.8 billion was not low back then they were talking about 2006 i did my research i also work in this massive industry today the the industry is around a $100.00 billion a year industry thats talking about all countrys and the truth of the matter is its just going to grow even bigger and thats good news for me […]’. And she continues to talk about USA: Loren - February 7th, 2009 at 7:47 am PST: yeah right nyou crazy if you dont think thats true the usa is the money hungry capital of the world and thats really what it all boils down to money porn = money i would not star in a porn film but i sure would promote it because of the money i think its funny people that say they would never look at porn i fine that funny cause everyone has sex what do you think that is and people will date someone then they break up now there screwing someone else and lets get it right people cheat in america alot so come porn is everywhere we are all porn stars in our own way.

On the one hand, we can say that because of our satisfaction and our economical needs we can not see the real power of capitalist system. Only we
live and help it to be more powerful. On the other hand, it changes our ethical rules, our ideas towards sex give us visual and verbal education that we previously got from the books, movies and people. However, nowadays we start to get it from the cyberspace. It can be argued that we start to understand our sexual desires, instead of repressing them and start to arouse and use them for money. In other words, we can talk about a dual satisfaction: sexual and economical.

Consequently, it is possible to suggest that ‘certain institutional and cultural practices have produced individuals.’ Therefore, new politics (free market and economics) bring new body images with themselves. If cyberspace is a limitless and new universe, our body images become just like toys for the capitalist or global system to either control our bodies or to give us a chance to feel free and redefine our gender differences: ‘The body must be regarded as a site of social, political, cultural, and geographical inscriptions, production, or constitution. The body is not opposed to culture, a resistant throwback to a natural past; it is itself a cultural, the cultural, product.’ Therefore, it can be said that new politics (Internet=free market) bring the new body politics with themselves. Bodies become just like toys, and are inside or outside of the law or rules and discourses.

Notes

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PART II

Online Communities, Web 2.0 and Emerging Practices In Social Networking
Hybrid Communities to Digital Arts Festivals:  
From Online Discussions to Offline Gatherings

Donata Marletta

Abstract
The aim of this paper is to contribute to blurring the gap between virtual communities and communities based on face-to-face embodied interaction, trying to deconstruct the obsolete online/offline dichotomy. Since the 1990s the concept of virtual community has changed and has been substituted by a fluid perception, where informational and physical contacts co-exist. Computer networks allow people to create a whole range of new social spaces in which they interact with one another. Through the use of interaction media people have formed thousands of groups to discuss different topics, create knowledge, and share mutual interests. Virtual community represents a form of post-modern community, characterised by the liberation of the individual from social constraints such as identity, ethnicity, social status and geographical space. In order to reinforce the disembodied relations built around the Internet discussions, members of virtual communities feel the need to meet during more embodied face-to-face gatherings. In such a context of continuous change and innovation, I am following digital arts communities, which make use of both cyberspace and physical space as places for interaction, collaboration, and connectivity. Global gatherings such as festivals devoted to art and technology play a critical role in the maintenance and nourishment of these social groups. International events such as Ars Electronica, Elektra or Transmediale draw people from all over the world; they represent both valuable forums and platforms for artists and intellectuals, and a unique chance for the participants to migrate from the cyberspace to a physical space.

Key Words: Community, Online, Offline, Cyberspace, Festival, Digital Art.

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In order to gain a wider overview of the concept of community, I believe that it is crucial to go back and re-discover the genesis and the evolution of this notion, and how it has been conceptualised within the literature among scholars from different disciplines.

Historically the notion of community has been associated with the notion of geographical place. In his seminal work *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* the German sociologist Tönnies was one of the first authors who conceptualised community and its characteristics. According to the transformations in the organisation of social life that emerged as a
consequence of the ascendency of modernity, Tönnies makes a clear distinction between two types of social groups: Gemeinschaft (Community) and Gesellschaft (Society). Gemeinschaft is characterised by natural will, and an organic sense of community, and Gesellschaft is characterised by rational will, and by a sense of individualism rather than communal. Tönnies is very critical towards Gesellschaft, in which he sees a form of social organisation based on hyper-individualism, which causes abandonment of collective memory, instinct, and habits.

Within the anthropological literature it is worthy of note the notion of community developed by Turner. The anthropologist differentiates between society and community, the two main models for human interrelatedness. Society, or societas, is a highly structured and hierarchical system; community, on the other hand, is an unstructured and heterogeneous group of equal individuals, however soon it develops a structure. Turner looks at community within the wider context of the “rites of passage”, and claims that during these rites a particular kind of comradeship emerges as a product of interstructural liminality. This group is a community or comity of comrades, and Turner uses the Latin noun communitas to identify such a group, which is characterised by absence of hierarchical structure, transcending any distinctions of status, age and kinship position. Members of communitas are linked together by special bonds that persist during the years, after the rites of passage are over. Turner claims that existential or spontaneous communitas exist not only in preliterate and preindustrial societies, but also in complex modern societies, where the values of communitas are present within groups such as the beat generation and the hippies. Members of these groups stress personal relationships rather than social obligations, and emphasise spontaneity and immediacy.

Many scholars concerned with the emergence of online communities have taken into consideration the concept of imagined communities formulated by Anderson in relation to the appearance of nationalisms. According to Anderson the nation:

It is an imagined political community - an imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.

This notion can without a doubt be transferred to the cyberspace, where relationships between participants to online communities are not based on face-to-face interaction; instead these members hold in their minds a mental image of their affinity, and develop a sense of fraternity. Here I would argue
that although face-to-face and online communities have their own specificities and peculiarities, they should not be regarded as separate realities. Instead these communities exist in a kind of symbiosis, nourishing and complementing each other.

The quintessential definition of virtual communities has been provided by Rheingold, in which he describes these social groups as “social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on … public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace”\(^5\). Today, fifteen years after its first formulation, this notion has to be re-adapted according to the ongoing evolution of both media and society.

Within the field of critical cyberculture studies Fung claims that online communities in a certain way reproduce real life; in order to survive these communities need to anchor and refer some of their features within ‘real’ daily life. In this sense it is impossible to disengage cyberspace from the real embodied space when the online setting is mostly modelled from real-world settings. Giving that real life can also be changed, distorted, or merged with cyberlife, studies of online communities should examine whether the remote and virtual interest of subjects realised in online space is linked to the everyday sense and complexity of human nature.\(^6\) Cyberspace does not represent an alternative to social reality, and then should not be understood as a separate realm, but rather as part of our existing reality. There is a complex constant process of interaction between our experiences of the ‘virtual’ and the ‘real’, what is becoming clear is the need of an epistemological framework able to speak about this complex online/offline interplay.

Baym holds a similar position, and argues that it is unquestionable that online relationships do develop in ways that are to some extent different from face-to-face relationships. She refers to language for instance, written or spoken, which is privileged over visual cues, and claims that geographical proximity is no longer considered a limiting element. Relationships of any kind are inevitably still built on mutual attraction, created through common interests, easiness of interaction, and running into one another in the same public spaces, even if those spaces are now virtual and intangible rather than material. Most of the researchers interested in studying online settings do not really look at cyberspace as a separate, detached place that stands in opposition to the real world. Baym stresses this point and claims:

How online spaces are constructed and the activities that people do online are intimately interwoven with the construction the offline world and the activities and structures in which we participate, whether we are using the Internet or not. Offline contexts always permeate and
influence online situations and online situations and experiences always feed back into offline experiences.\textsuperscript{7}

The emergence and the construction of cyberspace, and consequently the appearance of new forms of virtual social ties between people make it necessary to rethink the classical notion of society, especially the notion of ‘city’, historically marked as a complex place of social interaction, which has also been considered as the place where these ties emerge, are nourished and reproduced. This idea has been reviewed, reconfigured and readapted to the contemporary context where the emergence of cyberspace has become ubiquitous. The Greek \textit{polis} regarded as the prototype of the classical city and its vital elements, e.g. the \textit{agora}, as a public space for different urban functions, appear translated into new types of virtual and non-virtual realities. The agora, usually located at the very centre of the town site, was the gathering place and the focal point of community life in the ancient Greek city-state. Its functions were diverse ranging from serving as a meeting place for political assemblies, and outdoor market, to venue for festal processions and athletic displays.

The parallel between the critical role-played by the Net in the twenty-first century and the function of the agora in the life of the Greek \textit{polis} has frequently been used in several studies of cyberspace to emphasise its main characteristics of electronic social space and point of exchange. Mitchell observes that the worldwide computer network represents the electronic or virtual agora which, giving its distinct structure and organisation, drastically redefines the standard notions of gathering place, community and urban life.\textsuperscript{8} Geographer Crang similarly defines the public space of the virtual city as an electronic agora that consists of the same elements as the agora of the classical Greek city. This new form of intangible space is the point where conventional orderings and rules break down and collapse.\textsuperscript{9} In representing cyberspace as the new virtual agora, Ostwald argues that ‘the urban’ itself has become virtualised, simulating the social function of the agora as a potential ‘site of cultural seepage’; a place to where people can escape to find comfort in a virtual environment.\textsuperscript{10} Here, once more, the border between the virtual and the real has become blurred, making the distinction almost imperceptible.

Watson claims that, as a consequence of the proliferation of communication via computer, new modes of apprehending community have emerged. In Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) physical space has been replaced by a technology, a medium of communication. Consequently, it is claimed, the concept of community should be re-defined in terms of shared relationships between people rather than in terms of shared space.\textsuperscript{11} Wellman and Gulia, for example, argue that online relationships are based more on shared interests and less on shared social characteristics. As a
consequence online communities result relatively homogeneous in terms of interests and attitudes, and relatively heterogeneous in terms of social characteristics such as age, social status, gender, and ethnicity. The homogeneity of interests entails that participants can foster high levels of empathetic understanding and reciprocal support. Furthermore, by supporting such online contact, the Net may even encourage more frequent face-to-face meetings between those who might otherwise forget about each other.12

Jones stresses that cyberspace is a socially constructed space, one that represents a new kind of space that is not physical, and for this reason challenges the traditional notion of community that emphasises the geographical proximity. In his view community is no longer a place; it consists of social networks and social interaction. In defining online community the author uses the concept of social networks primarily because such definition is mainly based on social interaction, shifting the focus away from place.13 These new social groups represent a form of post-modern community characterised by the liberation of the individual from social constraints such as identity and geographical space. It should be noted that within these groups participants promote a sense of brotherhood among each other, and in order to fortify the disembodied and abstract relations, and to help participants to stay in touch, members of virtual communities feel the need to meet, sporadically or on a regular basis, during physical face-to-face gatherings.

In the article ‘The Anthropology of Online Communities’, anthropologists Wilson and Peterson claim that in analysing on line groups the main problem is that there is no agreement among scholars in considering these groups as real or imagined communities. The difficulty derives from the ephemeral nature of the media, the Internet, the definition of community itself, and from rapidly obsolescing technologies. The authors suggest that a rigid distinction between online and offline communities is not helpful. Instead, they claim, it is more useful to see communities as a continuum that exists regardless of the ways in which community members interrelate.14 In the same vein, Wellman and Gulia criticise those researchers who treat the Internet as an isolated social phenomenon, without taking into account how interactions on the Net coexist together with other aspects of people’s lives. The Net then is not a separate reality, but is only one of many ways in which the same people may interact.15

In the introduction to the special thematic section of the Journal of Computer-Mediated-Communication dedicated to Online Communities, authors Preece and Maloney-Krichmar claim that among researchers interested in studying CMC it is progressively accepted to consider online communities as the result of a blend between online and offline elements, presenting some physical components. These groups can start as a face-to-face communities and then move to the digital media within the realm of
cyberspace. Alternatively, members of an online community decide to meet during scheduled face-to-face settings. Thus, one dimension does not necessarily exclude the other.

In my PhD research I am looking at digital arts festivals as events that create and promote social connectivity. My fieldwork is carried out both offline and online, in the sense that through an ethnographic approach I observe festivals dedicated to contemporary art and digital culture. Concurrently I follow and actively contribute to online discussions of two mailing lists, Rhizome and <nettime>, in which participants discuss and share information about digital art, festivals, and net culture in general. These online communities nurture both digital art festivals and the digital art movement, and offer their participants the opportunity to critically share knowledge and keep experimental culture alive.

Established in 1996, Rhizome has played a fundamental role in the history, promotion and development of the link between art, Internet and new technologies. Rhizome, which since 2003 is affiliated with the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, is a web site, a digital art archive, and an open forum for issues related to the creation, support and critique of emerging artistic practices engaged with technology. The <nettime> group was founded in 1995, and since then it represents a valuable international forum for discourses about all aspects of net culture and new media, from art to politics. The contents of the forums are all archived in the web site, and freely accessible. Leading figures in the net culture’s scene like authors Bruce Sterling and Peter Lunenfeld, or Geert Loving, the writer and founder of <nettime>, and Felix Stalder who is both an academic and the current <nettime> moderator, are among the authors who regularly post texts on <nettime>. In addition I have created a blog aiming to further gather information, suggestions, and contributions from those involved in the digital culture scene.

In the relatively short time span of nine months I attended five of the major electronic and new media arts festivals, namely Mutek and Elektra (Montréal, Canada, May 08), Ars Electronica (Linz, Austria, September 08), and Transmediale and ClubTransmediale (Berlin, Germany, January 09). These festivals made me aware that there are people who regularly meet over the year in different locations around the world, to experience in a single time and space frame what can be seen as a ritual with its own rhythms and characteristics. In such a context the relation between online and offline communities becomes tangible. Here, at these events, people who were previously in contact through Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) meet face-to-face, and at the same time they keep updating their blogs and web sites, communicating in real time with other people located in different parts of the world, sharing their experiences and spreading the news through their networks. The planet could be seen as simultaneously connected
through wires and through people: here both the physical and the virtual are intrinsically tied together, forming a new hybrid space.

This new space, which is to be found at the intersection between the material and the immaterial, is linked with the notion of *liminal* space - Latin for threshold, as formulated by the anthropologist Turner. According to him some ritual performances occur in physically detached places, away from the flow of the everyday routine; in this sense ritual action is out of the ordinary. Following Van Gennep’s rites of passage model, Turner argues that a ritual exemplifies the transition of an individual from one state to another. Between the states the ritual subjects are set to spend some time in an interstructural or liminal situation; liminality is a state of being in between phases. During this phase of transition the liminal subjects are, in Turner’s words, ‘betwixt and between’. The subjects all treated equally, and constitute a community without status and hierarchies, the *communitas*. Turner herewith extends the liminal concept to modern societies in his study of liminoid phenomena. The term liminoid refers to experiences that have characteristics of liminal experiences, but if the liminal predominates in tribal societies, the *liminoid* - liminal-like, flourishes in modern industrialised societies, that are characterised by the emergence of technical innovations. The liminoid is a break from society, is play, is leisure, and allows people to express themselves through free and spontaneous experimentations and performances.17 It is arguably in this space, a grey indefinite area that virtual and non-virtual realities merge together.

In this paper I have predominantly reviewed a relevant segment of the existing literature about communities, both within the traditional studies from various disciplines, and from the more contemporary literature on communities that emerge from cyberspace. Discussions around the blurred boundaries between the online and the offline continue to be on the agenda of many researchers, and although some progress has been achieved, the path is still long. New issues will arguably arise, new technologies and new modes of interaction will be created. We will moreover have to continue to reflect critically on these constant changes and contribute to their discourse. This perpetuation is enclosed and encouraged in the following quote from the philosopher and theorist of digital culture Pierre Lévy, with which I would like to end this paper:

> The contemporary multiplication of spaces makes us nomads again […] we leap from network to network […] spaces metamorphose and bifurcate beneath our feet, forcing us to undergo a process of heterogenesis.18
Notes

Bibliography


**Donata Marletta** is an Italian researcher who in 2007 started a PhD programme by joining the Centre for Tourism and Cultural Change, Leeds Metropolitan University, United Kingdom. Her research project and main interest focus on digital art and on the emergence of a new generation of festivals dedicated to art and technology.
This Time It's Personal:  
Social Networks, Viral Politics and Identity Management  

Nils Gustafsson

Abstract
This paper deals with new forms of political mobilisation and participation in social media. The main focus is on the importance of social networks in providing a “media filter”, functioning as a kind of collective gatekeeper to spread news and information perceived as important, in contrast to the image of the single individual media consumer faced with an insurmountable mass of information. I argue that by investing one’s personal ethos in spreading information and encourage peers in the personal social network to political participation, vital news and calls for action spread quickly. A form of viral politics ensues that, in concordance with traditional types of mediation and formation of political opinion, might provide a basis for a new type of political elite in competitive democracy. Drawing on earlier research concerning the effect of social capital created by weak ties on political participation, I argue that social networks organised online provide a new type of post-organisational weak ties, functioning as maintained social capital building institutions, encouraging to and organising actions of civic engagement. More specifically, a case is made for the need for more thorough conceptualisation of new modes of participation: spontaneous, individualised, “unorganised” forms of action. Two concepts, “temporal elites” and “viral politics” are developed for describing how social network membership and density determine how people are recruited to political campaigns. The theoretical assumptions are further illustrated by the preliminary empirical findings of an ongoing study of Swedish Facebook users and their attitudes and behaviour concerning political participation in social media.

Key Words: Social Networks, Political Participation, Virtual Mobilisation, Facebook, Social Capital.

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1. Social Networks and Viral Politics
Social network sites are a prominent type of the various forms of user-generated social media that sometimes are grouped under the term “Web 2.0”. They are:

web-based services that (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list
of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.¹

By using social network sites, it is possible to maintain off-line connections in an on-line environment, making it possible to communicate with close friends as well as casual acquaintances regardless of where they happen to be situated in time or space.

It is also possible to form more or less contemporary groups, connecting people from different networks on the basis of common interests, membership in “real life” organisations, sharing jokes or promoting political and social causes. Another typical feature of social network sites is the interconnectedness with other types of social and mainstream media. It is easy to upload or link to media content, post it to your personal profile or to a group, or forwarding it to the contacts in your network, as well as integrating your personal profiles in different types of social media.

To take an example: someone sends you a funny video clip of a politician making a fool of her- or himself on television. You “favourite” it on your personal YouTube page, post it on your blog with a comment, tag it (assign a label to it in order to find it easily later) and store it on your del.ici.ous folksonomy page, forward the blog post to your Facebook profile, pass it along to your friends etc. Your friends will in their turn assess whether they think that the clip is worthy of passing on, forwarding it or not. Someone might edit the original footage, adding music, snippets of other clips, texts, thereby creating a “mash-up”, a new piece of media, which in its turn might be passed around. Different tools allow the interactive audience to discuss and see how other people have interpreted and rated the media content. There are special services available that collect the forms of media content that are most circulated at the time. In the end, the sharing of the media content might in itself be a story worthy of mentioning in mainstream media, thereby creating a feedback loop between the different forms of media. In effect, your social network provides a media filter for you, passing on media content that are found to be especially interesting.

This is the art of viral sharing, one of the defining characteristics of the ecological media structure. Perhaps most applied to the logic of new marketing techniques (viral marketing), it is also a concept most useful to describe how post-organisational political mobilisation might occur through activist mediation.
Henry Jenkins defines the core of viral sharing as “getting the right idea into the right heads at the right time.” The features needed for any media content to be truly viral are evocative images and consistency with existing world views in the minds of the audience. In the field of political and social activism, I call this phenomenon viral politics.

What effect does the sharing of political media content have on civic engagement and political action, then? Previous research has established a strong connection between social capital and civic engagement, in particular, the link between weak ties and civic engagement. As Mark S. Granovetter put it: “[P]eople rarely act on mass-media information unless it is also transmitted through personal ties; otherwise one has no particular reason to think that an advertised product or an organization should be taken seriously.” The relationship has been found in empirical studies, for instance in Jan Teorell’s 2003 study, where the main finding, using data acquired through a large 1997 survey in Sweden, was that the more weak ties an individual has, the more likely it is that that individual commits acts of civic engagement.

The importance of the personal dissemination of media content and calls for action is not new. The qualitative difference with social network sites and social media is the efficiency with which information can be spread. I will mention three major differences:

1) Organising weak ties in social network sites allows for an individual to, in a cost-efficient way, stay connected to brief acquaintances also when moving to another geographical area, thereby creating maintained social capital. This offsets the deterioration of social capital in society as a product of increased mobility. Online relationships are provisional, but off-line relationships in an on-line setting are not.
2) Another qualitative difference is the size of networks. The Small World Pattern explains the expression “It’s a small world” exclaimed by “newly introduced individuals upon finding that they have common acquaintances.” Small World networks are composed both of small groups of people dense ties and of larger groups with weaker ties. Important for networks to grow extremely large is the existence of individuals with a wildly disproportionate amount of connections, being able to connect a large number of smaller dense groups with one another: “In fact, social networks are not held together by the bulk of people with hundreds of connections but by the few people with tens of thousands.” New communication technology can enhance the stability of these networks, making it easier to connect to other social networks through the Connectors.

3) Finally, the sheer velocity of viral sharing implies that millions of people can be reached through word of mouth in a matter of days. Whereas meeting in person, phone chains, or other older methods of spreading rumours or information, took days and months to pass on media content to a larger group of people, social media reduces this time to a matter of minutes. Spreading a message through your personal network through social media will, by the logics of maintained social capital and the small world pattern, through viral sharing reach a global crowd at short notice (provided that the message is attractive enough to be virally shared).

In spreading media content to their personal network, individuals manifest their commitment to their existing beliefs and move closer to political action. They also invest their personal status as an acquaintance - their ethos - in forwarding a message through their social network. By finally reaching into mainstream media, the content will reach people who already do not share that commitment. This might be called “networked individualism.” Through the electronic organising of social networks, the “personal” information flow increases and the threshold for civic engagement is lowered.

2. Temporal Elites

I now move to elaborate on where the sources of viral politics are to be found. In my model of viral politics, political entrepreneurs play a major part. The advancement of a social or political cause does not take place out of nowhere. In order to start a successful campaign, someone must start it.
Consider the figure below. Viral politics emanates from political entrepreneurs, that most often will be directly affected people of a certain event or phenomenon (the “victims”) and/or groups and organisations, both NGOs and political parties devoted to this particular cause (Burma action committee, Doctors without borders, Amnesty International, United Nations, Oxfam, political parties or politicians). These individuals spread information and media content by word of mouth to wider groups of people through personal interconnectedness. If successful, the content/information will catch on and spread rapidly through the mechanism of viral politics, influencing the formal political system directly through personal contacts with political representatives and indirect through the feedback loop provided by mainstream media.

![Figure 2: A Model of Viral Politics](image)

The political entrepreneurs of a successful campaign of viral politics form, together with temporary supporters of the cause to be found in interconnected social networks, a temporal elite, having the necessary knowledge, skills and (perhaps above all) the motivation to promote the cause.

Most often, the concept of elite is put in opposition to the concept of democracy. It can however also be seen as an important part of well-functioning democracy, as in the tradition associated with competitive democracy, where the electorate is seen as passive, choosing between political alternatives depending on track record or promises, legitimating political representatives to rule between elections:
a small group of political leaders […] with perhaps an intermediate section of more active citizens, who transmit demands and information between the mass and the leadership.9

In this section, I develop the concept of elites based on voluntary engagement, bringing it more in line with the “intermediate section” of the model of competitive democracy.

That I choose to develop a new concept of elites does not mean that classic elites are not important; on the contrary. Financial and political elites are becoming increasingly powerful in an era of multilevel governance, ruling through networks, hiding behind markets, making power invisible where there used to be a throne, although it is also true that power elites are not as stable as before.10 The temporal elites might instead be seen as a potential counter-force, or at least complementing traditional elites in democracy.

I will start out with pointing to a sociological phenomenon labelled the power law distribution. When analysing, for example, the contributions to a Wikipedia page, one of the most characteristic features is the huge difference between contributors in the number of contributions made and the size of each individual contribution. Some individuals contribute substantially more than others, and the “normal” contribution is typically very small in size (compare with the discussion above on small world networks). There is no point in analysing average contributions, because the number and size of contributions among contributors is not normally distributed. Instead, the nth position has 1/nth of the first person’s rank.11

The figure below depicts a typical power distribution:

Figure 3: Power Law Distribution (Picture by Hay Kranen / PD)
The same is true for civic engagement in the setting of the post-organisational viral politics of social networks. A few individuals (political entrepreneurs) invest a very large amount of time in a political or social cause. These individuals constitute the inner core of the temporal elite associated with the cause in question. As they spread information about the cause in their social networks, some people will feel encouraged to invest an equal amount of time and join a temporal elite, some people will invest less, and most people will do little or nothing. The possibility of flexible engagement makes it attractive to more people to engage, as they can easily adapt the work effort put down to their personal priorities.12

The total sum of engagement may be equal or even higher than before, despite decreasing levels of membership in formal organisations devoted to social and political causes.

3. Identity Management and Annoyed Participation

In a pilot study, a small number of Swedish Facebook users were interviewed, using virtual focus groups, about their attitudes towards political content and mobilisation on the social network site.13

I will cite a few of the results in order to put some light on how complicated motives and actions of participants in viral politics are, and how further research must take that into account.

The participants in the focus groups had a sceptical view towards political campaigns in Facebook. Many of them maintained the notion that participating in political campaigns online in various forms filled mainly two functions: building your public or semi-public identity by expressing political views and concerns; and being an excuse not for taking a more active part in a campaign. Off-line activity was viewed in general as being more important or real.

The respondents also complained about the large number of requests for support from political campaigns, among an enormous number of other types of requests and invitations, leading to Facebook fatigue and a general reluctance toward any type of action.

However, most participants reported that they had actually taken part in off-line activities as a direct result of mobilisation using Facebook. They also reported, without exceptions, that they were indeed members of various groups on Facebook supporting political and social causes. One participant described this seemingly paradoxical behaviour as “annoyed participation”.14

This might be an indicator for people engaging in viral politics might not be aware of their own importance for a successful campaign and that empirical evaluation of the proposed model must be aware of this.
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The Second Self through Second Life: Mask or Mirror?

Kristi N. Scott

Abstract
As members of a society, there is a variable and determinable array of both personality types and the combinations in which they fit together. In this particular exploration, there is a focus on the continuum between those who are self reported introverts and those who are self reported extraverts. This paper seeks to explore and lay out the real world distinctions of introverted and extraverted individuals based on published research; then to look into and examine virtual life distinctions of introversion and extraversion in Second Life® to look for any correlations or significance.

Key Words: Introversion, Extroversion, Second Life, Avatar, Personality

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1. Overview
This paper seeks to explore and examine introversion and extraversion of avatars in the virtual world and the people that exist behind them in the real world. To do this, I examined previous literature and research on the self, identity, roles and introversion/extroversion in the real world. This allowed me to apply the theories to the avatar and examine these personality traits in the virtual world. As Sherry Turkle pointed out in Life on the Screen:

Computer screens are the new location for our fantasies, both erotic and intellectual. We are using life on computer screens to become comfortable with new ways of thinking about evolution, relationships, sexuality, politics, and identity.¹

By applying theories and comparing information from real life to virtual life the goal is to see if avatar personalities are significantly different, as in wearing a mask, or similar, as in seeing your reflection in a mirror, to their personalities in real life. Hogg saw that:

Identity is the pivotal concept linking social structure with individual action; thus the prediction of behavior requires an analysis of the relationship between self and social structure.²
My examination seeks to provide an impetus for avenues of further exploration in the future by providing a framework of virtual and real life understanding of personalities.

2. Virtual Life

Life today offers many opportunities to escape from ourselves. Television, radio, iPod’s, and the internet all offer interactive formats in which we can escape our everyday lives. As technology increases so does the escapist opportunities in front of us.

This can be potentially helpful for those individuals who are introverted or suffer from depression in the real world since technology can offer them the opportunity to express their ‘real me’. This technology gives these individuals to be anonymous online and therefore escape from their introverted or depressed sense of self to become different, possibly who the truly desire to be in real life. According to Amichai-Hamburger, this expression is an important aspect of expression for those with this type of personality because,

People who can't express their "real me" are prone to suffer from serious psychological disorders. It is therefore important to continue research in this field that will enhance our knowledge of the interaction between the user and the Internet and its impact on well-being.

With the availability through the internet to interact on this level of anonymity, even though there is potential to be the real self, instead of the idealized self online, there is a point where individuals may be affected by deindividuation, where their behavior becomes out of their norm because of the anonymity and relative “darkness” of an online virtual environment. In Zimbardo’s theory of deindividuation (1970), anonymity, along with other input variables, produces a state of the organism, deindividuation that in turn produces a general disinhibition of previously inhibited behavior.

In 1999, an online virtual community was created by Philip Rosedale called Second Life. Second Life offered a format similar to The Sims and other massively multiplayer online role playing games (or MMORPGs); except it allowed users to interact with each other in the worlds and selves they virtually created. In addition in allowed them express their creativity and own a piece of what they are interacting with, including the intellectual property rights. This freedom brought with it anonymity; users could be who and whatever they wanted to be without having others know who was behind the avatar, or virtual self. With this freedom came the opportunity to hide oneself behind a virtual mask, enabling tendencies that
normally wouldn’t have been able to be revealed in their everyday groups and lives to come out. Sherry Turkle found out in *Life on the Screen*, that 'It's a chance for all of us who aren't actors to play [with] masks. And think about the masks we wear every day'.

When Tice talks about the more careful moderation of public behavior and its resulting in greater internalization, it brings up the point that if communicating is Second Life is a form of public behavior, then it may also prove to be more greatly internalized. Gonzales saw that ‘online self-presentations have the power to change our identities. This finding has potentially important and wide-ranging implications for any Internet user that communicates with others online’.

