Week 11.2

Agenda

1. Annoucements
2. Lecture: data and information flux models
3. Discussion

Announcements

— Please send me your slides from presentations if you haven't yet!
— I will get your written feedback back to you by the weekend probably, by Monday absolute latest
— We will have our guest presentation on Tuesday.

— Who collects this dataset?
— How are the data collected?
— What are the data used for?
— Who/what is contained within the data?
— Who owns the data?
— Who has access to the data?

Surveillance and "the end of forgetting"

"In recent years, the digitization and databasing of sociocultural information has led to **a glut of data that upends traditional knowledge/power dynamics.** Older models of structure and agency based on the presumption of informatic scarcity are giving way to newly emergent forms and practices centered around shaping the flow of information, influencing knowledge production mechanisms, and efficiently assimilating and exploiting oceans of data."

— Jonah Bossewitch, Aram Sinnreich

The end of forgetting: Strategic agency beyond the panopticon

Key Points

— data and machines allow for a constant remembering (data and memory)

— assymetry around data and information flows

Data and memory

"Digital media increase the visibility and presence of the past while also reshaping our sense of history."
— Marlene Manoff

Data and memory

The archive is no longer a collection of artifacts, books, and records confined to particular locations that we may seek out if we so desire. Much of the archival record now consists of streams of data invading our work and private lives, perpetually tempting us to consume or contribute just a little more. The state, large memory institutions, and media companies are no longer the sole superintendents of the archival record. Individuals now have the tools to build their own digital archives and organize and manipulate them.

Marlene Manoff
"Archive and Database as Metaphor: Theorizing the Historical Record"

Data, memory, archives, and art

— Media artists and archive artists

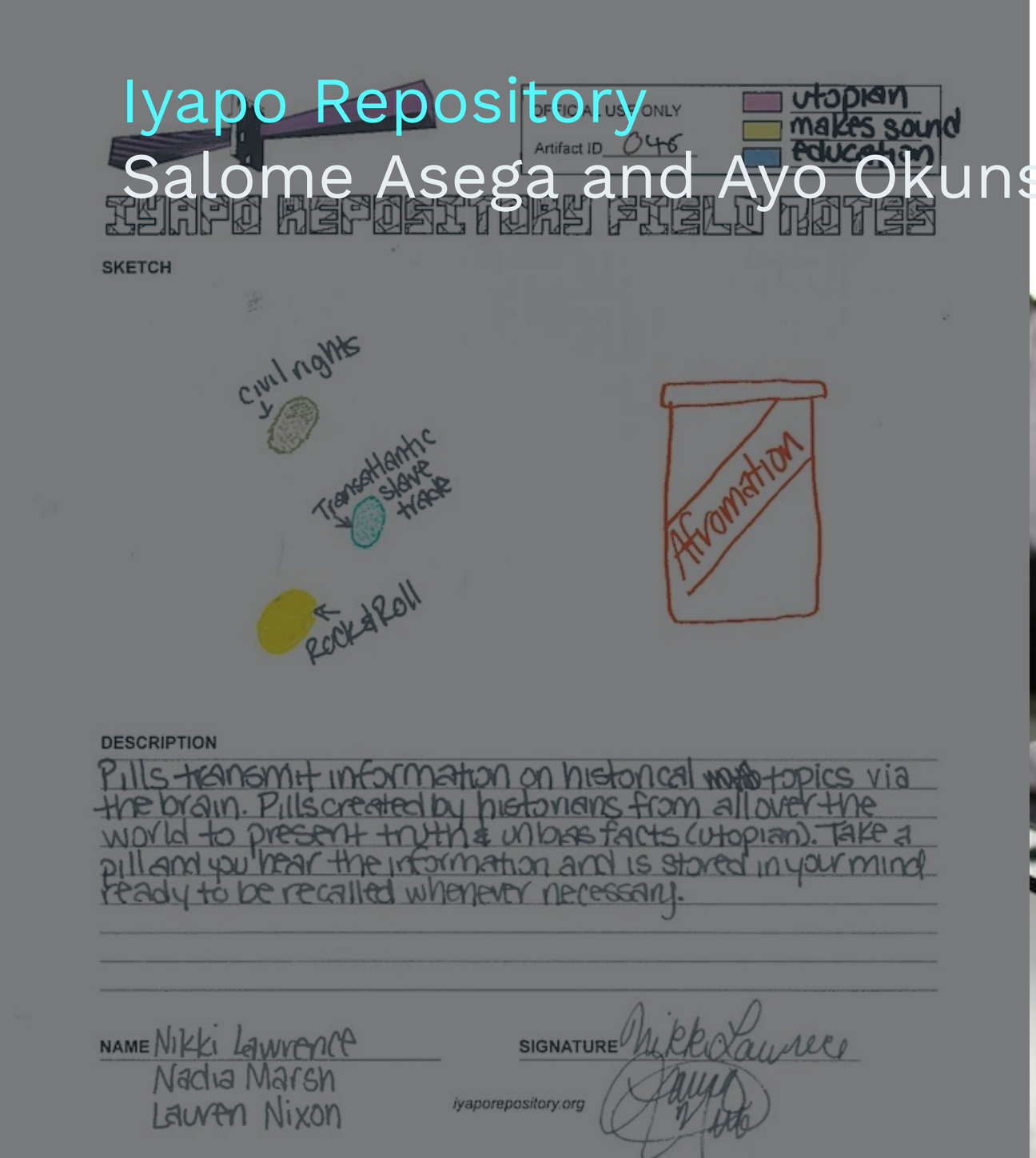
— "The notion of the archive is useful in theorizing the digital
precisely because it carries within it both the ideal of preserving collective memory and
the reality of its impossibility."

