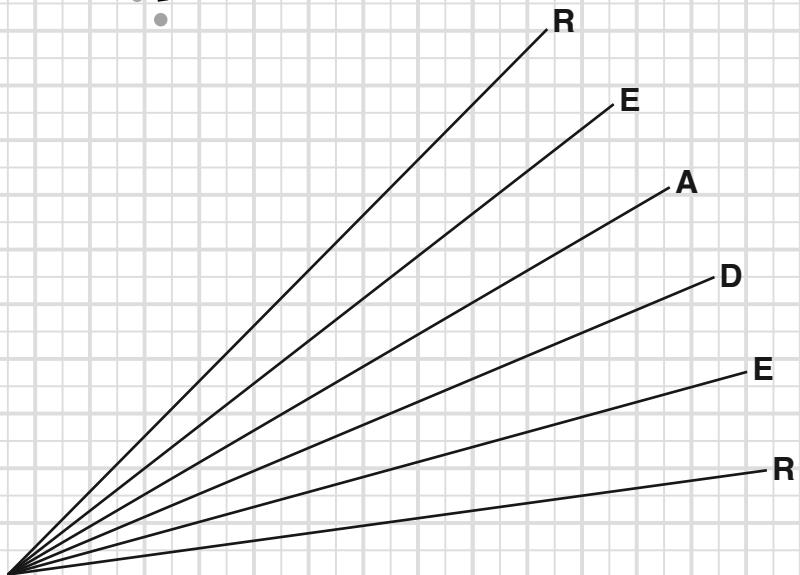


**node.london**



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The *NODE.London Reader II* projects a critical context around the Season of Media Arts in London, March 2008.

NODE.London (Networked, Open, Distributed, Events. London) is a voluntary network of people, organisations and projects sharing and developing the infrastructure for media arts and related activities in London and beyond.

NODE.London's founding aim was to be uniquely organised from the ground up – all activities organised via open meetings, both online and face to face.

Each individual project in this season of events was initiated independently; the NODE.London season of 2008 clustered these activities, in a process that aimed to facilitate the further involvement and the changing dynamics of a larger community.

NODE.London is a group of people exploring and developing media art. Its website is <http://node1.org>.

This reader revisits debates on media arts and activism, collaborative practices and organisation, and the political economy of media economics. It includes contributions from Ruth Catlow, Marc Garrett, Anna Colin, Julie Freeman, Matthew Fuller, Usman Haque, Jamie King, Armin Medosch, Jonas Andersson, Toni Prug, Adnan Hadzi, Cinzia Cremona and Petra Bauer.

Edited by Anna Colin, Mia Jankowicz, Adnan Hadzi and Jonas Andersson.

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## 0. INTRODUCTION

Edited by writer and PhD researcher Marina Vishmidt, NODE.London's first reader, titled *Media Mutandis* and published in 2006, rounded up the first season of media art in London which was marked by three main manifestations: *The World Summit on Free Information Infrastructures* (held at Limehouse Townhall), *Open Congress* (hosted by Tate Britain) and *Future Wireless* (held at the Science Museum's Dana Centre)<sup>1</sup>. Three years and a season later, NODE.London's second reader begins with an update on the status of NODE.London under the heading **Architecture of NODE.London**. Three voices involved at different moments and on various levels, namely Ruth Catlow and Marc Garrett, Anna Colin and Julie Freeman, provide their accounts of NODE.London's internal dynamics and make organisational recommendations for the future of the network.

Like *Media Mutandis*, the present reader further chooses to focus on particular themes and projects. **Economies of Openness**, the second section of the book, brings together texts and transcripts produced in part for the Open Media Economics Panel, which took place during the second *Open Knowledge Conference* (OKCON 2008) and for *Disclosures*, also in 2008.

Jamie King suggests that P2P networks may be the most efficient means of diffusion – especially so in times of economic crisis – and that values such as “success” or “making money” have become relative and/or redundant. Meanwhile, Armin Medosch and his respondent Jonas Andersson protest against the precariousness cultural producers are the subjects of, and which Open Source models of licensing and diffusion sustain. Their text launches an attack on Creative Commons, which they see as a passport for underpaying producers of culture. In the transcript of the ResourceCamp which it organised over an afternoon in March 2008, Critical Practice further addresses the absence of reference to money and to finance management in the guidelines put forward by open-organizations.org<sup>2</sup>.

**Exposing the Public Domain**, the third part of the reader, is a compilation of four texts which contribute to putting the public domain at stake whether through un-digging forgotten or deliberately hidden historical events and facts, or through reassessing its adaptability to newer modes of diffusion of knowledge and skills.

Petra Bauer takes a critical route with *Deleted Swedish Stories*, the script of a once performed lecture which addressed issues of censorship in Swedish media and how the government used to select the kind of information that would go public. Meanwhile, Armin Medosch's text is a self-evaluation of a project involving the release of forgotten historical events linked to the city and port of Southampton into the public domain, via FM and mobile technology.

1 NODE.London's first reader can be accessed at <http://publication.node-l.org/>  
2 <http://www.open-organizations.org/>.

Using Deptford.TV as a case study, Adnan Hadzi acknowledges the need for a social contract which can uphold an ethical viability for the ‘data spheres’ that have already emerged, but are currently branded illegitimate or at least non-sanctioned.

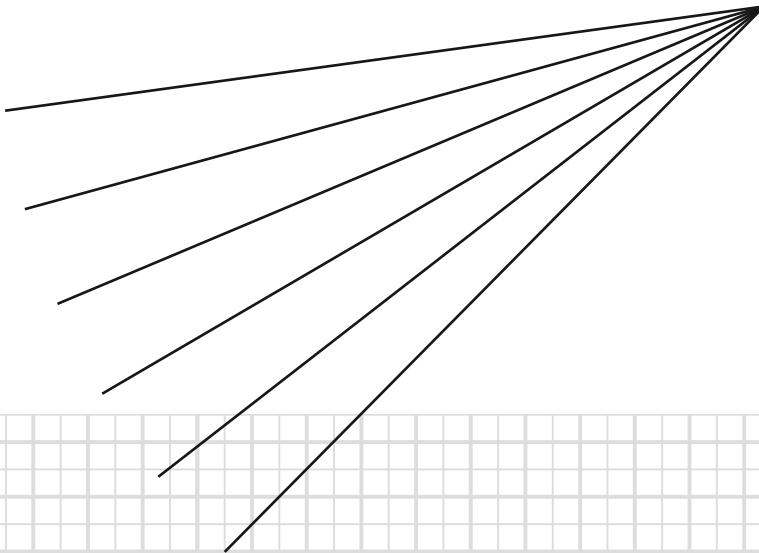
The question of *Why Open and Not Free?* in Toni Prug’s text is a means to take Open Source debates to their key Marxian concerns; their dependence on the fundamental resources of space and time. His contribution mobilises Lacan, Žižek and Negri in a discussion asking if there is anything in the notion of “free” for those who dream of a new egalitarian social order.

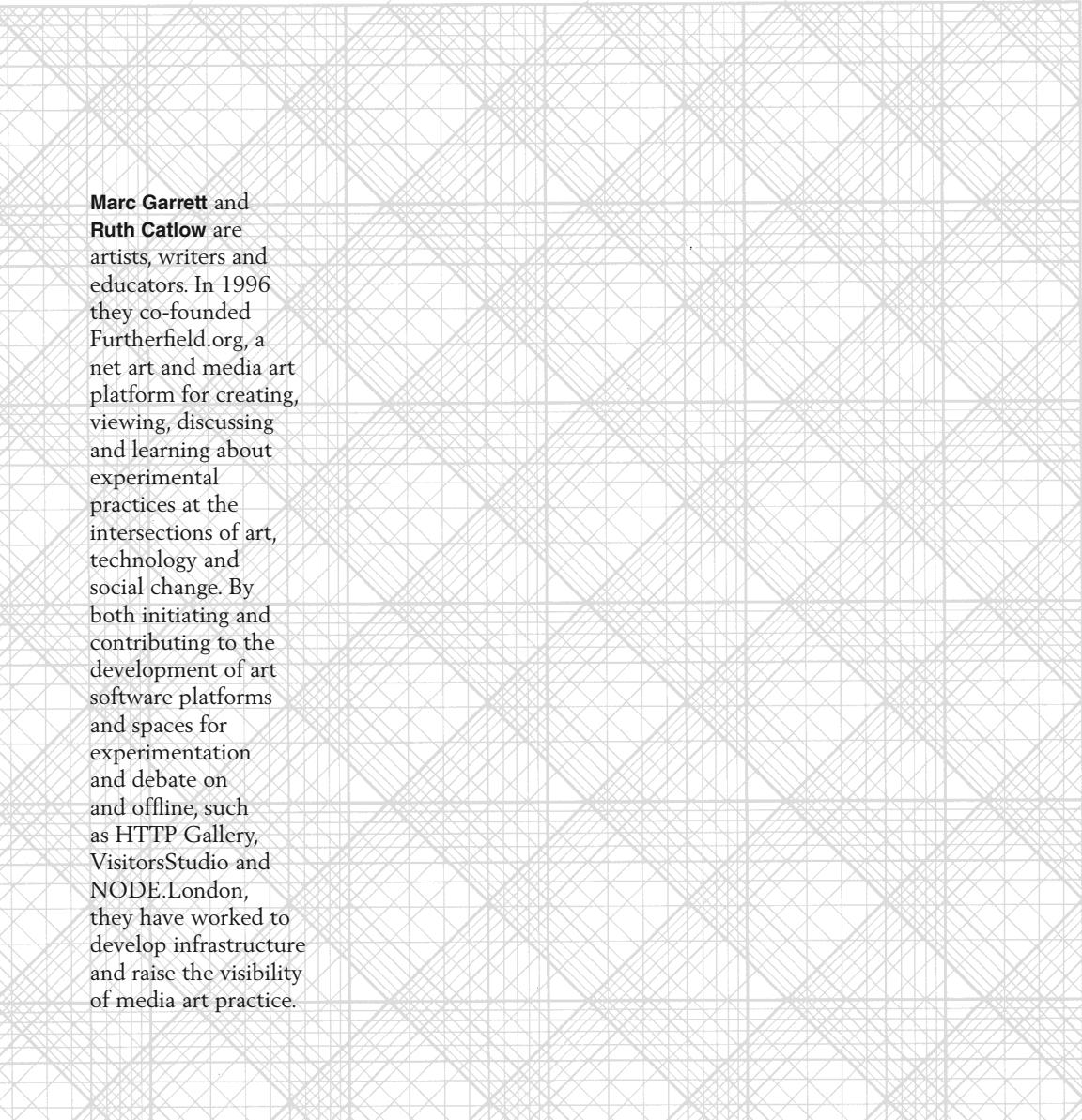
The fourth and last section, **Further Views on NODE.London**, brings together documentation from a selection of one off as well as long-term projects which took place or started during NODE.London Spring ’08. These are *Urban Versioning System 1.0.1* (by Matthew Fuller and Usman Haque), *The Next Layer* (by Armin Medosch), *OKCON 2008* (by the Open Knowledge Foundation), *Orelboot*; (by Area 10), *The Brentford Biopsy* (by Ilze Black for Watermans Arts Centre), *Hurry Up Please It's TIME* (by Alex Haw) and *Filmobile* (by Max Schleser).

The editorial team would like to thank all the Volunteers of the NODE.London network and the authors for contributing. This reader was made possible through the support of the London Centre for Arts and Cultural Exchange and Arts Council England, London.

*The editors, April 2009*

## 1. ARCHITECTURE OF NODE.LONDON





**Marc Garrett** and **Ruth Catlow** are artists, writers and educators. In 1996 they co-founded Furtherfield.org, a net art and media art platform for creating, viewing, discussing and learning about experimental practices at the intersections of art, technology and social change. By both initiating and contributing to the development of art software platforms and spaces for experimentation and debate on and offline, such as HTTP Gallery, VisitorsStudio and NODE.London, they have worked to develop infrastructure and raise the visibility of media art practice.

**NODE.London: Getting Organised Openly?  
by Marc Garrett and Ruth Catlow,<sup>1</sup> Furtherfield.org<sup>2</sup>**

The first NODE.London Season of Media Arts in 2006 was conceived as an experiment in tools and structures of cooperation as invented or adapted by artists, technologists, and activists, many (but not all) of whom were committed to ideas of social change through their practice<sup>3</sup>. It was to be an experiment in radical openness, not just to be confined to participatory artistic processes and events but also applied to the method of organisation. We believe that through creative and critical engagement with media art, people can be inspired and enabled to become active co-creators of their cultures and societies. So it was an enchanting notion: any self-selecting practitioner (artist, software developer, curator, free data or IP activist) might become an equal co-producer in the meaning and value of a media arts festival for London. It promised to connect people, groups, institutions (and their activities) who may otherwise be in competition for resources or attention in the noise and sprawl of London; to generate new ways of working together and to support work for a new kind of participating audience.

NODE.London still offers an important reference point for these practices as well as generating a certain level of activity. It points to ways in which grass-roots methods of taking hold of culture from the bottom-up might make all kinds of art forms accessible to a wider audience. However, as committed Voluntary Organisers<sup>4</sup> for the first 2006 season, it has been difficult for us (and many of the other original organisers) to continue to contribute to NODE.London's development and we want to understand why this is.

In March 2008, a new group of volunteers (with just a few of the original participants) organised and staged the second NODE.London season at a smaller scale. In keeping with the original aims of the NODE.London venture, participants organised on an open and cooperative basis, toward raising the visibility of contemporary media arts practice in London. The principles and processes were much the same as in the first season and organisers' investment of time and energy resulted in a programme of media arts events and exhibitions in venues around London. NODE.London Spring '08 was promoted by an informational poster and website to spread the word<sup>5</sup>. At this

1. Thanks to Anna Colin for proofreading and to Lauren Wright for discussion and editing.
2. Furtherfield.org is a media arts organisation which provides physical and digital platforms for creating viewing, discussing and learning about experimental practices in art and technology.
3. Garrett and Catlow wrote a short (and largely optimistic) text about the early development of the project in 2005 called *NODE.London: States of Interdependence*. Available online at <http://publication.node1.org/States-of-Interdependence>.
4. Voluntary Organiser for NODE.London. According to the Evaluation Report, in July 2006 there were 80 VOs: 'media arts practitioners, curators, media activists, venue representatives, producers, academic figures, writers, and others supportive of NODE.London's aims.' Anyone could become a VO since March 2005 by attending VO meetings and subscribing to the VO email list.
5. The NODE.London website (<http://www.node1.org>) was developed in the run up to the first season in 2006 and repurposed for the second season. It is discussed in greater detail later in this text.

point in time, it is uncertain what form a third season might take (if any) and how it would be resourced and organised.

The question of infrastructure for media arts takes on a renewed relevance and urgency in the context of the weird, recent assertion by the Director of the ICA that media art is just no good (as his justification for closing down the media art programme along with Live Arts; see Quinn, 2008). Recent debates in public forums<sup>6</sup> reveal robust arguments against his claims that this art form lacks depth and cultural urgency, providing evidence of a complex, critical and lively international culture of media arts. His decision is especially peculiar given the ICA's role in supporting the development of the art form over the last 40 years. But the ICA is not alone. An important element of the discussions following his statement was the (possibly) inherent difficulty of media art's relation to institutions, a situation NODE.London's radical approach to organising addressed with its very fibre. With a few honorable (if under-resourced) exceptions<sup>7</sup>, the larger arts institutions in London currently struggle to make media arts available to the mainstream.

The ongoing precarity of the NODE.London venture may be understood solely as a consequence of under-investment. NODE.London Spring '08 drew heavily on the resources of its participants (as with the first season), as well as its existing electronic infrastructure and reputation, but unlike the first season, it received no direct public funding. However, stretched resources are also symptomatic of a systemic problem with a particular approach to getting organised. *'A characteristic disease of human thought is to mistake the vehicle and the objective, or the instrument and the aim'* (Shah, 1978: 142). Early organisers (ourselves included) attempted to deploy isomorphic, networked openness in all aspects of artistic activities, infrastructure and organisation, which prevented effective tools and strategies for cooperative organisation from being adopted. This continues to affect NODE.London in many ways, limiting both its ability to plan and to articulate the value of its work to potential new participants, audiences and funders.

This text is a reflection on the NODE.London "experiment", its context, its cultures and the make-up of its events, infrastructure and organisation. It points to some earlier grassroots media arts festivals in London and gives a bare-bones description of the components of the NODE.London 2006 season. Taking Felix Stalder's analysis of the difference between Open Source and Open Culture<sup>8</sup>, this text looks at how different ideas and approaches to networks and openness were played out in the first season. With a focus on organisational matters, it further makes some judgements about where these were fruitful and where they were problematic. Finally it

6. Notably the *New Media Curating* email list and *The Guardian* online.

7. E.g. Tate's Intermedia Programme (and earlier series of net art commissions) and the Science Museum's media art commission and community outreach programme.

8. *On the Differences between Open Source and Open Culture* by Felix Stalder (<http://publication.node1.org/On-the-Differences>).

looks at the work of open-organizations.org<sup>9</sup> as one example of alternative frameworks for grassroots organisations and suggests that by directly addressing the particular problem of organisation, it might be possible and worthwhile to support the development of grassroots media arts infrastructure in London, including the possible iterations of a NODE.London season.

### **The briefest history of (since-Internet) media arts activities and festivals in London**

In his introduction to the *Takeaway Festival of Do It Yourself Media*<sup>10</sup> in March 2006, Armin Medosch reminded those present that NODE.London was not a stand-alone occurrence that had arrived out of nowhere. He proposed (in this speech and in his earlier introductory text for the DMZ publication; see Medosch, 2003) that the first outings of new media and net culture in London could be traced back to conferences between 1993 and 1998 organised by Lisa Haskel at the ICA<sup>11</sup>. Later in the 1990s in London, Backspace<sup>12</sup> provided a vibrant and open digital production and cultural hang out space. Community networks and wireless, free networks such as Free2Air<sup>13</sup> and Consume<sup>14</sup> were thriving and in 1999 media artists and activists gathered for the *Expo Destructo Open Festival*<sup>15</sup> organised by Matt Fuller of I/O/D<sup>16</sup>. In November 2003, the DMZ media arts Festival ran for two days at Limehouse Town Hall<sup>17</sup> and included among its 'stakeholders' the University of Openness (as the host of the event), Mute Magazine, MAP (Media Arts Projects), Digital Guild, SPC (evolved from Backspace), Film London and Arts Council England, London. It also featured media arts projects by eleven commissioned participants<sup>18</sup> and a series of panel discussions. Many of the approaches, themes, politics, ideologies, technologies and people associated with DMZ can be traced forward into the development of NODE.London.

9. <http://www.open-organizations.org/>.

10. *Takeaway Festival of Do It Yourself Media* organised by the Ravensbourne Postgraduate community at the Science Museum's Dana Centre as part of NODE.London (<http://www.takeawayfestival.com/>).

11. Including *Technophobia* and *Terminal Futures*.

12. Backspace cybercafe was situated on the River Thames on Clink Street, London Bridge (<http://bak.spc.org/>).

13. Free2Air – open, distributed public wireless networks developing in Berlin and London – especially flourished in small artists communities in the East End of London (<http://www.free2air.org/>).

14. Consume spread its Free Wireless across London (<http://www.consume.net>).

15. *Expo Destructo*, Charing Cross Rd, London. Furtherfield.org had a stall at *Expo Destructo* and met some early contributors there. The researcher also created one of the few art installations for the fair called Love Match with White Noise (<http://www.furtherfield.org/rctlow/cv/web%20cv/whitenoise.htm>)

16. I/O/D, 'a hyperactive electronic zine; also produced *Webstalker*, a web-browser in the form of a Macromedia Director projector that imitates the structure of the Internet. I/O/D slogan 'Software is mind control – get some' (<http://bak.spc.org/iod/>).

17. Limehouse Town Hall ([http://www.limehousetownhall.org.uk/lth\\_about](http://www.limehousetownhall.org.uk/lth_about)).

18. Those listed on the publication include ambientTV.net, container-project.net/Container, digitalguild.org, hi8us.co.uk, low-fi.org.uk (with Simon Faithfull, Amy Cunningham, Bureau of Inverse Technology, Corby and Bailey and Node Drawing) mediaartprojects.org.uk, metamute.com, mutantfilm.com/wireless, piratetv.net, spc.org, talkaoke.com and thomson-craighead.net (Medosch, 2003).

## What was NODE.London 2006 and what did it do?<sup>19</sup>

*NODE.London is a speculative infrastructure for organising an open season of media arts in London.*<sup>20</sup>

The activities of NODE.London aimed to develop an infrastructure and to take a decentralised approach to curating a media arts festival according to the ethos and methods of open cultural production, on the understanding that these had always been a source of inspiration to media arts practitioners. They were funded from a relatively small, strategic grant for developing media arts in London. Between December 2004 and March 2006 NODE.London produced two distinct programmes of events:

**Open Season** took place across 10 days in October 2005, in collaboration with a range of partners, sponsors and supporters.

It contained three events:

- *The World Summit on Free Information Infrastructures (WSFII)*<sup>21</sup> held at Limehouse Town Hall
- *Open Congress*<sup>22</sup> held at Tate Britain
- *Future Wireless*<sup>23</sup> held at the Science Museum's Dana Centre

**The Season of Media Arts** in March 2006 comprised 150 media arts projects in over 40 London locations, as well as online in the form of exhibitions, installations, software, participatory events, performance-based work and 'many other self-defining forms'. The organisational strategies and elements created and used to coordinate the season included the following:

- Voluntary Organisers (VOs) met once a month and subgroups met as necessary. Minutes from meetings and the forum discussions that followed were publicly documented using online community tools and resources provided by OpenMute.
- Voluntary Subscribers' meetings were also held once a month. Artists and project organisers presented their work to each other and to VOs for feedback. These meetings also facilitated brainstorming of technical problems and the matching of work with venues, organisers and resources.
- A Project Coordinator and PR Coordinator were both recruited to paid, part-time positions.
- Two email lists<sup>24</sup> were used to organise and disseminate news about the season.
- A node network of participating venues and their local

19. Most of this information is drawn from the NODE.London Evaluation Report produced by the evaluation team. Lots of reference materials about NODE.London 2006 are (at the time of writing) available here ([http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/NODE\\_London\\_2006](http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/NODE_London_2006)).

20. [http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/NODE\\_London\\_2006\\_in\\_a\\_nutshell](http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/NODE_London_2006_in_a_nutshell).

21. <http://www.wsfii.org/>.

22. <http://opencongress.onweb.org>.

23. <http://www.cybersalon.org/content/future-wireless-practicaldiscourse-creative>.

24. Still running – subscribe via <http://wiki.nodel.org>.

communities was established to act as distributed, local points of facilitation, outreach and advocacy – to share knowledge and resources.

- Online software tools (discussed later in this text) were created to allow artistic project organisers to input information about their project(s) and link to other relevant projects, venues and people. This was displayed in a public facing website, and provided context, a calendar and a map for the season.
- A printed catalogue and flyer was produced and distributed through the network, giving information about the season's events.

#### Notions of NODE.London

Notions of networks and openness<sup>25</sup> were hardwired into NODE.London (it's in the name: Networked, Open, Distributed, Events in London) and were the shared fascination of many VOs for the 2006 season. NODE.London was inspired by the scale-free networks of the World Wide Web whose topographies combine distributed and decentralised networks of hubs (see illustration), to which a new node (e.g. personal computer or server, web page or media file) may always be added.

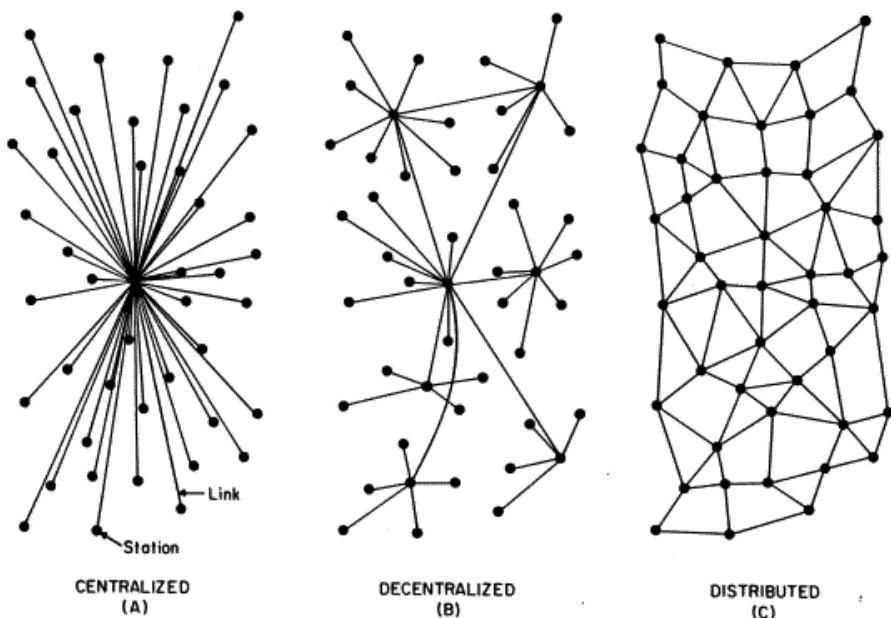


FIG. 1 – Centralized, Decentralized and Distributed Networks

From *On Distributed Communications* by Paul Baran (1964).

25. This section is developed from a presentation at a NODE.London Subscribers' Group meeting in Autumn 2006 entitled *What Did Openness Mean to NODE.London*, by Ruth Catlow (slides and notes available online at [http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/Ruth%27s\\_Script\\_and\\_Slides](http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/Ruth%27s_Script_and_Slides)).

Network science says scale-free networks maintain levels of connectivity regardless of their size. They do this by linking small clusters of locally networked hubs to more massively linked hubs, which are in turn connected to each other. It is possible to move from one small, local hub to another, distant, small hub by taking a couple of steps through the big hubs, creating what is known as the ‘small world’ phenomenon (Barabasi, 2002).

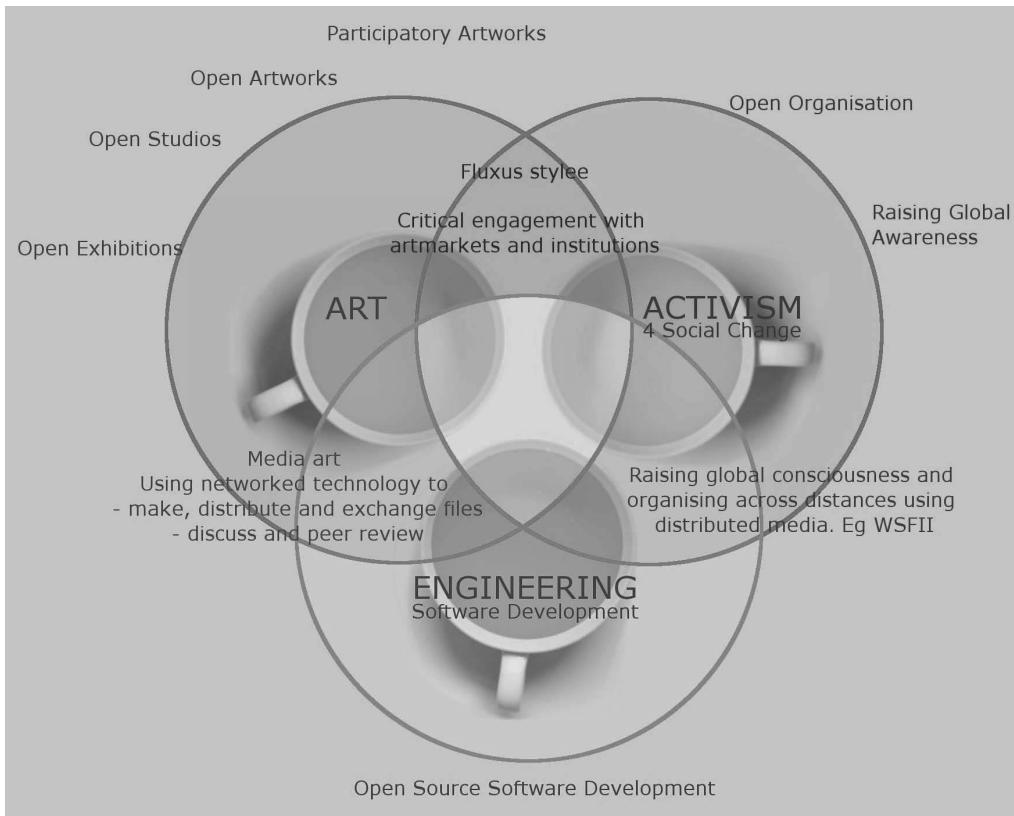
Social networks can serve to reroute information, knowledge, resources and opportunities across the ordinary boundaries of groups, institutions and class. Digital communication networks can support social networking by providing infrastructure for speedy, easy and efficient exchange across distances. They can also operate as the site for both the co-production of media files and computer programmes, as well as a means of distribution and exchange for both. Perhaps most significant though is the way our conception of scale-free networks impacts our imagining and thinking about openness and getting organised.

The participants (the organisers and the audience) of the NODE.London 2006 season were drawn from three cultures: art, engineering (software development) and activism (for social change) (Stalder, 2006). At its inception (reflecting the shared interests of these constituent cultures) the Voluntary Organisers of NODE.London committed to organising “openly”.

All decisions would be made in open meetings (open in that anyone could come along at any point and have their say – after all, networks are open insofar as you can always add a new node) and would be made consensually, without leadership, hierarchy or voting. The season of events and exhibitions would be open to all self-defining media arts practitioners rather than being selected by a centrally appointed curator. Some people had practical reservations (e.g. some of the larger institutions found it hard to accommodate or integrate the programming of events at short notice) but for the smaller organisations and individual practitioners it promised a level platform for their work whilst offering an opportunity to engage with and learn from each other and from the progressive practices of the Free and Open Source software movement. However, throughout the build up to the first NODE.London season in 2006, tensions and controversies arose as it became clear that openness had very different connotations in each of the constituent cultures. What follows is a rough sketch of three distinct approaches and the practices that arise where the cultures intersect.<sup>26</sup>

26. See *What Did Openness Mean to NODE.London*, by Ruth Catlow (slides and notes available online at [http://wiki.nodev.org/index.php/Ruth%27s\\_Script\\_and\\_Slides](http://wiki.nodev.org/index.php/Ruth%27s_Script_and_Slides)).

## What did ‘open’ mean to the three cultures of NODE.London?



*Media Arts – Three Cups of Tea: Three Cultures:* Drinking tea together suggests a base level of informal openness, to being together, to conversation and conviviality.

### **Openness** in art is associated with:

- A conceptual approach to art that frees the work from the associations and constraints of the unique art-object and its associated value as a commodity. *Open Systems: Rethinking Art c.1970*,<sup>27</sup> an exhibition at Tate Modern in summer 2005, included work by international artists like Martha Rosler and Hans Haacke who were said to have radically rethought the art object in the late 1960s and 1970s, in connection with the urgent political developments of the day.
- Participatory arts: the meaning and value of the work is always open and mutable, created in tandem with the viewer(s) or participant(s).
- Accessibility of art to diverse, always growing audiences.
- Equality of opportunity for practitioners.

**Openness** in activism is associated with:

- The influence of social movements, anti-capitalist and anti-globalisation movements like the G8 Summit protests in Genoa and Geneva who used the virtues of networked and open organisation to their advantage. (King, 2006)
- Models for open organisation are intended to support collective action, shared responsibility and transparent decision-making that do not privilege an elite group.

**Openness** in engineering (specifically software development):

The association of openness with software development arises with the Open Source software movement. In connection to this, and with a fuzzy interchangeability with the general ideals of Free, Libre and Open Source (FLOSS), notions of open collaborative processes of development and production become tied up with progressive ethical stances.

But aside from these considerations, the pragmatic success of the openness is particularly dramatic in this context. To create Open Source software, developers collaborate with each other on the code that makes the software work. It is particularly successful because:

- Software development is modular.
- There exist objective, widely accepted criteria to assess the value of a new bit of code.
- Evaluation is efficient because developers use the same tools to evaluate as to produce the code.

Neither art nor activism has such a neat and efficient way of evaluating their practices. In addition to this, Open Source software development often comes with its own built in frameworks of economic sustainability in that developers are often already working for academic or commercial institutions and by sharing their work they raise their own profiles as well as those of their institutions and hence the market for their services. However, the actual openness of the process is more limited than is usually understood. Not everyone can contribute to shaping software to their needs, as users need to at least have had the free time and/or educational opportunities to develop their programming skills, knowledge and experience. Also, development does not take place solely in an ad hoc, bottom-up manner, but is most usually carefully controlled by a central manager of high reputation.

**At the intersection of the three cultures lie some fertile grounds bringing about rigorous practices:**

- Art and activism give rise to Dada, Fluxus and Situationist-inspired practice; critical engagement with art markets and institutions; and socially engaged practice.
- Activism and engineering/software development give rise to distributed media platforms, which raise global consciousness and organise across distances to effect global

change e.g. Indymedia. Also decentralised distribution offered by peer-to-peer networks (file sharing systems such as BitTorrent and Gnutella and social organising software such as that created by we.riseup).

- Art and engineering/software development give rise to critiques and explorations of technologically-inspired structures, metaphors, relations; new tools and processes for production, critique, distribution and participation, e.g. distributed composition facilitated by wikis, software art as platformed by runme.org.

### **Events, infrastructure and organisation: Where openness intersected for the three cultures of NODE.London**

**Events:** To reiterate, the first NODE.London took place over two main seasons. *Open Season*, October 2005 was a programme of critical discussion and conferences. Here, openness meant an exploration of the parallels and crossovers between FLOSS and 'Open Culture' (through its organisational methods, talks, presentations, participatory art events and performances by artists, programmers, theorists and activists). For the *Season of Media Arts* in March 2006 openness meant a season or festival on the model of open-exhibition or open-studio event, not centrally curated but generated by artists, venues, producers, and facilitated by a group of Voluntary Organisers.

**Infrastructure:** The vision was for an open social network, supported by open web-based tools that would:

- Allow communities to connect and share resources (printers, sofas, spaces, technical know-how, etc).
- Provide an event calendar-cum-catalogue for conferences and media arts events in London long into the future.

In spite of the best and protracted efforts of some VOs, the original open software architecture was never realised as intended. This was probably our first major encounter with the effects of an inappropriate organisational approach and it had unfortunate consequences for the integrated vision and mutual respect of participating artists and software developers. It also limited the scope for marketing activities for the March event. However, the deep discussions about the use-cases of various stakeholders of the NODE.London community led to the development of a bespoke tool/website in PHP and MySQL, which enabled many practitioners (artists, programmers, producers and curators) to raise the visibility of their work to each other and to interested audiences.

**Using** this system:

- Participating media arts practitioners were able to submit details of their projects and exhibitions in their own words.
- The NODE.London catalogue of all participating projects could be printed with a very short lead time.

- Audiences were able to navigate the events, projects and people of NODE.London to see how they were connected to each other and to use this information to plan their visits to different events and venues.

**Organisation:** The organisation was very loosely modelled on the organisational principles of movements for social change (although this was never openly stated or discussed), attempting to run by consensual decision-making. The structure of organisational openness was inspired by scale-free networks of the Internet and used wikis and email lists to communicate and record the minutes of meetings. The fluidity of this approach gave rise to dramatic benefits and pitfalls, discussed at length in evaluation processes that followed after March 2006,<sup>28</sup> with the most important questions remaining around issues of:

- Power and transparency: Who makes decisions and where do they actually get made? Where does control and accountability lie within the organisation?
- Wastefulness of inadequate and inefficient organisational processes, poor deployment of skills and experience and insufficient planning.
- The lack of coordinated documentation and contextualisation of media arts practice in London limited the accessibility of the work and its ideas to a broader audience.
- Many participants were effectively excluded by the demands on “free” time; only those who were able to dedicate the time could afford to contribute and benefit.

#### **Legacy: When tea-time is over**

Back to the three cups of tea in our earlier illustration. When we artists, activists and engineers are drinking our cups of tea together, we look towards each other to consider what we might achieve together. But what happens when the last drop is drained, if the arguments have been too fierce, the disagreements too disagreeable, the mutual benefits not sufficiently established?

There are various tensions that act between the collaborators of the three cultures of NODE.London. The cultures are in many ways antagonistic to each other, easily drawn apart and scattered by diverse forces. This is not necessarily just about arguments between individuals from different tribes though. Many individual participants of NODE.London straddle the three cultures and therefore experience the tensions between them internally. Engineers, artists and activists operate in different models of the world, take different approaches to life and have different modes of survival available to them. These differences impact their free time, values and priorities, which in turn give rise to some tensions in how they view each other.

28. Also at *PLENUM*, an alternative, collective and performative mode of evaluation and “agenda setting” was offered by the artists of *Kingdom of Piracy* available online (<http://kop-kein.org/plenum/>).

For the **engineers/software developers**:

- Artists and activists do not fully appreciate their work because they do not fully understand what it involves. They may have unrealistic expectations and make unreasonable demands.
- Many artists may appear ill-informed and superficial in their approach to technology. Some use tools without any critical engagement or understanding of their application, or they develop ill-conceived technologically-inspired metaphors.

For the **engineers and activists**:

- Artists may appear selfish, concerned primarily with their personal profiles and ownership of Intellectual Property.
- All art is associated with the suspect cultivation of rare commodity through the dark arts of marketing, spectacle and art market speculation.
- The value of art appears arbitrary and corrupt: assigned by the market in collaboration with cultural imperialist institutions (galleries and public funders) and career academics.

For the **activists**:

- Art may appear superficial and to have no positive social or political function.
- Artists and engineers appear to lack urgency in response to social and political crises.

For the **activists and artists**:

Engineers are sometimes unable or unwilling to communicate enough about the issues they are dealing with to facilitate deep collaboration.

For the **artists**:

- Activists may appear to be strident and self-righteous ideologues.
- Engineers and activists may appear over-instrumental, rigid and intolerant in their approaches to collaboration.
- Engineers' and activists' assumptions about what motivates artists can be unexpected and puzzling, especially to those artists who have long been involved with alternative, participative (non-object based) art practice.

On the whole, these antagonisms had some surprisingly productive effects on the events and – to a lesser extent – on the infrastructure of the first round of NODE.London 2006. The diversity and quality of artworks and events platformed during the season of media arts is not the subject of this text although we are sure that a survey of work created would provide a compelling panorama of media arts practice in London.