3. **Real Life**

According to Stets:

> The person identity is the set of meanings that are tied to and sustain the self as an individual; these self-meanings operate across various roles and situations […]

This personal identity is unique when considered as an individual part of the self. The person is able to create an identity that is part of which they see themselves in their own surroundings and what they desire and want out of life. This changes though when the group dynamic is introduced in the case of the social identity. This group dynamic can be extracted and applied to the social group in-world that is created with Second Life. A person’s identity is a part of their self, and is contributed to by those around a person. The social identity draws from the group that one is around socially and therefore becomes less of their unique self perception; instead it is a construct of who they are when they are around others. This is dependent on the closeness of the group around them and their connectedness with them and the interaction of their identity with the symbol or social group that they are with.

4. **Self**

Even though there is no physical presence that exits, there is a strong sense of self that is created. There is a blending of the self with the computer. The computer becomes an extension of the self. With only this interaction of the screen it can become a very powerful presence in people’s lives. In *Life on the Screen*, Turkle talks about the way we are extended and blended in with the computers, becoming an extension of our selves and the fact that we are putting a bit of ourselves in to the computer, making it a form of ‘us’.

In this sense, we become protean, ‘The Greek God Proteus is notable for being the origin of the adjective ‘protean’-the ability to take on
many different self-representations’. These multiple extensions of self are able to have multiple existences in one person and that is an accepted view of balance that humans are capable of keeping.

Particularly in today’s world were keeping up with multiple identities is becoming more commonplace. “Kenneth Gergen describes its multiplication of masks as a saturated self. Emily Martin talks of the flexible self as a contemporary virtue of organism, persons, and organizations.”

However, something to keep in mind though is Jung’s perspective on the existence and expression of identity and self. He had expressed concern over one side of the self dominating and exhibiting itself more than the other side. For this particular research it can be taken in to consideration in one of two ways. That it is an expression of the real world self, one that an individual is not particularly content with expressing itself over the idealized self, and also that the idealized and created virtual self-dominating of the social self. This is something though that Jung also considers is what it takes for life to exist in general. We as humans need this tension between the selves that is as long as one side doesn’t dominate too much in the expression of itself.

Also, there is importance in the integration of the various forms of self that are created. If these multiple selves aren’t integrated appropriately it can create psychological problems such as multiple or split personalities in individuals. Yet, in the virtual world we wear our entire selves in our avatar. This integration of online and real life self are important because there without incorporation of the real and virtual selves it can cause unnecessary delusions of self.

In a study done by Gonzales, he found, ‘that when people walk away from the keyboard they may take with them aspects of the online self-presentation’. Yee found that there was reason to think that with avatars there is a change in our interaction with others around us. However, the commitment one has to an identity also plays in to level of identity salience on has with their identity. For the social identity to become incorporated with their sense of self permanently according to Gonzales, it need not take place in a real and physical sense, which is what is being examined with regards to the self in online virtual world situations. Instead that identity can be one that is imagined or one that the individual wants or expects to become a part of their identity. In addition, the online identity is one that is constructed with a sense of anonymity. This gives a lot of leniency in the creation of the identity that isn’t as simple of a task to achieve in real life, which I will talk about later.

This is important when taking in to consideration the virtual self that is created online, as there is no physical presence-taking place. Stepping away from the inward personality that can be communicated with the online virtual self, one’s avatar is able to express itself much like the real self is able
to do in everyday life with respect to movement and interaction with others in our groups, except for the added mobility of flying and teleportation. The individual is able to be in complete control of what it is they look like on the outside.25

In the real world to change the self and the way the groups we interact with accept us can be time-consuming, expensive and laborious. Not to leave out the fact that the groups we interact have to be willing to accept who this new self we see ourselves is. Our groups that we interact with an real life take change in our selves reluctantly since they already know us as they’ve seen and interacted with us. They see our physical self and accept that as who we are. Undergoing cosmetic plastic surgery is a way to change us outwardly, but as I mentioned above, it is time-consuming, expensive, and can be a painful experience.26

In Second Life it’s much easier still a bit time-consuming at first; there are over 150 sliders that one can use to change almost every imaginable aspect of one’s outward appearance of self. This online change, it is a matter of moving the sliders, or creating a new avatar and then developing new social circles to interact with that accept your avatar as they are and as they know them.27 After that, it’s just a matter of putting a personality to the face.

When it comes to the personality, it seems to those:

that in some cases the representations people make of themselves online are an amalgamation of their actual and ideal selves—that is, that the virtual self is a somewhat idealized actual self [...] a mode by which the player, through a constructed character, can enact aspects of his or her ideal self—the physical or psychological self the player wishes to be.28

While people know who they are in real life, they are also aware of those inner personality traits they would like to bring out in themselves in social situations, but don’t. There is a feeling that some of these traits people are merely unwilling to share with the outside world they feel unable to be their ‘true self.’29 This may also include what others see in a person. Boundaries of the self, particularly with the self and others, clearly exist though.30

For the concept of self to change there needs to be something there, an internalization of the self. Something needs to change where the person embodies their new change in self. These are illustrated when people make dramatic life changes and are able to change their selves, like moving, or going to college, etc. Internalization is easier when the individual is somewhat distanced from the old or alter self. This allows them to focus more on the new self and make it part of their everyday existence.31
5. **Introversion/Extroversion**

With this understanding of the identity, self and the way in which these two interact in groups, we can now look at the way in which introversion/extroversion of the avatar and real world self come together. People are malleable, as we’ve seen above, in the constant tug between our selves. Gonzales found that people can be manipulated even to the extent of how they view themselves, whether that be introverted individuals looking at themselves instead as extroverted or vice versa. There is a social influence at work with the reflection of self, therefore the need for this examination of self and avatar. Because with influence of groups and people that are close to you see the reflection of self. However, this reflection isn’t always accurate, as referred to above if their views that they are seeing of you are not that which is the ‘real’ you.\(^ {32} \)

With respect to the self, those who are extroverted are typically are able to their real selves through interactions face-to-face with people, whereas for introverted individuals they are more adapted to do this through the internet. Amichai-Hamburger found that the,” neuroticism factor was found nearly significant”.\(^ {33} \) Where Jung determined that this end of the ‘two ends of the extraversion-introversion continuum were related respectively to two varieties of neurotic disorders which he labeled the psychastemic and hysteric respectively’.\(^ {34} \)

Because of the abilities, mentioned above of the self and the creation of new self, it can by surmised that the introverted individuals see this online environment, such as Second Life as a way to free themselves. It provides them with a rich environment in which to change them in to who they want to be. Therefore introverted individuals, it has been found, ‘do not behave in accordance with their usual behavior patterns […] and so conduct themselves in ways associated with extroverts in offline relationships’.\(^ {35} \)

7. **Conclusion**

This type of research is helpful for society to understand whether or not the constraints of everyday life on the revelation of self are too strict and people are afraid to be who they are naturally because of societal pressures. Understanding this particular dynamic of human nature and tendencies with virtual reality will help us understand and cultivate technologies and a society of the future that understands what direction we as humans truly desire to go.

This is important because as we are increasingly allowed the freedom to be who we really are in virtual worlds such as Second Life without limitations. Society’s interest in research like this should lie in the understanding of our human nature and the capabilities we have to adapt to a technologically self-liberating society where we are free to remove our facades, and instead be who we truly desire to be.
Notes

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Stets, p. 228.
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PART III

Cybersubcultures
Sex, Sexuality and Cyberspace: Intersecting Queer Spaces On and Offline

Vikki Fraser

Abstract
This paper explores the discourses operating on websites that are used by queer youth in order to understand the ways online and offline queer spaces might intersect and inform each other. Drawing on qualitative research carried out in Australia; the paper focuses on the way discourses of sex operate on the websites Gaydar (www.gaydar.com) and Gaydar Girls (www.gaydargirls.com), in ways that (re)produce the discourses present in offline queer spaces (such as bars and clubs). Further, it explores the ways such sites enable young queer users, to gain an understanding of what to expect in other queer venues and develop insight into how queer cultures might be constructed and participated with. Exploring the ways that bodies and discourses shape and are shaped by space, and utilising both textual analysis of the websites and participant discussions, this paper challenges the assertion that internet spaces are spaces of transcendence, instead positing that they are intrinsically linked to ‘real life’ and therefore offline operations of discourse.

Using Foucault’s analysis of discourses of sex, this paper takes particular interest in the ways sex is used as a way of legitimating, or making knowable, the presence of various users online while removing others to a periphery status. Sex is also used on the sites to legitimise race or ethnic identities in a variety of ways, usually highlighting whiteness as inherent in recognisable queer sexuality. This paper highlights the deployment of discourses of sex to unpack and contest the way sex and whiteness are privileged on the sites, silencing and removing non-white and non-sexual queer experience.

Although the discussions made throughout this paper are by no means able to be generalised, the paper aims to provide insight into the multiple ways in which websites used by queer young people might be read and the implications for this reading in the context of increasing internet use.

Key Words: Internet, Space, Queer, Gaydar, Youth

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1. Introduction
The internet is a burgeoning social phenomenon in Australia. Used in a variety of fields, Australia has seen a widespread growth in access to the medium over the past decade. Attitudes toward the internet have been divided into two broad areas - the internet as dangerous and from which
children must be protected, and the internet as a space of freedom and transcendence, particularly for marginalised young people. Certainly, the focus of much research into young queer people and the internet has focussed on the way the medium enables young people to transcend the homophobia and heterosexism of mainstream Australian culture and try on queer sexuality in a safe way. However, while the internet has certainly opened numerous avenues of connectivity and interaction for queer young people which may have been previously denied, such an analysis implies that there is little or no connectedness between online and offline spaces. This paper will investigate the intersections of online and offline queer spaces to examine how discourses of sex operate in online space in ways that overlap offline queer space. Through this discussion I will demonstrate the way that young queer people perceive the internet as providing a space where understandings of their sexuality might be ‘bounced back’ between online and offline space, and therefore presents particular situations which must be negotiated in order to find congruence between online and offline discourses.

This paper is drawn from research into the role of the internet in the formation of queer youth subjectivities in Australia. This research examined, using critical discourse analysis, websites identified by participants in the study in order to unpack the discourses present on the websites. Further, the study engaged young (18 to 26) queer internet users in in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore the way they viewed and engaged with these discourses, and the negotiations they undertook in finding placement for themselves in online spaces. For the purpose of clarity, the term queer has been used to refer to all sexualities outside of exclusive heterosexuality, and as such has included asexual and pansexual participants.

A. The Research in Context

Although Australia recognises sexual diversity, queer sexuality is predominantly set up in a dichotomous relationship with heterosexuality whereby the hetero becomes the norm and the queer abhorrent. Young queer people in the Australian context are still faced with discriminatory attitudes, homophobia, and the consistent public reiteration of the normality and privilege of the heterosexual. Further, queer sexuality is reduced to sexual practice in ways that heterosexuality seldom is, creating a silence around queer sexuality and young people, which enforces a culture of shame and exclusion on the young queer subject. As a result, queer youth issues are silenced. The volatile positioning of queer youth has been linked to the increased rates of suicide within Australia.

However, young queer people negotiate the ways they are positioned within dichotomies of normal and abhorrent sexuality in ways that contest discourses of isolation, loneliness and shame. One such way that young people contest such positioning is through the use of the internet.
Certainly the internet has been an important site of interaction for young queer people, particularly when many offline queer spaces are restricted to those over the age of 18. As a result, the internet emerges as a strategic site of engagement with other queer people and a key source of information about being queer.

While the internet has provided an important space of interaction for queer young people, the internet is a text based medium which works to foreground and legitimate ways of being and subjectivities while foreclosing others. As Nakamura indicates, the use of particular languages, hierarchical lists and search results, and the complete textual removal of different identities online negate the possibility for transcendence and freedom. Rather, such textual practices often reproduce some of the more dominant discourses of sex, race and gender present in offline spaces.

The Gaydar websites have a female focused site (Gaydar Girls - www.gaydargirls.com.au) and a male focused site (Gaydar Guys - www.gaydar.com.au). The websites provide a networking site based on user profiles and forums. Although international in scope, Gaydar acts as a sponsor to many of the queer festivals in Australia, including the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Such sponsorship may account for some of the sites intense popularity, due to increased offline visibility. There is no intrinsic structural difference between the male and female focused sites.

2. Theory

Sex is, according to Foucault, one of the principle discourses governing bodies and spaces in contemporary Western society. The already mentioned reduction of queer sexuality to sex makes it therefore unsurprising that sex features so strongly in online queer spaces. This can be accounted for by the taboo that rests on discussions of same sex sexuality, particularly sexual practice, which creates an impetus toward speech around queer sex. Such impetus is less apparent for heterosexual sexual practice, which has fewer taboos and restrictions in operation. This impetus toward speech becomes a mode of governance and control which disciplines subjects in particular ways, marking some as legitimate and others as abhorrent. Online spaces enable young queer people to engage with a discourse of sex which has been denied to them in offline space; however such engagement becomes a way of determining who is a legitimate queer subject, belonging in online queer space, and who is not. Foucault maintains that sex becomes a marker of who is ‘normal’ and ‘healthy’ in our society. Likewise sex is a marker of adherence to the legitimized production of queerness within online and offline queer spaces.
3. Deploying Sex Discourses Online

Participants within the study highlighted the way Gaydar and Gaydar Girls structurally emphasised sex as a marker of legitimate queer sexuality, which directly excluded some while others actively took up and participated in the discourse to ensure placement in the space. Gaydar and Gaydar Girls actively work to construct the queer subject as willingly and actively sexual. The discourse of sex operating on the site is initially marked through the text and images of the sites’ home page. The homepage offers users “what you want, when you want it,” and this text is linked to a displayed image. Reading the image and the text together, it is apparent that the figures represented in the image are the what - what you want becomes that which is portrayed in the image. These images suggest highly sexualised interaction. Often containing semi naked men or women in tight fitting clothing, the images are rarely of individuals and are often of groups of two or more people embracing. As an interview participant, Greg\(^1\), noticed:

\[\text{Gaydar […] has a new picture everyday […] one of their pictures is […] three guys in the same shot, you know, holding each other or whatever. It’s hardly ever one guy, it’s usually two guys, like holding each other or being intimate. So I think it promotes that […] look we’ve got no tops on, we’ve got three people in the one shot, looking for a gang bang, you know. Use your imagination.}\]

Users are invited, through the text and image of the home page to participate in the types of interaction represented. As a result, the images and text indicate upfront the operation of a discourse of sex, which legitimates the sexual within the space and invites users to participate in sexualised behaviour whilst online. An important feature of each of the images is the eye contact made between the represented figures and the site users. Eye contact initiates invitation to further participation.\(^12\) Therefore, the images are not simply indicating that sexualised behaviour is enabled through or available on the websites, but rather that users are expected to actively participate in this discourse.

An image on the male website is particularly useful in this consideration - one of two men standing in an embrace. One man stands with his back to the user, while the other makes direct eye contact. The men are only in their underpants, and appear to have been intimately engaged. The user has interrupted this act and the figure making eye contact appears to acknowledge the user’s presence. However, the image is somewhat voyeuristic. The embrace is noteworthy. The man with his back to the user has both hands around his partner, while the first man wraps only one arm around the small of the others back, appearing more possessive than intimate.
His other hand is held slightly out from his body, and combined with the eye contact, appears to be inviting. The body offers the user proximity, welcoming them into further interaction. Such interaction between user and site is also replicated on the female site.

Images such as these work in the rhetoric of socialization in important ways. While as a society we are more used to sexualised representations, such images affect the ways we are able to read spaces, and the types of controls in place in such spaces. Highly sexualised and inviting imagery indicates the operation of discourses of sex on the site, as well as offering users free participation in that discourse. Users are invited to take up and act within the discourse simply through engagement with the home page. However, such images also work to demonstrate the ways in which a discourse of sex is used to control the legitimacy of queer bodies online.

While a willingness to participate in sexualised behaviour becomes the first and foremost marker of legitimized queer subjectivity in online space, such markers actively work to exclude subjects whose participation might be marked as abhorrent. As a result, users who identify as asexual are actively controlled and closeted through the discourse. According to an asexual queer interview participant, Robert, sites like Gaydar actively foreclose the possibility of interaction outside of sex. Further, the sites silence representations of self that are not sexual through the lack of non-sexualised language. Such enforcement of sexualised queer subjectivity through language works to legitimize understandings of queers as sexual, and mark as abhorrent queer subjectivities that are not willing to participate in sexualised behaviour. The naturalness and desirability of sexualised behaviour is deeply rooted in contemporary understandings of sex as natural and ever present, an understanding that is further reproduced through dominant offline queer spaces. As a result, subjects like Robert are intrinsically represented as lacking the very markers of queer subjectivity necessary to recognise them as queer, destabilising and removing them from such spaces. However, while the operations of sex actively remove users like Robert from the site, in much the same way as they are removed in offline queer space, it is interesting that Robert actively engages in the site. Through reporting his sexuality in a way he felt was accurate to his asexuality, Robert is able to disrupt dominant understandings of human sexuality, and particularly the legitimisation of sexualised queer sexuality. As such, Robert disrupts the closeting processes of the website and creates the possibility for other understandings of sexuality and legitimacy.

While Robert is able to contest the way sex is centralised in online and offline queer spaces, sex discourses are not only mobilised to legitimate and centralise sexualised behaviour. Sex discourses on queer websites also work to legitimate white subjectivity and racialise queer sexuality in ways that create fetishes around and remove non-white queer subjects from
dominant placement within the space. In the previously described image, the coupling consisted of a white man, acknowledging the user through eye contact, and a non-white man, whose back is toward the user. As already noted, the man making eye contact is in a position of dominance in the scene. His arm curls possessively around his partner, and he invites users into interaction. However, the framing of the image also works to decentre non-white queers and racialise queer sexuality as white. Through the discourse of sex, the non-white figure in this image becomes fetish through his facelessness. The separation of the body from the living person, through the removal of the face, creates the body as anonymous and abject. Such abjection is necessary to the creation of the object of desire. Interestingly, on Gaydar and similar websites, it is usually the non-white queer that is framed in this way, abjected and objectified. As I have discussed elsewhere, through various markers on websites, queers of marginalised ethnicities are removed to the periphery, marked as inauthentic or periphery queer subjects. The afore mentioned images on Gaydar mark non-white queer subjects as objects to be desired and possessed, rather than as agentic and desiring queer subjects.

Mobilisation of ethnicity through discourses of sex is another area in which online and offline queer spaces overlap and intersect in the production of legitimised queer subjectivity. As Barnard argues, when a marginalisation forms the basis of a community, it will always enforce other marginalisation. As a result, “‘lesbian’ and ‘gay’ means white lesbians and gay men”. Offline queer spaces often mobilise the whiteness of queerness through discourses of sex, in much the same way as has been articulated above. Non-white queers are perceived through racialised assumptions, which maintain the centrality and privilege of whiteness. Offline queer spaces use discourses of sex to either hyper-sexualise or remove from possible sexualisation non-white queers, leading to the abjection and fetishisation of the subject, or the removal based on a perception of lack from queer space. In such ways, discourses of sex online and offline overlap to reproduce the racialisation of the queer subject, which orientalises and colonises non-white queer sexualities.

4. Negotiation and Ways Forward

While I have painted a rather bleak picture of online queer spaces sex, young people are actively involved in the operations of sex discourses online, and often develop understandings of offline queer space through such interaction. Further, users actively work to negotiate discourses of sex online in ways that potentially disrupt the workings of exclusionary operations. As such, it is important to consider the ways in which online and offline queer spaces interact. Understanding the way users operate within both spaces might enable contestation of the exclusionary workings of discourses of sex.
both online and offline, particularly through empowering users to contest such discourses, where appropriate.

The power of discourse to legitimate and abject different subjectivities largely is dependent on the investment of users in those others with whom they interact\(^1\). In this way, online space, disconnected spatially and temporally from offline space provides an opportunity for users to diffuse disciplinary operations, such as shame, and therefore challenge the ways in which they are constructed as intelligible. As Robert demonstrated, while users of sites attempted to re-write his subjectivity as sexual, largely through the use of highly sexualised messages, the dislocation of the online space enabled him to react to such messages in a way which was different to how he would be able to act offline, and thereby continue to challenge the construction of sex as inherent and natural to queer identity in online and offline space. Understanding not only the ways that websites provide for a language of queerness, but also the ways in which such languages and representations re-produce exclusionary and limited offline discourses and subjectivities, and are negotiated and challenged by users, might better enable those involved in queer spaces to encourage the production of more inclusive discourses through online disruption.

Notes


3. S Dyson et al. *Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell: Hidden in the Crowd: The Need for Documenting Links Between Sexuality and Suicidal Behaviours Among*
Young People, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, Melbourne, 2003.


7 Nakamura, op cit.


9 Ibid.


11 All participant names given in this paper are pseudonyms.


Bibliography


Vikki Fraser is in the final year of her PhD at the University of Western Sydney, in the School of Education.
The Use of Social Networking Sites and Their Relation to Users’ Offline Networks

Natalia Waechter, Kaveri Subrahmanyam, Stephanie M. Reich, and Guadalupe Espinoza

Abstract
Social networking sites (SNS) such as MySpace and Facebook have millions of users and are especially popular among adolescents and emerging adults. In 2008, 68% of German online youth, aged 14-19 years, reported having used social networking sites for private reasons.¹ In the United States, this number is similar with about 2/3 of teens using these sites.² Because of the potential to interact with known others as well as meet and befriend strangers on social networking sites, it is important to learn more about young people’s activities on these sites and also to understand how their online networks might relate to their offline networks. The recent study at the Children’s Digital Media Center (CDMC, Los Angeles) on young people’s use of social networking sites, as presented at the “Cybercultures” conference (4th Global Conference: Cybercultures - Exploring Critical Issues, Salzburg, Austria, March 13-15, 2009) and recently published by Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza in the Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology³, investigated emerging adults’ online activities, their use of social networking sites for communication, and the overlap between their online and offline social networks. US college students completed two surveys, one in-person and one online, that asked a variety of questions about their online activities and closest friends. Results showed that participants often used social networking sites to connect and reconnect with personal friends and family members and that there was an overlap between participants’ top online and offline networks. However, the overlap was not perfect, suggesting that emerging adults may use different online contexts to strengthen different aspects of their offline connections. The results support the position that young people’s online and offline worlds are psychologically connected.

Key Words: Young People, Emerging Adults, College Students, Online Communication, Social Networking Sites, SNS, Web 2.0 Use, MySpace, Facebook

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1. Introduction and Research Questions
Worldwide, social networking sites (SNSs) such as MySpace and Facebook have become a popular online communication form among
adolescents and emerging adults. The numbers of new members are still increasing: For example, in 2008, 68% of German online youth, age 14-19 years, reported having used social networking sites (for private reasons), whereas in 2007, it was just 40%. While research on social networking sites is emerging - for example Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008; Hoffmann, 2008; Tillmann, 2008; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007 - questions remain as to what exactly young people do on these sites and with whom they interact. This prompted the survey study of emerging adults about:

- The prevalence and frequency of college students’ use of social networking sites.
- Their reasons for using these sites.
- Who they interact with online and whether these are offline friends as well.
- Whether they feel their online activities have had any affect on their offline relationships.

2. Method and Sample Description

For the presentation at the “Cyberculture” conference, the results of two questionnaires were presented: The first was a paper-and-pencil survey given to students in the department of Psychology at California State University, Los Angeles. The second questionnaire was administered online to a subset of the participants. It specifically asked about online and offline activities and use of the Internet on that particular day.

The sample consisted of 110 college students; equally divided by gender. They ranged in age from 18 to 29 years with a mean age of 21.5. The majority (78%) was between 18 and 23 years old and they were ethnically diverse. The majority of participants were Latino (51%), and Asian (20%). Other ethnicities in the sample are (in order of their frequency): White/Caucasian, Multi-racial, African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Middle Eastern (all between 10% and 2%). With regard to religious affiliation, 66% identified as Christian, and almost a quarter reported no religious affiliation.

3. Usage of Social Networking Sites

Of our sample of 110 college students, 86 (78%) reported having a profile on a social networking site. Although more young men (82%) reported having such a profile than young women (75%), this was not a
reliable difference. Having a profile was not related to the students’ ethnic group membership and religious affiliation.

Of those who have a profile, 61% reported having only one and 34% reported having two or three profiles. A few (5%) had four, five, or six accounts on social networking sites. The majority of participants used MySpace (88%). This was similar to the findings of Lenhart and Madden (2007), who found that 85% of teenagers using social networking sites have a MySpace profile. In our sample, only 8% had a profile on Facebook, and even less had one on Xanga, Bebo, or other sites.

The majority of participants in our sample could be characterized as frequent users: 57% reported checking their account or other people’s profile at least once a day (half of those had their profile open all day or checked it several times a day). Another 23% reported visiting social networking sites every two or three days, and only 20% said that they visited such sites once a week or less.

4. Reasons for the Use of Social Networking Sites

In order to assess why emerging adults had an account and their reasons for using it, we asked those participants with SNS profiles (n=86) to go through a list with 12 items and to check all that apply. The results suggested that the most common use of these sites was to interact with offline friends with 81% listing “to stay in touch with friends I don’t see often.” Other social reasons were also common, such as “because all of my [offline] friends have accounts” (61%), “to stay in touch with relatives and family” (48%), and “to make plans with friends who I see often (35%).” “To fill up free time/ not be bored” was also a common reason with 52% reporting this purpose. It appears that the college students in this study used their account to maintain and enforce their existing “offline” social network. MySpace and other social networking sites are not only used to connect with friends and relatives who they do not have the chance to see very often but also to connect with their day-to-day friends with whom they hang out a lot.

Meeting new people was a not a common reason for having a social networking site profile. Only 29% said that they had a profile “to meet new people” and “make new friends”, and 21% admit that they use the profile “to flirt”. It appears that the use of MySpace and similar sites is strongly related to participants’ offline worlds, whereas research on Internet chat rooms has shown that adolescents and emerging adults use it to a larger extent to meet new people and to flirt.

One important use of social networking sites such as MySpace is the presentation of oneself through a profile. The profile gives basic information about a person including the name, age, school/ job affiliation, interests such as music and sports, etc. Interestingly, the college students in our sample reported presenting their “offline selves”: The majority (70%) reported
having never made anything up about themselves or others on their profile and only 2% admitted to having frequently made something up. Those who had ever made something up, did so as a joke, “to make myself look better”; or “to see if people notice.”

5. **The Friends List**

One important feature of social networking sites is the friends list. We were interested in how many “friends” participants had on their friends lists, how they decided who to add to their list and if those offline friends were also online friends.

On average, participants with SNS profiles (n=86) reported having 137 friends with a range from 0 - 642. However, two thirds of the participants had less than 100 friends. Forty percent had up to 50 friends on their friends list and 26% had between 50 - 100 friends on their list.

When asked how many of the people in their list they have met face-to-face, 27% reported having met everyone on their friends list. On average, they reported having met 78% of the people on their friends list face-to-face. When asked with how many people on their friends list they interact with frequently, we found that only a few (3%) reported frequent interactions with everyone on their friends list. On average, they reported interacting frequently with 28% of the people on their friends list.

We also asked why emerging adults added friends to their profile: more than two thirds (73%) answered that they “will only add a person who they have met in person.” About half of them even reported to “only add a person if they are a face-to-face friend”. Only 11% of the SNS users said that they will add anyone who sends a friends request, and if the person who sends a request “looks cool” only a few more said that they are willing to add him or her (17%). So looking cool helps a little but knowing the person offline, or at least having a friend who knows that person makes it a lot more likely that they will put them on their friends list (33% reported they “will add a person who is a friend of a friend”). Regarding our overall research question about the link between online and offline social networks, these results on who is added to a user’s friends list confirms our hypothesis that young people’s online and offline social networks are related.

The social networking sites that the college students in our study used not only feature a friends list but also a “top friends list”. The results regarding the “top” friends show that the best friends offline are the most likely ones to make it onto the top friends list; 68% of the students in the sample reported that they chose their best friends offline for their top list. Another, less frequent way of how they chose their top friends was to reciprocate a friend who listed them on their top list (15%). Only 7% of respondents said they add people who ask for it or who put pressure to be in
the top list. Quite a few did not use the top friends feature at all (15%) or had other criteria of selection (some participants mentioned family and relatives).

6. Reported Impact of Social Networking Sites on Offline Relationships

When asked whether experience on social networking sites had influenced their relationships, the majority of the SNS using college students in the sample (n=86) reported that it had not affected the relationship with their friends (73%). Twenty percent said that it has made them closer and only 2.5% said it had created problems with their friends.

We also asked them if anything in their profile had caused trouble between them and their friends or family, and if anything in their profile had fixed a problem or cleared a misunderstanding. Twenty-one percent reported troubles, especially referring to troubles with their romantic partners. When asked to describe the nature of the problem experienced on social networking sites, a few young women reported romantic trouble in which their boyfriend was jealous of male online friends (“I had an ex-boyfriend as a friend, my current one got mad”; “Guys would leave me compliments and my boyfriend would ask about them. It seemed to annoy him.”). Young men also experienced romantic difficulties (“My girlfriend is possessive and jealous”; “Ex-girlfriend thought I was cheating on her”). Difficulties were not constrained to romantic relationships. Troubles with parents also resulted from online use. Specifically when family members viewed the college student’s profile and discovered things the young adult did not wish them to see (“My sisters would look through and see that I had a boyfriend (I was not allowed to have one before) and they told my Dad”).

