

RISKING EVERYTHING

THE COMPUTATIONAL POLITICS OF PREDICTION, SECURITY, AND SECRECY

Goldsmiths University of London | May 20 2016 | 10-6pm PSH LG02

This one-day workshop aims to discuss the possibilities of thinking the political with and through machines. Whilst debates about the political implications of computation have focused on the data-driven governance of risk, less has been said about how to use the logic of prediction of machines, and how to re-invent a cybernetic politics outside the model of the network. Since the paradoxical strategies of visibility and secrecy, inclusion and exclusion seem weakened by an ever invasive and rampant state of control, this workshop aims to ask questions about how to counter-act these strategies.

Organised by Luciana Parisi (CCS) & Susan Schuppli CRA)

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10:00 -12:30 Session I

Introduction & welcome

Ramon Amaro

($\sqrt{-2}$) Leibniz, Ideal Things and Well Founded Fictions

In *Letters to Vernon, With a Note on the 'Justification of the Infinitesimal Calculus by That of Ordinary Algebra*, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz writes: 'even if someone refuses to admit infinite and infinitesimal lines in a rigorous metaphysical sense and as real things, he can still use them with confidence as ideal concepts which shorten reasoning, similar to what we call imaginary roots in the ordinary algebra'. In this, his defence of differential calculus, Leibniz elaborates to define the necessity of imaginaries in aiding the expression of analytic values in straight lines. In the same way, he argues, we can conceive of dimensions, powers and exponents beyond the ordinary number to establish an ideal fitting founded on these realities. As such, Leibniz's differential calculus treats the infinitesimal, the peculiar, as a relation between the symbolic and rates of change, or magnitudes of incomparability between elemental differences — by which an 'act of vanishing' would derive equality as a case of inequality, rest as a case of motion, and parallelism as a case of convergence.

With differential calculus at the foundation of dynamic modelling systems in physics and learning algorithms in machine learning, how do we conceive of the peculiar and imaginary today in relation to colossal aggregations of infinitesimal data? Can the rules of the finite, as Leibniz argues, also be governed by the ideal and abstract? And, what is the role of absurdity in modes of algorithmically driven governance and risk?

Boaz Levin

Lost In The Cloud: The Representation of Opaque Power and Its Discontents

Writing of the Pentagon Papers during the 1960s, Arendt noted the resurgence of Arcana Imperii, the secrets of governance, lamenting beginning of an age in which image making—i.e., slick advertising methods, elaborate thought manipulation and self- deception—has become the core value of American global policy. Today, Political theorists have introduced the notions of "double government", "deep state" and, the more ancient, "state within a state", to describe a current widespread political reality where political power is split between elected government officials and a network of institutions constituting a "disguised republic". New technologies of opaque governance are proliferating – from The Cloud, to transitional security organizations, such as Frontex – all the while political subjects are rendered increasingly vulnerable, predictable. During the talk I'll discuss the challenges of representing opaque structures of power, taking as a starting point my work on *All That is Solid Melts into Data* (2015), directed together with Ryan S Jeffery, as well as my collective research, together with Vera Tollman and Maximilian Schmoetzer, as part of the Research Center for Proxy Politics, Berlin.

The talk is based on several texts I've co-authored together with Vera Tollman and Ryan S Jeffery. During the talk I'll explore the dialectical relationship between privacy and secrecy within networked politics, taking as a starting point my work on *All That is Solid Melts into Data* (2015), directed together with Ryan S Jeffery, as well as my collective research, together with Vera Tollman and Maximilian Schmoetzer, as part of the Research Center for Proxy Politics, Berlin.

Louise Amoore

On Data, Doubt, and Science

12:30 - 1:30 Lunch (vouchers for Café Natura available from Luciana & Susan)

1:30 -3:30 Session II

Paul Feigelfeld (skype)

Digital Rights, Clouds & Maritime Law

In my talk, I will give an insight into problematic history of digital rights by relating it to the history of clouds and maritime law. Looking into the deep web and the ensuing deep statecraft and - to speak with Keller Easterling - „extrastatecraft“ of infrastructural realities, I will try to fathom the spheres of intelligence - both artificial and agencies -, nature, cryptology, philosophy, politics, privacy, and power, and their reconfiguring relationalities. Terminologies like the so-called singularity should be measured against others, like convergence and transcendence, to be able to develop discursive tools for the cybernetic *futurum exactum* we exist in.