Akram Zaatari

Abu Jalal Dimassy (centre) and Two of his Friends Acting Out a Hold-Up.

Iyapo Repository

Salome Asega and Ayo Okunseide



Index of the Disappeared

Mariam Ghani and Chitra Ganesh

Antoni Muntadas
The File Room
installation view, 1994

Key Points

— data and machines allow for a constant remembering (data and memory)

— **assymetry around data and information flows**

Information Flux Model

— information is produced within context, and within a network

— **positive flux**: you are leaking information, and others have access to more than you do

— **negative flux**: you gather and retain more information than you emit

— **neutral flux**: everyone has equal access to everyone else's information, a situation one could describe as a form of perfect transparency.

Foucault's Panopticon

- First conceptualized by English philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the mid-1700s
- from Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison in 1975
- social control mechanism and symbol of authority and discipline in the western world
- social citizens internalize authority and permanent visibility
- power as "visible and

1. Traditional Panopticon

— The typical model of surveillance
— positive flux of information from individual to the institutions of powr
— "Big Brother"

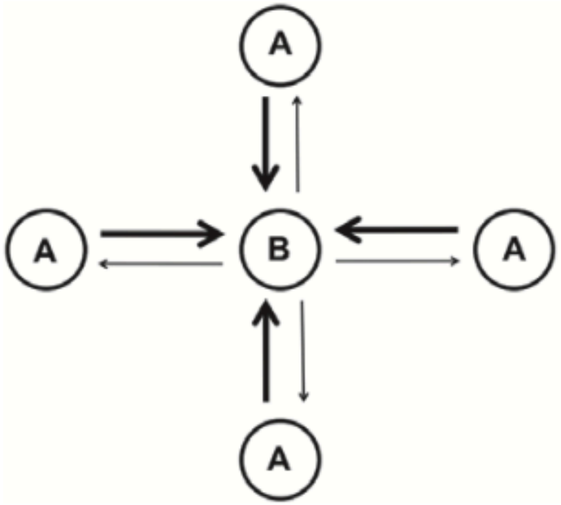


Figure 1. Panopticon.