Subjects also reported that having and using a profile affected offline relationships in a positive way: 11% said it had fixed a problem or misunderstanding. All problems that the college students in the sample mentioned had to do either with their friends (“make sure my friend wasn’t mad at me, where it would be harder to ask in person or by phone”) and/or with their boyfriend/girlfriend (“A partner/friend at the time had feelings of betrayal, but once they saw my page they found out that they were wrong”). However, it is ironic that the problem that could be fixed had been caused through the use of profile in the first place (“My boyfriend could read my comments that I’ve left for the guys and see that I’ve done nothing to provoke obnoxious comments they’ve left me”).

7. Overlap between Online and Offline Social Networks

In order to find out about the actual overlap between young people’s online and offline social networks, the students were asked to list the names of up to 10 people that interact with the most offline (friends and/or relatives with whom they spend most time), on social networking sites, and through
The Use of Social Networking Sites

instant messaging. From this 2 x 2 x 2 contingency matrices were created that assessed the amount of overlap between these three settings for each person. If participants named 10 people in each area and there was no overlap, they could name up to 30 people. For this paper, only the overlap between face-to-face and social networking site friends will be discussed.

Of the total sample, 73 students provided the names of their online and offline friends. Of these 73, eight (11%) had no connection between their listed social networking and face-to-face friends. Sixteen people (22%) reported 100% overlap between their social networking friends and face-to-face friends. On average, half (49%) of their top face-to-face friends were also their top social networking site friends.

8. Conclusions and Outlook

There appears to be a connection between the college students’ online and offline social networks. In fact one key characteristic of social networking sites seems to be that they consist largely of people with whom the emerging adult is friends with or related to offline. Therefore, the use of social networking sites may have an influence on the offline social worlds of young adults. Even college students who do not have a social networking site profile reported visiting MySpace or similar sites.

This same research design has been extended to high school students (13-19 years of age) within the Los Angeles area. While data are still being analyzed, our hope is to compare uses of social networking sites across these age groups (adolescents and emerging adults) using a developmental approach. Along these lines, an additional project is underway at the Austrian Institute for Youth Research that focuses on the use of Web 2.0 by socio-economically disadvantaged young people aged 12 to 19 years. Initial results will be available in September 2009.

For further information please visit the website of the Children’s Digital Media Center (www.cdmc.ucla.edu) and the website of the Austrian Institute for Youth Research (www.oeij.at).

Notes


Bibliography


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Cybergrace among Eating Disorder Survivors in Singapore

Bittiandra Chand Somaiah

Abstract
Articulation of the self after anorexia, an illness that sufferers reveal is extremely isolating disease, finds community in cyberspace. This paper, in a spirit similar to Arthur Frank in The Wounded Storyteller, shows how the injuries of the eating disordered (ED) can become seeds of their self-stories. Growing pains and telling pains in defining despair and disorder and in expressing the trials while journeying through individualized and therefore unchartered routes for recovery make for painful and active typing and reading. Illness, it has been said, is about learning to cope with lost control. Cyberspace then offers a medium to reclaim some semblance of lost control, a space where potential narrative wreckage can be rescued. The paper conceptualizes such online confessionals as proof of embodied community, sites where medically treated monadic bodies re-connect. Ethical acts of storytelling are explored through textual analysis of virtual modes of expression from recovering ED individuals living in the Republic of Singapore, a country whose Tourism Promotion Board has actively promoted as a “foodie’s paradise”.

Key Words: Eating Disorders, Illness Narratives, Cybergrace, Recovery

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1. I was chanting the Mantra in my Head... I need to finish all now to gain Weight to get well to let go to set Myself Free - Helen

In my paper I show how socially defined vulnerable groups such as those bearing the label of mentally disordered, specifically the eating disordered (ED) in the Republic of Singapore - a city-state in Southeast Asia whose Tourism Promotion Board has actively promoted as a ‘foodie’s paradise’ - make use of cyberspace to assert and express themselves as creative, proactive, often spiritually-charged individuals who form bonds of cyber-commensality via social networking tools and interconnected blogospheres.

Ethical acts of storytelling are explored through the textual analysis of virtual modes of expression. These outlets of localized vocalization include thirteen personal blogs of recovering and recovered ED individuals aged between late teens to mid-twenties, various online community forums and social networking groups based on common interest or self-help which serve to actualize a community of not only pain, but of promise - of full recovery. I did not restrict my research for cybergrace in cyberspace to blogs
but to any kinds of online communication. This included e-mail interaction and support found in online-forums and sometimes perhaps maintained via instant messaging tools such as Microsoft messenger (MSN). My research was therefore multi-locale. Focusing on ED recovery as a topic rather than on a specific site or two enabled me therefore, using discourse analysis, to recognize how the presentation of self, discussions on the trials of treatment, complaints about the lack of understanding from a largely uninformed, insensitive general public and declarations of religious faith were arranged to enable an embracing of a genuine pledge to getting better.

The findings are constantly triangulated with data from my ongoing fieldwork in the form of in-depth biographical face to face interviews with eleven identified recovered and recovering ED youth and my participant observation during monthly support group sessions held at the only specialised ED medical centre on the island where I informally interact with inpatients, outpatients, medical professionals, parents, friends. “Survivors” is the term used during support group sessions to identify those who are suffering from or who have suffered from an ED of any kind. I adopt and employ the term here because I feel it truly encompasses with dignity and honour, the emotional, moral, physical and spiritual bravery demanded during recovery. The term is positive and empowering, and a move away from feminizing, infantilizing and victimizing stances associated with the word “patient” in the arguably patriarchal and sometimes patronizing world of biomedicine.

2. (B)Logging On - Researching Recovery in Cyberspace

While the world wide web (www) can be regarded as a supplementary resource for social research, for this paper, the internet was prime fieldwork site for data. The discovery of a blog (sub)culture was a surprise to me and I found out about it through someone at my first Support Group session. None of the blogs or online group URLs, names of bloggers or dates of blog posts are mentioned here to guard the privacy of these individuals some of whom are below 21 years old. In instances where I have quoted at length it is with permission by the adult author. Since 2007, as part of my ‘internetnography’ or ‘virtual ethnography’, I actively visited the blogs of those who spoke of their eating disorder and recovery journeys. To place their blog posts in context, some of the internet usage occurred away from personal laptops at home or in the hospital but at university or at the gym using personal phones. The geographic spread of the bloggers was limited, and deliberately so, to Singapore. Blogs often were updated late into the night and response time from other bloggers varied.

In some blogs the ED featured as a strong presence, in others less so. It has been highlighted that personal blogs provide a potential area of research which moves beyond using community as a conceptual frame but
instead utilizes narrative analysis to understand (inter) relationships and the
nature of community. I thus embarked on this call and was able to examine the
gamut of individual tactics to make sense of an ED and recovery. Some
blogs had a blog roll, which linked me to other blogs by other recovering or
recovered ED individuals. The bloggers whose blogs I visited often interacted
on each other’s sites through comments of encouragement, empathy and
sympathetic humour in response to sometimes considerably lengthy
narratives of trauma. I was thus able to not only observe their relationships to
their blogs and each other but topical trends, the local lingo of ED, compare
my data and marvel at the sense of community support here.

Cobb’s ‘cybergrace’ speaks of the divine and divinities that are
manifested in computer mediated communication. She embraces a holistic
view of embodiment, spirituality and godly love that is transmitted and
touches users of the web. I employ the word because it was what I intuitively
felt was occurring in the blogospheres of the ED community in Singapore.
One blogger quotes a missionary she meets in a foreign land who advises
against becoming a “spiritual anorexic” or “spiritual bulimic” and she
discusses how this term resonates within her deeply, after her dark
experiences in anorexia. Her posts uplift and inspire not only me (a non-ED
individual), - she has a large following of readers in Singapore and abroad
who comment, praise and leave comments of thanks on her posts. She
ponders upon a “god-shaped hunger” within everybody and makes interesting
links with her experience with anorexia and her spiritual quest. Her quotes
from the Bible relate to nourishment, fasting, feasting but above all a
commensality and endless love. Such quotes from the Bible were found on a
number of the sites from ex or recovering ED girls. The ED was also referred
to as the “devil,” as “stupid satan”.

3. Off/Online Marginality - Writ Bodies

Cyber-communicating and blogging can help overcome barriers
resulting from stigmatized physical human bodies. “now, hear my intestines
twitch. / hear my stomach muscles roar with grief” writes Dawn. Bodily
sensoria were projected in the blogs I encountered to a large extent. The body
in these blogs becomes the point of reference for the shedding of problems
with food and the invention of new imaginings of the self, post-recovery.

Some blogs such as those of Stan, Gayle, Dawn and Helen have
food diaries with caloric content charted out to pain-staking detail to the point
of counting croutons. These food journals are self-assessed harshly.
Insomnia, obsessive exercise, baking adventures, experiences of being at the
ward and meals there, and reactions to various medications are shared. In
some blogs, clothing and identities feature more prominently than in others.

Those who are recovering from or who have recovered from an ED,
both diagnosed and undiagnosed, often reveal on their blogs and during
support group sessions how alone they felt in the depths of their problems around food and eating. “Come to the table of feasting” invites Tessa, a medical student, missionary and recovered anorexic. Rich offers that ED individuals tend to feel they are facing an ED alone because they are subject to other’s biomedical and/or folk constructions of it. In a conversational-style interview Isabel, who is in her thirties and runs her own food business and who describes herself as a recovering ED individual who had bulimia nervosa with signs of anorexia, revealed something which others have confided to me as well, “You’re so isolated when you have the ED.” The internet can then be attractive to those who yearn for safe social contact but are in the clutch of the disorder’s self-imposed retreat from society. Through everyday life stories and reflections on their personal blogs, recovering ED individuals form bonds of empathy between themselves and their readers. From the rich corpus of online material that came my way from hyperlink to hyperlink, it is evident that the articulation of the self after the trauma of the ED finds community in cyberspace.


While cyberspace offers a medium to reclaim some semblance of control lost during illness, a space where potential narrative wreckage can be rescued, online membership to eating disorder causes can serve to turn illness into meta-control. An example includes membership to Facebook causes to raise awareness about eating disorders.

Recovering eating disordered individuals give voice to experiences that Prozac prescriptions cannot communicate. Blogging can be a means through which the ‘dyadic body’ proffers its own body and obtains the comfort that others recognize what torments it. These online confessionals can be conceptualized as proof of embodied community, sites where medically treated monadic bodies re-connect. While voices of recovering eating disordered individuals are embodied in particular persons, in the democratic space of the internet, they are simultaneously social. Examining explicit sculpting of the body-self online through illness narratives can serve to shed new light on Goffman’s ideas of management of stigma, presentation of the self and ‘spoiled identity’. The identity positions of the bloggers were that they had or were suffering from an ED. Gayle, a twenty year old food science university student, is self-reflexive and is extremely particular not to be perceived as “promoting ED”. Self-censorship is sometimes a moral issue dealt with at a personal level by the bloggers who keep open blogs. Her reflections on readership of the blogs of other ED survivors however shows how cyberspace has allowed her to plug into a community of other wounded storytellers who struggle to tell their recovery journeys while providing hope for others that they are not alone in their trials.
The blogs sometimes challenge the bloggers into new spaces of interiority where their inner demons are confronted in front of an audience of other recovering ED bloggers and strangers. Gayle speaks of her “amazing” “ed fighter friends” and sometimes speaks directly to them in her posts. Sometimes she when feeling at a loss, or weak in the battle, the positive, life-affirming friendships she’s made on and offline with other ED survivors proves, along with her blogging, to provide a sense of accountability to herself with relation to others. Soft social pressure in the form of Durkheimean mechanical solidarity seems to be a tremendous aid in recovery journeys. A consultant psychiatrist whom I conducted face-to-face interviews with links recovery models using support groups to the kinds of support received from Alcoholics Anonymous where peer pressure to recover produces positive outcomes.

Cobb credits cyberspace in birthing new “faith communities” that exist on a geographically unbounded platform and yet are founded upon intensely personal interactions. Gayle sometimes juxtaposes prayers seeking mercy with profanities against herself, the medium of the internet or against people who do not understand. She sometimes makes direct (rhetorical) pleas to her readers - a common motif in the inner sanctums of these online confessionals where Judgment Day is spoken about and where gluttony, sin, guilt, grace, hell/heaven is contemplated.

There have been discussions that alliance to an ED identity is an obstacle to recovery. The bloggers whose blogs I studied however self-identified as recovering or having recovered from an ED. Their identity therefore weighed in favour of recovery and post-recovery midst other multi-hyphenated identities. I read these blogs as a taste of what it feels like journeying towards recovery, to get a glimpse in understanding the many diverse problems on their plate that need addressing. Out of all the blogs I read, only one seemed to identify as fully recovered and was able articulate eloquently her past ED experiences with the benefit of complete hindsight.

“Recovery is a journey not a destination” emphasizes Isabel. Susan Sontag’s ideas about metaphors of illness can be useful when conceptualizing recovery as a non-linear narrative journey. She speaks in her *Illness as Metaphor* of the ill as possessing ‘a more onerous citizenship’, being obliged to use the un-preferred passport to journey from the ‘kingdom or the well’ to the ‘kingdom of the sick’. She verbalizes that she is interested in what it is truly like to emigrate to that second-class kingdom and discusses the often oppressive uses of illness as a metaphor. Illnesses - and eating disorders are no exception - are often subjected to macabre metaphoric thinking. While Sontag warns against dishonest understandings of illness via the prejudiced figures that dot the backdrop of our social imagination, I posit that from the strong lyrical language and magical realism on curative cyber-spaces I visited, metaphor could indeed be a rich weapon ED individuals arm
themselves with as they resist the assorted biases they encounter on a daily basis and which they fight against internalizing. While Sontag seeks to dedicate her inquiry towards a liberation of illness from metaphor using the case of tuberculosis and cancer, that is not my aim here. Here I seek to move inside and beyond metaphor to perhaps elucidate why certain images among the ED community here keep cropping up. I was interested in how the individual bloggers studied seek new visual, religious, emotive imaginings to make sense of their clinical diagnosis.

With respect to cyberspace, Cobb argues that metaphors are the ‘primary currency’ we employ to ‘access’ the digital world and therefore the moral content of the metaphors used in this medium ‘carry additional weight’. I posit that metaphors associated with EDs are the fundamental means by which survivors and those who support them map escape routes from illness towards recovery. For many of the bloggers whose blog contents I studied, their blogs seemed to be one of the spaces where they felt they could be at their most honest. EDs are often misunderstood in popular culture and in general Singapore society where food and eating is considered a national pastime, where body-work and social policing of the body (politic) is part of everyday social life on the island.

5. (Un)Conscious Cyber-Healers - Dialectics of Flesh and Silicon

Disenchanted patients of biomedical psychiatry can learn to turn inwards, to use their pathographies of pain for better rather than for worse, by becoming wounded storytellers. By typing her thoughts through highly self-conscious writing, where she often ponders upon the purpose of blogging and her own self-reflexivity, Lea, a twenty year old university student and ex-gymnast who describes herself as loving god, self-heals through prose and through her active listening of others’ who have gone through similar experiences like herself. Gayle sometimes refers to other blogs. She finds inspiration in the blog of a girl who had binge-eating disorder for eight years but recovered. She speaks of how that blog made her “more determined to change (her) ways”. Likewise her blog inspires others like Eva who has commented, “u put the things i feel into words, & i can totally relate to you!” Eva and Gayle have spoken about their faith and admiration for each other’s strength during recovery, wishing Godspeed. Eva, a university student and recovered anorexic, and Lea have also committed that they are “to strive for godliness, not perfection”.

Nakamura\textsuperscript{11} and Collins-Jarvis\textsuperscript{12} proffer that cybercultures best be understood as a chain of negotiations which take place both off and online. Many of the bloggers have a shared history and knowledge of the other bloggers on their blog roll as they have met and continue to meet in person in a hospital setting - as in/outpatients or at support group sessions - or other institutional settings like schools, tertiary or university settings. It has been
argued that flesh-and-blood communities are nourished on the principal of reciprocity, just as virtual ones are. Cyberspace then gifts upon the users an extension of everyday living, and so the safety nets of society penetrate into the digital realm where introspection can reach richer planes without the encumbrance of a clinical setting, or a public unsafe space or a visibly abused body-mind. Although the possibility of diminishing into the cyburbia of one’s personal blog exists, it is quite improbable given the amount of peer policing and concerned surveillance that goes on among the survivors. There is clearly more than surface-level cheerleading going on in cyberspace. Practical and pragmatic concerns such as desires to do well in school and save money inform and shape their social interactions with each other.

6. In Lieu of a Conclusion

The cyberculture in the blogs I came across seemed to inspire feelings of empowerment among the users. To me it seems a healthy reclaiming of cyberspace from the more high profile and dystopic pro-Ana, pro-Mia sites which have recreated many a moral panic which have led to debates on web communication among ED individuals as being ‘sanctuary or snare?’\(^{13}\). Perhaps an etopia can be found in the blogospheres I researched. There is definitely camaraderie across these blogs however sharp-eyed, cautious and silent or luminously articulate, it is strong and it remains there. Also present in the writing is the “rapport” that people with ED feel to have with one another. This sentiment was constantly articulated at the support group sessions and its important thematic occurrence cannot be understated. The duet of recovery and renewed spirituality finds meaning in the wounded storyteller concept. I do believe the blogs, while often scathing to read, and I imagine to type, do provide hope and help to those who are willing to go through the zeniths and nadirs of these cyber-confessional\(s\) which sometimes cross-currents, which sometimes connect dots, which sometimes curse but which in all cases in the course of my data do not wrongly promote EDs as a life-style choice, rather they advocate recovery and provide safe support networks by those who are wounded storytellers themselves. Hope, help, honesty and the arduous return from hell characterize the content of these writings from recovered/recovering youth. It must be noted however that while online social support might provide a counter-effect to harsh diagnostic psychiatric labels, sometimes blog posts go uncommented and this might aggravate feelings of alienation especially among those who might be psychologically fragile\(^ {14}\). Cobb would argue that despite cyberspace being a “technology of connection” that simultaneously can “breed separation and isolation,” in the broader schema of ‘spiritual evolution, the dark and the light coexist in a constant dialectical tension that serves to move the entire process forward\(^ {15}\).
It has been suggested that the ‘stigma and shame that come with both diagnostic labelling and society’s misunderstanding of eating ‘disorders’ contribute to women’s need to find creative ways to connect’16. I hope that I have shown in this paper that the apparent atomized story-telling on the net by ED survivors in Singapore, through hyperlinks, and on and offline friendships creates a constellation of faith sometimes detached and ethereal, sometimes embodied and incensed but always towards full recovery. Just as the creatively expressed meditations painted on the blogs in the form of stream of consciousness style narratives, poetry or a pastiche bricolage of Bible verses bridges outsiders into a glimpse of their lived experiences17, through my sustained observation of online voices which was continuously cross-checked with my primary fieldwork data, I hope I have managed to ‘reduce the puzzlement’18 and distance that separates ED and ex-ED individuals from their friends, family and perfect strangers by bringing their voices to light. Online activity by recovering ED individuals are an exercise in self-management and bonding to reclaim a sense of self apart from the ED identity that is addressed in a clinical setting. By cybergrace, new non-ED identities are being bolstered by the open dialogue and accountability of blogging to a place where an appetite for living is slowly but surely rehabilitated.

Notes

7 Frank, op. cit.
10 Ibid, p. 3.

12 L A Collins-Jarvis, ‘Gender Representation in an Electronic City Hall: Female Adoption of Santa Monica’s PEN system’ in the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, vol 37:1, 1993, pp. 49-66.


15 Cobb, op. cit, p. 92.


**Bibliography**


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PART IV

The Future of Interactive Entertainment
Playing Games as an Art Experience: How Videogames Produce Meaning through Narrative and Play

Jef Folkerts

Abstract
My aim is to provide clarity about the nature of the videogame as a meaning generating system, while I consider imagination a central concept. Games are a common part of culture, that can be approached as a signification system, just like other cultural products like magazines, art, tv-shows, newspapers, films, books, ads, fashion, design, et cetera. I have examined the artistic and aesthetic nature of games: is imagination in a game experience comparable to our perception of art and literature? My hypothesis is that processes of signification in videogames are similar to those in literature and film, but that these signification processes display a different nature, producing different effects - to a large extent induced by the gamers presuming mental and physical input, and the specific nature of identity construction.

Key Words: Videogames, Art, Representation, Semiotics, Imagination, Identification, Consciousness, Metacognition, Constructing Meaning

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1. About the Artfulness of Videogames

After reading my introduction you might question my intentions to engage in this subject: why should we approach videogames as art at all? Videogames are mostly seen as entertainment, and are usually not intended as art. To begin with I agree with you, but I still think there are reasons to look at games in another, unusual way. In various publications on videogames I have encountered art related intuitions and convictions from game designers, game critics and game study scholars like Henry Jenkins, Warren Robinett, Raph Koster, Chris Crawford, and Clive Barker. This games-are-art conception is even discernable in the name of game publisher Electronic Arts (The Sims). But are games really art? In what capacity then? And what do promoters of this view mean by art exactly? In my view the notions art, aesthetic and artistic are often wrongly used synonymously. What people mostly say or imply when they assign artistic properties to games is: it is made by an artist; or, it looks like film, and film is art; or, playing this game produces aesthetic experiences; or, it is just as beautiful as art. Delightful assumptions, but as a matter of fact I never encounter a clearly defined view on art. All in all I believe the label art is granted too easily, concerning games.
If I seriously want to examine the artistic nature of games, my first act is to define what we consider art. In this very routine I specifically need to look for media transcending properties of art.

A short review of two thousand years Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art clarifies that conceptions of art always depend on the perspective that someone, a society, or the art world holds concerning art. The various viewpoints and philosophies evolved into what Stephen Davies identified as the three main theoretical approaches of art: Functionalism, Proceduralism and the Intentional Approach. Regardless of which view one favours, the proper approach to art, and how it should provide enjoyment is always governed by interpersonal conventions of the art world. And conventions and convictions about what we call art, or what art does, or what art means will change from time to time.¹

It is obvious that contemporary approaches of art ascribe an essential role to the experience of art. The artistic is not necessarily defined by intrinsic properties of an artefact, but is situated in the perception and comprehension of it. This changing view is moreover confirmed and illustrated by contemporary literary theories like Postclassical Narratology: the role of the reader and the reading process in the ‘making’ of the text is considered essential.

2. The Artistic-Aesthetic Distinction

In my strive for transparency and consensus in the artistic-aesthetic discourse I propose a slight adjustment in terminology, in a way that in my view better connects to what people intuitively feel with these notions. While most people primarily identify aesthetics with beauty, we can easily infer that art does not have to be beautiful, that the artistic experience is not always enjoyable. I simply refer to work of contemporary artists like Lucian Freud, Francis Bacon, Damien Hirst, Marina Abramović, Marlene Dumas, which often arouses disgust and repulsion. Stephen Davies offers an in my view adequate and feasible distinction between what is aesthetic and what is artistic. He maintains that we generally describe aesthetic properties as objective features perceived in the object. Artistic properties mostly depend on the content, on messages and meaning artworks communicate, that however by no means can be separated from the aesthetic properties.²

Since videogames usually are considered as entertainment, we need to know in which fashion the artistic experience differs from the entertainment experience exactly. An attractive solution to this dilemma is offered by the conception that for instance in light reading, soap opera or mainstream Hollywood film we usually do not encounter anomalies that force us to meaning-making. Therefore these entertainment formats create an illusion of absorption in the action. We are completely captured by it, but
their meaning is generally fixed: this first order representation and our imagination both reach closure. In literature and art on the other hand, the evoked mental images force us frequently to look for meaning. This process is encouraged by the way the representation differs from the ‘ordinary’, from what we already know, and by the multiplicity of interpretational levels. The significance of actions and occurrences is often unclear or even disturbed, and therefore offers insufficient explanation to interpret. This forces us to imagine a consciousness of the occurrences, or a certain perspective on them. Thus, in our strive for adequate interpretation we step into the mind of a character, the storyteller or the artist, and witness a meaning-making process from their perspective. This is what I call second order representation.

To illustrate the functioning of this signification process I refer to an exercise in observing by Boon and Steenhuis. In their analysis of the Picasso painting Musketeer with Sword, Boon stresses the abstract nature of this painting, that, as a deviation from the regular, forces beholders to a specific mode of interpretation. This deformed musketeer asks you to look in a different fashion, to step out of your familiar frame of reference, and take over Picasso’s perspective, his particular view on reality. By means of exactly this form of expression he delineates the contradictions and inconsistencies of human beings. Moreover, Picasso provokes reflection on our viewpoints on vitality and other preconceptions and conventions we hold on to, according to Boon.³ It seems quite clear that observation of this painting initially engages us in first order representation. While we perceive the concrete pictural image, we try to find similarities with reality. Due to an obvious lack of this mimetic quality we are pulled toward a meta-level, into second order representation in our quest for meaning. We then assume a perspective on what is represented, which supports our signification.

3. Metacognitive Artistic Play

In a text on videogames it is worth mentioning that literary scholar Brice Heath characterizes art as a specific type of game. She underscores our previous assumption that we need to step outside the frame of what is portrayed, to imagine what the artist herself saw or thought in the art creating - meaning making - process. Such artistic play offers the opportunity to lift the represented actions above the moment to transform them in multiple versions of something else. Brice Heath assumes this metacognitive process is play in more than one way, for it is exactly from this meta-level we are able to observe ourselves as performer, and to control, or to get grip on the scene, and in this very process we learn to improve subsequent mental acts.⁴

Cognitivist Merlin Donald identifies objects of art in themselves also as a cognitive construct, in the sense that they are representations that influence the way not only artists, but art recipients as well perceive the world. Art always aims at a cognitive outcome, designed to engineer a
particular state of mind in the beholder. Metacognition, he claims, is pre-
eminently self-reflection, and art self-reflective: the artistic object - or 
literature, I would like to add - challenges to reflect on the very process that 
created it. And that is on the mind of the artist, and therefore on society she 
emerged from.⁵

4. Games as Sign Systems

In the meantime we can hardly deny that representation of meaning 
construction and metacognition are significant aspects of the artistic 
experience. But what exactly are the typical attributes that trigger these 
aspects? I presuppose that culture texts like literature, art or videogames, are 
better understood with the use of a proper theory of symbols. When we 
signify representations (approached as signs here), without exception we use 
our imagination. If we read a narrative we construct a mental representation 
of occurrences and characters, if we watch a movie we imagine the backstory 
of characters and possible plot turns, if we play a game we imagine being 
somewhere else (in the virtual world), and being someone else (our avatar).

In our signification process we unconsciously use the sign-functions 
icon, symbol and index. References can be established by pictorial similarity 
or identity (icon), by convention or agreement (symbol), or by resemblance 
with a structural coherence, in short, with a theory (index). A common 
definition states that a sign is “something which stands to somebody for 
something else in some respect or capacity”. Thus, an arbitrary object, like a 
letter, a road sign or a photograph is no sign in itself. Furthermore a sign is 
not a thing, but an occurrence: something becomes a sign when somebody 
assigns meaning to it on account of a recognized difference with previous 
representations.⁶ Examination of semiosis offers an effective method to 
comprehend the nature of these differences, to expose subtle nuances in our 
meaning-making process. I will demonstrate the function of sign usage in a 
concise analysis of the role playing game Fable, The Lost Chapters.

5. Meaning-making in Fable

Right after start up an introduction commences, and visuals of the 
game world take turns with the credits, flamboyantly accompanied by 
orchestral sounds. Unmistakably this refers to conventions from the motion-
picture industry with the symbolic notion: attention, await a thrilling story. In 
semiotic terms we can mark the static, two-dimensional wall paintings, 
together with the voice-over, right after the introduction, as dual iconicity: 1. 
as icons the wall paintings offer a tangible visual representation of the game 
space; 2. the narrator’s story as an icon enables us to construct an even more 
extensive mental image of the circumstances in Oakvale. Based on verbal 
narration we visualise the representation, as if we see a film in our mind. In 
an icon the sign and its meaning coincide.
A symbol refers to something else by convention: the idea that a white pigeon refers to peace we only know by agreement, just like we have agreements about language signs. In symbols there is no natural similitude between form and meaning. The (iconical represented) name *Fable* even on itself functions as a symbol, due to its obvious connotation with fairy tales. Van Heusden offers an all-inclusive theory that answers adequately to the capacity that one single representation can produce different sign functions, as we saw in the previous descriptions. An *icon* can also symbolically stand for something else, and furthermore it can refer *indexically* to theoretical structures or models as well. We know that fire is the physical cause of smoke. Although this is a possible indexical interpretation, it is not the essence of it. It is important to acknowledge that the index is especially about identifying essential, structural relations between phenomena: it offers logical or theoretical knowledge.

The most interesting indices in *Fable* are related to characters and their role in the story, and are to be found in quests and subquests. Our Hero encounters a little kid whose posture iconically displays fear and submission. The cause of his anxious behaviour doubtlessly is the big guy in front of him. We see a causal relation here, but it offers a pattern, a theoretical model as well. Somebody seems to behave submissively if he is intimidated by a stronger person. Helping the kid earns you a gold piece. After several similar confrontations we easily grasp the rather unambiguous mechanisms: good deeds are repeatedly rewarded, and bad ones condemned. On top of that, once chosen an evil path, you will develop a demonical appearance. Considering all indices on a meso-level with a moral meaning structure, we end up with a game that seems to aim almost exclusively on ethical values: *Fable* is evidently encouraging stronger awareness of moral and immoral behaviour.