Antonia Majaca

A New Kind of Art is Possible

Foucault opens the 'The Order of Things' by quoting an ancient Chinese scheme of classification, dividing animals into numerous nonsensical categories. Pointing that the Western schemes of philosophy and science were no less arbitrary and no more true, Foucault called these schemes episteme or discursive regimes that set the limits of what can be said, thought and known. The only escape from these regimes, would then be in writing/art, and in brief moments of transition from one episteme to another, as was the shift from the episteme of representation to the episteme of man at the turn of the 19th century. In the periods of such radical shifts, a new kind of art is possible, free from governing conceptual schemes. In our time, human-machine interaction and the rapid development of algorithmic operability is reconfiguring the very notion of knowledge, generating an entirely new epistemic space which in turn puts art in an entirely new position. If our age is in fact an age in which knowledge is finding its new form, what might the implications of this change be on art's epistemic scope? If we assume that algorithmic governmentality introduces a new discursive regime, i.e. that we are indeed witnessing a shift into the episteme of the algorithm, does that shift open up a chance for the emergence of a new kind of art, resisting the governing conceptual schemes as Foucault would have it?

Oana Parvan

Women as Terrorists: Gendered Surveillance after the Paris Attacks

In his work on bodies' movement traceability, Grégoire Chamayou has reflected on the recent counter-insurgency wars of the past fifteen years waged by the US as a space of experimentation for a new regime of weaponised surveillance. A surveillance that targets the enemy thanks to the patterns of life analysis. The individuation of the possible threat is, thus, facilitated through a 'patterned individuality [being] woven out of algorithmic dividualities cut onto a thread of reticular activities' represented by one's behavioral regularities (Chamayou, 2014). After the Paris attacks in 2015, it has become clear that the 'War on Terrorism' is also fought against girls and women of the global North, who choose to devote their lives to Islamic militancy, such as Hasna Ait Boulahcen (in France), Maria Giulia Sergio (in Italy) or Samantha Lewthwaite (also known as the 'White Widow' in the UK). How does contemporary mass surveillance – enforced by the states' exceptional powers over the citizens' civil rights – articulate preemptive targeting of girls and women regarded as 'terrorist threats'? How would targeting algorithms based on behavior patterns (developed in warzones) be applied in the metropolitan global North? What deviant behaviors of girls and women would be targeted? This intervention seeks to imagine how contemporary profiles

of 'terrorist' women will influence future surveillance, also taking into account the continuous modulation of the category of 'terrorism' and 'extremism' with its impact on spaces of political action outside the Islam-related domain.

3:30 – 3:45 Break

3:45 – 5:45 Session III

Zach Blas

Informatic Opacity & Contra-Internet

Despite the recent proliferation of critical surveillance studies, which aims to explicate the endless tools and techniques of today's surveillance infrastructures, few scholars take seriously—let alone make their focus—practices and imaginaries of counter-surveillance, often relegating them as anecdotal, spoofs, or bloopers. Yet, in the aftermath of so much critiquing and diagnosing of the contemporary surveillance landscape, counter-surveillance practices are exactly what is needed to actualize the intellectual and political frustrations at the core of critical surveillance studies, even if such practices are difficult and challenging to implement, create, and sustain. Notably, it is artistic practice that has been at the forefront of such counter-surveillance activities and imaginaries. With this in mind, my talk will introduce two concepts / practices from the counter-surveillance imaginary.

First, I will focus on my recent artwork and writing that contribute toward a theory of "informatic opacity," which I define as aesthetico-political practices that resist emerging modes of digital capture, such as biometric recognition technologies, and insist on an embodied dimension of the life that cannot be fully abstracted by technical processes of calculation and visualization. I will explore this through an engagement with Eduoard Glissant's writings on opacity and his critique of transparency and also my art projects Facial Weaponization Suite and Face Cages.

Next, I will introduce a concept and art project I am developing called "contra-internet," which addresses the emerging militancies and subversions of the internet as a site of global control. Amid rampant dataveillance and social media monoculture, "the internet" has become something that is extremely difficult to articulate an outside or alternative to. Conversely, contra-internet gives a theoretical consistency to the practical and imaginative work being done to create alternatives to the internet and the network form itself.