NODE.London 2006 also caught the imaginations of media arts practitioners elsewhere in the world. The Medienstamm-tisch in Linz hosted visits by NODE.London organisers, inviting

them to share their approaches to organisation and infrastructure towards '*developing a more open and networked media arts community*'<sup>29</sup> in preparation for 2009, when Linz will be European Capital of Culture as 'City of Media'. Some aspects of NODE.London 2006 suggested a way for different media arts organisations within one city or town to work together, rather than in competition with each other for money and attention. NODE.Stockholm was set up as a non-profit organisation in 2007 and ran its own season of media arts in January 2008. '*No-body owns the projects, the participants own it together and share the credit. This means that big and small institutions can work together, the nodes will make the work and this gives maximum momentum to the project at low cost.*'<sup>30</sup>

### A black hole

Despite all of this, after March 2006 a black hole opened up in the decision-making process. Numerous, very well attended and seemingly well conceived meetings of various formats intended to set out the future direction of NODE.London, yet there still appeared to be no available mandate to make decisions or for experienced organisers to hand over responsibility. There was therefore no effective way to move forward with the experiment and organise efficiently, collaborate, build on and learn from previous work. One of the most disabling effects for the group was an inability to acknowledge and therefore activate roles of individuals key to the functioning of the group's dynamic. Consensual decision-making had many attractive effects and useful associations for participants (as described above). However the unspoken dogma of "flatness," which attempted to equate the apparent self-organising properties of a flat network of abstract nodes, to the group of (living, breathing, human) Voluntary Organisers, made it unseemly to differentiate between their different contributions and levels of experience. The resulting frustration made it more difficult to reassemble to produce an energetic dynamic for the evolving group.

The notable tendency to perceive the NODE.London organisation as a verb rather than a noun (perhaps in some attempt to sidestep controversies around power, control and ownership) simultaneously created and masked problems that made it impossible to develop the Organisation (noun). Over about six months of monthly meetings attended by old hands and new-bees, many interesting discussions took place but no decisions were made. Frustrated and too busy with other things, the black hole swallowed us up and we stopped being so closely involved. We followed the discussions and meetings via the email lists<sup>31</sup> but it was difficult to discern the aims of the group.

29. From a report by Luci Eyers ([http://www.servus.at/xchange/archives/2006/06/entry\\_7.html](http://www.servus.at/xchange/archives/2006/06/entry_7.html)).

30. Notes by Björn Norberg, Mejan Labs and instigator of NODE.Stockholm (<http://www.nodestockholm.se>).

31. Email lists remain an excellent source for London-related media arts announcements subscribe here (thanks to the ongoing goodwill of a couple of unacknowledged individuals: [http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/Main_Page)).

The ad hoc, open, collaborative and consensual approach to organising (the original NODE.London way) did give rise to opportunities for many levels and types of learning, skills and knowledge sharing. However, any learning that occurred resided largely in the individuals, and those individuals could wander off at any time (with no formal hand-over of knowledge), so depleting and disabling the organisation. The lack of a robust and reliable way for organisers to deploy organisational memory, knowledge and experience, impacted on its continuity and accountability which in turn again eroded attempts to build infrastructure. For example, whilst the current wiki links to lots of good resources including some texts about 2006 and subscription details for mailing lists, many of the extended, unprocessed records of NODE.London's early development process through discussion and development (wikified minutes, discussion forums and collaborative timeline), which represented the full diversity of opinion and contribution are no longer available online. The fact that only a few of the original Voluntary Organisers continued to be involved with the coordination of the second season also represents a serious loss of resources (skills, energy, critical engagement) for NODE.London as an organisation.

Rather symbolically, after a number of thwarted attempts to describe and pull in resources for the next season of media arts, one attempt to reboot in June 2007 took the form of a ritual 'Burning of NODE.London'.<sup>32</sup> This involved setting fire to the NODE.London evaluation report. This act was clearly intended to be cathartic and liberating this may have conveyed a "burn don't learn" attitude to past and future participants (this report represented an investment of hundreds of person-hours by the group of paid and volunteer evaluators), a notion that in some way the existence of information and reflection on previous experience was trapping. It also suggested an exorcising of the spirits of past controversies.

In December 2007, after another six months of agonising attempts to galvanise, fundraise and reboot, the announcement of the spring '08 season was made by one of NODE.London's original founders. It wasn't clear how the decision had got made but it is hard to imagine how, in the circumstances, anyone else in the group could have fired the starting gun with equal authority and effectiveness, regardless of the capable, experienced and energetic engagement of lots of other people over the previous two years. It appeared that the form of decision-making we had adopted had served to conserve the original power dynamic of the project: the original founder was still the (reluctant) initiator of something called NODE.London. This announcement did serve to galvanise people's efforts. The second season was impressively swift off the blocks, but from our perspective, the sidestepping of organisational issues of ownership, control and participation reduced the impact of the season.

### **Getting organised openly**

In our view NODE.London's original aims are still timely, London still hosts many energetic practitioners and some kind of open approach to organising may still be worth persisting with, but first an organisation (noun) needs to be formed and developed.

Organisers would need to be careful that it did not replace the old glass ceilings of hierarchical organisational structures with new glass-roots. If an imperceptible mesh of interpersonal dynamics be allowed to govern decision-making and action-taking; and if the knowledge produced be unevenly distributed and partly hidden; no matter how expert be the individual people, all participants will be unable to perceive either the possibilities or limitations of their agency in relation to the project. These factors set the current limits for the scope and value of this experiment in tools and structures of cooperation.

In our view, a new attempt at open, distributed, bottom-up organisation would need some careful thought. The economies that sustain each of our three cultures are quite different. Therefore it would be a mistake to assume equal levels of surplus time and energy amongst participants. This would need to be considered when clarifying participants' responsibilities and terms of engagement in order to enroll and harness all participants' enthusiasms, energy, skills and experiences towards agreed common aims.

The charters and resources of open-organizations.org<sup>33</sup> may supply some useful starting points. They draw on concepts of self-organising systems and emphasise the value of well-defined processes to establishing transparent, accountable and truly participatory organisations. These documents provide the tools to be both open (in the ways which are valued by our three cultures of art, engineering and activism) *and* effective at decision-making and action-taking. They offer ways to organise through laterally arranged heterarchies, to maximise communication and coordination between groups with well-defined (if temporary or evolving) purposes and so ensure transparency, accountability and organisational learning. An open organisation values the diversity of participants and their connection with each other and to the processes. It acknowledges the need to recognise the roles, commitment, specific skills and experience of individuals within the organisation.

This approach, which appears to have sprung from the intersection of our 3 cultures, may be the most useful one if NODE.London still wishes to operate openly, drawing on the work of the same communities. It may need to adopt temporarily a lighter model on its way there – one that acknowledges who is doing what to develop the organisation (noun) and why. It may need to draw on other models that reflect the needs of its participants even more closely.

A functioning organisation will not automatically solve the

33. <http://open-organizations.org>.

other important question of resources and funding for media arts in London. That is, and should remain, a separate question. Sometimes in the past these issues have got mixed up as people marvelled at the apparent low cost and efficiency of the first season, failing to spot that work was most likely being self-subsidised or subsidised from invisible sources and was therefore, while appropriate for a one-off experiment, not so sustainable in the long term.

We are not nonchalant about the fate of media arts in London, but this text is not an argument for or against the continuation of NODE.London's activities. It may take new people with different motivations and in different configurations to make this work. However, the intersection of the three cultures of art, engineering and activism that the text has highlighted is a fruitful one; it usefully clashes and challenges different practitioners' models of the world by obliging them to communicate and collaborate outside of their silos. By organising events and projects together around notions of networks and openness practitioners are faced with the various (otherwise hidden) interdependencies of their practices,<sup>34</sup> and audiences are offered alternatives to passivity inducing closed art objects and cold and cryptal technologies. This in turn supports creative, philosophical and critical approaches to contemporary technologies and the cultures that surround them. Work at this intersection facilitates those who engage with it to think about the changes that they can effect in the world with their processes, values, skills and tools.

It is clear that the enduring controversies that arise between these cultures and their engagement with networks and openness have afforded the NODE.London venture much of its dynamism as a context for developing media arts practice in London. However, the question of how to get organised in a way that sustains the criticality and potency of its work and makes it available to Londoners remains open.

34. i.e. the production and conception of work by most artists, activists and programmers (whether they choose to think about it or not) is contingent upon (or at least derived from) the work of others.

**Anna Colin** is Exhibitions Curator at Gasworks. Founded in 1994, Gasworks (<http://www.gasworks.org.uk>) is an exhibitions, studios and residencies space in South London. Gasworks focuses on visual arts practice in its broadest sense, working discursively with UK-based and international artists to facilitate the development of their work. Gasworks is part of Triangle Arts Trust (<http://www.trianglearts.org>), a worldwide de-centralised network of artist-led residencies, workshops and organisations.

Together with **Mia Jankowicz**, – formerly Residencies Curator at Gasworks and now an independent curator currently in training at De Appel, Amsterdam – they have set up the project *Disclosures* (2008-ongoing). <http://disclosuresproject.wordpress.com/>

**A few lessons learnt from a crash course:  
The privileges and disadvantages of lacking  
knowledge  
by Anna Colin**

Mia Jankowicz and I are second generation NODE.Londoners. We first came into contact with NODE.London in September 2007 following a trip made to India two months earlier.

Travelling to meet artists, with a view to inviting a few of them to undertake a residency as part of a project at Gasworks in spring 2008, we were fortunate to meet practitioners Shaina Anand and Ashok Sukumaran (of CAMP, Mumbai) early on. This encounter influenced our thinking enormously and led our research towards practitioners notably associated with Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology (Bangalore), the Alternative Law Forum (Bangalore), Sarai and Cybermohalla (Delhi).

Back in London, we wanted to explore like-minded organisations and the people behind them, a scene of which we were formidably ignorant. We set out to meet practitioners actively involved in cultural work whose means of production, presentation and dissemination reflect the work's artistic and/or ideological ends. We knew the collaborative work of artists Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska, one of the few models of practice in London's visual arts world dedicated to reconciling intention and methodology (to refer to just one aspect of their work). We came across the research cluster Critical Practice,<sup>1</sup> which Neil Cummings is part of, and the two-day event *Open Congress* (2005)<sup>2</sup> that they had organised two years earlier. *Open Congress* soon became a curatorial model we looked up to, as well as the one-day seminar *Who Makes and Owns Your Work* (2007), organised by Iaspis in collaboration with Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design (through Marysia Lewandowska) in Stockholm.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the NODE.London website<sup>4</sup> became a key tool to research and enter in contact with single practitioners, groups and organisations in and beyond London. Our interest in these three structures was linked by their common attempts to organise along principles of ground-up consensus and openness.

The series of meetings that followed this secondary research was instrumental to the shaping of our project *Disclosures*, which was gradually (and more widely) geared towards practices working critically, thus acting in response to – or potentially securing a place outside of – the market economy. This definition, wide enough as it was, meant we could bring together and draw parallels between media and art practice while acknowledging their divergent histories, literature, discourses, circuits of production, diffusion and representation, sources of funding and curricula. Through Tim Jones, the coordinator of

1. <http://www.criticalpracticechelsea.org>

2. <http://opencongress.onweb.org/>

3. <http://www.whomakesandownsyourwork.org/>

4. <http://node1.org/>

the first NODE.London season of media arts (2006), we got our first foot into the reviving – some would say the decaying – NODE.London network. Mia's attendance at the September 2007 meeting signalled our debutant entrée into the world of Open Source-inspired cultural work, and our hope to contribute to the long trail of its debates.

The September 2007 meeting was about figuring out what to do with the network now that a first and long chapter had been successfully closed. Four ways of treating the network were proposed: a) The brand umbrella model; b) the unfunded 'supper club' model linked with Upgrade! Network; c) the agency model; d) the commissioning group model.<sup>5</sup>

The second meeting Mia and I attended, and which was hosted by Gasworks, took up for discussion these four proposed directions. It might have been appropriate had Ruth Catlow and Marc Garrett – who had already offered several analyses of the network through a text published in the previous NODE.London reader, "States of Interdependence"<sup>6</sup>, and an evaluation report for Arts Council England – come to share their experience and guide the discussion. Failing this, and as the minutes of the October 2007 meeting relate: '*We discussed the four "models" for NODE.London, although many people were not familiar with them so it wasn't possible to come to any firm consensus about which way NODE.London might go.*'<sup>7</sup> Instead, the idea was proposed to link a number of future projects that had their funding in place (since there were no funds available from NODE.London), as a basis for another season. These included OKCON, the second Open Knowledge Conference, and *Disclosures* for the time being. A few more projects that were to happen between March and April 2008 were talked about.

The setup of the late November 2007 meeting prevented us from taking further action and continuing to discuss the prospect of a new season or series of tie-ins. We found ourselves, and without prior notice, in a seminar room at the LSE half filled with students from the Social Psychology department and from the Architectural Association who had been invited to observe a network meeting in action. Another aspect of the meeting was the presentation by Michelle Kasprzak from New Media Scotland who had been asked to come and talk about the Upgrade! Network. In fact, '*the idea of NODE.London linking with it had been a feature on the discussion list for a while*'<sup>8</sup>.

*After the presentation, the confusion about the diversity of meeting participants resumed. There was a brief exchange between participants about what they wanted to get out of the meeting [...] Here, in bullet form, are the concluding decisions we arrived at:*

*a) We should skip the December meeting and resume*

5. See [http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/Subscriber\\_Meeting\\_24-09-2007](http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/Subscriber_Meeting_24-09-2007)

6. See <http://publication.nodel.org/States-of-Interdependence>

7. See [http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/Subscriber\\_Meeting\\_29-10-2007](http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/Subscriber_Meeting_29-10-2007)

8. See [http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/Subscriber\\_Meeting\\_24-09-2007](http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/Subscriber_Meeting_24-09-2007)

*meetings on the last Thursday in January. A venue was not selected.*

*b) There was much debate about the NODE.London/Upgrade! collaboration. Some thought that it would be a shame to lose the NODE.London 'brand' (for lack of a better word) and that it might be a good idea to create a 'NODE.London/Upgrade!' as a kind of hybrid set of subscriber meetings. Others suggested there could be a NODE.London Upgrade! agent or representative that organised Upgrade events and liaised with NODE.London. Others thought it was best to keep them separate and simply encourage someone to independently start an Upgrade!. The conclusion was that we should start a discussion on the NODE.London site about NODE.London's potential relationship with Upgrade! and see what everyone thought now that we had heard from an Upgrade! representative.<sup>9</sup>*

None of this happened and yet again, those most concerned with NODE.London's lack of direction and best positioned to share their knowledge and experience of building and maintaining networks were absent. We were back at exactly the same place as a few months earlier.

Nevertheless, it was decided via email that an informal December meeting would be called to discuss what by now most excited those who had been attending the last few meetings: the prospect of a new season, which we had been unable to talk about at that last, oddly staged meeting. The minutes of the December 2007 meeting at Deckspace tell us that we elaborated a plan to make a season of media arts happen in the spring of 2008 and that we '*considered issues brought up in emails by Ruth Catlow and Tim Jones which highlighted various areas in need of attention [...] Preventing 'burnout' through uneven levels of commitment and input, questioning how genuinely broad consensus is achieved.'*<sup>10</sup>

What the minutes don't talk about is the impatience felt by some of us faced with the reported lessons of our absent mentors. It was a bit late to be taught how to operate a network: we had already been in our own hands for quite a few months. During that meeting, it was suggested that we break free of their remote control and that we get on with making decisions with whoever was present at a meeting. The need for face to face meetings as opposed to virtual meetings or meetings over emails with staggered replies had been acknowledged since the creation of NODE.London, and as a consequence the physical absence of some of the members could only lead to their distantiation.

Whether as a result of this decision or most probably because spring was getting closer, the group found a new energy, and between January and March 2008 new faces showed up at meetings, and not two but eighteen individuals and organisations

9. See [http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/Subscriber\\_Meeting\\_29-11-2007](http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/Subscriber_Meeting_29-11-2007)  
10. See [http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/Informal\\_Meeting\\_17-12-2007](http://wiki.nodel.org/index.php/Informal_Meeting_17-12-2007)

joined forces over the production of a poster marketing the events of the spring 2008 season. Perhaps as foretold by the originators of NODE.London, the momentum was short-lived. When the season ended, there were no longer eighteen people but three who sat down to resume the conversation about NODE.London at the June 2008 meeting. But to be fair, the reason for poor attendance was largely climatic, the meeting having been planned in a park and the weather being at its worst.

This is a short account of the spring '08 season of NODE.London seen from the perspective of a latecomer and partly written in response to the contribution of Ruth Catlow and Marc Garrett to this reader, 'Getting Organised'. In a segment titled 'A Black Hole' Ruth and Marc deplore NODE.London's recent decay, and write:

*The fact that only a few of the original Voluntary Organisers continued to be involved with the coordination of the second season also represents a serious loss of resources (skills, energy, critical engagement) for NODE.London as an organisation.<sup>11</sup>*

I couldn't agree more, and also regret the lack of possibilities for newcomers to learn from the experiences and knowledge of the original organisers.

While never formally going back to making a decision about which model to adopt (perhaps for fear of losing our creativity in the face of the impossible quest for a unanimous definition of NODE.London) the brand umbrella model<sup>12</sup> became the unwritten elected way of working, and from which the spring '08 season ensued.

The non-question: Who owns the network? and that of whether the network should redefine itself and evolve as old members leave and new members come – while still being identified as NODE.London – have haunted NODE.London ever since the first season ended, if not before. How progressive and efficient is a network whose vision is disputed by its initiators and altered by newcomers like us until it is of no use and needs redefining yet again? After seven months of inactivity, the monthly meetings were resumed in December 2008 during which the need to formalise a set of objectives was acknowledged if only for legal, practical and marketing reasons – i.e. to be able to write a constitution that would give NODE.London access to funding, and to propagate the work of NODE.London to larger communities<sup>13</sup>. The originators of NODE.London were back at the meetings, while many of the 2008

11. See Ruth Catlow and Marc Garrett, 'Getting Organised', this volume, p. 21.

12. "By coordinating another 'festival' event, NODE.London helps provide context and coordination particularly (but not exclusively) for smaller/grass-roots based media arts groups. The festival is an umbrella for a series of independent events providing a snapshot/inventory of media arts work of all kinds and in all contexts, rather than a platform which is curated or themed in any way. We use the NODE London 'brand' actively, tactically and effectively to support this activity" ([http://wiki.NODE1.org/index.php/Subscriber\\_Meeting\\_24-09-2007](http://wiki.NODE1.org/index.php/Subscriber_Meeting_24-09-2007))

13. See [http://wiki.node1.org/index.php/Subscriber\\_Meeting\\_01-12-2008](http://wiki.node1.org/index.php/Subscriber_Meeting_01-12-2008)

new faces (including me) were absent. NODE.London might have reached a full circle or is simply too good at burning out or demotivating its members for them to want to take long breaks. One can only hope that a third season might provide an answer to the identity crisis of the network.

### **Disclosures**

Some lessons were also learned through *Disclosures*, and perhaps it is now time to backtrack and explain how the project eventually developed. *Disclosures* set out to scrutinise the notion of openness across fields of cultural production at large; in other words, to look at how Open Source methodologies translate to practices located outside of the Internet. *Disclosures* started as a two-day seminar held in March 2008 in two sites in Aldgate East and brought together practitioners from the fields of visual and media art, philosophy, urban sociology and social history studies. Developed in four phases it addressed:

- 1.** The points of connection as well as the divides between critical media practice and socially-engaged work in the visual art field, both aspiring to work outside of, and acting in response to the market economy and the main socio-cultural circuits.
- 2.** Intellectual Property laws and the current licensing system; the idea of public availability of information and knowledge; the factors that have forced public resources out of civic reach; and the implications ensuing from the release of cultural material and alternative genealogies to those written by Western history.
- 3.** The socio-economic, political and cultural conditions for the technological underpinning of openness – Free/Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS) – to exist and become widespread across various global contexts; the limitations of FLOSS as a tool and model.
- 4.** Experiments with the blurring of authorship and with cross-referencing in the field of literature; horizontal collaborations through which the relationship between the fan, the author and the author's creations are reconfigured.

*Disclosures* further took the form of a series of commissions, residencies, a view-on-demand film and reading library and a sequence of events at Gasworks. Some of the contributions have been given space in this reader: Critical Practice's *Resource Camp*, under the form of notes and transcripts; Petra Bauer's lecture-performance *Deleted Swedish Stories*; and Matthew Fuller and Usman Haque's *Urban Versioning System 1.0.1*.

Going back to the lessons learnt in the process, the most interesting (for me) relates to the misuse of Open Source tools and the naïve belief that if you go 'open', participation will follow naturally. Indeed, when starting to develop *Disclosures*, Mia and I – drawing from *Open Congress* – opened a wiki page

on which we obsessively posted the project's latest bibliography, synopsis, agendas of meetings with practitioners and a wish list of participants to our two-day seminar. For us as curators, working in a competitive and often highly custodial art world, making our hesitations, weaknesses and desires public was a liberating and pleasingly provocative experiment. But to be fair, we were not taking great risks either: the list of contributors we were thinking of may have been surprised by our methods but not scandalised to see their names hypothetically associated with our project, being themselves devoted to ideas of knowledge-sharing and publicness.

The drawback of this experiment was the lack of use of the wiki by anyone else than the curators of the project. The fact that we expected over-solicited bloggers to add to our amateurish working tool clearly shows our inexperience. The wiki ended up becoming an online storage for ideas between Mia and I, and once the content was transferred to Gasworks' website, the wiki was emptied and still sits empty next to hundreds of misused wikis.

Yet, one thing this failed attempt and the whole project taught us is the potential behind the releasing of knowledge and information on the institutional level. One illustration of this is the commissioning of Pipeline<sup>14</sup>, a second online presence for Gasworks. Launched during *Disclosures* and edited by Gasworkers, Pipeline (re)publishes research material (text, audio, film, etc.) generated by and around projects as they are developed for Gasworks' exhibitions and residencies programmes.

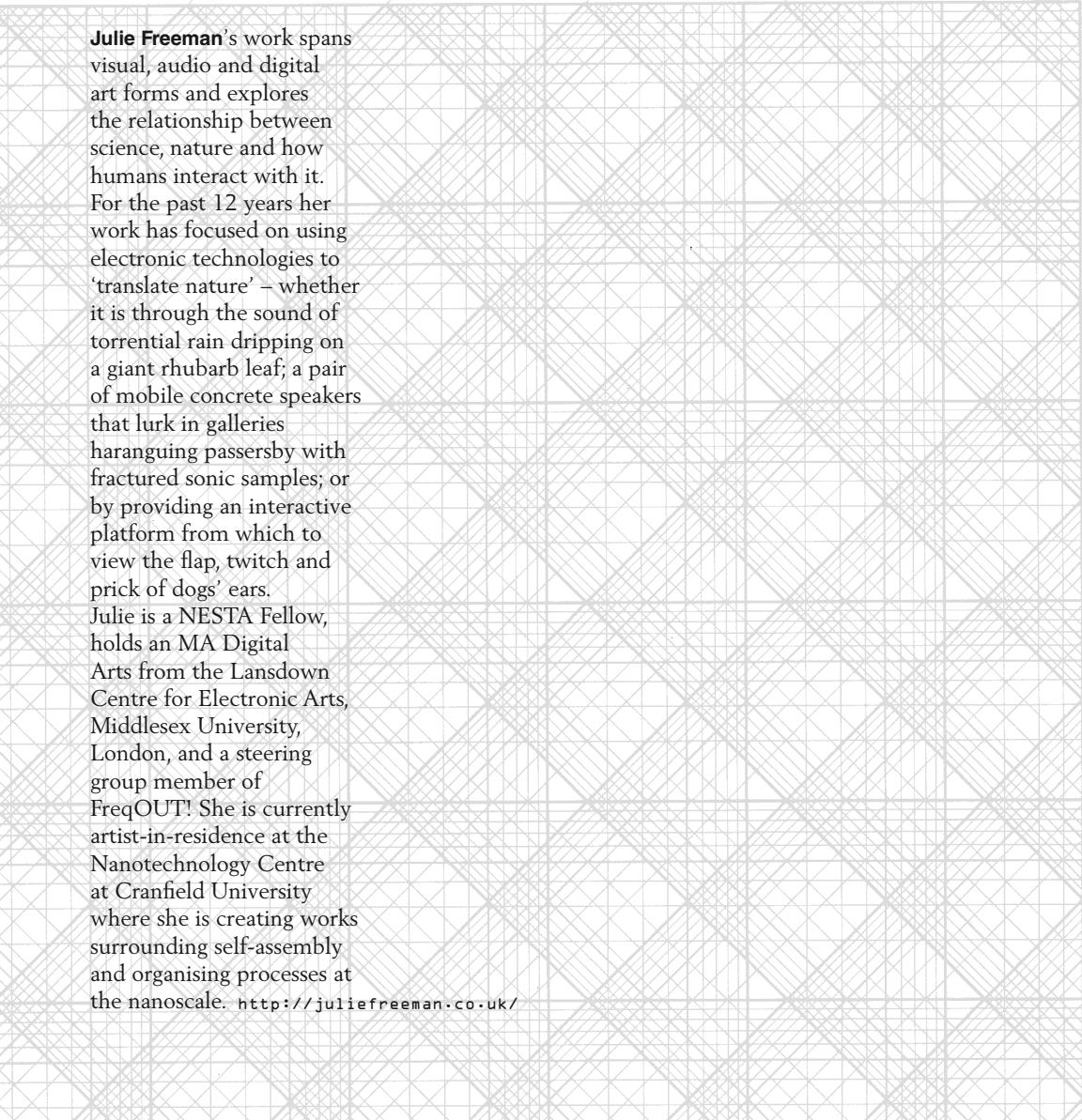
Having the possibility to share material with our peers and constantly to be on the lookout for oddities to keep the platform alive, has made the repressed geeks in us hungry for more flexible forms of presentation of ideas. In turn, having this platform has also, to some extent, contributed to redirecting the institution's working methods and choices of projects and practices to engage with. Pipeline is perhaps the most tangible – and the most long-lived – outcome of our immersion in the world of networked cultures and media art. Despite the occasional disillusion, if there is any remorse, it is that of being generalists constantly diving in and out of disciplines without much of a chance to settle into specialism. At least not yet.

#### **Recommended reading on the subject of specialism:**

Sheikh, Simon (2007) 'Constitutive Effects: The Techniques of a Curator' in O'Neill, Paul (ed.) *Curating Subjects*. London: Open Editions, pp.174–185.

14. Pipeline was created by realised by Electronest, a creative agency which develops technology for design & communication purposes. See <http://pipeline.gasworks.org.uk> and <http://www.electronest.com>.





**Julie Freeman**'s work spans visual, audio and digital art forms and explores the relationship between science, nature and how humans interact with it. For the past 12 years her work has focused on using electronic technologies to 'translate nature' – whether it is through the sound of torrential rain dripping on a giant rhubarb leaf; a pair of mobile concrete speakers that lurk in galleries haranguing passersby with fractured sonic samples; or by providing an interactive platform from which to view the flap, twitch and prick of dogs' ears.

Julie is a NESTA Fellow, holds an MA Digital Arts from the Lansdown Centre for Electronic Arts, Middlesex University, London, and a steering group member of FreqOUT! She is currently artist-in-residence at the Nanotechnology Centre at Cranfield University where she is creating works surrounding self-assembly and organising processes at the nanoscale. <http://juliefreeman.co.uk/>

## Mmmmm. Momentum, Motivation, Money. by Julie Freeman

This text is a subjective perspective on NODE.London from a relative newcomer to the scene. It takes a look at what has been achieved, makes some assumptions about where, and why, things were in mid 2007, and recaps on some economic suggestions made at the time. It contains a reflection on the organisation itself and where it is now, questioning whether with its existing funding strategy and highly dynamic structure, NODE.London can maintain direction, motivation and momentum.

### **Mmmmm**

The season of media arts events that NODE.London produced in 2006 was, on the whole, a very good thing. Over 400 organisers and artists created about 150 events, across 40 locations, and attracted a physical audience (i.e. excluding on-line audiences) of between 5,500 and 30,000.<sup>1</sup> There is no definite idea, in real terms, of how much this cost. Estimations in the evaluation report submitted to the Arts Council England (ACE) by NODE.London suggest over £500,000 (which includes an initial ACE strategic funding grant of £70,000, funds raised by individuals, and estimated volunteered time). What is known is how much effort it took to produce this number of art events for relatively little money, a lack of funds inevitably requiring a sizeable chunk of voluntary input from both organisers and artists. It's not surprising then that post the 2006 season of media arts, momentum had peaked and was on a downhill slide. NODE.London had achieved its initial aims, the thrill of the chase was gone, people needed a break.

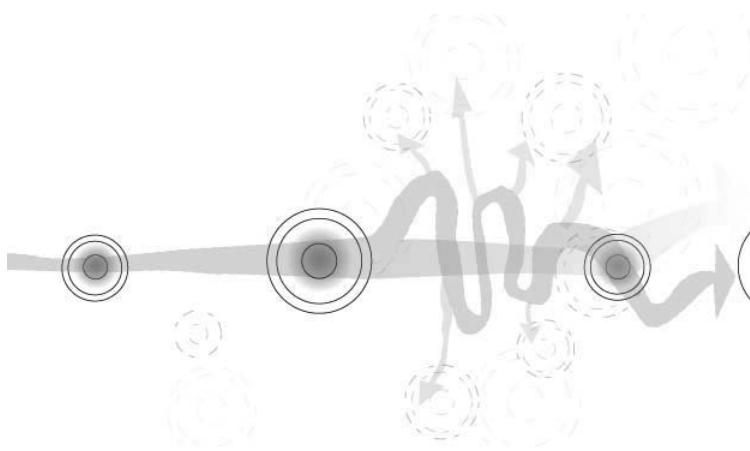
### **Momentum**

At the time I became more aware of the organisational side of NODE.London it was mid 2007, post two successful events (*Open Season*, October 2005 and *The Season of Media Arts*, March 2006), in the midst of this energy ebb. The main challenge seemed to be to pick-up the momentum, and start looking to the long term. So what was next? Another season? Something different? A more formal organisation? In research terms the NODE.London experiment had proven itself beyond feasibility and pilot study phases, and was ready to move into the next phase.

### **Motivation**

NODE.London's successful first 18 months was primarily due to motivation. Those involved with the initial concept and those that saw it through the first two seasons were highly motivated, passionate people with a clear shared goal. Motivation is para-

1. See <http://dusan.idealnypartner.sk/notepad/node.london/>. Also: [http://dav.nodel.org/evaluation/node\\_london\\_evaluation\\_report.doc](http://dav.nodel.org/evaluation/node_london_evaluation_report.doc).



mount to the success of any organisation, group or event; there is little that drives a project forward more effectively than shared responsibility and a well defined destination. Motivation is fundamental to goal attainment.

So why do we do it? For love, loyalty, fun, satisfaction, increased self-worth, obsession, challenge, money, sex, curiosity and many more, more or less Machiavellian, motives. Motivations can also be collective and reflective of the group, and it is perhaps up to the organisation to remove insecurities and doubts from its members to ensure that these shared motives can emerge. For many of us primary motivations vary, depending on the context, but fun is generally fairly high up on the list. Competitive amusement, use of ingenuity and tactics, close team work, pushing boundaries – these elements of game play are, when applied with the right intention, great tools for holding interest, having fun, and getting things done. Without this challenging edge brought about by an ambitious aim or seemingly impossible task, do overly stable organisations lose some of the playfulness needed to keep members motivated? Is it possible that the earnestness in some arts organisations kills motivation?

### **Money**

In July 2007 NODE Redux had a meeting at the HTTP Gallery where a selection of people talked through some “moving forward” kind of presentations. I talked about finance. There were a couple of reasons I opted to do this. Firstly I felt (and still feel) strongly that any organisation should aim to be as financially diverse and stable as possible, and secondly, that it was a good opportunity for the organisation to look to a long-term economic model that reflected the NODE.London ethos, and would provide some longevity to give the whole project depth over time.

The options below are a selection of funding routes, and the suggestion following was a potential way forward for NODE.London that tries to retain its experimental nature inasmuch as

it changes over time and reflects on itself to incorporate change from lessons learned and capitalise on successes.

### **Summary of arts funding options**

Below is an overview of the funding avenues available to the arts in the UK. The advantages and disadvantages I've noted are by no means comprehensive, but indicate some of the pros and cons that should be considered.

#### **A. Public Sector Funding**

Money that comes from tax payers, administrated for the government. Examples include Arts Council England, local authorities/councils, the National Lottery, NESTA, EU.

##### *Advantages*

No repayment.<sup>2</sup> Tax free (mostly if educational, developmental). Once authorised often arms length management (if any) is applied.

##### *Disadvantages*

Restrictive – your project must tally with the current aims of the funding body. State-dependent. Unsustainable for long-term security. Competitive. Often smaller funding packets, and smaller fees. Large funding applications can require organisational partners – a process that often needs funding itself.

#### **B. Charitable / Foundation Grants**

Grants and awards from known funders (i.e. Esmée Fairbairn, Calouste Gulbenkian, Foyle Foundation, Garfield Weston, Wellcome Trust, Arts&Business, etc).

##### *Advantages*

No repayment. Can be tax free. Generally good fee structures. Good networks. Often open to new ideas. Some use peer review processes. A successful grant will often open doors to other funding avenues.

##### *Disadvantages*

Restrictive – some funders have very tight guidelines regarding what themes they will support. Unsustainable – likely to be one-off grants. Highly competitive. Often require matched or other funding.

#### **C. Commercial Support**

Partners and sponsors from the commercial world. This could be in-kind, in the form of media coverage, technology support, venue provision, other resources, but more rarely cash.

##### *Advantages*

No repayment. Access to audiences. Gravitas through association. No formal application forms.

##### *Disadvantages*

Branding. Unsustainable – often a tie-in with current

2. If your funding is for a revenue making enterprise, or commercial product, you may be required to provide the funder with a return on their investment (NESTA in particular request this).

promotional or corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. Requires existing audience information. Lack of gravitas through association. Often require a good past history of attracting audiences. May require stability of an organisation behind individuals.

#### **D. Loan Funding**

Bank or business angel funding for a small business capital or cash-flow injection.

##### *Advantages*

Instant cash injection. Independence. Economic space to develop infrastructures not just projects.

##### *Disadvantages*

Core team need to commit long-term (hard to maintain flexibility of NODE.London ethos). Pay back required, plus interest. Guarantees sometimes required. Large admin overheads due to legal status requirements – accounting, banking, reporting. Will generally require return on investment forecasts which can be problematic for a non-profit structure.

#### **E. Voluntary Income**

Donations, company giving, death legacies, patronships.

##### *Advantages*

No repayment. Unrestricted. Cash.

##### *Disadvantages*

Rare. Small amounts. Generally only established charities build patrons. Unreliable (therefore unsustainable). Requires large audience (for donations).

#### **F. Self Generated Income**

Sales revenue from goods or services. Could include sales of art works/multiples, processes, website models, vegetables, advertising, competitions, training, subscriptions, entry fees and tickets, sponsorship opportunities, etc.

##### *Advantages*

Self-sustainable (independence). No repayment. Self-directed.

Scalable. Flexible.

##### *Disadvantages*

Requires strong promotion of brand. Taxable. Unpredictable.

Potential ownership issues within organisation for artwork (individuals vs whole).

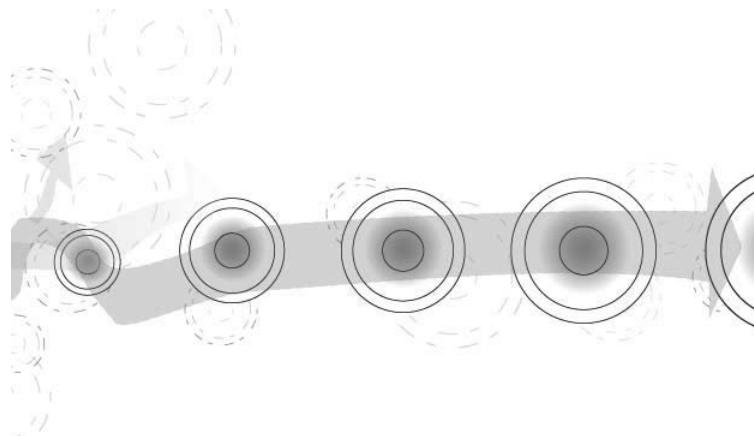
#### **A co-operative way forward**

To move NODE.London into a longer-term position of economic sustainability, a plan which involves a mixture of the funding streams above, could be implemented with a view to reducing public funding and becoming more self-funded over time. Using and planning for different funding sources ensures that the organisation spreads its financial risks – the loss of ACE core funding in early 2008 has been a big challenge to many arts organisations that were unable to generate enough other revenue.

Continuous core effort is needed to ensure any group or organisation is successful. If this effort can be funded, even at a low level, it becomes the foundation for everything else to build on. Funds will also give the group responsibility (internally and externally), increasing the likelihood that plans will move forward.

1. ACE/charitable foundation grant. Application to include a plan to set-up a more formal organisation (a co-op<sup>3</sup>) to ensure longevity, access to organisational funding, and continued use of the tools and networks built to date.  
Deliver: Season 4 – public sector funded, non-commercial
2. Gain backing once organisational framework is in place. Look to commercial partners to accelerate notoriety and gain larger audiences.  
Deliver: Season 5 – part public sector, part commercial, entry to self-funding.
3. Sustain: self generating revenue streams to include funding types B, C, E and F as above.  
Deliver: Season 6 – no public sector, commercial partners, self-funded.

Developing a long-term plan for a skeleton structure filled with short-term plans for projects would enable people, projects and outputs to change whilst still meeting aims within a larger picture. This strategy would also help to ensure that at the end of each new season or large event, members of the organisation, and the organisation itself, still have a *raison d'être*, still have goals to achieve, and still have the game to play.



### The Spring '08 Season

At meetings following that of July 2007 at HTTP Gallery, NODE.London went through the process of organising the next season – spring '08. Discussions about NODE.London as an art

3. A co-op is defined by the International Co-operative Alliance as '*an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.*' NODE.London could fit within this loose definition to formalise itself.

entity decreased, and practicalities of production took over.

This season had a smaller number of participants (artists and organisers) and aimed simply to assist in promotion of works. Creating, developing, realising and situating works was down to the individual – NODE.London raised awareness of these activities, placing it as an event promotion tool.

Value for NODE.London from this event will be through documentation and legacy. Essential trading for future fund raising and audience building, documentation is crucial for NODE.London in this role, as it is the only tangible output it has. This was acknowledged, but for event organisers documentation and evaluation is often low on the list.

### **More NODE.London?**

Reflecting on the organisation itself I wonder in what format will it continue. Sometimes the preoccupation with *how* NODE.London was working seemed occasionally to overtake the *what* NODE.London was doing – the organisational ego was making it a self-referential entity.

An interesting aspect of NODE.London is this heightened awareness to be atypical, and the ability to see when structure started to emerge out of the apparent lack of structure. It's tempting to try and build a centralised model to explain or contain these behaviours – to try and see who was making the decisions, to try and map a traditional hierarchical model over the top of what happened, but the dynamics of the group prevented this happening. It is important to acknowledge that boundaries constantly shift and that individuals all play a part in the experiment, changing it all the time, consciously or subconsciously. But does insecurity, brought through a dynamic organisational structure, disable its members' confidence?