6. Constructing Consciousness and Identity

Although we might feel some feeble indications of it now, it is still not entirely clear in what capacity playing games like *Fable* could turn into an artistic experience. Can we identify conditional attributes like *second order representation* and *metacognition* in *Fable*? If so, their presence and our interaction, our artistic play probably show entirely different qualities than with art and literature. After all, compared to literature, in games we nearly never face preconstructed consciousness, well-defined *fictional minds* of game characters. If we should get involved with fictional minds, it concerns a consciousness we create ourselves in a way. The process of meaning-making that we would perceive is - partly - achieved by ourselves. The freedom or latitude for multiple interpretation depends for a great deal on the choices we make in the game, and on the levels or categories in which we signify aspects of story and play. For example - in solving quests and puzzles - I alternately make an honourable moral decision, then a disgraceful one and so on. Then I
examine in what psychological and physical manner my avatar evolves, which on a meta-level enables me to track down the specific game-grammar, and the intentions of the game designer. At the same time however I could get mentally involved with an alter ego I really disapprove, but which is nevertheless a construct of my own choices and decisions.

It is obvious we can identify metacognitive processes in the previous description. Playing videogames involves playing with meaning and meaning construction, but apparently with identity construction as well. From the three identities James Paul Gee distinguishes within a gamer, the most interesting one is the projective identity, implying two different meanings of the word project: 1. to project specific values and desires on the virtual character (not necessarily similar to our desires in the real world); 2. the project of the making of that character that gets shaped to the particular creature the gamer wants it to become. According to Gee this strive for identity projection is so much forceful that gamers regularly redo a given fight scene, because they feel they “have let their character down”. This ‘responsible’ conduct even occurs in first-person shooters (fps) like Halo, Quake, and Unreal, in which the gamer usually can choose nor influence his avatar.

De Mul adds a substantially different view with his concept of ludic identity formation, a process in which we identify with the literal and metaphorical space of possibilities in the game. While gaming we gradually embody essential key rules, and the infinity of parallel possibilities, and in this very process our own identity changes as well. This assumed parallelism seems on par with the multiplicity of artistic interpretations, induced by literature and art. De Mul also points out the tendency towards discordance and the absence of closure in videogames, which is more and more widely desired by gamers and critics. I just refer to the success of the so-called sandbox games like Grand Theft Auto, The Elder Scrolls and Fall Out, to acknowledge this evolution. Because games structure (our concept of) the world and (our concept of) ourselves, according to De Mul gaming is a metacognitive, meta-reflexive process that, due to our stronger emotional engagement is even more thorough and fundamental than in stories.

7. Conclusion

We can reasonably conclude that it is not the aesthetic appearance - the iconical imagery - that defines the artfulness of videogames. In fact, I suspect it is exactly this wrongfully conceived preconception that causes the most common reason to credit games their assumed artistic qualities. Actually the artfulness of games seems closely related to the various modes in which the game story refers to reality, and prompts meta-reflection. We define the artistic nature by its content and by what it refers to. Whereas unusual occurrences in literature arouse meta-reflection, in games this is triggered by the outcome of our own choices. We continually signify the
consequence of a decision after resolving a quest or puzzle, and compare this particular outcome to all other imaginable alternatives. Did we choose well? Does this outcome lead to the imagined course of the story, or to a desired state of our character? From a meta-level we are able to observe ourselves as performer, and in a reciprocal action with ideological or ethical content we are free to choose the particular issues to reflect on. In this very process we seem to shape ourselves in the mirror our avatar is holding out in front of us. It somehow appears to me this is not miles away from what art and literature aim at. In the end it will nevertheless always depend on the eagerness and imaginative urge and aptitude of gamers to engage in this kind of artistic, meta-reflexive thinking. Which is of course not self-evident, considering we are dealing with videogames here, intended and appreciated in the first place for the enjoyment they provide.

Notes


Bibliography


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Anthropology of Accessibility:
The Perceptual Problems of Human-Computer Interactions

Anna Maj and Michal Derda-Nowakowski

Abstract
One of the most important problems which appeared in the computer mediated civilisation is the usability of content for people with limited abilities of perception and interaction. Digital communication has shown all inconveniences of hitherto prevailing 'interfaces to knowledge' and of communication devices in the range of their usability and accessibility. Traditional ergonomics ensured comfort of using the devices mainly to users without disabilities. The Net revealed the existence of the vast global community of disabled people who wants to come out of the ghetto of their own dysfunctions and participate in other communities. The Internet is often the only chance to cross the barriers of this specific exclusion. The Web design should take into account the aspect of various disabilities of the users. There exist both formal and informal instructions of accessible design. In some milieu of designers of interfaces and internet applications and content managers publishing of content and materials which are accessible is even a sign of 'good manners'. Therefore, there is a grassroots discourse of accessibility, which is conditioned socially. It is often contradictory to the discourse of global corporations, embodying their own non-standardised solutions. The struggle of the 'able-bodied' community for the accessibility of the content for people with dysfunctions of perception is a new form of global thinking about creation and maintenance of communication standards. It is often connected with the generation of open access to the content referring to Creative Commons licenses and technologies of Open Source. The paper analyses some procedures of improving the effectiveness of communication and interaction with computer in the process of web designing. It shows some examples of community initiatives connected with accessibility and everyday problems of disabled people. Ideologists and designers of usability and accessibility within the range of human-computer interaction are precursors of this new way of thinking about the needs of online communities which are aiming at the 'noble simplicity' enabling to encode complicated symbolic content - simplicity. Usability understood in this way exceeds the limitations of political correctness with its compulsory necessity of double coding and decoding of meanings. Such anthropological situation may become a natural bridge between the world of those who can see and those who are blind or other communities with limited access to the content.

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Ideologists and designers of usability and accessibility within the range of human-computer interaction are precursors of the new way of thinking about the needs of online communities which are aiming at the 'noble simplicity' enabling to encode complicated symbolic content - simplexity. Usability understood in this way exceeds the limitations of political correctness with its compulsory necessity of double coding and decoding of meanings. Such anthropological situation may become a natural bridge between the world of those who can see and those who are blind or other communities with limited access to the content. The reflection on the roles of mechanisms of social content-generation and visualisations of communication obstacles, both on-line and off-line, is necessary. There are various artistic and scientific projects, which resulted in real changes of architectural solutions or development of their accessibility.

The change in accessibility in symbolic and mediated communication is also a chance for revolution in thinking about the physical space. Thus, the Net impacts not only the architecture of information but also the architecture in traditional meaning. This way of thinking about the Network, communities and the new ergonomics of communication is therefore a kind of introduction to the reflection on new society lacking communication obstacles and on further evolution of humans connected to the computer, active in social terms due to technological interfaces and independent of limitations stemming from biology or traditionally understood dysfunctions.

In both perceiving and visually representing the natural organisation of objects, we are supported by the mind's powerful ability to detect and form patterns. With matters of the visual mind, the school of Gestalt psychology is particularly relevant. Gestalt psychologists believe that there are a variety of mechanisms inside the brain that lend to pattern-forming. [...] Humans are organisation animals. We can't help but to group and categorise what we see. [...] The principles of Gestalt to seek the most appropriate conceptual 'fit' are important not only for survival, but lie at the very heart of the discipline of design.
John Maeda, a new media artist, researcher and designer develops his narration about simplicity and design telling the story of development of iPod menu - its three phases: the first model of the interface (a jog dial with four buttons located circularly around), its complication into four buttons and a jog dial (separated) and simplification (integrated into one scroll dial). The last step - simplification led to its limits - provoked both the commercial success and marked new trends of interface design. It should be noticed here that this kind of simplicity contribute to economise maximally the activities of the user. Most often such a design is favourable for a contemporary user. However, this kind of usability is not so simple to use. Maeda shows the example of good quality design failure on the level of the user inability to use the device. He recalls his brother-in-law's lack of competencies in using the newest iPod just after getting it as a Christmas present. This situation can be regarded as a result of design which demands from the user the knowledge of the previous interfaces and the ability to manipulate them.

Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) is in fact a kind of cultural competence. Being one of the most important abilities in contemporary information society, paradoxically it is not taught anywhere; a user needs to acquire the knowledge by himself. There are no ideal interfaces - as we still need to 'learn machines' - but the good ones are stemming from the specific patterns of culture. Machines are learning these paradigms but also teach them to us, becoming the interpreters of humanity. This is the part of cyborgisation of culture, described as early as in 1964 by Marshall McLuhan in his classical idea of the extensions of man.2

The fundamental problem arising in cybertulture in the context of human and machine interactions was symbolically captured by an anthropologist, Michael Wesch, in the title of his popular YouTube film: The Machine is Using Us3. Therefore, the question of designing interfaces and devices regarding the users' needs and abilities is not marginal. The report of Pew Internet and American Life Project indicates that the presence of older generations in Internet is lower than the young (over half of Internet users is between 18 and 44 years old) - but within 10 years (with ageing boomers generation) the situation may change.

The biggest increase in Internet use since 2005 can be seen in the 70-75 year-old age group. While just over one-fourth (26%) of 70-75 year olds were online in 2005, 45% of that age group is currently online. [...] Instant messaging, social networking and blogging have gained ground as communications tools, but email remains the most popular online activity, particularly among older Internet users. Fully 74% of Internet users age 64 and older send and
receive email, making email the most popular online activity for this age group.4

The problem of cultural competencies in human-computer interactions is central to contemporary design, which needs to be the anthropology as well. Sometimes users' activity crosses the imagination of the designer. That was the case of Nasza-klasa.pl [Our-Class.pl] - Polish social networking website similar to Classmates - where a person who wanted to become a new user had to ask directly the website designers to broaden the age categories for potential users. The given categories were prepared for the users aged up to 90, whereas the asking person was 95 years old.5 The two young designers did not predict in their economy of thinking about human-computer interaction that also this age group can perform such an activity as social networking. This situation lets us suggest that web design is mainly directed to young people, which seems to be logical regarding the Pew Internet research quoted above but possibly is not a good rule for the next decade. Thus, web design should develop in the direction of diversification of the potential users.

There are of course such interfaces as smart homes, which support the users, especially aged and with disabilities, but these are not only pure interfaces but also habitats. HCI design is de facto the problem of technological imagination concerning target groups. It depends on multiple functionalities built in the interface. The idea of usability of interfaces is at the moment one of the most significant matters within the ideology of 'proper design'.

Functionalities of interfaces and the necessity of usability are the ideas connected with anthropological problems of Web 2.0 design. In fact, the rules of HCI are a kind of web design savoir-vivre and cultural competencies. Designers in a form of ritualised competition watch each other in order to maintain the standards of usability and develop more user-friendly interfaces. From the anthropological perspective, we can see in this process both the patterns of culture drifting into the direction of political correctness and 'the battle for standards'. One of the main assumptions of design 2.0 is separation of content, appearance and user's behaviour. This separation makes websites more accessible to users and more visible for bots of search engines. These are issues located between creative thinking and social practices connected with technology standards. It is a vast territory for quality research on humans in cyberspace.

Usability was born in Bauhaus as a mental concept for modernist humankind. It shifted from habitat architecture to architecture of information. New media art searches for new opportunities to diagnose abilities of human body and mind in the context of machines. This basic assumption leads to the conclusion that a technology user is also a participant and this is a new
perceptual paradigm. Creative process becomes an interaction design area where the needs of various social groups are transformed into artistic objects.

The prehistory of HCI can be traced back not only in engineering but also in artistic works of Nam June Paik, Bill Viola, Christa Sommerer, Laurent Mignonneau and others. The good example here is David Rokeby's work, *Very Nervous System*, which was described as adding new meaning to the term 'interactivity'.

The active ingredient of the work is its interface. The interface is unusual because it is invisible and very diffuse, occupying a large volume of space, whereas most interfaces are focused and definite. Though diffuse, the interface is vital and strongly textured through time and space. The interface becomes a zone of experience, of multidimensional encounter. The language of encounter is initially unclear, but evolves as one explores and experiences. The installation is a complex but quick feedback loop. The feedback is not simply 'negative' or 'positive', inhibitory or reinforcing; the loop is subject to constant transformation as the elements, human and computer, change in response to each other. The two interpenetrate, until the notion of control is lost and the relationship becomes encounter and involvement. [...] The installation could be described as a sort of instrument that you play with your body but that implies a level of control, which I am not particularly interested in. I am interested in creating a complex and resonant relationship between the interactor and the system.

*Very Nervous System* is the interactive circuit, which may be seen as a beyond-language conversation of human and computer. It is very similar to contemporary systems, which enable controlling computer with the eye movement or body gestures without VR equipment. Various inventions concerning the use of brain waves to control interfaces, even 3D virtual environment of Second Life, have been developed for several years in multiple research centres (e.g. Keio University). Such technologies can serve Internet users with movement disabilities helping them to control computer and interact with other Internet users. But what is also important is the social networking of people with disabilities.

Antoni Abad, a Spanish artist, founded Zexe.net website. It is an artistic project connecting various groups of marginalised people from different cities, e.g. Gypsies, prostitutes, taxi drivers, etc. One part of the website, called *Canal Accessible, serves people with movement disabilities
who create their own wikimap of Barcelona where they mark all places in the city space which are not accessible for people on wheel chairs. The users are documenting their work with photographs taken with mobile phone cameras.

In fact, this is not only the common map of physical obstacles in their daily life, but also a communication canal for discussions on various themes and a kind of exhibition area showing their problems to other Internet users. This work can be defined as a space for creating the discourse of marginalised groups. Such wikimap, being the user-generated content service, is not only the interface of HCI, but also of social symbolic relations helping to redefine the meaning of the real space.

HCI is connected strongly with researches on the perceptual apparatus and cognitive process. It results in the emergence of completely new ideas concerning possible ways of perceiving. New inventions and interfaces of totally new types have been created for people with sight or hearing impairment. Some of such interfaces are based on the idea of the replacement of senses. The vOICe is Peter Meijer's project stemming from the concept of seeing with ears. Device is a kind of a scanner mounted in spectacles, connected with headphones and completed by the software processing the optical signals and changing them into the soundscape. The volume represents the brightness of objects with continuous monitoring of the close environment.

Roberto Manduchi develops similar but still completely different project. His electronic cane is a kind of assistive technology device, which uses laser beam and spatial sensors. It finds obstacles in space, measures the distance, depth and size of objects and informs the user about it via the sound interface. The prototype tester, Lucia Florez, confirms the invention being intuitive and compares it to 'skin perception'. Both inventions are based on sensory substitution but perform it differently. It should be noticed here that the ideas are simple but to reach this simplicity the technology needs to be complex. Therefore, the design for people with visual impairments needs to blend both, complexity and simplicity - the previously mentioned simplexity.

Concluding, the result of the process of interfaces design for people without disabilities is augmented perception, even if we think only about the level of symbolic communication and the extensions of body and mind. But the final effect of designing interfaces for people with disabilities is first and foremost the process of reducing perceptual deficiency and sensory substitution. This can be regarded as a process parallel to media convergence - sensorial convergence. Derrick de Kerckhove, rethinking Marshall McLuhan, concludes:

There is clearly more to design than containment and seduction. In a very large sense, design plays a metaphorical
role, translating functional benefits into sensory and cognitive modalities. Design finds its shape and its place as a kind of overtone, as an echo of technology. Design often echoes the specific character of technology and corresponds to its basic pulse. Being the visible, audible or textural outer shape of cultural artifacts, design emerges as what can be called the "skin of culture".11

The contemporary 'skin of culture' seems to be hybrid: design means at the same time screenology, projecting interactions and augmenting perception. The design, which Derrick de Kerckhove was writing about in middle 90's, was concentrated on the shape and appearance of things and objects. Today, design is mainly projecting a user's experience, behaviours and feelings. It is closer to body and mind, develops cognitive processes and, in fact, programs a new user. Thus, it can be called the 'skin of a user' - which is taking us back to Marshall McLuhan thought12, but in the completely new cultural context.

Notes

8 Canal *Accessible, URL: <http://www.zexe.net/BARCELONA>.
12 McLuhan, op. cit., p. 47.

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PART V

Social Pressures in Virtual Worlds
Social Nature of Time and Space in Online Games: Designing Fantastic Social Worlds

Goknur Bostancı Ege and Nicholas Koullapis

Abstract
This paper is concerned with the dimensions of time and space of multi player online games along with the perspectives of both sociology and game design. We will analyse the time and space in these game worlds with regard to the illustrations from The World of Warcraft which came on the scene in 2004 and presently has 11 million players all over the world. We are examining both what players see on user interface and what is going on behind in computer space, comparing the time and space of the game with other games of the same genre and analysing social aspects of these game worlds. Our motivation in challenging such a problematic is that online games emerge as a social phenomenon that affects millions of people’s lives and constitute their own social environments for their online players.

Key Words: MMORPGs, Virtual Worlds, Time and Space Distanciation, Complexity Theory, World of Warcraft, Digital Divide, Net Generation.

1. Introduction
The phenomenon of online games has come into consideration for several disciplines with the extensive growth of MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games) and the increase in the number of players joining these virtual worlds. Despite the digital divide, there are crucial alterations in human experience of time and space with the creation of new social worlds by ICTs at least for who has access to them. This research is based on our observations in game (mainly Warcraft) and the social environments on the net related to the game such as forums and guild sites and it is also based on our interviews with the game players.

2. Who are MMORPG Players?
Although the player profile may change according to different MMORPGs, one can get pretty accurate information after decent participant observation. The general misconception of regarding computer games as children’s and teenagers’ spare time activity is shaken when you see players from 10 years old to people who are in their 30s and 40s playing together. Whoever you are in actual space and time, you are a Night Elf, Orc, Dwarf, Undead or whatever race you choose as your toon in the game. Your age is
less important compared to your playing talents, your raid experience, your attitudes towards the community and your gear (Warcraft, players, like in most MMORPGs, have one tangible objective: the improvement of their onscreen avatar. This is accomplished by acquisition of ‘gear’ (armour) and by improving their “level”, both increase their stats and thus survivability, and generally allows the player to see more of the game content).

MMORPG players are in large scale of the ages. They are from different cultures. They are living different parts of the world. However, one distinctive characteristic they share is they are individuals who have access, and have closer relationship with the Information and Communication Technologies. There are handicaps like: poverty, poor telecommunication infrastructure, and state censorship for some countries and ICTs are not available or equally available for the whole world population. This is called as digital gap or digital divide and has been put on the agenda by international organisations like The United Nations and the OECD. These are barriers to enter these virtual worlds. Language is another barrier. For example, Warcraft realms include English, German, French, Spanish and Russian. However, Turkish, Italian or Greek are not included in the list.

Another characteristic of these players is generally having good relationship with ICTs. Developments in the computer technology have been accelerated during the period following the invention of the transistor and integrated circuit in electronics that made possible the production of smaller, faster, cheaper handy computers more accessible by larger number of users than before. However, in 1980s computer use grew immensely widespread. During this time some computer models such as Sinclair, Commodore 64, Amstrad, and Atari…etc, have become famous as personal game computers. Children have got acquainted with the computer technology and computer games have become popular and prevalent spare time activities of youth.

This group following Generation X has been called as the Net-generation sometimes they called also as Generation Y. They were more comfortable and have closer relationship with computers than their parents do. Tapscott considers “Net as the antithesis of TV and the N-Generation as the antithesis of the TV generation in many ways.” Game worlds were different from TV as Turkle pointed out, and they created something you do instead of creating passive watchers. Playing a game is not only about sitting in front of a screen and watching but it is also about being part of it. That was a shift in our time and space experience towards a virtual presence.

3. **Different Time and Space Experiences: Imaginary Worlds**

Time and space are not only the matters of geography or physics but are also socially constructed notions. Durkheim points out that time and space are of the essential notions that have been called by philosophers as the categories of understanding since Aristotle. We seem unable to think of
objects that are not in time or space. Time is almost unthinkable without references that we create like years, months, weeks, days and hours. We have created references for space as well, there is no north or south, no right or left, no below or above in the universe but space is conceived by these categories which are created through collective experience rather than the individual one. Durkheim is not the only sociologist who dealt with time and space. Urry provides a short history of the notions of time and space in sociological thought in his work and claims that space should be central to sociology. Hence, time and space experiences and conceptions are related to one’s social environment and change according to cultures. Nevertheless, people have similar boundaries of geography and physics in real life. For example, you can only move forward to the future if you wait enough, but you cannot go back in time. Elimination of these boundaries is possible in the “dream space” that exists in novels, stories, pictures, movies, etc. or in the imaginations or dreams of an individual.

However, playing online games is different from reading a novel, watching a movie or dreaming. When you enter this kind of game world, you cannot take your physical body with you but you experience a disembodied entrance to a different world. Your feelings, thoughts and reactions regarding other people are indeed real in the sense that you are aware of the existence of your addressee on the other side of the line.

4. Reality Discourse: “It is more Real than Real World!”

The dichotomy of real and virtual, like in the other social worlds of cyberspace, leads to a conception that the imaginary and nonphysical worlds of online games are not real. This idea is supported by the disembodiment of the cyberspace. It is also very common among online game players to use the term “real” with the abbreviation IRL (in real life) for the subjects related to their offline life. However, the interviews with Warcraft players indicate that the social and emotional reactions towards other players like the anger during an argument with another player, shared pleasure of a success, the social and emotional reactions towards the attitudes of loyalty/betrayal, benevolence/selfishness, conformity/contravention, etc, and the time and space of the game, experienced in high level reality. A Warcraft player states: “This is a fantasy world, there is nowhere like Azeroth in the universe but what we share socially in this world is real”. Another Warcraft player stated that his heart was beating like a racing horse while fighting against an important boss in a high level raid. Impossibility for the body to enter computer space or disembodiment of cyberspace does not make the body independent from social or non social worlds created by ICTs. Although the body cannot infiltrate into this world, it is affected by what is going on there (heart beatings). Jakobsson describes experiential reality of a game:
It’s just a game. In a VW sticks and stones can’t break my bones, but this does not mean that I not would take notice of an angry mob trying to stone me or beat me up with their sticks. My mind and my emotions are present and virtual actions can work as the cause to effects on my mental state that are as real as anything you can experience in the physical world.\(^7\)

In some cases, players even can lose the boundary between real world and virtual world. An Age of Wonders player has said that after playing the game for a long time when she went out, she has perceived for a second the soldiers on guard duty in front of General Staff Chief Office as the soldiers in the game. Another player who is playing Warcraft has told that while he was intending to ask the price of a box of chocolates in real life “how much gold” came out of his mouth. Online game worlds like Warcraft are imaginary worlds but they are beyond the imagination.

5. **Time-Space and MMORPGs**

While the social space of Warcraft is created in the game world, it actually transcends this space. You have forums, fan sites, guild web sites where members can post pictures of themselves, talk about the game, as well as their ups and downs. MMORPGs connect a great number of individuals living in different parts the world within a game and on the internet, thus providing a dynamic and complex communication occasion. Complex systems are characterized by, large number of interactions among large number of components, self-organization, adaptive dynamic structure, nonlinearity, feedbacks among elements.\(^8\) All these characteristics of complex systems can be seen both in computer space and social space of the MMORPGs. There are large numbers of players and large numbers of interactions among them. The social organizations in the game world represent self-organization and positive feedbacks. The communication medium itself, in which these games exist, represents the characteristics of dynamic complex systems:

The Internet can be understood as a system that is far from equilibrium at several levels. The “energy” that is perpetually being dissipated through the system includes not only the constant movement of electrons through circuits; it can also be understood as the information that perpetually flows through the Net.\(^9\)

One can see even the signs of deterministic chaos in the social organizations of the game. While great effort may not result in aggregation to set two raid
groups (2x40), a huge PvP raid over 100 men can be started unpredictably by a weak whisper. On the other hand, this complexity in computer space can cause technical problems. Large number of interactions will result in heavy information traffic in computer space. Hence, the use of zones allows the server to handle all these players, the “load”, in a much more efficient fashion. If you cannot handle the load in an efficient manner, the players can find themselves experiencing lag in the world, disconnecting from the world or not being able to connect to the world at all. All these lead to an unpleasant play experience. Still, connecting large number of people and allowing their presence for each other through Internet alters our time and space experience.

Giddens exposes how time and space relation has changed in modern societies: it is impossible to define any social event without thinking of time and space altogether. “No one could tell the time of day without reference to other socio spatial markers: “when” was almost universally connected with “where”10. However, this relation has changed with the uniformity in the social organization of the time. For pre-modern cultures social life was mostly dominated by ‘presence.’ “The advent of modernity increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between “absent” others, locationally distant from any given face-to-face interaction.”11 Modernity produced mechanisms for the disembedding of social systems which means “lifting out” of social relations from local contexts12 and it accelerates the ‘time and space distanciation’. This analysis of time and space is quite significant for the worlds provided by ICTs that enable interactions with those who are physically absent.

The law of proximity of Gestalt theory states; spatially closer elements are perceived as a group.13 This perception reflects the reality for social relations based on direct interaction. Whoever is closer spatially is more expected to be socially close. Today one can be socially closer to a spatially distant person than his/her neighbour who is closer in time and space. However, in a game world like Warcraft social proximity still depends on proximity in the time and space of the game. Being in a same realm, same guild or even questing (the primary conveyor of the narrative and levelling mechanic) in same area of the game world generally prepares the required conditions for social relationships.

In the universe of bits, game worlds create their own perceptions of time and space both spatially and socially. Game realms have conceptions related to time and space like landforms, day and night circles, seasons, climate, aging, and travel in time, etc. A graphical game world provides embodiment to some degree. Emoticons work as a body language in text based environments. In a graphical world like Warcraft you can use emotes as body language. These are visual animations of laugh, cry, hug, kiss, love etc. This visual and virtual embodiment enables a kind of presence availability as it is about being there. You can come in contact with a player
Social Nature of Time and Space in Online Games

at one of the places like Auction House, a city square or an inn in the game world. You see other players who are in the same place running, standing, sitting around you and the “target of the target” option lets you know who is looking at you. This virtual presence availability works just as being in a same place in the offline world. All these indicate how being in the same world is socially important for the time and space design of a MMORPG. Creating a multi player online game world is also creating a social world.

6. Creating a Game World:
Creating a game world is all about making choices. A game world can be anything your imagination can conjure up. As such the possibilities can be overwhelming. What can the players do in this world? What kind of community do you wish to appeal to with this world? Is it a large or a small world? Is the world open plan (for example like World of Warcraft)? Is it “zoned/instanced” (for example like Age of Conan or Everquest)? Is it narrative driven? Is it abstract? Is it a graphical world or a text-based space?

Players would prefer more realistic time and space for better gaming experience. Game environments should give the feeling of a living world. Creatures; the Mobile elements of the environment (Mob) and Non Player Characters (NPC), should be designed not only with a mob model, a simple pathing algorithm, and a respawn timer but also with spirited features. Aarseth remarks the non-real world aspects of the Azeroth in World of Warcraft such as “cartoonism, lack of depth and ease for traversal” and lack of personalization compared to Everquest II where players can play on facial details and furnish their own apartments etc. These differences are based on the time and space design of the game.

There are two principle ways in space design of a game world. One is to create the space as seamless world. Here, the players can explore the world in whatever way they see fit. Game worlds can be seen to be split into categories called “zones” (A zone is an area of space where certain events transpire e.g. a forest, a town, a village or a city zone) However, all the players are in the same world, rather than in different “instances”. They travel from one zone to another without the need for any loading just like in real life people travel from one part of London to another. The loading of data in a seamless world, is handled behind the scenes, using a technique called “dynamic load balancing”. Here, the server dedicates more resources to the zone where more players are.

Dynamic load balancing:

1. Has seamless terrain (you can see the horizon).
2. Has boundaries that are not physical (monsters chasing you don’t get stuck at zone edges).
3. Balances the load better.
It’s an example of where technology imposes constraints. For fixed load balancing, zones can be created with greater individuality. The physical barriers between them allow for radical change […] For a seamless world, sudden changes have to make more sense or they will seem out of place.¹⁵

A seamless world creates a greater sense of immersion in the player. They can jump on their horse and ride from one forest into mountains, across rivers, into cities, in a seamless fashion. However, this is a slight illusion. The game mechanics keep the player confined to various zones or quest areas.

Since players will not have a chance of survival if an enemy is of a significantly higher level compared to the player, they are confined to the zones around their level, to do “quests” and kill monsters until their level outgrows the challenges of their current zone.

The other technique for space design is to use of instancing. An instance is a copy of something, in this case the game world; let us call it “Gameland”. The server holds all the data of the game world: graphics, music, objects, etc. However, here all the players do not log into the same game world. The server is told that each instance can hold 100 players. Thus, the first 100 players log on and go into “Gameland”. Then 100 more players log on and the server creates a copy or instance lets call it “Gameland #1 players log into that. They can communicate through chat channels, but a player in Gameland will not see a player in Gameland#1. This system is employed by several mainstream MMORPGS, like Everquest II, and Age of Conan. One feature that separates these two from World of Warcraft is their visual quality is vastly more photorealistic.

And, time can be represented in a game world in two different ways. One is to use of an artificial representation of time; the other is to use real-time. Everquest II does use its own, internal clock to represent time. A day in Norrath can pass in a matter of hours, and a player experiences several days in the space of one real day. Age of Conan also employs this system. Real-time in virtual worlds is like that: a minute in Azeroth is a minute in your world. When it is 9:00 pm in London, it is 10:00 pm in Azeroth (allowing for the +1hr time difference since the Blizzard server is based in France). This lends itself to a more realistic representation of time, without any significant drawbacks. A game world is an imaginative time and space design, yet paradoxically it should be realistic at the same time.