Pietro Pezzani

Digital Targeting: Aesthetics and Politics of Normativity and Contagion

Targeting is the act of addressing an entity by identifying its borders. Targeting operations are adopted to *classify* – to divide a population or a space into homogenous groups or regions – and to *detect* – to make a figure emerge from its background. Targeting can be understood as a spatial diagram that follows a logic of *economization*. This means, on the one hand, that it is adopted whenever the finiteness (or scarcity) of available resources makes it inconvenient or impossible to direct an operation in an indiscriminate fashion – i.e., throughout the entire space at one's reach; on the other hand, targeting entails a work of selection of the minimum features which are necessary to circumscribe a smaller portion of that space. As such, targeting refers simultaneously to the domain of *aesthetics* and to that of *governmentality*. Its diagram presides over operations aimed at directing human attention, distributing resources or assessing the opportunity of military attack. Historically, targeting was adopted in condition of spatial or temporal remoteness: something needed to be targeted when it was not (or no longer) directly at hand, or not immediately discernible due to lack of information. Yet the development of digital technology is causing a profound transformation in the aesthetics and politics mobilised through targeting operations.

I will try to explore some of these transformations through the notions of *normativity* and *contagion*, drawing examples from technologies as diverse as marketing segmentation, geodemographic classifications, credit scoring and signature strikes.

Emily Rosamond

Risky Behaviour: Social Impact Bonds and the Financialization of Rehabilitation

The emerging social impact bonds (SIB) market encourages investors to back privately operated social service schemes, which aim to improve a specific “social impact” outcome that could save governments money. Financial intermediaries collect investor capital, which they then funnel to service providers (often non-profits), who work with at-risk populations. If the desired social impact outcome is achieved, governments pay investors at a fixed rate of return. In 2010, the UK-based financial intermediary company Social Finance, Ltd. launched the world’s first social impact bond in a pilot program conducted by the Ministry of Justice. This SIB aimed to reduce recidivism among male short-term prisoners in the Peterborough prison north of London by at least 7.5% over six years. Although the British government cancelled the third phase of the pilot, the Peterborough SIB nonetheless launched a burgeoning international market in social impact. This market often focuses on rehabilitation by addressing, at least in part, the habits, beliefs and attitudes of vulnerable populations. (In this milieu, a change in an ex-prisoner’s worldview might directly line investors’ pockets.) Further, it mobilizes complex social diagrams of risk, secrecy and calculation, which congeal to produce a “double bottom line:” an investor’s term for a positive social outcome coupled with a reasonable financial return.

In this world of double bottom lines, who bears what form of risk – and how is secrecy redistributed? In many cases, at-risk populations might receive better support through an SIB-backed service than they would through an underfunded government program or a traditional Payment By Results contract. Yet in receiving such support, they unwittingly become investment-images in social impact, their very life changes calculated, bet upon, played. This paper argues the need for a politics of the investment-image: an acknowledgment of the new forms of invisible risk at-risk populations have been asked to undertake as unwitting indices of another’s investment, in an age of financialised social impact.

Biographies

Ramon Amaro is an Associate Lecturer in Critical Theory and Media Philosophy and PhD researcher at the Centre for Cultural Studies, Digital Culture Unit, Goldsmiths. His joint academic background in philosophy, sociology and engineering comes to fruition in his research looking at the philosophical dimensions of computer modelling of social processes, with particular reference to data fairness and algorithmic equality in machine learning and artificial intelligence systems.

Boaz Levin is an artist, writer and occasional curator. He studied fine arts at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem and has completed his Meisterschüler studies under Hito Steyerl at the Universität der Künste, Berlin. He currently holds a position as a research associate at the UDK, Berlin, where, together with Hito Steyerl, Maximilian Schmoetzer and Vera Tollman, he runs the Research Center for Proxy Politics (RCPP). Levin has presented his work at the Transmediale (Berlin), CCA (Tel-Aviv), Former West (HKW, Berlin) and Recontres Internationales (GAÏTÉ LYRIQUE, Paris. HKW, Berlin). Recently, he has co-edited, together with Vera Tollman Filippo Spreafico and Oliver Leron Schultz, the online video-vortex Hybrid reader. He is also the co-founder, together with Daniel Herleth and Adam Kaplan, of *Trois Chaînes press* where they have published *It’s Twilight Again*. Levin is currently working on *All That is Solid turns into Data* a documentary-video-essay co-directed together with Ryan S. Jeffery, which will be premiered in FidMarseille, 2015.