NODE.London created the impression that it prioritised the structure and technologies of the organisation at the expense of the individual.<sup>4</sup> One of the 'assumptions' of NODE.London was that it would be non-curated (Jones in Barbeni, 2006), which indicated that ego and personality would be actively kept outside of the frame. Externally, this is very important in the production of a season, festival or exhibition of diverse and pioneering art forms. However, internally NODE.London is about the people in it and the energies they bring. Regardless of having open communications, flat hierarchies, consensual decision making, it is the individuals within a group and the dynamics between them that push organisations forward, creating drive and feeding momentum. The lack of acknowledgement of that dynamic will be an important contributory factor to the form NODE.London takes in the future. Yet another factor is the reluctance of active feedback, an increase of which would improve security in a group where individuals' roles have blurry definitions, and within which

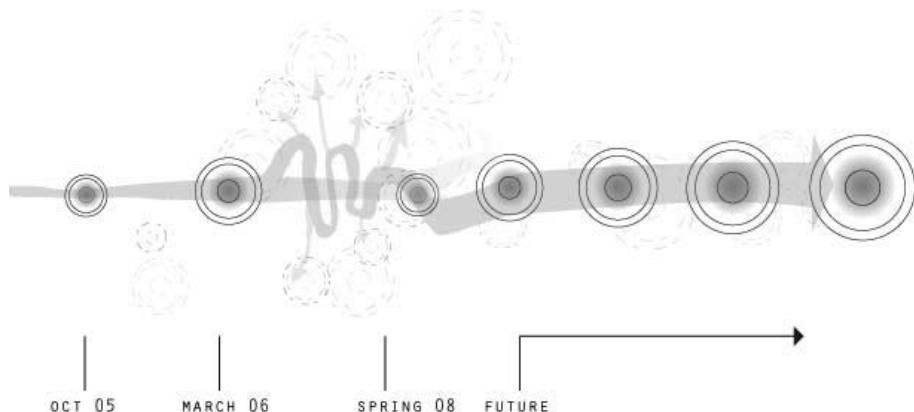
<sup>4</sup> This is in opposition to Hobbes' social contract, which is worth a read to see how NODE.London tried to avoid the single "dictator" and also avoid the egotistical consequences of this (according to Hobbes, that is).

technological tools play a major part.

Symptomatic of a technologically driven life, the structure of arts organisations is constantly being updated, fixed with patches, upgraded to other newer models, and has a reluctance to work with legacy systems. Does this constant reinvention and lack of overarching plan create a sense of continuous flux, or does it bring innovation and the ability to act responsively in the moment?

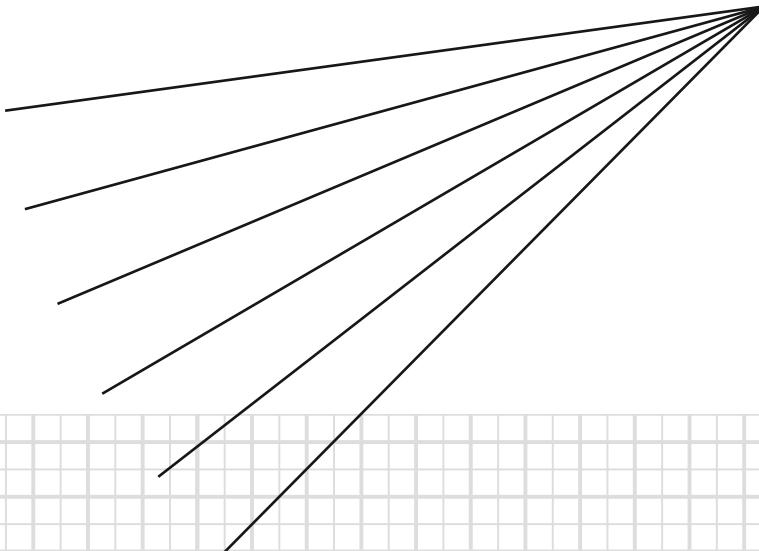
The current status of NODE.London is undefinable as it is whatever you want it to be – add energy and it will spring to life. It's been proven that activity can be mobilised quickly and efficiently when needed – this was evidenced by the spring '08 season. Maybe NODE.London is for now just that: an easily mobilised tool waiting for the next signal.

NODE.LONDON





## 2. ECONOMIES OF OPENNESS



**Jamie King** (*Steal This Film 1 & 2*, <http://www.stealthisfilm.com/>) is a filmmaker, writer and activist working enthusiastically in the area of new media, post-IP culture and social organisation. A former editor of *Mute Magazine* (<http://www.metamute.org/>), lobbyist at the UN, journalist at ITN News, and consultant for Channel 4 Television, Jamie is now focused on radical approaches to sharing, exchange and co-operation indicated by network technologies across a variety of media.

**After the Crash, or How We Stopped Worrying  
and Learned to Love p2p**  
**by Jamie King**

At the Open Media Economics Panel (OKCON 2008), I've been asked to speak about new distribution models, lessons learned from distributing *Steal This Film* (there are *a lot* of lessons learned from *Steal This Film!*) and how these might pertain to filmmaking in the future.

I always try to find fresh things to say at such occasions, but it's not hard right now against the background of a major financial crisis, a crisis of global financial institutions that is spreading into the "real" economy in ways that will impact us all.

It is quite clear that, in the short to medium term and perhaps in the long term too, resources for filmmakers are going to dry up in the two directions that matter. First, companies are already going to be slashing advertising spend, and this is going to effect broadcasters, which is in turn going to effect the commissioning of new films. Second, foundations and endowments who either have money invested in the stock market or who depend on funding from other institutions will find their resources tightening significantly. In both cases, these institutions are going to tend towards funding media they see as likely to be more "successful," making it much harder for filmmakers to find the money to make films in the traditional way.

The obvious response for many "small filmmakers" will be panic, fear, loathing. But what can we see in the nascent forms of production developing online that could be relevant to our plight?

First: peer-to-peer (p2p) networks – whether BitTorrent-based or any other – are the most cost-effective form of distribution we have. What we have created, together, blows broadcasting, cinema distribution and DVD distribution out of the water. I hope cinema will never die, but there's no doubt that in terms of getting the movies to the people, The Pirate Bay is a hell of a lot more efficient. You can, right now, see people ripping and sharing HD movies that are close as damn it to what you're seeing projected in multiplexes. The cost is distributed amongst all the people in the swarm of sharers, absorbed into the price they pay for their monthly bandwidth. By choosing to dedicate some of their bandwidth to distributing the media, they become investors in that distribution process, with the level of investment pegged to their enthusiasm for the film and commitment to the community in which they're sharing it. (And presumably, in the case of HD sharers, this investment ends in a 720p or 1080p projector, more infrastructure they've invested in, which is another significantly shared resource in homes or amongst neighbourhood and friends.)

Let's be real about this. As the economy contracts, people are going to have a lot less money to spend on things like DVDs, cable and satellite contracts, and weekly trips to the cinema. As well as being non-essential, all of them are simply overpriced, partly because they rely on outdated distribution technologies

and partly because the businesses behind them are gouging profits at the expense of their own futures – *aka* looting. There is little to no loyalty to these forms of distribution. When push comes (as it is now) to shove, people will turn to p2p to get their media. They'll burn DVDs for their friends. They'll use capacious USB keys and sneakernets to move media around local areas. They'll create community Wi-Fi networks with readily available, cheap networking equipments. And governments, knowing that cheap, readily available entertainment is in the interest of a country in a depression, will leave them to it.

Now: in what sense is this *not* doom for content creators? How is unrestricted copying anything but a bane for people trying to make a living while making media?

First: we have to refuse completely the idea of scarcity in media. Abundance is not our enemy, it's our friend. We have to start to see the sharing of our works as an investment of time and money by p2p communities and expression of interest in, or love for, the work. Our baseline response as producers has to be to treat these distributing communities with respect, not as people who've detracted from the value of our work, but as people who are contributing to it.

Strange as it may seem, we are in the debt of "pirates" – and hyperbolic as it might seem, we'll be even further in their debt as the old machinery of mass media becomes less and less available to us to create and focus attention on our works. Ultimately, it's all about getting and sustaining attention, and this is what passionate distributing communities do for us. Once we have that attention, the rest is fairly simple: each of us then has to negotiate contracts with the people who consume our work to allow us to sustain a practice that provides them with what they love. In each case this will be a different contract, with a different setup, and a different degree of "success".

Second: we have to refuse the ideas of "success" that have been handed down from the previous generations of mass media. Then, "success" was media that could sucker millions of eyeballs to it at a single moment, in a single broadcast, allowing distribution companies to sell advertising on an industrial scale. The successful work was a Big work, with Big "production values," Big themes of interest to definable, big "markets," demographics that were, absolutely and specifically, based upon their capacity to be *sold* to.

We have to refuse this idea of success now, because our media doesn't – or doesn't always – work like this. It can be small, touching themes that are of interest to specific communities of people stretched over the whole world. It can find its way to these communities through low-cost, low-latency community distribution that allows discovery to happen over a long extension period (p2p media is not remaindered, deleted, or put in the archives). And while this in no way limits the success of a particular film – in fact, I would argue, it improves the chances of traditional success for most producers – it does mean that we

may have more cases where a producer can live modestly from a work, or have a work become part of the constellation of things they do that makes it possible to live. We have to ditch the gambler mentality afflicting most media producers ("famous or bust") and see this sort of modest income as a genuine success, especially if it goes on over a significant duration.

And third: we have to embrace a new idea of what making media *is*, and it's an idea that we're already seeing developing online. This is a media in which production "values" needn't be Big – but in which a work can still have meaningful effects, and take place in a conversation or variety of conversations. Take *Loose Change* or *Zeitgeist*. Both were largely composed of second-hand, downloaded clips with an added voiceover – something that could be done in any bedroom – but they became something people thought about, talked about, referenced, and passed on to others. They became massively popular. The fact that they were not of "broadcast quality" didn't matter at all.

There's no need for "broadcast quality" when you're not justifying to Gucci why they should advertise next to a piece of media, or why someone should spend \$15.00 to sit in a seat watching it. Most people care less about the "finish" of a product than they do about the essential messages conveyed, about the characters, the drama, the story. It's not about *refusing* "high quality," but about working enthusiastically with what's available, not letting it stop us because of some perceived barrier about what is 'right'.

Besides, what's available to us now, technologically speaking, is remarkably good. We seem to be on the cusp of a real change in what it is possible to produce on a "micro-budget", with the Red One (still outside the league of most small filmmakers) only the beginning of the story. Being 'small' may mean soon nothing more than rethinking what it means to make media outside the overblown, self-important, distorted, overpaid systems that have come before us. And most importantly, we don't have to ask anyone before we do it: we already have the distribution deal that everyone's searching for. It's called p2p.

It's amazing more filmmakers haven't got the idea. So much of making films today seems to revolve around pitching, cutting and re-cutting trailers, networking, attending seminars on approaching potential investors and so on. Quite obviously, if these people focused on getting a film made with the means they had available they would... get a film made. As we showed with *Steal This Film*, getting the first "part" – or even a "working version" – up online can attract support, attention and, ultimately lead to opportunities that are not available otherwise.

The interesting thing about the coming crisis is that we may be forced to stop supplicating to those whose permission we still perceive as being necessary to make "proper" media. Even if we do have ambitions to address traditional distribution systems – perhaps to test their power to make us some money, or because we want the thrill of seeing our films in cinemas – by far the

best way to convince a distributor to take a financial risk on a film is to show them people are interested in it first. With strong online statistics in favour of a work, this may well become a no-brainer – and if it doesn't, at least the producer has the satisfaction of knowing people have *seen* it!

So in the end, producers are going to embrace file-sharing because they *have* to – because our networks are the best, and maybe soon the only way of getting their work out to people. We'll see a lot more work being made by passionate amateurs, and a lot less by bored professionals churning out procedural rubbish for a perceived 'demographic'. In the end, the networks we are building only function if people care about works enough to distribute and share them. And if people distribute our work, talk about it, promote it to their friends, we are one step away from being able to make it part of what sustains us.

How we do it is up to us. Chris Anderson (2006<sup>1</sup>) suggests that we should be giving away *some* content and charging a levy on the rest – he calls it 'Freemium'. The problem I have with this is that it still owes too much to the scarcity model, and can lead – in independent filmmaking – to giving away little more than trailers. Projects like Big Buck Bunny<sup>2</sup> showed that it is possible to sell and give away pretty much simultaneously: supporters pre-bought DVDs but were allowed to rip and share them immediately. This is more like what one commenter to Anderson's blog called '*en masse purchase or commission*' in which '*the keenest section of the audience pays as a collective – for a work that is then freely copyable to the rest of the world*'.

This is closest to what "feels right" to me, but in the end what comes next will be a whole lot of creativity about how to turn this into an "industry". I hope it will be a more heterogeneous, weird and interesting one than that we are struggling with today.

1. [http://www.longtail.com/the\\_long\\_tail/](http://www.longtail.com/the_long_tail/).  
2. <http://www.bigbuckbunny.org/>.



**Armin Medosch** is a writer, artist and curator working in the field of media art and network culture. He initiated the exhibition WAVES which was shown in Riga, Latvia, in 2006, and in 2008 in Dortmund, Germany. He has published numerous articles, book contributions and two books: *Netzpiraten* (2001) and *Freie Netze* (2003). He is currently doing a practice-based PhD at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He runs a collaborative research platform under the title *The Next Layer*. <http://www.thenextlayer.org/>

**Jonas Andersson** is an analyst of contemporary media technology, popular culture and everyday consumption. His main focus is on the various processes of digitisation of media content. He was a PhD student and Visiting Tutor at Goldsmiths College, University of London, but has now re-located back to Sweden, where he is finishing his PhD thesis on p2p-based file-sharing and participates in local debates in said areas.

## Paid In Full: The Remix “...No Mistakes Allowed”

### Introduction

In Deptford.TV Diaries II: Pirate Strategies (OpenMute Publishing 2008), Armin Medosch argues that **the buzzwords of allegedly “free” and “open” media in fact serve to cheapen the terms of trade for individual cultural producers**. If what we produce is expected to be entirely free, we open up yet another route for abuse by the existing expropriators and media channel owners. Jonas Andersson adds to this argument, recognising how formulaic rule systems promote what is essentially **a fantasy of cultural control**, and how **technical infrastructures without the involvement of true human commitment only worsen the crisis**, by expelling new production into obscurity.

What is really in short supply in the age of cultural mass consumption is not money, but respect for cultural production and the life-long commitment of people who happened to end up as professional artists because there is maybe nothing else that they can do or want to do. Knowing that this can be easily misunderstood, one must nevertheless insist on this distinction of professionalism and on the notion of respect as an appreciation of the various bonds between authors, their works and the publics supporting them. This is the real currency in the economy of cultural production.

In this sense one has to say, just like Eric B and Rakim in the seminal 1987 album, that **we've got to be Paid in Full**.

Armin Medosch:  
*Kingdom of Piracy*  
When in 2001 Shu Lea Cheang, Yukiko Shikata and I curated a net art exhibition for Taiwan's Acer Digital Arts Centre (ADAC), we called it *Kingdom of Piracy* (KOP). Despite our cultural differences the three of us shared a very similar background in the 1980s appropriation art. Challenged with curating Taiwan's first major exhibition of net art, we thought that net art and the intellectual property debate were a uniquely suitable topic. The intellectual property question formed the looking glass through which, we thought, a Taiwanese audience stood a good chance of getting a grasp of net art. We speculated that the issue was as

In recent years ‘remix culture’ has gone mainstream. One of its most visible protagonists is the lawyer and Creative Commons (CC) co-inventor Lawrence Lessig. In his lectures he presents the culture of remix as a paradigmatic turn from a passive read-only culture to an active read-and-write culture. Lessig uses remix culture as an argument for the necessity of the CC licensing system for content. CC is a licence scheme (and also an internationally working non-profit organisation) which allows creators to choose and mix between different levels of freedom and protection. CC claim that their licences would allow authors to share their texts and music safely yet still to retain ‘some rights’.

CC is based on an overestimation of technology in that it thrives on a neophilia of **the Internet as the main lubricant for cultural change**.

Lessig's continued emphasis on the Internet and digital technology as the causes of a switch from read-only to a read-and-write-culture is a somewhat one-dimensional view on human culture. The fundamental connectedness of human beings to each other through language and culture including the whole of the symbolic realm (that includes, for example,

numbers and the signs that mathematics and logic use) does not depend on the Internet and digital gadgets to make us co-creators.

People produce culture anyway. The argument of the copyright industry that its way is the only way of financing cultural production is a red herring. Culture exists because it serves many needs both on the creator's and recipient's side. Creation is supported by a fabric of social relationships. One could go further and say that culture exists because of that fabric of social relationships; it literally grows out of those. Within those networks of relationships there are also many forms of internal support that allow art to be produced and artists to get through. On top of that there are also immaterial relationships between artists and their audiences that also allow art to be produced – such as shared psychological worlds, matching needs and desires. Human culture is networked in many ways – not just through the Internet – and those networks are also the source of complex economies enabling artists to be creative. Lessig's take on remix culture risks turning all this into a digital soup, delivered in a can embossed with the glossy Creative Commons logo.

According to Laikwan Pang (2006), the idea that policy-making can shape culture is **a fantasy of cultural control**.

"Mainstream" political economy often tends to fuel the idea that cultural control can be exerted through policy documents, NGOs and trade bodies (Pang assigns socio-economists like Saskia Sassen to this latter group). Here, culture is engineered by governments or powerful institutions, instead of the scattered controls exercised and felt in the looser cultural domain. Here, legal documents are essentially what shape culture, and interestingly this is also in some way where we find the "big three" of the U.S. American copyleft literature: Lawrence Lessig, Siva Vaidhyanathan and Yochai Benkler.

Because the CC ethos presupposes that culture follows law, and with the right laws implemented (i.e. CC ones), "better" or "freer" culture will follow. As Rasmus Fleischer pointed out in his comments to this article: Stallman the father, Lessig the son, and the wireless spirit of 2.4 GHz form a holy trinity of copyleft.

In other words, traditional "copyleft" is not so different from its opposite: Compare on the one side the religion of copyright – the belief that WTO rules, restrictions and conventions can actually harness culture into preferable shapes – with this religion of copyleft; the belief that alternative rules, restrictions and conventions can harness culture, but differently. Two equally martinet, rule-obsessed approaches.

In addition, CC institutionalises culture; it brands it, restricts it, formalises it. **Albeit a "renewed," "liberalised" extension of traditional copyright, it helps to consolidate a copyright-like mindset.** 'Instead of creating the flowering alternative cultural space

important for international audiences, should the show ever travel. The promised grant of 25.000 US\$ by ADAC gave us the opportunity to commission 15 artists and 3 writers to produce new work. As Taiwan had been identified as a 'pirate data heaven' in a 1994 Arthur Kroker essay, we took this a bit further by calling the exhibition *Kingdom of Piracy*. What would have been a one-off event became, through the special circumstances that arose, a project that still continues today. The Taiwanese government, nudged on by US foreign policy shortly after the start of our work for the exhibition, declared a 'war on piracy,' arrested students who engaged in file sharing, put on show trials against them and even organised a "spontaneous" pro-copyright demonstration in the streets of the capital Taipei. The following is guess-work (there might have been other, internal reasons too) but we think it was this climate that

influenced our main sponsor, ADAC, to withdraw its support (although we had already commissioned the artists and writers to create new work which they had already began to create) and shut down our access to the server. From then on KOP became a floating, migrant kingdom. Our main sponsor had pulled out, yet thankfully Ars Electronica gave us the chance to premier the original KOP show in September 2002 in Linz. (After a prolonged email battle with ADAC and Acer lawyers we managed to finally get paid and reimburse commissioned artists and writers.) Shortly thereafter we were commissioned by FACT in Liverpool to create new works. This commission, received through Michael Connor, then in charge of FACT's digital arts programme, enabled Shu Lea Cheang to create the BURN installation and me to make the DIVE publication (a combination of CD ROM, booklet and website).

envisioned by many, they run the risk of creating the conditions for a new wave of privatisation of culture' (Berry 2006).

Although it preceded Web 2.0, CC is ideologically closely linked to this new mass participatory culture. While it is fantastic that many amateurs now can enjoy diving into advanced cultural practices such as remix and appropriation, the Web 2.0 paradigm is the ultimate distortion of the values of a free (net) culture, using some of its slogans and concepts while enclosing user-generated content into proprietary platforms. CC aids and abets this tendency. Another serious flaw is that the whole concept behind CC does so far not take into account the professional who creates cultural and digital content as a member of a creative profession, and who has devoted her or his whole life to this. CC does not pay any attention at all to the issue of an economic model for supporting cultural production. Lessig appears to regard this as a matter that will automatically resolve itself in the future.

If CC continues to disregard concerns about revenue models for professional writers, musicians, photographers **it does indeed play into the hands of venture capital-driven online projects such as Flickr or YouTube who make a fortune by harnessing user-generated content**. The way it has been promoted, CC has been instrumental in establishing a paradigm based on a false moral postulate, according to which every cultural producer has to put out her or his work for free.

However, CC is now widely adopted and the legal hawks of CC have gone to some lengths to adapt the licence scheme to legislations in different countries. CC, used in a benevolent institutional context, can be interacted with in various ways. Therefore it is often appropriate to use specific CC licences.

While in some cases it is agreeable to use CC licences, still they cannot act as "the solution" for all licensing and copyright-copyleft issues. The thorny issue remains that by using a CC licence you effectively waive your exclusive rights and allow, for example, any collection society to collect and distribute mechanical reproduction and statutory rights in your name. Such mechanical rights can be a nice side-income if radio or TV were to use your work. By signing away this possibility you risk consigning yourself to eternal poverty.

### **2001, 2002, 2003 ... the growing normativity of "free" and "open"**

On the positive side, since 2003 many people got infected by the FLOSS virus, became interested in Linux and the collaborative principles behind free software, and started to use CC licences for their own creative output. Since 1999 the *Wizards of Open Source* conference had been investigating how principles behind FLOSS could be applied to other areas.

The seed had started to grow beyond software developers, academics and net culture intellectuals – circles traditionally concerned with such topics. Now artists and broader circles in academia and civil society also got involved. **The middle class, or rather specific sectors of it, started to support things that are “open” and “free”**

While in principle this was a positive development and a sign of success, it added impurities to an already complex picture. As the newcomers had not been involved with the thriving net culture and specialist online communities of the 1990s, they lacked a more intuitive knowledge of its values, which were derived from an earlier hacker ethics. This gradually led to a situation where an “open everything” hype started to create ever bigger waves. Increasingly “open” appeared to be conceptualised as a somehow undistinguished, generalised “openness” that was assumed to serve as an organisational principle behind the allegedly emerging global digital commons. The second major misunderstanding concerned the notion of ‘free as in freedom, not free as in free beer,’ as Richard Stallman had so tirelessly explained, yet still many people were unable to understand.

We are faced with a situation where **the technocultural dynamic improves conditions for the distribution of works, while the economy of cultural production is in a deep crisis**. The old cultural industries of television, radio, book publishing, record and film employ fewer people of which only a small percentage enjoy good conditions.

As opposed to what these industries would want to make us believe, this is not caused by “piracy” but has other causes stemming from the industry itself. The contraction within the industry coincides with it being less open for unusual and critical forms of content. This conspires with an objective situation of a worldwide information infrastructure – the Internet – hungry for bits, but with no mechanism for the payment of small sums that would enable a sort of pay-per-view system directly rewarding content producers. The old model does not work any more; a new model is not yet in sight. Those combined factors make the economic situation of cultural producers already very precarious.

Ever since the Industrial Revolution a market started to grow for cultural goods, such as books and magazines in the late 18th century. As culture became a commodity in early capitalism, this process accelerated alongside technological innovations in the 19th century. With the electrification of the world and the telegraph, telephone, record player, radio, industrialised newspaper, cinema and television, a multitude of channels for the dissemination of cultural commodities opened up. It was this process that provided the context for the introduction of copyright to give artists and artisans some level of control over their work and a financial incentive for its publication.

Rasmus Fleischer:  
Piratbyrån, Sweden

A decisive moment for me personally occurred in Berlin early summer 2004, as I visited the Wizards of OS conference which really dedicated itself to this trinity of free things. Coming from Sweden – a country which never really had had any ‘avant-garde of net culture in the 1990s’ – this must have been the first event in my life where this mixture of hackers, artists and academics met in a sometimes intelligent exchange of ideas. This became very stimulating for me exactly because I could not agree with some of the fundamental assumptions behind the two main reform proposals brought forward at that event. One was Creative Commons, which Sebastian Lütgert in one panel aptly characterised as a ‘social democracy for the digital commons’. The other was the proposal of a so-called ‘content flatrate,’ promising legalised file-sharing while somehow giving “compensation” to all kinds of copyright holders whose material was shared. I borrowed Sebastian’s phrase for a criticism of the

latter proposal, the first thing about this topics which I ever wrote in English, mailed it out on Nettime and found out that it became quite discussed and republished a number of times. I remember this as my entry into the international, or really mainly continental European, critical discourse about copyright.

Piratbyrån became an interface between this discourse and the broader Swedish so-called 'file-sharing debate,' which really broke into the mainstream in the spring of 2005. (The stimuli were two: A very controversial anti-piracy raid against an ISP, and the implementation of sharpened copyright laws.) The following year this debate reached new levels of intensity after the raid against The Pirate Bay. At that time, Piratbyrån were no longer alone in pursuing copyright criticism in Sweden; on the contrary there had been an emergence of loose networks of bloggers and also politicians (from the left and right alike) who strongly opposed the war against piracy.

As the tools of reproduction forms matured from mechanic to electric to electronic and digital, the old framework for maintaining control over distribution crumbled while the morality of the system had in itself long started to rot, as **the beneficiaries of copyright were no longer artists but publishing companies and holders of large stocks of copyrighted materials**. The late 20th century was characterised by a huge cultural industry that wielded immense power, both economically and socio-culturally, and for which intellectual property was vital as a business model.

Towards the very end of the 20th century two entwined but not causally linked processes happened. To begin with, there was what business people call a "consolidation" of the culture industry. In the overall neo-liberal climate of the late 20th century the culture industry kept expanding in volume yet concentrated on the most profitable areas. During this process many guiding values went out of the window. For instance, while newspapers in the past were funded by their proprietors and kept alive also during those phases that were non-profitable (because they were more than just a business and allowed the proprietor to leverage political influence), all media nowadays seem to be under the same profitability criteria. Those and other factors led to a shrinking of the industry and a polarisation of its workforce between the heavily exploited and precarious freelance work of the commercial media and cultural industries and the few stars who still enjoy the old perks of being in a privileged area of cultural production.

Furthermore, Marx's classical distinction between use-value and monetary value of goods is useful here. The relationship between these two types of value is not always straightforward. In cultural production, use-value and monetary value can even be opposed to each other as, for example, Bourdieu (1993) has shown. Since the neo-liberal revolution of Reagan and Thatcher, financial value has become the single dominant value, with increasing disregard for all other values. Completely disconnected from this is another process that has to do with the dynamics of techno-cultural development. This "dynamics" (which is a result of the interplay of many different agents, and not an anonymous technological progress, as a technological determinist would have depicted it) creates a situation favourable to the replication of information. As our whole intellectual production has increasingly become digital, the availability of relatively cheap computer hardware and memory as well as broadband Internet access means that the costs for reproduction and dissemination of digital files race toward near zero.

Meanwhile, as it has become clear that file-sharing in p2p networks and via torrents is **impossible to stop entirely**, the old culture industry – particularly in the US, which enjoys a worldwide cultural hegemony – has panicked and started to pursue strategies contrary to the flow of this techno-cultural dynamics.

The whole model of the cultural industry, based on individual objects as carriers of sellable units of IP, is condemned to perish. To avoid this, the industry has started going to extreme measures. It tries to influence technological development and bend and tweak an unwilling technology as to force it to allow copy control (for instance through DRM, which the industry spells out as Digital Rights Management whereas critics call it a ‘restriction’ management) and it successfully influences politicians to make insane legislation that favours the copyright industry but harms almost every other area of human interest such as education, learning, innovation and creativity.

What is vital here is the realisation of how much of our world that after all remains outside of these observed vectors: the ‘dark matter’ of the Internet, and of everyday life. There are so many uses of cultural material out there that simply slip outside of our view, and – partially – slip outside of control. One-off file transfers, failed attempts, spontaneous exchanges. The whole phantasm of cultural control is a by-product of modernity, of Euclidian space, and yet it is our only tool to systematise what is going on.

The key, therefore, is to not remain blind to complexity, and to try seeing the strengths of each perspective – nationally, methodologically, epistemologically, politically – and further, seeing the connection points between perspectives that might appear different at first. We need to acknowledge that there can never be one solution for all the problems affecting cultural production in the age of digital reproduction.

A further reflection is how the current crisis in the cultural industries appears to be one primarily of **distribution and marketing**.

Much of the ‘file-sharing debate’ has in the mainstream press been portrayed as mainly a problem of maintaining the old levels of remuneration for those guild-associated rights holders who are in charge of the established structures of remuneration anyway. However, if shifting our focus to strategies for alternative (that is, non-sanctioned, non-guild-based, not-yet-established) media, we are presented with a dilemma which is all the more interesting: the issues pertaining to how to get your locally produced content “out there” in the first place – as a non-established, corporately non-affiliated producer – and how to be able to find revenue streams without violating or trying to stem the rising tide of ubiquitous file-sharing.

As it happens, cultural **production** takes place – in local settings, worldwide – all the time. Thanks to the radical cheapening of and growing access to technical tools, it is arguably easier to be a cultural producer now than ever before. Similarly, crude broadcasting technologies allow for a publication (as in literally “making public”) of private life that was simply not possible before. Blogs, vlogs, YouTube, MySpace and Facebook all allow for an extensive documentation of one’s everyday reality.

Of course, after every escalation some new actors joined the debate by proposing the “compromise” of a flat rate compensation models. But every time, these proposals were soon drawn back after being heavily criticised. And I think that Piratbyrån’s long-standing criticism of this compensation discourse has really had an impact on the Swedish situation. Imaginary solutions have simply been kept out of sight, while we have kept insisting – however hard that is – that there can never be one solution for all the problems affecting cultural production in the age of digital reproduction. For every “event” – like a raid ordered by anti-piracy groups, or the proposal of even harder copyright laws – the public and political interest in these questions have been widened in Sweden. And every time, it felt like the discussion had to start from zero again. The mass-medial discourse reproduced the conflict as “Shall there be file-sharing or not?”, as if file-sharing was

something to maybe implement in the future and not an existing reality. This frustrated us, especially as we were perfectly aware that it somehow was Piratbyrån who had started this whole debate some years ago. We decided to perform a symbolic action on Walpurgis Night in the spring of 2007, went up at a mountain and burned our own *Copy Me* book, a collection of texts from our website published in 2005. We declared the file-sharing debate to be over, that 'the files have already been downloaded,' and that 'we are not about anti-copyright'. The declaration ends, with a reference to a traditional Swedish Walpurgis song.

When we talk about file-sharing from now on it's as one of many ways to copy. We talk about better and worse ways of indexing, archiving and copying – not whether copying is right or wrong. Winter is pouring down the hillside. Make way for spring!

Likewise, *consumption* is something that the youth of today excel in; as citizens of the Western world, this is arguably the primary area of cultural expertise for all of us, being knowledgeable, demanding, yet highly casual consumers. In media and cultural studies, the term 'consumer' is largely interchangeable with 'user' since with cultural consumption, nothing is really "consumed" (as in exhausted and/or ingested). There is a dimension of disposal inherent to cultural use and consumption though; Michel de Certeau (1984) points to this ephemeral, transient dimension of everyday cultural consumption, which he defines as 'quasi-invisible,' played out in the margins. When not accounted for or concretely materialised, the traces of consumption and use are short-lived. Maybe the 'datascapes' of social networks and p2p-based technologies allow for an increase in this traceability, as Bruno Latour has recently argued (2005; 2007). As our everyday lives are increasingly permeated by these technologies, however, a lot of evidence indicates that these traces are inherently restricted to the micro level. They are short-lived – like the IP address temporarily logged in an IRC or p2p exchange, or the textual exchange maintained only for the duration of a chat session – and they are local in that they are visible and/or overseable only to the agents directly involved. The topology of MySpace or Facebook does not stretch itself out as a vast landscape from which one can oversee it in panopticon-like ways – it rather takes the shape of several interconnected but exclusively segmented rooms, only overseable through the local, myopic interaction that Latour (2005) labels 'oligopticon'. It is an interaction and orientation that requires active work.

The problem with distribution on the Internet is that it is granular, and dispersed in a way that is in fact antithetical to panopticon-like overview. **Instead, it favours an accessibility that primarily operates through a search function.** The online topology thus overlays the offline topology of naturally segmented producers, or **occasional acts of cultural production.**

In local, creative environments like the London hotspots of Deptford, Hackney, Brixton, etc. the problem has become one of improving the connections in between such acts of production – essentially making them aware of one another, so that they can start feeding off one another's creativity, and generate those collective sums that exceed the individual parts – but also to improve the visibility, communicability and relevance of these acts to the wider world, in an economically viable way.

This economic viability is precisely what the argument of being paid in full comes down to: once the damaging expectancy has taken root that culture is to be produced with very little economic gains or incentives to these producers, the table does turn towards a mode of production that is more sanctioned the more transient it is. Effectively, what is favoured are amateur forms that do not require much involvement in terms of personnel, time, capital investments, etc.

This favouring of transient, agile, mobile, lean modes of production is not exclusive to the corporate sponsors, but is found across the board among new media sympathisers – this book included! Hence the common fascination among us all for anything “grassroots,” and hence the active support among copyleftists and activists for typically minute, D.I.Y. musical forms such as grime, dubstep, laptoptronica and punk rock over more traditional, multi-vocalist, multi-instrumentalist, studio-intensive; one might say ambitious ones. One might also say that these latter forms are dismissed for being too “polished” – not “polished” as a formal property, since a purely stylistic surface thanks to Logic, ProTools or Ableton is increasingly accessible to all – but rather because they embody a mode or *ethos* of production that is accomplished and comparatively investment-heavy.

What is presented to the poor struggling artist or musician who is bloody-minded enough to pursue these latter, more unwieldy, more ambitious forms of expression is a double burden: a climate favouring opportunist media creation above anything else, on top of the crisis of distribution that is briefly outlined here. The key is to become known, to find avenues to get one’s productions recognised by the wider public in the white noise of millions of competing cultural messages. The easy route is of course to put on a funny hat and perform a YouTube mime to any given pop song, but if your aspirations are somewhat more laborious than this, what is the right outlet?

Further down the line, even when finding an initial outlet, one can expect to be copied, appropriated, pirated to degrees that are simply beyond one’s own control. Is the luxury of public discovery something that can no longer be afforded without accepting vast degrees of free use and consumption of one’s work? Perhaps so, but in order to become pirated to begin with, one needs to have a name that is recognised and – ultimately – respected.

A bug has occurred within the system, **causing an “open everything, expect nothing” paradigm**. Expect nothing, that is, if you are an independent cultural producer.

As a cultural producer, one is soon accustomed to getting a fair share of what one could call “indecent” proposals. What is meant by “indecent” is when a major institution that is obviously well-funded asks a freelance agent to write a text, but fails to mention money whatsoever. Since the “open” paradigm has become mainstream, an increasing number of institutions quite deliberately rely on content creators’ willingness to contribute in such a way – i.e. without pay – to their publications. It is one thing to be approached by a grassroots initiative with a strong political, activist track record to speak at their meeting for free or contribute a text to their publication. It is something else to be asked the same by very wealthy, major institutions including well-funded university departments, art festivals and research institutes linked to political parties alike. Sometimes they even go so far as to explicitly reveal their expectation that Open

#### burntprogress:

One example of alternative distribution and collaboration is the London-based burntprogress collective (<http://www.burntprogress.com/>), which in 2009 presents their second CD compilation *burntprogress 2.1*, highlighting some of the artists who feature at the burnt-progress monthly club night *CDR – A night of ideas and tracks in the making mixed from recordable CDs and other digital media*. Here, an avenue to potential recognition is provided, from starting blocks which are essentially noncommercial yet providing the potential to capitalise on one’s own production. The first compilation, *burntprogress 1.1* (2006) was (besides its legally available forms) for a long while available as a ripped torrent, something which burntprogress co-founder Tony Nwachukwu welcomes as a living proof of the actual popular acclaim of this music. The illegal dispersion of the compilation, parallel to its legal dispersion, here becomes perhaps not complimentary, but in any event an unavoidable side-effect which affirms some

sort of success in the first place. What is more, we see here how instances of production that might otherwise have been separated by space and time become apprised to one another – CDR very much serves as a real-world hub or community for a long list of artistic collaborations – and how an initiative like burntprogress acts as a *connector* or *aggregator* of talent.

Unlike the fragmentary, jungle-like worlds-in-their-own of MySpace and/or Facebook, who surely help to showcase creativity yet do nothing to comprehensively promote noncommercial acts in an orchestrated way, connectors like burntprogress and Deptford.TV work against the grain of the transience and de-territorialisation outlined above.

Essentially they *re-territorialise*; something which requires intentionality, the possibility of failure, and ultimately some form of political agenda. Strategy rather than tactic. Orchestrated ‘data spheres’ amid the amorphous ‘datascapes’.

Source-activists and left-leaning critics would be expected to contribute entirely for free to a given project – as if the good cause, the kudos or the fame would be a big enough reward. In the current economic climate, if these expectations may shift around, a suspicion lingers: Should real-term funding become even scarcer, these rhetorical excuses would become even more prevalent.

Whereas in the past it was clear that asking a writer for a book contribution would involve some money offered, **now the basic expectation is that everybody would contribute for free.**

This sort of new voluntarism often presents itself in the shape of a (false) moral imperative. While there will always be zeal on the extreme ends of a binary issue such as the alleged “copyfight” of the last decade, such radicalism can in effect be deeply counterproductive to the overall cause of either side. As copyleft radicals pitch vitriolic condemnation at those professional writers who try to earn money from their work, their bravado often masks the fact that these radicals see their main income coming from other directions than the production and distribution of political text. This, as the most radical purists on the copyleft tend to be programmers, consultants, or externally funded in some other way. The author role comes second, and the work produced in this capacity is thus affordable to be licenced in entirely “free” and “open” ways. It would make sense if other “positive externalities” were to be expected further down the road, with aggregation, promotion or further interest being generated by this free publishing – but as the CC schemes prohibit sensible cross-licensing and/or derivative commercial uses, even this becomes a scarcity in the world of those “free everything” zealots.

The irony is that the copyright totalitarians on the right then become allowed to stand and point to this purism as a proof that the copyleft system does not work in terms of solid remuneration for its authors, and that by extension any attempt at a radical getaway from traditional copyright would be economically defunct.