Designers, and the code they construct, go a long way toward making a virtual world real. They fill it with objects and spaces, properties and behaviors. Sometimes they create imaginative scenes only found in science fiction or fantasy. Other times they help mirror the offline world by creating
The time and space design of a MMORPG should use the potential of imagination to tear down the boundaries of physical world and also should use the references of the real world to improve the sense of reality.

7. Conclusion

Obviously, the time and space design of a multi-player online game is crucial for the social relationships in game. For these game players, unity of the social world of the game is as important as the aesthetic and realistic aspects of the visual materials. A Warcraft player says: “If you prefer to play alone, what is the reason for playing a multi player online game?” This idea represents that the game world is not only considered as a gaming space but also as a social space by the players. And, the reality discourse on the game world seems to be intensively based on the friendships and social bonds built up within social environments of the game. MMORPGs enable the player to participate to the story, play a role while having fun, and socialize at the same time. These games, unlike TV, provide both the chance to build up social relationships and the possibility of participation the story on the screen.

The increase in the number of MMORPG players is possibly related to the rise in the number of people who have closer relation with ICTs. Net generation is getting older. The children of late 70s and early 80s are in their middle ages today. This generation has grown up with computer games. They want to participate to the story. Internet is not only an ICT to surf on the web, to get information or to communicate, but it is also a tool for entertainment and multi player online games seem to be candidates to become one of the main elements of the future entertainment.

Notes

11 Ibid, p. 18.

**Bibliography**


**Goknur Bostanci Ege**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at Department of Sociology, Ege University and **Nicholas Koullapis**, Game Designer.
Web Based Authorship in the Context of User Generated Content: An Analysis of a Turkish Web Site: Eksi Sozluk

Burak Dogu, Zehra Ziraman and D. Emrah Ziraman

Abstract
Recent developments in the Internet technology have offered various formations online, many of which can be brought together in the frame of Web 2.0. Among these, some applications have put the user on the foreground, placing him/her to a fairly active position. In that manner Eksi Sozluk (www.eksisozluk.com), one of the most popular web sites in Turkey, has attracted attention as an output of online collaboration. 1 It’s described as ‘a collaborative hypertext dictionary based on the concept of web sites built upon user contribution’ (Turkish Daily News Web site, 14th August 2006) enabling its users to express themselves in different ways. Although there are some similar (but different on a larger scale) worldwide web site formations, Eksi Sozluk is still unique with its format. This paper locates Eksi Sozluk among these other forms of online web applications via drawing the frame of its functions. Although it has emerged as a database with the catch-phrase ‘sacred source of knowledge’, it is used in a sense of a blog diary and a web forum at the same time. In this study, attributes of authors are examined for the reason why they contribute to such community by reproducing texts.

Key Words: Authorship, User-Generated Content, Eksi Sozluk, Web Community.

1. Introduction
In the circumstances of open society, lifestyle and social relations of new media user have changed. That is to say, people are influenced by the others’ opinions and the written texts are mostly created in a wide frame of references. Regarding this network style of communication, virtual spaces are constructed to the extent that some particular patterns of daily life are transferred. Especially in the manner of social relationships, this process of transfer can be clearly observed on interactive collaborative activities.

One of the collaborative works which require the active participation of high numbers of users is Eksi Sozluk.2 With its distinct structure, Eksi Sozluk as a part of the active web environment has become a reproductive basis of popular culture in Turkey. This fact can be readily noticed when the ‘entries’, a term which is used by the users (Eksi Sozluk users) to refer to the written texts of authors, are examined on the web site. This web site can be regarded as a place in which daily social practices are transferred with
Turkish cultural habits.

Since Eksi Sozluk is a web community service created by its authors, their attitudes, perceptions and behaviours constitute the main subject matter for this study. That being the case, the reasons driving the authors to continue writing were surveyed from the authorship perspective. The matters like their motives of participation in Eksi Sozluk, the meaning of being an author in that community, the period of time they spend for writing were also dealt by reviews.

2. **Eksi Sozluk**

Eksi Sozluk is a web site founded by an employee of Microsoft Corporation, Sedat Kapanoglu in 1999. In the beginning the web site was open to everyone. Then, enrollments began with a variety of criteria for the increasing interest. Enrollment periods to the dictionary and the criteria of acceptance are changeable. For instance, a first must for the authors belonging to the 5th and 7th generations was to send some used books to the small library of a village school. But, there were no such obligations for the 9th and the 10th generations and they have waited for a too long time to become an author. The *newcomers* of the mentioned generations have been accepted as authors on the birthday of the founder.

The ever-changing statistical data give idea on the web site. The number of authors involving the 11 generations is about 22,000 and the total number of users is 192,579. And there are 8,088,612 entries under 1,486,388 titles.

Authorship is a designation depending on the moderation approval and there are some different categories of Eksi Sozluk for users other than authors. These user profiles can be revealed under the following categories of newcomers; newcomers awaiting approval, registered readers, moderation, informers, predators and habitats.

3. **The Concept of Authorship**

We know that the need for the ‘characterization of each text with its author’ emerged with modernity. Earlier, it wasn’t an essential association about the content. Thus, authorship started to be shaped through interaction with the beginning of the 20th century. Today, it gradually loses significance to verify the source of information flow. What we call ‘text’ has turned into an unstable and dynamic form.

In current social networks, the acts of author and reader are intertwined. Authors are no more a representatives of a certain motive, since they have a relative anonymity. On the other hand, since the reader is positioned in an active role, arguments can be considered as they are referring to the empowerment of reader as a contributor. We should note that the
Authorship is the traditional sense has changed with the new utilities of the Web and has recently created the ‘web authorship’ concept through interactivity. Though the traditional relation between the author and text has also changed. Authorship of user-generated content differs from the traditional practices of authorship and covers the readership specialities. It enables the user to participate in the content actively both as an author and a reader. And it is possible to combine the activities of these two roles just by being a member of the network.

On the web sites like wikis, in which the user participates mostly by reading, texts are intertwined and the content is open for editing to other authors. On the wiki web sites, the private status of the author and the originality of the content are questionable. In some cases, the author is not more than an organizer of the content. Because the author contributes by composing informative essays on the subjects collaboratively, the name and the characteristics of the author remain in the background. On the other hand, on blogs, contributors may let their proper names or user names to be displayed under the submitted content.

Eksi Sozluk is an online dictionary involving entries listed in an item type format. Under each of their entries, authors have nicknames as their trademarks. The most important rule for writing in this ‘loose’ dictionary form is to write the first sentence of each entry as a description or at least give information on the title in question. Author has a total freedom of speech (including usage of slang and swearing) at the rest of the entry. The entries are consist of anecdotes, essays, descriptive information, related memories and any kind of empirical information. This is where the genuineness of Eksi Sozluk comes from.

Eksi Sozluk is open to regular readers only for exploring its content. The hypertext structure enables them to jump between the numerous descriptions just by clicking the hyperlinked words, names or expressions without following a continuous line. The entries including hypertexts both can be in accordance with each other and provide continuity under a certain title. The interactive searching facility also brings a dynamism to the reading practice.

The speciality of Eksi Sozluk among other collaborative web communities also comes from its text based content. There are no avatars or images describing a title and author. This is notable for the authors, because it is very similar to the traditional practices of authorship.

Eksi Sozluk gives no guarantee for the reliability of the information it contains. The motto ‘sacred source of information’ inholds some level of irony on this subject. But it doesn’t mean that these subjective information are incorrect, it just makes them impossible to be confirmed. Some authors
write informative and comprehensive entries that are possible to be published as scientific papers, but at the same time they are free to write about the reason why they like the lyrics of a song. The most important issue is the writing skills and authenticity. The general structure of Eksi Sozluk is informal, but there are no restrictions on the formal entries.

Authors are more than just users contributing to the web site. They are able to get feedback for their entries and to communicate using the instant messaging facility. Also with the extensional sites such as ek$ibition or sourberry, authors become able to experience the other forms of online socialization facilities. They can participate to the meetings that are arranged in real life to establish personal contacts. These options make Eksi Sozluk more than just a virtual community.

In his work *The Virtual Community*, Rheingold asks if CMC [Computer Mediated Communication] is a publishing medium or a communication service or an informal public space. Perhaps Eksi Sozluk can be taken both as a publishing medium and an informal public space. Approaching from the first definition, Eksi Sozluk can be seen as a multi-dimentional social platform enabling its users to express their opinions. The entries are chronologically ordered to provide its users to make entries considering the former texts. The latest entry stays on the top and it is this chronological format that gives Eksi Sozluk its blog-like appearance. By this structure, discussions are promoted especially in up-to-date events. The second approach drives forward the social aspects of Eksi Sozluk. As it is an open source for discussions, Eksi Sozluk draws the line of an informal space. This point of view settles dictionary users as a community which builds up a public opinion.

4. Methodology & Findings

While conducting the research, both participant observation and in-depth analysis methods were applied to set forth the specifications of Eksi Sozluk and figure out the attributes of its users. First stage of the research was about proceeding the user observations. Two authors of this paper are already members of Eksi Sozluk, yet they participated deeply to get details about the user modules of the web site and user behaviours. (We shall note that most of the modules are closed to the access of regular users.) In the second part of the research, in-depth reviews were conducted. A variety of authors - including ssg, the founder of Eksi Sozluk - were interviewed to get idea about their usage habits.

The participants who were interviewed usually spend one to eight hours daily on Eksi Sozluk. This period is limited to the time remaining from daily routines. However, while being online, almost every participant spends much of it on Eksi Sozluk. But, the ratio of the time spent for reading/writing
cannot be precisely defined. After all, we know that each writer is essentially a good reader.

Reading activities are common to the participants especially in the manner of following the entries of another writer. So it can be said that, reading the texts of favoured authors is among the priorities of users. One of the participants nicknamed *likeaprayer*, defined the reason to follow a specific writer as keeping an eye on the agenda, so that she can be informed of up-to-date events without watching television or reading newspapers.

We observed that while writing, participants mostly prefer giving opinions on their personal interests. But interests within Eksi Sozluk have a very wide scope. For instance, two unrelated titles like ‘evolutionary theory’ or ‘men obsessed with the name Zeynep’ can be regarded as area of interests. Some participants define the limit of interests by their professions and others by their immediate attention on various topics.

There are a lot many Eksi-like formations in Turkey, which appeared after the birth of Eksi Sozluk. These formations (called as ‘clones’) try to adopt the Eksi Sozluk model by the means of the interface and jargon. Clones are far more undersized than Eksi Sozluk and users of clones do not have the diverse outlook as in the original formation. Most of the participants found clones unnecessary in the presence of Eksi Sozluk. On the contrary, *ssg* defined clones as a wealth of opinions. Eksi Sozluk is still popular for being the first one among the similar formations. Due to the effective control mechanism, the dictionary maintains its stabilized structure. Therefore, being an author of Eksi Sozluk is prestigious, since the entries of authors can be found in the results of search engines like Google.

All the participants portrayed Eksi Sozluk as original. Among various reasons for this opinion that became prominent, are the diversity of its users and accessibility to the information demanded. According to the author nicknamed *average*, originality of Eksi Sozluk comes from its meaning, which he defines as; “possibility of encountering a topic [on the dictionary] that can be thought individually, but cannot be shared with anyone else”. On the Eksi Sozluk platform, most of the participants state the things that cannot be declared in real life.

Participants do not take the rules of Eksi Sozluk as a means of limitation. Such that, one of the participants thinks that the authors of the dictionary are still able to criticize facts even after the prohibitions on May 2006 and September 2008. Though, none of the authors have developed a self-control mechanism against the attempts for censorship of the government. Because, they believe that they are able to write within the current rules of the dictionary.

All the participants admitted the fact that they use jargon when contributing to the dictionary. But, use of jargon is chosen for the most specific situations, not for the whole entries. Again, they stated that they do
not use jargon in their real daily lives, but they prefer it merely in the
dictionary ambience. And considering jargon, most of them indicated that
they absolutely are not being disturbed of profanity use. In fact, they find it
eligible to use profanity if not directed to a certain author. For instance, an
author nicknamed *tulay_1959* denoted that, she began using profanity both in
the dictionary platform and in her real social life after becoming an author of
Eksi Sozluk.

All the participants stated that no author can truely be anonymous in
literal sense. However, the majority of the participants do not announce their
identity on Eksi Sozluk authorship, unless a discussion related to the
dictionary in real life is broached. Some participants such as *likeaprayer*
explained the reason for this kind of behaviour as a matter of restraint. “To be
known as an author of Eksi Sozluk may turn out be a means of pressure” she
said. In the case of a violation of use, IP number provides an evidence for the
moderation. On this wise, the argument of anonymity turns out to be a
questionable matter. Since it is not possible to be anonymous and hide the ID
completely, this issue will still remain as a common contradiction for social
networks.

5. **Conclusion**

Therefore, it can be inferred from the Eksi Sozluk phenomena that
rather than writing, reading can be considered as the primary author activity
in the dictionary. This choice locates Eksi Sozluk in a unique level within the
practices of web reading and participating. It turns out to be a place where
users read the items on the global agenda through the dictionary’s internal
view. Approaching from the view of authors, we can say that the power of
Eksi Sozluk is the main factor stimulating the desire to make them continue
writing. Most of the authors agree on the idea that being a member of Eksi
Sozluk as an author is prestigious.

The quality that makes Eksi Sozluk special is the variety of content
and expression of styles. Considering the specific conditions of Turkey, we
can talk of Eksi Sozluk as a medium for those who were unable to express
their opinions in the past. Because a great number of users, who have grown
up in 1980’s Turkey, constitute the first author generations of Eksi Sozluk.
Basically, Eksi Sozluk is the most efficient online space to express
themselves among other Web environments. In fact, Eksi Sozluk enables its
users to reflect their ideas better and more freely than in real life.

**Notes**

1 This is a condensed version of the article for the eBook format. Please
contact with the authors to acquire the full original paper.
3 Data were received on January 6, 2009 at 11.00 pm.
6 Zehra Ziraman (suser nickname; karakedy) and D. Emrah Ziraman (suser nickname; balikci filozof)

Bibliography


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PART VI

The Cultures of Online Learning

And Educational Use of Videogames
The 3-D Virtual Library Concept Revisited

Daniel Riha

Abstract
One of the most promising but the least penetrated online library services on the Web includes multi-user 3-D worlds. While in the United States, after the success of SL Library 2.0 and other projects based on the Second Life platform, librarians share an idea that the most existing web-based library services can be implemented in Second Life and SL library user communities flourish, from the European perspective, the situation seems to be significantly more complicated.

In Europe, multi-user 3-D worlds, and specifically the Second Life platform, have been utilized mostly for marketing purposes, without a deep understanding of the actual opportunities offered by these new media. Although the developments surrounding SL Library 2.0 seem to be promising, the history of online library service in the 3-D space reach back to an era far before Second Life's start-up, and the lessons learned from previous pioneer projects realized in 1990s might offer important lessons for avoiding future failures in the implementation of such library services.

Key Words: Virtual Library, 3-D Multi-user Environments, Active Worlds, Second Life, Virtual Community.

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1. Introduction
This paper analyses the functionalities of 3-D library services and the assumptions for establishing a long-term user community from a broad historical perspective. The concept of the 3-D Virtual Library, a winning concept developed in 2002 for the Kunst am Bau (Art on Construction) art competition and realized in 2004 for the University of Constance Library (UCL) as the first of its kind in Germany, is compared against current 3-D library concepts. The 3-D Virtual Library is presented as a case study investigating the issues surrounding its implementation and usage and questioning the potential of the multi-user 3-D interface to bring added value to the online library user community in the European context.

2. 3-D Multi-user Virtual Library - The Concept
The widespread adoption of Internet technology induced a new communication paradigm for executing library services. Levy, already in 1997, identified for the need for web-based online library services “networked learner support” as a new model for the practice of academic
The 3-D Virtual Library Concept Revisited

The original proposal for the 3-D Multi-user Virtual Library for the Kunst am Bau competition in 2002 declared as its goal the design of a general 3-D space infrastructure for online user support in shared online communication and built upon the assumption that the web environment of an online library is less user-friendly compared to a real world library, and an application of 3-D multi-user environments (MUVEs) might optimize computer mediated communication (CMC) parameters for online library services. Other goals included increasing social awareness of online library users and creating an online library users' social network.

In this study, the author emphasized the increasing importance of two selected main functions of academic libraries - user education and reference services, as well as the need to implement these functions live and interactively in a shared online environment.

The virtual space of 3-D MUVL was intended to serve as a platform for user education. Maher introduced an idea that a virtual learning environment could be designed under place metaphor, with “place as context for cooperation, access to other students, teachers and learning materials”.2

The 3-D MUVL space was designed as a constructivist online learning environment that would serve users with learning materials, social awareness and identifying colleagues with complementary expertise. The space was planned to be used for library user live training, focused on empowering information literacy initiatives.

The assumption that 3-D multi-user environments may serve as the ideal solutions for online information literacy courses, with their proven ability to establish and support different online communities, failed in the case of 3-D MUVL at the UCL because 3-D live chat assistance became redundant as regular web services and parallel applied e-learning systems were implemented. The browsing of library webpage content and links in the shared 3-D space was not recognized as an added value for the local student community.

The UCL developed several information literacy courses in conjunction with the Informations-Kompetenz I3 project. Their model consisted partly on web presentations in the form of PowerPoint presentations and text documents, with major components residing in advanced e-learning modules produced using the open source e-learning system ILLIAS. The courses were developed with proven pedagogical methods and offered online users self-paced courses, and tutorials and auto-evaluation tests, all of which did not require live human librarian assistance. Computer-mediated communication for learning and social awareness issues was not recognized as research issue during the IK project and developers have not
discovered any added value in live coaching of online users or course materials housed in the 3-D MUVL environment.

The U.S. ACRL Guidelines for Distance Learning Library Services state that:

Access to adequate library services and resources is essential for the attainment of superior academic skills in post-secondary education, regardless of where students, faculty, and programs are located. Members of the distance learning community are entitled to library services and resources equivalent to those provided for students and faculty in traditional campus settings.4

The 3-D MUVL project partially examined the optimization of virtual reference services (VRS). Web-based VRS are still not comparable with traditional library reference services. Distant users work online with open public access catalogues (OPAC) and search engines, but often beginners find such tools to be overly complicated. Users may value the assistance of library personnel present available live through an online library interface in a shared 3-D environment, where the librarian assists with navigation of online library information resources. This function could be important for users in avoiding information overload.

3-D MUVL has not been operated as a VRS interface at the UCL. Presumably, the UCL does not have enough distance education users who might potentially profit from such an online coaching service.

Without a plan for integrating the 3-D MUVL into real library web services and without the regular live presence of library professional devoted to online users, this interface was condemned to become simply a static repository for dated 3-D designs and information content.

Despite valuable attempts to organize student teams to update and revive the project, there was little chance that students could adequately serve online library users and fulfill the original 3-D MUVL project goals.

An additional 3-D MUVL feature was intended to support library marketing initiatives. While the 3-D MUVL was located on an Active Worlds Educational Universe5 (AWEDU) server, where over 60 international educational experiments to be found in 2007 (downscaled from over 100 projects in 2002), online visitors from other AWEDU sites could potentially have been attracted to the UCL presence and services.

However, since 2005, the online population of AWEDU has been steadily decreasing. Actual academic users prefer Second Life (SL) 3-D MUVE and its Virtual Campus. Second Life, with potential millions of users and a growing community, may have a larger impact in relation to designed 3-D presentations today than in the case of the 2002 experiment in AWEDU.
The aforementioned results of 3-D MUVL usage suggest a need for further research in order to answer the question of how to provide 3-D library services desired by today's users.

3. The 3-D Multi-user Virtual Library - Technological Issues

The world of 3-D graphics is developing very quickly. Every year, major technical improvements can be expected. In the frames of the 3-D graphical design the probability of a project to become technically outdated is increasing with each added year of production. In the presented example of the 3-D MUVL, the implementation process took more then 3 years, from October 2002 to public launch in January 2006. Whilst the Active Worlds multi-user technology had been adopted for this project, it became outdated for the most of the users.

The decision to implement the Active Worlds for the 3-D MUVL was influenced by number of factors:

AW is a super-browser type application which integrates a web browser, a 3-D multi-user browser, text and voice chatting interactive features.

*Kunst am Bau* competition rules set up a limiting condition that a project cannot interfere with a current library information system. Active Worlds system fulfilled this condition.

The shared 3-D interface enables developers easy updating of text, pictures, video and sound on a pre-made database consisting of objects and panels inside the environment.

The 3-D MUVL was set up on AWEDU Universe for 395 USD/year and was at that time by far the most inexpensive solution available.

In 2002, Active Worlds was a leading multi-user system on the market and many successful online communities were based on AW and AW Educational Universe, which offered space for experimentation to more then 100 international academic teams.

The main disadvantage of Active Worlds is its Renderware 2.0 engine, which produces obsolete, low-end graphics. Other difficulties appear during the import/export process of custom-made material.
The alternative solutions available like Blaxxun Community Platform or game engines with multi-user capability were under consideration, but the author had budget considerations in mind during the entire implementation. A non-Active Worlds solution would have required new expensive computer hardware, set up of a multi-user software server and maintenance costs for both. The project budget did not allow for such contingencies. The 3-D MUVL project could not utilize game engine types of application for following reasons:

- Costs (professional game development environment costs exceed 100,000 USD).
- Community building (since these applications are not focused on social networking and informal collaboration).
- Complexity (the content produced in such software cannot be easily updated nor re-designed by hobby developers).

In 2002 Active Worlds seemed to be a good trade-off when considering the functions offered by this technology and the limited budget on the other side.

4. Current 3-D Virtual Library Concept Revival

The latest developments surrounding Web 2.0 have implications for the library community as well. Library professionals intensively develop and discuss ideas about what functionalities Library 2.0 shall provide.

The buzz surrounding Library 2.0 is spreading out throughout the Second Life library community and the idea of the 3-D virtual library in 3-D social worlds is being resurrected. A major Second Life milestone took place on October 12th, 2006, when the SL Library 2.0 opened its virtual door. In the SL Library 2.0, the Alliance Library System (ALS) and Online Programming for All Libraries (OPAL) cooperated by extending the programs currently offered online to librarians and library users into the Second Life environment. ALS and OPAL built the central library on the Info Island and started to offer virtual reference services with OCLC question point and traditional library services like book discussions and search assistance. ALS is offering further the sessions on how to use and search that database and how to search the Internet for information and how to evaluate that information. ALS provides virtual tours of these resources as well.

The SL Medical Library (SLM) shares the SL Library's mission statement, as well as primary goals and objectives. The mission of the Second Life Library is to:
Explore the issues of providing library services in a virtual world.

Evaluate services currently offered by real world libraries in the light of features offered in virtual reality environments and the information needs of VR residents.

Examine how libraries will remain relevant when more business and education activities take place virtually.

Promote the real library and online library services to residents of Second Life.

SLM's designers declare that „in SLM, most existing web-based services in libraries can be implemented, but the main goal is to 'market' existing library services and resources in general. Special interest lies in exploring innovative ways of offering and distributing services.‖ Specific goals and objectives for the Medical Library include:

- Experiment with innovative delivery of services, focussed more on visual and audio exchange than on text.
- Exploring interactive possibilities between library & library staff and guests/visitors.
- Getting a presence and promote the services of the Second Life Library 2.0 in general, and the Medical Library in particular.

Another major organization active in Second Life is the American Library Association (ALA). Since 2008 they operate ALA Island. ALA Island is designed as the open air campus including kiosks for ALA’s divisions, offices, and round tables, two lounge areas, the publishing pavilion and the floating gallery that is dedicated to photographic exhibitions. The virtual space is used for various virtual meeting activities like inviting expert presenters on actual librarianship topics or regular meetings of the Virtual Communities and Libraries Member Initiative Group (VCL MIG). In 2009 the ALA presents this VCL MIG Statement of Purpose:

- To provide a group within ALA for members interested in fostering the practice of library work, the visibility of libraries and library workers, and the extension of library
services within online social networks, virtual worlds, and other communities of intention.

To provide a mechanism for sharing experiences and practices in-person or virtually through programming or asynchronous communications.

To encourage wider participation by the profession and the association in virtual worlds. To establish a forum across all types of libraries and at all levels of library employment concerned with the development of library services in emerging social networks, virtual worlds, and other communities of intention.10

All above presented 3-D library project actually flourishing in Second Life are based in the United States. While Europe has taken a lead in the number of the active users in Second Life11, to the date there is no comparable Second Life library service operating on the European level.

In 2007 Amsterdam Public Library (APL) opened APL Island as a promising first Dutch library project in Second Life with the following goals:

The library will initially be offering e-books, reservation facilities and will be promoting library membership. The virtual library will also be selling tickets in cooperation with AUB ticket points, an existing service of the real library. In addition live Amsterdam FM broadcasts will be produced. […] The aim is to make the virtual library an experience library just like its counterpart in real life.12

Talis with Alliance Library System opened in February 2008 Talis Cybrary Island that offers a free space to other subjects allowing to design their virtual library branch with the hope to attract some of the European SL users alike:

The raison d’être behind Talis Cybrary City was to foster innovation within the library community. This it clearly did, with dozens of libraries taking advantage of the facilities to create their own Second Life library branch.

Cybrary City, although open to all, did have a large majority of participants from North American libraries. We hope to gain a much larger representation from other continents among the residents of Cybrary Island.13
Kirriemuir points to the fact that “Despite steady integration into a common European Union, each European nation retains certain individual elements of infrastructure. Libraries, for example, tend to follow different policies and systems in different countries.” The fragmented European library infrastructure and different language base might be identified as one of the reasons for a lower adoption of the Second Life platform for online library services in Europe. The answering of question “why this is the state of things?” would be beyond the extent of this paper.

The above listed paragraphs show that various 3-D virtual library projects based on the Second Life platform share the common goals very similar to the original goals proposed by the 3-D virtual library concept in 2002. In the concluding part the author will attempt to identify some possible limiting factors for the wider success of the 3-D virtual library project.

5. **Conclusion**

The author would summarize possible reasons why users did not massively use the 3-D multi-user virtual library in AWEDU as:

- Limited number of potential users
- No integration with other library web services
- No live user support in the AWEDU environment
- No pre-designed goals/activities
- Outdated 3-D technology and information content
- Problematic maintenance workflows leading to frustration by interested student community developers

In contrast, the success of Second Life, with its ever growing cyber-population and the buzz surrounding SL Library 2.0, may prove that some of the assumptions upon which the 3-D MUVL of 2002 have proven to be correct.

The Second Life environment presents itself to be more suitable for easy social networking. The current popularity of SL might attract more library users to test an environment often seen only in TV news, and these first-time users perhaps could gain more interest in becoming active members of such online community.

Active Worlds have not delivered technological solutions for incorporating primary web-based online library services into a 3-D interface.
The current attempts to integrate real library web services into Second Life by Alliance Library System and other providers supported by Library 2.0 technologies are very promising and worthy of further evaluation.

The 3-D Multi-user Virtual Library project for UCL must be recognized as one of the early experiments examining the value of 3-D social interfaces for academic libraries, although it did not attract regular attention from a large number of users. More information and a full documentation of the project development is available at: <http://www.virtuallibrary.de>.

Notes


Bibliography


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Cyberculture: Learning New Literacies through Machinima

Theodoros Thomas

Abstract
This paper aims to describe the implementation of an introductory cyberculture course in the French language and literature faculty curriculum (University of Athens, 2008). The main objective of this course was the education of today’s digital Natives and future Netizens and the development of new media skills which should be seen as social skills. The syllabus contained an introduction to cyberspace, virtual communities, digital video and sound, digital effects, an insight into collective intelligence, politics on the Net and mainly the examination of digital storytelling through machinima. Students created collaboratively characters and stories wrote scenarios using a wiki and then produced machinima films. Based on current research on new media literacies, we propose that the creation of machinima films by students-prosumers is a form of participatory culture and an excellent way to develop new media skills.

Key Words: Cyberculture, E-Learning, New Media Literacies, Wikis, Digital Storytelling, Machinima

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1. The Case
In the last decade Cyberculture has emerged from its status of a subculture, closely related to cyberpunk and the Gibsonian cyberspace to refer to our ways of life affected by digital technology. In this paper we talk about the implementation of an introductory cyberculture course in the French language and literature faculty, University of Athens curriculum. The course lasted for one semester, from February to June 2008, consisting of 11 sessions of 2 hours each. The audience consisted of 56 students (53 females and 3 males) aged from 19 to 23. Apart from one Socrates exchange student coming from France, the rest of the audience was Greek originated.

In the Faculty of French Language and Literature, part of the University of Athens’s School of Philosophy to obtain a bachelor’s degree in French language and literature a student needs to pass 33 compulsory modules and 7 out of 25 electives ones. The faculty is mainly focused on French literature courses and it aims mostly at the formation of future teachers of French language through the development of individualized skills to be used for personal expression. This curriculum can be described as very rigid and outdated.
In 2003 the faculty received funding from EPEAEK (Operational Program ‘Education and Primary Vocational Training’), co-funded by the European Union. The main objective of the EU program was the improvement of the educational system and its services, in order to respond more effectively to real social needs by opening up communication channels and links to the job market. Under its main priority axis of the improvement of education new educational approaches were introduced to the department. An e-learning platform was introduced, many of the didactic materials were digitized and the curriculum was enriched by new prototype elective modules which gave priority to new media. One of the elective courses proposed was Cyberculture that was introduced during the second phase of implementation of the EPEAEK Program (2007-2009).