Louise Amoore is a Professor in the Department of Geography at Durham University. She researches and teaches in the areas of global geopolitics and security. She has particular interests in how contemporary forms of data, analytics and risk management are changing the techniques of border control and security. Louise has been awarded a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship (2016-18) for work on the *Ethics of Algorithm*. Louise’s *Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship* provides an account of the potential for an ethics of algorithm. In a tradition of ethics as the situated giving of an account of one’s actions at the limits of intelligibility – “I cannot give an account of myself without accounting for the conditions under which I emerge” (Judith Butler 2005) – the research excavates how the algorithm might give an account of itself and its emergence. The research develops six conceptual themes – to form the chapters of a book – opening up dimensions of the relation of algorithm to ethics: undecidability; doubt; cognition; perception; association; automation.

Paul Feigelfeld is the academic coordinator of the Digital Cultures Research Lab at the Centre for Digital Cultures at Leuphana University Lüneburg. He studied Cultural Studies and Computer Science at Humboldt University in Berlin. Between 2004 and 2011, he worked for Friedrich Kittler and is one of the editors of his collected works. From 2010 to 2013, he was a teacher and researcher at Humboldt's Institute for Media Theories. He is working on his PhD thesis titled *The Great Loop Forward. Incompleteness and Media between China and the West*. His writing appears in publications such as *032c*, *frieze*, *Texte zur Kunst*, *PIN-UP*, or *Modern Weekly China*.

Antonia Majaca is a curator and researcher at the IZK Institute for Contemporary Art at the Graz University of Technology, where her work focuses on the art-based transdisciplinary research and the epistemology of art in the age of algorithmic governmentality. Her three-year research and publishing project 'The Incomputable - Art in the Age of Algorithms', funded by FWF Austrian Science Fund, is currently being developed through an international platform involving Graz University of Technology, Goldsmiths University of London and the Department of Human and Social Sciences at the University of Naples.

Oana Parvan Oana Parvan is a Romanian researcher based in London. She holds a degree in Philosophy and Semiotics from the University of Bologna. Currently a doctoral student at the Centre for Cultural Studies. She has published articles on *I/Manifesto*, *th_rough Europe* and *Dark Matter*. Her current research explores the relationship between forms of cross-class struggles linked to the Tunisian revolution and the way they are being framed by Tunisian street-artists.

Zach Blas is an artist and writer whose practice engages technics and minoritarian politics. Currently, he is a Lecturer in the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. Blas's recent works respond to technological control, biometric governmentality, and network hegemony. *Facial Weaponization Suite* (2011-14) consists of "collective masks" that cannot be detected as human faces by biometric facial recognition software. *Contra-Internet* (2014-present) explores subversions of and alternatives to the internet and is supported by a 2016 Creative Capital award in Emerging Fields. Blas is producing two books, *Escaping the Face*, an artist monograph to be published by Sternberg Press, and *Informatic Opacity: The Art of Defacement in Biometric Times*, a theoretical study that considers biometric facial recognition as an emerging form of global governance alongside aesthetico-political refusals of recognition, such as masked protest.

Pietro Pezzani is an architect and researcher from Milan, currently based in London. He has recently finalised a MA dissertation at the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths University. Prior to that, he worked as an architect and a tutor at the School of Architecture of Polytechnic University and at the New Fine Art Academy in Milan. In 2012 he co-founded the office [ForestieriPacePezzani](#).

Emily Rosamond is a Canadian artist, writer and educator. She is a Lecturer in Fine Art at the University of Kent, and a member of the art collective School of The Event Horizon. She completed her PhD in Art in 2016 at Goldsmiths, University of London, where she held a Commonwealth Scholarship. Her doctoral work focused on character as a prominent speculative, representational logic of personhood in an era of predictive analytics. Often, such analytics (associated with big data) focus on determining individuals' future actions by analysing their past behaviour, or statistically situating them within flows of transient norms in social networks.