#### **“Open” as in “oligarch”**

There is now a **deteriorating funding situation for artists’ and writers’ work**, especially if it critically questions social mechanisms and is methodologically innovative, while at the same time **institutions believe that it is not wrong at all to ask people to work for free.**

Sometimes this is added to by the notion that “authorship” was a somehow obsolete notion anyway. Everything writes itself just like the pages of the Wikipedia. It is easy to see how this creates a situation of negative feedback. Not only does it make it increasingly difficult to get funding for work of a certain complexity, and for work that needs long-term commitment, it

also strengthens the hand of the copyright tsars and data lords as owners of the realm of commercial production where authors still get paid. The culture industry can present itself as the only “relevant” area of production vis-à-vis the amateur production on the Internet where everything is free as in gratis and therefore, in their worldview, without value. By establishing the financial value above the use value, only those who get paid are “legitimate” and “professional” producers. Many “professionals” have returned to amateur-like ways of production regarding the financial aspect. To the same extent that independent thinking and free-spirited people are squeezed out of the culture industry, the Bertelmanns and the Murdochs of this world benefit from a misunderstood “open” paradigm by cultural institutions who have become scroungers for free content.

Art and culture strongly rely on intrinsic qualities – qualities that are values in themselves and do not need any external justification or motivation. The diverse practices in art are often simply things that people like to do because it is pleasurable doing them and because it feels like an achievement having done something. Note here also the “crafty” aspects of the art; the work with the material, the engagement with the properties of tools. If we talk about the economy of cultural production and how to make it sustainable, then we need to look at all those things together: those social networks that facilitate cultural production and the intrinsic qualities in which both artists and audiences have a strong interest and investment. Those aspects are either ignored or cynically exploited by the cultural industries and the “creative industry” models proposed by the cultural funding departments of nation states. While the immaterial values of art and culture are invoked in Sunday speeches by politicians, they are trampled on by the same people the following Monday when they make their next round of funding cuts.

While money is certainly not the only problem, **completely dodging that question is not a solution in the long term**. The copyleft radicals are maybe still very young and live in a squat or have very rich parents or both. Radicals on both sides of the copyleft/right divide do not want a solution. **The business people just want to go on as usual – no compromise.**

The copyleft radicals receive cultural capital by appearing as modern day Robin Hoods stealing from an evil industry. Leaving those extremes aside, how can societies afford to have a rich cultural life that also includes top-quality works of art and not only amateur-based mass production? Some quite sane and useful suggestions have been made in recent years. One would be a sort of digital Shilling (alternatively “broadband tax” or flatrate system) collected by the collection societies and redistributed to everyone who visibly contributed to online content. These kinds of proposals seem problematic, however, in many ways, not least due to the deeply conservative nature of

Surely MySpace, with its specific disposition towards pop music, has helped many artists gain increased visibility despite its primary intention to lure unsuspecting eyes to increasingly narrow-cast marketing – but its entire mode of operation does nothing to steer away from the ultimately neo-liberal agenda of leaving ‘each to his own abilities’. Its economic externality of allowing potential collaboration and discovery can be seen as an economic subsidy to struggling artists, but it is a subsidy which is intended only as a “trickle-down” effect ultimately benefiting the hugely popular, already-established over the multitudes of unknown talent, prompting a model of society where these lesser-known artists should count themselves lucky if ever reaching the mainstream.

### **Opera Calling**

While the culture industry contracts and consolidates, the European system of art funding also changes to the detriment of cultural producers.

The situation is of course slightly different in each country.

However, the capitalist rhetorics of EU governments steers all arts-related funding towards a 'creative industries' model with ever-closer integration between the arts and the needs of businesses or causes external to art such as urban regeneration and city marketing. At the same time in Europe the old art forms of the bourgeoisie – opera and theatre – get

preferential treatment and are funded on a very high level, while contemporary art forms get the 'creative industry' treatment, i.e. are condemned to more precarious conditions. This was addressed by the Bitnik art project in Zurich with their project

*Opera Calling*  
(<http://www.opera-calling.com>). They placed bugs in the opera house which transmitted the performances via the telephone system to the outside world.

the collection societies who have not shown any understanding of digital and networked culture in the last ten years, and often seem very willing to become active enforcers of the copyright industry. Nevertheless, the collection societies may be reformed through good legislation and a new regime that rewards authors and other content producers may be introduced. A further problem would of course be the issue of how to define content as adequate cultural products qualifying for remuneration.

To this, one would have to add the traceability involved; how to measure the level of circulation of a cultural product without installing a potentially repressive surveillance mechanism. What is more, how to define *tools* not works of art, as in the case of software, applications and services? And ultimately, how to deal with products that have *multiple authors* in such a system; authors whose roles might be blurry and hard to define?

Let us not **fetishise individual authorship**; other forms such as distributed authorship or collaborative forms of production and content filtering/moderation are as important as "authorship" in the traditional sense, and also need to be supported. As the Free Software Foundation (FSF) (who still maintain the gold standard of what 'free' means in licensing through the GPL) points out on its excellent page about licences: **the CC licences are actually so different that it hardly makes sense to speak of them as one and the same thing**. The FSF recommends in particular the CC Attribution 2.0 and the CC Attribution ShareAlike 2.0 licences as free content licences.

The other option would of course be the introduction of a basic wage for everyone. This too comes with its own problems, such as potentially generating widespread societal addiction to automatic hand-outs, with the usual lament from the political right of "less incentives to work," etc. However, both a digital Shilling plus a basic wage would be better than the status quo, and if we look at Western societies with their pre-existing social benefits and cultural funding, we already in many ways see fragments of this kind of blanket sustenance.

As we are looking at the economy of cultural production and its sustainability, it needs emphasising that this goes beyond sheer money. Sustainability is also linked to social networks supporting or even enabling cultural production and is based on the intrinsic qualities involved in shaping those networks. We have to untie the knot between cultural production as such and cultural goods. The industry, of course, focuses on the products – cassettes, CDs, DVDs, files. Sometimes it is made to look as if only the product counts and this, indeed, is what the culture industry does: it fetishises and favours the products, things to be sold and owned. However, cultural production does not always need to materialise in such things and is driven by many other factors than money and supported by diverse ecologies. It is important to make this distinction. If we look away from the product as a "thing," then the concept of ownership also opens

up to different interpretations. Ownership then is not just possession of something, but also implies care and responsibilities. Similar relationships also exist between authors and their works and authors and their audiences, there are mutual responsibilities involved.

Wouldn't it be great to remain at that position, in 2003, where it was said that **being a pirate is not necessary anymore because we have free software and the digital commons**? But as things turned out, both of those have become endangered and problematic in various ways.

Because of these developments in recent years – hopefully accurately sketched out above – the situation has worsened. We are experiencing a widening of the copyright divide between the radicals of both sides. While solutions exist in principle, there is no social consensus around them because it would mean that some compromise needs to be made. In that situation it is important to highlight the values of cultural production and the importance of a diverse concept of authorship. Rather than denouncing authorship as “a concept of the past” as some copyleft radicals do (while inflating their own status as “activists”) cultural producers need to redevelop their various bonds with the social humus of their various arts. This means also to recapture the debate and bring it back to our home ground.

We, as cultural producers, cannot allow ourselves to be represented either by the stooges of the old order or by the copyleft Jacobinites who are so eager to denounce authorship that one would fear to be hanged just for admitting to be “one of those”. As the situation keeps worsening, we need to find ways of being radical without denying the complexity of the issues involved. As the oligarchy has tightened its grip, and everybody is worse off, we cannot rely on the legitimately “free” as in FLOSS world alone. Acts of piracy can be very necessary sometimes, in combination with a variety of methods of cultural resistance.

We are *not* seeking some middle ground between copyleft and copyright. We are grappling with issues here about sustaining professional, critical, high-quality cultural production, issues that are neither solved by the content-is-king fetishism of the copyright industry nor by the bit-fetishism of the p2p activists. Cultural production is always entangled in webs of dependence and sustenance, it is always the upshot of, and generates, positive and negative externalities. Perhaps more solid attempts at cultural production can come from a more effective harnessing of these various, heterogeneous externalities. We are seeking to explore the meshwork inside and around the playing field. We recognise that there are more and other issues involved than the simple branding and sloganeering of “free” and “open”.

Cultural production and consumption takes place everywhere all the time; the problem is when these instances remain discrete, muted, and soon-forgotten. **The digital ameliorates this, it helps in making known that which is unknown, but only to a degree.**

Any Internet-mediated cultural production, no matter how banal, becomes textually instantiated and searchable. As Clay Shirky rather provocatively stated, most user-generated material is actually *personal communication in a public forum*, and hence not actually “content” (in the copyright industry sense of the word) at all, since it is not designed for an audience in the first place (Shirky, 2008). All this conversational material drowns out the potentially audience-orientated, and adds to the noise.

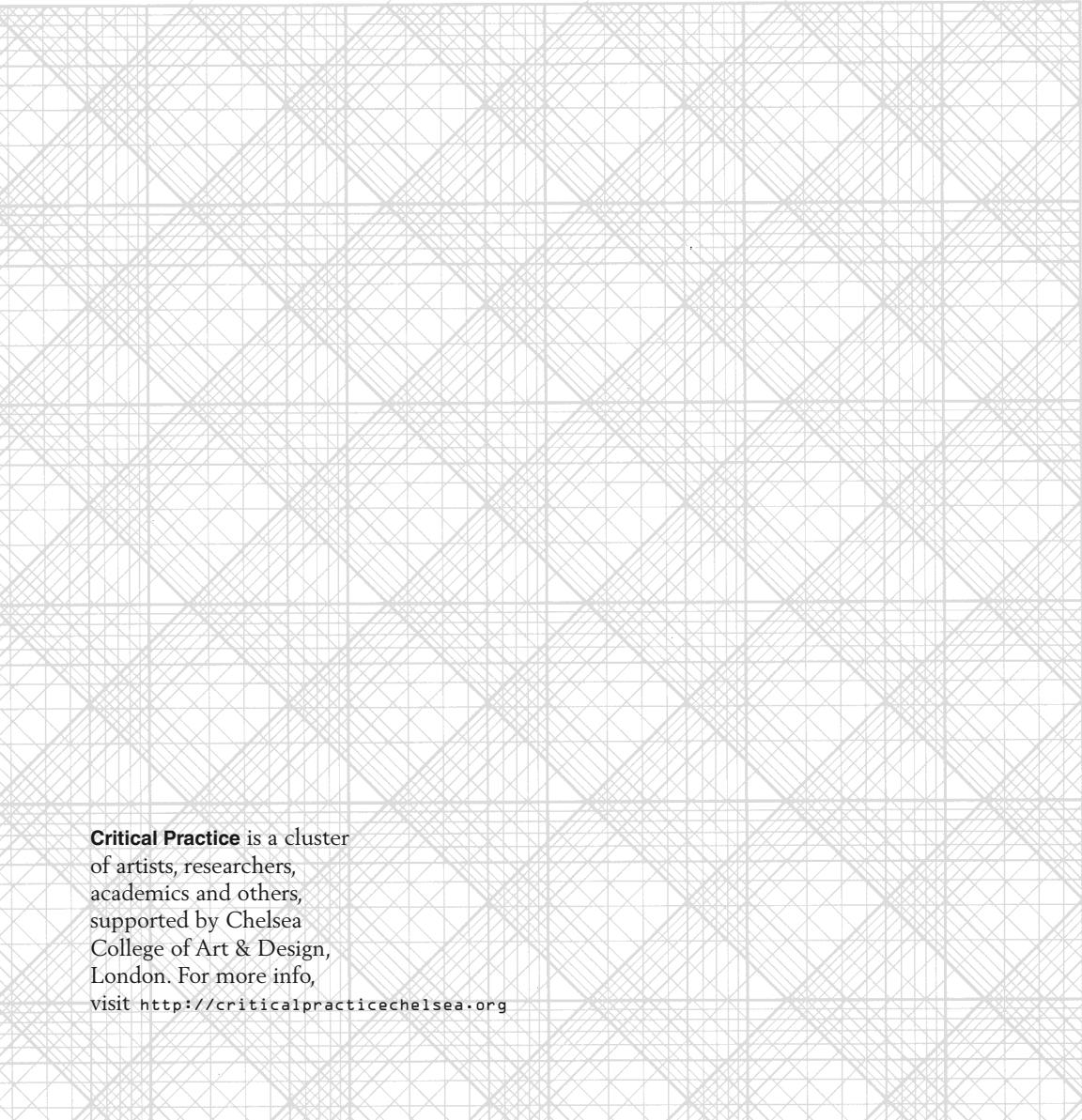
So the common idea that digitisation makes it easier to access stuff is in fact only superficially true. Once again, on the raw, jungle-like networks this accessibility is directly determined by the search function. Mesh-like spheres like p2p and Web 2.0 networks might help to heighten the visibility of individual acts of consumption/production, but only in a way that is temporary, never fully foreseeable and ultimately statistical, where a panoptic view can only be attained by means of a search. And searches, as we all know, require prior knowledge.

Precisely because of this, well-maintained and comprehensive metadata is not enough. Active and deliberate connectors are still needed, especially since one of these primary connecting practices is the one linking the online with the offline, a gap that should not be seen as a barrier but becomes exacerbated by the purely online ventures of social networks and torrent archives. Here local, grounded, committed initiatives have a role to play.

They re-territorialise, and by doing so, compel everyone into opinion or at least awareness. They shed light. They editorialise. They redistribute, or at least help users organise themselves to privately re-distribute in more orchestrated and thus more meaningful, potentially profitable ways.

Surely, the modes of action required for such endeavours can on the surface appear to be outright piratical. Especially so, when many of the non-conventional methods of assembling, editorialising, and redistributing data involve unsolicited copying. Surely, the modes of action required can appear to reinforce the author function, in ways that are provocative for those most hard-edged copyleftists who hold that authors should let go of any claims to controlling their work altogether. Surely, the modes of action required can be of an ill-defined kind, often arising out of ad hoc situations and operating in a grey zone of copyright.

But we should not reject them because of that. They need not be sanctioned by formalised rule systems or law-defined commons. They can just “emerge”. But similarly, like with all ad hoc formations, they need some form of protection to be allowed to emerge. What we have questioned herein is whether Creative Commons is the right type of tool for this protection, and whether the shallow call-to-arms of “free” and “open” everything of late actually assists this protection or thwarts it.



**Critical Practice** is a cluster  
of artists, researchers,  
academics and others,  
supported by Chelsea  
College of Art & Design,  
London. For more info,  
visit <http://criticalpracticechelsea.org>

The 'Elephant In the Room'  
of Open Organisations  
by Critical Practice (coordinated by Cinzia Cremona)

**Contents:**

1. The ResourceCamp
2. Flip-chart Notes
3. Draft Budget Guidelines
4. General Principles
5. Guidelines

**1. The ResourceCamp**

**Introduction**

For *Disclosures*, Critical Practice convened a ResourceCamp on Sunday 30th March 2008. The ResourceCamp addressed what we consider the 'elephant in the room' of open organisations – money. Or more specifically, money and its 'open' management.

Critical Practice is an 'open organisation', though we prefer the term 'self-organised cluster'. We use open-organisations.org guidelines for our organisation, because we recognise – after Theodor Adorno – that indeed, all art is organised and managed. Being sensitive to how we manage ourselves is an important part of our 'critical practice'. The pragmatic character of open-organisations' guidelines makes them really useful for structuring our activities. Borne of participation and analysis of previous open organisations like Indymedia, they stress process, functionality and accountability. Yet to our knowledge, none of the online guidelines or documents mentions or addresses how to value and manage money or more generally resources.

BarCamps, from which the ResourceCamp took its inspiration for *Disclosures*, are an international network of self-organised, user-generated unconferences – open, participatory workshop events – often related to Open Source methods, social protocols, and open data formats. Sessions are proposed and scheduled among attendees. Everyone is encouraged to contribute by dividing their time equally between presentation and questions, observations and exchange. Anyone can initiate a BarCamp using the BarCamp wiki for guidance.

**Resources**

In the last year Critical Practice has engaged and struggled with questions of value, money and economies of resources. Perhaps these themes are what we have in common with most art organisations, NGOs and self-organised groups – organisations that function in mixed economies of funds, fees, volunteers, generosity, grants, etc. We do not have, and would never have, enough money to pay people proportionately to their participation. And much of what we value – creativity, conviviality, knowledge, experience, etc. – is difficult to quantify and reimburse.

To address this situation, Critical Practice convened the

ResourceCamp as the first step in drafting guidelines for open resource management. Contributors included Kuba, Neil, Corrado and Marsha, Peter, Anna, Cinzia, Trevor, Ian, Eileen & Ben, Jem, and Marcel. Video documentation of their presentations is available at Swarm TV. Beyond our stated goal – drafting open budget guidelines – we engaged in peer-led, practice-based research; a process that expanded our shared knowledge and engaged other people and presentations within *Disclosures*. Peter, Anna, Eileen, Ben and Marcel offered useful and often provocative insights that challenged our emergent approach to resource management.

Below is the notational flip-chart transcript kept by Michaela during the ResourceCamp.

## 2. Flip-chart Notes

These notes were made during the ResourceCamp. They are a sketch of the presentations and responses from participants, without discriminating between different types of contributions.

### Kuba – HOW TO DIVIDE A CAKE?

Economy as a cake with 4 layers (from Hazel Henderson):

1. Market
2. State
3. Love
4. Natural environment

1 & 2 are concerned with individuals

3 & 4 deal with the collective

What are the Art World applications of this theory?

'Mother Culture' is made up of language, tradition, everyday practice.

A slice of cake contains all 4 layers

Who has the power to slice the cake?

'Natural' resources are assumed to be endless

Without social/emotional investment – the top 2 layers can't exist

### Neil – GENEROSITY: THE ECONOMY OF THE GIFT

Flat hierarchies based on goodwill

'All art is organised'

Critical Practice as open-organisation/self-organising group

Open-organisation guidelines are pragmatic but... no mention of money

Money (actually managing money is comparatively easy)?

We can pay for specific tasks – i.e. skills and labour (e.g. admin work)

Problems arise in mixed economies

Volunteers gifts and generosity  
More money is not a solution  
How do we reimburse conviviality/friendship?  
Can generosity be reimbursed?  
GENEROSITY is the problem.  
Risky generosity – creative surplus is invested in CP  
Is this sustainable?  
Finance ≠ Gift Economy  
Can we quantify investments and expenditure?  
How do we prevent exploitation (personal/institutional)?  
Ethics and the capital we produce  
Capitalist economy puts the competitive market first  
Love = Gift Economy  
Potential exploitation of everyday exchanges  
'Love is evil' – Žižek

Can generosity be reimbursed?

#### **Corrado and Marsha – THE TROUBLE WITH ASKING**

The accountability of desire  
Openness – online budget as 'best practice'  
Asking: how do we recognise those who don't ask to be recognised?  
*Open Congress* – a wikified budget  
Some retracted their budget claims  
Asking too much?  
Is the wikified budget coercive?  
E.g. What is involved in choosing a cheap/expensive hotel?  
Sofa-sharing instead of hotels – but what if there is no buy out?  
How do systems condition personalities?  
People participate in different ways  
Open organisations accommodate certain types of personality  
'Impression Management'  
Selecting people who can afford to be generous

Transparency as a principle – how does it function in practice?

#### **Anna – WHERE DOES THE ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL GO?**

It's not generosity but commitment  
Free labour in the art world can build reputation  
The cultural field is seen as a main source of funding  
What about political aims as motivation?  
What happens when we call 'Politics' 'Art'?  
What happens to the capital you produce?  
We have to teach ourselves how to respect different forms of labour  
The importance of logistics  
Desire – arts practice  
Desire – political practice  
Subjectivisation: It's different to be a 'me' for 'me', rather than a 'you' for 'them'

### **Peter – TRANSITIONAL PRACTICE**

The co-operative – ‘To each according to their need...’

The dynamics of an organisation change as needs change  
When dealing with public money – we have to respond to  
formal budget terms

In Transitional Practice – everything is negotiated

Contributions ‘In Kind’ (for match funding)

Budgets should be organised around tasks – but these are always  
negotiated

Working within an institution – is transparency a good thing?

Membership of an organisation

Does the online relationship change the relationships we can  
have?

What’s the online/offline relationship?

Trust and Prestige

Prestige doesn’t make itself. How do we value it?

Trust optimises personal resources

Trust is its own reward

Do we operate within a contradiction?

Points of friction are potentially points of change.

### **Cinzia – THE PERSONAL IS ECONOMICAL**

What is the nature of a resource?

An attempt at a personal balance-sheet on a collective project

Is it possible to keep a ‘Personal Balance Sheet’?

Income/Expenses

What is the value in leaving the question open (risky)?

How far should we use the language and models of  
corporations/capital?

1: Transparency/Accountability – is it possible?

2: Power/Hierarchy – a few have access to resources. Do the  
lines need to be made clearer?

3: Trust/Transparency

Do we need to know everything in order to trust?

The rewards of generosity

1. Materialistic (Money/Time)

2. Decision-making (Political power)

3. Interpretation, reflection on what we are doing (Trust)

Self-actualisation – we can’t begin to measure this

TRUST – a precondition of making

Concerning the density of the social bond

Patterns of communication

- Each project should be considered in its own right

- Precedents can be deceptive

### **Trevor – THE COST OF OPPORTUNITY**

Value is a sacrifice one is prepared to make

Opportunity costs

Choosing one option over another

- One's uses of time over another

- The decision to participate or not

Assessing the true cost of any course of action

How do we account for implicit hidden costs?

Is value imposed rather than intrinsic?

What about volunteers?

What do they gain in terms of acquiring skills, visibility, personal growth?

How do we relate personal economies?

In a fragmented field – how do we edit?

Supply as reverse demand

The metaphor of tuning into radio frequencies

Are choices always rational?

Either/Or is more than a choice between 2 options

Personal Economics – how far and why am I invested?

Why do we use models of scarcity to manage abundance?

### **Ben and Eileen – OPEN MUSIC ARCHIVE – THE BUDGET**

A resource for future use:

60% pressing record – 500 discs

20% venue hire

10% flyers

10% transport

No-one was paid

Records were not sold but people were asked for a donation

Different sites/forms of distribution

Bidding against other artists – undercutting? Sustainability?

Where does an open-organisation end and this type of organisation begin?

What are the benefits to the people involved in creating the resource?

Does this way of operating privilege those with independent income?

Vinyl seen as best resource for all involved

How could you track resource use?

When we have digital means, why go back to traditional market?

Emphasis on performativity

## **Jem – THINK OF A NUMBER – PRINCIPLES OF OPEN BUDGET MANAGEMENT**

How does a group choose a number?

Behind this simple task there is a multitude of principles – each with pros and cons

Open budget management – Harrow residents

Principles, definite objectives – principles met?

1. Influence
2. Information
3. Deliberation
4. Feedback
5. Independence

Possible principles:

Consider each case Flexibility Aims/Desire Priorities (tasks),  
Monetary strategy and other implicated transactions

## **Marcel – EXPLOITATION**

Good to measure exploitation

Avoid measuring using money and capitalism

Digital(ism) is a useful abstraction

Protection afforded by licences may be an illusion

We 'own' gestures, not substance

Reciprocity of GPL is a political gesture

There is no exploitation if feeding back according to original values

Law – contracts – relationships

Default on love!

Reputation systems – potentiality in assigning judgments/values  
(?)

Copyright infringement = false

Clarity at the beginning

If you want to make money – do business

Common responsibility

Make justice where it doesn't exist.

## **3. Draft Budget Guidelines**

These guidelines were extracted from the ResourceCamp, were expanded and condensed and now evolve online at Draft Budget Guidelines. Oscar Wilde, in Lady Windermere's Fan has Lady Windermere say: '*The cynic knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.*'

This is a draft set of guidelines for individuals and organisations trying to practice in an 'open' way. They are explicitly intended to facilitate the open, transparent and accountable management of financial resources, although they inevitably mesh with human, social, intellectual and material resources too. The guidelines are an open and ongoing project.

## **4. General Principles**

### **1. Purpose**

At all times, but especially at the beginning of a project, try to be clear about your specific aims and time-frame.

### **2. Simplicity**

The more complicated the resource management, the less likely it is to be well managed.

### **3. Flexibility**

The resource management process should be flexible; resources and needs will change, frequent reviews are helpful.

## **5. Guidelines**

**1.** Organise resource allocation around clearly articulated tasks, services, needs, specific people, goods or projects – bearing in mind these are subject to continual review.

**2.** For each project:

- a)** Estimate/allocate the appropriate resources
- b)** Estimate/record all the incomes (investments)
- c)** Estimate/record all the expenditure
- d)** Total your income and expenditures
- e)** Review
- f)** Make adjustments as necessary

**3.** Invest for future gain, and try and build resources for others.

**4.** Respect and evaluate different forms of income and expenditure – obviously nothing is ‘free’. And perhaps think of a ‘total audit’ of personal (and collective) intellectual and emotional investment, time, energy, materials and space that make a project possible – the opportunity costs.

**5.** Appointing a resource coordinator is useful.

**6.** Be transparent with the available financial resources; publish the financial resources (e.g. on a wiki), and clearly describe the process by which participants can access the funds – i.e. through the resource coordinator.

**7.** Be clear who has permission to act, and who is empowered to make decisions – rough consensus is good. Try to avoid the ‘Big Other’ of hidden power and responsibility.

**8.** Ensure flows of accrued capital are distributed equitably.

**9.** Public transparency should guard against misuse and corruption.

**10.** Consider each case for funding, or demand upon resources, in their own right. Precedents, although useful can be deceptive.

**11.** Use resource management as a plan for future action.

**12.** Use points of friction as opportunities for reflection and change – changes in practice and to the guidelines themselves.

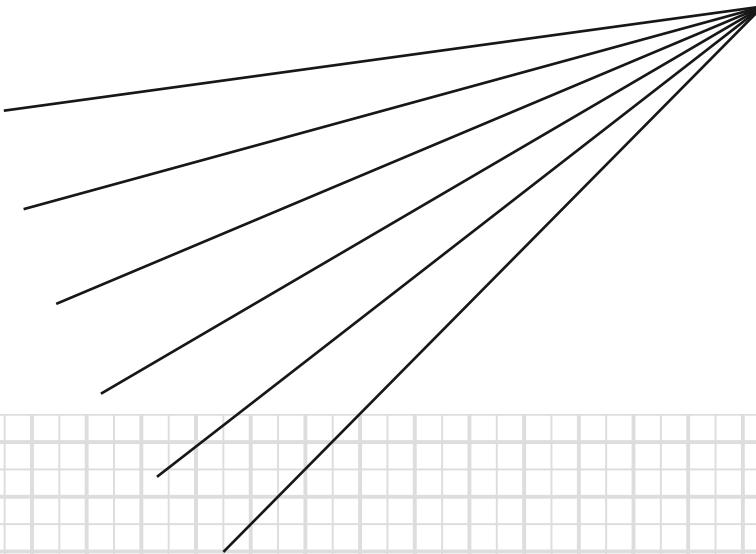
**13.** Take responsibility, and do not look to apportion blame for the mistakes of others, especially the 'Big Other' or the resource coordinator.

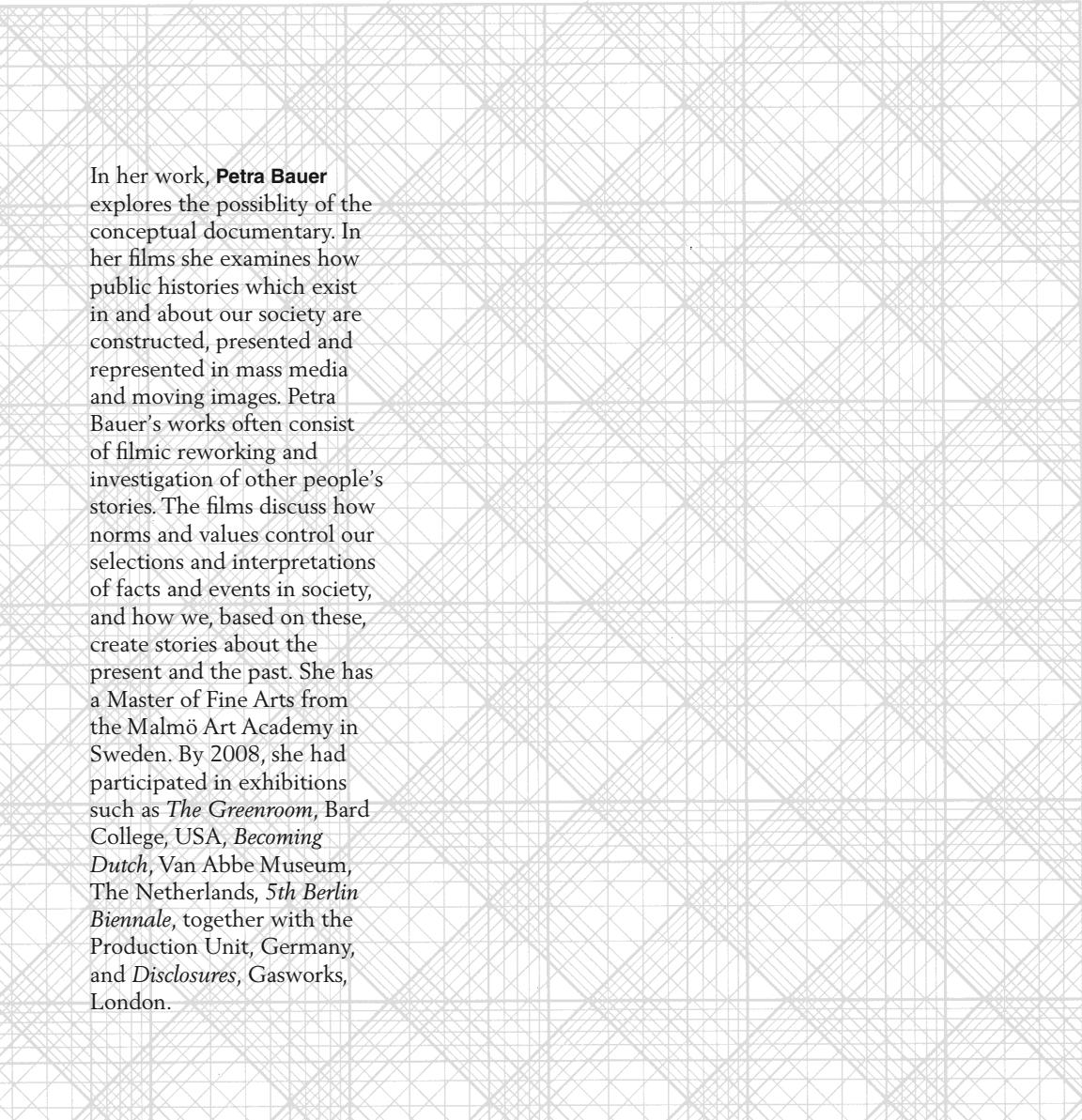
**14.** There is no intrinsic value, so be sensitive to the sacrifice – the opportunity cost – implicit in one choice over another.





### 3. EXPOSING THE PUBLIC DOMAIN





In her work, **Petra Bauer** explores the possibility of the conceptual documentary. In her films she examines how public histories which exist in and about our society are constructed, presented and represented in mass media and moving images. Petra Bauer's works often consist of filmic reworking and investigation of other people's stories. The films discuss how norms and values control our selections and interpretations of facts and events in society, and how we, based on these, create stories about the present and the past. She has a Master of Fine Arts from the Malmö Art Academy in Sweden. By 2008, she had participated in exhibitions such as *The Greenroom*, Bard College, USA, *Becoming Dutch*, Van Abbe Museum, The Netherlands, *5th Berlin Biennale*, together with the Production Unit, Germany, and *Disclosures*, Gasworks, London.

**Deleted Swedish Stories, Part 1.  
by Petra Bauer**

**Presented at Gasworks on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2008**

Hi, my name is Petra Bauer. Great that you could come tonight. This evening I want to talk about several examples that are related to a discussion on hegemony, ideology and power strategies. However, I must admit that I am still in the middle of my research, so what I'll do tonight is open up my research process for public scrutiny. Or to put it another way, you are my test audience! Some of the examples that I'm going to talk about here tonight may be excluded in the final lecture whereas others will stay to be developed and changed. So I think that your response and critical reflections afterwards will be very valuable.

All of the following examples I want to talk about this evening are extracted from a Swedish context and history.



**The Battle of Algiers**

In the first example I will talk about a scene from the film *The Battle of Algiers*. The film came out in 1965. In 1967 the film was imported to Sweden by AB Svensk Filmindustri, or SF. In the Swedish film print there is a scene missing compared with the original film; it has been cut. I'd like to talk about this scene and why it was cut.

In the cut scene, Ali, the main character of the film, meets the ideologist for the National Liberation Front, the FLN. It's a scene that gives us a more ideological explanation for the use of violence in the struggle against France, but also about the reasoning behind the Algerian national strike announced by the FLN. It is also one of the few scenes where we see Ali reflecting on his actions from an ideological perspective.

Why was this, of all scenes, cut?

My first thought was that the film had been censored. So I called *Statens biografsbyrå*, the SBB, which is Sweden's state-controlled film censorship body. They have been in existence since 1905. They have accurate records of every scene that has been cut from films shown in Sweden and even information on how the censor reasoned and justified his/her decision. It turned out that *The Battle of Algiers* was never censored, which meant that the scene must have been cut either by the production company or by the company that imported the film. The imported film ran at 123 minutes, but the version first shown in a Swedish cinema was only 117 minutes long, meaning that exactly 6 minutes were missing. I called SF, the company that imported the film to Sweden.

- Hello, my name is Petra Bauer. I have noticed that the film *The Battle of Algiers* is missing a scene where the lead character meets the ideologist for the FLN and they discuss the reasons for the national strike and the use of violence within the FLN. This is one of the few scenes where the viewer gets a deeper ideological explanation of the FLN's strategies, but also one of the few scenes where Ali reflects over his own actions. I would like to know why this specific scene was cut from the Swedish copy?

- Listen dear, that was over 40 years ago! I didn't even work here then and neither did anybody else here now.

- No, I'm aware that this was a while back. But if I understand correctly, you have worked there since the 1970s, and I thought that you might know whom I should talk to, or if it might be possible to find the minutes detailing the decision to cut the scene?

- No, I can't imagine there being any minutes. I can see here in the computer that we bought the film in 1967. But you see we only save our minutes for 10 years before throwing them away. Besides, most of the people that worked here are either dead or retired.

- I'd really appreciate it if you could give me the name of a retiree that might be able to help me carry on my research.

- You could try ringing Jörgen.

---

- Hello, is this Jörgen?

- Yes.

- I'm trying to find out the reason that a scene from *The Battle of Algiers* was cut from the Swedish print. I thought you might be able to help as you worked with imports at the time.

*- I remember the film but I can't remember us cutting anything. The production company must have done it. We were way too proud of the film to have made any changes to it. It was a really important film at the time.*

*- Yes, but I know that it was cut down here in Sweden. When it was bought into Sweden it had a 123-minute running time, and now it's only 117. Besides I know that it had been cut before it got to the SBB, the censor.*

*- Really? No, I can't remember. Anyway I can't imagine that we would have cut it to fit the cinema schedules.*

*- What do you mean?*

*- Well, at that time we showed films at 7 pm and 9 pm. If a film was longer than two hours we could only manage one showing per day, which would naturally affect our takings.*

*- Do you mean that films were cut to allow two showings?*

*- Yes, exactly. But as I was saying, I can't imagine us doing that with *The Battle of Algiers*. But try calling Lennart, he's 90 years old now, but he was Head of Import in those days, so he should know more about the film.*

*- Yes, OK, thank you very much.*

---

*- Hi, Lennart. My name is Petra Bauer. I'm trying to find out the reason that a scene in *The Battle of Algiers* was cut when it was imported into Sweden.*

*- I have no memory whatsoever that we cut any scenes. But how long did you say the original was?*

*- It was 123 minutes long, and now it's only 117. It's rather a special scene that's missing, where Ali meets the FLN's ideologist.*

*- Yes, we surely cut it down to fit the cinema times. We did that quite often.*

*- Do you think it might be possible to find any minutes that were taken, or do you think that it might be worthwhile ringing the production company to see if they have any kind of contract with you confirming that the film was cut?*

*- No. We never kept records of things like that. We cut films however we wanted to. It was that simple.*

*- My problem is that I'm trying to find out why this specific scene was cut out of the film. It could have been shortened in many other places. I want to know why the one scene that gives a more ideological reflection of the FLN's strategies in the war against France was removed. Even if the film was cut for commercial reasons it doesn't explain why the scene in question was removed. When information is removed, a choice has been made, and I'm interested in that choice. This is a scene that the Swedish cinema-going audience never got to see, that is not until it was released on DVD a few years ago. The Swedish audience never got to know why the FLN announced a strike, in other words the ideological strategy behind the national strike. So I would be very grateful if you can put me in touch with anyone who might have a good recollection of the film.*

All information that is removed affects our knowledge and our experience of an event, or in this case, the film. We build up a memory and a perception that is based just as much on information that has consciously been removed. Even if it took place over 40 years ago, it's still a relevant question, because the action, that is the fact that the scene was cut, has influenced the audience's relation to the film.

*- I think you should speak to Mats. He's Head of Development now, but back then he worked as a projectionist. He was the one that actually ran the film when it was shown. Perhaps he can help you. Give him my regards.*

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*- Yes, I remember the film very well. I remember that Lennart and Jørgen thought the film was a little long and slow. Not terribly much happening. So they tried to cut whatever they could to up the tempo. And the scene they cut was a scene of just dialogue, and besides it was comparatively theoretical dialogue. It didn't add anything to the plot. The audience didn't even notice that it had been removed, but rather the film itself was made tighter.*

*- OK, thank you very much!*

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There are three things that I would like to focus upon during this presentation; plots, politics and history in relation to moving images.

Within classic Hollywood film it's all about efficient storytelling, each scene should have a clear purpose. Scenes should be built causally, that is each scene should lead clearly to its following scene. No action should be unnecessary but must be clearly motivated by its preceding action. Characterisation is clear and characters are driven by a desire to solve a problem.

This type of storytelling is naturally part of an ideological structure and paradigm, and affects how we construct and view stories. If we accept that film contributes to how we experience society and to construct memories of events, then a discussion about the narrative structure is central. The narrative structure limits the possible information, concerning both contents and how the possible information can be structured.

It is my assertion that the Swedish distribution company, in this case, treated the film as though it followed the classical storytelling model, whether it actually did or not. With classical storytelling as a reference point, the scene between Ali and the ideologist was deemed superfluous; it contributed nothing to the plot. Thus it could be removed. The information contained within the scene doesn't fit the narrative structure, which is based on a clear causal structure.

Within the classic Hollywood model (which in many respects is the predominant model in film industries throughout the world) there is no room in the plot to pause and reflect upon plot and structure. Within this narrative model, plot is seen as something concrete, one thing that leads directly to another.

A scene that is a theoretical reflection upon the purpose and conditions of a revolution is unnecessary, as it doesn't lead directly to a new sequence of events. One is also uninterested in the political content of a scene and its role within the narrative.