2. The Course Audience

Our audience in current scientific literature but also in areas as varied as marketing, administration, and education is often described as ‘digital generation’,1 ‘cyberkids’,2 or ‘digital natives’.3 It is thought to be a generation defined in and through its experience of digital Computer Technology. According to Bourdieu, generations are socially and culturally identified and formed, and digital media help to shape the beliefs and dispositions, a different \textit{habitus} for this generation.4 This may be true and the current generation may be defined by digital technology but we must not fall to the trap of Cyberlibertarianism, the ecstatic enthusiasm for electronically mediated forms of living combined with radical, right wing libertarian ideas about the proper definition of freedom and technological determinism. The relation of these students with technology is far more complex than it might initially appear. In their mind they are persuaded that they must use digital technologies, they interact with them on a daily basis but at the same time they often lack a deeper knowledge of how they work. They solely think about the consequence of their usage as if they fear them and they often even don’t admit their technophobia. These students don’t avoid the banality of digital technology use. They almost all use mobile phones and they mostly answer positively to the question whether they can use a computer but in practice their knowledge is rudimentary and they lack basic skills of literacy in the New Media Culture, the ones that we call the new media literacies: a set of cultural competencies and social skills that people need in the new media landscape.

3. New Media Culture Skills

Jenkins and coauthors maintain that youth does not acquire miraculously the key skills and competencies to actively get involved to participatory culture by merely interacting with popular culture and they give
three arguments to support his position. They write that this laissez faire attitude cannot solve the participation gap, ‘the unequal access to the opportunities, experiences, skills, and knowledge that will prepare youth for full participation in the world of tomorrow’. Furthermore there is the transparency problem. Despite the fact that the digital natives are accustomed at using new media, their knowledge is not always active and they do not always develop critical or metacognitive skills. Finally there is the ethics challenge, the norms that rule the publication of online content without any formal guidance or supervision in a fuzzy environment where the vision of McLuhan and Nevitt that with electric technology, the consumer would become a producer becomes true with the emergence of the prosumer, the consumer who is not passive but also produces.

With these three concerns in mind they propose the following competencies young people should acquire in their learning experiences:

- **Play**: the capacity to experiment with one’s surroundings as a form of problem-solving.

- **Performance**: the ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery.

- **Simulation**: the ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes.

- ** Appropriation**: the ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content.

- **Multitasking**: the ability to scan one’s environment and shift focus as needed to salient details.

- **Distributed Cognition**: the ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities.

- **Collective Intelligence**: the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal.

- **Judgment**: the ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources.

- **Transmedia Navigation**: the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities.
Networking: the ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information.

Negotiation: the ability to travel across communities, discerning and respecting multiple views, and grasping and following alternative norms.

4. Course Objectives and Course Syllabus

By taking under consideration the profile of the Department, the profile of the students and the previously mentioned new media competencies we proposed this course with the intention of creating the opportunities for students to develop the cultural competencies and social skills needed for full community involvement, participation and individual and collective expression. We departed from the traditional skills developed in a University in order to try to cultivate skills needed for our networked society through collaborative learning. Furthermore in order to cope with the students’ technophobia we decided to help them build technical computer skills which would build up their self-confidence.

We designed the course syllabus to include theories and concepts of Cyberspace, knowledge in the digital era, virtual communities, politics on the net, videogames and digital storytelling through Machinima.

We wanted to combine theory with practice so each session was divided in two parts of 45 mins: a lecture and a practical workshop. Our aim was to show to the students that the issues examined are not so virtual and elusive as they might originally think. We also adopted a blended learning strategy. The aforementioned sessions were supported by E-class, a virtual learning environment. E-class provides a depository for on-line learning materials as well as a forum and a chat. Since we wanted to explore virtual communities, create a participatory culture and e-class cannot be easily personalized by students we encouraged them to create an account to MySpace. Furthermore we created two wikis on pbwiki in order to see in practice how a wiki space works.

Students in order to be evaluated had to accomplish three tasks (two individual and one collaborative): they had to participate to the conversations on the forum, to write an article on the wiki about cyberculture and to contribute to two other of their fellow students and finally to create a machinima film.

5. Background

Wikis are websites based on the open editing concept, allowing common users to create and modify any of its pages. Named by Ward Cunningham in 1994 and signifying quick in Hawaiian wikis have become
the expression par excellence of what Pierre Lévy described as the collective intelligence. The most famous, probably the most successful and surely the most controversial of these sites is Wikipedia. The collaborative nature, the simplicity and the ease of use have been remarked by numerous scholars and educators who have explored the educational potentials of the tool. These characteristics go along with the constructivist pedagogy and they support learner’s autonomy. Furthermore they contribute in the creation of Communities of practice.

Machinima definitions are provided by several communities of practice on the Internet with the most eloquent this of the academy of machinima arts and sciences. Machinima is filmmaking within a real-time, 3D virtual environment, often using 3D video-game technologies. It is the convergence of filmmaking, animation and game development. Machinima is real-world filmmaking techniques applied within an interactive virtual space where characters and events can be either controlled by humans, scripts or artificial intelligence. By combining the techniques of filmmaking, animation production and the technology of real-time 3D game engines, Machinima makes for a very cost- and time-efficient way to produce films, with a large amount of creative control. So more than a new medium, Machinima is rather a new technique to produce video narratives.

The term Machinima was coined in 1999 by two early practitioners of the technique Anthony Baily and Hugh Hancock and it is a misspelled portmanteau of machine cinema. Back in the early 1990’s players of video games Quake and Doom used to record their game exploits and to create movies. Gamers were gradually transformed into actors and ‘the viewpoint of the player became the viewpoint of the director’. Series like the Halo based Red vs Blue made the genre quite popular and films like The French Democracy about the 2005 riots in Paris' suburbs gave an alternative touch.

6. Procedure

Since this was a course addressed to inexperienced students, in parallel to the lectures we launched initiation activities. Students were asked to create online profiles on Myspace and to get registered to class groups. In an attempt to break the ice and help students get to know the other members of their group we used E-class forum. We tried to ignite conversations by posing questions such as: ‘how digital technology affects your life?’ or ‘Do you think that videogames are a waste of time?’ This activity lasted the first two weeks of the semester and gave them the opportunity to get adapted to the online environment. Most of the students responded quite well, although some were still hesitant to participate.

Then we addressed the issues of knowledge in the Digital era and we studied the case of Wikipedia. Given that E-class did not offer at that time
The functionality of a wiki we chose Pbwiki because it is web-based, it is easy and simple and does not require any knowledge of HTML but it allows at the same time to upload any kind of documents, and multimedia content, access can be forbidden to non members and lastly it has no ads. We invited students to the wiki and we proposed them a list of topics about cyberculture. We asked them to choose one to develop it and two from the ones that their colleagues developed to comment them and correct them. Then they had to present their work and their experience to the rest of the group orally. Most of the students accomplished this assignment.

When we explored digital narratives, we had tutorials on Audacity, an open source audio editing software and Windows Moviemaker, a video editing software in order to introduce students to digital storytelling. Storytelling and learning are inseparably interconnected since the process of making up a story is at the same time a process of making sense. Especially for language students the ability to make coherent stories is related with the pragmatic competences (discourse and functional competence) of the Common European Framework for language learning.

We delved deeper into digital narratives through Machinima. Our intention was to initiate students to the procedure of a creation of a film (preproduction, filming and postproduction) by enabling them to create their own film. Our ambition was to teach cineliteracy. We chose for that the Lionhead’s studio game ‘The Movies’. The Movies is a business simulation where the aim is to create the most successful studio in the world. Probably the most interesting feature of the game is the advanced creation of a movie where you can write a script based on the Hollywood scriptwriting templates (horror, action, romance, sci-fi, comedy movies), choose the settings, the actors, direct and post produce a film. We found The Movies game engine perfect for an introduction to Machinima because it provides lots of capabilities and requires little or no technical or modding skills to create interesting movies. Additionally it isn’t demanding in computer technical requirements and its price is not prohibitive.

Our students were asked to form groups of 2-4 and to work collaboratively in order to create and to develop a short film based on their ideas. They were invited to a wiki where they could describe the characters of their story, write their story, and develop a script. Finally they could optionally post their film on these pages. The ideas and stories were critiqued during team meetings with the instructor. One of the main concerns was to establish the notion of narrative action and conflict and resolution. These critiques occurred informally as the instructor observed student progress but it was still very difficult for the students to apply successfully these principles. Finally, on the last course session students had to present orally their work, speak about the challenges and the problems they faced while
producing the film and project it. Their fellow students were invited to peer-review these final products. We noticed that students were much more motivated to finish this assignment than the first wiki assignment, even though they lacked time. What’s more, they were more eager to criticize their fellow students work and to point out negative and positive aspects. We judge that is due to the oral nature of the commentaries as opposed to the written commentaries on the wikis.

The best way to illustrate the concepts that student learned is to look at the films they created. 11 films were produced ranging from horror movies to romance, crime stories, sitcoms and dramas. In addition students showed extreme ingenuity and capacity to overcome problems. Many students applied successfully techniques of remix culture by incorporating elements of famous popular films into their movie.

7. Results

With these assignments we applied an underlying principle of constructivism which supports that for learning to happen, learners themselves must be actively engaged in the process of learning and we gained a better understanding on the procedure of creating a machinima as a tool to promote learning. We think that these activities develop new media skills. Despite the time pressure students were motivated to bring to a termination their film, not so much out of desire for a higher mark but for the sake of the project (Play). They adopted different roles in order to carry off their project (i.e. director, video editor, audio editor, script editor). They also had the chance to participate and to perform identity tourism (Performance). They took turns to adopt those roles (Multitasking). Out of the video game they realized how a thriving cultural industry works (Simulation). Students incorporated in their films experiences from other media and they remixed them in their own products ( Appropriation). They used the digital tools offered by a wiki in order to collaborate, communicate and break the constrictions imposed by distance and time. This interaction thanks to the wiki was not only among members of their team but of all their class (Distributed Cognition, Collective Intelligence and Networking). They had to make decisions of which tools to choose and which sources were better to support their choices. Additionally they built critiques and reflections on other’s work (Judgment). They weaved a story that they expressed using different modalities (text, video, music, photos) (Transmedia Navigation). Finally, students learned team work, scheduling project management, iterations and refinement skills that depend heavily on negotiation.
8. **Assessment**

Work produced by students surprised us positively. They learned how to use the game in order to create a movie fairly easy. They produced original, short movies and they were often very creative. As far as the use of wikis is concerned we must state that there was a problem with the evaluation of sources for the cyberculture wiki. Generally speaking we realized that students encountered greater difficulties with the use of French language than the use of digital tools. One last remark is that the use of several virtual spaces (eclass, wikis, MySpace) is not recommended since it triggered a feeling of *virtual disorientation* to the more technologically inexperienced students. Linked to this is the *identity disorientation*. Many students turned out unable to understand that cyberspace also has its own registers and conventions as every human interaction does and so they have to adopt the proper code.

Students assessed their experience of this course very positively. Most of them were happy to have chosen it (4.33/5, N=32) and they thought that its contents were very interesting (4.42/5), with clear objectives (4/5) and well structured (3.7/5). They thought that it quite requires a lot of effort to follow it (3.33/5), but that it is almost as difficult as other courses are (3.2/5) and it develops their critical thinking (3.9/5). At the same time they thought that more time was required to cover its contents (3.45/5).

As far as the assignments are concerned students thought that they foster collaboration and team spirit (4.33/5), that they are indispensable for the deeper understanding of the course (4.24/5) and they are worth the time spent (4.03/5) because they are generally interesting (4.12/5) and they develop critical thinking (4/5).

9. **Conclusion**

In conclusion, in this paper we have suggested that the process of Machinima making proves to be an excellent tool to teach cyberculture. The initial evaluation of this idea was built on student performance and our observation and interaction with them through the preparation of their assignments and conversations in the lab. Machinima films are produced quickly, cheaply, effectively and combined with the usage of a wiki they can initiate students to digital storytelling and help them develop cultural competencies and social skills for the digital arena. We believe that machinima film production motivated students to learn and allowed them to apply the concepts learned.
Notes


Bibliography


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PART VII

Digital Art and Interactive Storytelling
Abstract:
The text format that Mark Z. Danielewski adopts in his novel *Only Revolutions* (2006) is more than challenging since he resorts to simultaneously interweaving ‘stories’ which, on the page, appear in an upside-down or in a coloured and multiple-sized font fashion. His new book definitely signals a new kind of convergence between print and electronic media. This is quite apparent in the way the text is presented to the reader, since the writer makes excellent use of the interactive quality digital media is endowed with when it comes to the functionality of this book’s typesetting as well as the navigational quality of its design.

What this paper will attempt to explore is the extent to which the interpenetration of digitality and printed textuality has further fortified narrative experimentation and storytelling interactivity by taking the printed media on to a new level of production. Special attention will be paid to the kind of sensation Danielewski’s book creates, since its storyline is not solely determined by print narrative models. A way of viewing Danielewski’s novel will be suggested: the intermingling of print and World Wide Web practices result in the formation of a much more aesthetically diversified and fortified print book culture. Subsequently, Danielewski’s book will serve as a case study through which the ‘benefits’ of crossmedia will be assessed and commented on as well as its impact on the way we think, read and express ourselves in a literary manner.

Key Words: Convergence, Crossmedia, Digitality, Uncanny, Spectrality, Vision, Mutability, Perception

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1. Introduction

Troy Patterson in the review he wrote for *The New York Times* immediately after the publication of Mark Z. Danielewski’s new ‘novel’ - *Only Revolutions* (2006) - said:

Mark Danielewski’s publisher recommends you read his new book, ‘Only Revolutions’ […] in incremental bursts. The idea is that, if you turn the book upside down and swing it around every eight pages, you can alternate the monologues of its two narrators, Sam and Hailey, so as to
The author himself in an interview to Callie Miller and Michele Reverte for the magazine *LAist* in 2007 argues that his new novel is ‘designed to be read in so many different ways. […] It depends on your mind - maybe there is someone who could read it all and hold it all. [He] couldn’t do it, but [he] could understand the thrill of trying.’ As these quotes suggest, Danielewski’s novelistic endeavour pushes digitality and print publishing on to a different level of creative but ‘centrifugal’, as he says, novelistic expression. In this paper, I will attempt to argue that Danielewski’s new ‘novel’ constitutes quite an interesting, thought-provoking and challenging case study through which the ‘benefits’ of crossmedia in the realm of book/fiction publishing can be assessed and evaluated.

2. The Intersection of Print and Digital Media

N. Katherine Hayles in her new study entitled *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary* (2008) claims that ‘the digital leaves its mark on print in new capabilities for innovative typography, new aesthetics for book design, and in the near future new modes of marketing.’ Danielewski himself admits in an interview to Kiki Benzon that his new novel ‘could not exist without technology. Without [his] G5 and 23-inch screen, with two pages on the screen at one time. […] Online recourses, certain archival things. OED online so [he] could race through etymologies quickly, double check words.’ Even looking at the book or flicking through its pages, one can easily understand that this colourful and pleasing to the eye piece of hardbound work could not have been materialized if it had not been for digital technologies.

Having no formal starting or ending page, this ‘book’ invites the reader to plunge into a completely different ‘reading’ experience of constantly mutating, evolving and intertwining storylines. Even though in terms of character development it seems as if it is following a much more regimented structure, since the two voices governing the pace of the ‘narrative’ is that of Sam’s and Hailey’s, Danielewski’s new novel is introducing the reader to an experience that goes beyond hermeneutics and affective responses. The novelist William H. Gass said in his book *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (1970) that ‘a character, first of all, is the noise of his name’, indicating in this manner that a character’s name in a fictional text can either be allusive to a particular notion or concept, or point to the kind of
nature the character embodies. However, the word ‘noise’ that he uses could have a different sort of significance that moves beyond the notion of voice or point of view that each character contributes to the narrative, as it could stand for the low drone of what is happening in the background of the novel production, the sound of technological equipment, the disembodied voices of the free-floating and simultaneously interweaving ‘storylines’ which appear in the ‘book’ in an upside-down, coloured or multiple-sized font fashion as well as it could be the noise of the character keys of a word processor.

The novelistic experience that Danielewski attempts to enclose within the hard covers of *Only Revolutions* does not succumb to any clear-cut or straightforward interpretation; as for the characters Sam and Hailey, they do not stand for singular entities but they additionally embrace readers, writer, software programmer(s) and designers by suggesting ways of reading, ways of seeing, ways of looking at or designing the text. Sam’s and Hailey’s textual streams which the book contains seem to be diminishing or increasing in size as the narrative develops, being simultaneously accompanied by long strips of historical data. In this kind of texts, one cannot view or read everything as s/he would have done in a solely Gutenberg-styled book, but one realizes, as it would happen in computational media, that the information printed on the page follows a pattern of ‘dynamic hierarchy’. In this sense, every segment of text works not only independently but also in conjunction with the other segments, each one re-forming the other simultaneously, which adds to the complexity of the endeavour under discussion here.

One could argue that the characters, Sam and Hailey, metaphorically function as computational prompts for the existence of a binary code by which this novelistic experience is shaped and formulated. Hayles writes that ‘binaries operate as a spectrum of possibilities rather than as polar opposites with an excluded middle.’ In Danielewski’s book, the oppositional notions of male and female that the characters of Sam and Hailey represent actually interconnect and supplement each other, paving the path for lots of unforeseen cognitive entanglements. Even the colours that herald their existence - Sam as green and Hailey as yellow - give way in the text to a much more diverse palette of colour shades when it comes to the printing of particular letter characters or page sequences, further fortifying and enhancing the ‘textual’ surfaces that this ‘book’ is composed of. It is also worth mentioning the kind of flap jacket that the hardback edition of this ‘book’ has been marketed with, with each side featuring a dual-coloured - both green and yellow - iris, highlighting in this manner the foreseeable and unforeseeable data that it contains. To this end, Danielewski states in his interview to Benzon that:

> one of the things this [*Only Revolutions*] resists is vision.

> […] With the exception of some color mentioned, it never
quite paints those borders, the edges […] Words that are about seeing, for the most part, were taken out. […] But the resistance allows for the proliferation of other words.8

Consequently, readers experience a constant uncertainty as to what they see or read in this novel, which is keeping them in a constant motion of figuring and re-figuring the context of the narrative. Whether this kind of uncertainty encourages narrative creativity or incites fear or even terror of what the status of fictional narratives may be in the age of digital production is what I will attempt to explore next.

3. Flickering Texts - Uncanny Texts

If one accepts that machines are not only fashioned to respond to our needs but we are also refashioned due to our interaction with them, according to Hayles own argumentation,9 one could claim that we are on the threshold of an interesting evolution.

What is important from a narrative point of view is that this text does not work by following certain rigid rules, but it is a mixture of various narrative paths and possibly still unforeseeable patterns of reading or ways of perceiving its textual surfaces. So the beauty of Danielewski’s undertaking, if one wishes to follow Edward Fredkin’s syllogism, is that ‘the meaning of information is given by the process that interprets it.’10 This whole idea of oscillating meanings and perpetually evolving texts is further reinforced by a particular symbol that Danielewski’s ‘book’ bears at different pages, that of the pause symbol. The same symbol, one could also claim, is inserted into certain words, such as ‘Allways’, operating as a visual connector with the symbol itself or as, one could claim, a trop l’oeil mechanism.11 Particularly, he says in his interview to Miller and Reverte that ‘when you pause, it means the thing is playing. When you press the pause button, it turns into the play. So when you see the pause symbol, it’s playing.’12 With this comment it becomes apparent that the ‘book’ we are holding in our hands is more than a few ink marks printed on paper, but, actually, it is a sophisticated artifact that its value rests in its potential to trigger multiple combinations and re-combinations in the way the narrative or the data it delivers flows, is read or even is perceived.

Obviously, the way one perceives a text and the kind of information this text transfers very much depends on the kind of activity its characters are engaged with. This is of a double nature since characters, according to Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, are ‘nodes in the verbal design […] constructs.’13 Danielewski himself when composing his novel had the idea of

‘using the book to manifest [Sam’s and Hailey’s] relationship physically. […] What is terrifying about them is
that the world withers and shakes and burns to the ground around them, but it doesn’t bother them at all. They are so caught up in their affection for each other and their antics that they lose track.”

These quotes bring a few interesting notions to our attention, such as those of ‘node’, ‘design’, ‘physicality’ and ‘person-like.’ Indeed, in Only Revolutions, the characters’ names do function as harbingers of subjectivity and physical existence; however, what about the way they are positioned in the narrative? As shown in the following lines, Sam and Hailey are constantly on the move:

We are without perimeters, perpetually unwinding, unifying. All around receding before our freedom. Even the Vengeful & Needy. Because we’re mighty. We are the feer every Itinerant longs to scoot clear of. […] We are all strays. Allways astray. Unwelcome. Continuously unchallenged, unchanged by all we legally & illegally dissuade.

After reading these couple of lines, one could argue that the word ‘unchallenged’ could serve as a very interesting clue as to how this ‘book’ actually works. Danielewski maintains that his characters are ‘un-pursued’ so as to avoid giving to his narrative a ‘plot-driven feeling’, which in a way justifies the meaning of the word ‘unchallenged’. So if there is nobody they are running away from, what is it then that keeps Sam and Hailey on the run? If they are nodes, what is it that their presence is helping to bring or join together? Is their mobile nature suggesting another interpretation? Hayles, when talking about computer-mediated text, says that ‘code can never be seen or accessed by a user while it is running.’ Could it be then that Sam and Hailey are trying to prevent us from something, or are their storylines only a façade of the data code that runs behind them? This whole idea echoes Nicholas Royle’s argument about the uncanniness of a text in relation to what Jacques Derrida calls spectrality and phantom writing, as expressed in his study Spectres of Marx (1994), serving:

as a sort of model for thinking about texts in general in terms of phantom effects […] textual phantoms which […] do not in fact come to rest anywhere. Phantom texts are fleeting, continually moving on, leading us away, […] to some other scene or scenes which we, as readers, cannot anticipate.

As a result, in the case of an uncanny or phantom text, Royle argues that beneath the textual surface that appears in front of our very eyes there is an-
other, unseen kind of ‘text’ that determines or regulates our ‘principal’

novelistic experience. This other text may be determined by factors we barely

notice when we are reading, constituting the variable codes or textual layers

that the visible text - in other words the text that we have been trained to see -
is made of. The efficacy of Only Revolutions very much relies on the

‘multiple vocabularies’ that Danielewski resorts to: he is paying attention to

voice, the way one looks at a composition, how various elements are

juxtaposed, the size and shifts between fonts, parataxis, typography and

interdisciplinary knowledge.19

Moreover, the relation that there is between Danielewski’s text and

spectrality could also be interpreted by some as a manifestation of

elusiveness, liminality or even terror: terror of what might this text bring to

life on the page; terror of what is going to happen to the text; terror of what is
go
gonna happen beyond this text; or terror of what is going to happen to us in

relation to this text. With terror having a socio-political dimension attached to

it, one could claim that Danielewski’s book is another example of this newly-
formed ‘threat’ against our long-acquired reading and writing habits. But is

this really the case? Not being able to foresee what is coming next or what is

going to become of the fiction industry in the near future, one tends to

succumb to the fear of the unknown, to the uncertainty of what such textual

experiments stand for. David Punter, in his approach of terror from the

perspective of textuality, writes:

The meanings of terror, […] will always hover undecidably

between the psychological and the political, between the

inner and the outer […] And this returns us again to the

condition of all textuality, where the free will of the

characters is an illusion but one in which we are more than

happy to share until the point where we sense that […] as

readers […] we are being led to conclusions which involve

death and destruction.20

Could death and destruction here be related to fiction writing or to the

suspiciously emerging narrative and reading styles that books, such as

Danielewski’s, bring to the foreground? Or could it just be us viewing

anything technological as menacing and distrustful?

Being witnesses of an interesting evolution in the realm of fiction

production, we are all at the threshold of a very interesting development in

terms of fiction writing and fiction production. The sensation that the

multiple and somehow disjointed textual streams that Danielewski’s ‘book’

creates to us is not that foreign if we compare it to the multi-tasking skills

that we acquire while using our word processing software. In this sense, Danielewski’s text does affect the way we relate to text and the way we ‘see’
it; but does it also mirror the next step forward? In this sense, it is the formation of a new kind of aesthetics that I’ll be briefly touching upon in the next section.

4. Convergence Aesthetics

Depending heavily on the power of the eye as well as on the duplicity of the act of seeing, Danielewski is preparing the ground for a ‘new’ but not that unfamiliar way of interacting with printed texts. This very much echoes Pierry Levy’s take on the emergence of a new kind of aesthetics, as evidenced in his study *Collective Intelligence: Mankind’s Emerging World in Cyberspace* (1997), where the ‘distinction between authors and readers, producers and spectators, creators and interpreters will blend’ so as to ‘sustain the activity’ of each one of them. Danielewski’s ‘book’ does constitute a very good example of this emerging trend, gradually leading fiction writers to new ways of expression and new insights. Insights into the way we relate to the printed text or the literary experience that it formulates and into the medium that determines it alongside the author’s own imagination.

Nevertheless, the question is whether the audience is ready to appreciate this kind of writing. One could claim that even out of curiosity readers will be tempted to get hold of such ‘books.’ However, the question remains: are they in a position to value the printed as well as the computational strategies that are at work for the publication of such texts? Ithiel de Sola Pool in his work *Technologies of Freedom: On Free Speech in an Electronic Age* (1983) warns us about media transition and media convergence. He says: ‘Convergence does not mean ultimate stability or unity. It operates as a constant force for unification but always in dynamic tension with change.’

It is true that we are at the dawn of a new era of communication patterns. The convergence of media will lead to the generation of a different kind of emotional, sensory or even moral data, which will need to be communicated or disseminated to us. Of course, one always needs to be aware of the financial or consumerist ‘merit’ of such an enterprise as well as of the availability of this kind of technology to all. What is certain is that at this stage we can only make hypotheses about how this new phase that we are now entering will affect, either positively or negatively, the way we write about and interpret the literacy changes that are taking place around us. What is of the utmost importance for us though is to consider right now not how magnificent convergence is but what it is that we would like to gain from it.
5. **Concluding Remarks**

What I have intended to achieve in this paper is to share with you a few ideas, observations or even realizations as to where fiction production is nowadays moving towards. Whether we are ready to tackle the intricacies and challenges of the newly emerging aesthetics in the realm of fiction writing and fiction reading, it is too early to tell.

According to Pool’s argumentation, the road to media convergence may be long and volatile but it will certainly reshape the way we think about printed and electronic media as well as envision our relationship with it. Speaking through his characters, Sam and Hailey, Danielewski writes: ‘I will sacrifice nothing. For there are no conflicts. Except me. And there’s only one transgression. Me.’

In this case, we and each one of us - as writers, readers or software designers - are probably the ones who need to reconfigure our position in a changing world and shift our perspective by surpassing our inhibitions about the new era of collaborative communication that we are now entering without, of course, letting our guards down. It is no longer the case of books disappearing because of the emergence of digital technologies, but it is the case of each one of us becoming aware of the risks and potentials we will gradually confront in a culture whose multi-media make up is yet under construction. What will determine the success of this new undertaking, it is the clarity of our aims and objectives as well as the awareness of our position in a changing world. Having quite a long experience before us, we should make sure that this is not going to be another trick that the publishing industries will resort to in order to sustain consumer allegiance but another stage in our evolutionary chain as perceptive and literate individuals.

**Notes**


5 Benzon, op. cit.

7 Hayles, op. cit., p. 51.
8 Benzon, op. cit.
9 ‘Humans engineer computers and computers reengineer humans in systems bound together by recursive feedback and feed-forward loops, with emergent complexities catalyzed be leaps between different media substrates and levels of complexity’ (Hayles, op. cit., p. 48).
10 Ibid., p. 52.
11 Brian McHale defines the device of trompe-l’oeil as a technique which is particularly employed in postmodern narratives so as to highlight the multiple diegetic worlds that exist in them as well as the confusion or illusion created as to their status (‘real’ or ‘virtual’) and order (see B McHale, Postmodernist Fiction, Methuen, New York and London, 1987, pp. 115-119). In the case of Danielewski’s narrative, this term is used in order to suggest its multilayering and flickering nature.
12 Miller and Reverte, loc. cit.
14 Miller and Reverte, op. cit.
16 Miller and Reverte, op. cit.
17 Hayles, op. cit., p. 164, emphasis in original.
19 Benzon, op. cit.
23 Danielewski, op. cit., p. 3.

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Intermedial Performance: Digital Connectivity

Yap, Tyng Shiu

Abstract
It is well recognised that performance practices and their development are intricately linked to media and technology. The intermedial in live performance is both a technological and a performative phenomenon. It points at once to the incorporation of digital processing for inter-media communications within performance; and, correlatively, to performance that occurs within this in-betweeness of mediality. The incorporation of digital technology does not just expand and alter the sensory and temporal aspects of live performance, but it affects process as well as content and form. Systems of varying complexity are developed to enable inter-communication between different media and elements in real-time. Through feedback loops between different elements, dynamic and non-linear events could be generated real-time. Performance becomes the choreography of a relational system - playing through the field of combinatorics, patterning and the transformational. Translation between media means that the boundaries and distinctions between media becomes blurred or even fused. The implication of this is not only ontological, it affects meaning and signification as well as performativity.