2. Sousveillance Society

— flip in polarity of flux from the traditional panopticon
— individuals surveil institions
— "sous" - French for "below"
— By participating in the surveillance processes (both as surveillant and object of surveil- lance) actively and transparently, individuals can both mediate and understand the per- sonal information they are transacting, and mitigate the inequity of

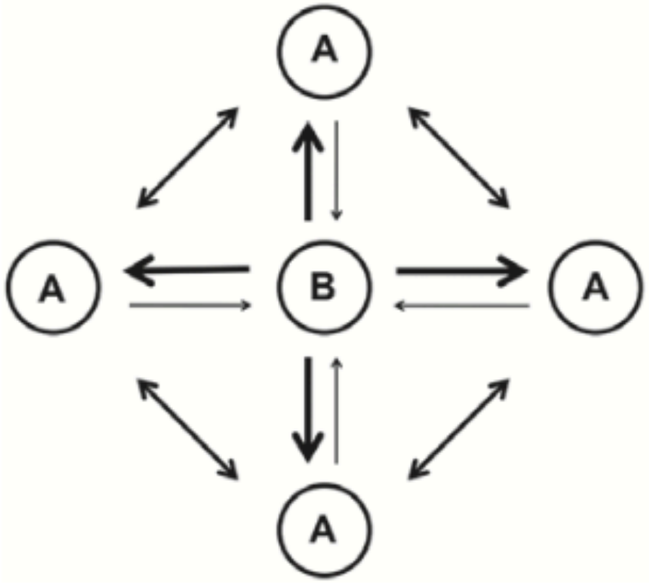


Figure 2. Sousveillance.

3. Total Transparency

— Theoretical and unrealizable model

— Describes a world of total transparency where every person has equal access to one another's information

— A supposed solution to institution corruption

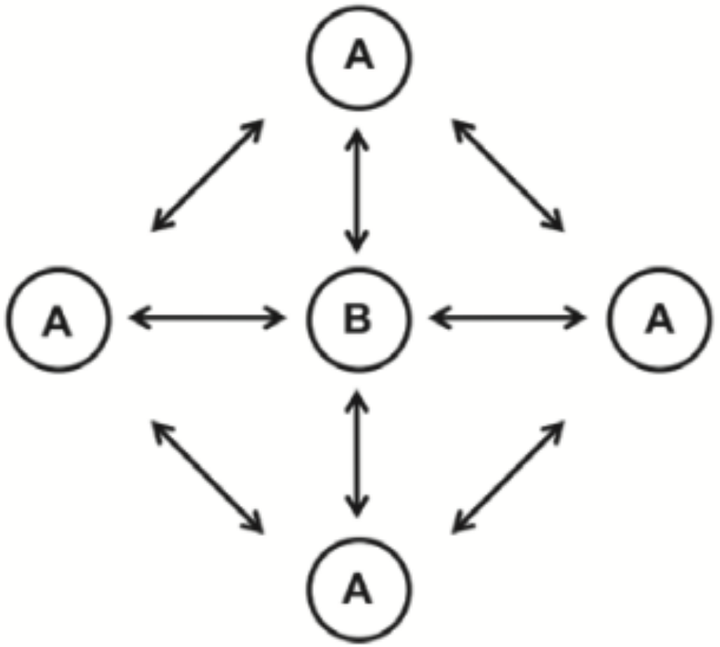


Figure 3. Transparency.

4. Off the grid

— Efforts to disappear as throroughly as possible from the information exchange

— Goal is to reduce information flux to zero

— "For the individual, this strategy is enacted by actually disengaging from the telecommunications network, or by encrypting and obscuring the information transacted, and by refusing to use credit cards, mobile phones, ATMs or any of the