Neither is there place within this paradigm for non-rational action, nor for the unexplainable nor the unpredictable. Classic storytelling is constructed upon a rational logic in which there is only room for leading characters that either succeed or fail in solving certain given problems. Within this paradigm, the story must develop in a straightforward manner and finish before the conclusion of the film.



The historical *Saltsjöbadsvälet* corporatist agreement in Sweden, 1938

#### **From Socialism to Increased Equality?**

- Hi Torsten, thanks for calling back. I guess you have listened to my message?

- *I think you wanted me to tell you a bit about the TV series From Socialism to Increased Equality?*

- Yes that would be great. But can't you first tell me a little about how you think it suits my research?

- *Well, the fact is that From Socialism to Increased Equality is one of the most widely discussed programmes in Swedish television history. Senior Social Democrats and other powerful figures got involved in the debate following the series. I believe the debate became an arena for a struggle between political actors on ideology and hegemony within the medium of TV. The debate came primarily to concern more who should have the preferential right of interpretation, and less the programme's actual content.*

The programme, broadcast in 1971, was about the development of Social Democracy. In one of the episodes the Saltsjöbadsavtalet, an agreement reached between LO and SAF in 1938, is criticised. In this agreement, which is one of the pillars upon which Social Democracy is based, representatives for employees and employers regulated the right to strike and the potential for negotiation. The agreement formed the foundation for the politics of consensus that was established in Sweden. The television series advanced criticism of the agreement from a Marxist perspective, insisting that the agreement contributed to the strengthening of bourgeois ideologies and hegemony.

The makers of the series were obviously very critical of Social Democracy and the politics of compromise that the party had developed.

Amongst other things, the programme was reported to the Swedish Broadcasting Commission for being too partial and containing factual errors. The experts that examined the programme found that there should at least have been mention of the “official” position on the Saltsjöbads Agreement and the Spirit of Saltsjöbaden, so as to counter the contemporary and latter-day Communist-tinged interpretation that characterised the programme. The experts continued that if one deviates from a generally accepted interpretation, then one must present the argument for doing so.

I’d like you to emphasise how it was deemed desirable to call attention to the “official position”. What’s really interesting is that what is meant by “official position” is never revealed. It’s quite simply taken for granted. But I believe it is precisely within what is deemed unnecessary to problematise, discuss or criticise, that the ideological position is revealed. This applies to all of society, and all times.

It was also held that the Marxist view of history presented in the programme lacked the support of the majority of historians and sociologists in Sweden and other western European countries. Can you believe that? It’s just incredible! Irrespective of what you might think of Marxism, you can’t just assert that it was a marginalised theory: that’s a falsification of history.

It is my belief that when the experts seek the “official” position it is nothing more than an attempt at hindering the type of research that leads to a critical approach and a reconsideration of this “official position” and its modern legends, such as the Saltsjöbads Agreement.

Within Social Democracy there was clearly a fear that the far left wasn’t going to be content with just a debate; that what it was interested in was to establish hegemony. So the Social Democrats launched a serious attack on the TV programme *From Socialism to Increased Equality*. The producers of the series were deemed to have crossed the line marking the established consensus that existed in 1971 within Swedish Television. Ok, I think that should be enough in order to understand the stir the programme caused.

- Thank you very much, Torsten!

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### **The Olympic Games, Mexico City 1968**

- Hi, Bo. My name is Petra Bauer. I was recommended to contact you about a research project I'm working on, in which I'm examining how society has been built upon information which has deliberately been marginalised, hidden, forgotten or repressed. I'm trying to do this by, amongst other things, taking a closer look at situations where there has clearly been a struggle for the preferential right of interpretation. In addition to examining the type of information that has been marginalised in Sweden, I'm also interested in the strategies that have been used to try to legitimise and support existing power relations. I'll be presenting part of my findings in a lecture in London on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April. I was wondering if you've come across any examples during your research where there has been a clear struggle for the preferential right of interpretation and which you think may be worth taking up in London?

*- That sounds like an interesting project. Of course, I've primarily been researching media strategies, amongst other things looking at the discussion on the relations between politics and TV-mediated sport. There's actually an interesting example from the Olympic Games in Mexico in 1968 that might well be something for you. It's perhaps even more interesting today, with the upcoming Olympics in Peking in mind.*

- That does sound interesting, would you like to tell me about it?

*- The breakthrough of television brought a global viewing audience to the 1968 Olympic Games. That year they were due to take place in Mexico City. At this point in time, Mexico was a country with great differences of income amongst the general population, and was run by a repressive regime. Hosting the Olympic Games means having the eyes of the entire world upon you. The regime saw this as an opportunity to show themselves in a positive light. But the world's spotlight on Mexico also meant that democratic forces had the chance to make themselves heard.*

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In July 1968, around a hundred or so students marched through Mexico City to commemorate the Cuban Revolution. The march was violently quelled by the Mexican police. The following day thousands of students protested against this treatment. A large number of them barricaded themselves inside one of the university's buildings. The police gained entry to the building with the aid of bazookas and several students were shot dead. This was the start of a restless summer, with many student-police clashes. On the evening of October 2<sup>nd</sup>, just 10 days before the games were due to begin, troops opened fire on several thousand people gathered on the Plaza de las Culturas to listen to the students. Over 60 people – men and women – were shot dead.

- But wasn't it more than sixty, I've heard that the figure may have been as high as several hundred but that the regime tried to hide it?

- Yes it's possible. But in my book I've used the official figures because it's not the specific amount of people that were killed that I'm interested in questioning, but rather how the event was treated by Swedish Television.

- But do you think it's possible to just ignore it?

- I don't really know, but for the purpose of this lecture we have to. Anyway, the preceding months had seen many discussions taking place on the wisdom of locating the games in Mexico. The bloodbath gave added fuel to the debate. Nevertheless, the International Olympics Committee chose to move ahead with the games. The day following the bloodbath the committee chairman Brundage made an appearance, insisting that as the Mexican authorities had guaranteed the incident-free passage of the Olympic flame into the Olympic stadium, there was no reason to move or postpone the games. Brundage continued: "If the Olympic Games were to be stopped every time politicians violate the bill of human rights, we shall never be able to hold international competitions."

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In any event, Swedish Television deemed the situation in Mexico so strained that it would be a good idea to have the games commentated not only by a sport-commentator but also by a political-commentator. Together they would be able to give a more complex picture of the events. This led to the inauguration ceremony being commentated by two commentators: a sport-commentator and a political one. I think that when you are in London you should read aloud an excerpt from their dialogue, because one can very clearly experience the struggle for the preferential right of interpretation. The ceremony lasted for over two hours, but I've chosen a passage for you that I think is very interesting:

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Plex Petersson: [...] the Greeks in dark blue jackets and grey trousers, followed by the Afghani squad. The Greeks have 92 registered participants.

Per Grevé: Yes, we shouldn't glorify this event because this is the most controversial Olympics there has ever been. Even if it looks idyllic, the fact is that just one week ago an emergency meeting was being held to discuss whether the the Olympics should happen or not, and during which the International Olympic Committee eventually made the decision to carry on as normal. But obviously all the orderliness and pleasantness we're seeing now is in the shadow of a tragedy. The fact is that this is the most controversial Olympics yet. One could almost describe it as a four-dimensional controversial Olympics.

Plex Petersson [interrupting]: You just watched Central Africa pass by as third nation. They have 6 registered participants. [pause] The West German squad just being announced. Here it comes and it is



*the largest yet. The ladies [pause] in what colour shall we call that?*

*Per Grevé: Oh, I wouldn't dare to say. Light red maybe. [laughs]*

*Plex Petersson: Yes, something like that. Very tasteful. The men dressed in light grey. The West German squad is 302 members strong... A squad hoping for a medal or two. They've certainly won a great many in the past.*

*Per Grevé: If I can just say something here then feel free to interrupt me when you have something to say. But whilst presenting this one really has to talk about the flip side of the medals and as I was saying the Olympics were preceded by an emergency meeting a week before their start with the intention of discussing whether to hold them or not. I'm talking about a four-dimensional controversy. It all began of course with whether Mexico could even provide adequate conditions.*

*Plex Petersson [interrupting]: The East Germans march in with Karin Balzer, who won the 80 metre hurdles in Tokyo, bearing the flag. And the East Germans too look very good. Dressed completely in yellow. The ladies wearing pretty, modern hats. And the men in a combination of dark jackets and light grey trousers. Also a strong squad, 286 members.*

*Per Grevé: First the question was whether Mexico could provide the adequate conditions for the athletes: there was the country's geographical position, the difference in altitude and so on. So there were rows about that. Then the somewhat dictatorial president Avery Brundage introduced the amateur rule and succeeded in turning 7,500 athletes practically into liars when they had to give assurances that they had never taken payment for practicing their sports. And elite athletes nowadays can hardly say that. That was the second controversy. And then we had the row about South Africa and her exclusion over apartheid. The United States*

*too grappled with the same problem, the question of whether her coloured athletes should boycott the squad. Czechoslovakia was a tricky problem for the Olympic Committee. And finally, internal relations threatened to capsize everything. So, a controversial Olympics, more than any that have taken place before I think one can say.*

*Plex Petersson: The Algerian squad on its way in there. And Argentina following. With the ladies in delightful light blue and white hats and white shoes. Very pleasant looking. Argentina has registered 117 participants for the games. The men perhaps not as colourful. They have dark jackets and dark grey trousers.*

*Per Grevé: Those in power are painting this as the Peace Olympics whilst the students here have characterised it completely differently. On one demonstrator's placard a little while back I read "68 – the Brutal Olympics".*

*Plex Petersson [interrupting]: Australia on screen. 137 in their squad. The girls in gorgeous yellow dresses, the men in green and white. The green jackets that Australians usually wear on occasions such as this. And white hats with green bands. They looked very dapper.*

*Per Grevé: I saw in the newspaper this morning that the Olympic Committee is appealing to the entire world to observe peace and peaceful coexistence during the 15 days that the Olympics are underway. As I said, the whole town has been decorated with doves of peace. But there's no getting away from it, it is a little, one almost has to say it, a little grotesque seeing soldiers armed to the teeth with doves of peace on their arms, a remarkable paradox.*

*Plex Petersson [interrupting]: Gentlemen in shorts! From the Bermudas.*

Looking back one could say that Plex Petersson won that battle, as Per Grevé never got to commentate the Olympic Games again. This was the only time that Swedish Television has had a general reporter act as commentator at a sporting event.

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### **Facebook and Palestine**

*- Hi, my name is Rana, I'm a good friend of Jila's.*

*- Hi.*

*- Jila told me that you're working on an essay about hegemony, resistance and power strategies.*

*- Yes, one could say that.*

*- I have something interesting for you. Do you know Facebook?*

*- Yes, I do.*

*- Well it's like this, I'm from Palestine, or rather my parents come from Palestine. Yeah, and on Facebook I'm a member of the Palestine network. But last spring they suddenly closed down that network without any explanation whatsoever. 16,000 people were left without a network. One girl wrote a letter to Facebook and asked which regional network she should belong to now, when Palestine had been removed. The Facebook team replied that she should either belong to the West Bank or Gaza. High politics had*

*made a clear entry into the banal part of cyberspace. Facebook quite simply meant that Palestine wasn't a country. You have to wonder where Facebook think that Palestinians come from? Besides, even the UN has accepted Palestine as a country. The conflict is not about whether Palestine is a country or not but rather where the borders should go. If it starts becoming acceptable around the world to say that Palestine isn't a country, then that means that one's certain viewpoint or one's certain policy has the preferential right of interpretation. That would be catastrophic for everything that Palestinians have fought for so long. I get really annoyed just thinking about how Facebook without a second thought can make a political decision without there being any kind of consequences.*

*- Yes, it sounds just terrible. But I have taken more of an interest in Swedish historical examples so I don't know if this really suits me that well.*

*- But you can't discuss ideology and power strategies without including contemporary examples and besides, Facebook is a Swedish phenomenon too.*

*- What you mean by that?*

*- Facebook is a global network, and thus a Swedish phenomenon. If you are interested in discussing hegemony and power strategies then you can't limit yourself to just national examples, you have to include strategies operating on a global scale. They may seem insignificant but may be incredibly effective. For example this thing with Facebook. It may seem like a trifle, something of no importance. But don't let that fool you. Every decision that seems unimportant may push the boundaries for what is deemed OK. It's in the small events that ideology is being expressed.*

*- I think you are right, but what network are you in now?*

*- The thing is that we wrote a protest letter to Facebook where 16,000 people threatened to leave Facebook if they didn't open up the network again. And it helped, now you can be a member of the Palestinian network again. So the protest helped. Facebook have never explained themselves though, one day they took the network away and a few months later Palestine was back as a network. I know that a few people have tried getting an explanation from Facebook, but they have refused to comment.*

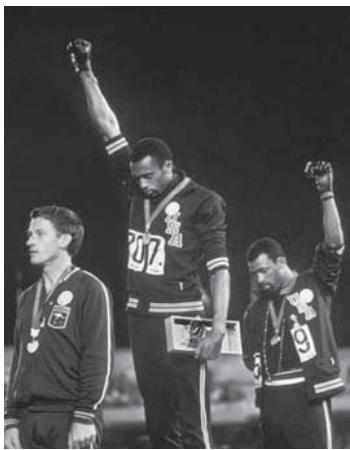
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#### **The Olympic Games, Mexico City 1968, Tommie Smith and John Carlos**

*- Hi Petra, it's Bo here again. I've been thinking for a few days now and have come up with a further example from the 1968 Olympics that might interest you.*

*As you know, on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1968, the black runner Tommie Smith won the 200 metres and his black compatriot came third. Up on the winners' podium, both men stood still, dignified, each with his arm raised, fist clenched. They each wore a single black glove. It was a symbol for Black Power. The pictures were seen by 600 million people. The day following the prize ceremony, Tommie Smith and John Carlos were disqualified from taking further part in the*



games and thrown out of the Olympic village. The event received huge attention in the media. But not on Swedish TV. The early morning broadcasts summarising the previous night's events featured nothing of the prize giving nor of the protest, only pictures from the race were shown. The man responsible for the morning broadcast was interviewed in the newspaper Aftonbladet the following day. I think the article may interest you; the attempt to justify certain actions, that is the non-discussion of the protest, is quite evident. The article even exposes the ideology behind the justification.

I think you should read the articles in Aftonbladet from 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> October 1968. They more or less speak for themselves.

#### Aftonbladet, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1968:

TV didn't want to show pictures of the most dramatic Olympic prize ceremony of all time. TV's morning reporter Peo Nilsson, 42, refused to utter a single word about the race drama following the 200 metres. American TV station ABC (who bought the Olympic Games for 23,5 million Swedish crowns) apparently completely avoided filming Tommie Smith and John Carlos' black-gloved, raised-fisted protest of the Star Spangled banner.

Captain Peo Nilsson, of Air Force Unit F13 in Norrköping, was in charge of TV's morning broadcast: "I didn't even want to mention this demonstration. It didn't belong in a sports arena."

"I don't have any film of what happened either. Most likely American ABC, who are in charge of the live broadcast, avoided pointing their cameras at the winners' podium."

Peo Nilsson never uttered a word on TV. Despite having access to the same pictures shown in today's Aftonbladet. "I was in charge of the morning broadcast and my personal viewpoint is this: We here at home know so very little about the race-problem. We think that we know more than we do. I myself have been a reserve at the Olympics, and an athlete in Texas, USA. I don't want to take a position on the race question."

Peo Nilsson has five World Championship Military Pentathlon and Air Force Pentathlon gold medals. The five-time world champion continues:

"Being a former athlete I'm only interested in sporting

*achievement. I showed a repeat of the 200 metres finals twice this morning. I don't know if we can show anything from this prize giving in any of today's three remaining Olympic TV broadcasts either. That will depend upon whether we can find a film that someone other than TV broadcaster ABC shot at the time." Peo Nilsson finishes.*

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October 1968:**

*Peo Nilsson:*

*"I'll explain it once again. I have been an athlete in the USA. I think that the race problem is detestable. And when I realised, whilst there, how little of the hostilities I understood I became completely neutral. The problem was too big for me, I can't make a stand."*

*Do you believe that one can't mix sport and politics?*

*"Somehow politics have entered the sporting sphere. Harmony and brotherhood have always been guiding influences there. It's a shame that it's turned out the way it has. [...] I once believed in brotherhood across all borders and think that it's sad to see how it's become. I wish it were different."*

*It sounds like a delusion.*

*"Yes, but I prefer to believe in it. I am from Småland, I am stubborn and have a lot of opinions but I don't form them without thinking first. I can't have opinions on something that I know nothing about or don't understand."*

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**Agiza and Al Zery**

In my final example I want to focus on a very well known Swedish case from 2001. A number of reports and articles have been written about the case. However I still think that it is topical and clearly visualises power strategies that have been adopted by several western countries. On top of that, I don't want the case to enter history yet, but to be a part of the present. There are certain things we shall not stop talking about. The following text has been compiled and written by myself and my colleague Anna Eineborg.

During the spring of 2001, the Swedish Security Service (SÄPO) commenced work on a case concerning two Egyptian citizens, Agiza and Al Zery (who were seeking asylum in Sweden). For the next six months the Security Service ran surveillance and investigative operations on both men. Simultaneously, the Swedish Migration Board was processing asylum applications for Agiza and Al Zery. The Migration Board, however, considered the case of a nature that warranted a governmental decision. Thus in the autumn of 2001, the case was passed on to the Swedish Government Offices for processing.

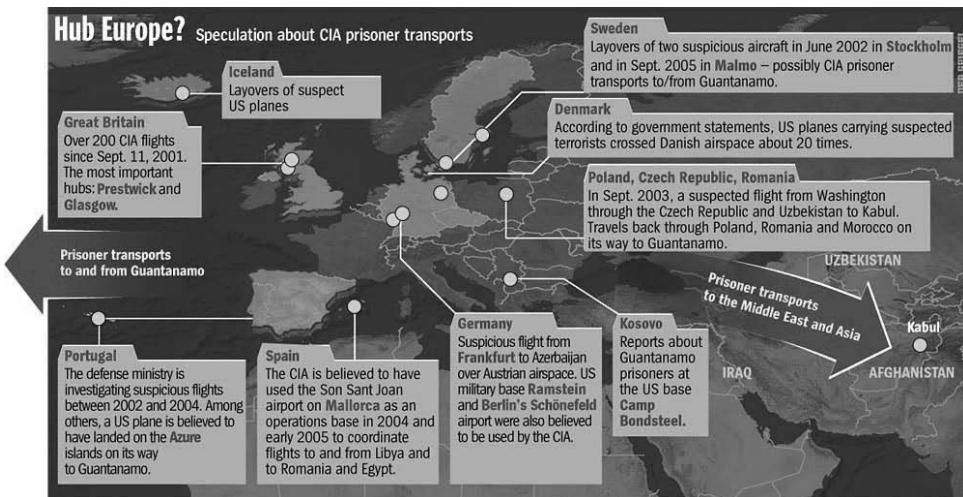
On 18 December 2001, the government decided to reject Agiza and Al Zery's applications for residency and work permits and that both men should be deported. Furthermore it was decided that the deportations should be enforced by the Swedish Security Service with immediate effect and that the men should be taken to Egypt. Amongst other things, the decision stated that Agiza and Al Zery had held leading positions within an organisation responsible for acts of terrorism and that they could be seen as being responsible for the actions of the organisation in question. Prior to the decision it was arranged that the transport to Egypt would be carried out with the assistance from the American government using an American governmental aircraft. Upon return in Egypt they were tortured by prison guards.

This deportation was one of several extraordinary renditions that have taken place in Europe since 9/11. In Great Britain alone CIA-planes that have been involved in the transport and illegal detention of prisoners have landed at least 170 times. For a long time the people involved in the case in Sweden kept silent. Not until 2004 did we learn about the event, when two journalists started to investigate it. Not till then did we learn that Agiza and Al Zery were not only deported to a country that is known for using torture but they were also humiliated and abused in Sweden before boarding the plane. The physical and mental abuse were conducted by CIA agents, but were observed by Swedish policemen. When the Swedish policemen were asked by the journalists and the parliamentary ombudsman what had happened, they said that they had neither heard nor seen anything. The Swedish government too rejected any involvement in the event, despite the fact that they had granted the American plane with accompanying CIA agents approval to land and arrest two men in Swedish territory. It was not until the journalists and the parliamentary ombudsman produced their report that the event was documented and brought to light. I would like to read an excerpt from this report in order not to let it enter into history, but to keep it as part of contemporary political discussions about power strategies and violations of human rights.

**Excerpt from the parliamentary ombudsmen's review of the Swedish Security Service's enforcement of a government decision to deport two Egyptian citizens:**

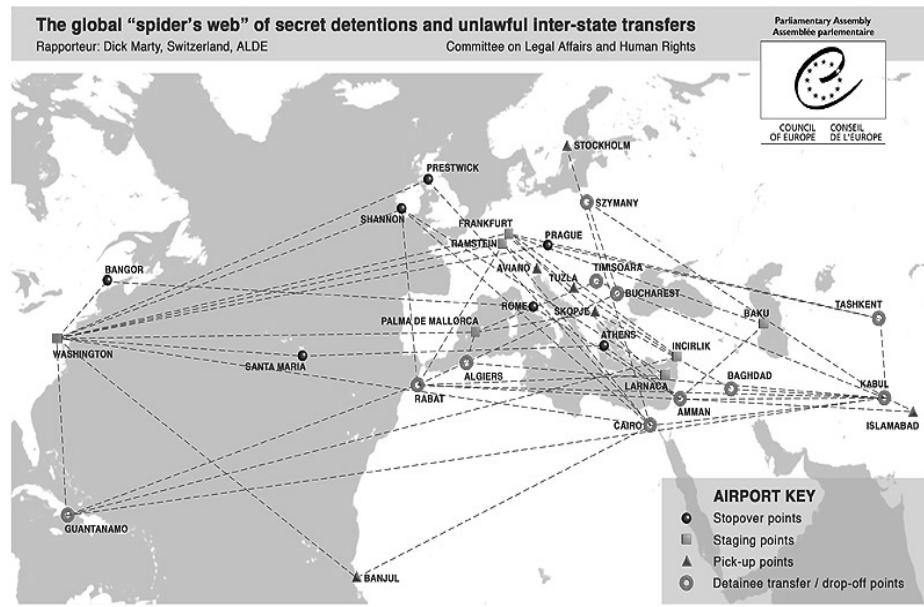
*18 DECEMBER 2001 – THE DAY OF THE ENFORCEMENT*

*At lunchtime on Tuesday 18 December 2001, Swedish Security Service officer Y – who had planned the enforcement of the government decision – met with American officials at Bromma Airport (in Stockholm). During the meeting he was informed that there was an*



source: Der Spiegel, 2005

source: The Council of Europe, 2006



Annex to ASJUR (2006) 16 Part II

Graphic design by Ondrej Wancík

Maps showing the flows of European inter-state detentions in the name of 'war on terror'.

*(American) security presence on board the plane, due to land at Bromma at around 9pm.*

*During the meeting it was also made known that security personnel may be wearing hoods and that they wanted to carry out their own security check of Agiza and Al Zery before boarding the plane. The men would not be allowed transport on the plane without such a check.*

*Security Service officer Y contacted his superior AA and informed him that the American officials wanted to carry out their own security check at Bromma. According to Security Service officer Y, AA offered no objection to this. AA has stated that it is probable that he was contacted on the matter but that he has no recollection of that taking place. He has further stated that, "purely hypothetically", he probably would have considered it "quite alright" to have a security check before taking the Egyptians on board the plane, though "naturally under the command of, so to speak, the participation of Swedish personnel".*

*Later that day the government decided, in accordance with the Aliens Act, to reject Agiza and Al Zery's applications for residency and work permits and that both men should be deported. Furthermore, it was decided that the Swedish Security Service should enforce the deportations immediately and that the men should be transported to Egypt. The Swedish Security Service journal for the case has an entry showing notification of the government decision at 3.10pm.*

*At 4.43pm it was decided that Agiza and Al Zery should be detained.*

*Almost immediately, the Security Service took Agiza into custody as he stood at a bus stop in Karlstad. A security search was conducted but no weapons or other dangerous objects were found. Agiza was informed of the government decision in his native tongue, placed in a vehicle and taken to Bromma airport. According to the journal entry Agiza was "arrested and informed of the government decision" at 4.55pm. No violence was used whilst taking Agiza into custody, neither were handcuffs used during the trip to Bromma. Medicine that Agiza need for a stomach ailment was brought along from Karlstad.*

*The National Task Force took Al Zery into custody at around 5pm at his place of employment in Stockholm. He*

*was thereafter transported to Kronoberg Remand Prison where he was kept until further transport to Bromma airport could be arranged.*

*According to the log kept by Security Service officer Y dated 21 December 2001 and detailing the transportation of Agiza and Al Zery, the transport vehicles arrived at Bromma Airport at 8.20pm and 8.30pm respectively. After being directed to the closed airport area by authorised personnel, the vehicles were parked outside the airport police station where they then waited. According to an official within the Security Service, E became agitated on realising that they were at an airport and commented in his native tongue, amongst other things, that blood would flow.*

*At this time at the airport there were five officials from the Swedish Security Service present, among them Security Service officers X and Y. None of these five held a high-ranking position within the force and none of them had been designated Incident Controller (IC).*

*Just before 9pm the American plane landed. Security Service officer Y received the Americans at the aircraft steps. On board the plane, besides the aircrew, were seven or eight people that made up the security presence, amongst them a doctor and two Egyptian officials.*

*The security officers, all of whom were wearing hoods, approached the vehicles containing Agiza and Al Zery. First, one of the men was taken into the police station by security officers. Inside, in a small changing-room, the American officials carried out the so-called security check. According to reports the doctor was present in the changing-room. On completion of the security check the second man was fetched and the procedure was repeated exactly as before.*

*Inquiries have shown that the security check comprised in each case the following elements; Agiza and Al Zery were given body searches, their clothes cut off and placed in bags, and their hair, oral cavities and ears searched. Further, each man was shackled hand and foot and dressed in overalls before being photographed. Finally, loose-fitting eyeless hoods were placed over their heads. Agiza and Al Zery were then taken barefoot from the police station and transported to the waiting aircraft.*

*Al Zery's council KJ has additionally stated that El Zery has said that members of the security detail bent him forward in the changing-room, at which point he felt something inserted into his rectum. Following that he was fitted with a nappy. According to KJ, Al Zery subsequently felt calmer, as if "all the muscles in his body were relaxing". EZ was however wide-awake whilst in transit. KJ has also stated that Al Zery was blindfolded and hooded and forced to lie in an uncomfortable position whilst on board the aircraft.*

*Security Service officer Y has stated that he "is under the impression" that he asked two of his colleagues to observe the respective security checks so that they "kind of have some idea" of what took place. There was only room for a few people in the changing-room. Whilst the security checks were taking place Y was standing further away and didn't see what was happening. The two Security Service officials, a civilian interpreter and a Security Service officer, that accompanied the security personnel to the changing-room, have stated that they did not see Agiza and Al Zery being given suppositories or nappies. Information provided by them makes it clear however that it was crowded in the changing-room and that they therefore had difficulties in supervising events the entire time.*

*The Security Service officer has stated that, because of the crowding, he left the changing-room at an early stage. Thus he didn't even see that the clothes were cut off. The interpreter has stated that he was present for the entire time, while when Al Zery was undressed he turned away for approximately 20 seconds. When he turned back again, Al Zery was more or less fully dressed.*

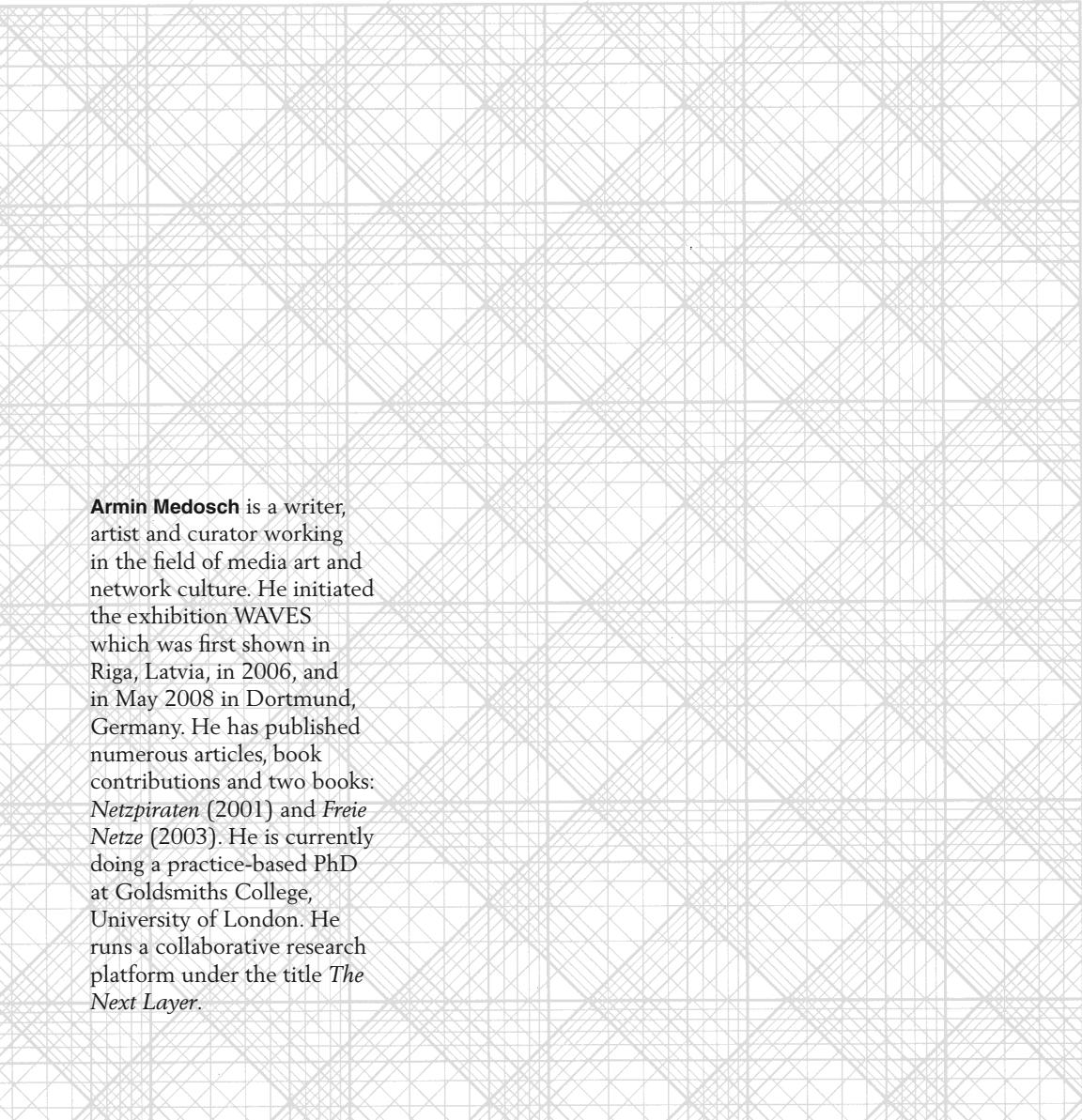
*According to both Security Service officials the security personnel carried out the security checks quickly, efficiently and professionally. The security officers did not talk with one another but communicated in sign language.*

*Both men were then taken to the aircraft. Just before 10pm the plane left Bromma for its journey to Egypt. Agiza and Al Zery were placed in the rear end of the plane, laid on separate mattresses and bound tightly with belts. Neither the hand and foot restraints nor the hoods were removed during the journey to Egypt.*

*Security Service officer Y produced a memorandum, dated 18<sup>th</sup> December 2001, noting measures connected with the*

*deportation. In it he noted that the body searches and placing of restraints were carried out on the explicit orders of the aircraft's commanding officer. It was also noted that the measure of hooding Agiza and Al Zery, along with the security personnel's wearing of masks, had been explained as a policy adopted in the wake of the events of the 11th of September 2001, concerning the transport of terrorism-associated deportees.*

*At around 3am the aircraft landed in Cairo. Agiza and Al Zery left the plane and were received by representatives of the Egyptian authorities. They were thereafter driven off in a transit-bus. With that, the Security Service officers deemed their work complete.*



**Armin Medosch** is a writer, artist and curator working in the field of media art and network culture. He initiated the exhibition WAVES which was first shown in Riga, Latvia, in 2006, and in May 2008 in Dortmund, Germany. He has published numerous articles, book contributions and two books: *Netzpiraten* (2001) and *Freie Netze* (2003). He is currently doing a practice-based PhD at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He runs a collaborative research platform under the title *The Next Layer*.

**Situating Nodes and Narratives:  
Hidden Histories / Street Radio  
by Armin Medosch**

'Is *Hidden Histories* a micro-FM station, a sound installation, an audio tour or a local history trail? Perhaps it is none of the above, or perhaps all four,' says Ieuan Franklin (2008) in an article about *Hidden Histories/Street Radio*, a work I created in collaboration with Hivenetworks in Southampton in the spring of 2008.<sup>1</sup>

**On ten light poles** in the centre of Southampton small, weather-proof little boxes have been mounted containing commercially available cheap hardware that has been appropriated and turned into Hivenetwork "nodes". The hard-software combination implemented by Hivenetworks plays sound files on a loop on FM radio on 89.5 MHz. The very low powered USB FM transmitters are said to have a range of about 10 to 15 metres. Thus, around each lamp post in a radius of approximately 30 metres you can hear one particular radio art piece, which I have created with excerpts from Southampton City's Oral History Archive. The ten Hivenetwork nodes or simply "boxes" are arranged in such a way that together they form an overlapping area saturated by the wireless signals pregnant with stories from the city's maritime past. The audience of the piece, either equipped with a mobile phone with FM reception or a small radio receiver, is invited to take a walk through the city, smelling the air, seeing radio masts of ships in the distance, being "disturbed" by seagulls, watching the quotidianongoings of Southampton on a weekday morning, while all the time the audio sphere reveals different layers of the past: about work in the docks and on ships, the sinking of the HMS *Titanic* and other disasters, food and domestic life, the music, dances and cinema of the 1920s, and the experiences of immigrants from the West Indies and Asia after the second World War. The voices of the people of Southampton telling a version of subjectively experienced history are transmitted into public space. Little squares and corners of the city are enriched with a civil society version of history profoundly different from the official versions of history taught at school or being propagated by the mainstream media. The installation creates a new public interface through which to experience the city and to hear "ear witness accounts" (Franklin 2008, quoting Truax 2001) of its past.<sup>2</sup>

The work was commissioned by the Solent Centre for Architecture and Design, an organisation concerned with promoting design values in the built urban development. The source material of the piece stems from the Oral History Unit (OHU) of Southampton Council heritage services.<sup>3</sup> The OHU '*was set up in 1983 as part of the Museums and Heritage Services*

1. Project website: <http://www.hiddenhistories.org.uk>

2. An image gallery can be found at <http://www.thenextlayer.org/image/tid/266>. Precise locations of the boxes can be seen at <http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=118218136315501198272.00043bbb8d1274fd75b378&ll=50.908418,-1.406507&spn=0.002638,0.00721&t=h&z=17&om=1>

3. Information on Oral History Units can be found here: <http://www.ohs.org.uk>

*of Southampton City Council and since that time over 900 life stories have been recorded with local people' (OHU, 2008). The OHU collection 'covers the period from 1890 to the present and provides a unique insight into the social history of modern Southampton. It is particularly strong in the areas of maritime history, women's history, Second World War Civilian experience and the dock-land communities of Chapel and Northam,' (OHU, 2008). My work with this archive was made possible and supported by Sheila Jemima and Padmini Broomfield from the OHU.*

When working with the archive, my focus was on creating relationships between the site of a specific Hivenetworks box and the stories selected for that site. The locations of the boxes were selected according to two main criteria: each box should be situated next to either a monument or memorial or another significant spot, and all the "nodes" should be within reach of one another's wireless "mesh network" data cloud.<sup>4</sup> In the Southampton installation, the wireless mesh network is mainly important for maintenance reasons (the nodes can be accessed remotely via a gateway to the Internet, so that the Hivenetworks developers can access them using Secure Shell protocol (ssh)). The public "front end" is formed by the USB "Mini FM" transmitters contained in the Hivenetwork nodes, sending a weak radio signal with the stories from the OHU, as well as bluetooth text messages with additional information.

During an earlier artist's residency in Southampton in 2003/04 I experienced public spaces in the city as quite impoverished. Most public spaces seem to be either dominated by shopping or are spaces that people just pass through. The only potential island of civic life is the so-called Civic Centre with a public library, an art gallery and a cafe, as well as the space outside its main entrance and the surrounding parks. Yet even there hardly anybody stays for much longer than it is necessary to pass through. The city centre itself is occupied by the West Quay shopping mall that squeezes out the life of the heart of the city by attracting everyone inside its roofed privatised version of "public space", while shops nearby suffer economically and neighborhoods appear deserted in daytime even though they are at the centre of town. A second observation was that although the port is still a major force in the economic life of the town, the number of people working there has shrunk significantly since the introduction of container shipping. Thus, although Southampton is still an important port, the port itself plays little role in the public imagination of the city. Most people are hardly aware that it exists.