Intermedial performance is a form of multi-medial staging where media are not just layered and juxtaposed with one another; instead modalities and media are being transformed and mediated through the other, producing a fabric of inter-relations where often the other is the transcoding of the one thing in another form. Representation or remediation through transcoding involves a reductive process; this materialist idea of translating quantitative and qualitative values and relations from one medium to another transposes our conventional idea of meaning creation.

Intermedial performance presents an expansion of how we construct and think about meaning and performance through the process of mediation and remediation. This paper’s exploration includes a case study of “Quartet” presented by Margie Medlin.

Key Words: Intermediality, Live Performance, Digitality, Mediality, Mediation, Materiality, Materialist, Performativity, Transcoding, Real-Time

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1. Intermediality and Digitality in Live Performance

The use of digital technology in live performance enables the manipulation of models of reality in which performativity and medial
communications can be designed and implemented according to the conceptual framework employed. This paper looks specifically at the intermedial effect that occurs in live performance when medial spaces become digitally integrated; where such connectivity and interaction between media affect both the staging and the perception of performance. The intermedial effect will also be examined through the materialist approach within the ‘ímmaterial’ processing of the digital system, where everything is treated as informational; as numerical values that can be manipulated and organized through coding. This paper will trace a variety of intermedial effect in live performance and the associated changes or implications on content, performativity, perception and the space of performance.

The focus of intermediality here as a consequence of the incorporation of digitality in performance is not to expound technological determinism, nor to denounce the influence of the socio-cultural - but to isolate the examination to the effect of digitality so as to probe, in a more direct way, the implications it has on the process and content of live performances. In this paper, the term “performance” refers broadly to the whole range of contemporary performance and theatre practices, where conventional distinction between fields such as theatre, dance, music and art may overlap. The intermedial discourse highlights the manner in which “live” performance now takes place within the culture of mediation.

Intermediality in live performance operates and occurs at the in-between or the intersection of media; such that the boundaries of media elements, conventionally considered disparate and separate, are blurred or fused through a state of medial exchange or communication in which one media is transformed or informed by the other. Traditional notion of medial representation ascribed the principle that meaning or expression could be equivalently expressed between one media and another. Following developments in the creative fields and informed by new media and post-structuralist theories, practitioners begin to interfere with media seeming transparent translation and contextualization of meaning and information. In current occurrences, the intermedial is often presented through the open-ness, multiplication and/or plurality of signs and meanings reverberated and played across multiple media as a means to fracture the straightforward working of mediation. Although here the term intermedial refers the effect arising from a variety of communication between media that is driven by the incorporation of digital processing in live performance; however, the occurrence of intermediality encompasses process that can be found between media, art forms and concepts outside of the application of digital technology.

The intermedial discourse had been distinguished into four types by Jens Schröter:
1. Synthetic intermediality, which refers to the fusion of different arts and media into new art or media forms.

2. Formal or trans-medial intermediality, based on the assumption that methods and modes of representation (aesthetic conventions) operate in several media.

3. Transformational intermediality, which refers to the representation of one medium through another medium.

4. Ontological intermediality, the reverse of transformational intermediality, where a medium defines its own ontology through relating itself to another medium, and raises the issue that it is not possible to define the specificity of a medium in isolation except through comparison with another.1

The distinctions within the intermedial discourse are organized around media specificity through the explication of materiality and mediality; because studying the different forms of intermediality involves specifying the expressive structure or mode of articulation specific to the materiality of any media, as well as its communication semiotics and its relations with other media.2

However, digitality alters such clear definition of materiality in at least two ways: First, once media is being expressed numerically, it can be pulled apart and (re-)organised in relations not circumscribed by its former origin in analog media. For instance moving images are now organized through motion estimation algorithm, rather than a series of still frames; therefore in spite of the visual preservation the materiality of the images differ profoundly.3 Second, the numerical representation of media implies that the same set of data can be transposed onto another media, as another kind of physical manifestation. From this view, there is a division between information and form. If information is the essence, so to speak, then materiality would become just a fleeting manifestation. Henceforth digitality changes and complicates the intermedial landscape. Digitality, underlined by numerical representation and the singular substance of the binary, alters the seemingly clear borders between media structures and form by making structures indeterminate and in flux.

Accordingly, the boundaries or distinctions between the media (and the associated modalities) can be made blurred through manipulating varying degrees of convergence, re-mediation and/or composite arrangements. Such manipulation of media creates an expanded dimension of relationality in which live performance takes place. Intermediality is incorporated in
performance through the development of systems that transcode sets of relationship between media. Transcoding quantitative and qualitative values and relations between media involve a reduction process whereby material occurrence is abstracted through the manner in which information is tapped, organized and understood. In this materialist approach, the conventional ideas of meaning translation, signification and representation are stretched, because meaning and signification depends on defined structures of relations (as that found in natural order). The ontological blurring and indeterminate state of things as a result of the malleability of relations expressed through the informational affect sign-systems and meaning.

2. Reduction as Creative Potential

The seeming limitation of reduction in materialist translation is also where its potential lies. In each reductive tapping of information there exist multiplicity of Other-ness and leaks. There are other way of understanding and organizing information, and other way of defining materiality. In each case the logic of information extraction and algorithmic coding employed is correlative with the conceptual framework and knowledge model used in the system design. Coding are not indifferent abstraction, it is informed by the design deliberation - the manner in which the kind of information is tapped and utilised, visualized and presented becomes a window to the understanding of the thought processes behind it. While the viewing of events and transformational movement often becomes a primary perceptual process in intermedial performances, in practice meaning is in fact not entirely handled a posteriori.

In some cases practitioners work between linguistic and non-linguistic semiotics. For instance, certain intensity of emotions may be expressed by a corresponding value change etcetera. In which case, the system is coded with the associative presumptions, conditioned ideas and/or knowledge framework. In other strategies, information is not transcoded to produce associative meaning, but as a pure driver of relations and patterns, or as the transformative of the new. The sets of algorithmic coding and rules formulate the in-betweeness of mediality through the real-time processing of translation or transcoding. The running of the codes in real-time during live performance forms relations and patterns which pushes the making of meaning to occur at the receiving end, thus audience have to become active collaborators in the negotiation of meaning or meaningfulness. In the designing of the system for live performance, the selection of wares relates to the kind of information that can be obtained and manipulated and correlatively to the kind of transposition and transcoding of information between media.

The materialist approach provides the possibility of forming rhizomatic relationships or uncommon and unconventional connections
between things. Such intermedial performance reorders or shakes up our perceptual processes; instead of looking for meaning and signification, we look rather at relation between multiple forces acting on one another in a reciprocal and transformative manner. We watch for causal relations, patterns, and becomings. The primacy of signs, significations and meanings shift to made way for the observation of materialities of communications, events and intensities in live performance - there is a focus on affect and the phenomenological and a move away from reading.

3. **Inter-medial Causality and Performativity**

The real-time digital generation of the intermedial process in live performance results in a form of causal relationship within the sequence of mediation and remediation. This dimension of relationality between media elements differs in character from machinic extensions where parts join to form an extended body. Here there is a cross bordering of different medial realities and spaces in which performance takes place. When embodied interaction is involved between the performer and the network of media - the actions or body of the performer extends and enters the circuits of medial causality - implicating performativity. The mediality of the performer and the mediality of other media elements form causal (inter) connections, such that there are literal expansions and overlap of mediation spheres.

The embodied interaction creates an ontological blurring of actions - in which the performer’s actions have no one definitive meaning or resultant end. It both expands and abstracts the body through the framing of interaction - mediating the performer’s gestures and movements. Embodied interaction with the system also demands the performers to act in a medial environment in which our conditioned expectation of causality or causal relation is stretched and altered. Our ideas and concept are formed from our routine experience of causal relationships or causal routes. The rhizomatic effect of producing uncommon relations suspends conventional causal anticipation. Through digital processing, intermedial performance implicates the processes of mediality and it forms a responsive environment that is prescribed with its own spatial, temporal and causal rules. The designing and implementation of such causal relations becomes a critical process of the creation of structure and content of the performance.

The implementation of system is only one stage in the production of the intermedial performance. The selection of media elements followed by the configuration of the digital media environment generates a field of potentiality, from which the creation and actualization of the performance piece can take place. Through the different layers of authorships, practitioners have to creatively exploit the possibilities within the implemented system. The system could in term produce unexpected combinations and occurrence from which the practitioners can tap into.
4. Case Study

A. Quartet: Presented by Margie Medlin

Quartet is a live performance performed by a dancer, a musician, a virtual dancer projected onto a screen and a 3-axial robotic arm that is affixed with a camera at the top and attached to the ground at the bottom. Communication lines are set up through the translation of information between the human and virtual/robotic performers. First, data of the relationship of movement within a dancer’s skeletal frame is captured. This data from the dancer translate and drive the 3-axial movement of the robot-camera. This set of data is also being used to translate to the body of the virtual dancer projected onto a screen. A second set of data is captured from the gesture of the musician arm that is used to translate into the arms movement of the virtual dancer.

During performance these four entities form different sets of combinatorial relationships. The system is also designed to draw information from the body to produce movement other than, yet in relation to, itself. The data set captured is processed with different translation algorithms from which variability of movement can be derived. Collectively the movements of the bodies translate into a multiplication of forms and possibilities for choreography. The perception of relationship is critical to the set-up and the resultant choreography. In Quartet different translation scheme are implementing such that the other (virtual/robotic dancer) is programmed to create an extra dimension of choreographic or movement difference through a combination of information from the dancer and the musician. Choreographic difference and otherness is generated through algorithmic coding. From the Livingness of the body to the liveliness of the virtual body, exploiting the “otherness” of movement and choreography within the
possibility of combinations inherent within the transcoding; and working through the potentiality within the system. On one hand the transcoding form inter-actions between the virtual and the actual bodies, on the other hand, it present the leaks within any presentness; the virtuality within the potentiality of the actual. This is reverberated in the use of the moving live camera, which shows the dancer from another perceptual framing, in another possibility of relation.

The intermedial relations between them create an ontological tension between the connected and the disconnected; between the same and the different; and between augmentation and the individuation of parts. Different qualities of intermediality arise from the heterogeneous connections within the system:

First, the dance form a relationship between the gesture of playing music and the gestural movement of the virtual dancer generated through algorithmic transcoding. This manner of relating music to dance corporealizes music by highlighting the material link music has with the act of playing a musical instrument. Further, in the coding, by passing over music in the causal route and instead placing a direct link between the musician gestures and the virtual dancer’s gestures present the body as a medium in plural states of ‘coherence’ with music and dispersing it as a single distinct entity. The musician’s gesture is a consequence of the embodied interaction with the instrument and the intentionality of playing music, whereas the dancer’s gesture and movement is the result of a response to stimulation from without filtered through experience (and subjectivity). But here the multiplication of forms is driven by information feed from the musician to the virtual dancer; the translation presents a derail of the mediation processes by altering their conventional causal route.

The intermediality between dance and music negotiated with a physical link as opposed to the sound of music opens-up and dissolve the ontology of music and the body. The operation of creating “another kind” of causal relations between dance and music also raises the veil that there are no autonomous phenomena (or substance). In this sonic intermediality, sound is seen and dance is to be heard.

Second, with the varying degrees of abstraction or forms of remediation of the dancer’s corporeal form, the translated forms (of the virtual dancer and the robot camera) not only disrupt representation of the body - it creates a to and fro mirroring with the body between the three entities, dispersing it as a whole/unified entity. On one hand, the translation act as a hypermediacy of the body, dispersing it in various forms; on the other hand, the otherness of the translation acts as the trigger for difference - we thus see and relate the body in comparison and variation with the other. This occurs in two ways: in terms of the choreographic movement and it terms of visual and existential difference with the body.
As figural, the robot’s reference to the humanoid axes and the virtual dancer’s simulation of the human body disrupts representation rather than approaches it; it does not represent the human body and set it in stone but they act as difference to the figure (the human body), such that they are involves in the ‘becoming’ of the figure by throwing it into a zone of indiscernibility or undecidability between states of being. The figural is a deterritorialisation of the figure and function as a middle way; such framing of the figure operates as a point of departure for deterritorialisation, for a moving beyond the figure.6

In movement, this ontological blurring translates to the shifting of the centre; the body disrupted groundedness or centredness. Through embodied interaction, the extension of the body is also the increase in its limitation - body moving in accordance with, and in control, of an outside body/entity; body moving to affect a distance cause. Phenomenologically this engages the reversibility and extension of the body proprioception; the body relating to the outside through the flipping of consciousness. Causal actions and movement between the three also forms an assemblage in which the different elements can be heterogeneously combined to form different ‘co-functioning’ unities. During performance they slip into different pairings and trios. The corporeal intermediality is performed at this hovering of the virtual other as an extension of the body and as an ontological difference. Here corporeal identity is provisional much like the reconstituted virtual body, which is without a single coherent identity but is composed of integrated information from different sources.

Third, the camera view and the virtual space both operate as spatial folds. The movement of body is also the creation of spatiality. The moving view point of the camera films the movement of the dancer from without, while at the same time making new choreography with its own movement and moving frame of the dancer; and in the process flipping the audience’s and dancer’s point of views. In this manner of being amid media space, the human dancer is performing, simultaneously, for the filmic, as well as the virtual space - such that there is a spatial intermediality and a dialogue between the mixes of realities.

The choreography of the various elements is set up to achieve a sort of threaded, combinant movement, contiguous through the different realities presented on stage: body moving other bodies, moving other point of views, existing in a state of perpetual flux and pluralism. Space, movement and bodies cannot be, and is treated as not being, separated entities but existing as a resultant whole in its heterogeneous manifestations; it is abet a whole that leaks and re-associate. In production terms, the employment of 3d motion capture, as opposed to 2d video capture, enables this play of multiplicity of form, folding of space and moving point of view. The real-time embodied performative interaction, allows dancer to dance not so much from the
memory (of recorded images) but to dance in response to the camera in real-time.

Collectively, like the Deleuzian notion of body without organs, the performance has no centre but slips into different material and spatial connecting and extending possibilities. The body is presented in-between and through multiple forms of remediation; fracturing its identity.

5. From the Intermedial to Models of Reality

The intermedial effect alters according to the variability of system implementation. The specific design solution virtualizes a certain possible events. The interactivity frames the actions that takes place within the system and determines the route and consequence of each occurrence. In this responsive space the character of form (or anti-form), space and time emerged through the way information is organized and mediated. Perception of ontology and materialities of media and performers are shaped by this (inter)communications and dimension of relationality during performance. Phenomenological perception of the intermedial performance operates through the inter-subjectivity and interplay of the different and the same. All presences in the performance space (“real”, mediatized or mediated) contribute and affect the experience of one another and the performance in collective. On the semiotic level, the intermedial effect crosscuts straightforward representation by interfering and fracturing media coherency and causality - such that there are no origin, but all elements (the media and performers) operate in an referential loop, and in this process opening up meaning and activating observations of presence and materiality.

More often than not, the design of an intermedial system is based on the threshold of our corporeal functioning and our conditioned ways of being. Digital intermediality offers the opportunity to test our limits - how far can we go with augmentation before we stretch the borders of intelligibility and actions that can be meaningful to us.

Notes

4 The ‘rhizomatic’ is a term used by Deleuze and Guattari to describe connections that are random and decentred as opposed to traditional orders that are hierarchical and directional.

5 I attended a showing of ‘Quartet’ at Dancehouse, Melbourne, Australia in October 2008.


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PART VIII

Cyber-Policy and Cyber-Democracy

And Their Impact on National and

Global Politics
Governance and the Global Metaverse

Melissa de Zwart and David Lindsay

Abstract
The governance of emerging global communities such as MMORPGs, virtual worlds and social networking sites, raises fundamental issues concerning the legitimacy of rule-making, including problems such as the applicability of democracy and the rule of law, issues of consent and accountability, public versus private rule making and the application of national laws to global virtual communities. This paper will consider questions regarding the legitimacy of decisions made by private entities, especially service providers, the relevance of applying territorial national laws to global technological spaces and the rights of citizens of virtual communities. It concludes that governance of such spaces must reflect the networked nature of the global metaverse which gives effect to individual choices regarding social actions.

Key Words: Virtual Worlds, Internet, Governance, Regulation

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1. Virtual Worlds
Before we consider the application of governance mechanisms to virtual worlds, it is important to identify the nature of the environments captured within this term. It is now reasonably well recognised that not all virtual worlds are the same. Some are text based, others highly graphical, some open and others highly regulated. Some of the most successful worlds are aimed at children and young teens. However, the danger is that regulators, seeking to simplify the regulatory environment may wish to lump them in together, leading to inappropriate forms of regulatory control. This paper will focus upon massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) such as World of Warcraft and EverQuest, and social virtual worlds, such as Second Life, as they currently attract the highest number of users and demonstrate the range of issues to which virtual communities give rise. The key attributes of these environments is that participants interact in a shared, persistent environment, in real time, through an avatar and that the data creating the environment is hosted on a central server (or servers) controlled by the service provider. MMORPGs generally have a game object, requiring players to adopt a character from a predetermined set of characteristics and to level up through a series of challenges and tasks, whereas as social virtual worlds may have no object other than socialising. However, many spaces within social virtual worlds are dedicated to role-play.
and prescribe their own rules and objects, further muddying any attempts to clearly categorise such environments.

2. Governance Issues

As the number of people participating in virtual worlds increases, along with the amount of money invested in and circulated through virtual worlds, increasing demands will be made by national governments to control the activities that occur within them. Key governance issues identified by virtual worlds stakeholders at Virtual Policy 08 (UK) as requiring further exploration included:

The complex nature of governance of virtual worlds which consists of a mix of self-regulation, End User Licence Agreements (‘EULAs’), national regulation and codes of conduct;

The applicability of classifying virtual worlds as a separate classification for regulatory purposes (as distinct from broader regulation of the Internet);

The perceived lack of lobbying power/cohesive interests amongst service providers;

The question of whether national laws should apply to virtual worlds, or whether they should be recognised as a separate place and the related matter of determination and enforcement of jurisdiction with respect to applicable laws;

The nature and quality of consent provided by users;

Clarification of the question of whose interests should be protected pursuant to regulatory intervention (ie children or adults);

Recognition that enforcement procedures were a necessary aspect of effective regulation;

Recognition of the variety of models of virtual worlds;

The need for clearer induction procedures and education of users;
The identification of an appropriate legal model for participation in virtual worlds.\textsuperscript{4}

As can be seen from this list, these are fundamental issues in need of resolution. There is a danger that if such questions are not meaningfully resolved by the service providers and key stakeholders, governments will move to regulate virtual worlds without fully understanding the nature of such environments.

Virtual world creators and inhabitants alike have thus far resisted calls for greater regulation on the basis that they are artificial spaces and hence protected by ‘the Magic Circle’. The concept of the magic circle is derived from Johan Huizinga’s discussion of play spaces and identifies the game space, in which players are separated from the real world and agree to abide by the applicable game rules whilst they are in that space, as being outside the application of ‘real world’ laws.\textsuperscript{5} Virtual world pioneer Richard Bartle describes this as a willingness to forgo certain freedoms so that certain benefits and freedoms of the virtual world may be experienced during the time in-world.\textsuperscript{6}

However, this concept is under attack from many quarters, including national regulators, on the basis that many of these in-world actions have impacts upon people outside of the ‘game’. Media reports of fraud, sexual grooming, money laundering and terrorism have led to greater scrutiny from domestic governments, particularly with respect to threats posed to children. Joshua Fairfield has recently argued that the magic circle distinction between in-game and out-of-game activities is not helpful in determining when real world laws should apply to in-world events.\textsuperscript{7} Fairfield argues that it should be replaced with the recognition that virtual worlds should be permitted to create their own rules, acknowledged and accepted by members in their consent to the terms of service (‘ToS’) and community norms. When a dispute arises, these rules should be respected and in most cases enforced by domestic courts.

We will return to the question of whether there is any need for increased regulation and governance of virtual worlds, but first we will identify current sources of governance in virtual worlds.

3. Current Sources of Governance

The sources of law (rules) which may be currently be identified in virtual worlds are:

- The EULA/ToS: the contractual terms accepted by the end user, albeit frequently without reading them;

- The community rules or acceptable use guidelines;
The code: the underlying physics of the world, which determines what the avatar can (or cannot) do;

The general law applicable to the end user and/or the service provider;

Possibly, the specific norms or rules that apply to the particular environment, such as rules regarding speech, conduct and appearance, for example, the steampunk sim of Caledon (and surrounding sims) in Second Life.

Grimes, Jaeger and Fleischmann further simplify this down to two forms of governance, being the underlying source code of the program and the civil code of rules.8

Even with these multiple layers of control, there remains within the virtual world some gaps or capacity for change and uncertainty. In some environments this gap may be left deliberately to facilitate expansion of the world through user creation of new content. As Humphreys observes MMORPGs (and by analogy social virtual worlds) continue to evolve and grow after launch, with input from both service provider and users.9 For example, the code may allow or enable some particular activity that may be prohibited by the game rules or community norms. A question then arises as to whether an exercise of this power is ‘cheating’ or merely exploiting an aspect of the world’s functionality. Your point of view on this would be dictated by both the nature of the world and your attitude as a member of that world. Castells has identified four layers of cultural attitudes underpinning the Internet being the techno-meritocratic, the hacker, the virtual communitarian and the entrepreneurial.10 The hacker, representing a ‘culture of convergence between humans and their machines in a process of unfettered interaction’, may regard such actions merely as a potential waiting to be fulfilled.11 The virtual communitarian, on the other hand, may place a higher value on mutual respect for community norms.

As Grimes et al observe, there are multiple forms of governing documents in virtual worlds, however there is no fixed or common terminology regarding what terms such documents should contain, nor any commonality of language or structure.12 A key aspect of such documents is the software licence agreement, which permits the user to use the underlying computer software subject to the terms of use dictated by the service provider. As the recent litigation involving Blizzard, the owners of World of Warcraft, and MDY, the creators of Glider, a program, which facilitates automated play, demonstrates, this structure represents an extremely powerful form of control. Blizzard has alleged that end users of WoW, who have paid their subscription fee and are otherwise legitimate authorised users
of the WoW software, are in breach of the software licence when they use Glider in conjunction with WoW. Thus this use of the unauthorised program places them in breach of the contract and transforms them into copyright infringers. MDY they claim is then liable for inducing end users to breach contract and copyright. This claim has been upheld by the District Court of Arizona, with the judge finding on summary judgment that MDY was liable for tortious interference with contract and contributory and vicarious copyright infringement. On a further hearing the Court concluded that MDY is also liable under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act provisions relating to trafficking in technological products designed to circumvent technological measures that control access to a protected work and that protect a right of the copyright owner; that Donnelly, the president and day to day manager of MDY, was personally liable for the tortious interference, copyright infringement and DMCA violations and that Blizzard is entitled to a permanent injunction against the continued sale and distribution of Glider. The key interest of this case from a governance perspective is the finding of the Court that the grant of the limited license to use the game software is expressly made subject to the user’s ‘agreement to and continuing compliance with this License Agreement.’ Further, the licence agreement provides that ‘[a]ll use of the Game Client is subject to’ the EULA and the ToU. This strict enforcement of the copyright licence ignores the fact that modifications (or ‘mods’) of game software, despite being explicitly prohibited by the Licence Agreement and ToU, are frequently made by gamers and are seen as part of the gaming culture. There are thousands of mods available on the Internet and Blizzard provides some support to the modder community. Hence there is ambivalence and tension in the relationship between the service provider and users, reflecting fear, respect and resistance at the same time.

4. The Nature of Control

Service providers are both creator and controller of the virtual world. As Sal Humphreys asserts, in developing the code that generates the virtual world service providers do not merely launch a completed environment, but from that time forth must also take responsibility for civic control as the ‘manager of communities’. This may be a role that the developer neither understands nor wants. On the other hand, as Bartle has argued it may be a deliberate strategy, actively wanted by developer and players alike. Linden Lab, the developers of Second Life, have had a troubled relationship with their users (‘residents’), at times asserting control in the guise of the benevolent dictator and at others seeking to shelter behind the mantle of service provider. As the discussion of the Glider case demonstrates, the relationship between the service provider and community involves
elements of devotion and resistance and, as each community has unique attributes and aspirations, that relationship requires more constant maintenance than the service provider may have anticipated. The players are dedicated to supporting and nurturing their virtual worlds, through fan forums, blogging and conventions. However, where interests of players or citizens and the service provider diverge, there can be serious dissent, for example the ban on ‘broadly offensive content’ in Second Life. Bartle’s description of the game providers as ‘gods’ does not apply so directly to worlds such as Second Life, where so much control is granted to citizens through allowing them to create content and acquire a sense of ownership.19

5. Consent
So, reflecting this need for bespoke governance, does the EULA provide the most effective form of governance?

The development of the ability to transmit content electronically, and hence to monitor, charge for and potentially restrict the use, reuse, modification and further transfer of that content, has led to a shift from the regulation of distribution of such content from general laws such as copyright to the private ordering of rights through contract. On the one hand, proponents of greater control over such uses, headed up by the US content industries, have argued for greater control over access and re-use through the legal enforcement of technological protection mechanisms and contractual waiver of exceptions existing under the copyright law. On the other hand, advocates of greater rights of access and manipulation, such as the Creative Commons movement, have bemoaned the overly restrictive nature of the copyright law and created suites of ‘copyleft’ licences to be attached to new works, flagging the rights of re-use and attribution to be accorded to a work. In this climate, private ordering through contract has been advocated as a superior form of rights management, albeit for very different reasoning.20

This thinking has of course influenced issues of governance of virtual worlds, the worlds themselves being creative manifestations of the service provider, assisted in most cases by user created content. Therefore the trend has been to regard the best way to regulate such worlds as to leave it up to service providers to enter into a contract with users. However, this model has many flaws, not the least of which is the fact that most users do not read the EULA, and even if they did there is no scope for them to negotiate its terms. Membership of the world is offered solely on a take it or leave it basis. Further, citizens entering a virtual world will carry with them a belief that they carry with them certain entrenched values or norms, which may be legally enforced in that virtual world. As noted above, citizens also acquire a sense of ownership over the virtual world when they engage in creation of content.
6. Internet Governance

Does the Internet governance debate provide any guidance on effective governance of virtual worlds? Internet mythology provides us with two stories regarding the governance and control of the Internet. One approach, taken from the stories told by the cyberlibertarians such as John Perry Barlow, tell us that the Internet is not susceptible to control. As an end to end network, connected by users’ adoption of the TCP/IP protocol and operating on a distributed network, offering redundant links, these commentators tell us that: ‘You can’t stop the signal’. On the other hand the cyberpaternalists conclude that the architecture of the Internet can be used to determine and dictate and therefore effectively control behaviour.

In his recent work on Internet governance and regulation, Andrew Murray draws upon these two opposing views of Internet control and concludes that neither is accurate. Building on Castells’ concept of network individualism, Murray argues that the key to understanding regulatory challenges is to be found in network individualism or weak collectivism. He states:

Network individualism or weak collectivism is an effect of modern communications cultures and is particularly strong in the decentralised network that is the Internet. With no single point of control, as is found in other media carriers, the opportunity for regulation through law or code is diminished and the opportunity for communities to set standards and values (short of norms) which challenge regulatory communications from regulatory bodies is enhanced. This leads to the development of a broader network of networks as communities gravitate towards other communities that share similar values. In linking together and sharing their cultures each community affects and influences the others, the points of contact being individuals who are members of multiple communities. This means that any attempt to intervene in one part of the network will have unanticipated consequences for other parts of the network. Murray concludes; ‘This makes traditional command and control regulation highly disruptive.’

Therefore regulation of this network of communities is not merely a question of identifying and imposing the ‘correct’ existing laws on virtual worlds, but to ask as Poster did with respect to the broader Internet in 1995: ‘are there new kinds of relations occurring within it which suggests new forms of power configurations between communicating individuals?’ Poster concludes: ‘Internet communities function as places of difference from and resistance to modern society. In a sense, they serve the function of a Habermasian public sphere without intentionally being one.’ This
networked model of interconnected public spheres may provide some guidance regarding governance of virtual worlds.

7. **Conclusions: Governance of the Global Metaverse?**

Can it be said then that there is justification for a blanket approach to governance of virtual worlds? There is a diversity of environments that may satisfy the definition of a virtual world, yet each represents and reflects the interests and expectations of a diversity of users. The value of such worlds lies in this very diversity, which should be respected and encouraged. Therefore any governance model adopted should reflect the importance of the network as the organising agency, respecting the need of the individual to participate in a range of interconnected experiences, which should not be fragmented or interrupted by the interference of inconsistent domestic laws. This analysis still reflects the choice between control by national governments or control by service providers, there is little reflection of control by the citizens of virtual worlds. National governments can best support the development of virtual worlds by creating consistent supportive and facilitative frameworks, which respect the needs of users and service providers rather than imposing external controls. However, it is also desirable to clarify the relationship between the service provider and the citizen regarding important matters such as privacy, surveillance, ownership of intellectual property, transparency of terms and age appropriate content. This approach would be most likely to facilitate the development of productive, vibrant virtual communities embodying values of the public sphere.

**Notes**

1. ‘Virtual worlds are not all the same, and the law should therefore be careful about treating them as if they were all the same.’ R Bartle ‘Why Governments aren’t Gods and Gods aren’t Governments’ *First Monday*, Special issue number 7 (September 2006).