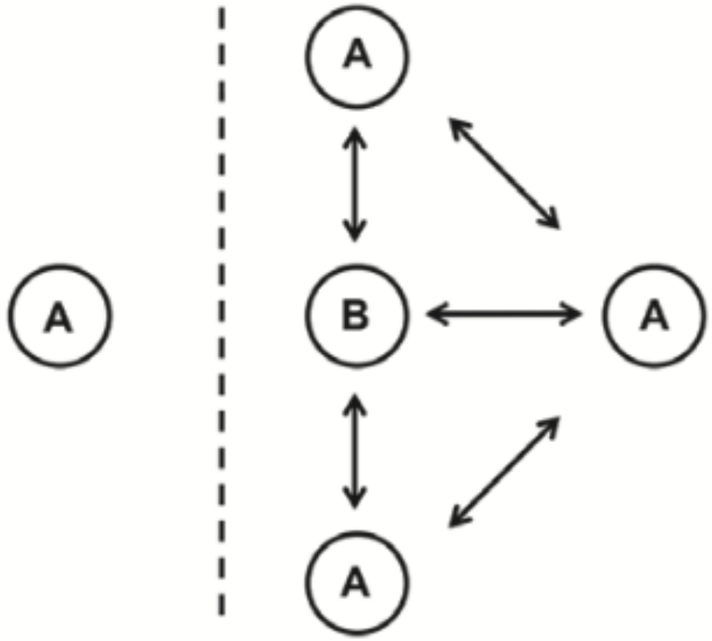


Figure 4. Off the grid.

5. Black hole

— Collect and analyze as much information as possible from the outside, while leaking as little as possible

— Strategy of several US intelligence organizations

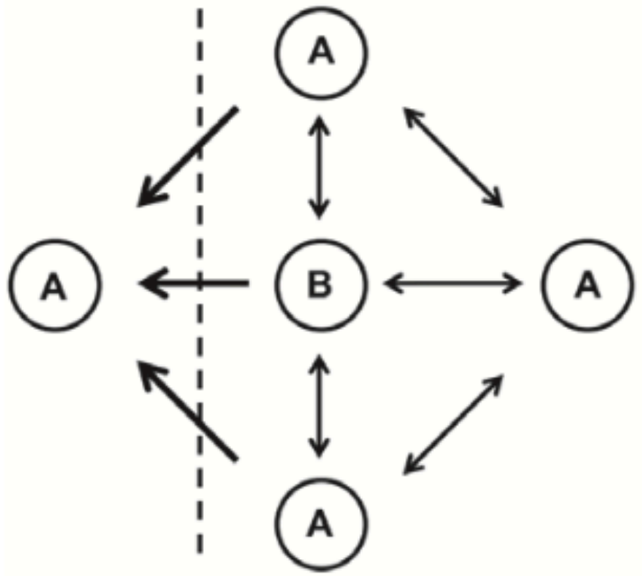


Figure 5. Black hole.

6. Promiscuous broadcaster

— can be practiced non-strategically or strategicially

— similar to total transpaency, but does not require symmetrical exchanges of information

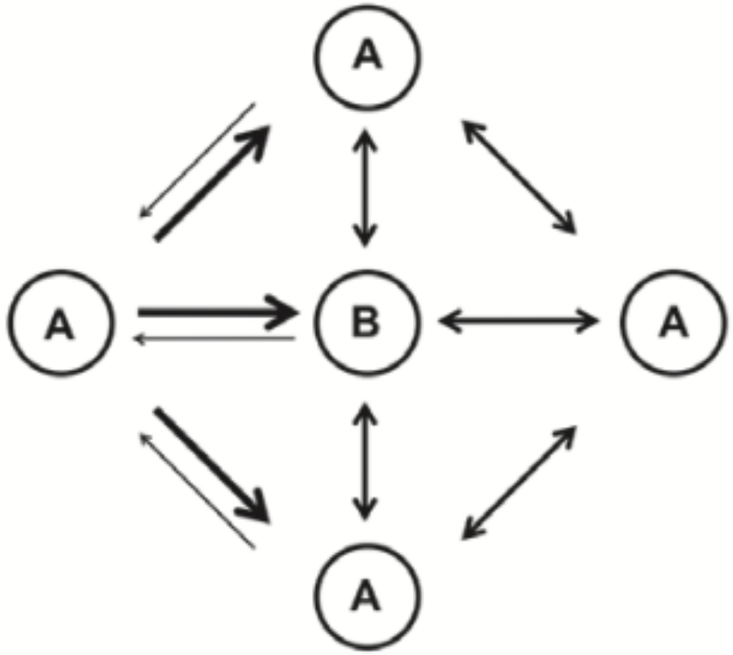


Figure 6. Promiscuous broadcaster.