The choice of the "earwitness" accounts as source material

4. Mesh networks are highly distributed networks that use special routing technology. In standard routing, technology is used to send and receive information via the Internet. The "routes" that data packets take are fixed. In mesh networks the software decides "dynamically" or in an ad-hoc manner which route data packets take. Sometimes "mesh networking" and "ad-hoc networking" are used as synonyms. In wireless and mobile networks mesh networking has the obvious advantage that the software adapts dynamically to changes in the structure or topology of the network. There are a number of routing protocols that support mesh networking amongst which OLSR is one of the most advanced and most widely used.

for the *Hidden Histories/Street Radio* project was motivated by the aim of bringing the maritime history of the city back into the city centre told through the voices of ordinary people and, by doing so, inspiring and facilitating new types of behaviour that might eventually – and this is of course speculative – foster a renewed sense of public life. The project serves as an interface both to the collective memory of the city's inhabitants and to the current day urban topology of the city. Potentially, it would give "being" in the city centre a new meaning, by allowing people to explore the streets, places and parks along the sediments of a reactivated past. Although the piece is not "interactive" in any sense of technical interactivity, it is a form of participatory radio art. According to Allan S. Weiss, radio is the ideal medium to establish a poetics and ethics of 'imagination as creative act' (Weiss, 1996). *Hidden Histories/Street Radio* uses the voices of the people to create a dialogic form of 'receptive participation' (cf. Arns, 2002, Bishop, 2006) demanding from the visitor an act of deliberate concentration on listening to site specific radio "narrowcasts" by moving through public space along the electromagnetic field created by the ten narrative nodes. Ieuan Franklin writes:

*The time-binding properties (Innis, 2003) of this media form allow participants to receive communications from, and about, the past, creating cultural continuity. The project represents a re-inscription of real time, but also real space. Taking the audio tour, I was also interested in the coupling of content (the oral history) and physical context or place, to achieve site-specific localisation.*  
(Franklin, 2008: 2)

The choice of the monuments or buildings near which to locate Hivenetworks nodes was an important decision, as was the selection of the "stories". The site as well as the visual environment of the work contribute to the work's meaning insofar it is not just a radio art piece but a site-specific public art installation, as Franklin (2008) also recognised. With relation to the monuments I am influenced by Rosalynd Deutsche's work in *Evictions – Art and Spatial Politics* (Deutsche, 1996), in particular her critique of the function of monuments to assert the 'ownership' of public space through 'powerful forces' using 'instrumental aesthetic ideologies' to turn away a 'socially undesirable population' (Deutsche, 1996: 5). Further important works that influenced my thinking on urbanity and space are *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre, 2000) and *The Urban Revolution* (Lefebvre, 2003). The following quote in particular demonstrates why Lefebvre's work is so important for artistic practices such as *Hidden Histories/Street Radio*:

*The expression "urban society" meets a theoretical need. It is more than simply a literary or pedagogical device, or even the expression of some form of acquired knowledge; it is an elaboration, a search, a conceptual formulation.*

*A movement of thought towards a certain concrete, and perhaps towards the concrete, assumes shape and detail. This movement, if it proves to be true, will lead to a practice, urban practice, that is finally or newly comprehended. (Lefebvre, 2003: II 5)*

The monuments in Southampton appear to confirm Deutsche's critique as rather than attracting people, they serve to keep away the "wrong kind of people" (the poor, alcoholics and drug addicts, teenagers). Nobody "hangs out" except, at least in my observation, a group of schoolgirls who regularly hide next to the Cenotaph to smoke cigarettes. My selection of stories aimed to subvert the official function of monuments and, as Franklin points out, start '*work on the listener's imagination*' (op.cit., my emphasis). Through the combined experience of public space as it is *now* (lived, three-dimensional, chaotic, polluted, loud or at the same time deserted, empty, hushed), and the collective *history* of the city brought back into public space, a powerful multi-layered experience is created.

The composite aim was to avoid pathos and to avoid calling into service the notion of the sublime. Rather, I employed irony, contradictions and the "wit of the people" to work against the sometimes dominant architecture of places. For instance, one node was placed next to a former luxury department store, Tyrell and Greens. In the past this shop had doormen who would not let poor people in. On this node a selection of stories about the food of the poor is being played. The food that poor people in the past had to eat truly sounds horrible, but I selected people who were not moaning about that but told those stories with verve and humour. Overcoming poverty and hunger can be read as defiance of and resistance to the implications of luxury food shopping and present day consumerism. In a similar way I tried to avoid blunt messages that would tautologically and one-dimensionally refer to the "meaning" of a site.

The memorials and sites themselves are sometimes very heavy signifiers. The archive of the OHU contains tough stories from both World Wars, sad stories about death and loss, for instance regarding the *HMS Titanic*, or poverty and hardship concerning the labour conditions in the past.<sup>5</sup> If I had wanted to I could, through using the materials of the OHU, have portrayed life before the second World War for the working classes as endless misery and hardship – and most likely it was. Yet to me, although it was tough, hard and unfair, life seemed to me freer than it is now, less alienated, mechanised, and not so much characterised by internalised forms of repression. As there was no television and the entertainment industry was much less developed than now, people had to find ways of entertaining themselves that maybe are not used so much anymore. Through my selection I tried to find a balance between exposing the political unfairness of the pre-war class system and evidence of

5. For an audio excerpt concerning the sinking of the *HMS Titanic*, see <http://www.thenextlayer.org/node/341>.

the moral courage and pride of working class people without romanticising them – a sort of Allan Sekula in oral history without the pathos of loss that Sekula's work employs<sup>6</sup>.

The work with the archive of the OHU itself became an immensely important experience for me. Although the help of OHU staff made it possible for me to skip significant numbers of interviews, I still had to listen through many to get the job done. I was in an oral history universe for almost three months, listening.

One of the things I learned during that time is that “the people” is a very diverse entity. Drawing on this experience, I would like to ask, “Who are ‘the people’?” That is an important question that deserves much further attention. Are “the people” what the sociologist makes of them, or the corporate market analyst, or the politician who claims to speak “for” the people, or patronising media which pretend to be the voice of the people when actually they are the voice of their owner? Or, are the people the “multitude” as Negri and Hardt (2000) called them in *Empire*, the possibly revolutionary crowd, the “motley crowd” of the working classes, a term used by Marx and reused to great effect by Linebaugh and Rediker (2000) in *The many-headed hydra: sailors, slaves, commoners, and the hidden history of the revolutionary Atlantic*. In this book, Linebaugh and Rediker scramble together from a myriad of sources a bottom-up history of what they call the “transatlantic proletariat”, a restive and resistant, multi-ethnic crowd that was able to politically organise itself and was at the forefront of many revolts and revolutions. The stories in the OHU archive, told by sailors and dock workers, as well as female seafarers and male stewards and waiters, show that those forms of resistance and solidarity reached well into the 20th century.

The material of the OHU is a treasure of “ear-witness” accounts that allows such new histories from below to be discovered by historians. Contained in those histories are several subplots such as little known labour histories (for instance female dock workers doing hard physical work such as coaling ships in Liverpool and London before 1918; Black women doing the same work in African ports), sexual histories (the language of “Polari” developed on board ships, gay and lesbian as well as transgender identities lived on board ships), acts of international solidarity between workers (boycotts of freighters from fascist countries in the 1930s; support of Spanish Republicans; stopping Mosley from giving a speech on Southampton commons). The narratives also offer interesting accounts of the views of immigrants and aspects of their culture, views that opened up spin-offs of my research into, for instance, early musical styles such as Soca and Mento in the Caribbean as outlets for political resistance (cf. Trouillot, 1992). Node 10 of *Hidden Histories*, a node located at a bus stop with a view of the

6. Allan Sekula is a photographer and writer who works on topics such as globalisation, division of labour, alienation, migration, cultural translation and exploitation. Many of his works highlight ports and shipping as the real site of the exchange of commodities.

port, is devoted to these more open ended narratives that take off into different directions mentioned above.

The technique of the life interview as practiced by the OHU and other oral history projects is an excellent way of tapping into the great unknown territory of “the people” not as a mass but as individuals.<sup>7</sup> A life interview does not have a specific research question, and does not have an overtly ideological agenda (cf. Grele, 1987). The main structuring element is the decision of whom to interview, and from there onwards the interviewer’s main task is to keep himself or herself in the background, yet still create and maintain a relationship with the interviewee that makes the latter comfortable in digging deep into their memories and voicing them. It is a performative situation in which both sides play their part. The interviewer needs to be able to encourage the interviewee without becoming too dominant and directing the interview too much (cf. Shopes, 2002). If performed well, the life story interview is a very good way of accessing history directly (cf. Blatti, 2000). History becomes an “Open Source”. If combined with emergent creative technologies, oral history achieves a new stage in mediality, as Campanelli suggests.

*Today we can notice an emergent new form of orality that should be defined as a “tertiary”, in the School of Toronto tradition, that taught us to consider the electronic-era orality as a secondary one. (Campanelli, 2008)*

The performative aspects of the interview, the process of the interviewee living through moments of their lives that happened in the past played an important part in my selection. The situatedness of the speaker and the actualisation of the past makes the material very lively – animated as well as animating. Here, the oral qualities of the material comes to the fore. The voices themselves, often aged, yet highly individual; through the character and properties of the individual voice – deep, high, sensual, raspy, with/without timbre, etc; plus the modulations of the voice that occur during telling the stories of their life – accelerations, sighs, laughs, intensifying, fading away, excited or moved to tears; all these factors made the interviews a very potent source material whose dignity I tried to preserve, consciously using the material in such a way that it never would turn against the speaker.

With *Hidden Histories/Street Radio* the decision was made early on in the work to use the voices in a realistic manner. The only intervention on my part was to select excerpts of vocal recordings of a length of between 10 seconds and one and a half minutes to be assembled into 10 different audio pieces (Hörspiele) grouped according to themes or “thematic nodes”.

The work draws on my own background as radio artist with the group Radio Subcom, from 1985 to 1993. The relationship

7. As Walter Benjamin wrote, the creation of the “masses” through electronic media is one of the biggest problems of the 20th century. In the 19th century the fear of the “mob” was a driving factor in politics and city planning.

with Subcom, is given through the compository concerns regarding “clichés” – the term my colleagues and I used at that time for found audio footage – and the notion of acoustic environmentalism that was emphasised in our practice and writing (cf. Subcom, 1988). Aspects of this work are described in more detail in my text *Paid in Full* (Medosch, 2008) and in *45 RPM – Radio art histories remixed* (Medosch, 2007). The forthcoming book by Dan Gilfillan (2009) sheds more light on the work of Subcom with “clichés” and the notion of radio environmentalism. An important aspect was also that Subcom tried to develop an entirely different model for the medium of radio, not just “radio art” played within a slot on existing radio channels. This is emphasised also by Tetsuo Kogawa in his text for the *Re-inventing Radio* reader (Kogawa, 2008).

I felt strongly that the material from the OHU archive did not need that same treatment of re-contextualisation that characterised the work with Subcom<sup>8</sup>. The only special effects used were short pieces of music and sound used as a sort of semantic break between sentences, also as a way of highlighting atmospheres and playing with or against expectations, and to provide associations to other layers hidden in the narration which were maybe not so obvious on first hearing. Through the use of the voices the 10 pieces reached a certain dramatic or theatrical quality that invited the listener to engage with the “dialogic” quality (Kac, 1999). The work was not made to satisfy the deconstructivist impulses of a media art audience but to address the people of Southampton and give them the best chance to engage in a dialogue with the overlapping collective “spaces” of community memory and the city.

“Narrowcast”, mini or microcast radio (terms I use synonymously) work as a sort of subterranean medium, literally “under the radar” of broadcast society. It creates invisible bonds of desire between the broadcaster and the potential receiver who, in order to get a better signal, has to move around the receiver to engage with the field strength of the radio (cf. Kogawa, 2008). The work relates to an updated understanding of Brecht’s radio theory (Brecht, 1932) as well as Walter Benjamin’s demands in *The Author as Producer* (Benjamin, 2002) that the quality of a work lies not so much in its immanent aesthetic qualities than in its relationship to the forces of cultural production. Similar to Kogawa’s MiniFM projects, *Hidden Histories/Street Radio* in Southampton functioned on a level of presence/absence (Hayles, 1999). For instance, cars stopping at traffic lights would suddenly hear snippets from our programme on their car radio. As the listener walks through the city space of Southampton, the imponderabilities of the wireless medium carry a wave from a far away node unexpectedly mixing in with where the listener is on the trail. A relationship with the radio signal is created because it is weak, it does not

8. Subcom used a technique of montage which took snippets of audio from very different contexts, and created new ‘meaning’ or textures by assembling the material in new and unexpected ways, thereby subverting stereotypes of listening.

give blanket coverage. The signal is very local and does not propagate equally well in all directions, being weakened and redirected by trees, houses and other physical objects. The distance between the nodes makes it possible to glide seamlessly from one signal to the next, from an inner circle of very good reception of one node, to a zone where two signals overlap, to a zone where the next signal is received clearly again. Watching users at the opening day, one could observe how they started drifting from one node to the other, headphones on, radio in hand, listening to one story and then, after a while, moving on to the next. The work creates a narration that is temporal as well as spatial.

The piece also relates to the genre of the audio walk and to the evolving new genre of “locative media”. The audio walk has quite a long history in art, having been popularised by artists such as Janet Cardiff, who used relatively simple means such as a CD player or walkman. In more recent times the audio walk has had a renaissance at new media art festivals such as Futuresonica, Manchester 2004, and ISEA, San Jose 2006. Now, works using mobile media and creating relationships between “information” of any kind and a situated urban context are called “locative media”. This is a relatively new term coined by artists at a workshop in Karaosta, Latvia, organised by the organisation RIX-C from Riga in 2003.<sup>9</sup> That same year also a “cartographic congress” was organised in London by people associated with the University of Openness at Limehouse Town Hall. Many young artists developed an interest in areas such as bottom-up geography, free or open geographic information systems and aspects of “psycho-geography” or related areas inspired by the Situationist’s reports about their practice of the *derivé*.

While quite a diverse field of practices was subsumed under the term “locative media”, including “non-technical” or “low-tech” types of locative practices, during roughly 2003-04 works that used GPS and various other forms of quite technically based “mappings” were foregrounded. This led to a critique of locative media as uncritically using a military technology (cf. Tuters & Varelis 2006). This was also the time that I first developed the concept of the Southampton Oral History trail. One key question for me then was “how can I create locatedness or a relationship with space and place without using GPS?” The reason for the wish to avoid GPS is not only that it is controlled by the military but also that it emphasises the grid of longitude and latitude. In my view, the human sense of space has no relation to the mathematical grid but is constituted by other factors such as sense-perception, experiences, memories, urban flows, and psycho-geographic energies (being subconsciously attracted to or repelled by a place). The concept for *Hidden Histories/Street Radio* was developed in order to combine narrations, nodes and spaces without the technical aid of GPS or other locating technologies such as triangulation (the method used by mobile phone companies to locate phones/users).

9. See <http://locative.x-i.net/intro.html>.

Another important premise behind design decisions was that the work should be as accessible as possible to the potentially biggest number of people and that it should be free of financial cost for the recipient.

To meet those goals, Hivenetworks developed the framework for Street Radio.<sup>10</sup> This term coined by me together with Hivenetworks describes the technological framework on the basis of which different projects can be carried out. So, for example in Southampton Street Radio carried the specific project *Hidden Histories/Street Radio*. In Dortmund as part of the Waves exhibition in May 2008, Street Radio was used for the project *Field Amplification* (2008) that took the concept further and introduced interactivity (Arns & Medosch 2008). Based on the principles described above, we decided to use USB FM transmitters and bluetooth to reach out and connect with something that most people already carry in their pocket as an end user device: the mobile phone.

What at the front end makes things as simple as possible for the user, is based on years of research and very specific skills developed by the group Hivenetworks. Hivenetworks is a project which was initiated by the London based artist/engineer Alexei Blinov around 2003 – which is about the same time that my conceptual work on the Oral History Trail started. Other artist/engineers involved are Vladimir Grafov and Wolfgang Hauptfleisch, who was the main developer, besides Blinov, for the Southampton project. When Hivenetworks started, Blinov and I were mutually aware of each other's work, so it would be hard to say what came first, the technology or the idea. Alexei Blinov has worked with several important artists in the past, such as Atau Tanaka and the Sensor Band, Eric Hobijn, Amsterdam, or the now dissolved BAFTA-winning new media group Audiorom. In the early 2000s Blinov was strongly involved in the wireless community network movement Consume in London (Medosch 2003) and helped to spread Consume's ideas to the Continent (for instance BerLon workshop, 2002). The wireless community network movement, also called Free Network movement, created not only specific technological implementations but moreover a certain philosophy of networking (cf. van Loon 2006). It picked up the original ideas of decentrality behind the Internet and started, at a time when the Internet was being commodified, to build wireless decentralised networks based on non-hierarchical ownership structures. The aim was to create wireless wide-area networks in which each node was independently owned and managed. In the beginning of this movement routing problems were particularly hard to overcome. This improved with the adoption and implementation of mesh network routing protocols such as OLSR (Open Link State Routing) (Medosch 2006a).<sup>11</sup>

10. For a Street Radio description and technical images see [http://hivenetworks.net/tiki-index.php?page=Street\\_radio](http://hivenetworks.net/tiki-index.php?page=Street_radio).

11. See <http://www.olsr.org>.

The sole concentration in the free network movement on network layer issues such as routing was, to Blinov, unsatisfactory, and he started to think about how to combine the decentralised ethos of free networks with a layer of individual nodes becoming content providers. In this regard Blinov was influenced by concepts such as ubiquitous computing (cf. Weiser, 1993), yet with the important difference that he wanted to implement such ideas at the absolutely lowest cost possible. Instead of using specially built expensive hardware Blinov set out to re-use existing mass distributed cheap consumer hardware. The keyword to this is “firmware replacement”. The free software movement has been able to reverse engineer the low level hardware routines of a number of chip sets so that it has become possible to install a scaled down version of GNU/Linux on small devices – embedded computing on the cheap. Blinov has watched those developments closely and started actively developing Hivenetwork technology when prices had come down to really low levels that made those technologies accessible to a wide range of people. Important advancements in this area were also made by other projects such as OpenWRT that provides a GNU/Linux based firmware for WLAN devices. OpenWRT, however, is relatively difficult to use, needing good GNU/Linux command line skills. Hivenetworks tried to open up participation by providing a DIY kit for firmware replacement that was easy to use and offered a number of plug-and-play applications, so-called “Hive personalities”.

For Southampton, an ASUS WL-500G Premium that runs OpenWrt<sup>12</sup> RC-5 firmware and the BlueJack<sup>13</sup> personality developed by Hivenetworks is used. The ASUS boxes are stripped of their casing and connected with a bluetooth dongle and the USB FM transmitter. This configuration is then mounted inside a weatherproof hard plastic box and mounted on a light pole, and electricity is provided from a socket at the bottom of the pole. Each node contains OLSR mesh network software that automatically recognises other nodes and together with them forms a continuous wireless data cloud that would be inaccessible for people using commercial unmodified WLAN equipment. This “mesh network” is connected to a gateway and via that to the Internet. The mesh network software also has a mapping tool that automatically creates images of the network topology.

12. See <http://openwrt.org>.

13. See [http://hivenetworks.net/tiki-index.php?page\\_ref\\_id=69](http://hivenetworks.net/tiki-index.php?page_ref_id=69).

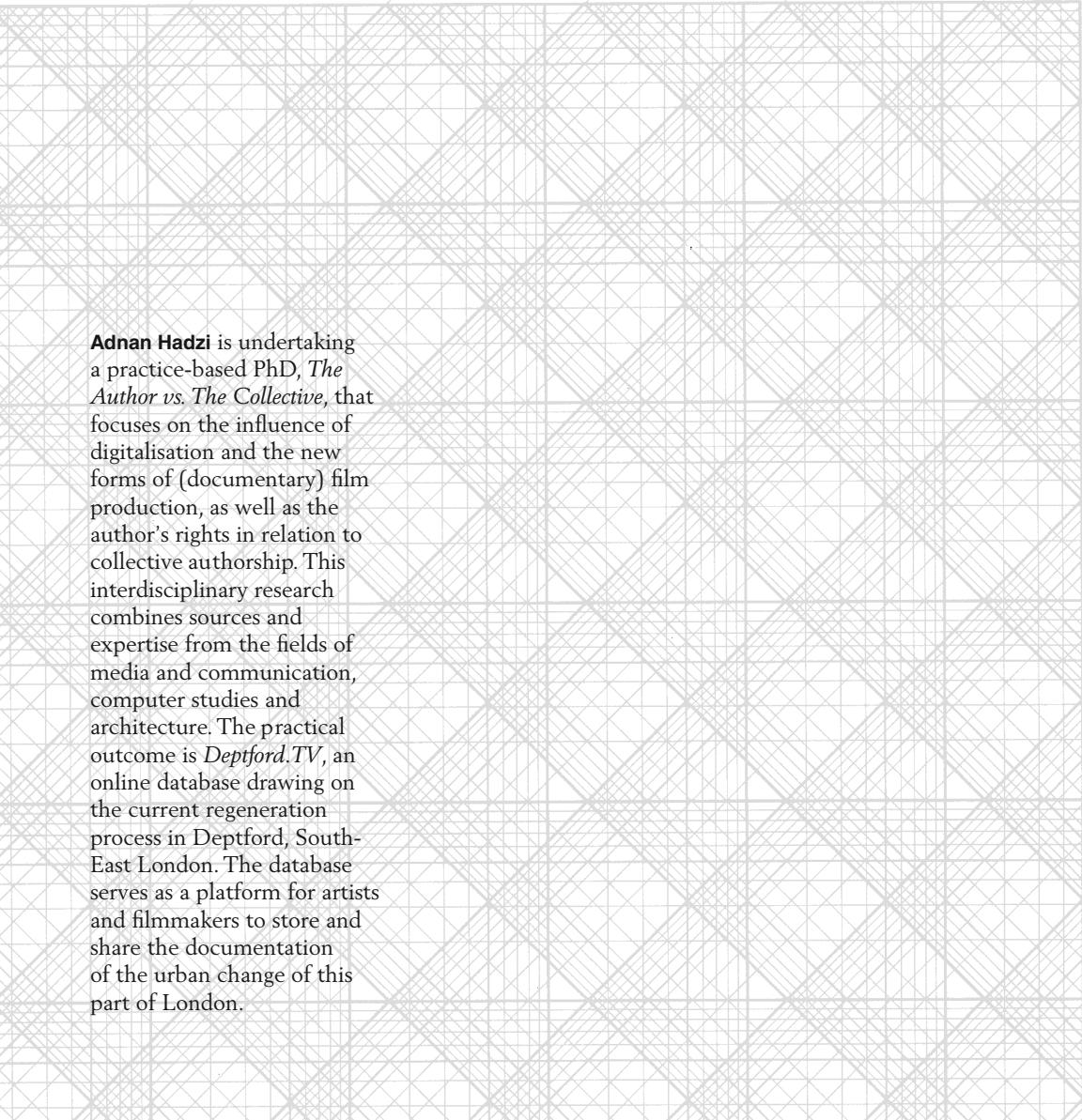
## **Conclusions**

Most of the media theories of the 20th century have been characterised by a “negative” or dystopian outlook. In the work of Marshall McLuhan media are understood as extensions of our central nervous system that, laid bare and exposed to external forces, result in a complete re-arrangement of our main way of understanding the world – from a visually based culture in the Gutenberg Galaxies to a new orality in a Global Village (McLuhan, 1964, McDonald, 2006). As Richard Barbrook shows, most media theories after McLuhan follow in his framework either in a more utopian or dystopian version (Barbrook, 2007). The rather dystopian version of McLuhanism proposed by Friedrich Kittler (1999) suggests that the meaning of media is determined by their hardware and the fact that it has military origins. As ‘there is no software’ (Kittler, 1999, pp. 147–55) the space for artistic intervention shrinks to next to nothing in a deterministic interpretation of the relationship between technology and society. Such pessimism is countered only by myriad examples (of which I don’t think it is necessary to cite any one in particular) of technologically underpinned optimism that characterises the “pragmatic” discourses on new media by instances such as governments, high tech incubator centres and “boosterist” economic publications. Projects such as *Hidden Histories/Street Radio* show that there is another way possible, a way of working and developing narrations mapped onto nodes that does not fall into the traps of either utopian or dystopian media theories. The participatory media paradigm, introduced by Brecht and Benjamin in the 1930s and updated by Enzensberger (1996) now allows situated narrations and narrative nodes to be developed on a low cost and environmentally friendly basis. The combination of artistic and technological inquiries sensitive to situatedness of both place and the tellers of tales, allows us to create social technologies that serve as an interstice to create new types of social interactions and narrations.<sup>14</sup> The works that I have created together with Hivenetworks can also be described as networked communication sculptures in which each node is a carrier of a site-specific narration while the work as a whole challenges the mainstream narrations surrounding technologies. The technology that Hivenetworks creates is a “node” in a discourse on technology and society. It can be seen as a ‘material ensemble’ (Hartmann, 2003) which links places, people, voices, ears, sounds, memory, processors, and thereby drives cultural and technological co-evolution in new and interesting directions.

## **Links**

Project website: <http://www.hiddenhistories.org.uk>

Image gallery: <http://www.thenextlayer.org/image/tid/266>



**Adnan Hadzi** is undertaking a practice-based PhD, *The Author vs. The Collective*, that focuses on the influence of digitalisation and the new forms of (documentary) film production, as well as the author's rights in relation to collective authorship. This interdisciplinary research combines sources and expertise from the fields of media and communication, computer studies and architecture. The practical outcome is *Deptford.TV*, an online database drawing on the current regeneration process in Deptford, South-East London. The database serves as a platform for artists and filmmakers to store and share the documentation of the urban change of this part of London.

Deptford.TV functions as an open, collaborative platform that allows artists, filmmakers and people living and working around Deptford to store, share, re-edit and redistribute the documentation of the urban change around Deptford in collaboration with the Deckspace media lab<sup>1</sup>, Bitnik collective<sup>2</sup>, Boundless project<sup>3</sup>, Liquid Culture<sup>4</sup> initiative and Goldsmiths College<sup>5</sup>. The open and collaborative aspect of the project is of particular importance as it manifests a form of liberated media practice. In the case of Deptford.TV this aspect is manifested in two ways: a) audiences can become producers by submitting their own footage, b) the interface that is being used enables the contributors to discuss and interact with each other through the database. Deptford.TV makes use of licences such as the Creative Commons<sup>6</sup> and GNU general public licence<sup>7</sup> to allow and enhance this politics of sharing.

**The aim of the** Deptford.TV project is to research new forms of film-making with a focus on developing technologies and platforms that can support ‘collective film’ production, existing ‘between idea and distribution’. Participants can collaborate through the use of the Deptford.TV database, which enables for multiple processes of shooting, editing and viewing of the media contents.

The Open Source and Free Software movements share the source code of their programmes under a copyleft licence. In the same way, Deptford.TV will share the film ‘source code’, that is the rough material plus the meta-data created by logging and editing this material. Such web-interfaces challenge the notion of traditional broadcasting: While the production and distribution processes can be said to merge together, the audiences become able to participate actively by undertaking a role that has always, within the frame of traditional media production, been exclusively reserved to producers. These changes challenge expectations of the film as a finished, linear product, and of the audiences as passive consumers of culture and/or entertainment.

Deptford.TV generates an online public space where contributors can discuss the regeneration process and the transformations this brings to specific, physical public spaces. This online public space exists as a weblog on the website <http://deptford.tv>. Video-blogging has been discussed as a form of collective documentary-making. According to Hoem<sup>8</sup>:

1. See <http://dek.spc.org/>.
2. See <http://www.bitnik.org/en/>.
3. See <http://www.boundless.coop>.
4. See <http://www.liquidculture.info>.
5. See <http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk>.
6. Creative Commons is a nonprofit organisation that offers flexible copyright licences for creative works. See <http://creativecommons.org>.
7. The GNU General Public Licence aims to guarantee everybody's freedom to share and change free software. See <http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/gpl.html>.
8. Hoem, Jon "Videoblogs as 'Collective Documentary'" at Blog Talk, 2004

*In relation to the use of online (found) footage the term "collective documentary" becomes highly relevant, on the one hand emphasising the intention of telling something significant about real life events, on the other hand telling that the work is made as a result of several people working together, not as an organised team defined by a given task, but rather as a small community with shared interests.*

(2004:6)

Hoem goes on to argue that blogs provide '*an individual base for entering a community*' (2004:7). While maintaining a blog is an individual activity, the process of blogging often becomes part of a collaborative effort where diverse people contribute different types of content in multiple ways and on different levels.

According to Hoem, blogs are blurring '*the boundaries between production, distribution and consumption*' (2004:7), whereas they necessarily redefine notions of media literacy so as to '*reflect(s) an awareness of both the consuming and the producing aspects of media technology*' (2004:7).

### **The Utopia of Liberated Media ?**

Berthold Brecht was enthusiastic about the potential of radio as a liberating medium when it was first invented in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. For Brecht radio was a two-way communication device: a receiver as well as a transmitter. The first radio sets were indeed designed as both receivers and transmitters. In his letter to the Director of Radio Broadcasting in 1927 Brecht wrote:

*In my view you should try to make radio broadcasting into a really democratic thing. To this end you would already achieve much, for example, if you were to cease production only on your own for this wonderful distribution apparatus you have at your disposal and instead allow it to make productive topical events simply by setting up and in special cases perhaps by managing it in a skillful, time-saving way. [...] In other words I believe that you must move with the apparatuses closer to the real events and not simply limit yourself to reproducing or reporting. You must go to the parliamentary sessions of the Reichstag and especially to the major court trials. Since this would be a great step forward, there will certainly be a series of laws that try to prevent that. You must turn to the public in order to eliminate these laws.*

(Silberman, 2001: 35)

Brecht wrote the radio play *Lindberg's Flight* for an interactive many-to-many radio event, which opened at the Festival for German Chamber Music in Baden-Baden on 27 July 1929. The play's subject was the first flight over the Atlantic Ocean by pilot Charles Lindberg in May 1927. *Lindberg's Flight* pictured the flight as a struggle of technology against nature, and as an achievement of a collective rather than an individual. The

audience was participating in the role of Lindberg. Brecht was showcasing '*how the medium itself can transform social communication through its technological advantage: the ear is to become a voice*' (Silberman, 2001: 41).

Brecht's vision never materialised. Instead, radio became a one-to-many medium, distributing content controlled by centralised radio stations to the masses of audiences. According to Williams, the history of television was very similar. He was skeptical towards any positions of technological determinism, as he believed that the same technology that could liberate media production, could also be used to control and align it with commercial and/or state interests. He wrote:

*It is ironic that the uses offer such extreme social choices. We could have inexpensive, locally based yet internationally extended television systems, making possible communications and information-sharing on a scale that not long ago would have seemed utopian. These are the contemporary tools of the long revolution towards an educated and participatory democracy, and of the recovery of effective communication in complex urban and industrial societies. But, they are also the tools of what would be, in context, a short and successful counter-revolution, in which, under the cover of talk about choice and competition, a few para-national corporations, with their attendant states and agencies, could reach further into our lives, at every level from news to psycho-drama, until individual and collective response to many different kinds of experience and problems became almost limited to choice between their programmed possibilities.*  
(1974: 151)

Today, digital networks provide new possibilities for liberated media practices through the use of Free Software. Since art and ideas never develop within an art-historical vacuum but always feed on the past, free culture ideals promise to make our cultural heritage accessible to everybody to re-read, re-use and re-mix as they like. According to Armin Medosch, '*without open access to the achievements of the past there would be no culture at all*' (2003: 15). His project *Kingdom of Piracy*, a book and a CD software package, was released under Open Content licences and it was free to use, share and edit. One of the softwares found on the CD is the Dyne:Bolic, a Linux platform used for the Deptford.TV project.

An ever-increasing amount of recent and current art projects require that artists work collaboratively with programmers in order to create such projects. They also often require the use of controversial technologies such as file-sharing or concepts of computer viruses. Such projects are of course, more often than not, criticised by the media industry as giving ground to piracy. '*This is not piracy, as industry associations want us to believe, but the creation of open spaces in a number of different ways; they facilitate freedom of expression, collective action in creation and*

*political expression and the notion of a public interest in networked communications' (Medosch 2003: 18).*

The Deptford.TV database is licenced under the General Public Licence, the Creative Commons Attribution-Share alike Licence and the Free Art Licence. By using these licences we still reserve two rights: the original author must be credited, and any distribution, sale or re-use of the work must also be under the same copyleft licence. This enables Deptford.TV participants to share their content legally. Ideally this licensing system spreads like a virus: it allows commercial exploitation of the content only if the companies/individuals using it redistribute their produced outcome under the same free licence. This is unlike the common commercial copyright law that gets the content locked away in an archive.

*In considering a source code as literature, I am depicting viruses as though they were the sort of poems written by Verlaine, Rimbaud et al., against those selling the net as a safe area for straight society. The relations, forces and laws governing the digital domain differ from those in the natural. The digital domain produces a form of chaos – which is inconvenient because it is unusual and fertile – on which people can surf. In that chaos, viruses are spontaneous compositions which are like lyrical poems in causing imperfections in machines "made to work" and in representing the rebellion of our digital serfs.*

(Nori 2002: 62)

Deptford.TV requires that each individual contributor takes on parts of the responsibility. This means that "amateurs" are taking control of domains that were strictly reserved for the professional "classes" of media-producers. *'Whether in music file-sharing, radio broadcasting or the writing of fanzines, the amateur media producer is intimately involved in dominant cultural practices, at the same time as they transform those practices through their own "autonomous" media'* (Atton 2005: 15).

*The Electronic Disturbance* from Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) was a starting point for the Deptford.TV project. *The Electronic Disturbance* was written to indeed disturb and provoke, but what is most interesting is CAE's conclusion that creating databases – rather than linear films – could be part of the solution for enabling liberated media practices, by inviting the audiences to claim a role as participants and political contributors.

*Documentary makers must refuse to sacrifice the subjectivity of the viewer. [...] Make sure the viewers know that they are watching a version of the subject matter, not the thing in itself. [...] it would make the documentary model a little less repugnant, since this disclaimer would avoid the assertion that one was showing the truth of the matter. This would allow the system to remain closed, but still produce the realisation that what is being documented*

*is not a concrete history [...].*

*It is this nomadic quality that distinguishes them from the rigidly bounded recombinant films of Hollywood; however, like them, they rest comfortably in neither the category of fiction nor nonfiction. For the purposes of resistance, the recombinant video offers no resolution; rather, it acts as a database for the viewer to make his own inferences. This aspect of the recombinant film presupposes a desire on the part of the viewer to take control of the interpretive matrix, and construct his own meanings. Such work is interactive to the extent that the viewer cannot be a passive participant.* (Critical Art Ensemble, 1996)

### **Open Media as Liberated Media?**

Open Content licensing schemes, as outlined in Lawrence Liang's book *Guide to Open Content Licences* (2004), help to create an understanding of a shared culture – culture as a communication medium rather than a commodity. Culture and creativity very often build upon previous works, through re-using, remixing and reinterpreting works; often this is a fundamental part of any creative practice. Therefore the academic and journalistic concept of 'fair use' could be an important part of social contracts for creative practices. But fair use and even 'public domain' is under threat. New digital copyrights such as the Millennium Copyright Act (1998) were written in order to tackle file-sharing, illegalising this new technology in many countries without considering any of its benefits.

This is a recurring discussion that tends to take place around any invention of new communication technology. An example is the invention of VCR recorders: it became clear at the time that those trying to stop the distribution and production of VCRs, especially the big studios, made huge profits from rentals and sales in the new home-video market. The same could prove to be the case in regard to file-sharing technologies.

The original intention behind copyright laws was to support a vibrant production of culture through the protection of producers and artists. As the current copyright legislation cannot be fully implemented when it comes to practices of online distribution and file-sharing, new copyright laws are proposed by the lobby of media giants which violate the private sphere of the consumer and threaten the existence of a democratic public sphere. The irony behind the attempt to create a more strict copyright through eliminating fair use is that this original intention to support cultural production might come to a stand-still, as artists will not be able to access and use cultural materials they need in order for them to produce new work. As a result, stricter copyright laws disadvantage artists and small producers while they work for the benefit of the already powerful media conglomerates.

*For the most part, copyrights are not held by individuals, but by corporate entities who are part of the content industry. The content industry would argue that strengthening their position allows them to provide greater incentives to individual creators, but many creators vociferously challenge that notion. Strengthening copyright laws does improve the position of the content industry by giving them a relatively untempered monopoly over content, but it does so at the expense of the public good.*

*(Besser, 2001)*

The public sphere has traditionally been determined by law. In the second Deptford.TV reader, *Pirate Strategies* (ed. Hadzi, 2008) I coined the term 'data sphere' as an extension of the public sphere, following Downey & Fenton's (2003) argumentation on 'counter-public' spheres. This, in order to describe a digital and networked public sphere where practices such as peer-to-peer networking cannot possibly adhere to traditional copyright laws and cultural content is made available in complete disregard of current legislation. This all happens largely through processes that are wholly machinic: automated, self-emergent, governed by protocol rather than direct human intent. Consequently, these copyright laws are for the first time being breached by a critical mass of technologies which are mainly in the hands of consumers. When observable coalitions arise out of this mass, they resemble a 'data sphere' more than an intentional, human-centred 'public sphere' in the traditional sense, since the coming-together need not be by personal volition but by the ways the actual infrastructures are configured. If the 'datascapes' of Latour and others (see also Andersson 2008) make possible a tracing and documentation of how existing social structures come together and become constituted, 'data spheres' are the more particular manifestations that form through an actual mobilisation within these datascapes.

Social contracts and laws will eventually be defined for these data spheres, but until then the big 'user-generated' platforms such as YouTube, MySpace and Facebook try to get their hands on every uploaded piece of content in accord with the old, non-efficacious, copyright legislation. Reading the terms and conditions of those mega-platforms makes one wonder how it can be that so many artists and independent producers hand over the rights for their content to these platforms. This is an excerpt from Facebook's own terms and conditions:

*By posting User Content to any part of the Site, you automatically grant, and you represent and warrant that you have the right to grant, to the Company an irrevocable, perpetual, non-exclusive, transferable, fully paid, worldwide licence (with the right to sublicense) to use, copy, publicly perform, publicly display, reformat, translate, excerpt (in whole or in part) and distribute such User Content for any purpose, commercial, advertising,*

*or otherwise, on or in connection with the Site or the promotion thereof, to prepare derivative works of, or incorporate into other works, such User Content, and to grant and authorise sublicences of the foregoing. (Facebook Terms & Conditions, 2008)*

These platforms present themselves as open-content providers that host a democratic discourse by offering members of the public freedom of speech. In reality they hold the contributors as slaves to advertisement which is, at the moment, the only real means of income generation and profit-making for these ventures. Investments in this field can be on a grand scale: Google bought YouTube in 2007 for \$1.65 billion. These companies need to see a quick return on their investment so they become a “wolf in sheep’s clothing,” marketing themselves as providers of free and open content while in fact implementing strict proprietary rules.

*Consciousness of desire and the desire for consciousness together and indissolubly constitute that project which in its negative form has as its goal the abolition of classes and the direct possession by the workers of every aspect of their activity. The opposite of this project is the society of the spectacle, where the commodity contemplates itself in a world of its own making. (Debord, 1994)*

I suggest that the only use of these platforms should be tactical – as when publishing content on YouTube one can benefit from higher visibility, but this comes with abandoning one’s rights. The use of file-sharing technologies on the other hand is strategic – as the participants do not need to abandon their rights and can bypass the draconian terms and conditions imposed by platforms such as YouTube and Facebook. Michel de Certeau defines ‘strategy’ in *The Practice of Everyday Life*:

*I call a “strategy” the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an “environment.” A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, “clienteles,” “targets,” or “objects” of research). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model. (de Certeau, 1984)*

Often, strategic models depend on the building of infrastructures and the production of laws, goods, literature, inventions, etc. Through this production process a strategy aspires to sustain itself. I argue that the Internet is such an infrastructure and is, by its very ontology, a file-sharing technology. As such, use of the Internet through file-sharing is almost impossible to restrict by enforcing non-realistic copyright

laws. This use is a strategical utilisation of an infrastructure that is already anti-hierarchical. This strategic utilisation generates data spheres, which have to be moderated through social contracts since the anti-hierarchy and openness of the datascapes does not lend itself to restriction in the traditional sense.

Adding Open Content licensing schemes to the file-sharing distribution technology enables audiences to become active not only in the process of viewing and criticising content but also, and more importantly, in its production process. Open, free content licences are often referred to as 'copyleft'.