9 Humphreys, above, p. 150.
11 Castells, above, p. 50.
12 Grimes, Jaeger and Fleischmann, above, p. 10.
13 *Blizzard Entertainment, Inc and Vivendi Games, Inc v MDY Industries, LLC*, 14 July 2008, Arizona District Court, Judge David Campbell.
14 *MDY Industries, LLC v Blizzard Entertainment, Inc and Vivendi Games, Inc and Blizzard Entertainment, Inc v Michael Donnelly*, No CV-06-2555-PHX-DGC, Order, Arizona District Court, Judge David Campbell, 28 January 2009. The decision is likely to be appealed.
17 Humphreys, above, p 151.
21 <http://www.serenitymovie.com/>, Mr Universe: ‘There is only the truth of the signal. Everything goes somewhere and I go everywhere’.
23 M Castells, *The Internet Galaxy*, above, pp. 129-133.
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Bibliography


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Politics and Social Software: Recommendations for Inclusive ICTs

Christina Neumayer, Celina Raffl and Robert M. Bichler

Abstract
The emergence of social software and the new perception of the Internet promise to enable decentralized actions, a range of possibilities to share and exchange information open and free of charge, to collaborate equally, and to foster intercultural understanding and participation. These new possibilities have the potential to lay the foundation for a new way of political participation and social movements to emerge, but there are also limits because of existing social structures and increasing commercialisation of the Internet. In this paper we discuss theoretical concepts that we currently state as characteristics of political activism and the Internet in general, and of social software in particular: [1] the foundation for community building, [2] the interrelation of the real and the virtual space, [3] digital divide and social inequalities, and [4] the influence of globalisation. The Internet provides the foundation for communities to emerge and to shape society, for both societal benefits, e.g. empowerment of citizens, ecological conservation, democratisation and participation, as well as negative consequences, e.g. social inequalities, imbalanced power structures, and digital divides. Based on these four concepts we outline recommendations for inclusive Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), i.e. possibilities social software theoretically offers for social movements, political activism, and participation.

Key Words: Cooperation, Cyberspace, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), Social Inclusion.

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1. Introduction
New technological applications, often subsumed under terms like social software and Web 2.0, and increasing computer literacy brought about a new generation of skilled web users that actively contribute to innumerable communities, blogs, and wikis. As produsers they generate content by aggregating, mashing-up, (re-)interpreting and distributing information. Users are able, motivated and willing to participate in the creation of content, sharing information and knowledge and making it available to others. Social software in particular promises to enable decentralised actions, a range of possibilities to share and exchange information open and often free of charge, to collaborate equally and to foster intercultural understanding and participation. The
Internet is claimed to change politics, not only from a governmental and parliamentarian perspective but also on the individual level. These new possibilities have the potential to lay the foundation for new ways of political participation and social movements to emerge. ICTs provide the infrastructure for diverse groups or people to engage in a common cause within weak-tie networks. Some claim that a virtual public sphere emerges by political online interaction and that online communities provide opportunities for participation and engagement. Blogs, wikis and social networking sites provide a technological basis for grassroots action to coordinate and for activists to communicate. The Internet can support the organisation of topic-oriented pressure groups, protest organisations and ideological movements outside the mainstream. Participation, discussion, the active role of users, organisational and social benefits by using the global infrastructure for creating networks are important elements for political activism.

Communities that emerge in cyberspace can enhance political activities, but there are certain disadvantages as well, that are inherent in the technology. Political leaders, commercial global players and international institutions have an enormous influence on the structure and the design of the web as infrastructure, the commodification of information goods and web services, on power relations and content. The outcome, the political orientation, and the methods for online political activism and participation are dependent on users, developers, and producers of social software. Although the Internet can potentially connect people all over the world, limitation in Internet access, lack in computer skills and literacy make the political forum it offers less inclusive - not only, but especially in the developing world. Cultural differences can lead to misinterpretations when political mobilisation enters a global arena through digital social networks. An increasing number of people is currently participating in weblogs, social networking sites, wikis, and open source software. At the same time political participation is decreasing in many western democracies.

In the following we critically assess this contradiction based on theoretical concepts that we currently state as characteristics of political activism and ICTs, in particular of social software: [1] the foundation for community building, [2] the interrelation of the real and the virtual space, [3] digital divide and social inequalities, and [4] the influence of globalisation. Based on these concepts we develop guidelines to enhance political engagement and grassroots activism that lead to a more inclusive society. This requires cooperation among citizens, their willingness, and possibilities for participation.

2. Cybercommunities and Politics

The heterarchical, decentralised and likewise open architecture of the Internet provides the necessary precondition for virtual communities and
hence for participation, new social movements and grassroots activism to emerge. Cyberspace can be defined as a space that enables social movements, i.e. grassroots democracy, and political participation. Common history, knowledge, and practices foster the strength of a community. The web enhances networking of people from different backgrounds, histories and experiences to share interests and aspirations. The Internet provides space to articulate group identity, e.g. sharing a political cause. Social software provides the possibility for political action and participation, although commercial structures are inherent in most websites and create hierarchies in favour of some participants and, on the contrary, repressive for others. Online communities share different ideas, political causes, symbols, imaginary, and ideologies, which are dependent on the physical actors who discuss, exchange ideas, and participate by using digital ways of political expression.

3. Between Real and Virtual

Social software has already changed the way we perceive, design, and (re-)use information and communication technologies. We state that cyberspace is not a sphere of its own, distinct from real life, but an expression of social structures that are to some extent transferred to the virtual space, and vice versa. Hence cyberspace is a social space, because it is created, shaped and (re-)designed by technicians, constructors, engineers. Designing and structuring cyberspace is a social act and cyberspace is a product of human action and creativity. We have to estimate the role of the engineers who created the websites and those who want to make profit out of them and therefore do not enhance political engagement in the first place. Both, users as well as the design of social software, have an impact on defining the ideological colouring of digitally networked politics. The use of social software for political protest or participation is dependent on ideologies, as well as cultural and political contexts of its users and developers. Klar argues that:

new communication technologies, decentrally employed, could just as easily lead to a cultural revolution in which the citizens take their problems into their own hands, defining and designing their needs, products and lifeforms for themselves.

This vision is still present in discussions about political activism in the virtual space. However, disadvantages in societal structures are transferred to the virtual space and influence online participation and political engagement. There are two extreme perspectives in terms of power relations: ICTs can help to increase control over users and privacy diminishes; at the same time, social software is associated with a more powerful role of users and increasing self-determination regarding content. This leads to an enforcement of
collaborative democratic possibilities. These perspectives are based on two contrary policy making approaches. On the one hand a top-down approach, which is characterised by mental disappropriation, loss of control, and surveillance, on the other hand a bottom-up approach, which enables self-determined life-styles, participation and protection of personal rights.

Decentralized organisation of the Internet allows the emergence of direct-democratic grassroots communities that challenge the centralisation of power; hence a participatory society can be established. At the same time ICTs and social software foster the rise of totalitarian forms of surveillance and control. ICTs have the potential to strengthen both, participation and surveillance. These are two tendencies that contradict each other, but both affect society. The inherent democratic potential of ICTs is often not realised because of asymmetrical distribution of power and resources in the real world.

4. Digital Inequalities

Social patterns existing in real space, including social inequalities, have an impact on cyberspace communities. We assume that political activism via social software is in many cases initiated by an elite, representing their interests, and not necessarily those of the citizens. Those excluded from cyberspace thus depend on real-space-elites. As Graham argues the so-called information revolution is carried out by “literate and language related” societies and is therefore a product of an elitist part of the world’s population that does not include financially and educationally backward groups. Participation, social movements, collective intelligence, collaborative knowledge production, citizen journalism, user generated content, etc. are new qualities of social software, but inequalities in social class, education, skills, and lack in capabilities influence the way technology is used and political engagement is perceived.

Information and knowledge are central forces and became a strategic economic resource. The Internet enables reproduction and free global distribution of information. Information can be stored on physical carriers, it is a non-rival and intangible good. With the help of intellectual property rights information is artificially transformed into a scarce resource. A monopoly for selling and licensing information is established in favour of the information-owner. Due to commodification of information and increasing commercialisation of the Internet initial hopes of creating a free cyberspace away from social power structures, traditional hierarchies and inequalities were replaced by profit-oriented realism. Increasing commercialisation of the Internet led to its control by an elite, that is able to restrict or enhance political protest and networks of critical voices across the world. Imbalanced power relations, as well as lack of cultural, economic, and social capital can marginalize people from the political potential of social software. As Lessig argues the Internet was created as a global space, although controlled and regulated under the
influence of commerce. The Internet itself is neither regulated nor controllable, but a combination of hardware, software, and code, that can enhance freedom or be an instrument of control.

5. **A Global Virtual Sphere**

The global architecture of the virtual sphere is not restricted to local, e.g. national or geographical boundaries. Via the Internet local political concerns can be transformed into transnational issues and gain attention from people all over the world. Although global information distribution was possible by mass media as well, world-wide visibility has increased through the Internet’s possibilities for global networking. Political actions, causes and decision-making processes on a local scale, or in a particular part of this world, can trespass national boundaries and rapidly acquire worldwide attention and support.

Information technologies and, related to them, changes in communication structures are among the deep drivers of globalisation. At the same time the expanding logic of capitalism and development of global market goods and services, worldwide distribution of information, new global division of labour driven by multinational corporations, the growth of migration and the movement of people foster global interconnectedness. There is a difficult relationship between the “global as the principle source of domination and the local as the principal source of resistance and emancipation.”

Local, national and global interaction is necessary for political activism and awareness by a global community. Social software provides the potential to connect people from across the globe with common interests, but with different cultural and national backgrounds. Consequently “political narratives that govern communication between elites and following different parts of the world” would need a careful translation from one context to another. People act in local contexts, hence mobile, transboundary political practice is possible not only through institutional global spaces, but through powerful imaginaries, languages, and symbols that inspire global action.

The outcome of these technical properties depends on the users and their perception of a particular political problem, worldview or ideology and their ability of using the technologies. According to Giddens local action becomes action from a distance with impacts beyond national boundaries. Globalisation is characterised by intensification of international social relationships by the specifics of network structures and their interdependencies and interactions with people who are not restricted to space and time.

Although the Internet in general and social software in particular provide possibilities to enhance political engagement on a global scale, cultural misinterpretations, social inequalities, as well as commodification of information and web services hinder global grassroots politics.
6. Conclusion and Recommendations for Inclusive ICTs

Learning from theoretical concepts we conclude that ICTs provide the foundation for communities to emerge and to shape society, for both societal benefits, e.g. empowerment of citizens, democratisation and participation, as well as negative consequences, e.g. social inequalities, imbalanced power-structures, digital divides. Based on the four concepts mentioned above we outline recommendations for inclusive Information and Communication Technologies from a social science perspective with a normative approach. We emphasise on the possibilities social software theoretically offers for social movements, political activism and participation to emerge.

[1] Community building in cyberspace requires an open, participatory framework. Following Jenkins we can define a participatory culture by following characteristics: “relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement”, “strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations with others”, “some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices”, “members believe that their contributions matter”, “members feel some degree of social connection with one another.” Birdsall describes a development from “build it and they will come” to “they will come and build it” focusing on the changing role of content consumption to content production by users, what underlines the concept of a participatory culture as an individual- and society-centred communication process. To foster community building in cyberspace, technology design as well as social and political contexts, have to leave space for grassroots democracy, and political participation to overcome the heteronomy of contemporary politics and to move towards a more participatory virtual culture.

[2] Societal structures and political concepts are transferred from the real world into the virtual space. Since cyberspace is a social space, the real and the virtual cannot be seen independently from each other. This also includes the design process. Technology design is a social act and technicians should be understood in their social role as experts, hackers, laymen, and common users that adapt to their technical needs. Constructing technology is per se a social act. Hence people have the ability to shape technologies. At the same time technologies influence society, they are both, enabling and constraining. The architecture of technology is designed by an elite and by private companies that usually do not consider grassroots activism as a desired goal. Very often people tend to arrange themselves with technologies, rather than changing or adapting them. By including users in the design process, users’ needs for political participation and grassroots democracy can be considered as a valuable design guideline.

Apart from a participatory technology design approach real world context has to enhance participation, the emergence of bottom-up discussion and social movements. Cultural, political and societal contexts have to be considered. We argue that current intellectual property rights do not enhance...
collaboration and participation, on contrary: “the entire universe of peer-produced information gains no benefit from strong intellectual property rights.” An interrelationship between open content, the assurance of privacy, and avoidance of surveillance technologies especially in countries with restrictive governments, are preconditions for political engagement of civil society by using social software.

3 The so-called digital divide still excludes many people especially in the developing world to use social software for political engagement. Considering the enormous part of the population that is currently excluded from the Internet we argue that social software - if not supported by traditional media or opinion leaders - cannot be the adequate tool for grassroots democracy to emerge, especially in countries with enormous inequalities and restrictive regimes. Universal access is the precondition for using ICTs for grassroots democracy, although lack of skills, education, motivation, and capabilities lead to exclusion as well. Imbalances in economic, social, symbolic and cultural capital require an interdisciplinary approach to overcome inequalities in using social software for political engagement.

4 Social software provides possibilities to enhance political engagement on a global scale, although cultural misinterpretations, social inequalities, and commodification of information and web services hinder global grassroots activism. The users, producers, and creators of social software can either enhance competition, or communication and collaboration in cyberspace. The potential of the technologies can be used in different ways and the future direction it takes depends upon its actors. Civil rights and political freedom cannot be guaranteed by a capitalist system that makes social actions possible only if they are adjusted to their ideologies. Commodification of web services and commercial interest hinder grassroots activism, which is not directed according to rules of the market, supporting economic benefits and capitalist ideas. Free and open source based social software hence can lead to more inclusive ICTs and support grassroots democracy.

Notes

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Mediatisation of Terror in Cyberspace: Scrutinizing Al-Qaeda’s Media Strategy

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Abstract
Al-Qaeda’s quick and pervasive use of satellite broadcast and the Internet is central to its decisive use of the mass media to further its strategic agenda. Videotaped messages of Osama Bin Laden are now exclusively produced and disseminated online for publicizing its ideology, legitimizing its goals, while at the same time inflating fear in the West, via constant threats. This research critically analyses Al-Qaeda’s media strategy, as central to its military strategy in its fight against the West. Assessing the ways it communicates its strategic deeds, I argue that the apparent success of Al-Qaeda’s media strategy, carries the seeds for its failure due to the inherent contradictions in its propaganda messages, the absence of territorial-based legitimate goals, and the inability of its virtual activity to substitute for the real world. In addition, the deliberate targeting of civilians worldwide, which works against the essence of Islam, diminishes the liability of Arab and Islamic support.

Key Words: Cyberterror, Terror(ism), Bin Laden, Al-Qaeda, Jihad, Media Strategy, Propaganda, Publicity, Legitimization, Intimidation

1. Introduction
The convergence of media and communication technologies - allowing for the Internet to carry text, audio, and audio-visual messages, downloadable in multiple formats-has opened up the way for terrorists to exploit the media in accumulating their strategic interests. Jihadis, say Cornan and Schiefelbein, execute their communication and public relation strategy in a highly developed fashion ‘assimilating new media into their repertoire’ to establish ‘a virtual worldwide jihad movement.’

Since 2001, post 9/11, Al-Qaeda organization emerged as a highly influential terrorist organization efficiently using multiple media types, including the Internet, in communicating its deeds. Quickly and efficiently expanding its Internet presence, it became evident that audiovisual propaganda messages of its leading strategists, bin Laden and Al-Zawahri, are vital to its media strategy, the key for its political/military stratagem.

Despite arguments on the Internet’s extending terrorists’ power, this research argues that the apparent worldwide success of Al-Qaeda’s media strategy carries the seeds for its eventual failure. This is due to various factors
including, the inherent contradictions in its propaganda messages, the absence of a territorial-based legitimate goals, the inability of their virtual online activity to substitute for the real world, and the deliberate targeting of civilians in its operations, which deeply works against the essence of Islam.

Scrutinizing Al-Qaeda’s media strategy and discursively analyzing its videotaped messages is central to assessing its strengths and weaknesses, thereby anticipating its success and/or failure opportunities. Evaluating the discursive structure of images and words, this research provides a persuasive critical account of Al-Qaeda’s communicated audio-visual rhetoric of policies and strategies.

2. Terrorism and the Mass Media: Propaganda of the Deed

Classic definitions of terrorism are only centred on ‘state terror’ when states commit deliberate acts of violence against their own people or the people of other countries. Regime de la terreur is the French origin of the term terrorism or terror. It developed during the French Revolution as an instrument of governance to consolidate the state’s power to intimidate what was regarded as counter-revolutionaries, subversive groups.

Opposite to classic definitions lies contemporary-post 9/11-definitions mostly transfixed on terrorism conducted by non-state actors, usually Muslims. Theorists distinguished between terrorism from below, practiced by ‘those outside the dominant group,’ and terrorism from above, referring to ‘coercive intimidation practiced by the state directly or sponsored by the state indirectly and practiced by surrogates.’

The overtly-biased Western media coverage of terror events, practiced from below, coupled with the global disagreement on a single definition for terrorism, helped fixing the terrorism label solely on non-state actors-especially Islamists-and totally excluding governments-especially liberal democracies. This, says Grosscup, has left the term ‘politically loaded,’ and opened up for officials to formulate their own definitions in a ‘consistently inconsistent’ fashion that suits their political agenda, and ‘to avoid the terrorism label being applied to their own violence.’

Nearly every state-sponsored definition of terrorism excludes the liability of state terror and is just centred on the notion of ‘Islamic terrorism. According to Richard Jackson, ‘It is most frequently assumed - often without any evidence provided, as if it were a self-evident fact - that terrorism is directly linked to, emerges from or is inspired by extremist and fundamentalist forms of Islam.’

Just as the media has transfixed terrorism on non-state actors, terrorists have frequently exploited all forms of mass media, including the internet, to promote their strategic deeds. Terrorists’ ultimate objectives are political, says Nacos. ‘Without making friends and foes aware of their existence, of their motivations, and their objectives, terrorists would not see a
chance to further their political agenda.’ Propaganda of the deed includes extremists’ employing political violence or terror as well as the mass media to justify their deeds and gain public sympathy for their goals.\(^6\)

The relationship between the media and non-state terrorists is widely described as ‘symbiotic’ or mutually beneficial. Their deeds in using the media, say Enders and Sandler, includes exploiting its ability to reach nearly ‘every corner of the globe almost instantaneously.’ Terrorists use the media to inflate fear, widen public support, recruit new candidates, and ‘portray government responses as brutal in the hopes of winning popular support.’\(^7\)

The mass media is mainly interested in the size of its audience. ‘Larger audience means higher viewer ratings and advertisers demands for television and larger profits for print media.’ The media goals in reporting terror events include: getting a \textit{scoop} by reporting the news first; intensely \textit{dramatizing} an event and its causes. Nevertheless, ‘there is no credible scientific evidence that establishes ‘a cause-effect relationship between media coverage and the spread of terrorism.’\(^8\)

Propaganda of the deed is also practiced via the internet. Terrorists’ use the Internet, says Crilley, to campaign for legitimacy. The convergence of communication technologies has allowed for ‘the widest ever propaganda campaign’ to take place online. The Internet has provided terrorist, extremist or activist groups with the means to propagate their ideology, encouraging organizations to disseminate propaganda and misinformation. But how effective is the internet in empowering the terrorists’ agenda is yet another question. ‘The evidence to date,’ adds Crilley, ‘is that sub-groups at least use the Internet mainly for propaganda.’ Though the availability of knowledge and the anonymity of cyberspace may facilitate the creation of new groups, ‘real’ resources are required to execute a plan.\(^9\)

The internet seems to be an unreliable and unstable location in terms of information provision and impact. The volume of people with access to television is still ‘larger than those with Internet access.’ A website is useful in providing in-depth and up to date information to the ‘already converted’ or to those aware of the issues, ‘rather than for creating awareness.’ The internet complements other types of media, but its virtual nature cannot replace the real world; ‘ten-thousand emails does not have the same impact as ten thousand protesters in Whitehall.’\(^10\)

In addition, the decline of face-to-face communication amongst terrorist groups, adds Crilley, means that ‘the very structure of these groups may be affected in ways that could be hard to anticipate.’ The anonymity ‘helps distance those sympathetic with the cause from those actively fighting for the cause in ways that may be objectionable to the sympathizers.’\(^11\)
3. Al-Qaeda’s Media Strategy

The ‘symbiotic’ relationship binding the terrorists’ and media, and the Western media’ focussing on terrorism from below, transfixed on Islamic terrorism, helped Al-Qaeda fostering its ideology and strategy. The nature of modern communication technologies met spontaneously with Al-Qaeda’s goals in globalizing Jihad and spreading fear from terrorism in the west.

The ‘visual culture’ of television made the presence of audiovisuals a determinant for what to be aired. Al-Qaeda has applied this in 9/11, hitting landmarks, where largest television stations are concentrated, guaranteed ‘exhaustive coverage and a global projection of their actions.’ Television, notes Soranio, ‘prioritizes violence indirectly,’ where newsworthiness depends on more dramatic, spectacular, and emotional content for ‘an image-oriented culture.’ The nature of Western media coverage of bin Laden and Al-Qaeda has deeply exaggerated its acclaimed power and impact. Terrorism’s enduring presence in current media ‘overdimensionalizes’ its capacity, and reinforce the impact of its threats and intimidation.12

This has assisted Al-Qaeda in its attempts to achieve its strategic propaganda goals: propagating its ideology, legitimizing its vision, and intimidating its enemies. According to Lynch, ‘Al-Qaeda the organization has increasingly become indistinguishable from Al-Qaeda Media Phenomenon.’13 Skilfully employing satellite technology to air its video messages to Arab and Western audience alike, nowadays, the Internet represents the central stage for Al-Qaeda’s media battlefield.

Believing in the media’s capability to multiply their power, Al-Zawahri asserts, ‘We are in a battle, and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media... we are in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma.’ Racing for the hearts and minds of Muslims reflects an overt weakness in Al-Qaeda’s goals and the means to achieve them. Al-Qaeda keeps denouncing the media role in covering their actions, claiming that the media not only lies about their real motivations, but also about the motivations of the West, usually reported as seeking peace and security.14

Central to Al-Qaeda’s media strategy, thus, was approaching Al-Jazeera to air their propaganda via satellite, since 1998. Approaching a single channel contributed to the fame of bin Laden and guaranteed him favourable coverage. Approaching news reporters ‘acting less like terrorists and more like politicians,’ terrorists ‘could hold out the promise of a comprehensive scoop while also guaranteeing […] more favorable treatment in a story.’15

The nature of Al-Qaeda’s relationship to Al-Jazeera, however, has often been misunderstood by the west, drawing wrong policy conclusions, as a result, says Lynch. The migration of bin Laden’s videos into the Internet was an expression of discontent about its airing of counter arguments, to seek objectivity. Jihadists found the Arab media ‘an unreliable ally,’ and bin
Laden in a 2004 statement identified the Arab media as ‘the primary source of deviation in the Muslim world.’

The global reach of the Internet has helped Al-Qaeda establishing itself as a ‘virtual state’ communicating with its ‘citizens,’ and expanding its audience. According to Seib, ‘For every conventional video performance by Bin-Laden that appears on Al-Jazeera and other major television outlets, there are hundreds of online videos.’ Similar to traditional media in wartime, the jihadist online media seeks to intimidate the enemy, legitimize its activities, and propagate support. Its impact however is hard to assess.

In 2001, the appearance of multi-media company as-Sahhab (the Clouds) marked the production of bin Laden and Al-Zawahri’s audio and videotapes. ‘Its productions, says Rogan, are known for their technological sophistication, cinematic effects, and unique footage, as well as for efforts to reach a Western public with translations and subtitles in foreign languages.’ The main strategic goals of as-Sahhab-produced videos are propagation, legitimization and intimidation. The most important goal is legitimizing the movement activities. ‘This is articulated through religious justification and by presenting the movement as a rightful resistance group within the context of Islamic history.’ Then, when directly addressing the West and the western public opinion, warning and reminding of the truce offered by bin Laden, the goal is intimidation.

Al-Qaeda’s stated goals, say Cornan and Schiefelbein, include toppling the ‘apostate regimes’ of the Middle East, restoring an Islamic Caliphate, and expanding its influence and rule as far as possible. Their media strategy is geared to facilitate those ‘overall’ goals. The absence of a clear and legitimate agenda to realize those general, possibly utopian, goals makes them inherently unreasonable and utterly unachievable.

4. Discursive Analysis of bin Laden’s Speeches

Bin Laden’s interpersonal, possibly charismatic, character has always been central to applying Al-Qaeda’s strategic goals, most notably: Propaganda. ‘Softly speaking, with apparent confidence, playing on issues of concern, to present his misconceptions of Islam,’ says Atwan, he tries to manipulate diverse audiences in the meantime. As describes Miller, ‘With his turban and camouflage jacket, his ornate Arabic and harsh vows of continued terror against America, Osama bin Laden revealed in his speech the instinctive cunning that has made him such a formidable foe.’

The overtly controversial personality of bin Laden represents the central propaganda vehicle of Al-Qaeda organization. Analyzing the audiovisual discourse of bin Laden’s speeches is thus central to evaluating Al-Qaeda’s points of strength and weaknesses, its strategic deeds as reflected in its own audiovisual communiqués, and assess their applicability. Using
critical discourse analysis, this research analyzes bin Laden’s online videos, scrutinizes verbal content of those videos, and their strategic function. Applying critical discourse analysis on bin Laden’s online videos between 1998 and 2005 has empirically demonstrated how his strategic goals, propaganda, legitimacy and intimidation, are in themselves central points of weaknesses, that he attempts to overcome via several techniques.

The first technique bin Laden uses is simplifying immoral acts of terror, as retaliation. This was evident in his 1998 interview with Al-Jazeera, saying, “Every Muslim should seek a place to fight the Jihad [...] to please God,” concluding with an open-ended question, “What is wrong with resisting the aggressors?”21 His statement evidently oversimplifies acts of terror, exclude its direct repercussions, and the religious grounds it purports.

The second techniques is speaking on behalf of the all Muslims, overtly misusing concepts like, umma, jihad, mujahideen, martyrs, infidels and many others, which directly loses him legitimacy and credibility. His misconceptions, for instance, of the term Jihad transfixes it on terror and violence, and exclude its positive applications, such as work and charity. He justifies violence against civilians as some sort of defence or retaliation.

The third technique, is acting more like a politician and less like a terrorist, by positioning himself as a political leader seeking to achieve religious goals, like restoring the Islamic caliphate, liberating Palestine, and toppling the ‘apostate’ regimes of the Arab world. Playing on general, possibly utopian, dreams as central goals, without providing a clear agenda on achieving them simply erodes credibility.

The above-explained techniques used by bin Laden in his online videos are not exhaustive, but are most indicative of his strategic failure for their inherent contradictions. Simplifying the immoral and illegal acts of terror as retaliation is meant to publicize and legitimate Al-Qaeda’s ideology. Speaking on behalf of the Islamic Umma delegitimizes him in the Islamic world, and in the meantime intimidates the West, inflating fear from ‘Islamic terror’, especially in a culture transfixing terror on Islam and Muslims.

5. Conclusion

Opposite to common arguments on the media’s role in empowering non-state terror, evidence suggests that contemporary terrorists’ relationship to the mass media is a love/hate one. Though non-state terrorists, since 9/11, have extensively used the media to publicize their deeds, media-backed post-9/11 definitions of terrorism have transfixed terror on non-state actors, featuring them as inherently radical and violent. The media has endorsed state acts of terror as legitimate retaliation, despite the massive killing of civilians, incomparable in volume to the outcome of non-state terror.

Though Al-Qaeda has expanded its presence throughout various types of mass media since 9/11, especially the Internet, aided by the
convergence of communication technologies, its strategic deeds does not seem to be fulfilled. Their ‘symbiotic’ relationship to conventional media helped them dramatize their terror acts via instant media coverage, boosting viewership rates in the meantime. Paradoxically enough, their terror acts were negatively framed by the media, in comparison to the Western states’ actions, featured as legitimate retaliation. The unethical immoral acts of terror committed by non-state terrorists, which negates the essence of Islam, in addition to the negative Western media coverage it received, I argue, has helped turning the global public opinion against them.

Their unlimited expansion over the Internet is also unlikely to make dramatic changes to this dominant image. Deemed as an extremely unreliable and unstable location in terms of information provision and impact, terrorists’ rallying of public opinion via email is incomparable in impact and liability to drive policies to real life protests in renowned locations. The absence of face-to-face communication erodes the structure of terror organizations. Despite carrying a wealth of information, the internet’s anonymity delimits its impact, and its virtual nature strangulates processes of putting words into actions.

Though Al-Qaeda has extensively used diverse forms of mass media to globalize jihad, the media exaggeration of its power and impact has deeply helped eroding its global support, thus, weakening rather than strengthening it. Using the Internet to air their videos online, with English subtitles, is also unlikely to gain them public support whether in Muslim world, or in the West. In addition to the low impact of the internet, in contrast to other media, the overtly flawed content of bin Laden online messages, reflects deep weaknesses in Al-Qaeda’s goals, and the means for achieving them.

Analyzing bin Laden’s videotaped messages have demonstrated that Al-Qaeda’s propaganda, legitimacy and intimidation goals are carrying the seeds of their failure. The contradiction between the looks of bin Laden, wearing like classic religious Muslim clerics, and his messages, negating the essence of Islam, erode his credibility. Constantly justifying his violence with an utterly flawed logic demonstrates an appalling weakness of Al-Qaeda’s ideology and a lack of confidence in its actions and goals.

Notes

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