7. Voracious collector

— The ‘voracious collector’ strategy involves maintaining a consistent negative information flux, but it differs from the ‘black hole’ strategy in not requiring the participant to go partially ‘off the grid’

— 'quantified self movement'

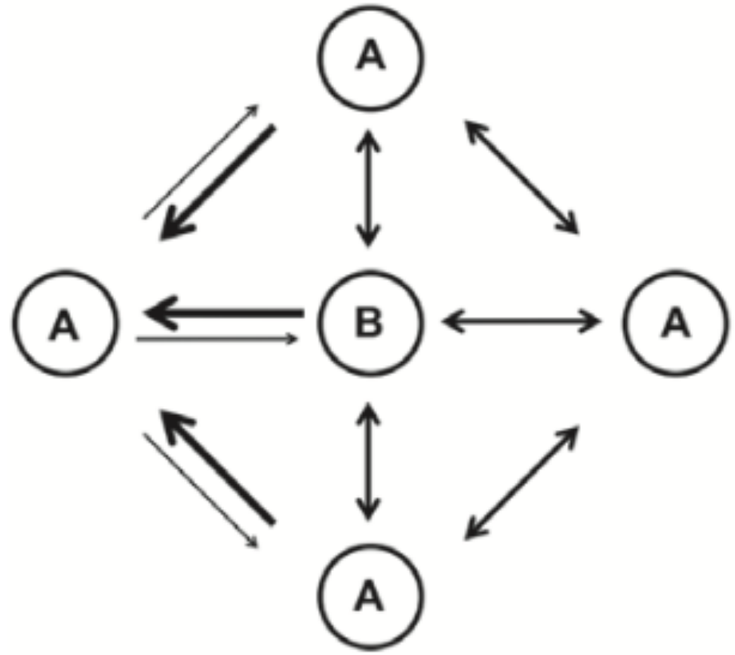


Figure 7. Voracious collector.

8. Disinformation campaigns

— propagating disinformation, thereby reducing the flow of accurate information outward and producming a more negative flux overall.

— Advertising agencies, governments, companies, individuals

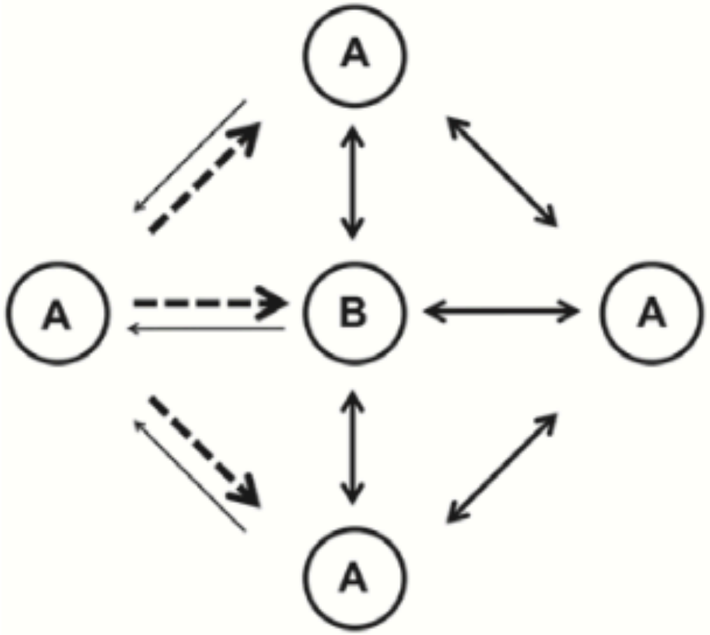


Figure 8. Disinformation.

Examples and groups

— 10 minutes in small groups

— Try to come up with as many examples of each model as possible

Additional Questions

— Which model best matches your approach to information flux? Is this a complete list?

— Are there models that you think are better or worse, and if so, why?

— Bossewitch and Sinnreich claim that "Individuals, communities and organizations have very similar options within this space." How true is this? Which models are more accessible to which people?