**In the online hacker** lexicon.jargon.net, copyleft is defined as:

*copyleft /kɒp'ee-left/ /n./ [play on 'copyright'] 1. The copyright notice ('General Public Licence') carried by GNU EMACS and other Free Software Foundation software, granting reuse and reproduction rights to all comers (but see also General Public Virus) 2. By extension, any copyright notice intended to achieve similar aims.*

For the "copy-paste generation," copyleft is already the natural propagation of digital information in a society which provides the possibility of interacting through digital networks. In doing so one naturally uses content generated by others, remixing, altering or redistributing it.

The Deptford.TV project is strategically building up its own server system with the goal to distribute over file-sharing networks rather than relying on YouTube or MySpace, thus distributing the files over the Free Art Licence in the spirit of the GPL and the Creative Commons 'Share-Alike' attribution licence.

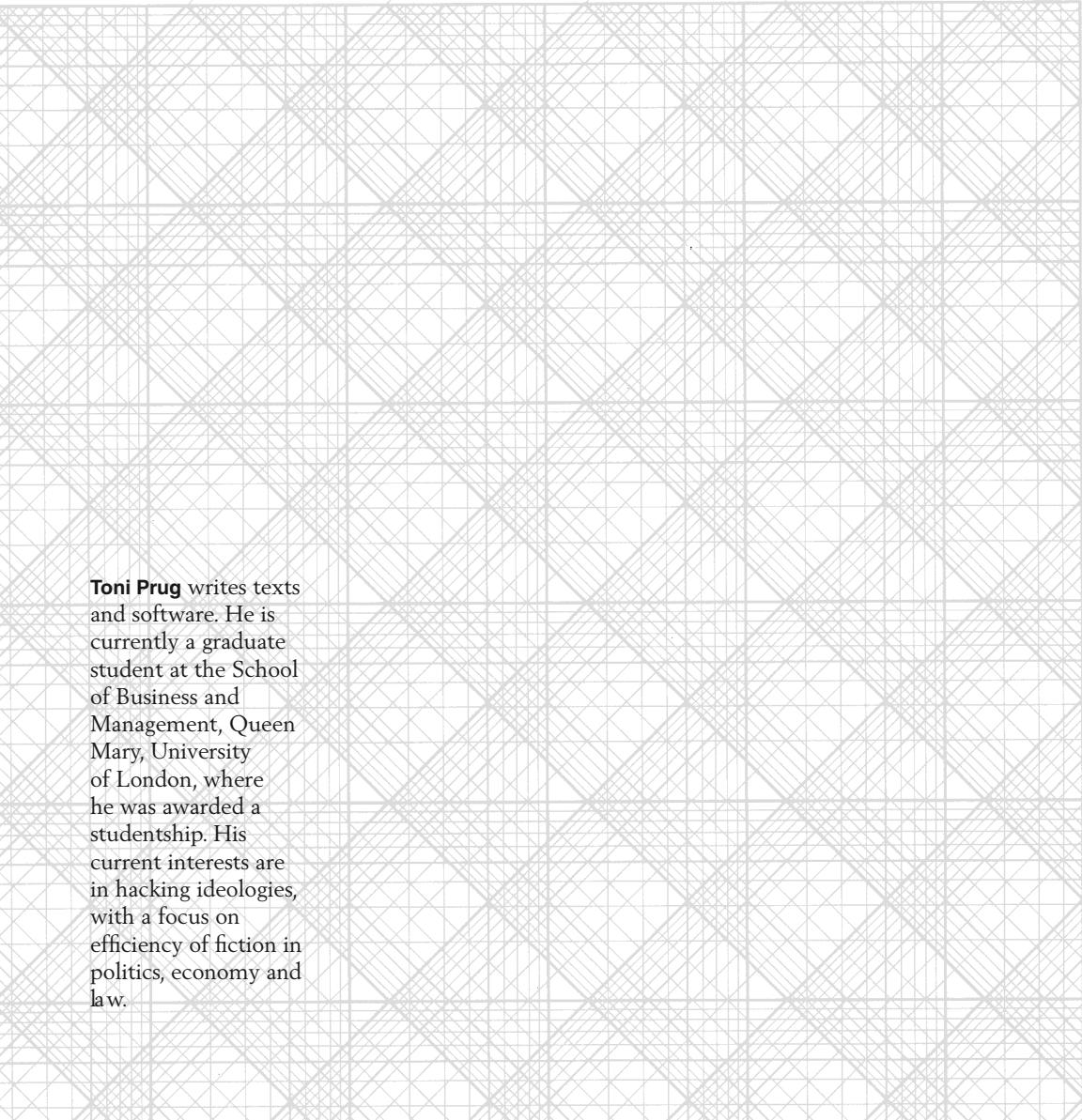
The Creative Commons Licence (CC) was critically discussed in the first Deptford.TV reader by Rota & Pozzi (2006), specifically criticising the 'Non-Commercial' clause of the CC licence. This Non-Commercial (NC) licence forbids for-profit uses of works. Despite that, it is often used by content creators who want their media to be distributed and find useful the exchange of information and critical opinions about their work. In this way, a common pool is created. For commercial use of material distributed under the NC licence, one would have to contact the original author for permission. Nevertheless, the definition of 'Non-Commercial' is, strictly speaking, very difficult. Many producers use CC licences to distribute content cheaply via the Internet in order to raise attention to their works. It is interesting that through this attitude we see more artists relying on revenues coming from higher visibility rather than sales of their work. For musicians, for example, this can be live concerts; for photographers, ad-hoc commissions. According to Rota, '*the Non-Commercial clause would only limit diffusion of their works, as well as limit the availability of freely reusable*

*work in the communal pool from which everyone can draw and contribute back' (Rota & Pozzi 2006).*

Unfortunately these uncertainties in the Creative Commons system made it corruptible. This is the reason why YouTube, MySpace, etc. are often referred to as "open" user-generated content platforms. They provide tools which merely make it seem as if there's real sharing going on, whereas in reality these sites are about driving traffic to one single site and controlling this site.

*In many ways, the GPL provides a de-militarized zone. Everyone agrees to leave the big guns at the door. Period. The non-commercial CC licence, on the other hand, is a pledge not to use the guns, if you play nice. And, to be on the sure side, being nice means to consume, but not to build upon works in a serious way. [...] essentially (and to daringly simplify) GPL comes from an ethical conflict/dilemma, while CC comes from economic/jurisdictional observation. (Princic, 2005)*

Deptford.TV uses the General Public Licence (GPL), the Free Art Licence and the Creative Commons Share-Alike attribution licence as a statement of copyleft attitude. The basic reference for the Deptford.TV project is the General Public Licence. These licences are unfortunately not entirely compatible with each other, however they carry the same attitude. Like with the discussion between free and open-source licensing schemes and the resulting labeling of FLOSS (Free / Libre / Open Source Software) I argue that alternatively the same can be done with media to represent the same attitude. Therefore one could perhaps speak of "FLOMS" (as in Free / Libre / Open Media Systems), since the discussions and differences in the open media field between GPL and CC are like the ones in the software field between free software and Open Source software. To use file-sharing as a technology and to apply the attitude of copyleft is a possible strategy for alternative media practices with the aim of creating a social contract, a legal model in which the culture of sharing becomes valuable. Therefore, concentrating on a copyleft attitude for media production might be a better way forward to bring social contracts into the data sphere and with it a new discussion around the meaning of the public sphere and the shared cultural heritage of the file-sharing generation.



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**Why Open And Not Free?  
by Toni Prug**

**Notes from a presentation held at Disclosures, 31 March 2008**

**Hacking Ideologies:** The spectre of free information is haunting capitalism, but what's in it for us?

If the Open Source movement was created to attract and include capitalists, what can be said of Free Software? Is there anything in it for those who dream of new egalitarian social orders? Sharing is great. Yet, IBM agrees. The spectre of free information is haunting capitalism, says Eben Moglen (Kumar, 2007). What if that spectre wins, capitalists fail to assert control over it, and all that can be copied digitally becomes shared? Would that assist us in any way in establishing an entirely different set of egalitarian social relations, one based on new modes of production and consumption, coordinated by a different set of political institutions and organisational forms?

*The spectre of free information is facing capitalism.  
(Moglen in Kumar, 2007).*

So: free, not open. When Richard Stallman invoked freedom as his key category, and used the legal system as his means of establishing it, he confirmed that if 'a state is a union of an aggregate of men under rightful laws,' (Kant, 2003: 45), then indeed, concrete freedom is inseparable from the state (Hegel et al., 1991).

And if a monopoly on violence and the legal system make the state and concrete freedoms possible, then these are the crucial axis along which we should analyse the freedom and openness of Free Software, Open Source and Creative Commons discourses.

So, what about the key concepts used by the discourses of the state? What does the government of the USA, where all of the discourses evoked here originated, mean by freedom? And what do Richard Stallman and Eben Moglen think when they say freedom?

The foundations of the US government's concept of freedom can be summarised in freedom of religion, speech, voting, assembling and difference of opinion (USA, 2001).

The foundations of Free Software freedoms are the freedom to: (0) use software for any reason, (1) examine how software works in order to be able to adapt it to personal needs (here, access to source code is a prerequisite), (2) redistribute copies to help one's neighbour, (3) improve the software and publish it so that the whole community benefits from it (again, access to source code is a prerequisite).

A quick comparison suggests that in the relevant USA political analogy, the community in question would consist of both religious and political participation and debate. The freedom of free software includes certain freedoms that are firstly part of the process of software use – Richard Stallman

has insisted many times that freedom of consumers to do what they want, even to join the work on improving the software, is the most important issue at stake. Still, those freedoms can be, and are, part of the process of production. And not just the production of software, but that of large portions of automated work on the planet today, including consumption, management (administrative institutions) and participation in the community (state, associations).

By contrast, freedoms such as the use, modification and creation of the work do not in any way form part of the USA's political definition of freedom.

Free Software has been accused many times of connection with the ideas of communism, and explicit statements by Eben Moglen have contributed to this. However, nowhere does Free Software include those freedoms related to the worker's labour in its totality, i.e. regarding the relationship of the work and the means of production as situated in space and time.

This is strikingly similar to Lawrence Lessig's nonexistent categories of time. In Lessig's case, a culture's degree of freedom is determined by 'how much, and how broadly, the culture is free for others to take and build upon,' (Lessig, 2004: 30). He concludes that US culture used to be freer, and that now, due to the vast increase in copyright, it is less so. What he doesn't consider is free or 'disposable' time as Marx called it, the time necessary for culture to be used or built upon (Prug, 2006).

As Free Software, Open Source and Creative Commons are all constituted through discourses that do not include space and time, and thus do not include relations of production and ownership over time and property, the subjectivity through which such discourses of freedom and commons are being constituted is that of the liberal political subject – a subject whose private property cannot be questioned or challenged. The separation between private and public is thus a constitutive separation within the liberal discourse of freedom, a separation without which Free Software/Culture and Creative Commons are not possible.

Let's not forget that in the USA the participation in battles for political power does not include common, or prescribed, space and time. The space and time used for gaining political power (campaigns, elections) are paid for by private funds, while at the same time those funds secure access to those who end up holding the political power. The autonomy of the economy, where space and time are carved and determined, is not only not hindered, but it is actively strengthened by the political. Thus, it makes sense that these discourses of freedom and commons in software and culture that lack concepts of space and time do come from the state where the separation of public and private, of social and private, are inscribed into the political philosophy and constitution of the state in extreme ways.

This is why we can characterise those discourses as a sort of magic, that creates truth by what at first seems an impossible move: the omission of the most fundamental elements of

existence, space and time.

How is it that we live in space and time, but discourses through which lived reality is constituted exclude exactly this space and time? How is such an operation possible?

Recalling Miller's explanation of Lacan, '*The truth is not exactitude, nor has it any existence apart from signs. These signs are no doubt fictions, organised into a discourse, but truth itself has fictional structure, being but the effect of discourse.*' (Miller, 1990: XXVII)

Lacan himself says 'A truth can not be separated from the effects of language,' and 'no truth can be localised, other than in the field in which it was spoken' (Lacan, 2007: 62). In other words, we're not just born through matter, which isn't enough for us; but also through language that employs and enjoys: 'We are the beings of surplus jouissances, born through being used by the language' (Lacan, 2007: 66). However, Lacan is not the only one connecting fiction, truth and discourse, as inseparable elements of what we experience as reality:

*Far from representing a dysfunction of the law's discursivity, fictions merely push the limits of the very efficacy of a discourse, in narrative or performance, firmly established in 'its' reality. Classical jurists pretend to believe that fictions constitute an underestimated or unnatural reality, and that it is possible to bypass them, without deviations and artificial constructs, in order to grasp reality as it is. But, since reality is necessarily elusive, being nothing more than the product of conventional nomination, the fiction will appear not as a deficiency but rather as the manifestation of the nature of legal discourse. (Kerchove, 1993: 160 quoted in Vermeerkunzli, 2007: 42)*

In other words, almost mirroring Lacan's thesis, the use of legal fiction confirms truth and discourse as inseparable.

OK then, but what does this tell us about the discourses we're dealing with here? A few things.

**First:** It is perfectly logical that these discourses, these fictions and truths have been formed by two lawyers, Lawrence Lessig and Eben Moglen. In the early English Parliament, every act of either Commons or Lords was a judgement, as Parliament was a court (Pollard, 1926: 24). It is essential to keep in mind that the Crown, the Parliament and the courts of law 'all descended from a single ancestor' (Pollard, 1926: 25). Even to this day business of Parliament is conducted in ways which are highly suggestive of those conducted in courts (Pollard, 1926: 58). Given the above notion of fiction being the manifestation of the nature of legal discourse, rather than the exception behind which some firm reality exists, fiction was a key element for the establishment and function of the English Parliament. For Pollard, fiction was a crucial mechanism for the development of both the early legal and government system: It served England

well enough to avoid revolutions and enable co-operation until a mature enough national consciousness had appeared (Pollard, 1926: 5).

**Second:** That which enabled the formation of the discourses under discussion here is the liberal subject who, through its monopoly on its internal, publicly unreachable, private possession of space and time, represents the axis of creativity in capitalist discourse. Why capitalist? Because it is precisely here that we can see where the surplus value is hidden, in which dark corners of discourse it is stored. Technology, instead of serving all with a vast increase in disposable time through the automation of work, enslaves us to work longer hours than primitive mankind, despite their primitive tools (Marx, 1973, p.708-9).

**Third:** The rights of the liberal subject are guaranteed by the political constitution of the state. The most important rights are to accumulate private property and capital. Hence, in extreme cases, such a subject can possess the ability to directly influence political decisions on the highest level and to exert command over natural resources and people. Since we're dealing with capitalist discourse, which makes surplus value invisible by hiding it inside the liberal subject, where does this excess volunteerism, concentrated belief and contributed work come from in free software and culture?

In other words, if the surplus value that we create in common is appropriated through the concept of the liberal subject, why do we feel so emancipated through the production or use of what we produce? Where does such popularity and idealisation of volunteer software production come from? What attracts us and leaves us permanently fascinated? What do we hope for when we participate in discourses of free software, culture and creative commons? If those discourses remove surplus value from us, why do we make them call them ours? Or, to turn to Lacan again: how do these discourses speak through us? What are the frequencies, the protocols, through which real liberal subjects speak their truth through us? What are the tropes through which the truth of capital speaks through us?

Lacan's discourse of the master may allow us to see waged labour from another angle: getting people to work is not easy; the master never does it himself. Instead: 'He gives a sign, the master signifier, and everybody jumps.' (Lacan, 2007: 203). Are we attracted by the choice of the direction of *how* something gets done, and *how* it gets used? Freedom to choose *how*? If it is just creation that exhilarates us (Richard Stallman has said many times that what attracted him to programming was the ability to check the outcome quickly<sup>1</sup>) how can we then explain the exhilaration of users? How can we explain the explosion of networked communities? Or the tens of millions of free and open software users?

1. Let us leave bugs and bug-checking aside for the moment.

Let us turn to Antonio Negri for some help. Despite all his contradictions and regardless of his refusal to follow worker struggles on the factory floor and his insistence on the need to re-conceptualise Communist subjectivity (Wright, 1996), the concept of the socialised worker could provide inspiration and possible answers.

The question we ought to be asking is: Why do we joyfully create the means of our own, even more effective, subordination to the dictates of the liberal state and capital?

Negri asserts the following:

*The ideological character of the idealistic aspect of capitalist strategies is more heavily emphasised the more pressing the need becomes to destroy the socialisation of work and the more this project becomes exclusive and attempts to constitute an antagonistic alternative.*  
(Negri, 1989: 136)

In other words, if we can translate this correctly in the context we find ourselves today, we could say that new forms of socialised work are all forms of networked communities, from capitalist business projects like Facebook and Myspace, to mailing lists, chat channels, newsgroups of free software and culture, Open Source, hacker communities, peer-to-peer communities, etc.

The greater the chance there is for us to use socialised work for our own emancipation, the greater is capitalism's need to destroy the potential of an antagonistic alternative that our socialised work possibly offer. Capitalism does this by strategy of idealisation of the same potential and new forms of socialised work. This strategy is a part of a constant revolution of both the means of material and the social re-production that Marx spoke about.

If Negri and Marx were right on this, it also follows logically that idealisations are made through Free Software, Open Source and Creative Commons movements. In that case, the paradox is that while we're changing and partly socialising certain forms of production, we're at the same time joined together in destroying the potential for emancipation and the possible increase in disposable time that could otherwise be an outcome of socialised work and machine/computer/network automated production.

Negri continues:

*To say this is to say that the establishment by capital of hierarchical values increasingly represents a deficit of reality: here the capitalist project no longer mystifies reality, but, observed closely, substitutes mystification for reality and thereby accentuates emptiness of the world. ... it is a moment of that abstraction which is opposed knowledge of reality. It is a function of command, and an articulation of absurd, but efficient signifiers. Here the production of subjectivity has become the production of*

*the inhuman. The Nazi aspect of capitalist ideology in the period of the socialised worker can not be underestimated.*  
(Negri, 1989: 136)

Here he makes a small but important mistake. There is no mystification of reality. Reality is fictitious. Following the above reading of Lacan's truth, we could say that reality is in close relation to the truth of the discourse in which it emerges (if not the truth itself). Let us make this clear:

Discourse is first. Reality, or to be more precise, what we experience as reality, becomes possible thanks to discourse. There is no real reality, all reality can be mystification, and all mystification can be reality, again, depending on the discourse in which they are spoken. This is what Negri confirms when he points out the emptiness of the world. However, the production of inhumanity suggests that there is a human that precedes humanity. But what is this previous human? I can't see it. If the world is empty, it is empty because we, his sculptures and servants, are ourselves empty too. Negri, like Lenin (Žižek, 2002: 179-180), has not abandoned concepts of reality and man – positive, fully graspable, aspects of determination. And if something is a potential on top of which we can build subjectivity and through which we will institutionalise our own control over our socialised and automated work, and hence drastically increase disposable time, that is precisely the empty subject, pure discourse through which, via fiction, the truth speaks.

In his discussion on Fukuyama's Factor X, and his notion of the Kinder egg, Žižek reveals Fukuyama's insistence on a single common entity in all humans. Factor X, as he calls it, is false (Žižek, 2003: 148-52). Instead, what we all share is an empty place, a void that enables the constitution of human subjectivity. We could risk claiming that had it not been for that void, had it not been for the absence of a positively determined being, symbolic fiction would not have been able to assert its efficiency and human beings would not have developed any further than animals did.

The Open Source movement negates the concept of this void at the centre of our subjectivity by asserting the neutrality of its actions, justified by claims of pragmatism; insisting on engineering methodology alone, and on an absence of any ethics. The clearly stated goal of their work was to attract capital. What they believe to be hidden, or what they haven't thought of at all, is that by attracting capital while insisting on the absence of ethics, the empty place, the void that we share, got filled by the ethics of capitalism. They naturalised the production of Free Software, turning it into Open Source, whose nature is capitalism. Contrary to this, the Free Software movement chose its ethics explicitly, asserting its ability to determine the subjective fiction under which it operates, and to which it submits. This assertion of ethics, a definition of life in positive terms, is an important lesson to take from Free Software.

Let's recall for a moment Žižek's discussion of freedom, from *On Belief* (2001): Here the Lacanian 'Master-Signifier' can be of some help, designating precisely this hypnotic force of the symbolic injunction that relies only on its own act of enunciation – it is here that we encounter 'symbolic efficiency' at its purest.

The three manners of legitimising the exercise of authority ('authoritarian', 'totalitarian', 'liberal') are nothing but three ways of covering up, of blinding us to the seductive power of the abyss of this empty call. In a way, liberalism is the worst of the three, because it *naturalises* the reasons for obedience into the subject's internal psychological structure. So the paradox is that 'liberal' subjects are possibly the least free: they change the very opinion/perception of themselves, accepting what was *imposed* upon them as originating in their 'nature' – they are no longer even *aware* of their subordination. (Žižek, 2001, 120)

Translated in our discussion here, Open Source is a liberal creation, unaware of its subordination, while Free Software is partially authoritarian, i.e. partially based on direct exercise of authority. Free Software attempts to force users to give back software improvements, applying its logic by entering into battles with both individuals and with large corporations, while Open Source rejects the need to take a firm stance on the ethical principles set by Free Software, and thus sets itself free from it. In other words, the reasons for obedience are naturalised, Open Source is no longer aware of its subordination, and the forces of commodity exchange and capital can reign, free from the limited political intervention that Free Software attempts to impose.

Towards the end of his essay, Negri calls for action on a task we face: 'From resistance to appropriation, from re-appropriation to self-organisation' Negri (1989: 137). The question is only: how? Our problem today lies in 'establishing autonomy of the political – not where the political is emancipated from the social, but where the political entirely and independently reassumes within itself the social' (Negri, 1989: 146).

We can say that Free Software has displaced some sort of politics into the social, with its ethical commands and insistence on them, and with its privileging of what matters for community and society as they see it, over the quality of technology.

What we witnessed since the creation of Open Source are three steps of ideological regression of the political: from the social, through the ethical commands of Free Software, through Open Source, back to the invisible soul of the liberal subject.

Here's how we could map the development of software sharing in the past few decades (all of the below models now co-exist):

**0. FORMERLY:** sharing of software as part of the discourse of science – let's say before the rise of copyright in software in 1970s.

**1. Free Software (FS):** sharing as an imperative, as an ethics, through resistance to imposition of economic concerns over the social. Communal production (socialised workers) as a norm, from the mid-1980s when the GNU project started, or from the appearance of the first version of General Public Licence.

**2. Open Source (OS):** sharing as an option, communal production as a choice, since 1998.

**3. TODAY:** Open Source intranets – sharing as an option, but in closed corporate communities, see CollabNet (CoN), since 2005.

We could represent it as a series of moves in the concepts of sharing:

### Sharing by default

```
--> Sharing as a self conscious, ethical commitment, (FS)  
--> Sharing as an option, a commitment to capital (OS)  
--> Sharing within semi-closed communities (OS Intranets/CoN)
```

Translating the same movements in political terms we get:

### Intellectual property not the crucial frontline to the ruling discourse

```
--> copyleft = self conscious, ethical, not-liberal (FS)  
| | --> liberal naturalisation, "just do it" (OS)  
| | --> further capitalist appropriation (OS/CoN)  
| --> FUTURE? copyfarleft, worker owned production  
--> FUTURE? copying for the new subject (multitude?)
```

This also maps onto the development on World Wide Web:

**BEGINNING:** The desire of scientific communities to share and be open, and the benefits can be appropriated by anyone.

**TODAY:** Corporate communities and networks, the desire of capital to morph socialised work into new communities with a partially closed format (input mostly open, output mostly closed), so that the benefits of production are private (corporate, and not social), while investments are social too (academia, public, as well as private capital).

**FUTURE:** As per the idea of the Copyfarleft licence, it is proposed to allow licenced work to be used only by worker-owned organisations, while preventing use by organisations based on wage labour exploitation. This is one way in which space and time, through the question of worker ownership of the means of production and property, could be introduced (Kleiner, 2006).

However, is the productive worker a subject through whom we can assume battles for the materially egalitarian emancipation of all? Or, do we need a new subjectivity? Has the concept of the Marxist working class been spent? Is it time, as Hardt/Negri did with the *Multitude*, to concede defeat and think the impossible?

Negri claims that in this battle for the future, 'Organisation is the basic and central element of the constitution of the subject' (Negri, 1989: 147). To achieve this, 'reappropriation of an antagonistic social nexus' is needed (Negri, 1989: 149). A necessary condition of this is that 'the productive must also be incorporated within the political' (Negri, 1989: 150). We could say that this is what Free Software attempted to do, to displace the constitutive liberal boundary of social and private, by commanding a new ethics in the realm of production, and thus by both rendering the boundary social/private visible and bringing this boundary into discourse. This is the boundary that Kleiner proposes be pushed further left.

So, production has to be inside the social, and thus inside the political. This is the line upon which emerging peer-to-peer economies will be challenged. Will they become a part of socialised work, part of the explicitly politicised sphere of economy, or will they remain in the liberal capitalist discourse where economy and politics are declaratively kept separate while operating in close symbiosis?

To put it in other words, the words of our problem of liberal subjectivity, the lines drawn by law and the constitution of the state, lines between the private and social/public, or the political and non-political, the political and production (economy), ought to be moved and redrawn first.

In the next few pages of his essay, shortcircuiting past the equality of socialised work, Negri arrives at Communism. The 'right to revolution' and a 'victory that will require the employment of new and terrible forms of violence ... We know that all this is necessary and yet we do not want it' (Negri, 1989: 152).

This regression, this short-circuit to which Negri submits his reasoning in order to finish the essay, cannot be accepted. *How*, I repeat, *how* do we move towards the praxis, from the needs that Negri speaks of prior to taking his 'shortcut'? And does this praxis have to be a revolution with new and terrible forms of violence? Maybe, but not without arguments. It is here that Negri goes against György Lukács' suggestion that we should never romanticise illegality, nor give any special respect to legality (Lukács, 1971). Law, like the state, are points of power; no more, no less. Hence, the violence on which the law and the state are formed are also in transition. To call for a new violence as Negri does, assigns existing points of violence a fixed position which they do not possess and in which they do not reside. But even if that were the case, if violence were a necessary ontology of the social (past and new), it is still irresponsible, and lacking in any context, to call for violence in the way Negri does. Have we not already seen where attempts at certain sorts

of violence have led us in the past? Red brigades anyone? Mass imprisonment of leftist political activists, including, of course, Negri himself?

What I believe constitutes a key move forward from here, what we can use to continue Negri's thought (and do so without throwing ourselves down a rough and unknown road), is the inclusion, and the reconceptualising, of space and time in all discourses – and especially into those which are constituted through the omission of these very categories. In Negri's words: '*As always, the problem of the definition of subjectivity concerns the basic issues of space, time and the metaphysical quality of substratum*' (Negri, 1989: 207).

In other words, there is no magic. Magic does not exist. Not in the liberal vision of the space/time-free immaterial world, nor in free software and culture, nor in creative commons, nor in philosophy.

Every sort of magic makes itself appear as magic by hiding the material price that it pays in order to assume its form as magic.

Dialectical materialism are analytical processes through which we seek this material price paid through the appearance of magic. In his seminar (Žižek, 2008) at Birkbeck College in London, Žižek relates a scene in the film *Prestige* (Christopher Nolan, 2006) that communicates this point brilliantly: When Christian Bale's magician does the trick of a disappearing bird by squashing the bird cage with a cloth, he pulls another bird underneath the cloth moments later, claiming that magic has happened and that the bird is still miraculously alive! A small child in the crowd refuses to believe it, and when the magician approaches him and shows him a living bird, reassuring him that nothing bad has happened, the first thing the child asks is: 'But where's his brother?' (i.e. the dead bird). In short: a child understands that there is no magic, and that whenever we think that magic has taken place, there is in fact a material price to be paid, in each act. What makes the trick seem magical is the concealment of the material price: when the magician walks away from the child, we see him throwing the dead bird from his pocket into the bin.

So, what is the dead bird of our idealisation of liberal subjectivity, the subjectivity through which the same idealisation is made possible?

I would dare say that one can locate this dead bird in the figure of a girl mentioned in Naomi Klein's *No Logo* (1999), a girl who has no computer and has no knowledge of how to operate one, but who for minimal pay assembles parts for the latest IBM laptops. It is even harder to see the dead bird in ourselves, it is hard to see what we might, but don't achieve, since the categories of space and time are given in advance by an unquestionable structure of ownership of matter and the human capability for work and creation.

That what could be in us instead of our liberal subject, and isn't, is our dead bird. Whether we want it or not, we carry this death in us. Let's call it the unfulfilled possibility of material

equality and emancipation of disposable time for all.

However, not all equalities are the same. Today, precisely in submission to capital, in predisposition that it is equally available to us, we are, paradoxically equally in a position to be exploited (Rancière, 2006, 19-21). Assuming this starting position of equality for potential exploitation, sets of rights and regulations attempt to ensure that no one is discriminated against. This is why, when Paul Gilroy says that 'Equality of opportunity is now a feature of every anodyne corporate mission statement but inequality is increasing' (Gilroy, 2002: 34), this apparent paradox is perfectly logical: the more equal we are in our availability for capital to exploit us, the more unequal we end up.

This is another example of the mighty power of discourse, whereby even a term like 'equality for all' can be used to justify, codify and institutionalise the logic of exploitation, and to reproduce vast inequalities and class divisions in society. Through a policy of equal opportunities, Britain has attempted to inscribe the availability of all for capital. No one is to be discriminated against in one's capacity to be exploited. Still, we shouldn't forget that for many, and for centuries, this position has been an unreachable point. In the past, while white men in today's older economic centres of power were labourers, blacks were slaves and women frequently unpaid or lower-paid workers. Today, while white French people are labourers, French citizens of Arab origin are isolated in suburbs, discriminated against and unable to enjoy full subjective kinship with the liberal capitalist economy. In other words, there are aspects of this liberal equality that are not to be forgotten, whose emancipatory potential is not to be simply dismissed, and whose advantages and problems, we ought to – dialectically, in a materialist way – elevate beyond the horizon of equality as defined by the capital and the state. In short, to the capitalist liberal equality of opportunity, we should say: Yes, but that's not all, that's not enough; we demand – and we take – more.

In the end – talking about openness using the language of philosophy for a moment – it becomes clear that it is precisely the choice of discourse, and the language itself within the frame of the chosen discourse, that defines the first, foundational, degree of openness. That is the prerequisite of, but not necessarily a predecessor to, the creation of truth and of the discourse through which such truth speaks.

It is precisely the openness of Lacan's discourse, his readiness to confront each of his meanings, to change them as the thought progresses, that makes his work a good candidate for thinking about a discourse of openness through which our speech of egalitarian emancipation of all can commence.

#### **What is the link between this presentation and art?**

The link is the language, the practice and most importantly, the truth of open, confrontational, unresolved, antagonistic, subjectivity:

*I-ya, I-ya  
I against I,  
Flesh of my flesh,  
And mind of my mind,  
Two of a kind but one won't survive,  
My images reflect in the enemy's eye,  
And his images reflect in mine the same time,*

*I-ya, I-ya,  
I against I,  
Flesh of my flesh,  
And mind of my mind,  
Two of a kind but one won't survive*

*(Mos Def & Massive Attack, 2002)*

**There:** I battle with myself. No need for an external enemy. Speaking through this language of the street and of art, the message is as clear as Etienne Balibar states, where every ruling ideology has to incorporate the ideas of those who oppose it. Žižek develops this further to define how ruling ideas are not the ideas of those who rule (Žižek, 1999: 184–187).

To feel free, in the liberal sense, I first have to feel my own free will. But that free will, by excluding the categories of space and time from the definition of my liberal subject, is a compromised will, part of whose choices are given to the master to whom I sell my knowledge and capacity to work. Yet, it is essential that I still feel and act as if I possess complete freedom of will, as if discourses do not speak through me, but as if I speak on my own, freely. This is an example of the concept of freedom's integration into discourse by the master whereby, by feeling free, I deprive myself of the potential to construct freedom on my own terms. For, why would I strive to be something that I am informed that I already am, i.e. free? It is this battle, the battle of the master to make me feel the way I would like to feel in the first place (in liberal discourse: free to choose, to speak, to be judged on merit), and my resistance to it, my resistance to define those desires on my own terms, that Mos Def and Massive Attack describe so vividly.

When I battle against I, what I strike against, what I hit, what I need to break, is the transparency of images of myself that master-I constructs for me to assume. The enemy is the idiot-I, the one who can't distinguish the master-I from the other. When something is transparent, we can't discern what is it made of, what is its structure or texture. Hence, this transparent sense of freedom is what needs to be broken, taken apart. In this sense, the freedoms of Free Software deceive us, by allowing liberal subjectivity to remain transparent and invisible, a smooth operator.

A key point in this battle is the following: as long as the master, structurally, through laws and the state (but first and foremost through our understanding of who we are, through our

transparently assumed free liberal subject) has at its disposal our space and time. As long as ownership of space and time remain within the category of the private, out of reach of all of us who create; any attempts by liberal subjects for the egalitarian emancipation of all are doomed to fail. This is because they are being fought on the master's terms, and as long as that is the case, all we can get is more of the freedom and openness that the master has defined for us. A definition that we transparently experience as a set of free willed options, and one through which we remain subordinate. This is the sour truth of the sweet sounding liberal discourses of freedom and openness.

Therefore, it is our task to think through why it is that categories of freedom and openness are so strongly beloved in some discourses of US and UK economies and politics. Or, why was the creation of Open Source needed in order to bring capital into the production of Free Software under its own terms? What did Free Software's discourse of freedom prevent, that Open Source enabled?

However, let's say that Open Source never happened, and that development continued under Free Software. Richard Stallman says that it is fundamental to have the freedom to communicate with other people, and freedom to create and live in communities. These freedoms are for Stallman more important than the quality of software. I agree. But let's recall what Christopher Spehr (2003) has said about the free cooperation. In capitalism, cooperation is imposed, since we have to sell our labour. According to Spehr, there are three factors to be taken into account if the cooperation is to be free:

**First:** cooperation can be questioned by anyone. There can be no sacred rules that cannot be rejected, or that cannot be negotiated.

**Second:** the rules for cooperation can be changed using the primary material force of rejection of cooperation.

**Third:** the price of rejection of cooperation has to be affordable to all. This means that no one's existence will be put in question if he/she does not cooperate.

Spehr concludes that the main question of cooperation is the question of property, because as soon as everyone is not guaranteed basic material existence, cooperation will be imposed, forced upon us. Or in the language of this text, as long as space and time are excluded from the discourses through which we understand ourselves as ourselves, through which my 'I against I' gets formulated, no aspect of free cooperation is possible.

If we supplement this with the language of Negri's politics of subversion, we can say that as long as the socialised worker doesn't socialise space and time in new ways that enable global material equality and emancipation of disposable time for all,

and until lines of separation of private and common are not radically displaced from their current state and capital-defined positions, nothing will happen to our desire for free cooperation.

Until then, with the current distribution of space and time, our cooperation will remain largely forced, capitalist.

The freedom and community that Richard Stallman talks about can be thought only when, and if, we interweave categories of space and time into Free Software. Especially that of disposable time, the time that remains after the selling of labour and basic life administration. The same goes for shelter, living space for which we typically pay all of our working lives. This is necessary space whose price forces us to accept an imposed form of cooperation, without allowing significant negotiation or objection.

Finally, let's remember that Lacan was kicked out of the association of psychoanalysts through an excruciating process that lasted for years. Speaking of it at the time, he insisted that the idea of there being a practice outside of such institutions as freedom and emancipation is impossible. There is no innocent community functioning 'outside', free from structure and norms. The institution can never be just a totality in which all the battles are predetermined and already scripted. The unconscious cannot be privatised (Copjec, 1990: 50-52).

And before we conclude, back to our starting question...

#### **...so: open or free?**

What philosophy has taught us, especially in the era that started with Kant, is that, in their current form, such questions are at best irrelevant and are at worst ideological normalisations placing our dominant liberal subjectivity at the centre of the discussed concepts. Following a Žižekian-Lacanian theoretical model, if the subject and subjectivity are by default empty, if the structure of reality is fictitious, and as such it appears through discourses and truths that emerge within them, how can we then avoid the pure relativism of subjects confined to their own stories, their own realities?

First of all, let's accept that there are dominant discourses. The degree of dominance varies. The problem with our dominant liberal capitalist discourse today is precisely that its dominance is transparent and omnipresent to the extent that we don't see it any more – it magically appears everywhere, with no need for it ever to be made explicit. Since an axiomatic discourse can be an effective way out of this, we could read Richard Stallman as a follower of Kant. Stallman posed his software freedoms as axioms, while Kant posed freedom in general as the only idea whose objective reality can be proven:

*One cannot provide nor prove objective reality for any idea but for the idea of freedom; and this is the case because freedom is the condition of the moral law, whose reality is an axiom. (Kant, 1988: 98)*

In other words, if all other ideas are debatable and open to subjective judgments, freedom posed as axiom can be objectively assessed.

This is why it is important that Free Software set its own freedoms as axioms. Even though new forms of distribution of space and time (that would enable us to advance towards a global material equality and emancipation of disposable time for all) are still not present in them. To render visible liberal capitalist discourse and disturb its transparency is an achievement in itself. The very existence of Open Source exposes and makes more visible the gap between liberal capitalist discourse and Free Software.

Back to our Hegelian terms, where ‘the state is the actuality of concrete freedom’ and where the strength of the modern state is in the possibility that subjectivity can progress to extremes while being integrated into a unity with the state (Hegel et al., 1991: 260). We can read Stallman’s work along those lines: his subjective reaction to the introduction of a copyright regime was taken to extremes by the success of the Free Software movement and was integrated into the state through the invention of the General Public Licence and its successful incorporation into the legal system.

Since it is the discourses through which we speak, or which speak through us, that determine the actual meaning of any concept of openness, or freedom; what does matter, and what we should be asking and investigating, is whether or not there is anything in those discourses of openness and freedom of technology and culture that could be a contribution towards materially egalitarian emancipation for all? Or, are there obstacles in those concepts that hinder such emancipation from being developed?

If ‘the most developed machinery forces worker to work longer than the savage does, or than he himself did with the simplest, crudest tools,’ and if ‘the measure of wealth is the not any longer, in any way, labour time, but rather disposable time’ (Marx, 1973: 708–709), should we not ask ourselves over and over: how is it that the automation brought by machines does not contribute to the reduction in the time we spend under the command of wage labour, and how is it that our disposable time hasn’t increased drastically?

Given that commodities are designed to break, fall apart and be replaced regularly, the words from the Family Guy cartoon ring true: *‘You don’t own your possessions, your possessions own you.’*

In this discourse that deprives us of disposable time, in the exploding abundance of things, without any positively determined alternatives to it, we cease to be subjects, but become mere means by which the cycle of things is sustained.

What could disturb that cycle could be production based on quality, the extension of the longevity-use-value of commodities. That could translate into reducing the necessity of selling our labour, since commodities wouldn’t last a year, or two, but five,

ten or more. On the level of society, it would mean that we would need to produce a lot less, which also means a reduction in the energy needs required to sustain life. But for some reason, no political force – including anti-capitalist movements – dares to make such arguments. The old Left wants work for all under whatever they consider good conditions; precariats (Ueno, 2007) want not to be precariats but proper full-time permanent employees, while unions would like to administrate the smooth running of the wage labour monster machine for all. Looking at the core Free Software projects, is not the insistence on quality the best solution, and the tough debates through which solutions are discussed, a step towards this longevity of a product?

Or is this only possible because most Free Software is also free of charge, and thus there is no reason for it to break in order to force us to update. On the contrary, updates, new versions of software, security patches, are all sent to us almost daily through Free Software. What still makes Free Software special, however, is its appearance of a magical break with the logic of commodity circulation which deprives us of time.

After all, how do we account for this break? Do we conclude that Free Software re-shaped software out of the form of commodity? Or, given that labour is still necessary for software to be written, is it rather a new form of commodity? But most importantly of all, does it really make a difference to the fundamental material relations that guide our lives?

Why not ask simple, naïve questions like these: do new communication and computation technologies such as Free Software, Open Source and Creative Commons contribute to the availability of fundamental desires often expressed by their sympathisers: disposable time, better working conditions, easier access to shelter, more affordable education and health care, redistribution of wealth, participation through new forms of self-governance, global solidarity, the displacement of control over world resources from the hands of the current few power centres?

And if the answer is no, then we have to ask the following: what is it in the discourses of new technologies that fails us? That, regardless of its, and our, contribution to the improved and highly automated material production and administration of life, fails to benefit us in the shape of easier access to good quality food, shelter, and hence less forced waged labour and more disposable time – the time in which we would stand a chance of actually enjoying the benefits of wide availability of software and digitally shared culture?

In other words, is not the core question of our time, as exposed by the so appealing, yet so disappointing Free Software, Open Source and Creative Commons discourses, the following: as liberal subjects, are we, as Žižek suggests, unaware of our submission, and the least free of all?

When Steve Wright used Tronti's words to warn Negri of the danger of being caught in his own self-referential discourse, he

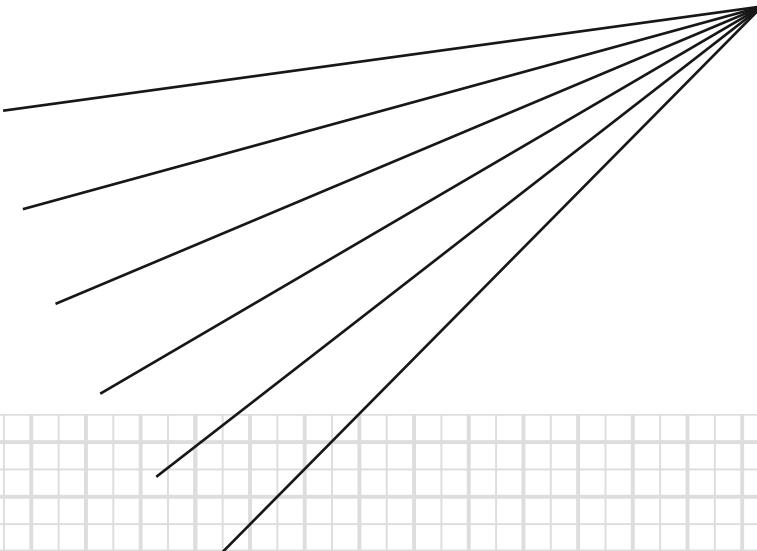
said the following: '*A discourse which grows upon itself carries the mortal danger of verifying itself always and only through the successive passages of its own formal logic*' (Wright, 1996).

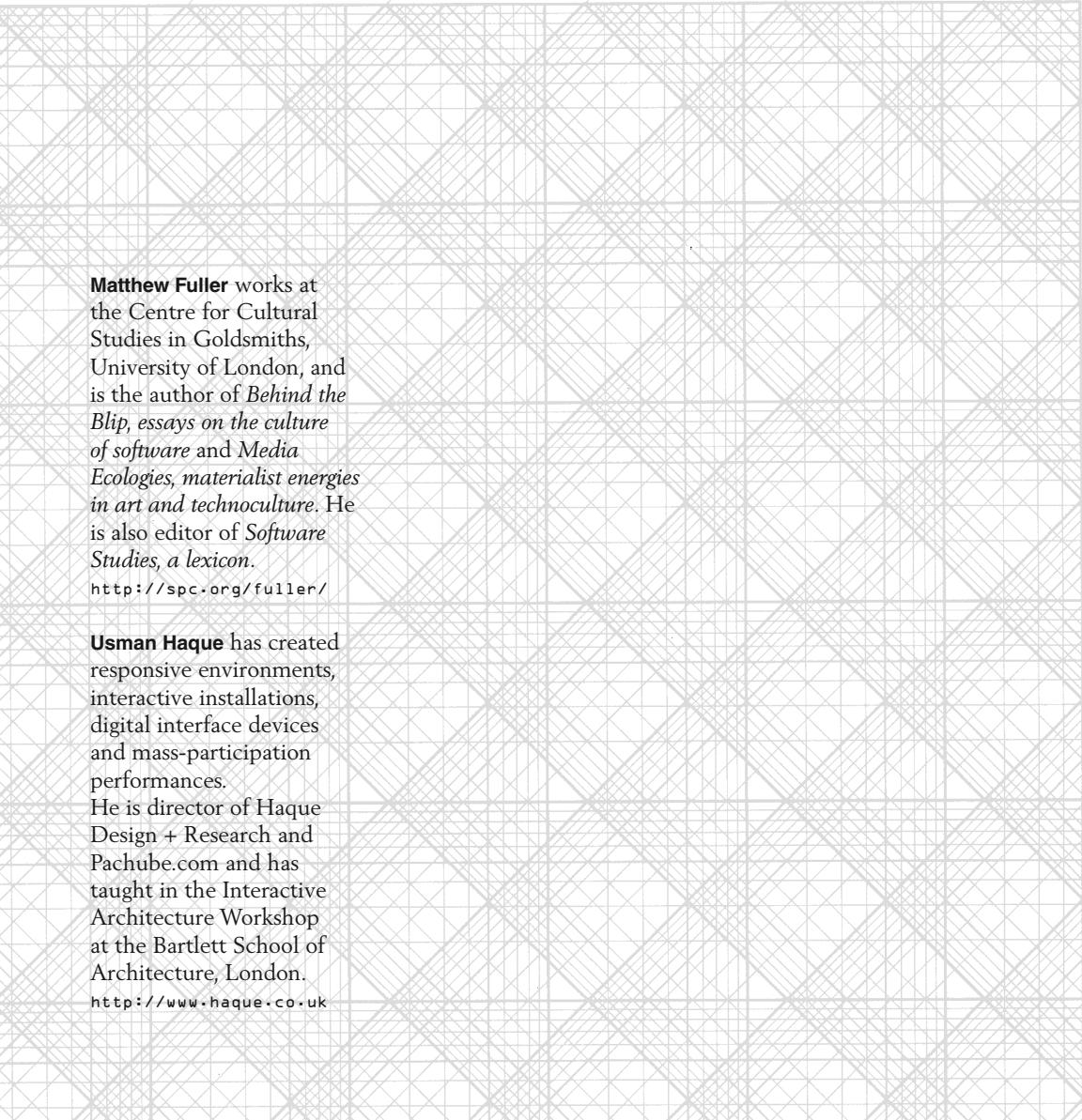
This is precisely what happens with Open Source, Creative Commons and to large extent with Free Software too: they end up being verified by the formal logic of their own invisible, liberal capitalist, discourses. The introduction of antagonisms – that are currently patched up, hidden away, through idealisations performed by these discourses – that is the task of a communist, materialist critical thought. The initial battle that awaits is the battle with our Master-I. But let's have no illusions, for the Idiot-I never goes away; it merely changes the master alongside whom it operates.

The question is, however, are we capable of overcoming the master that makes our experience of being free willed subjects appear so transparently real? And how do we break with an appearance so appealing, yet so fundamental for the mechanisms through which we accept submission with so little resistance?



#### 4. FURTHER VIEWS ON NODE.LONDON





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### **Preamble**

The production of structures to articulate, produce and protect space, often coded under the disciplinary term “architecture” is arguably one of humanity’s oldest activities. Countless technologies and legal frameworks have grown along with this process. Formerly one of the most collaborative endeavours, architecture now often functions in opposition to such collaboration.

Matthew Fuller and Usman Haque, a writer and architect respectively, propose that a lesson can be learned for architecture from the way in which software is made. Here, they concentrate on the current most significant mode of software development, Free/Libre and Open Source Software (FLOSS). The rigorous set of approaches to software development in FLOSS, formulated as a set of freedoms, are here suggested as a point of inspiration. The Free Software Definition<sup>1</sup> states that free software contains the following freedoms articulated as an ethical rule-set. Since they are a set of contractual terms, they are set out as such:

- The freedom to run the programme, for any purpose (freedom 0).
- The freedom to study how the programme works and adapt it to your needs (freedom 1). Access to the source code is a precondition for this.
- The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbour (freedom 2).
- The freedom to improve the programme and release your improvements to the public so that the whole community benefits (freedom 3). Access to the source code is a precondition for this.

A number of attempts have been made to transfer such principles to the making of objects. Often this has been done on the basis of plans, recipes, diagrams and other such “genotypic” information. The key question here is how such strategies apply or can be modified to apply to the production of architecture.

In architecture there is no substance that is concurrently both “editable source code” (genotype) and “usable artefact” (phenotype). Though some have usefully argued that architectural drawings can be considered “source” and therefore it is the design process that must be opened up (Kaspori 2003)<sup>2</sup>,

1. Free Software Foundation, The Free Software Definition, online at <http://www.fsf.org/licensing/essays/free-sw.html>. For useful reflections on Free Software, see Kelly (2008).

2. See also The Open Architecture Network (<http://www.openarchitecturenetwork.org/>). Kaspori, often in collaboration with artist Jeanne van Heeswijk has developed some very significant moves towards a participatory architectural and planning practice, for instance in the *Face Your World* project (2005-2007) which involved hundreds of people over several months in the redesign of a park in the Slotervaart suburb of Amsterdam (<http://www.faceyourworld.nl/>). An early text which develops the political reading of architecture and Open Source software in a useful way is Carroll (2000).

one of the most interesting aspects of Open Source software is the continuous interleaving of production, implementation, usage and repurposing processes, all of which can and sometimes must be open – not just an “open design” that then gets implemented in a closed manner. Such an approach changes the place of aesthetics in architecture to one not of form, but of organisation.

We propose a licence for the Open Source design and construction of cities. The *Urban Versioning System* (UVS) quasi-licence is not yet such a licence. At the moment the document is more a dogma or set of constraints. It's an oath, a quasi-licence, something to chew on. It does not base itself on the genotype/phenotype split, though the distinction can be made: we want to see what happens if we work otherwise.

The *Urban Versioning System* quasi-licence proposes the following seven initial constraints:

### **1. Build rather than design**

We propose a new model for the production of cities where design and planning are abandoned in favour of beginning immediately with building and construction. This new ‘adhocism’ (Jencks & Silver, 1973) requires us to disregard any temptation to sketch, plan, model and above all to discard any desire to “brainstorm”. All these activities can be performed on the actual materials we wish to build with, while the thought-processes directly engage with or become the lived-in artefact, articulated at a 1:1 scale.

Constructing right from the start erodes distinctions between design, modelling, construction and inhabitation. To design and build concurrently requires simultaneous tenancy. The building is the model. It enables us to produce real spatial situations we otherwise only imagine, and makes it possible for interested people to enter into, critique and add to what we are being realised in the world. We can discuss with materials – not *representations of materials* – and negotiate around connection points and the means of connection, rather than proffering a completed structure as a whole.

The problem is that architectural design can often simply be a process of predicting problems, removing obstacles and resolving all possible contradictions: the best situation, from the perspective of such an architect, is to have project documentation that is so complete that every aspect of the construction (and occupancy) has been articulated and specified so that the eventual building construction contractor does not need to make on-site decisions and simply has to follow orders to the letter. This process often leaves no room for future adaptation.

Building continuously rather than designing makes it clear that buildings are dynamic, responsive and variable and would

encourage the development of robust technological frameworks that unite design, construction and occupancy.<sup>3</sup>

## **2. Materials must come pre-broken**

A seamless package is frustratingly daunting when it comes to enabling others to participate in the design and development of an artefact. However, a broken system is usually one that attracts the most attention, in part because it appeals to others' desire to "repair" and also because breaks can enable one to understand better how something should or *could* work.

With respect to opening up the urban design/construction process, and encouraging the reuse and repurposing of architectural artefacts, it is important to ensure that such structures and systems are released in a pre-broken condition. This might take one of several forms.

Materials that readily decompose can be said to be ecologically pre-broken. Those which rapidly decompose to a basic elemental or organic state, such as ice, iron, wood and silica rather than complex materials involving a high amount of adulteration are particularly interesting. Building with such materials requires constant innovation, replenishment and reconstruction and emphasises the ephemerality of architectural constructs, helping to counteract the usual architectural obsession with permanence.

Materials that are readily repairable, interrogable or hackable can be said to be pre-broken in terms of their use. Broken structures are not meant to last, they encourage reuse and repurposing and enable people to participate at a number of levels, depending on skills, desire and ambition. Failing this, power tools, hairpins and nail files prove useful in opening things up.

## **3. Make joints**

We understand joints not only to be the things that hold things together, but also as the means by which an object connects to its outside and allows it to dream. We are interested in joints which function as forcing points of abstraction.

The joint is a point, conceptual as much as material, at which powers are mediated and confronted, the part that conjoins, spreads and transforms tensions. To continue our parallel with computing, interfaces, protocols, interpreters, compilers and screens are kinds of joints. Joints are entry points for supporting, contrasting or even opposing systems. Concentrating on the production of joints presupposes future amalgamation or integration with things, events and systems that are yet to occur.

A threshold is not a joint, a joint draws thresholds towards

3. Extended Environments Markup Language, (<http://www.eeml.org/>) by one of the authors, is one attempt to extend Industry Foundation Classes (an established construction industry format) by describing the dynamic behaviour of sensors and actuators.

it. As such the joint is the structure's defence against entropy, against simply becoming a pile. In doing so it allows the structure to conjugate both symmetry and asymmetry. Asymmetry of materials and of forces, and where wanted or found, symmetry of structure.

All entities under the UVS quasi-licence must have more than one open joint available at any time. Opening but a single joint at any time will simply result in 'chain' structures. Two, three or more, result in a workable range of degrees of freedom.

#### **4. Rubbish is the root of virtuosity**

The more granularity an instrument offers, the more it establishes the capability of proficient, as distinct from perfunctory, performance. Moreover, from there, granularity is the means by which the instrument establishes a trajectory of possibility to infinite levels of brilliance. In this generosity, it also sets up an abundant capacity for incompetent performance. Equally, in releasing any construction to open development, it must be appreciated that design preciousness can result in aggravation and disappointment: the entity that you have nurtured since birth will be manipulated, botched and improved by others in ways that, if you retain sensations of ownership, might be difficult to bear.

People will, collaboratively, take a design in directions you could never have imagined, sometimes in ways that you think are utterly wrong. In order for the constraints associated with ownership not to impose such heartbreak, objects made under the UVS quasi-licence are constrained to preserve a clear pathway that participants in builds can take. As in old guilds or current games, they would pass various levels from beginner/introductory/informal participation all the way to advanced/sophisticated/virtuoso participation. Free software projects often have a clear hierarchy of involvement and ways of making a contribution that require different levels of skills, from the relative beginner to the high-level expert. Modularity in this sense means arranging the development of a project in a way that allows productive involvement from large to small scales, from brief to long-term periods, and that, in terms of expertise, encourages participation ranging from beginner to high levels of sophistication.<sup>4</sup>

There is a meaningful granularity of participation that drives the most successful FLOSS projects. Whilst such qualities allow for multiple kinds of productive involvement, what is often missed in accounts of these structures is that in allowing for finely granular participation and incrementally difficult problem-setting, these projects also act as large scale learning environments. This would be quite a good definition for a city.

4. This is the argument that is put forth in various ways the in following texts and elsewhere: Benkler, 2007; Brabham, 2008; Howe, 2006; Lovink & Spehr, 2007; Spehr, 2007.

## **5. Collaborate with collaborators**

One way in which the question of objects and code is often articulated is that code allows for non-rivalrous use. A piece of software can be copied as many times as wanted without any loss of quality and without denying anyone else the ability to make such a copy. This is seen as being a key difference between the world of bits and that of atoms. Yet rivalry can find itself played out at many distinct scales.

An interesting consequence of the kinds of collaboration developed in FLOSS has been that enemies find themselves working on the same project. Companies who are in at least nominal rivalry with each other may build their businesses around shared code or use the sharing and development of such code as a way of developing an alternative platform to proprietary software in order to gain market share.

More notably, those in conflict in other ways may find themselves working together. Anarchists might find themselves contributing to a code-base also worked on by the United States military.

Such paradoxes are replayed in terms of construction in the interplay between the static and the changeable, between the learning built into interrogable technologies and the things that are taken for granted in designed ease of use. Builds using the UVS quasi-licence will shelter and defend this paradox of collaboration, and will be as nurtured as they are confounded by it.

## **6. Copying or not copying is irrelevant**

The UVS quasi-licence recognises that the world is constructed by its inhabitants at every moment of conception, inception and perception. When we talk about the public domain, we understand that the public is not some pre-existing fact. Publics must be made, indeed publics make themselves, and in so doing publics make domains that they refer to and through which they are mutually constitutive. The spatial technologies of such publics interweave fluctuating participation and capacities for organisational coherence.

The do-it-yourself (DIY) approach has been popularised recently by television shows which chart the progress of projects undertaken by homeowners or show how design professionals can advise people in upgrading existing homes themselves.

Rather than shying away from the conceptual difficulties offered by a system in which “anyone” can be a designer; where “copies” are as flawless as an “original”; where preciousness is not a desirable attribute; architects could embrace these concerns and seek ways to narrow the divide between the “designer” and the “designed-for”. Embrace the culture of the knock-off and of improvement.

The architect in this situation is therefore many things, not simply locatable in a single professional. The architect becomes a diagramming force, both rule and rule generator determining the

axioms that run through the process. Rather than being locked into gatekeeping, this figure unleashes processes, encourages the flow of possibilities and modalities, works in a specific fashion on particular problems with certain sets of knowledge, learns and is often taken by surprise through the process.

### **7. Property must be invented**

What we contemporarily understand as property is only what has been settled as such. Arguments that property takes on any particular natural form are unhelpful. Its visible artificiality is what makes it useful. What we encourage is an understanding of property as plastic, as historically contingent, and something to be experimented with or left as redundant. This means that there is no blueprint, provided by FLOSS or anything else, to follow religiously. It is a given that property is theft.

What we propose here is that the vocabulary of property generated by capitalism, especially in its neoliberal variants, is too rigid to allow for invention. In its application it has also proven itself to be incapable of allowing for a sustainable, let alone fully ecological, relationship between the societies it organises and the life systems of the planet. In its application to the context of digital abundance, it has failed on its own terms, let alone those of the development of a viable and delightful digital culture. FLOSS has shown, in the domain of software, a way in which systems of property may be manipulated in order to set out a more pragmatic, useful and productive mode of operation.

All UVS builds must open the category of property up to their own speculative reinvention. These are not predetermined. Only a mode of construction that is capable of losing the plot is adequate.

### **Legible Notice Requirement**

In order to comply with this quasi-licence, the following statement must be legible on the construction: '*This build is licenced under the Urban Versioning System v.1.0*'

### **Note on the Super-Mini-Special Version**

This text is redacted from the *Urban Versioning System 1.0* quasi-licence. The full version was published by the Architectural League of New York as part of the *Situated Technologies Pamphlet Series* edited by Omar Khan, Trebor Scholz and Mark Shepard.

<http://www.situatedtechnologies.net/>

Further information on the *Urban Versioning System* can be found at: <http://uvs.propositions.org.uk/>

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The Next Layer is a collaborative research environment. If you would like to join please email armin [at] easynet [dot] co (dot) uk

Creative Cities - das Versprechen der kreativen Ökonomie: Einführung

Armin Medosch

Die Konferenz Creative Cities - das Versprechen der kreativen Ökonomie", wird am 31.03.2009 in Wien stattfinden. Vorbereitend werden in einer kleinen Serie von Artikeln hier die wichtigsten Positionen und Themen vorgestellt. Folge eins dieser Artikel erklärt einige der Hinter- und Beweggründe für die Konferenz.

.. Armin Medosch's blog | Visit Creative Cities Konferenz-Information | Read more

Interviewing The Crisis - Art Is Open Source interviews Marc Garrett.

Marc Garrett from Furtherfield.org interviewed by Art Is Open Source.

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## 1. The Next Layer

<http://www.thenextlayer.org/>

Academic or scholarly practice has always been a group as well as a singular activity. Discussion, dialogue, seminars, colloquium, meetings with one or more peers or supervisors, all shape the experience of the PhD research student. A collaborative culture underpins knowledge generation and the academic disciplines in general. thenextlayer.org has therefore been founded to create a platform to aid a more collaborative way of conducting research. Thus by a number of researchers documenting and annotating their research processes, gives rise to exciting prospects of information sharing, where overlapping interests can 'find' each other and benefit from the work of others without constituting theft, lack of ingenuity or even plagiarism, but simply by laterally noticing somebody else's 'stream' of research.

A content management system (CMS) is a programme used to create a framework for the content of a website. Based on the CMS Drupal with various modules (sections) contributed by others, the CMS allows the easy creation, maintenance and handling of a new type of multimedia research journal that can include text, images, audio, video, RSS feeds bibliographic references, bookmarks and taxonomies (key descriptions) used

to annotate all those media. As Drupal allows the combination of content types, it can best be imagined as many-to-many relationships between different items that become ‘nodes’ in a database on which ‘views’ can be created aided by the existence of the taxonomical system. A combination of processes such as collaborative filtering and techniques known from social software sites, promise benefits for the individual as well as knowledge production in general. These benefits I call ‘lateral benefits’ as they are based on ‘weak’ types of collaboration. In short, the site is in the early stages of becoming a giant catalogue of files which have been put together by individual contributors. Each file is linked to a user and annotated or ‘tagged’ by various key words.

**Lindsay Brown writes about The Next Layer:**

For me, one major theme seemed to reoccur again and again, and this was one of ownership and dissemination of knowledge. From the individual researchers data collection, to projects such as Cel Crabeel’s thesis proposal that incorporated seven other participants within a theme of Documentary, the notion of who owns what and how we are all individually working around/within this, is fascinating. What came to light, was that there are no set hard and fast rules within the University system. Each institution having their own ideas over what constitutes ownership, and how much freedom that they are willing to offer the individual student with the manner in which they store, disseminate and publish their data, theories and theses.

In going back to the original introductory text of the day then, my questions now are:

**Coalitions:** How do we embed a collaborative Open Source culture into institutions that utilise a business ethos?

**Technologies:** How far can we make use of tools and technologies that incorporate multiple contributors, within an institutionalised system that holds copyright over individual work?

**Solutions:** What mechanisms, subversions and methodologies will allow us to work around and within an institution that recognises the sole author as one of its main output statistics?

My end thoughts are that...

1. I hope that someone responds
2. Working within groups is the way forward
3. Let’s not become institutionalised and loose sight of a potential new way of looking at or thinking about a problem.



Photo from the 2007 OpenKnowledge Conference, Limehouse Town Hall

## 2. OKCON 2008: Applications, Tools and Services <http://okfn.org/events>

The annual *Open Knowledge Conference*, OKCON 2008, took place on 15th March 2008. Open knowledge is material that others are free to access, reuse or re-distribute – and may be anything from ‘sonnets to statistics, genes to geodata’.

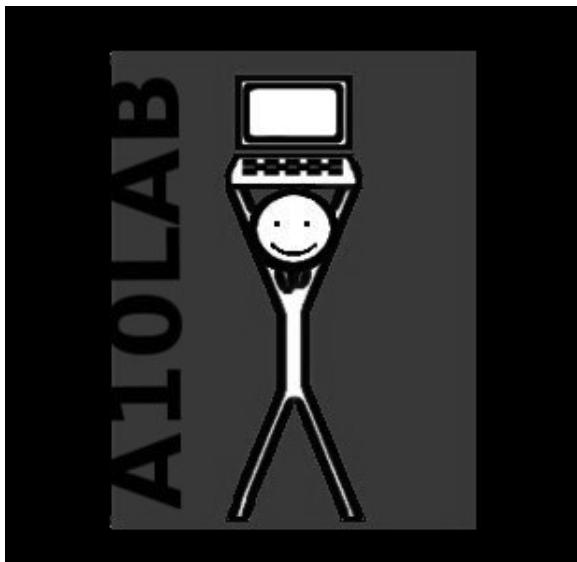
The conference brought together individuals and groups from across the open knowledge spectrum for a day of seminars and workshops around the theme of ‘Applications, Tools and Services’. Three main sessions focused on ‘Transport and Environment’, ‘Visualisation and Analysis’ and ‘Education and Academia’, followed by an ‘open space’ for demos, talks and breakouts. There was a rich mix of projects represented – from AMEE – an open carbon calculator platform, to DBpedia – a semantic version of Wikipedia which allows it to be queried like a database.

The day saw the launch of the Public Domain Dedication Licence (PDDL), a legal tool for opening data which takes account of rights in data, particularly the EU Database Directive. This is a crucial step towards the growth of an ecology where datasets can be freely shared, integrated, represented and built upon – whether for scientific research, or for compelling new web applications.

It also featured discussions about openness in web-based services – from social networking sites to online spreadsheet packages. Since OKCON 2008, the Open Software Service Definition (OSSD) has had its first full release, and we’ve witnessed the launch of compliant services – such as Identi.ca, a fully open micro-blogging service.

### 3. ()re|boot; by the a10lab team

<http://www.a10lab.info>



As part of Area10 the new medialab platform has been introduced to facilitate the development of research and art practices using new technology in the media arts. A10lab aims to establish a strong community of users both locally and internationally. A10 is able to provide support, space and skills in which digital media projects, workshops and/or research can be realised for either individual practitioners, media groups or local colleges and universities. The lab has already established connections with other medialabs worldwide, including France (Apo33, Crealab, Labomedia, Sonic, PurePresence.), Norway (Piksel), Ireland (Tweak), Spain (Medialab Prado Madrid), Peru (Aloardi) which helps to reinforce the global community of practitioners and focus on the exchange of research, art work, as well as virtual and physical space.

A10lab provides a space that encourages cross-disciplinary collaborations between various arts and science based practices, and facilitates open and critical discussion in view of knowledge sharing and skills transfer.

A10lab was launched with its first event ()Reboot; which comprised of a two day event presenting artworks, performances and presentations from artists, collectives and hackers working within New Media and Digital Art. A10lab is a place of experimentation with the opportunity for practitioners to work and challenge their practice within a unique warehouse space with site-specific approaches that deal with Area10's raw urbanscape through its contrary digital realm, this can create new conditions for digital art, mixing realities amongst this

massive space and its angular organisation of exhibitions. We invited more than 30 artists from across Europe to challenge their work within Area10 Project Space, Peckham, a vast and derelict warehouse, creating works from light interactive projections to audio/visual art installation. Over 15 audio/visual artists used the stage set up in the Saw Mill to create a night long programme of performances and concerts. Orelboot; saw over 350 people pass through Area10 during those two frosty days in April and is now the main A10lab festival. The future for Orelboot; will see an annual event showcasing local and international projects of medialab collaborations and works created within A10lab or relative to its research.

The “medialab” is a space for experimentation and exchange, not only in terms of content but also within the creation of the framework itself, it is a space of crossover and networked art, social and political invention and connectivity virtual and real. In the context of this crisis of late capitalism, where the rise of the individual is valued and promoted above all else, such a space holds a critical proposition – acting against the monolithic way of building human beings and our future society. We could see the practice of lab creation in the sense that the medialab is a fragile and non-static piece of social and political art, an art of deconstructing and reconstructing traditional territories as well as challenging our usual habits of living and/or working together.

#### **4. The Brentford Biopsy by Christian Nold**

<http://www.publicbiopsy.net/>

The Brentford Biopsy Map is the result of a 12 week local residency by the artist Christian Nold with the designer Daniela Boraschi. Initiated by Watermans Arts Centre and the curator Ilze Black, the project consisted of a number of participatory workshops and drop in sessions. During the workshops the gallery acted as a live design and mapping studio for working with local people to gather, edit and visualise all the information that was used to create this map. We would like to say a very big thank you to everybody who participated and gave their time and energy towards this project.

Instead of taking tissue samples as one would from a human being, this project uses cultural probes to investigate the local social body and its unique ailments. Like eastern medicine, this project takes a holistic view of the body to look at the interconnections between problems to get a sense of the whole.

##### **What is this?**

In some sense, this object in front of you is a public mirror onto Brentford and the people who live there. It was created purely from the data, information and conversations about the area which were collected by roughly 200 local people. You



will notice that the texts on this map are those of multiple voices often disagreeing with each other or speaking from different points of view, but always trying to make sense of their environment. Unlike a mirror which cleanly bounces light in order to reflect, the process of reflecting opinions and ideas is never simple or clean. This project is an art piece which brings a particular set of instruments and methods for exploring and visualising Brentford.

While some of the instruments used to create this map, such as the clipboard seem familiar to us, others like Emotion Mapping or Sensory Mapping are exotic. More important than the unusual instruments or visualisations is the fact that this project does not hold a particular local agenda. It does not filter the collected information in order to persuade people to implement or build something. In fact, its central aim is to hold up the complex network of local issues for all to see and reflect upon and not to attempt to untangle or resolve them.

This will no-doubt frustrate those people looking to this object for easily implemented-able action points. In fact, the best metaphor for this object is actually as a foreign language newspaper dedicated to reporting on Brentford. When looking at the newspaper we recognise a lot of words such as local landmarks and we can understand the photos and illustrations, yet there is a lot we are missing. We feel a sense of frustration at not being able to understand everything. Yet if we make the effort to grasp the logic behind it, we get amazing insights into Brentford.

People might question why we are not use a “normal” language for this map. Well, we, the artists, argue that as a public,

we actually have very few shared references or languages for how to talk about our social spaces. The language of mainstream consultations offers only the impersonal language of officialdom and tick-boxes which reproduces the tired assumptions of those creating the questionnaires. What we need is a communal process of translating complicated objects like this map in front of you, in order to create an active process of disagreement and participation. Even by publicly disagreeing with each other we create social positions and relationships that generate a public sphere. Rather than asking for, or offering action points for local change we ought to accept the difficult process of dealing with differences and making our own translations.

### **Who is this map for?**

This map is for anyone who cares about Brentford or who really ought to care about it. The hope is that all the Brentford stake-holders such as local people, interest groups, developers and the council will use this map to revitalise their discussions. In particular, we insist on the role of people's sensory and emotional experiences as an essential part of all political discussions. How each one of us 'feels' about each other and our environment is the foundation stone upon which any democratic decision-making has to be based.

To do this, we first have to enable people to focus more strongly on their own experiences, reflect and question them and then to articulate and share them through a political process where their personal experiences are valued and not disregarded. The challenge that this map presents to all the local stake-holders is how to use this document productively and include it within the process of politics. It is this complexity and difficulty of how to situate the content of this map that should also give it a value and meaning to a wider audience who are interested in new ways to represent local and intra-local issues or ways to instigate local public spheres.

### **How to read this map**

The map has been structured into four interrelated sections that suggest a left to right narrative from the past towards the future, as well as a progression from the static and solid towards the fluid and malleable. Each section contains its own mini summary of the issues and discussions that emerged from that section. In addition to the sections, the map is divided into smaller graphical elements that visualise the results of the different participatory activities with local people.

Each of these activities becomes a lens for looking at Brentford from a different angle.

#### **Emotion Mapping**

The map starts with Emotion Mapping which indicates points of communal high arousal recorded by workshop participants exploring Brentford with the Bio Mapping device, designed by the artist Christian Nold. The map shows high physiological

arousal as red stars. Arousal is not positive or negative but an indicator of high bodily and mental attention.

This first geographical map is the conceptual focal point of the project, bringing together people's bodily experience with reflection and discussions about place. In addition, the map contains a large variety of people's comments and annotations in relation to their experience of walking and living in Brentford.

### **Sensory Mapping**

This activity involved people walking a small area close to the project base whilst blind-folded and deafened. One person lead another, who recorded their sensory experiences in textual form in relation to particular locations. On their return, they entered these observations into a computer.

### **Adjective Clouds**

The clusters of blue to black words are adjectives that project participants used to describe Brentford. The size and colour of words indicates their frequency of use. The adjectives have then been collected together into clusters of similar words. For example in the Built Environment section we see the tension between words talking about the history and past of Brentford versus change and development in the area.

### **Issue Networks**

The rounded square shapes with interconnecting lines represent Issue Networks of ideas that the workshop participants connected together and later edited and reconnected. In the third section for example we can see how the issue of building flats, young people and community are interconnected.

### **Drawing Provocations**

This is a series of drawing sheets with challenging questions such as: '*You have unlimited amount of money, power and freedom to change Brentford. Draw what you would do to this place.*' The drawings made by the participants were then digitalised and composited with the Adjective Clouds and Issue Networks.

### **Open Data**

The Brentford Biopsy map has been released under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share alike 3.0 Licence. A full quality digital version of this map is available for download from the project website (<http://www.publicbiopsy.net/>). This map uses data from the Open Street Map project under a Creative Commons Licence.



## 5. Hurry Up Please It's TIME by Alex Haw

Dr.mo (Mauritius Seeger) and I met at a Dorkbot back in November 2007. Mo came up to chat after my presentation; I proposed we do a project together for NODE.London '08.

The idea emerged from, of course, a few drinks at the bar, and adapted as we sought venues with an interest in new media and projective work.

We got some small sponsorship for the install from the Big Chill House and Bombay Sapphire sponsored the install at the Roxy.

The original intention of the project was to scan the bar with a fixed camera and project back onto the bar a precisely mapped orthogonal aerial image matching the people items in display pixel for pixel. The innovation lay in distorting the presumed real-time nature of most camera-feed by selectively transforming the image according to activity.

We mounted an infrared camera above the bar which watched movement illuminated by supplementary infrared lights so as not to be constantly triggered by the visible luminous movements emanating from the projector, but also to augment the low night-time light levels at the bar. The camera fed a bespoke software programme which utilised computer vision to analyse the scene for movement. A co-located projector, its lens as close as possible to the source camera lens, projected the footage back in the same direction from which it was collected, replacing moving pixels with moving particles, which swarmed in response to the location and speed of any visible movement. The particles were coloured green to both accentuate their allusion

to the ‘natural’ metaphors of swarms and flows, and their computer-generated ‘cyber’ artificiality; this precise green proved to be the best complement to the cabaret velvet reds of the Roxy Bar, heightening the projection’s visibility.

An additional piece of software calibrated the projected camera image in order to match it to its source location, calculating the necessary distortion to a regular grid of projected dots to determine precise alignment. The bar surfaces were overlaid with a robust lightweight cellular white material that efficiently received the image but withstood the assaults of bar drinkers. Given the non-wide lens angle on the 3000-lumens projector, we used angled mirrors to bend the projection and double its reach. At the Roxy, which has a long and accessible bar counter,



we used both our own strip of mirror and the existing wall mirror behind the bar to achieve a double-bounce and maximise the width of the projection.

We chose a bar as a protected internal environment with high activity that also prompted lingering, dawdling and play, a space for interaction, encouraging activity and prompting surprise – something an outdoor street-based install wouldn’t have encouraged. We saw the bar as an area where people often get stuck with nothing to do, yet often have large amounts of time on their hands (something the projected particles made manifest) as they wait for a drink. We also saw the expanse of the ubiquitous bar counter as a cross between a found projection surface and a kind of giant drawing pad, where people’s gestures would begin to generate a sort of graphic language.

The particle systems were elegant, seductive and entrancing; at the height of the project’s performance, their explosive, accurate and dedicated responsiveness was delightful. The installation utterly transformed the way people occupied the bar, encouraging personal and fairly introspective explorations of the levels of possible interaction. The suspended strip mirrors provided a surprisingly interesting secondary surface for projection, and extended the performance to people throughout the bar to whom the counter surface was visually inaccessible.



## 6. FILMOBILE

FILMOBILE is a networking project developed by Max Schleser (CREAM PhD candidate), which aims to create a dialogue between the mobile phone industry, filmmakers and artists working with mobile devices through a variety of on-line and off-line events.

The first international platform for the discussion of mobile technologies, mobile art and mobile moving-image practice was launched in London at the end of June 07. On 4th and 5th April 2008 the international FILMOBILE conference took place at the Old Lumière Cinema. 150 delegates and 22 conference speakers from Australia, Germany, Italy, South Africa, the US and the UK discussed the cultural and economic impact of mobile technologies on the domain of art and media practice. The conference featured industry panels, a live web broadcast with the Mobilefest in São Paulo and a cinema screening programme of feature mobile phone productions.

The conference ran in conjunction with the FILMOBILE exhibition at London Gallery West. The exhibition explored the new emerging mobile phone aesthetic displaying mobile moving-image productions, single screen projections, mobile photography, mobile installations and interactive works. The preview featured a live performance by Jo Thomas and Visual Rhythms. The FILMOBILE exhibition at London Gallery West featured mobile art works by Mark Amerika, Camille Baker, Bebe Beard, Melissa Bliss, Elly Clarke, Romain Forquy, Steve

Hawley, Brian House, Brooke A. Knight, Kevin Logan, Simon Longo, Anne Massoni, Kasia Molga, Sylvie Prasad, Michele Pred, Karen Reed, Henry Reichhold, Max Schleser, Jo Thomas, Anders Weberg and Robert Willim.

"Max With a Kaitei" depicts the new emerging pixel aesthetics while juxtaposing it with the advanced Japanese format, (which is based on the mpeg 4 codec). The feature film can be screened in a cinematic environment, in a gallery space and can be distributed via Bluetooth technology. In the age of High Definition the mobile phone has introduced a new standard at the other end of the cinematic spectrum.

The first generation camera phones had 512 MB memory cards which allow to record for up to 10 or 15 min depending on the intensity of the video footage. These mobile phones of the first generation recorded in 12 frames per second while new devices can easily handle up to 30 frames. With the enhanced production technologies, mobile media has reached miniDV standards, while the mobile phone as a viewing device is a relatively unexplored tool. The FILMOBILE exhibition provides an alternative to the content distributed by the global entertainment industry (such as mobisodes) and image brokers selling 'dirty reality' (Birchall, in Austin, 2008), rather creating mobile experiences.

FILMOBILE is supported by the University of Westminster, HEIF, the Centre for Research in Art and Media, London Westside.







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